

THE SECRET OF CHIMNEYS

Agatha Christie

An amateur production by arrangement with ORIGIN™ Theatrical on behalf of Samuel French Ltd

Director's Note

Having acted in several Genesian Agatha Christies over the years, when the time came to pitch for the 2020 season, *The Secret of Chimneys* was my first choice. Having started in acting for theatre and then directing film for several years, I was keen to take on the new challenge of directing a play and, knowing just how fun they can be, an Aggie felt like the best way to dive in. I welcomed the chance to direct a new show not only to the theatre, but to all of Australia and have fun balancing the mystery elements of theft and murder and Christie's masterful use of red herrings.

In fact, the play itself also has quite a mysterious history. Christie published *The Secret of Chimneys* as a novel in 1925 and then adapted it for stage, changing some details. The play was scheduled to open in 1931 but was suddenly withdrawn only weeks before its premiere without any explanation. It then faded into oblivion. Seventy years later a Canadian director found a reference to the play, tracked down a copy of the script in the British Library and staged the world premiere in 2003.

The Secret of Chimneys is set in England in the 1920s, a decade of significant social change. Women had recently been given the right to vote; they were cutting their hair, shortening their hemlines and insisting on social freedoms as never before. Some men accepted these changes easily, but others clung desperately to past supremacy.

So welcome to the ancestral home of the Caterham dynasty and the latest political shooting party. I invite you to sit back, relax and enjoy the Australian premiere of *The Secret of Chimneys*.

Molly Haddon
Director

Dame Agatha Christie (1890-1976) In one of her rare interviews Agatha Christie said "Once I've been dead ten years I'm sure nobody will ever have heard of me." Fortunately, she was wrong. She died in 1976 and is probably more famous now than she was in her lifetime. She wrote 76 novels, numerous short stories, and a number of plays. Many of her novels have been adapted for the theatre by other playwrights but the ones she adapted herself, or wrote specifically as plays, are particularly successful. Peter Saunders who produced her plays and Wallace Douglas who directed several of them both spoke highly of her understanding of the practicalities of writing for theatre.

Synopsis Of Scenes

Act One

Scene One: An afternoon in late September

Scene Two: 11:30pm the same evening

Scene Three: The next morning

Act Two

Scene One: The same night

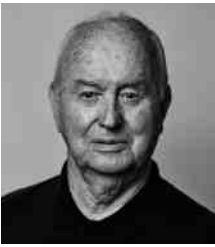
Scene Two: The following evening

MOLLY HADDON - Director Molly Haddon is a Sydney based director and actor. She attended Macquarie University studying media and later the Australian Film Television and Radio school (AFTRS) studying a post graduate course in Cinematography. In 2020 she completed the Directors Studio program at the National Institute of Dramatic Art (NIDA). Molly began acting at an early age but now works predominately behind the scenes in film, directing music videos and working on her own narrative projects. Having performed in several Genesian productions herself, Molly is excited to have taken on a new role as Director.

SUSAN CARVETH - Costume Design Susan has worked as the designer/costumier on dozens of Genesian productions - a few favourites being: *Ladykillers*, *Persuasion*, *Figaro*, *Under Milkwood*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *The Three Musketeers*, *Far From the Madding Crowd*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *A Man for All Seasons*, *An Ideal Husband*, *Witness for the Prosecution*, *Hay Fever*, *Murder on the Nile*, *Richard III*, *Frankenstein*, *Twelfth Night*, *39 Steps*, *Forsythe Saga*, and *Blood Wedding*. She has also worked for Opera Australia, the ABC and BBC as a costume coordinator, and costume maker for *Tall Poppeas* (Ondine Productions), *Opera Bites* and *Deadhouse* (Blancmange Productions).

IAN WHALAN - Lighting Design Ian has been working in Sound & Lighting Operation, Programming & Design for professional and non-professional theatres across Sydney and Newcastle for 30 years. His recent credits include: *Trial by Jury* (Opera Hunter / NTC), *Vicar of Dibley* (Theatre on Bruncker), *The Property of the Clan* (Constellations / NTC), *The Importance of Being Earnest* (Genesian), *Ghost Train* (Genesian). Ian's first production was *Corpse* in 1992 here at the Genesian and he has worked on many productions with our company since.

MICHAEL SCHELL - Sound Design Michael has been a member of the Genesian Theatre for over 40 years. A professional Sound and Lighting Designer, his Genesian credits include *Great Expectations*, *St Joan*, *The 39 Steps*, *Terra Nova*, *Frankenstein*, and *Sherlock Holmes: The Final Adventure*. Other recent Genesian sound design credits include *Pride and Prejudice*, *The Mousetrap*, *Crown Matrimonial*, *Spider's Web*, *Three Sisters*, *Our House*, and *Dracula*.



RODNEY STEWART - Tredwell This is Rod's 13th play for the Genesians; his last being *The Ladykillers* in 2020. He has also appeared in 11 plays for the Lane Cove Theatre Company; the last as Yurtle the Turtle in *Seussical Jnr*, in 2018. Rod also writes musical plays. His last two: *Devil May Care* and *Vicki* have been workshopped by this theatre.

JACK ELLIOT MITCHELL - Monsieur Lemoine Jack trained at the Stella Adler Studio in New York and with Physical Lab in London. His UK credits include *Mourning Overnight* (Edinburgh Fringe, Hen & Chickens), *The Changeling* (OVO Theatre), and *The Recruiting Officer* (Old Red Lion) in which he played Captain Plume. In 2018 he played Bertie Wooster in *Jeeves and Wooster in Perfect Nonsense* (Hunter's Hill Theatre).



SANDRA BASS - Lady Caterham Sandra Bass is a familiar face to many Genesian patrons, having joined the theatre in 1984. Her past roles include Lady Bracknell and Lady Catherine de Bourgh, both formidable figures, so she welcomed the chance to play Lady Caterham as a much more sympathetic member of the aristocracy.

DOMINIQUE NESBITT - Lady Eileen Brent (Bundle) Dominique first performed on the Genesian stage in 2014, as the young Pippa Hailsham-Brown in Agatha Christie's *Spider's Web*. She returned a year later to play Irina in Chekhov's *Three Sisters*. This production marks her return to performing after a brief hiatus. She has previously worked on theatrical productions with SUDS.



VICTOR MOORE - George Lomax Victor studied Acting for Screen and Stage at Charles Sturt University and has performed in productions such as *Cloudstreet* and the *Laramie Project* with various theatre ensembles across Sydney and NSW. He most recently appeared in the film adaptation of Helen Garner's novel *Joe Cinque's Consolation*. This is Victor's debut with the Genesian!

ABBIE LOVE - Billie Eversleigh Abbie recently completed a residency at NIDA (singing and acting studio) and undertook contemporary singing training at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music. Abbie has featured in theatre performances and an award-winning independent film in the UK, and is a trained voiceover artist. This is her Genesian debut.





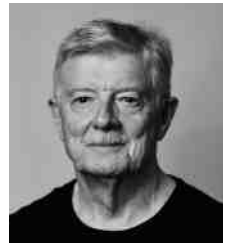
PATRICK TANGYE - Anthony Cade This is not only Patrick's Genesian Theatre debut, but also his return to the theatre after over a decade. Prior to his break, he enjoyed meaty roles such as the pyromaniac Kurt in *Fireface*, and the 10th Juror in *12 Angry Men*. Patrick is also a photographer and writer.

RACHELE EDSON - Virginia Revel Hailing from Brisbane, Rachele has performed in various Sydney stage productions including *Don't Dress For Dinner*, *When A Man Loves A Woman*, and *Death of a Salesman*. She acted in several short films and commercials in 2020 and is currently writing and producing her own short, set to film in South Australia later this year.



HAMISH MACDONALD - The Stranger / Boris Andrassy / Monsieur X Born in England, Hamish spent 10 years in his parents hotel in Edinburgh and the rest of his childhood on a tomato farm near Noosa. Now Hamish lives on the stage; he has performed in *Death of a Salesman* and *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*. He is excited to perform alongside the cast of *The Secret Of Chimneys*.

DAVID STEWART-HUNTER - Superintendent Battle David has played every kind of English toff in previous Genesian productions, but this time he's a not-so-posh copper. In his working life, David spent thirty years in advertising and marketing and then ten years atoning for his sins as a High School English teacher.



THOMAS SOUTHWELL - Herman Banks Tom has enjoyed performing in numerous student and community productions, including the Genesian's *The Unexpected Guest* (2018) and *Towards Zero* (2019). A fan of 1920's fashion and aesthetic, it's fairly unsurprising he has found himself in three consecutive Christie plays. Is he playing the murderer this time...?

Production

Director

Assistant Director

Set Design

Costume Design

Lighting Design

Sound Design

Production Manager

Set Construction

Accents and Vocal Coach

Stunt Coordinator

Photography

Graphic Design

Ticketing

Transport

Acknowledgements

Molly Haddon

Sandra Bass

Molly Haddon

Susan Carveth

Ian Whalan

Michael Schell

Roger Gimblett

Tom Fahy, Garry Bates,

Peter Curtis, Paul Gilbert,

Patrick Tangye, Victor Moore,

Members of the Company

Benjamin Purser

Scott Witt

Craig O'Regan, Patrick Tangye

Trudy Ritchie, Tom Massey

Tom Massey

Carlin Hurdis

Janice Mcleay, New Theatre

Crew

Stage Manager

Lighting and Sound Operation

Marica Fumanti

John James Leonard,

Charlotte Launay

Cast

Tredwell

Monsieur Lemoine

Lady Caterham

Lady Eileen Brent (Bundle)

George Lomax

Billie Eversleigh

Anthony Cade

Virginia Revel

The Stranger / Boris Andrassy / Monsieur X

Superintendent Battle

Herman Banks

Rodney Stewart

Jack Elliot Mitchell

Sandra Bass

Dominique Nesbitt

Victor Moore

Abbie Love

Patrick Tangye

Rachele Edson

Hamish Macdonald

David Stewart-Hunter

Thomas Southwell

About the Genesian Theatre

The Genesian Theatre Company celebrated our 75th year as a company in 2019! For 65 years we have been operating from our home at 420 Kent St in the Sydney CBD. We boast among our alumni numerous household names in Australian theatre and film such as Angela Punch, Bryan Brown, Baz Luhrmann, Coral Lansbury, Judi Farr, John Bell, Peter Carroll, and Nick Enright. We are also just as proud of the hundreds of other talented actors, directors, stage managers, set and costume designers, lighting and sound specialists, stage and production staff who have contributed to Sydney's unique little theatre. We are particularly proud of all our members who volunteer their time to work Front of House to help you enjoy your visit to the Genesian Theatre.

Over the years the company has developed into a theatre providing a training ground for young theatre professionals and a place where those who love the theatre can meet, share, and extend their knowledge of the performing arts. The Genesian Theatre Company is one of Sydney's most active theatre companies. In addition to six main stage productions each year we run classes, workshops, and many other activities.

The building which houses the Genesian Theatre Company was originally St John's Church, and dates from 1868. It served as both a church and a poor school until 1932 when it became the Kursaal Theatre, housing the Sydney Repertory Company. In 1938 it became the first Matthew Talbot Hostel. Since 1954 it has been the home of the Genesian Theatre Company which was formed in 1944.

The Genesian Theatre Company acknowledges the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation as the traditional custodians of the land our theatre stands on.

Membership

If you're interested in acting, directing, stage management, sound, lights, publicity, admin, etc, or if you just want to experience being a member of the group, we would welcome you as a member. You don't need to be experienced, we can provide training and can cater to different levels of involvement. Please see our web site for further information.

Coming next...

