



DON'T DRESS FOR DINNER

Directed by
Elena Stejko

14 - 28 November, 2015

The Director



Elena Stejko

Elena Stejko is a Russian born actor, theatre director and tutor of Russian acting technique. Elena graduated from Kiev University of Culture in 1991 and has worked in Russia, Brazil, Switzerland, France, America, Australia and New Zealand over the last 24 years. She was nominated for Best Actress at the NZ Film and Television Awards 2010, for her role in Russian Snark by Stephen Sinclair, and received the Best Actress Award in Roger Hall's play Shortcut To Happiness at the Fortune Theatre in 2011 and the Circa Theatre in 2012.

Elena has worked extensively as a casting director in NZ film and television. She is a founder of Actors Studio in Auckland, a school of acting based on the Michael Chekhov acting technique. Elena works extensively as a teacher and director with graduates students of performing arts at Unitec, Toi Whaakare and South Seas Film and Television school. Elena has worked as a freelance director for various theatre companies for the last 20 years. Earlier this year she ran a workshop in the Chekhov technique for Company Theatre and another is planned for March next year.

The Play

Bernard is planning a romantic weekend with his elegant mistress in his charming converted farm house whilst his wife, Jacqueline, is away. He has arranged for an agency cook to prepare gourmet delights, and has invited his best friend, Robert, along too in case he needs an alibi. It's foolproof; what could possibly go wrong?

There will be a 15 minute interval between acts - during this time refreshments will be available in the foyer

Director's Note

Comedy is the most difficult genre to direct. It is challenging to get it right. Farce is different to comedy with an emphasis on physical activity, situation and character-based humour with verbal wit. Farce is more akin to tragedy than comedy. The recipe for farce calls for a few essential ingredients including - mistaken identity, escalating complications and slamming or swinging doors for all entrances and exits. These are all necessary to keep the action flying. Place everything under intense time pressure and allow events to boil into a chase-like speed!

A story as seemingly light as *Don't Dress For Dinner* is deceptively difficult to put together. It takes patience, precision and perseverance to find the humour and ensure the viewer buys into the dilemma presented to the central characters - Bernard and Robert. There are a lot of farcical elements in this play - people chasing around and being slapped and falling over, but you have to keep it as real as possible. The situations and the settings are real - the people are out of control.

Casting is essential in this genre - it requires actors with impeccable timing. An easy trap to fall into is assuming that you can just cast comedians. However, the characters have to be believable and relatable in order for the viewer to be drawn into the seemingly implausible situation. For me such productions are a thing of discovery. I like to encourage actors to explore things and to work out together the calamities of the play. With this in mind, I want to thank our gorgeous cast for their trust, generosity and full engagement in the processes that helped shape the play. My sincere thanks also to the many others involved with this production. So, welcome to the theatre and enjoy a good laugh. There's nothing I love more than laughter in the theatre!!

The Playwright

Marc Camoletti (1923-2003) was a French citizen born in Geneva. He was an acclaimed artist and associate of the Societe National des Beaux Arts. His first major international success, *Boeing-Boeing*, ran for seven years and 2000 performances in its debut London production. *Don't Dress for Dinner*, also ran for seven years in London's West End.

The Cast- in order of appearance



BERNARD : Albie Smith

This is Albie's first production with Company Theatre, although he has been involved in the theatre for most of his adult life. He has appeared in many plays and musicals with Papakura Theatre Company including playing Jud Fry in *Oklahoma*. Some of his most recent work includes *A Christmas Carol* at Harlequin where he portrayed Scrooge. In 2009 he won the NAPTA best actor award for this portrayal of McMurphy in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*.



JACQUELINE : Donna Franks

Donna is thrilled to be back on the Rose Centre stage as part of Company Theatre's production *Don't Dress for Dinner*. She has performed with Company Theatre previously in *Shortcut to Happiness*, *Improbable Fiction* and *Murdered to Death*. With Elena Stejko as director Donna says that she is being challenged to develop her characters further than imagined. "It is very exciting! Theatre is my passion".



ROBERT : Paul Roukchan

Paul is a professional actor who has appeared in over 30 plays in the last 15 years with various theatre groups throughout New Zealand. He has appeared on numerous TV shows both as an actor and a presenter. Paul is also a professional stand-up comedian and has toured throughout New Zealand and abroad over the last 10 years. He is very excited at the opportunity to work with Elena Stejko on this beautifully staged dramedy with an amazing cast that is just too fun to work with!

The Crew



SUZETTE : Pip Block

It seems Pip's annual return to Company continues; this time as a confused cook. Having appeared with Company several times in shows such as Boeing Boeing, Brassed Off and A Shortcut to Happiness, she's feeling right at home! Pip says that each time she treads the boards here she learns so many new ways to develop characters and this has been no exception; Elena is thorough and fun in her direction, drawing out minute details that add to the nuances of the plot.



SUZANNE : Greta Lawson

Greta is delighted to be back on stage escaping real life and sinking her teeth into a juicy role – albeit without much on. This is her fourth foray with Company Theatre, after appearing as Brooke in Noises Off, a beautician in Calendar Girls and most recently a bevy of roles in Fawlty Towers. She's sure the journey has been made even more satisfying, and amusing, by working with such an exceptional cast and passionate director.



GEORGE : Ian Birch

This is Ian's second trip out playing George in *Don't Dress for Dinner*. However this time, under the direction of Elena, he says it feels like a very different experience. Elena has helped him find and develop different dimensions to portray a much more complex character. Ian has performed with Company Theatre previously in More Fawlty Towers last year and is an active member of the committee.

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| Director | Elena Stejko |
| Production Manager | Sherry Ede |
| Stage Manager | Michelle Smith |
| Assistant Stage Manager | Kay Williams |
| Set Design | Phil Davis |
| Lighting & Sound Design | Stephen Hood |
| Properties | Fred & Doreen Gould |
| Rehearsal Prompt | Michelle Smith |
| Set Construction Managers | Phil Davis, Ian Birch |
| Set Construction | Nigel Adler, Caroline Parker, Tony Sandy, Anne Rimmer |
| Costume Design | Cathie Sandy |
| Wardrobe Team | Barbara Farron, Ruth Chapman |
| Poster Design | Sacha Stejko |
| Publicity Team | Kathy Gent, Ruth Flynn |
| Photos | Kate Birch, Sherry Ede |
| Front of House Manager | Lesley Hawkey |
| Bar Manager | Alastair Fletcher |

Acknowledgements

Company Theatre would like to thank:

Kath Hair, Manager of the Rose Centre
Places and Graces (*for set dressing*)
Coopers Creek Wines

Past Productions

Company Theatre is the resident theatre group at The Rose Centre. We started in St Michael's Hall, Belmont in 1980 and moved to The Rose Centre in 1992.

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| 2005 | Caught in the Net Trick of the Light The Ghost Train | by Ray Cooney by Ken Duncam by Arnold Ridley |
| 2006 | Spreading Out Gym & Tonic Noises Off | by Roger Hall by John Godber by Michael Frayn |
| 2007 | The Bach Daughters of Heaven Funny Money | by Stephen Sinclair by Michaelanne Forster by Ray Cooney |
| 2008 | Someone Who'll Watch Over Me 'Allo 'Allo Boeing Boeing | by Frank McGuinness by David Croft and Jeremy Lloyd by Marc Carnoletti |
| 2009 | Relatively Speaking Tom, Dick and Harry Murdered to Death | by Alan Ayckbourn by Ray and Michael Cooney by Peter Gordon |
| 2010 | Who Wants to be 100? (Anyone who's 99) Brassed Off Music Hall 2010 | by Roger Hall by Paul Allen |
| 2011 | Pride & Prejudice Four Flat Whites in Italy Improbable Fiction | by Jane Kendall by Roger Hall by Alan Ayckbourn |
| 2012 | Fawlty Towers The Mousetrap | by John Cleese and Connie Booth by Agatha Christie |
| 2013 | Calendar Girls It's Just Sex Little Gem | by Tim Firth by Jeff Gould by Elaine Murphy |
| 2014 | An Ideal Husband A Shortcut to Happiness More Fawlty Towers | by Oscar Wilde by Roger Hall by John Cleese and Connie Booth |
| 2015 | Peace Plays Hay Fever Don't Dress for Dinner | by Kathleen Gallagher by Noel Coward by Marc Camoletti |

Next Company Theatre Production

David Williamson's

WHEN DAD MARRIED FURY

Directed by Max Golding Company Theatre April 2 - 16 2016

Auditions are at 2pm on Sunday, 6th December
in The Company Room upstairs at The Rose Centre, Belmont.
More information about the auditions can be found
on our website www.companytheatre.co.nz

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Left to Right Back: Kay Williams, Donna Franks, Greta Lawson, Paul Roukchan, Doreen Gould, Fred Gould

Left to Right Front: Stephen Hood, Ian Birch, Pip Block, Albie Smith, Michelle Smith.

Company Theatre would like to thank: Phil Davis, Nigel Adler, Alastair Fletcher, Lesley Hawkey, Caroline Parker, Anne Rimmer, Cathie Sandy, Tony Sandy, Barbara Farron, Kathy Gent, Sacha Stejko, Kate Birch, Kath Hair, Members of the Committee and all the Front of House Volunteers.

Don't Dress For Dinner by Marc Camoletti. November 14 - 28 2015

