



PRESENTS

THE THRILL OF LOVE

A GRIPPING DRAMA BY

AMANDA WHITTINGTON



DIRECTED BY

KATHY GENT

HELD AT

THE ROSE CENTRE, BELMONT

BOOKINGS AT

ITICKET.CO.NZ

FROM 13-27 AUGUST 2022



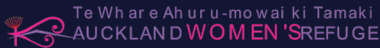


WELCOME

from Stephen Hood

PRESIDENT OF COMPANY THEATRE

Company Theatre welcomes you in from the winter cold to see its second production of 2022 – based on the thrilling true story of Ruth Ellis, who after shooting her lover dead was the last woman to be hanged in Britain. The public outcry following this case eventually led to the British death penalty's abolition. We welcome Kathy Gent back as director of **The Thrill of Love** after last August's stunning season of **Neville's Island** was brought to a very premature end due to "the virus which shall not be named", and we'll continue to move onwards and upwards this November with Kristof Haines directing the New Zealand premiere of Jez Butterworth's **Jerusalem**. It would be great to see you there!



In acknowledgement of the wonderful work of Auckland Women's Refuge to protect and support women affected by domestic abuse, we invite you to make a donation in their collection box which is in the theatre foyer.

THOUGHTS ON THE PLAY

from Kathy Gent

DIRECTOR - Thrill of Love

The Thrill of Love is a detective thriller but one in which we already know who is responsible for the crime, a thriller told from the perspective of the women who knew the irrefragable blonde bombshell Ruth Ellis best.

The question to answer is what drove this enigmatic young woman to kill her lover. "It's obvious when I shot him, I intended to kill him," Ruth told the jury during her trial. But nothing about her case, or Ruth herself, was obvious, and that's why her legacy continues to haunt people today.



The Thrill of Love challenges the stereotyped definition of Ruth as the peroxide blonde, vengeful lover; it is a play about the social perception of women in 1950's Britain and how this affected the justice meted out to them.

Seventy years on and Ruth would have been allowed the defence of sexual abuse, diminished responsibility and post-traumatic stress, but not in 1955 when the Home Secretary Lloyd George rejected an appeal for reprieve, made to him, on the grounds that the crime was one of murder, intentional, and premeditated.

The Thrill of Love is a gripping, evocative, and moving play about a woman whose execution still haunts us and which became a defining step towards the abolition of the death penalty in the UK in 1964. It's also a timeless story about obsession, crimes of passion, and the myth of romantic love.



Ruth with David Blakely



Ruth with Desmond Cussen, with whom she also had a relationship and who supported her and her son, Andre, financially.

The thrill of fame...

Vickie Martin was born Valerie Mewes in 1931 and, with her best friend, Ruth Ellis, worked at Murray's Club in Soho where Stephen Ward of the Profumo Scandal later met Christine Keeler. Vickie was also a friend of the Maharajah of Cooch-Behar, whom she met at a film party for *It Started in Paradise* in which she played a model.

Vickie had an affliction for car accidents and was killed outright in her 13th crash on the 9th January 1955 leaving Ruth Ellis devastated.



Ruth's claim to stardom was appearing as an uncredited beauty queen, alongside Diana Dors in *Lady Godiva Rides Again* in 1951.

Yesterday the girl who sought the bright lights made her last appearance as a glamour girl Her "stage" was the dock of the No. 1 Court at the Old Bailey. And her "act" ended in a sentence - of death.

Daily Mirror, 22 June 1955

RUTH ELLIS

tells her full story

- I realise now that I should never have killed David however badly he may have treated me. I hope my warning may save some other woman from falling into the same trap as I did.
- My first serious date became my first love, my first taste of ecstasy and my first experience of absolute and bitter misery.
- Mayfair opened its heart to me. I met many men... rich and entertaining men who showered lavish presents on me.
- Only a woman who had led a similar life to mine could understand how I was irresistibly compelled to do what I did.

MY LOVE AND HATE

begins this weekend

EXCLUSIVE

woman's
sunday mirror

THE CAST

Ruth Ellis
Jack Gale
Sylvia Shaw
Vickie Martin
Doris Judd
Prison Warder

Meg Andrews
Matthew Diesch
Catherine Maunsell
Rosheen Leslie
Natasha Ross
Freya Said / Vettinia Ross

SETTINGS

ACT 1

The play opens very late in the evening of Easter Sunday, 1955 at Hampstead Police Station.

There follows a series of flashbacks to Ruth's working life, first to The Court Club in Mayfair and then to The Little Club in Knightsbridge where she was the manageress and lived in a two-bedroom flat upstairs.

INTERVAL OF 15 MINUTES

ACT 2

The second half resumes with Detective Inspector Gale reading Ruth's letter to David's mother, followed by a flashback to Vickie Martin's funeral on 14 January 1955 at Golders Green Crematorium.

There is a further flashback to Ruth's bedsit after she was sacked from The Little Club.

Thereafter Ruth is in her prison cell and the visiting room at Holloway Prison.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*Centrestage Theatre Orewa, Dolphin Theatre, The Patriot Devonport,
Devonport Museum, Elena Stejko, Suzanne Lynch*

MEET THE CAST



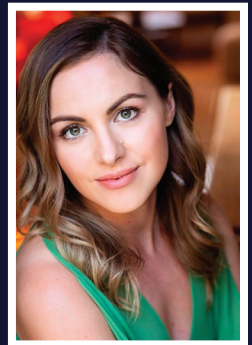
KATHY GENT
Director

Kathy's passion is directing and has been since university days when she directed university revues, then as a teacher directing school productions and as a WRNS Officer, award-winning plays and pantomimes in Royal Navy competitions. During ten years with Putney Players in London her favourite productions were *Cabaret*, *Stepping Out*, *When we are Married*, *Bedroom Farce*, *Rebecca* and *A Chorus of Disapproval*. After directing a run of fifteen dramas and comedies for Company Theatre, she has very much enjoyed getting to grips with the essence of Ruth Ellis and her story and staging Amanda Whittington's vision for the play. She has much respect for the experienced and talented actors and crew who have worked hard to create this compelling production.

"It has been a joy to work with a cast as keen as I to delve into the fascinating story of Ruth Ellis and explore her place in English history as strengthening support for the abolition of the death penalty ten years later. My heartfelt thanks to the wonderfully hardworking crew for contributing to the film noir concept for the play and the accuracy of the period."

MEG ANDREWS
Ruth Ellis

Meg is an award-winning actor and director and has trained at two Aotearoa drama schools. She's had the privilege to play many varied and exciting roles, more recently including Portia (*Merchant of Venice*), Cheshire Cat (*Alice in Wonderland*), Lady Macbeth, tour with The Ugly Shakespeare Company as their first female performer, Tim Bray Theatre Company shows, and more!



She has directed vibrant pieces: *Lovepuke*, *The Vagina Monologues*, an all-female *Taming of the Shrew*, and more recently she directed the premiere of *.CO.NZ-* a new play for Matariki. She dabbles in professional theatre and community theatre, stating that theatre is both her profession AND her hobby. As a lover of the abstract and absurdist theatre, plus wāhine-led stories, the tragic tale of Ruth Ellis as depicted in *The Thrill of Love* appealed greatly to Meg.

MATTHEW DIESCH **Jack Gale**

Matthew is an actor, director and photographer. He has recently played Governor Danforth in *The Crucible* and directed the brilliant Lucy Kirkwood play *NSFW*. You might even have heard his voice in *.CO.NZ* or *My Cousin Rachel*. He is hugely grateful to get to work with this cast of fantastic women in this great play.



CATHERINE MAUNSELL **Sylvia Shaw**



This is the third time Catherine has been in a production at Company Theatre. Previously she played the part of Celia in *Calendar Girls* (the one who needed bigger buns) and Judith Bliss in *Hay Fever*.

This is the first time she has worked on a play relating a true story and it has been a fascinating exploration through seedy 1950s nightlife and the rather shadowy details of Ruth Ellis' final actions. It has been a lot of fun working with Kathy Gent again and the beautiful, talented cast. When not playing at the theatre, Catherine can be heard calling "Sheep, sheep, sheep" on her farm in the Kaipara Flats.



MEET THE CAST



ROSHEEN LESLIE **Vickie Martin**

Rosheen Leslie is a Tamaki Makaurau based actor and creative, originally from Wellington. She has been acting since 13, and has been on stage every year since. Her recent performances include *Bridal Shop Confessions* (Dolphin), *Spiders Web* (Dolphin) and *The Addams Family Musical* for Manukau Performing Arts.

This is Rosheen's first time working with Company Theatre, and she is excited and grateful to be working with so many new and familiar faces. She has adored playing the role of Vickie, with all of her joy, ambition, and love of the other women in her life. Rosheen would like to thank the dedicated team behind this show, as they are essential to finding the magic of the final piece. She'd like to dedicate this season of *Thrill Of Love* to all the women who have inspired and helped her grow into who she is today.



NATASHA ROSS **Doris Judd**

Natasha is thrilled to be back treading the boards with a fabulous cast & group of creatives. Natasha's career spans thirty years and includes performing in 48 hour film competitions, appearances on *Shortland Street* and a webseries, in addition to lead roles on the London fringe and in New Zealand.

She was instantly drawn to the characters in the *Thrill Of Love*, to the strength, vulnerability, and complexity of the wahine fighting to be seen, fighting to be loved and fighting for their dreams. The aroha, warmth, humour & nurturing soul that is Doris Judd was an irresistible character to play. Nga mihi maioha for being here tonight to tautoko this powerful story.

The thrill of acting...



THE CREW

Director	Kathy Gent
Assistant to the Director	Suzy Sampson
PA/ Rehearsal Prompt	Sarah Dettwiler
Production Manager	Stephen Hood
Stage Managers	Freya Said, Lucus Lucent
Set Design	Scott Thomas
Set Construction	Scott Thomas, Stephen Willson, Sherry Berg, Tony Sandy, Brett Marshall, Freya Said, Lucus Laurent, Vettinia Ross, Anne Rimmer, Caroline Parker, Stephen Hood, Kathy Gent, Alastair Fletcher
Set Painting	Caroline Parker, Sherry Berg, Vettinia Ross, Tony Sandy
Props	Vettinia Ross, Sarah Dettwiler, Chris Smith
Costume Design	Suzy Sampson
Costume Advisor	Cathie Sandy
Dresser	Kate Finlay
Choreography	Nicole Parry
Lighting & Sound Design	Sam Mence
Lighting Assistant	Leo Schumacher
Lighting & Sound Operator	Stephen Hood
Poster Design	Tess Saxby
Programme Design	Sherry Berg
Publicity	Kathy Gent
Website	Sherry Ede
Facebook/Instagram/Newsletter	Stephen Hood
Photography	Kathryn Nobbs
Front of House Manager	Lesley Hawkey
Bar Manager	Alastair Fletcher



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A big Thank You to the Rose Centre!



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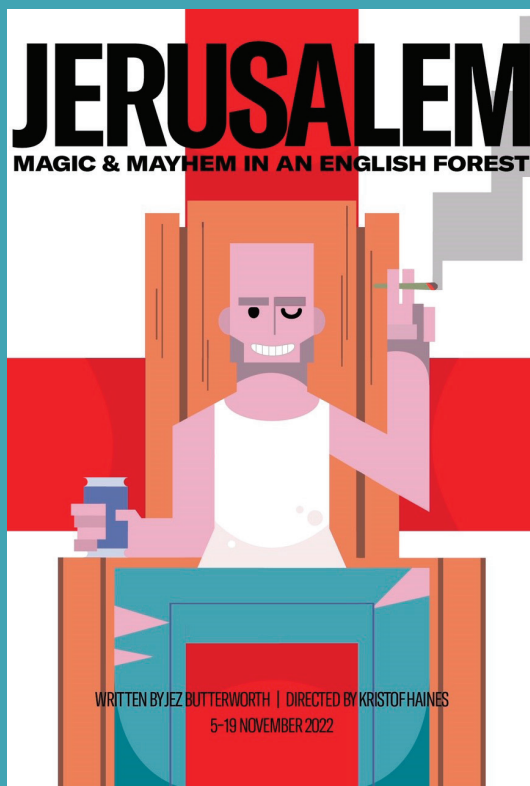


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COMPANY THEATRE presents



Written by Jes Butterworth
5-19 November 2022

Jerusalem is a raucous, provocative work that tells of a modern, mythic English hero: Johnny "Rooster" Byron. During the course of this Tony-nominated play, Johnny tells tales, gets drunk, does drugs, dodges the authorities, and both charms and infuriates all that he meets.

The play opens on the morning of the local county fair, and we discover that Johnny Byron is both the most and least popular man in town. The local authorities want to evict him, his son wants to spend the day with him, the town thug wants to teach him a lesson, and his ragtag group of friends want to party with him. Though he may be harried, harassed, bloodied, and bruised, Johnny is not a man to be beaten down. Johnny's stand against the hypocrisy of modern suburban life is shocking, moving, and a wonder to watch unfold. Though Johnny may be a modern man, he has the spirit of England's legendary giants of myth. With *Jerusalem*, playwright Jez Butterworth spins his own darkly comic, modern take on the classic English idyll.



Kristof Haines
Director