

Faringdon Dramatic Society

presents



Affiliated to NODA

OUR COUNTRY'S GOOD

by Timberlake
Wertenbaker



Faringdon
Junior
School

curtain

7.30 pm

Thur 7th Nov
Fri 8th Nov
Sat 9th Nov
2019



Please note – suggested age 16+ contains
strong language and adult themes

www.faringdondramatic.org.uk

OUR COUNTRY'S GOOD

by Timberlake Wertenberger

I first came across 'Our Country's Good' some years ago and knew at once that I would like to direct it. Sometimes we like to take on a challenge at FDS, so I was pleased to be given the chance to tackle this real classic of the modern theatre. My last directing job was Faringdon's open-air Nativity in the Market Square a couple of years ago and this too is a play about redemption.

It relates a true story, far stranger than fiction, and the protagonists you will see were real people. The cast, whom it has been a real pleasure to work with, have carefully researched their characters and instead of our usual biographies we have decided to tell you about the people they are playing.

The setting is Australia 1789, in Britain's first penal colony, where an ill-assorted crew of convicts and one of their captors, a Lieutenant of Marines, really did put on a play to celebrate the King's birthday. This Olivier Award winning modern classic was first performed in 1988 and is now often used as an A Level study text. It contains plenty of comic moments as well as two very contrasting love stories, but there is some stronger language than you would normally hear on our stage, as well as adult content. However I felt it would be a big mistake to water it down. The real message is about the redemptive and transcendental power of theatre.

Carolyn Taylor

ACT 1

- 1 The Voyage Out
- 2 A Lone Aboriginal Australian describes the Arrival of the Fleet
- 3 Punishment
- 4 The Loneliness of men
- 5 An Audition
- 6 The Authorities discuss the Merits of the Theatre
- 7 Harry and Duckling go Rowing
- 8 The Women learn their Lines

- 9 Ralph Clark tries to kiss his Dear Wife's Picture
10 John Wisehammer and Mary Brenham Exchange Words
11 The First Rehearsal

ACT 2

- 1 Visiting Hours
2 His Excellency Exhorts Ralph
3 Harry Brewer Sees the Dead
4 The Aborigine Muses on the Nature of Dreams
5 The Second Rehearsal
6 The Science of Hanging
7 The Meaning of Plays
8 Duckling Makes Vows
9 A Love Scene
10 The Question of Liz
11 Backstage

There will be an interval of about twenty minutes between Act 1 and Act 2

Cast:

Second Lt. Ralph Clark	Richard Lock
John Wisehammer / Captain Jemmy Campbell	Dave Headey
Governor Arthur Phillip	Alan Taylor
Midshipman Harry Brewer	Dominic Bullock
Major Robbie Ross	Jeff Barry
Ketch Freeman / Captain David Collins	Gary Field
Robert Sideway / Captain Watkin Tench	Martin Waymark
Mary Brenham	Jayne Hoyland
Liz Morden / Lt. Will Dawes	Sandra Keen
Dabby Bryant / Second Lt. William Faddy	Debbie Lock
Duckling Smith / Lt. George Johnston	Helen Thrower
Meg Long / Reverend Johnson	Joan Lee
Voice of Aboriginal Australian	Sarah Varnom

Directed by **Carolyn Taylor**
Assistant to the Director: **Carole Tappenden**

Production Team

Stage Manager	Alan Merrick
Set design	Jo Webster
Costume	Joan Lee and Jeni Summerfield
Set construction	Jeff Barry, Derek Crowdson, Alan Merrick, Carole Tappenden, Martin Waymark, Peter Webster, Jo Webster
Publicity	Gary Field, Ian Lee, Adrian Wells
Prompt	Carole Tappenden
Props	Alison Morris, Jan Crowdson, Derek Crowdson
Programme	Dave Headey
Sound	Gary Bates
Lighting	Ian Chandler, Steve Greening
FoH Co-ordinator	Sarah Varnom
FoH Team	Lynda Bates, Ian Lee, Denise Monk, Sheila Rowan, Duncan Sinclair, Debra Warner, Peter Webster, Jo Webster

The imitation firearm used in this production falls outside the VCR Act. The restrictions in section 36/38 do not apply as the original gun this replicates was manufactured prior to 1870

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank:

- **Faringdon Junior School** for their cooperation,
- **Faringdon United Church** for rehearsal facilities,
- **Stay Grounded** for ticket sales,
- and **Professor John Mansfield** of Melbourne University for advice on Aboriginal Australian culture and languages

Profiles of some of the Characters in the Play

Ralph Clark (Richard Lock)

Second Lieutenant Ralph Clark was a member of the 27th Company of the Royal Marines. He saw service in the American Revolutionary War. Then, leaving behind his wife and son, he volunteered for the First Fleet voyage to Australia, seeing it as an opportunity for advancement and more money. Arriving in New South Wales in January 1788, he filled a number of roles in the newly established colony.

He was known for his diaries (much of which survive today), and suffered badly from homesickness and vivid dreams, missing his dear wife and son a great deal.



Liz Morden (Sandra Keen)

Liz is not based on a single, historical figure but her story captures the unrelenting hardship of the lives of so many.

As a child she suffers abuse and betrayal at the hands of her family when she is wrongly accused of theft by her father, in order to deflect from his own crime. She is bold and resourceful, living on the margins of society and trusting no one. Through her acceptance into the company of fellow actors she, for the first time, becomes part of a group and learns empathy for those around her and that she has worth in this very new society. Liz is the epitome of the transformative power of the play.



David Collins and James 'Ketch' Freeman (Gary Field)

Captain David Collins was appointed as the colony's judge on arrival at Botany Bay in 1788, despite a lack of any formal legal training. He became the first Advocate General of Australia, and went on to found the first settlement in Tasmania.

Ketch Freeman was a convict and was the first hangman of the penal colony in Australia. He had been convicted, along with others, of stealing from the colony's store and sentenced to hang. However, on the morning of his execution, he was given a choice of 'hang or be hanged' and agreed to become the colony's hangman. This alienated him from his fellow convicts as they felt he had betrayed his own kind.



Dabby Bryant (Debbie Lock)

Mary (Dabby) Bryant came from the West Country. In May 1787 she was transported to Australia, on the ship the *Charlotte* for stealing a silk bonnet valued at 12 pence, and other goods valued at £1 and 11 shillings. She gave birth on the journey to a baby, whom she called Charlotte. When she arrived in Australia, she married William Bryant, a convicted smuggler, who was also on the *Charlotte* and they later had a son, Emanuel.

Dabby was one of the first people to escape from Australia, with her family and eventually returned to her childhood home in the West Country. Sadly her husband and children died during the escape.



Arthur Phillip (Alan Taylor)



Governor Arthur Phillip (1738 -1814) was a remarkably humane and liberal man for his time. After his naval career, he was asked by the Home Secretary, Lord Sydney, to preside over the penal colony in New South Wales. The government wanted a competent, practical man. Governor Phillip is rightly lauded in Australia as the founding father of the nation. He epitomises liberal beliefs in education and redemption over punishment.

Alan has been a member of FDS since 1986 and says that “to portray such a worthy character is extremely satisfying”.

Robbie Ross (Jeff Barry)

Major Robbie Ross had previously been on the losing side in the American War of Independence; Ross makes a reference to this in the play. The fact he feels he is being blamed may account for some of his bitterness, but he is a vile, power-obsessed man who intimidates the convicts and believes their punishment should be severe.

Jeff has been a member of FDS since he performed in **Dancing at Lughnasa** in 2004, and has been in many plays since then.



Robert Sideway and Watkin Tench (Martin Waymark)

Sideway is one of the convicts but sees himself as better than the rest. An accomplished pickpocket, he likes to think of himself as a gentleman rather than a petty thief. He thinks he knows many things about the theatre, but his acting is over-dramatic and humorous. In real life he did, apparently, found a theatre company in the colony.

Captain Watkin Tench is an officer who hates all the convicts. He doesn't believe they can, or should, become members of society again, nor does he believe they can be converted from their criminal ways.

Rev. Johnson and Meg Long (Joan Lee)

Reverend Richard Johnson was born 1756, in Welton Yorkshire. He was ordained in 1784 and along with his wife Mary sailed with the First Fleet arriving in Australia in 1788. He was the first cleric in Australia and held the first Christian service at Sydney Cove on Sunday, 3 February 1788. In 1790 they had a daughter (who was given the Aboriginal name Millbah) and a son in 1792. He returned to England, in about August 1801 and continued to take an interest in Australia. He died on 13 March 1827.

Meg Long lived in Covent Garden on the streets and belonged to a canting crew (beggars, thieves) from a very young age. She was transported for life for beating the wife of a coffee merchant so badly the jurors at her trial wept. She acts as a madam for the other women convicts, and had a tough life which probably sent her a little mad.



Harry Brewer (Dominic Bullock)

Midshipman Harry Brewer is a favourite of the Governor, having served him at sea for a long time. The Captain tends to delegate unpleasant jobs to Harry and asks him to organise the hangings, which means he'll have to do some himself. He is tormented by jealousy over Duckling, who has also slept with Handy Baker, a marine hanged by Harry for stealing food. Harry is haunted by Baker, who apparently taunts him about Duckling, making him very agitated and upset.



Duckling Smith (Helen Thrower)

Duckling was a child prostitute who beguiled Harry Brewer. Harry helped in commuting her sentence from hanging to transportation, and she subsequently lived with him (possibly imprisoned). In 1790 Duckling was sent to Norfolk Island due to the outbreak of famine in Sydney. Her subsequent fate is unknown.

Mary Brenham (Jayne Hoyland)

Mary worked as a servant and was tried at the old Bailey in 1784 for stealing clothes for the value of thirty nine shillings. She was sent to Australia for seven years and was transported as part of the first fleet on the *Lady Penrhyn* in 1787. She gave birth to a child by a seaman on 20th July 1788.

Jayne has enjoyed playing Mary, and seeing her growth in confidence throughout the play.



John Wisehammer (Dave Headey)

John Wisehammer was born in 1769, probably in Bristol (his character in the play has been relocated to London). He was tried at Gloucester on 10 February 1785 for stealing snuff, and found guilty. He was sentenced to transportation for seven years and left England on the *Friendship*, one of the vessels in the "First Fleet", in May 1787, aged about 18. On his release, he married and became a merchant, but never achieved his ambition to become a famous writer.

Director (Carolyn Taylor)

Carolyn joined FDS in 1986 and has been Chair of the Society three times. She has directed and appeared in many productions for FDS and other companies, including a number of open air Shakespeare productions, most recently *Romeo & Juliet* and *Richard III* at Oxford Castle and *The Dell*, Stratford-upon-Avon this year. Other highlights include playing Aunt Ada Doom in *Cold Comfort Farm* 2010 and *Madame Ranevskaya* in *The Cherry Orchard* 2006. To her list of talents she can add that of playwright, being the author of the pantomime *Beauty and the Beast* in 2009 and *Reflections* in 2014. Most recent FDS appearance: *Scaringas*, the dragon in *Wishing on a Star* 2019.



Faringdon Dramatic Society

Since its formation in 1948 Faringdon Dramatic Society has mounted over 150 productions, ranging from pantomime to dramas, comedies / Shakespeare. We have carried off a number of awards including the NODA Flame Award for **Heroes** in 2010: 'for inspirational contribution to the pursuit of excellence in Theatre'. **The Crucible** (2001) and **Dancing at Lughnasa** (2004) both won best drama production in London and the South East area from NODA.

We have won four of the last five pantomime competitions run by the Oxfordshire Drama network. The most recent was for **Arthur's Adventure** in 2017.

Our current membership is around 60, but new members are always welcome; there are opportunities for backstage / front of house personnel as well as actors.

Our next production is our annual pantomime

Aladdin

by Peter Webster - directed by Debbie Lock
Saturday 25 January - Sunday 26 January
Friday 31 January - Saturday 1 February

Tickets will be available from our Online Box Office and Stay Grounded.

We would be really pleased if you would write us a review – your honest opinions will be much appreciated:

www.faringdondramatic.org.uk

where you can also find up to date details of the Society and membership.