

**Preious Mottisfont productions by
The Maskers Theatre Company**

| | |
|------|---------------------------------|
| 1982 | A Man for all Seasons |
| 1983 | Tom Jones |
| 1984 | She Stoops to Conquer |
| 1985 | Ring round the Moon |
| 1986 | Cyrano de Bergerac |
| 1987 | Beaux Stratagem |
| 1988 | The Rover |
| 1989 | Much Ado about Nothing |
| 1990 | Penny for a Song |
| 1991 | The Recruiting Officer |
| 1992 | The Canterbury Tales |
| 1993 | Joseph Andrews |
| 1994 | the Importance of being Earnest |
| 1995 | A Midsummer Night's Dream |
| 1996 | The Three Musketeers |
| 1997 | Ondine |
| 1998 | Wild Oats |

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Bonne Chance aux Maskers pour fLe Bal des Voleurs!

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About the author

Jean Anouilh was born at Bordeaux in 1910. His father was a tailor and his mother a violinist, who played in the Casino Orchestra at Arcachon. He studied law and worked briefly in advertising. At 18 however, he saw Jean Giraudoux's *Siegfried* and that set him on a career as a playwright. He worked briefly as the secretary to the great actor-director Louis Jouvet.

He has divided his published plays into *Pièces roses* and *Pièces noires*, in which similar subjects are treated more or less lightly. *Le Bal des Voleurs* is certainly one of the former. Anouilh was in favour of what has been called "theatricalism" that is the return of poetry and imagination to the stage. This play can also be seen as reflecting the classical style of French theatre, much in the style of Molière, some 250 years earlier. It is described in the original script as a comédie-ballet and you will note the very French style of mixing music and drama into a single art form. Followers of Anouilh's work will have noticed repeated themes in his plays; the conflict between purity of thought and pragmatism; his dislike of aristocrats, actors, critics and bureaucrats; the exchange of roles amongst the characters and certain stylised characters who make appearances in several of his plays.

Some of the audience may have seen our earlier production of *L' Invitation au Chateau*, (Ring round the Moon) at Mottisfont, and a production of *La Valse des Toréadors* (The Waltz of the Toreadors) at the Winchester Theatre Royal. Other well-known plays by Anouilh include *Antigone*, *Euridice*, *Poor Bitos*, *Becket* and many others.

Since 1936 Anouilh collaborated on the screenplays of several films, directed two, and wrote also ballets. Among his films are *Monsieur Vincent* (1947) and *Little Molière* (1959), which depicted the unhappy relationship between the writer and his wife. Divorced from Monelle Valentin he was survived by his second wife, Nicole Lançon, and four children. His daughter Catherine Anouilh is a stage and screen actor.



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About the play

Le Bal des Voleurs was written in 1932 and first produced at the Théâtre des Arts in 1938 and was later brought to London as *Thieves' Carnival* in 1951. Anouilh labels this play a Comédie-ballet. This label indicates clearly that we are not to expect a 'comedy' in the generally accepted modern sense of the term. The author has deliberately chosen a label which was used in the seventeenth century to designate a freer kind of divertissement, for instance some of the plays of Molière in which music and dancing contributed to the total effect.

The characters are all caricatures of themselves. There is a sense in which they are moving on strings (for instance, when some of the characters are led onto the stage by the Musician) with Anouilh performing the role of puppet master. The theatrical effect may be seen as similar to the work of Pirandello.

Anouilh also has a fondness for using unusual names for his characters. Some are just plain idiosyncratic, like Peterbono, whereas Juliette appears to have been chosen for its Shakespearean connotations. Lord Edgard (an alternative French spelling for Edgar) suggests a very English kind of aristocrat while Lady Hurf's name probably derives from the colloquial *urf* or *hurf* meaning slap-up or tip-top. Dupont-Dufort indicates a contrast with these aristocratic characters; both these names have a distinctly bourgeois flavour to them.

The play is set in Vichy, in the middle of France. As Peterbono says to Gustave, "We're working, lad. It's the height of our season." Vichy can be thought of like Cheltenham where people come to take the waters and the season is the horse racing season. Hence the pickpockets are here. The season coincides almost exactly with our production of the play.

Anouilh plays are fun to perform, especially for the principal characters since everyone is flitting on and off the stage rather than sitting waiting for a call from the Green Room.

The "Roaring Twenties"

After World War I the US economy expended with such a boom that this period became known as the "roaring twenties" Radio, gramophone records and Hollywood films popularised American music, dances and fashions in Europe.

European and African music had fused into the music of the time, giving jazz its characteristic ragtime (ragged time) sound. The French assimilated jazz and of course there are at least two world famous exponents of this musical form, Sidney Bechet and Stephane Grappelli. The Belgian Django Reinhardt was also a regular performer in Paris at the time.

The form of dance which swept round the world from its origins in South Carolina was The Charleston. This dance really epitomises the frenetic, extravagant spirit of the roaring twenties. It was especially popular with the flappers, whose Charleston outfits included swinging beads and fringes. The film star Joan Crawford was a famous flapper. Young women scorned the stiff corsets, voluminous petticoats and cumbersome skirts of their grandmothers. The dresses were low waisted and their hems were high and they wore make-up and costume jewelry. Large hats were also out. Lady Hurf remarks "Have you noticed all these little cloche hats everywhere? How absurd they look!" It was probably Henry Ford who killed off the earlier large hats, many with their ostrich feathers. How else was the modern woman supposed to sit comfortably in a motorcar?

Gabrielle 'Coco' Chanel set up her own fashion house by adjusting men's jackets to fit women. She also introduced her famous perfume, apparently using her favourite numéro cinq.

There was a new informality and classlessness for men. They no longer had to be gentlemen of leisure to wear a certain type of hat or a suit. An Oxford University student fashion for wide-legged trousers, known as Oxford bags, also spread to other countries in Europe and the USA.



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have to write. Inspiration? – a hoax fabricated
by poets for their self-importance.

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Cast

| | | |
|----------------------|--------------|--|
| Peterbono | } Thieves | Albie Minns |
| Hector | | Brian Stansbridge |
| Gustave | | Alec Walters |
| Lord Edgard | | Harry Tuffill |
| Lady Hurf | | Mollie Manns |
| Eva | } Her nieces | Alice Haine |
| Juliette | | Nicki Housham |
| Dupont-Dufort Senior | } Financiers | Alan Watson |
| Dupont Dufort Junior | | Paul Baker |
| Little Girl | | Hannah Stansbridge |
| Town Crier | | Ron Randall |
| Musician | | Mike Bailey |
| Nursemaid | | Helen White |
| Policemen | | Bruce Atkinson, Graham Buchanan, Ken Hann, David Jupp |
| Gardener | | John Carrington |
| Maids | | Brenda Atkinson, Christine Baker, |
| People at the Ball | | Adrienne Bath, Reg Bath, Clare Minns, Angie Stansbridge |

Act 1 In the Park at Vichy
Act 2 Lady Hurf's gardens

Interval – 20 minutes

Act 3 Lady Hurf's gardens
Act 4 Lady Hurf's gardens

Technical Crew

| | |
|-------------------------|---|
| Director | Philippa Taylor |
| Technical Coordinator | Ron Tillyer |
| Stage Manager | Angie Barks |
| Sound | Lawrie Gee, Tony Lawther |
| Pyrotechnics | Martin Clift |
| Lighting | Clive Weeks, Nathan Weeks, Steve Price |
| Wardrobe | Christine Baker & The Costume Workshop, Sandown, IOW |
| Properties | Ella Lockett, Gill Buchanan, Irene Shiell |
| Set Construction | Douglas Shiell, Bryan Langford |
| Front of House Manager | Derek Leslie |
| Ushers | Members and Friends of The Maskers Theatre Company |
| Marketing and Publicity | Jan Ward |
| Programme Design | Harry Tuffill |
| Programme Advertising | Alan Robinson |
| Box Office | Turner Sims Concert Hall |
| Poster Design | John Hamon |

The Director wishes to acknowledge the assistance of
Ingram's Opticians, Smith Bradbeer, Sarah Darch,
Amber Antiques, V.J Bartlett & Son, Watchmakers
and Hillier Nurseries.

Note: Members of the audience are kindly requested to place high backed chairs at the sides or at the back of the seating area so as to allow the 'lower' seated to be able to see! Also, please take your empty bottles and picnic leftovers home with you at the end of the show.

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Philippa Taylor – Director

This year's director Philippa Taylor is no stranger to Mottisfont having directed *She Stoops to Conquer* and *Ring Round the Moon* in past years and acted in *The Beaux Stratagem* & *Penny for a Song*. Her other credits include *The Rivals* and *The Provoked Wife* at Avington Park, *The Crucible*, *On Golden Pond*, *When the Wind Blows* and *Woman in Mind* at the Nuffield, *Amadeus* and *Seasons Greetings* at the Plaza Romsey.

Mike Bailey - Musician

Mike is musical director of The Madding Crowd, which specialises in the village band period. He also plays in a swing band, sings barbershop regularly, and leads the early music group Tambourin. For some years he was MD for shows at RAODS, including the marathon *Nicholas Nickleby*, *Lock up Your Daughters*, *The Lion in Winter* and *Far from the Madding Crowd*. This production is an opportunity to lean on the music of Django Reinhardt and the Hot Club Quintet, some of the happiest jazz ever recorded.

Paul Baker – Dupont-Dufort Junior

This is a fourth outing to Mottisfont, starting with a debut performance in *The Three Musketeers*, then the King in *Ondine* and Second, or was it First Robber in *Wild Oats*? He claims to have appeared in many locally filmed TV dramas – is there no end to his talents – but has yet to appear in any episode of *The Bill*.

Alice Haine – Eva

Alice is a new member of the Maskers making this her first performance at Mottisfont. She's had a six year break from the stage and used to be a keen theatre buff at school where she played numerous parts in school Shakespeare and musical productions as well as festival competitions. The highlight of her short acting career was a performance in front of the Queen where she wore an Elizabethan headdress which covered her face, forcing her to navigate blindly round the stage!

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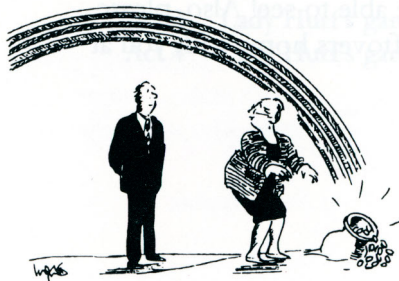
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Nicki Housham – *Juliette*

Nicki debuted with The Maskers at the Nuffield Theatre in *The Cherry Orchard* following a number of school and college productions which included Monica in *Daisy Pulls it Off*, Lucy in *Nania* and Goldilocks in *G and the Three Bears*. She says she is really enjoying working in the open air at Mottisfont, has never had to speak so loudly, and even thinks it is worth every gnat bite on the forehead and ears that she has suffered.

Mollie Manns – *Lady Hurf*

Mollie became a Masker in 1970 and has played many leading roles. Her favourite is Helene Hanff in *84, Charing Cross Road*. She feels a great affinity with this lady, if only because HH was once seen to bend down and stroke a suitcase, thinking it was a Red Setter dog. Mollie experiences similar errors, most notably (to date at least) serving a sink plug instead of a mushroom. Her dream would be to have played Mrs Doyle with the late, very lamented 'Father Ted'. Her sons say that would be type-casting. Mollie also directs with The Maskers including last year's production of *Wild Oats*.

Albie Minns – *Peterbone*

Albie has appeared in most Mottisfont productions since *Cyrano de Bergerac*. Memorable characters (he says) include Squire Sullen in *The Beaux Stratagem*, Reverend Chasuble in *The Importance of being Earnest*, Starveling in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the lecherous Mr Didapper in *Joseph Andrews* and Sir George Thunder in last year's *Wild Oats*. Next year the Committee has promised that he can play the young male lead in The Maskers outrageous production of *Hair*. (Ed. Dream on Albie!)

Ron Randall – *Town Crier*

Ron appeared with The Maskers years ago and only recently had the good sense to come back to the fold. Happy to play any part, he especially enjoys this role as he will be on his way home well before most of the rest of the cast have made their first appearance.

Brian Stansbridge – *Hector*

Brian has been a Masker for more than 25 years (Ed. would you believe it) and he has played the title role in *Tom Jones* and Laurie Lee in *Cider with Rosie*. He most enjoys playing comic character parts and Mottisfont audiences will recall his bawdy Eddie Mundy in *Canterbury Tales* and his memorable Bottom in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The previous time he appeared in a Jean Anouilh play was as both twins in *Ring Round the Moon*. This was opposite his wife Angela who was secretly carrying their third child Hannah – now making her speaking debut in this production!

Harry Tuffill – *Lord Edgard*

This is Harry's umpteenth appearance with the Maskers at Mottisfont and he has played more "men of the cloth" than you can wave a stick at! Previous parts here include Sir Thomas More in *A Man for All Seasons*, Foigard in *Beaux Stratagem*, Parson Adams in *Joseph Andrews*, Lane in *The Importance and Le Bret in Cyrano de Bergerac*, and the kindly old cottager in last year's *Wild Oats*. More recently, as he approaches his dotage, he finds himself type cast as a loveable old buffer, which he considers himself perfectly suited to play.

Alec Walters – *Gustave*

Alec exploded onto the acting scene at school with the definitive rendition of A Strange Beetle in *The Insect Play*. Spotted early by a Maskers Talent Scout his suave lean good looks have graced such parts as Jack Worthing in *The Importance of being Earnest*, Demetrius in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, The Duke of Buckingham in *The Three Musketeers*, Hans in *Ondine* and Harry Thunder in *Wild Oats*.

Alan Watson – *Dupont-Dufort Senior*

Since giving up a globe-trotting career, marrying Jenni, raising two lovely daughters and joining the Maskers, Alan has tackled some of the major roles in the canon, including *King Lear* (2nd Knight), *A Funny thing Happened on the Way to the Forum* (a Eunuch), *The Winters Tale* (a Satyr) and culminating in *The Rover* (the Bull). This is Alan's seventh Mottisfont show.

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