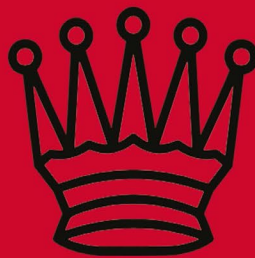


# MARY STUART

**with  
power**

**comes  
fear**



**a play by Friedrich Schiller  
translated by Peter Oswald**

**PROGRAMME**



# YOU AND CRI



It gives me great pleasure to welcome you back to the Criterion for this production of "Mary Stuart". Whilst it's always lovely to see familiar faces, I particularly want to welcome any of you who are visiting the theatre for the first time tonight - we hope it's the first of many!



The Criterion board and I are particularly keen to be able to welcome as many people as possible to the theatre, something that we aim to do with both the variety of plays we produce, and all the other activities which take place within these walls. As I write, we all will no doubt be worrying about the possible changes that may have to be made to our lives, so soon after the pandemic, as the rising cost of living puts pressure on our outgoings. As a voluntary organisation, we are not trying to make profits through the theatre, but to create opportunities for people to be involved in something they love and enjoy. The theatre has a history of creating life-long friendships and some even stronger vows - and I'll also take this opportunity to congratulate Paul and Becky Cribden on their recent marriage.

I'm not going to wax lyrical about how great the show is - particularly as I am in it - but as Hugh Sorrell has pointed out in his notes opposite, it's so great to be able to finally present it to an audience. This was one of a host of plays which we were due to perform back in 2020, and it's so great that many of the "original cast" and crew were able to stay on board through to the actual production. Our next two productions "The Haunting" and "Alice", featuring a number of hopefully the next generation of theatre performers will also close our 2020 season! They are sure to warm the hearts of audiences, so hope to see you again for them.

So even if it is cold outside this autumn, and uncertainty reigns longer than Elizabeth I, you can be sure that the theatre doors are always open for some sort of business: show or otherwise!  
Jon Elves, Chairman.

For all the latest updates from the theatre, check out the website

[www.criteriontheatre.co.uk](http://www.criteriontheatre.co.uk)

# DIRECTOR'S NOTES

I came across this play around the time that the Criterion was putting on Anne Boleyn. I'd never seen it but when I opened the script, I immediately fell in love with its depth, its truths, its story and theatricality.

Both Mary and Elizabeth are trapped: the former quite literally in prison, the latter - in the more opulent but no less circumscribed court - by religion and politics. Never was the idea that the personal is the political more apt than for these two women. They were held to account both for those things they couldn't control like their sex and the circumstances of their birth and early lives, as well as for things they could - their choices about who to marry or not marry, how to prosecute their faith, how to rule over others. The mood at the time was febrile with religious division and power plays between the men who ruled the continent and the women who ruled, or thought they did, the British Isles.

What Schiller managed in this play was to bring out the strengths and weaknesses of both Elizabeth and Mary, the impossible positions they found themselves in, the unpalatable decisions they were forced to make. We know the outcome, but like all good tragedies it is the faults in character that drive the it: Mary's deep-seated anger and sense of injustice against Elizabeth's overthought, sometimes overwrought politicking. Whereas Mary was once surrounded by power-hungry men eager to prey on and manipulate the woman who could feed them - all of them doomed - Elizabeth now has to contend with the same thing. But she is canny; she plays her hand close to her chest and has learned to manipulate the men who seek to manipulate her, if not always with success.

A production of a different translation in 2016 saw Juliet Stevenson and Lia Williams tossing a coin each night to see who would play which queen. It was a schtick, of course, but illustrates just how much Elizabeth and Mary had in common.

This production has been challenging, inevitably due ultimately to Covid. The first lockdown put paid to the first attempt, reluctance to come out while the pandemic continued stymied the second. Third time lucky.

I am incredibly grateful to the cast who in challenging circumstances have worked so hard to get to the meat of the play, to understand their characters and the times they lived in. I am deeply indebted to the wonderful crew who have built and painted the set, dealt with my experimental lighting and sound requirements, sourced the costumes and props and managed the production. I'm particularly thankful for the support (and gin) of Anne-marie Greene during some testing times.

Hugh Sorrell, Director "Mary Stuart"

# The Players



## **Elizabeth, Queen of England**

*Deb Relton-Elves*

Deb has been with the Criterion theatre since 1992 where she started with a role in props then went on to act, direct, dance, work front of house and also did a couple of terms on the Criterion board. Deb also appeared in a few issues of Jackie and Blue Jeans magazines, with lots of boy troubles, in their photo love stories!!!



## **Mary Stuart, Queen of Scots**

*Leonie Slater*

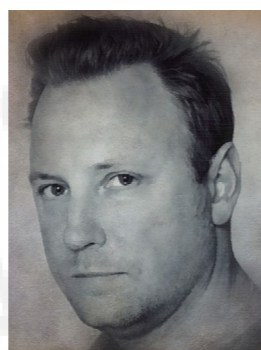
Leonie Slater has been a Criterion regular, since Picnic at Hanging Rock in 2017; Mary Stuart will be her 10th performance in a main house production. Finally, Leonie's long history of playing raging poshos will reach its natural conclusion - an actual Queen.



## **Mortimer, nephew to Paulet**

*Ted McGowan*

Ted McGowan is a practiced Criterion prop thief, having made off with several 'souvenirs' of his previous plays. His most prized possession is a wooden train whistle, lifted from the set of It's a Wonderful Life (although nobody wanted it anyway, as he'd had his gob on it every night).



## **Dudley, Earl of Leicester**

*Peter Gillam*

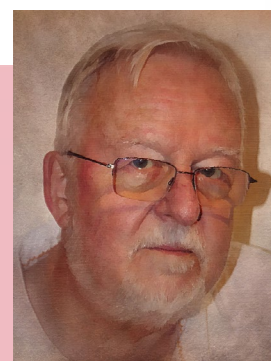
Pete returns to acting following his directorial debut of the previous production at the Criterion, "Midsummer". It is still unclear which is more nerve-racking! Away from productions, Pete plays an important role in maintaining the theatre website and enjoys regularly tweeting his new "bestie" Gordon MacIntyre.



## **Talbot, Earl of Shrewsbury**

*Andrew Sharpe*

This is Andrew's second formal stage role, following the Railway Children at the Criterion in 2019. He has extensive past experience of traditional English street theatre. Performs poetry, and with the bands Steamchicken and the Cellar Tapes. He's also active as a playwright in fringe theatre, with several recent and current productions.



## **Melville, Mary's former house steward**

*Pete Bagley*

Pete has been a member of the theatre for more years than he cares to admit to, having been cast in 67 previous productions! However, he is looking forward to working with previous colleagues and meeting new cast members plus welcoming them to the theatre.



## **Aubespine, French Ambassador**

*Nouri Beladaci*

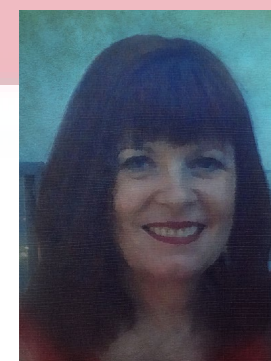
Nouri has played roles from Brechtian theatre style plays in Algeria on social issues to recently performing in pantomime: Dick Whittington as the Sultan at the Albany Theatre. Outside theatre, he is looking forward to representing the Great Western Region in the doubles Champion of Champions in Petanque in October.



## **Hannah, Lady Kennedy**

*Chris Ingall*

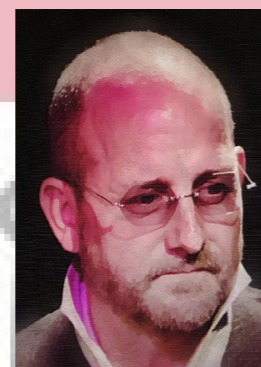
A happy return to the stage for me after a few years directing, most recently "The Gift", Act 2 of which recently won the Best One Act Play Award at the National Drama Festival. I'm enjoying playing gloomy, doom-laden Hannah. Scottish accent alert - she says 'murder' a few times!



## **Paulet, Mary's guardian**

*Lilian McGrath*

Lilian recently returned to the Criterion stage after a gap of over 25 years since performing in productions. When not acting she gives historical guided tours in the Midlands and Tamworth Castle. Lilian is also a skilled upholsterer and upcycler with a passion for reusing and repairing pre-loved items turning something that could end up in landfill into beautiful bespoke pieces.



## **Lord Burleigh, High Treasurer**

*Jon Elves*

In 1992, I gave a lift to the theatre to a friend who wished to audition for a show. I knew where it was because at 15 I had auditioned for the Youth Theatre. Somehow, waiting in the bar led to appearing in over 60 productions, meeting my wife, and holding the position of Chair since 2013.

I no longer talk to that friend...



## **Davison / Bellierre / O'Kelly / Drury**

*Georgia Kelly*

Georgia has been involved at the Criterion for most of her formative years, after graduating from the youth group. Having run her own production company, she has also been involved in the recent City of Culture celebrations, and is famed for being cloned on the Criterion Archive. Her alter-ego, unimaginatively called Georgia Kelly, appeared onstage just the once, in Skellig (2017).

# The Crew

<b>Director</b>	Hugh Sorrill	
<b>Stage Manager</b>	Alan Fenn Ann-Marie Greene	
<b>Prompt</b>	Erica Young	
<b>Wardrobe</b>	Pam Coleman Elizabeth Stevens Diana Slocombe	Nicole Firth Judy Talbot
<b>Props</b>	Sally Patalong Rebecca Mason	Erica Young Bill Young
<b>Set Designer</b>	Paul Chokran	
<b>Set Build</b>	Terry Rahilly Frances Dixon Chris Hernon Judy Talbot Michael Waterson	Simon Sharpe Mandy Sutton Paul Tate Jimmy Kay
<b>Set Paint</b>	Paul Chokran Linda Gregory	Judy Talbot Bridie Hernon
<b>Sound Designer</b>	Dave Cornish	
<b>Sound Operator</b>	Ellen Sharkey	
<b>Lighting Designer</b>	Karl Stafford	
<b>Lighting Operator</b>	Verity Gillam-Green Paul Harrison	
<b>Design</b>	Susan Schweitser	
<b>Photography</b>	Gareth Withers	



From July 17th to 23rd 2022, as part of the National Drama Festival, sixteen plays were performed by amateur theatre companies. This week-long theatrical extravaganza was the final heat of the annual National Drama Festivals Association competition, which brings together winners and high scorers from numerous drama festivals which have taken place across the UK as well as entries from Switzerland and Guernsey.



The Criterion Theatre, Earlsdon competed for the first time in 2021, where we achieved Runner Up in the full length play category with 'Queers'. This year, we were determined to up our game, and we took two plays to one of the regional qualifiers, the Lighthorne Festival of One Act Plays in June- 'Closer to God' by Anna Jordan and 'The Gift: Act 2' by Janice Okoh. Both plays scored highly, but we were thrilled that 'The Gift' received one of the highest scores ever given to a play at Lighthorne and got automatic entry to the final competition.

Given that the plays are the best at their regional festivals, the standard at the final is exceptionally high. We were therefore over the moon to go on to finally win the trophy for Best One Act Play, and Best Comedy Moment for our production of 'The Gift'.

The whole experience was thrilling and so rewarding. It is a competition, but within a very supportive environment, and the adjudicator Jan Palmer-Sayer gave such constructive feedback to everyone involved. You get to see all different kinds of plays and meet lots of interesting people, connected together through their shared love of theatre.

As a side note, our good friends The Talisman Theatre in Kenilworth won Runner Up in the Full Length Play category for their play 'Twinkle' which just shows how high the quality of amateur theatre is in our little corner of the Midlands.



We're delighted to announce our 2023 season; a season that is exciting, interesting and challenging in equal measure. We're really hopeful that there is something for everyone, including actors, backstage teams, front of house and of course, audiences!

Why not get involved and be part of a wonderful year of theatre?

February 4-11: 'After Life' by Jack Thorne, Directed by Anne-marie Greene

A group of strangers grapple with this impossible question as they find themselves in a bureaucratic waiting room between life and death. Encouraged by enigmatic officials, they must sift through their past lives to choose their forever moment. Adapted from Hirokazu Kore-eda's award-winning film, After Life is a surreal and powerfully human look at the way we view our lives, and a haunting, beautiful meditation on what it is to live.

April 1-8 -Festival Development TBA

This slot is set aside for creative collaboration with directors/teams in preparation for competition at Stratford and Lighthorne Drama Festivals. Hopefully this can see us reach out to wider networks right across the local community

June 17-24: 'Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street' by Hugh Wheeler and Stephen Sondheim, Directed by Debra Relton-Elves, Musical Director: Liam Walker

An infamous tale, Sweeney Todd, an unjustly exiled barber, returns to 19th century London seeking vengeance against the lecherous judge who framed him and ravaged his young wife. The road to revenge leads Todd to Mrs. Lovett, a resourceful proprietress of a failing pie shop, above which he opens a new barber practice. Mrs. Lovett's luck sharply shifts when Todd's thirst for blood inspires the integration of an ingredient into her meat pies that has the people of London lining up, and the carnage has only just begun.

September 2-9: 'Beryl' by Maxine Peake, Directed by Helen Withers

It was 1954 when Beryl Charnock met keen cyclist Charlie Burton. In those days they cycled in clubs and once Beryl started she was smitten, not only with Charlie, but by the thrill and freedom found on two wheels. Beryl was better than good, she was the best, and she was determined to stay that way. Beryl Burton was five times world-pursuit champion, thirteen

times national champion, twice road-racing world champion and twelve times national champion.. Burton was one of the most astonishing sports people ever to have lived, but she remains something of a mystery.

October 21-28: 'The Welkin' by Lucy Kirkwood, Directed by Nicol Cortese  
Rural Suffolk, 1759. As the country waits for Halley's Comet, Sally Poppy is sentenced to hang for a heinous murder. When she claims to be pregnant, a jury of twelve matrons are taken from their housework to decide whether she's telling the truth, or simply trying to escape the noose. With only midwife Lizzy Luke prepared to defend the girl, and a mob baying for blood outside, the matrons wrestle with their new authority, and the devil in their midst.

December 9-16: 'Arsenic and Old Lace' by Joseph Kesselring, Directed by Bill Butler

Mortimer Brewster is living a happy life: he has a steady job at a prominent New York newspaper, he's just become engaged, and he gets to visit his sweet spinster aunts to announce the engagement. Mortimer always knew that his family had a bit of a mad gene -- his brother believes himself to be Teddy Roosevelt and his great-grandfather used to scalp Indians for pleasure -- but his world is turned upside down when he realizes that his dear aunts have been poisoning lonely old men for years! When Mortimer's maniacal brother, Jonathan returns on the night that the aunts were planning to bury the newest victim, Mortimer must rally to help his aunts and protect his fiancé -- all while trying to keep his own sanity. as well. An uproarious farce on plays involving murder, Arsenic and Old Lace has become a timeless and classic hit both on Broadway and in the West End.

Full details of readings and auditions will be announced through the website and socials in due course.

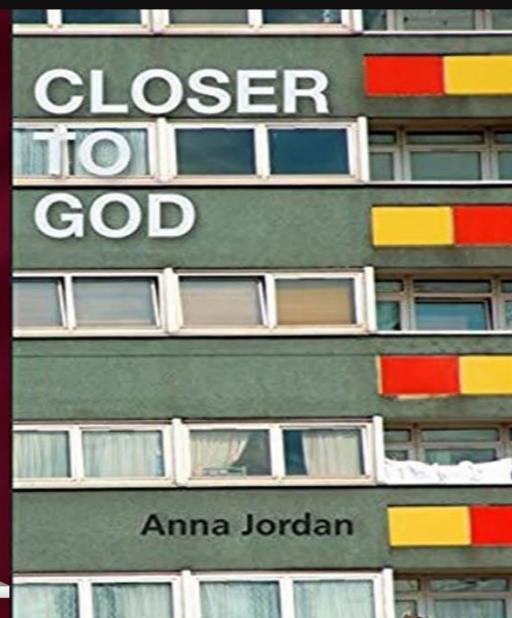
## CRITERION FRIENDS

We are so grateful to our current Criterion Friends who continue to give us small, and larger, donations on a regular basis to help us keep going into our seventieth decade!

You can join this list - there is real power in lots of people giving us small amounts on a regular basis. And you can gift-aid your pledge too. Gifting the cost of a double gin and tonic every month will make all the difference to your local theatre!

So what are you waiting for? Contact [friends@criteriontheatre.co.uk](mailto:friends@criteriontheatre.co.uk) or visit [www.criteriontheatre.co.uk/join/friend](http://www.criteriontheatre.co.uk/join/friend) to find out more.

- Alan Porter
- Mick Forey
- Ruth Miller and Bill Butler
- John and Kate Purcell
- Judy and Simon Sharpe
- John and Wendy Baxter
- Pete Gillam and Anne-marie Greene
- Chris Murly
- Jane and Keith Railton
- Zoe and Rob Wartnaby



Sunday 11th September - 5.30pm  
@ Criterion Theatre

We are thrilled to be presenting a double bill of plays which were taken to the heats of the National Drama Festival Association 2022 competition.

This is a special one-off performance with two intervals when the bar will be open.

**'Closer to God' by Anna Jordan directed by Gennie Holmes (20 minutes running time)**

Cast: He - Matt Sweatman She - Kelly Davidson

She is a young single mother. He is a seventy-nine-year-old man. They both live on the nineteenth floor of a council block. Isolated and out of reach, these two neighbours talk through the paper-thin wall of their high-rise flats, together in their loneliness. The play explores the private worlds and differences and connections that can exist between strangers, living side by side but generations apart.

**'Twinkle' by Philip Meeks directed by Stephen Duckham (1 hour and 30 minutes running time with interval)**

Cast: Harold Thropp - Phil Reynolds

In this monologue we meet Harold Thropp, a long-time, now faded star of the role of Pantomime Dame. Meeks describes the play as a revenger's comedy and Harold certainly has a lot to feel aggrieved about. This is the side to panto that the audience don't usually see and will intrigue and entertain both audience and those from the theatrical world alike. Meeks creates a fantastical world that is steeped in drama, exposing the crueller side of theatre's backstage bitching and the reality of TV's increasing role in pantomime. When you are no longer recognised, what lengths will you go to shine once more?

The Talisman Theatre won Runner Up in the Full Length Play category with this play at the National Drama Festival in July.



You can now order your drink and/or ice cream before you even get to the theatre via the Criterion Bar online ordering system.

Collect it on your way into the theatre and enjoy some refreshment at your seat. You can also choose to order for either interval (or both!) during the performance too.

Please be aware that cash payments will not be available at the bar itself - CARD ONLY.

Go to <https://www.criteriontheatre.co.uk/bar> to start your order!

## CRITERION DRAMA CLASSES



ALL THE FEELS

Spaces are available in the new year of Drama Classes at the Criterion Theatre which take place on Saturday mornings. They are open to children in School Years 3-11 (aged 7-16 years)

Using imaginative play, theatre games, visualisation and movement, role play and scripted action, students will have the opportunity to stretch and grow and experience the excitement of theatre in a relaxed environment.

There is no pressure and there are no exams in our classes.

Drama techniques help children to learn to cooperate and create together, hone their listening skills and feel more confident. Most important of all, it's a lot of fun!

Classes run on Saturdays 10:00-11:15 (Age 7-11), 11:15-12:30 (Age 12-16)

There are 10 classes per term for which the cost is £40.

For more information & to book a place email [dramaclasses@criteriontheatre.co.uk](mailto:dramaclasses@criteriontheatre.co.uk)

# Coming Next

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## The Haunting

Saturday 29th October - 4th November 2022

A spine-chilling play, based on several original ghost stories by Charles Dickens.

In an ancient, crumbling mansion, sheltering from the howling winds that tear across the surrounding desolate moorland, two men stumble across a dark and terrifying secret that will change both of their lives.

When a young book dealer, David Filde, is employed by a former associate of his uncle to catalogue a private library, he finds an incredible array of rare and antiquated books. But as a series of strange and unexplained events conspires to keep Filde from his work, he realises that if he is to convince his sceptical employer that the mysterious phenomena he is experiencing are real, they must journey together to the very edge of terror, and beyond...

'Great pace and terrific suspense... guaranteed to raise goosebumps' Maidenhead Advertiser

'Gripping... and fascinating too' British Theatre Guild



If you have any comments about your experience with The Criterion Theatre, please email us at: [customerexperience@criteriontheatre.co.uk](mailto:customerexperience@criteriontheatre.co.uk)

Video and/or audio recording of performance by any means whatsoever are strictly prohibited

Registered Charity 11614

We believe that it is important as an organisation that serves the people of Coventry to speak out against racial injustice and prejudice.  
**We want to be clear – Black Lives Matter.**  
We are listening, and we are learning about how we can serve our communities better together.

