

THE MASKERS THEATRE COMPANY

KENNETH GRAHAME'S

The Wind in the Willows

ADAPTED BY ALAN BENNETT
DIRECTED BY SHEANA CARRINGTON

IN THE OPEN AIR AT
MOTTISFONT ABBEY
COURTESY OF THE NATIONAL TRUST

WED 12 JULY - SAT 22 JULY
2006

EXCEPT MONDAY 17 JULY

SUNDAY 16 JULY

SPECIAL CELEBRATION TO MARK 25TH MASKERS
PRODUCTION AT MOTTISFONT ABBEY



25 YEARS AT MOTTISFONT – A PERSONAL MEMORY



I was delighted to be asked to contribute an item for the programme of our 25th Anniversary production (cue trumpets). As Chairman for 30 of the 36 years of the Company's existence, and as a major contributor to our annual visits to the delights of the greensward, I found that on doing a bit of research (and a lot of mind search) that I have been artistically involved in 21 of our 25 productions at the Abbey. My memories of the delightful evenings abound, some sharper than others. I'm sure

that if you bring down a passing actor, or consult with one of the members of our regular audiences, they would produce a completely different list – please forgive me if I ramble through some of mine! Vivid in the mind are.... as Henry VIII, being strung up with garden twine into a costume destined for another actor (scars of the mind and body remain!)..... being dragged by the legs, 'dead', after a dual, through a patron's picnic and, in particular a Black Forest gateau..... taking on a double role after an accident to a fellow actor, and having to change costume and make-up, on the move and at speed, through and around the house (oh, to be that fit again!).

Inevitably, one is often asked to choose an especial favourite. Here they are in reverse order: 'A Penny for a Song' – ideally set on one façade of a country house, upstairs and downstairs, featuring a Napoleonic Dad's Army, complete with a sentry tower. The actor stayed on watch all evening, taking even his bow in situ..... a 1920's 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' – forced to place away from home, scaffolding covering the house, the Plane tree provided a fabulous backdrop – the magic of Mendelssohn, mechanicals, and boop-a-doop. And at No.1, as you might expect, the memory of Cyrano de Bergerac, and with it the opportunity to fulfil a 35 year ambition to play Rostand's tragic hero.

What will be included in the lists of future memories – hopefully Albert the Horse? – (both ends!).

Ken Spencer
A Founder Member of the
Maskers Theatre Company

A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Approximately eight years ago I saw the delightful production of Alan Bennett's adaptation of *The Wind in the Willows* at the Old Vic. On returning home I kept imagining this fantastic play performed at Mottisfont, with the setting of Mottisfont Abbey as Toad Hall. The River – of course - but would we be allowed to use it? The Wild Wood – the largest plane tree in England growing in the grounds - what could be a more perfect backdrop?

I raised the idea of *The Wind in the Willows* at Mottisfont with the Maskers Committee and members of the company, and continued to discuss and develop the idea over the next few years. Everyone seemed to agree that it was a wonderful idea. Eventually the play was released to amateurs – but then I had to wait so that it could fit in with my personal commitments. When I was asked to direct this year's 25th production, we were in business – at last.

Well, they (who ever 'they' are!) say "never work with children or animals". You could say that the whole cast is portraying animals, so that is one part of the rule broken. As for the children – that was double trouble! It is necessary to have two teams so that they can rest between performances, which is fine, but that means rehearsing their scenes twice - not to mention other complications! Then there was 'boat practice'. Keeping the boat upright and yourself and your costume dry isn't easy with dialogue to say as well (even though our 'Ratty' had experience of boating).

There were the logistics of organising a cast of 49 – with music, dance rehearsals, rehearsing in the pouring rain – just to mention a few problems. However – the pleasure of seeing all of the scenes come together was tremendous – all the hard work of the costume, props, set and backstage departments, especially the costume designs by Lewis Yapp which bring a freshness and quirkiness to the show, and complement Alan Bennett's script perfectly.

The company joins me in hoping that the 'Motti Magic' that we have experienced for the last 24 productions continues at this, our 25th!

Sheana Carrington
Director, *The Wind in the Willows*



Fight Arranger Paul Benzing discussing the plot with Sheana

THE AUTHOR



We are apt to associate Kenneth Grahame with everything that is rural and English, but in fact he was a thoroughbred Scot by birth. He was born in Edinburgh on the 8th March 1859.

When he was only five years old, his mother died of Scarlet Fever and his father, shattered by his wife's death, sent Kenneth and his siblings to live with his maternal grandmother in Cookham Dene, Berkshire. There is much to suggest that these years were the happiest of Kenneth Grahame's life.

All through his adult life this exiled Scot never strayed from the soft hills and rich soil of Berkshire. At the age of eight years he was sent to St Edward's, Oxford. He was keen to attend Oxford College but he failed to reckon the financial cost involved. His family, namely his uncle, refused to support him, and he was nominated for clerkship at the Bank of England. During this time he began to write, publishing several children's stories, including his famous short story *The Reluctant Dragon*.

At the age of 40 he met and married Elspeth Thompson. She was a formidable woman with a very strong personality. They honeymooned in Fowey, Cornwall, where Grahame had made friends with Arthur Quiller Couch a few years before. He was a regular visitor and liked nothing more than 'messaging about in boats'. Many readers have surmised whether it was Fowey or Cookham Dene that *The Wind in the Willows* was based on – a bit of both, one suspects.

Their marriage, although not a happy one, produced a son, Alistair, or 'mouse' as everyone called him. He was visually impaired and Elspeth convinced herself and others that he was a brilliant scholar and put enormous pressures on the child. During this time Grahame created the character of Toad to amuse his young son and wrote it in the form of letters to be read as bedtime stories. In 1907 Kenneth Grahame retired from the Bank, and in 1908 *The Wind in the Willows* was published. Ironically Alistair went on to be an undergraduate at Oxford. Tragically he was to take his life, although it was never proved. He was found dead by a railway line. After his son's death Grahame became something of a recluse, and lived quietly by his beloved Thames until his death in 1932.

ALAN BENNETT



Alan Bennett's original adaptation of *The Wind in the Willows* opened at the National's Olivier Theatre on 12th December 1990. Alan Bennett states in his introduction to the script, "I have tried to do a faithful adaptation of the book, while at the same time, not being sure what a faithful adaptation is! One that remains true to the spirit of the book, most people would say."

It's hard to pigeonhole Alan Bennett, and correspondingly easy to undervalue his achievements. Although one of the most recognisable writers of his generation, his unassumingly owlish persona and fondness for self-deprecation has created the impression of a loveably eccentric minor talent, whose amusingly droll plays about elderly Northern women and fussy secretaries are merely one step up from sitcom.

Born on 9th May 1934 in Armley, Leeds, the son of a butcher, Bennett grew up surrounded by gossiping Yorkshire women, which made an indelible impression on him, as did regular holidays to coastal resorts like Morecombe. Winning an Oxford scholarship, he spent the 1950s preparing for a career as a medieval historian, until his increasing fondness for appearing on stage culminated in a legendary collaboration with Peter Cook, Dudley Moore and Jonathan Miller. *Beyond the Fringe* (1960) did more than anything to revolutionise British satire, moving it from Goonish surrealism towards pointed, often controversial political comment.

His prolific output has stretched to nineteen individual television plays, four television series and three cinema films, together with numerous stage works, short stories, assorted journalism and his inimitable diaries.

In June of this year *The History Boys* by Alan Bennett won a total of six Tony Awards. Not since Arthur Miller's seminal play *Death of a Salesman* triumphed in 1949 has a single drama stormed the Tony Awards so decisively.

THE WIND IN THE WILLOWS

BY KENNETH GRAHAME

CAST

Narrator	David Pike
The River Bank	
Mole	Matt Avery
Rat	Philip de Grouchy
Toad	Johnny Carrington
Badger	John Souter
Otter	Martin Caveney
Portley – a young otter	Holly Ryan, Georgia Humphrey
Albert - a horse	Ken Spencer
Tommy – a hedgehog	Daniel Mackney, Lydia Caveney
Billy – a hedgehog	Georgia Griffiths, Phoebe Blandford
Rabbits	Brenda Atkinson, Moyra Allen, Rae Kibble, Sarah Murdoch, Ron Randall, Jo Welch, Alan Watson, Anna Carrington
Hedgehogs	Bruce Atkinson, Richard Hackett
Squirrels	David Collis, Graham Skinner, Nichola Caveney, Charlotte Webb
Field Mice & small rabbits	Abigail Caveney, Lydia Caveney, Phoebe Blandford, Cicely Blandford, Hermione 'Fizz' Blandford, Georgia Humphrey, Anna Carrington, Mia Carrington, Holly Ryan, Daniel Mackney, Georgia Griffiths, Chloe Sensier, Olivia Thomas, Kirsty Figuera, Sophie Figuera, Thomas Welch, William Carrington, Lola Gerrard
The Wild Wood	
Chief Weasel	Adam Taussik
Weasel Norman	Paul Baker
Weasel	Sarah Hedges
Stoats	Jez Minns, Rachel Thomas, Martin Caveney, Richard Hackett
Ferrets	Rae Kibble, Jo Welch
Fox	Sophie Carrington
The Wide World	
Mr Parkinson	David Collis
Motorist Rupert	Alan Watson
Motorist Monica	Emma Carrington
Magistrate	Harry Tuffill
Clerk of the Court	Moyra Allen
Policeman	Graham Skinner
Gaoler's daughter	Kate Grundy
Washer woman	Jenni Watson
Train driver	Bruce Atkinson
Barge woman	Avril Woodward
Gypsy	Nicola Sensier

There will be one interval of 20 minutes

PRODUCTION TEAM

Director	Sheana Carrington
Production Manager	Tony Austin
Stage Manager	Angie Barks
Costume Design	Lewis Yapp
Make-up Advisor	Libby Crawford
- assisted by	Lara Duncan, Jan Spiers
Wardrobe Mistress	Eileen Stannard
Set Design	Ken Spencer
Set Construction	Roger Lockett, Ken Spencer, students of Southampton City College
Riverbank 'Stove Master'	Brian Stansbridge
Lighting Design	Tony Lawther
Sound Design	Jamie McCarthy, Lawrie Gee
Sound Operator	Jamie McCarthy
Sound Reinforcement	Tony Lawther
Technical Team	Clive Weeks, Nathan Weeks, David Fawcett, Martin Clift, Julia Campone, students of Southampton City College
Properties Coordinator	Emma Carrington
Properties	Ella Lockett, Gill Buchanan, Liz Hill, Alison McCarthy, Jo Iacovou, Narinda Gill, Jenni Watson
Special Effects	Tony Lawther – PRESTECH
Musical Director	Pam de Grouchy
Musical Accompanist	Rosa Longman
Choreographer	Adrienne Bath
Fight Arranger	Paul Benzing
Front of House Manager	Geoff Cook
- assisted by	Pam Cook
Marketing and Publicity	Angela Stansbridge and team
Stewards/Box Office	Maskers Theatre Company
Photography	Clive Weeks
Publicity Design	John Hamon
Programme	Sandy White

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Yorkshire Playhouse for Toad's car · "Trigger the Train" presented by Roy Rogers ·
St. Denys' Rowing Club – Ratty's boat · Nathan Roe – rowing advice for Ratty ·
Southampton City College [Marine Technology] "The Barge" · Manor Farm Country Park
· Ian Abrahams, Bitterne Local History Society · Martin Humphreys – transport ·
All those who have taken care of the little animals of the River Bank! · The National Trust

Sightlines

"As to education, Badger was undoubtedly at Winchester and new College. Rat presumably went to a minor public school which had a headmaster who admired Arnold and Maurice, and Mole was perhaps a pupil at a provincial grammar school. One could imagine Toad enjoying a brief period at Eton or Harrow before being expelled".
From **Secret Gardens** by **Humphrey Carpenter** – OUP 1985

On reading *The Wind in the Willows*

"I feel I've grown up with *The Wind in the Willows*. I started off as Toad, poop-pooing my way around the countryside in a sports car. Now I'm badger and know his uncle the Archdeacon." **Roy Hattersley**

"At infant school there were them and us. They read Winnie-the-Pooh; we read *The Wind in the Willows*. We won." **Brian Redhead**

"For an actor, all the parts are lovely to play, but Toad is best because he's a show-of. For me it will always be an adults' book for children." **Bernard Cribbins**

"*The Wind in the Willows* is the quintessence of waterside Britain as it was even when I was a little boy." **David Bellamy**

"I'm surprised how few people realise that *The Wind in the Willows* is a deeply subversive green tract, and should be kept away from children at all costs. The persecution of Mr. Toad is extraordinarily offensive to all car-owning, horn-tooting, tyre-burning speed freaks, who are simply defending their basic human right to terrorise cyclists and pedestrians and to poison the atmosphere. Terrible damage could be done to this 'great car economy' of ours if our children were to be taken in by the anti-industrial whimsy of *The Wind in the Willows*."

Jonathan Porritt, Environmentalist

"It is the most delightful book ever written. I was about nine when I first read it on a little playing field in Wimbledon – I can almost smell and feel that day now. The book has never left me since." **Richard Briers**

"*The Wind in the Willows* brings sheer joy and contentment – all's well in the Wide World."
Leslie Phillips

DUCKS' DITTY

All along the backwater,
Through the rushes tall,
Ducks are a-dabbling,
Up tails all!

Ducks' tails, drakes' tails,
Yellow feet a-quiver
Yellow bills all out of sight
Busy in the river!

Slushy green undergrowth
Where the roach swim –
Here we keep our larder,
Cool and full and dim.

Every one for what he likes!
We like to be
Heads down, tails up,
Dabbling free!

High in the blue above
Swifts whirl and call –
We are down a-dabbling
Up tails all!

from *The Wind in the Willows*
by **Kenneth Grahame**

FORTHCOMING PRODUCTIONS

Greek

by Stephen Berkoff
Maskers' Studio
23rd – 28th October 2006
Box Office: 023 8055 1489

King Lear

by William Shakespeare
Nuffield Theatre
February 2007 – (date to be confirmed)
Nuffield Theatre Box Office: 023 8067 1771

Our Lady of Sligo

by Sebastian Barry
Maskers' Studio
April 2007 (dates to be confirmed)
Box Office: 023 8055 1489

Pride and Prejudice

by Jane Austen
in the open air at Mottisfont Abbey
July 2007
Box Office: 023 8071 1818

Full information can be found on the Maskers website
www.maskers.org.uk

If you are interested in joining the Maskers, as a full member or as a Friend,
please contact our Membership Officer Julia Jupp on
023 8044 6600, or see our website for details

The Maskers Theatre is a Registered Charity - no 900007

IN REHEARSAL



There's nothing quite like being
beside the river!



A very wet boat rehearsal



Chief Weasel in full voice



Fight direction for Toad, Mole,
Badger, Rat and Chief Weasel

If you would like to receive details of Maskers productions you can leave your
details on our website at: www.maskers.org.uk or fill in the slip below and hand to
any of our Front of House stewards, or post to:

Maskers Theatre, Unit 1, Emsworth Industrial Units, Emsworth Road, Shirley,
Southampton SO15 3LX

Name.....
Address.....
.....
Email

We look forward to hearing from you

