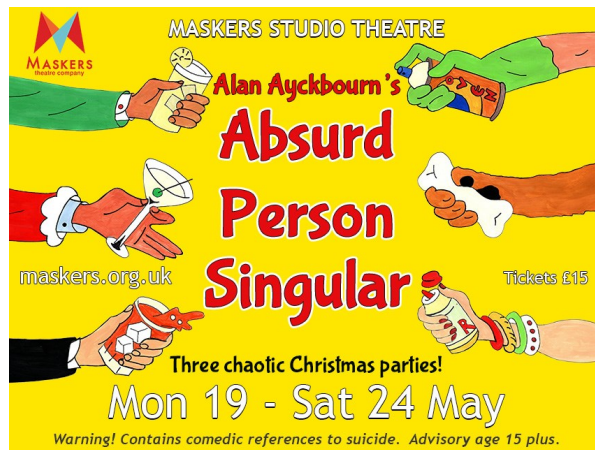


Forthcoming Productions



Three people meet in the afterlife to determine just what went wrong at their meeting in 1941.

A lot can happen over three years, and in this black comedy it certainly does!



BOOKING: Via link on our website maskers.org.uk or 0333 666 3366

For the Maskers Technical Manager:- Jamie McCarthy; Lighting Consultant:- Clive Weeks; Sound Consultant:- Jamie McCarthy;

Marketing Team:- Jenni Prior, Angela Stansbridge, Clive Weeks, Robert Osborne, Meri Mackney, Paul Baker; Tash Priddle; Front of House Manager:- James Lawson; Box Office Manager:- Chris Baker; Photography:- Clive Weeks; Bar Manager:- Meri Mackney

 @MaskersTheatre  Find us on Facebook

Registered charity no.900067

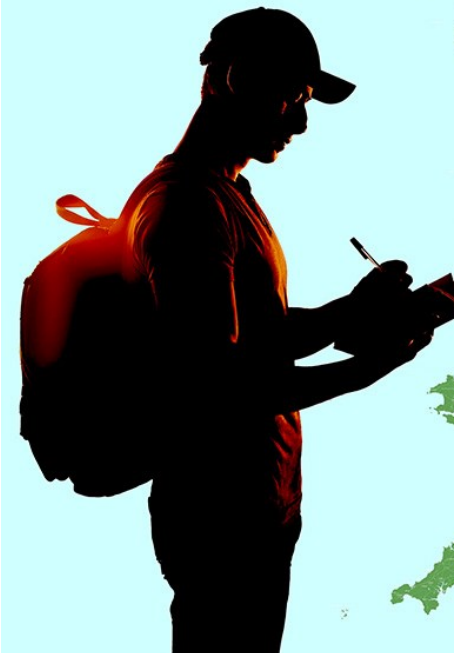
Bill Bryson's

Notes from a Small Island



Adapted by
Tim Whitnall

A hilarious tour of the UK



Programme

24th February — 1st March 2025

Maskers Studio Theatre

This is an amateur production by arrangement with Nick Hern Books

Registered Charity no. 900067

maskers.org.uk

Director's Notes

I've been a fan of Bill Bryson's books for over 20 years now, having first discovered his writing, oddly enough, in a science class at college. He had just published *A Short History of Nearly Everything*, a journey through science and history rather than places, but after picking this for my review of popular science literature coursework, I promptly fell in love with his wit and observations.

Throughout the next 20 years I would eagerly read through more of Bryson's work, both old and new, exploring whole new worlds and places unfamiliar, from the Appalachian Trail (*A Walk in the Woods*) to the human body (*The Body, a Guide for Occupants*), and of course the more familiar; *Notes from a Small Island*. His books always felt like a place of comfort to me, like listening to stories told by an old friend, where you can laugh together at the silly little things that happen. My bookcase is now cluttered with an array of Bryson's books, some bought new in hardcover, others well-read second-hand copies ex-libris or from charity shops.

Fast forward to 2024, and I'm thinking of directing a play again. As I look through the list of comedies a surprising but familiar name appears – *Notes from a Small Island* by Bill Bryson. Simultaneously delighted and berating myself for not knowing about it sooner, I am reassured to see that it is in fact a relatively new play, having first been performed in 2023. My interest piqued, I ordered a copy, and as soon as I started reading it, it was like coming home to an old friend: I had to direct this play.

Of course, there is the small matter of working out how to pull together a cast of 10, covering a journey spanning 800+ miles, 90+ characters and myriad sounds and scenes...but I love a good challenge, and this certainly was a good challenge. With so much to cover in such a short time, Tim Whitnall has created a play that by its very nature is the opposite of what most plays are and yet carries throughout it that familiar essence of Bryson's writing.

Whilst not my first time directing, and in fact not even my largest cast (I always seem to pick the big ones!), this is my first time directing with Maskers, and my first time directing something where the source material is so beloved, not only to me but to many others throughout the UK. It would have been easy to feel the burden of this responsibility, especially being such a new play, but the process of bringing the words of one of my favourite authors to life on the stage has been nothing but a joy. I have laughed at every rehearsal, despite knowing the punchlines already; I have enjoyed seeing the characters develop alongside the efforts of the rest of the creative team as my little ideas become real. Whether or not you are familiar with Bill Bryson already, I hope you enjoy watching this production as much as we have enjoyed creating it for you. Thank you for joining us on our tour around Great Britain.



Jenni

Directed by Jenni Prior - Jenni joined Maskers in November 2023 for *Almost Maine*, and has a long history of acting, directing and backstage roles before Maskers. She was the joint director of *Murder in the Studio* and assistant director for *Winter Sparkles*. Jenni has also taken on the demanding role of Marketing Director for the company. She likes to keep busy!

POP IN AND GET TO KNOW MASKERS BETTER

Ever wondered what goes on offstage at a play?

Every show has a host of people working away out of sight of the audience. Maskers is welcoming people into the theatre to see the bits the audience doesn't usually get to see. Come and learn a little about the workshop, the technical department, the costume department and how we go about marketing our shows.

Or just drop in for a cup of tea and a chat on the first Saturday of every month.

Saturday 1st March
Running from 10am – 1pm.

WARNING! This performance contains flashing lights.

CATCH THIS ORIGINAL ADAPTATION OF DICKENS' CHILLING SHORT STORY

DOING YOUTH THEATRE DIFFERENTLY
Scan above or Email info@lightupdrama.org.uk to book a FREE trial.
REG CHARITY: 1174737

The Production Team

Director
Production Manager
Stage Manager
Lighting Design
Sound Design
Lighting and Sound Operator
Projection Operator
Set Design
Set Construction
Costume
Properties
Poster Design
Show Photography
Rehearsal Prompt

Jenni Prior
Jill Desborough
Robert Osborne
Emily Smith
Jamie McCarthy
Ashley Martin, Daniel Dick
Robert Osborne
Clive Weeks
Tuesday Team
Chris Baker, Clare Britton
Adam Taussik, Lucy Lockyer
Clive Weeks
Clive Weeks, Tash Priddle
Jill Desborough, Allegra Carlton

Acknowledgements

Maskers would like to thank :

For various props:

Chesil Theatre, SOS Presents, Tony Lawther, Santos Lounge, Tom Taussik

Valentine Instruments & Repairs @valentine_instruments for the sitar.

Isobel Howard for sewing chair covers.

Jo Iacovou for rolling the Fat Bifta

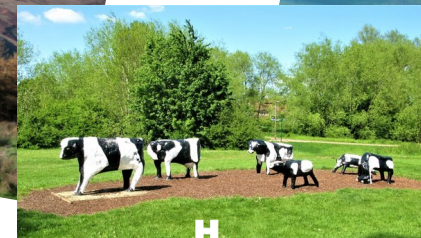


WHERE IS BILL? - the answers

A Dover B Glasgow C Stonehenge D Blenheim Palace E Corfe Castle
F Malhamdale G Bournemouth H Milton Keynes I John O'Groats J Edinburgh
K London L Weymouth

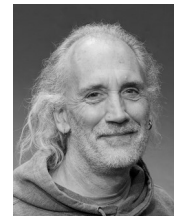
There will be one interval of 20 minutes
Win a bottle of Prosecco—tickets available from the bar!

Where is Bill? Can you identify some of the places he visits?
Answers on P6





Bill Bryson played by **Johnny Carrington** — Johnny made his stage debut at the tender age of ten... as the back end of a donkey in the school nativity! A year later he was making his Maskers' debut at the Nuffield as a paperboy in *Oh What a Lovely War*. Having parents who were founding members meant he was always around the theatre and he started appearing with the Maskers Youth Theatre whilst at college. Johnny has been in numerous shows both in traditional venues and outdoors, but four of his favourites have been *The Rover* (Willmore) *The Three Musketeers* (D'Artagnan), *The Man in the Iron Mask* (also D'Artagnan) and *The Wind in the Willows* (Toad). He also began directing with the Maskers with the tribute play to the Spitfire, *Mitchell's Wings*, in 2011 (which he also wrote). His most recent appearances with Maskers were in *A Bunch of Amateurs* (Jefferson Steel) and *Out of Focus* (Bob Enfield).



Ian Wilson — Ian has been a member of Maskers for 17 years and appeared in many productions, most recently as Eric, the benefit cheat, in *Cash on Delivery* and the pedantic trainspotter, Leonard, in *Out of Focus*. His most recent outing was as the director of *Blue Remembered Hills*, a play he has been wanting to be involved in for many years. He is very much looking forward to playing multiple roles in this production, assuming he can conjure up 10 different accents.



Liz Finbow — This is Liz's first show with Maskers. She has had fun rehearsing this, changing from one role to another and enjoying the laughs this play brings.

The Ensemble in order of appearance



Adam Taussik — Since joining Maskers 21 years ago, Adam has played characters of many ranks, from peasants to kings (with a smattering of vicars, chefs and bears), and now has the chance to play them all - even a National Treasure - at the same time! Following the death of Tybalt in last summer's *Romeo and Juliet*, Adam is pleased to survive to the end of this show.



Molly McDade — Molly's most recent roles with Maskers were: Molly in *Winter Sparkles*, Florrie in *Murder in the Studio*, and Prunesquallor in *Gormenghast*. Molly has been part of Maskers since 2014. Apart from appearing in various Maskers' productions, including *The Jungle Book*, *A Bunch of Amateurs* and *Around the World in Eighty Days*, she is also a member of Southampton Operatic Society and has appeared in *Legally Blonde* and *Crazy for You* at MAST Studios



Philip de Grouchy — Philip has been a member of Maskers for fifty odd (?) years, playing many varied roles in that time. He was last seen as a 'Public Prosecutor' in *Murder in the Citizen's Jury*. Philip relishes joining with younger members in playing a few of the 90+ eccentric British characters in Bryson's amusing yet affectionate account of his times in our island - never were so many accents gathered together in one place . . .



Meri Mackney — Meri has been a Masker for more years than she cares to remember and has been involved with many shows both on and off-stage. She most recently appeared in *Murder in the Studio* and *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, and her most recent production was the Christmas show, *Winter Sparkles*. In 2023, she adapted and directed our open air production of *Jane Eyre*. When she isn't in/ directing the show (and sometimes when she is!) she will usually be found behind the bar.



David Collis — David has been treading the boards for over 25 years. He has returned to Maskers after a 10-year break, lured back by this witty look at 'being British'. Loving all aspects of theatre, especially musicals, and more recently panto, his many roles have been as diverse as Zeus in *Orpheus* to Hysterium, a slave, in *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*. It's great to be back with such a great cast and team, bringing life and laughter to Bill Bryson's journey.



Jenni Prior — Jenni has had that nightmare for all directors, where a member of the cast falls ill late on in rehearsals and there is really no option but to step into some of the roles—most notably that of Bill's wife, Cynthia. Jenni asks you to be kind and remember she has had only days to get to grips with being in the cast as well as directing everyone else!



Neil Forster — Neil joined Maskers in 2021 and has since made appearances in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, *Almost Maine*, and *Four Weddings and an Elvis*. Most recently he could be seen as the lovesick Romeo in last summer's outdoor production of *Romeo & Juliet*. A native Geordie(ish), Neil grew up in South Shields and studied at York University, where he performed in various productions including *Cider with Rosie*, *Arcadia* and *Journey's End*. He later moved to London, where he appeared in many other shows including *A Clockwork Orange*, *Oh What a Lovely War!* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.



Sally Scott — Sally originally joined Maskers for the 2007 production of *Pride and Prejudice*. After having a fabulous time and meeting some lovely people, she moved away for other UK and Canadian adventures. Coming straight back to Maskers on her return, Sally was immediately cast in this production but has had to withdraw due to illness. She can, however, still be heard in several voiceovers. We wish her a speedy recovery.