

Maskers Theatre Company presents
in the open air

The Scarlet Pimpernel

A play by Baroness Orczy Adapted by Beverley Cross

Mottisfont Abbey

Romsey, Hampshire

Courtesy of The National Trust

Wednesday 16 July to
Saturday 26 July 2003

Except Monday 21 July

the scarlet pimpernel

was here



"Off with their heads!"

Last year the Queen of Hearts threatened it but this year, heads WILL roll! Those damned "aristos" are for the chop and only the bravest (and best dressed) man in all Blightie can save 'em...*The Scarlet Pimpernel*.

Welcome to Mottisfont and our twenty-second year of performing in this beautiful setting. For this year's production we are delighted to return to a bit of good old swashbuckling. Our last foray into this genre was seven years ago with *The Three Musketeers* and several members from that production can be seen in action this year. The appeal of Sir Percy Blakeney and his deeds of derring-do are widespread, for this historical tale has lots to offer: - heroics, double lives, mystery, romance, intrigue and lots of action as the revolutionaries wreak havoc in Paris and the English gentry come to the aid of their aristocratic French brethren.



We always look forward to performing at Mottisfont, courtesy of The National Trust. The Abbey is set amidst some of the most beautiful Hampshire countryside along the River Test. Originally a 12th-century Augustinian priory the building was converted into a private house after The Dissolution and has seen various adaptations and additions since. The grounds still retain the spring or 'font' from which its name is derived. The Abbey contains a drawing room decorated by Rex Whistler and Derek Hill's 20th-century picture collection, but the key attraction is the extensive beautiful grounds with magnificent trees, walled gardens and National Collection of old-fashioned roses. The National Trust at Mottisfont also offer their facilities for corporate functions and entertainments as well as weddings and other private parties. For further information see www.nationaltrust.org.uk

We hope you enjoy your evening and we thank you for your continued support.



Scenes

Act 1

- | | | |
|------|---------|-----------------------|
| i. | PARIS: | A Place of Execution |
| ii. | PARIS: | The West Barricade |
| iii. | DOVER: | The Dockside |
| iv. | DOVER: | The Fisherman's Rest |
| v. | LONDON: | Lord Grenville's Ball |

Act 2

- | | | |
|------|-----------|-------------------------|
| i. | RICHMOND: | Blakeney's Residence |
| ii. | DOVER: | The Dockside |
| iii. | PARIS: | A Place of Execution |
| iv. | CALAIS: | The Lion d'Or |
| v. | PARIS: | Robespierre's Residence |

There will be one interval of about 20 minutes.
Refreshments are available courtesy of the National Trust. ☒



PLEASE MAY WE REMIND YOU TO SWITCH OFF YOUR MOBILE PHONES.



Cast

<i>Sir Percy Blakeney - The Scarlet Pimpernel</i>	Martin Humphrey
<i>Marguerite Blakeney</i>	Susannah Lawther
<i>Chauvelin</i>	Matt Avery
<i>Lord Anthony Dewhurst</i>	Harry Tuffill
<i>Sir Andrew ffoulkes</i>	Andrew Wolfe
<i>The Prince of Wales/Priest/League of Pimpernel/Mob</i>	Brian Stansbridge
<i>Armand St Just/Mob</i>	Peter Taylor
<i>Suzanne de Tournai/Mob</i>	Hannah Stansbridge
<i>Brogard/Mob</i>	Ken Hann
<i>Lambert</i>	Patrick Stevens
<i>Citizen Captain</i>	Richard Hackett
<i>Lord Grenville/Soldier</i>	Tony Austin
<i>Jellyband/Mob</i>	Hazel Burrows
<i>Sally/Princesse Blanche de Vaugard*/Mob</i>	Isobel Morse
<i>Robespierre/Ball Guest/Mob</i>	Ian Morley
<i>Knitters: -</i>	Jo Young Angie Stansbridge Sarah Lynn
<i>Guillotine Sergeant/Ball Guest</i>	Paul Baker
<i>Executioner/Sailor/Mob</i>	Matthew Tuffill
<i>Comtesse Emile de Grignon/Philips/Mob</i>	Hannah Dutton
<i>Comte de Fayence*/League of Pimpernel/Messenger</i>	Alec Walters
<i>Comte de Tournai/Mob</i>	Bruce Atkinson
<i>Comtesse de Tournai/Mob</i>	Brenda Atkinson
<i>Signorina Bosca/Soldier</i>	Lyn Austin
<i>Comtesse de Villefranche*/Ball Guest/Mob</i>	Shona Lupton
<i>Henriette Bavay*/Sansculottes/Flunkey</i>	Joanna Iacovou
<i>Abbé of Montbazou*/Mob</i>	Jan Ward
<i>Ball Guest/Mob</i>	Mollie Manns
<i>Ball Guest/Mob</i>	Sandra Thibault
<i>Sailor (sings)/Mob</i>	David Jupp
<i>Sansculottes/Ball Guest</i>	Christine Baker
<i>Sansculottes/Mob</i>	Gill Morse
<i>Mob</i>	Jez Minns, Ron Randall, Alex Austin, David Pike

* = executed



Crew

<i>Director</i>	Alec Walters
<i>Assistant Director</i>	Brian Stansbridge
<i>Production Manager</i>	Christine Baker
<i>Stage Manager</i>	Helen White
<i>Assistant Stage Manager</i>	Emma Carrington
<i>Lighting and Special Effects</i>	Tony Lawther
<i>Assisted by</i>	Tom Huns, Ivan White, Julia Campone, Nathan Weeks, Clive Weeks, Greg White
<i>Sound</i>	Angie Barks
<i>Assisted by</i>	Martin Clift, Lawrie Gee, Jai Mitchell, Ralph Bateman, Simon Proctor, Nick Browne
<i>Props</i>	Ella Lockett, Emma Carrington
<i>Costumes</i>	Serena Brown
<i>Set Design</i>	John Carrington
<i>Carpentry</i>	David Jupp
<i>Assisted by</i>	Alan Baker, Graham Buchanan
<i>Guillotine</i>	Roger Lockett
<i>Set Painting</i>	John Carrington, Helen White
<i>Front of House</i>	Julia Jupp, Alan Watson, Julie Baker
<i>Marketing/publicity</i>	Jan Ward
<i>Poster design</i>	John Hamon
<i>Programme</i>	Helen White

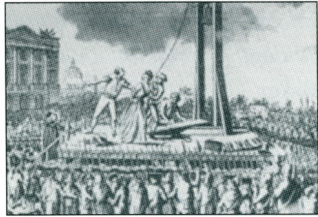
Acknowledgements: -

Bristol Costume Services, Haslemere Wardrobe, Sandown Costume Workshop, Torbay Costume Hire; Wigs by Showbiz, Southampton; fight direction by Paul Benzing; RBS Scaffolding Limited, Southampton; weaponry - Baptys of London; snuff - Paul Green of Greens of Leeds Cigar Merchants and Tobacconists; wattle fences and farm implements - Manor Farm Country Park, Brook Lane, Botley; hurdles - Steve Stefanczuk, Old Alresford; handcart - Ian Abrahams at Bitterne Local History Society; tumbrell - Rodger of Botley; printing - Cedar Press; wooden bowling balls - Norman Woodford "With very best wishes to the Maskers Theatre Company for a successful production of *The Scarlet Pimpernel* from Southampton County Bowling Club (est. 1889)"; caps and guillotined heads - Sarah Spencer; help with costume alterations - Kate Ward; photography by Clive Weeks; music composition (*Eldorado*) - Mark Ponsford; keyboard (*Tom Bowling*) - Belinda Drew; chair - Larry Bartel; and all those, here unsung, who have lent a hand with this production, many thanks indeed.

Finally, The Maskers Theatre Company would like to extend thanks to Barry Futter and members of the National Trust staff at Mottisfont for their continued support and assistance throughout the rehearsal period and the run of the show.



"Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité, sinon, La Mort!"



The play takes place in 1792 when ground was being set for the establishment of a Republic in France and the removal of any enemies of "the people". From 1789, when they stormed the Bastille (in what was more of a symbolic action than a bid to free the prisoners, for there were only seven in there at the time!), revolution was seen by "the mob" as a means of revenge against the hated nobility (many of whom fled to England) and the absolute power of the monarchy. While the nobles and clergy enjoyed power and privilege, the majority of the people paid most of the taxes and had virtually no say in the running of the country. Social injustice and economic distress was to culminate in one of the most bloody and terrifying revolutions in the history of Western civilisation. The Reign of Terror began with the September massacres of 1792. The vicious slaughter continued under the leadership of Robespierre and early in the following year King Louis XVI was executed. Thousands were killed as any opposition to The Terror was crushed; even those who had masterminded the damning of the aristocrats were not spared. The Terror ended in 1794, and in 1795 the middle class came to power under a scandalous republican government known as The Directory which was finally overthrown by Napoleon in 1799.

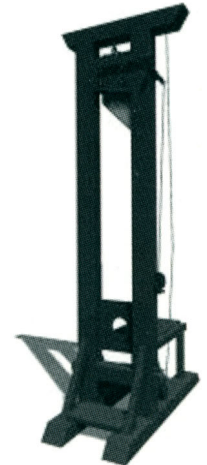


Madame La Guillotine

The definitive symbol of the French Revolution, this formidable lady was the result of a decision to consolidate the many forms of capital punishment which existed in France in the Eighteenth Century. Step forward Dr Joseph Ignace Guillotin (Gee-o-tan) and his macabre machine which delivered decapitation in one clean chop and which he hoped would supply a more efficient and "merciful" death. Marie Antoinette termed it a "cumbersome scrap of flotsam that will never catch on"...unfortunately for her, it did. People even prayed to "Saint Guillotine" to save them from their enemies the aristocrats.

Dr Guillotin's original plans included a horizontal blade but he found that this was not adequately functional. In a cruel twist of fate he was advised by Louis XVI to make the blade come down at an angle, and as Louis experienced at first hand, this was to be a highly efficient alteration!

Originally it was known simply as "the machine" but this was later changed to *guillotin* (in honour of its inventor) and finally *guillotine* (in order to rhyme with "machine" - better for use in chanting). For the rest of his life poor Dr. Guillotin tried, unsuccessfully, to rid himself of his associations with this horrifying machine. The Guillotine continued to be used up until the 1980s.



(The Company would like it to be noted that while no Maskers were harmed in the test runs, several cabbages have, indeed, suffered for their art.)

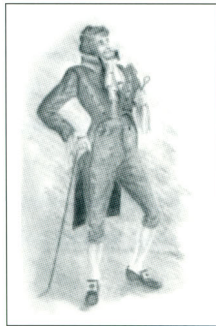


"What is a Pimpernel, Monsieur?"

In 1792, an agent of the French Revolutionary government, Chauvelin, comes to England (Revolutionary France's leading opponent) to seek out "that damned elusive Pimpernel", armed only with one clue - his calling card. This bears the image of "a humble English wayside flower" (from which the, as yet unidentified, hero has been nicknamed). Apart from that, this Englishman, who rescues condemned French aristocrats from the clutches of Madame La Guillotine, is a mystery. Not even his wife, the beautiful French actress, Marguerite St Just, is aware that he leads a double life, for in her presence Sir Percy assumes the role of a fop as, indeed he does in front of all others except his trusty band of followers - the League of the Pimpernel. Thus he removes all suspicion that he could be the most gallant man in England (although the suspicious Chauvelin keeps a watchful eye on him).

Sir Percy smacks of an early James Bond - dashing, heroic and immaculately attired. Cool to the core, he is willing to take impossible risks for sport and be instrumental in rearranging the world to suit his ideas for a more favourable one. He seems to have an enviable ability to get himself out of the trickiest of situations, giving his enemy the slip with what appears to be instantaneous cunning and dexterity for he is virtually effortless in everything he does.

While it is certain that rescue attempts would have been staged on behalf of guillotine victims, there is no evidence that such a character as The Scarlet Pimpernel existed. He remains, however, forever associated with this most turbulent period of France's history and one of fiction's best-loved characters.



Martin Humphrey, this production's Pimpernel, joins a long line of distinguished performers of stage and screen who have taken on the role of this Eighteenth Century super hero: - Fred Terry, Leslie Howard, David Niven, Anthony Andrews, Donald Sinden, Richard E. Grant, and Sid James, to name but a few...



About the author

Baroness Emmuska Magdalena Rosalia Maria Josefa Barbara Orczy (pronounced Or-See) was born in Tarna-Ors, Hungary in 1865, daughter of the composer Baron Felix Orczy. Educated in Paris and Brussels, she later moved to London to study Art and there met her husband, Montague Barstow, an artist, to whom she remained utterly devoted all her life. As a little girl she had witnessed a part of her father's family holding being torched by revolutionaries, forcing them to leave Hungary, although she never dropped the title of Baroness. Many years later, while living with her husband in London, it gave her the inspiration for the novel, *The Scarlet Pimpernel*, (which was initially a play on which she collaborated with her husband in 1903; the first production starred Fred Terry and Julia Neilson). After approaching over a dozen publishers, the novel was finally published in 1905 (it had only taken her five weeks to write!). It was an instant success, making her something of a celebrity, and has remained popular ever since.



Although remembered principally for this tale, the Baroness was a prolific writer, notching up nearly 70 works. Gifted at languages, she learned English at 15, and chose to write in English. She produced a whole series of books based on the Pimpernel (17 in total although none of these ever matched the success of the original) as well as several detective stories *The Old Man in the Corner* (her first venture into writing fiction) and *Lady Molly Robertson-Kirk*.

Ironically, during WWII, she experienced the darker side of life as an aristocrat, when she and her husband were trapped in Monte Carlo as the Nazis invaded France. For five years they were afraid to speak English in public and lived in the shadow of the Gestapo. Her husband died in this exile and she in London in 1947 shortly after the publication of her autobiography.

By all accounts, Baroness Orczy was a colourful character; witty, flamboyant and charming. She was always immaculately dressed and welcomed at the highest courts of Europe. It is quite possible that she modelled the character of Lady Blakeney on herself, and possibly a little of Sir Percy too, thus immortalised in one of fiction's best known characters.



Would you like to join us?

The Maskers Theatre Company was founded in 1968. Several hundred productions (large and small) later we are firmly established as one of the South's leading amateur groups. We are always pleased to welcome new members. Alternatively you may join the Friends of the Maskers in order that you can be kept up to date with advance notice of all our productions.



If you are interested in joining us as a full member or as a Friend, please contact our Membership Secretary, Betty Riggs on 023 80472619 or see our website: www.maskers.org.uk for further information.



Forthcoming Maskers Productions

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By **PETER WHELAN**

Directed by **SHEANA CARRINGTON**

The Maskers Studio, Southampton, **21st - 25th October 2003**

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4 cabaret dinners, December tba

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Directed by **KEN SPENCER**

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By **HAROLD PINTER**

Directed by **RON STANNARD**

The Maskers Studio, Southampton, **23rd - 27th March 2004**

The Merry Wives of Windsor

By **WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE**

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