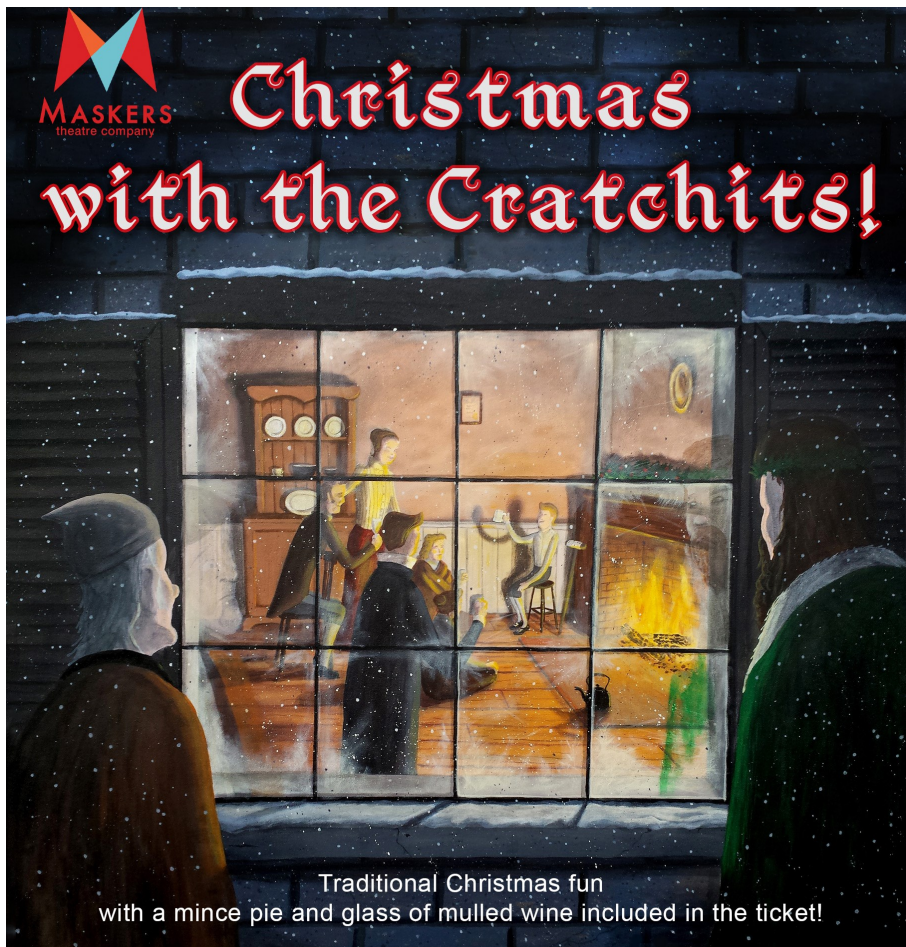


## OUR NEXT PRODUCTION



**MASKERS**  
theatre company

# Christmas with the Cratchits!

Traditional Christmas fun  
with a mince pie and glass of mulled wine included in the ticket!

**MASKERS STUDIO THEATRE**  
off Emsworth Road, Shirley, SO15 3LX

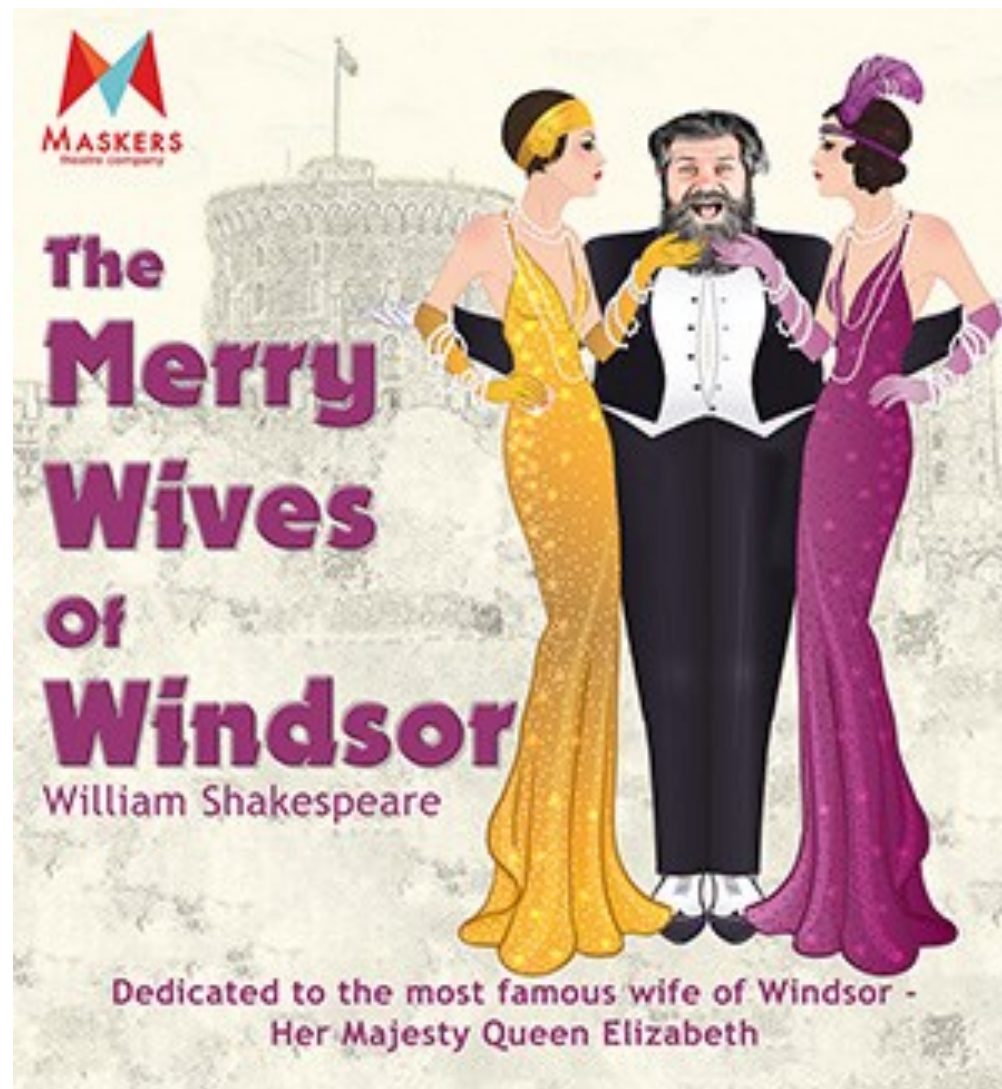
## Mon 5 - Sat 10 December

Friday performance at 8pm, other nights at 7:30pm

Full details and on-line booking at:  
[maskers.org.uk](http://maskers.org.uk)

Tickets £12  
Registered charity 900067

Telephone booking:  
0333 666 3366



**MASKERS**  
theatre company

# The Merry Wives of Windsor

William Shakespeare

Dedicated to the most famous wife of Windsor -  
Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth

Programme

17 - 22 October 2022

**MASKERS STUDIO THEATRE**

Registered Charity no. 900067

[maskers.org.uk](http://maskers.org.uk)

 @MaskersTheatre  Find us on  
**Facebook**

## Director's Notes

The ridiculous trials and tribulations of Falstaff, as he attempts, with stunning lack of success, to woo two middle-aged, middle-class wives in the heart of England, make for an irresistible comic plot. There are colourful characters, both young and old, all involved in the tricky plot.

I chose to stage *The Merry Wives of Windsor* to give opportunities to the company for both experienced members and for new and younger members with less experience in performing Shakespeare.

Rehearsals have been a little erratic due to illness and the holiday period, but the cast have worked hard and I'm sure you'll enjoy their performance.

I should like to thank all those involved in this production, especially my wife, Gill, for her constant support.

*Graham*



**Directed by Graham Buchanan** - Graham is a founder member of Maskers and has been very actively involved throughout the fifty-four years of our existence. A wonderful comic actor and director, Graham has been involved in every type of play and part, from playing Don Pedro in the first Maskers' production of *Much Ado about Nothing* in 1968/1969, through directing such shows as *The Taming of the Shrew*, *The Comedy of Errors*, *Lock Up Your Daughters* and *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*, playing parts in very many shows, taking care of Maskers' business and marketing, building and painting sets and generally being an amazing all-rounder, to playing a lovely cameo in *Sharks in the Custard* last year. We are delighted that Graham has stepped back into the Director's role for this production of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*.

**There will be one interval of 20 minutes**



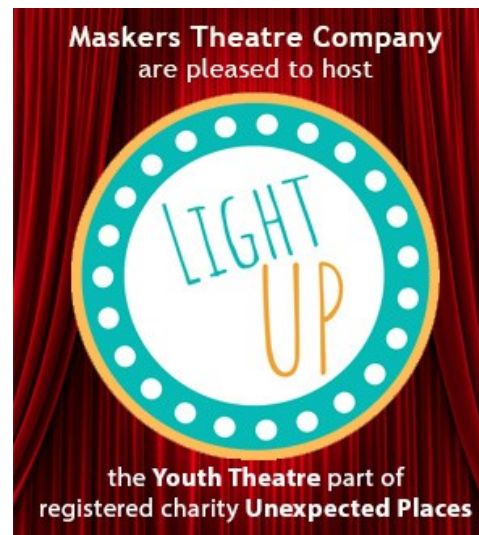
**We hope you enjoy our Show !!**

We welcome your comments on tonight's show for marketing purposes and also any feedback on your visit to Maskers Studio

Email: [feedback@maskers.org.uk](mailto:feedback@maskers.org.uk)

**Many Thanks**

**See you again soon!!**



**Shirley Juniors/Seniors**  
Fridays, 4pm-6pm, Aged 7-11/11-16

**Shirley Advanced**  
Fridays, 6pm-7pm, Aged 7-16  
[info@lightupdrama.org.uk](mailto:info@lightupdrama.org.uk)

Watch Maskers' website  
for details of :

**The Lion, The Witch  
and  
The Wardrobe**

Coming Soon

## The Production Team

<b>Director</b>	Graham Buchanan
<b>Production Manager</b>	Ken Hann
<b>Stage Manager</b>	Angie Barks
<b>Lighting Designer</b>	Clive Weeks
<b>Sound Designer</b>	Jamie McCarthy
<b>Lighting and Sound Operator</b>	Freya Mackay
<b>Set Design</b>	John Hamon
<b>Set Construction and Painting</b>	John Hamon, Clive Weeks Robert Osborne, Ken Hann, Maria Mackay, Donald Coe
<b>Costume</b>	Sheana Carrington, Susan Wilson, Gill Buchanan
<b>Properties</b>	Gill Buchanan, Alison Tebbutt
<b>Show photography</b>	Ian Wilson, Clive Weeks
<b>Admin Assistant</b>	Meri Mackney

## Acknowledgements

Our thanks to:

A big thank you to Serena Brown for coming to the rescue at short notice; altering a costume, with her usual skill and professionalism. What would we do without her?

## Coming in 2023

Watch the website for details of our exciting programme for 2023!

# THE PICTURE OF DORIAN GRAY

# Gormenghast

## For the Maskers

**Technical Manager:-** Jamie McCarthy; **Lighting Consultant:-** Clive Weeks; **Sound Consultant:-** Jamie McCarthy; **Marketing Team:-** Angela Stansbridge, Clive Weeks, Hannah Shepherd, Alison Buchanan, Robert Osborne, Meri Mackney, Abigail Caveney, Paul Baker; **Front of House and Box Office Manager:-** Chris Baker; **Photography:-** Clive Weeks; **Bar Manager:-** Meri Mackney

## Meet The Maskers



### 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 or coffee and a chat  
on the first Saturday of every month.**

**Saturday 5th November**

**Running from 10am – 1pm.**

## The Merry Wives of Windsor

*The Merry Wives of Windsor* is one of Shakespeare's so-called Garter plays. It was written in 1597 and was probably performed at the Garter Feast on April 23rd. The general opinion is that George Carey, the second Baron Hunsdon, who was one of the five newly elected Knights of the Order of the Garter, commissioned it. On April 17, 1597, George Carey was appointed Lord Chamberlain so it would have been appropriate that he should ask Shakespeare to write a new play. He had also inherited the position of patron of the company of players to which Shakespeare belonged. The company was known as The Lord Chamberlain's Men.

There is also rather flimsier evidence that the Queen "was so well pleased with that admirable character of Falstaff, in the two parts of Henry the Fourth, that she commanded him to continue it for one play more, and to shew him in love." So we find a number of characters from these other plays appearing once again, including Pistol, Nym, Mistress Quickly and Robert Shallow.

There are two aspects that differentiate *The Merry Wives* from other Shakespeare plays. The first is that around eighty percent of the text is in prose, rather than the verse that we usually associate with Shakespeare. The exceptions are Fenton, who always speaks in verse, Pistol, who appears to aspire to be a bit of a poet, and Act 4, Scene IV where the Fords and Pages are plotting Falstaff's final downfall. The second aspect of note is that the play is so contemporary. The Fords and Pages in particular may well be drawn from acquaintances of Shakespeare. We could even imagine that Anne (with the same name as his wife) may also have some of the characteristics of Shakespeare's older daughter, Susanna, who would have been fourteen at the time. In Shakespearian England, William and his wife may well have been contemplating the marriage of their daughter.

1597 must have been a turbulent time for Shakespeare. He was at his most successful as a writer and during the year he bought New Place, which was said to be the grandest house in Stratford. During the previous year his father had been granted arms, and so recognised as a gentleman. Between these two successes his twin son Hamnet had died, aged eleven.

Some critics suggest the play was written in fourteen days. We can imagine that Shakespeare collected plots and ideas for future plays so that once he started writing he had all the outline of the play clearly established. There is an earlier story by Fiorentino called *Il Pecorone* in which a young student asks his professor to teach him the art of seduction and then sets about the task and reports his progress to the professor. The professor suspects the woman is his wife, which it is. He follows the student to his house but does not find him because his wife has hidden the student under a heap of washing. With that plot in mind and the other major plot of the three suitors for Anne, Shakespeare was in a position to intertwine these two plots with his usual skill until all is satisfactorily resolved in the final scene.



**Doctor Caius** is played by **João Pinto** - After graduating as an engineer, João arrived in the UK from Portugal about 2 years ago for work and soon got involved in many different activities around Southampton. From playing live music with his guitar to pursuing his passion for writing stories, he has now, for the first time, joined the theatre and embarks on his first part in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* – playing a Frenchman!



**Fenton** is played by **Simon Burke** - This is Simon's first performance with Maskers Theatre. He has appeared in a variety of performances since 2014, including Christmas Shows (*The Eight Reindeer Monologues*, *Seven Santas* and *An UnXmas Story*), Paid Street Performances (*Mad Hatter's Tea Party* & *Beware of Pirates*) and traditional theatre performances (*Rozencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*). Simon was also the Director of *44 Inch Chest* which made its debut at Edinburgh Fringe Festival in 2019. Most recently Simon has performed at Chichester Fringe 2022 with his company Original Case Theatre in their original performance *The Tragical History of the Life and Death of Doctor Faustus*.



**Frank Ford** is played by **Ian Wilson** - Ian has been with Maskers since 2007 and has played a wide range of roles including the Fool in *Wyrd Sisters* and Leonard, the trainspotting pedant, in *Out of Focus* - no acting was required for either of these roles! Amongst other parts, he has played a lepidopterist in *Butterfly Kiss*, the barman in *The Weir*, Bolingbroke in *Richard II* and Samuel Parris in *The Crucible*. Frank Ford is only his second stab at Shakespeare with Maskers, although he did play Oberon for Southampton University Players. He has also directed a number of times: *100*, *Chair*, *Closer* and *Zoo Story*.



## The Cast (continued)



**Anne Page** is played by **Katherine Evans** - Katherine is delighted to be appearing in another Shakespeare production with Maskers, having previously played Hero in *Much Ado About Nothing* last year. Other roles with Maskers include Cecily Cardew in *The Importance of Being Earnest* (2014), Emily in *Our Town* (2014) and Eliza Doolittle in *Pygmalion* (2016). In addition to acting, she is a keen singer and has performed in a wide range of local musical and operatic productions. She has also directed several shows including Mozart's *The Magic Flute* (Pocket Theatre, 2017).



**Peter Simple** is played by **Daniel Chopra** - Daniel joined Blue Apple theatre company in Winchester in 2017 and has appeared in 13 plays with them before recently joining Maskers for the summer production of *The Three Musketeers*. For Blue Apple, he has appeared in *The Wizard of Oz*, *The Tempest*, *The Railway Children*, *Much Ado about Nothing*, *Frankenstein*, *A White Christmas*, *Family on the Frontline*, *Change*, *Pinocchio* and *Macbeth*. Blue Apple supports performers with learning differences to develop and present high-quality productions for the widest possible audience – performing and touring theatre, dance and film within a variety of venues around Hampshire and the southern regions. Daniel has cerebellar ataxia.



**The Hostess of The Garter** is played by **Dawn Gattrell** - This is Dawn's first appearance with Maskers, her most recent appearance being as a member of the community cast, in the premiere of *The Shadow Factory*, at the Nuffield Theatre. Prior to that, she was involved in the 'highbrow' Christmas pantos, at the now defunct Bent Brief pub. Her pièce de resistance was playing the eponymous hero of *Cyrano de Bergerac*, but she is equally comfortable playing the maid, or tavern wench, and she is looking forward to managing the Garter Inn, as well as to the comedic subtleties of the Shakespearean language in this particular production.



**Mistress Quickly** is played by **Sue Dashper** - During Sue's time in Maskers, she has been involved in a variety of productions including: *Out of Focus*, *Contractions* and *Metamorphosis* in the Studio and *Sitting Pretty* and *An Italian Straw Hat* at the Nuffield Theatre. Sue has appeared in many open-air productions and was part of The Watch in *Much Ado About Nothing*. Previous outdoor performances were in *Don Quixote*, *Around the World in Eighty Days*, *The Jungle Book*, *Anne Boleyn*, *Treasure Island* and *Twelfth Night*.



**Jean Ruby** is played by **Meri Mackney**- Meri has been a Masker for more years than she cares to remember as actor, director and just about every job going. When not onstage or backstage, she can be found running the Studio bar.

## Merry Maskers

*The Merry Wives of Windsor* is another one of Shakespeare's plays that Maskers have performed on more than one occasion.



The first outing was in May 1975, directed by none other than Graham Buchanan! It started in the Maskers' Bassett Studio and then toured to Salisbury Playhouse, Tudor Merchant's Hall and the Nuffield Theatre. Seen here: Ken Spencer as Sir John Falstaff, with Avril Woodward as Meg Page and Mollie Manns as Alice Ford. Brian Stansbridge played Peter Simple in this production.

Then, in 2004, the Merry Wives appeared in the open air at Mottisfont Abbey. On this occasion, Sir John Falstaff was played by John Souter with Hazel Burrows as Alice Ford and Maria Head as Meg Page—yes, Maria is reprising the role in this production and doesn't look a day older! The show was directed by Harry Tuffill. It is worth noting that a number of the production crew for that production are also working on this one.

So we come to the present day and back in the confines of a studio theatre—though with more space (particularly offstage) than we had at the Bassett.



Pictured here: Maria Head, Brian Stansbridge and Jill Desborough

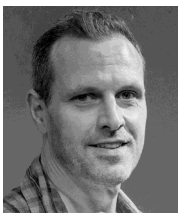
## The Cast (in order of appearance)



**Justice Robert Shallow** is played by **Philip de Grouchy** - A member of the Society since the early 1970s, Philip has played a large variety of parts in every kind of show, including several of Shakespeare's plays; each time, for some reason, playing an older character than before! Since our reopening in 2021, he has appeared as Leonato in *Much Ado About Nothing*, Lou in *Four Weddings and an Elvis*, Mark in *Yards Apart* and in the Christmas Show, *A Box of Delights*. He will also be directing this year's Christmas Show, *Christmas with The Cratchits*.



**Abraham Slender** is played by **Simon White** - After being inspired by watching a performance, from the lighting box at the Birmingham Hippodrome, Simon went on to operate the lighting at his school's productions and later developed an interest in movie special effects. Having not been involved in the arts since then, Simon decided it was time to re-explore his interests and joined Maskers in May. *Merry Wives* is Simon's acting debut, and he is enjoying learning the process with the friendly and helpful support of fellow Maskers.



**Rev. Hugh Evans** is played by **Neil Maddock** - Neil has toured the UK with Activate Theatre Company, working in schools throughout the country. He also spent two years working with Detour Theatre Company in NZ. Neil has performed a variety of roles including Peter (*The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*), Jonathan Harker (*Dracula*), and Jesus (*The Southampton Passion*). He has appeared in musicals such as *West Side Story* and *Half a Sixpence* and was a member of the community cast for *The Shadow Factory* at the Nuffield Theatre. Most recently, Neil played Stevie in the Maskers' production of *Ugly Lies the Bone*. This will be his second appearance on stage with the company.

Neil is excited to be fulfilling an acting goal by being on stage in his first Shakespeare play!



**George Page** is played by **Joe Hand** - Joe has been performing in Southampton for nearly 10 years, with highlights including stints as the Pirate King in *The Pirates of Penzance* and Tevye in *Fiddler on the Roof* with University of Southampton's Light Opera Society, playing Andre Thibault in Southampton Musical Society's production of *Dirty Rotten Scoundrels*, and co-writing and starring in Gauntlet Theatre's *My Life Closed Twice*. This is Joe's second show with Maskers after *Four Weddings and an Elvis* in February, in which he provided 50% of the Elvis and, indeed, 50% of the weddings.



**Sir John Falstaff** is played by **Brian Stansbridge** - A long-term member of Maskers, Brian has been involved in many shows, both as an actor and director. Recent acting credits include: Tim in *The Flint Street Nativity*, Miguel de Cervantes in *Don Quixote*, the Station Master in *Mistletoe Junction* and Long John Silver in *Treasure Island*. During his acting life, Brian has made an unintentional habit of taking over parts at short notice when other actors fall ill. He swears he didn't poison them. Recent directing credits include *A Box of Delights*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Mistletoe Junction*, *Room at the Inn*, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, *The Servant of Two Masters* and *The Comedy of Errors*. During the Covid restrictions, Brian wrote and directed a one act play called *Parklife*, which we performed in parks and open spaces around Southampton. He has also written a short play about the Cratchit family which will be part of our Christmas show this year.



**Pistol** is played by **Liam Willat** - This is Liam's first production with Maskers. Previously, Liam has performed in a variety of shows, including the lead role in *44 Inch chest* performed at the Edinburgh fringe festival. He has been acting since early childhood and is now happy to perform in one of the classics of Shakespeare.



**Nym** is played by **João Godinho** - After finishing his academic goals, Joao decided to stay in the United Kingdom where he would find multiple opportunities within the film industry. Having the chance to experience acting on stage was a challenge different from anything he has ever done, so he decided to give it a go.



**Mistress Alice Ford** is played by **Jill Desborough** - Jill has been a member of Maskers for over seven years and has been involved in many shows, both on and off the stage. In 2020, just before lockdown, she directed her first show, *Quartet*, at Maskers Studio and last Christmas co-directed the Christmas show, *A Box of Delights*, with Brian Stansbridge. This summer she assisted the director for *The Three Musketeers*. Jill is enjoying being back onstage.



**Mistress Meg Page** is played by **Maria Head** - Maria has been a member of Maskers for some time and has played a wide variety of roles including Goneril in *King Lear* at the Nuffield Theatre and most recently Mary Plunket in *A Bunch of Amateurs*. She also appeared in the Maskers' production of *The Merry Wives of Windsor* at Mottisfont Abbey several years ago. She is delighted to have the opportunity to repeat this role in such a great comedy.