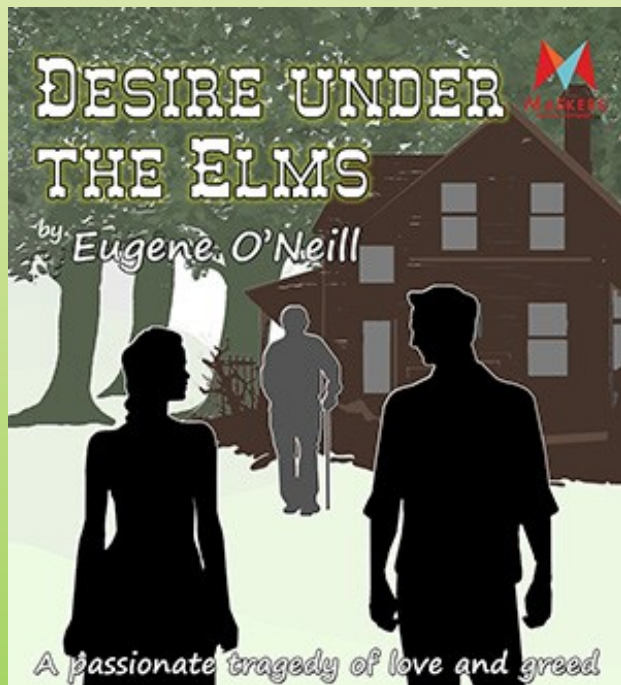


Our Next Production



15-20 September 2025
at The Maskers Studio

Emsworth Road, Shirley, Southampton SO15 3LX

BOOKING: Via link on our website or 0333 666 3366

For the Maskers

Technical Manager:- Jamie McCarthy; **Lighting Consultant:-** Clive Weeks; **Sound Consultant:-** Jamie McCarthy;

Marketing Director:- Jenni Prior; **Marketing Team:-** Angela Stansbridge, Clive Weeks, Tash Priddle; Maddy Cope; Robert Osborne, Meri Mackney, Paul Baker, Nataliia Prymak; **Front of House Manager:** James Lawson; **Box Office Manager:** Chris Baker; **Photography:-** Clive Weeks, Ian Wilson; **Bar Manager:-** Meri Mackney

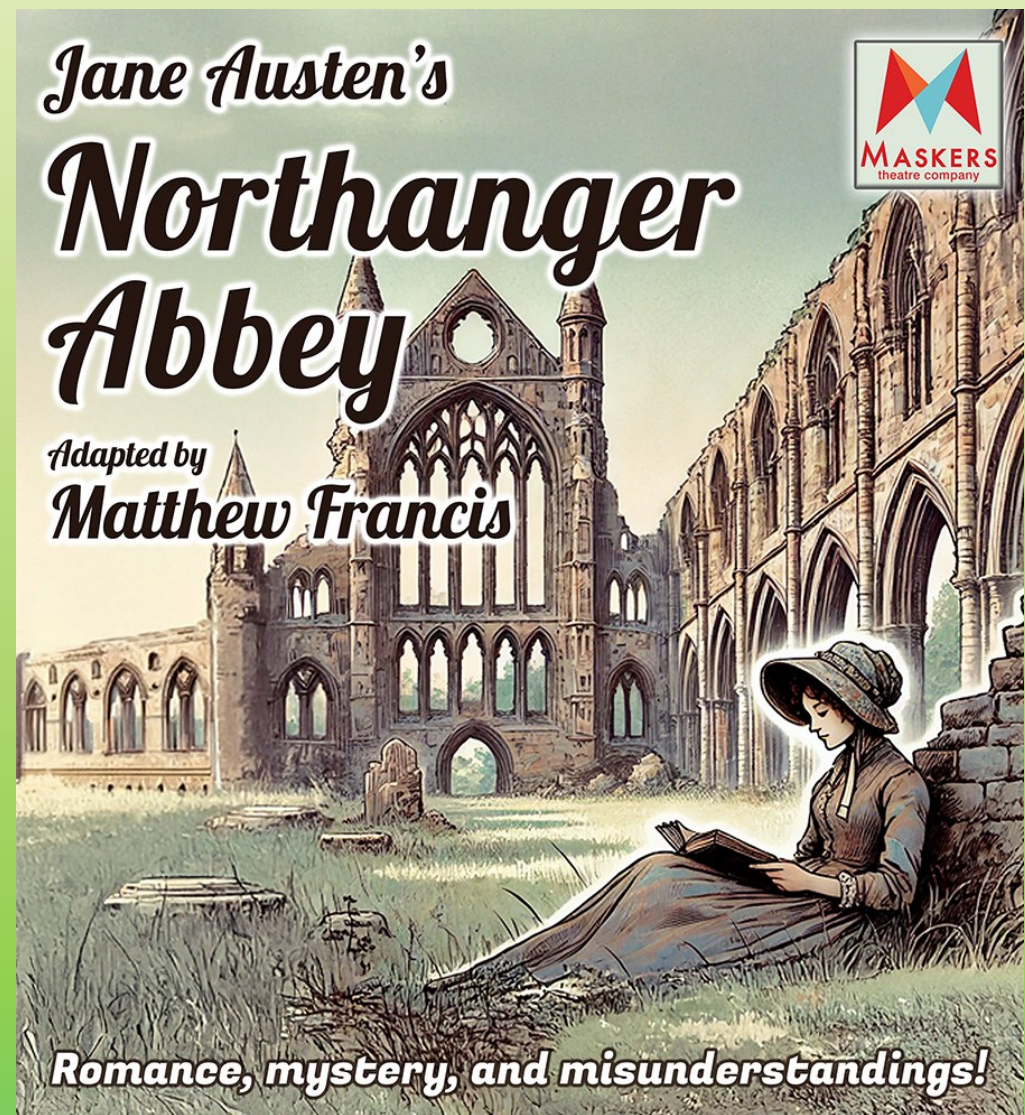


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Facebook



or Instagram



Programme

On tour 7 - 26 July 2025

This amateur production of “**Northanger Abbey**” is presented by arrangement with Concord Theatricals Ltd. on behalf of Samuel French Ltd.

www.concordtheatricals.co.uk

Registered Charity no. 900067

maskers.org.uk

Director's Notes

Novels!? - "There seems almost a general wish of decrying the capacity and undervaluing the labours of the novelist..." from Chapter 5, *Northanger Abbey*, Jane Austen - very short chapter, almost certainly written after her first attempt to get the book published. The author directly addresses the reader throughout the chapter. It is a rant! It's quite possible the gothic satire that is such a feature of the book was also added later. During her time living in Southampton, Austen visited Netley Abbey, a well-known gothic ruin, painted by her contemporaries Turner and Constable. The original title was *Susan*. To date there are no Susan's in the book, or this production!

Last December (the month of Austen's birth), I visited God's House Tower in Southampton to see an exhibition featuring her travelling writing desk, on loan from the British Library with some of her letters. One letter postmarked from Southampton, asked her publisher to print or return her manuscript of *Northanger Abbey* in 1809 – signed Miss Ashton Davies. M.A.D. It was fascinating and if you've not already noticed, this year marks the 250th anniversary of Austen's birth, with many events planned in our city and around the country. It seemed as good a time as any to put my hand up to direct a favourite novel of mine.

No, it's not the one where Colin Firth gets his shirt wet! *Northanger Abbey* is her first, and in a way, last novel. It was published after her death along with her last completed novel – *Persuasion*. These are her only novels to feature Bath. It is a coming-of-age story and, interestingly, it was at the Dolphin Hotel, Southampton - currently being converted into student accommodation - where Austen danced and celebrated her eighteenth birthday. My eldest daughter turns eighteen, days before this show opens. Catherine Morland, the unlikely heroine (aren't they always), also turns eighteen by the end of the novel...

So, I'm grateful to have had the opportunity to direct; to have been able to include dancing in Bath and live music too (not just because it was tricky to transport sound and tech). I must confess, I did do a double take when I first saw the words 'summer tour'. Like Austen's writing desk, this show will be travelling; packing up lighting desks not writing desks, into a convoy of cars, not carriages or curricles.

All this has been made possible with a HUGE amount of collaboration with cast and a production team - the costumes (they are the design, as we couldn't pack a set), lighting, sound...the list goes on, too many to mention here. I would just like to say a big thank you to them all. I hope we all get to enjoy it... Classics can be fun too. Oh, and keep reading novels... Even the *horrid ones*!

Rob

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Join the Maskers' online mailing list - visit our website and click the box provided.

The Production Crew

Director
Production Manager
Stage Manager
Assistant Stage Manager
Lighting Design
Sound Design
Lighting Operator
Sound Operator
Properties
Costumes
Assisted by
Music Selection and Adaptation
Set Construction and Painting

Front of House Manager
Show photography
Catering Manager (Townhill only)
Rehearsal Prompt

Rob Iliffe
Meri Mackney
Meri Mackney
Maddy Cope
Clive Weeks, Tony Lawther
Jamie McCarthy
Maddy Cope, Tony Lawther
Ashley Martin, Jamie McCarthy
Teo Rusu, Meri Mackney, Maddy Cope
Susan Wilson, Sheana Carrington
Alison Tebbutt
Juliette Ribí, Teo Rusu
Clive Weeks, Martin Caveney, Martyn Welch, William Baggs, Brian Stansbridge
James Lawson
Ian Wilson, Clive Weeks
Chris Baker
Jenni Prior

Acknowledgements

Thanks to

Elena Vorobeva and the Hampshire Regency Dancers for teaching us to dance.
Tony Lawther for the use of his keyboard.
The staff at each of our tour venues for their help and support.
Hampshire Wardrobe
Iryna Prymak for dressmaking

Why not join Maskers?

Maskers are always keen to welcome new members with an interest in any aspect of theatre - all things technical, directing, costumes, props, set design and construction, front of house, marketing and, of course, acting!

Enjoy the challenge of making theatre happen.

To find out more about Maskers Theatre Company, go to

www.maskers.org.uk, speak to any of the Front of House staff or come along to one of our friendly Open House mornings on the first Saturday of every month from 10.00 to 13.00.

Next Open House is on Saturday, 2nd August

Our Tour Venues

Maskers Studio maskers.org.uk

Maskers Studio Theatre has been located in Shirley, Southampton for over twenty years, although historically we have been based in various different parts of the city. While we draw our members and audiences from all over the Southampton area and beyond, we feel we are a part of the Shirley community and are keen for local residents to see us as their theatre, where they can enjoy high quality theatre on their doorstep. However, tucked away as we are behind Shirley High Street, many local people are unaware of our location, so we are actively working to raise our profile in the area.

Hanger Farm Arts Centre www.hangerfarm.co.uk

The iconic 9-bay barn at Hanger Farm, now listed as Grade II, stands as a testament to its enduring legacy. With its weather-boarded timber frame and a roof originally covered with slate, the barn has been carefully preserved. It now houses a meeting room, a cozy café and bar area, and a versatile theatre space equipped with retractable seating for a variety of events.

Townhill Park House (The Gregg School) www.thegreggschools.org

Townhill Park House is the former home of Lord and Lady Swaythling. The building dates from around 1790 and was extended and re-designed by the architect Leonard Rome Guthrie, who also designed the terraced gardens to complement the style of the house, with planting plans produced by the noted plantswoman, Miss Gertrude Jekyll. The Gregg School moved to the site in 1994, since when it has sought to conserve and enhance the Grade II listed house and gardens. If you would like to visit the gardens, the next Open Day is Heritage Day on Sunday 7th September. *We respectfully request that you take all your picnic leftovers and empties home. You may remain to finish your picnics at the end of the play but we ask that you vacate the grounds by 10.30pm (5.45pm for matinée). Thank you!!*

Please take care when moving around the grounds as steps and paths may be uneven and slippery if wet.

Chesil Theatre www.chesiltheatre.org.uk

Chesil Theatre is Winchester's leading amateur theatre, renowned for performing high quality productions, ranging from comedy to classics. In 1966 our home was established in the former 12th century church of St Peter Chesil. This historic medieval listed building provides an intimate 75-seat studio-style theatre and versatile performance space. Chesil Theatre has a proud reputation as an excellent guardian of our medieval listed property, which we have occupied since 1966. We have total responsibility for the upkeep of this historic building in one of Winchester's prime Conversation Areas at the en-

King Edward's Hall, West Tytherley <https://westtytherleyhall.co.uk>

West Tytherley lies in the heart of the Test Valley. King Edward's Hall, dedicated to King Edward VII, was constructed in 1911 by Washington Singer using red brick with stone window features and a tiled roof. In 1946, King Edward's Hall was handed over to the village to be held in trust for the benefit of the inhabitants of the Parish of West Tytherley. It is run by a Management Committee and seeks to enrich life in the surrounding area by hosting a variety of events.



Directed by Rob Iliffe - This is Rob's directorial debut for Maskers. The last time he directed a play it was staged in the back of a large removal van...

So, it's with ironic trepidation he looks forward to **Northanger Abbey** out on tour!

Rob first appeared in Maskers' outdoor production, **Jane Eyre**, followed by **Almost, Maine**, **Murder in the Studio** and **Romeo and Juliet**. He's also made an occasional splash with set painting in-between shows. Other performances include: **Southampton Mummers Play** in St Michael's Square and **The Hound of The Baskervilles** at MAST Mayflower Studios for SUP.

Northanger Abbey is Rob's favourite Jane Austen novel, (although there are two he hasn't read yet) and he hopes this production will be a fitting celebration for her 250th anniversary.



There will be one interval of 20 minutes

Maskers Studio only -Win a bottle of Prosecco —

tickets available from the bar!

The Cast



Catherine Morland played by **Katarina Smith** — This is Katarina's second Maskers' production, having taken part in *Pygmalion* in 2016. She is excited to return after such a long break, and to be playing the excitable, imaginative, and sometimes silly, Catherine Morland. Katarina's previous roles include: Juliet in *Romeo and Juliet*, Ismene in *Welcome to Thebes* and Helena in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (twice!).



Henry Tilney played by **Neil Maddock** — Neil has toured the UK and worked in NZ for different theatre companies and is now enjoying being part of the local theatre scene! Neil's previous roles with Maskers include Aslan (*The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*), Hugh Evans (*The Merry Wives of Windsor*), and Stevie in *Ugly Lies the Bones*. Elsewhere, he has played Jesus (*Southampton and Havant Passion plays*), the Ghost of Christmas Present (*A Christmas Carol*), and Nathan Detroit (*Guys & Dolls*). Neil is delighted to be back with Maskers and to experience his first foray into the world of Jane Austen!



Annette/ Mrs Morland/ Mrs Thorpe played by **Sue Daspher** — During Sue's time in Maskers, she has been involved in a variety of productions including: *Winter Sparkles*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *Out of Focus*, *Contractions*, *Metamorphosis*, *Sitting Pretty* and *An Italian Straw Hat*. Sue has appeared in many open-air productions including: *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Don Quixote*, *Around the World in Eighty Days*, *The Jungle Book*, *Anne Boleyn*, *Treasure Island*, *Twelfth Night* and *Jane Eyre*.



John Thorpe/ Mr Morland played by **Simon Mewett** — Simon has performed in a wide range of Maskers productions: from the heartfelt vignettes of *Almost, Maine*; the literary intensity of *Jane Eyre*; and the swashbuckling adventure of *The Three Musketeers*. In this, Maskers' contribution to the Jane Austen 250-year anniversary celebrations, Simon is delighted to be playing Richard Morland, Catherine's dad, as well as the obnoxious John Thorpe.



Isabella Thorpe played by **Samantha Richards** — Samantha is excited to join Maskers as the scandalously charming Isabella. This is her second time on stage, though she's been performing unofficially in classrooms for years as a drama and English teacher. She's a lover of Austen and thrilled to be part of such a spirited production.



James Morland played by **Matthew Grant** — Matthew has performed in many different theatre shows since the age of 14, mainly in musicals and pantomimes, and now, at 29, is in his first Maskers' production. He hopes you thoroughly enjoy the show.

The Cast



Mrs Allen played by **Jill Desborough** — Jill joined Maskers in 2014 and has been involved with many shows in a variety of roles, both on and off stage. Acting highlights have included: *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *Sharks in the Custard*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and several Christmas Shows including last year's *Winter Sparkles*.



General Tilney played by **Philip de Grouchy** — A member of The Maskers for over 50 years, Philip has played quite a variety of parts over those years - latterly several 'cameos' in *Notes from a Small Island*, the Public Prosecutor in *Murder in the Citizens' Jury*, and Lord Montague in *Romeo and Juliet*. He now looks forward to personating the alternately unctuous and irascible General Tilney, owner of *Northanger Abbey*.



Eleanor Tilney played by **Emily Smith** — Emily initially studied acting at Academy of Art University before moving behind the scenes for a film degree. She has been a Masker for over two years, establishing herself in backstage roles and appearing last year in *Almost, Maine* and *Murder in the Citizens' Jury*. Emily is enjoying indulging in her love of Jane Austen's writing.



Dimity/ Ensemble played by **Kate de Haviland** — After acting in the Midlands as a child, Katy studied Drama and Performing Arts at college before joining her local theatre company. After a 20-year break, she joined Maskers in 2020 and has since played Elvira in *Blithe Spirit*, Susan in *Murder in the Studio* and Naomi in a brand-new production, *Murder in the Citizens' Jury*. As a lifelong Jane Austen fan, she's very excited to be part of this summer production.



Ensemble/ Musician played by **Teo Rusu** — Teo is a Southampton-based actress who joined Maskers in 2024 and was most recently seen portraying Pauline in *Murder in the Studio*. She is enthusiastically awaiting to see how performing live music in front of an audience will go after a 15-year hiatus.



Musician played by **Juliette Ribi** — Juliette studied Music at Anglia Polytechnic University in Cambridge where she was also on stage for music-based productions. She has worked in the teaching and music teaching profession for over 25 years, has played for amateur dramatics and is a Music Worship leader. As well as playing and teaching the flute and piano, Juliette also enjoys singing.