

PASSION PLAY

by Peter Nichols

*Falling in love
is easy, but
being faithful
is the hardest
thing of all*



£2

PROGRAMME

TUE **21 NOV** – SAT **25 NOV 2023**


ttc

Teddington Theatre Club



Formed in 1927, Teddington Theatre Club (TTC) is now one of the leading amateur drama groups in south west London, performing in their own custom-built theatre in Hampton Hill. Starting out to stage Shakespeare for schools, it soon developed to stage a wide repertoire of plays for the general public, originally to raise funds for its schools programmes.

TTC's first production, in 1927, was *Scenes from Twelfth Night* followed in 1928 with *The Merchant of Venice* and *Scenes from As You Like It*. Since then, the Club has gone on to put on over 670 productions and counting as it rapidly approaches its hundredth anniversary. Having performed four or five productions a year in hired halls for many years, in 1969 the Club was granted a lease of part of Richmond Council's Hampton Court House and after two years of conversion work finally opened its own theatre in 1971.

As the lease came towards its end, negotiations with Richmond Council secured a site on Hampton Hill High Street for a new theatre and after a concentrated period of fundraising and with a grant from the National Lottery, the well-equipped Hampton Hill Playhouse (now Theatre) was opened in 1998.

TTC present about ten productions a year and welcome new members - from those who wish to be on stage to the technical teams or front of house. All shows at the Theatre are supported by a huge team of volunteers – so thanks to all of those who have supported this show with marketing, front of house, bar, health & safety, box office, finance and more.

There are lots of ways to get involved, so please go to our website to find out more and to keep in touch with what's on at Hampton Hill Theatre, sign up to our monthly show listing.

www.hamptonhilltheatre.org.uk



Welcome

Welcome to Hampton Hill Theatre and Teddington Theatre Company's production of *Passion Play*. Thank you for joining us. I hope that you enjoy our staging of Peter Nichols's provocative and (er-hem) penetrating exploration of sex, love and infidelity.

My thanks also to director Ben Clare for sensitively and skilfully bringing this powerful modern masterpiece to vibrant and robust life. I must also thank the entire cast and crew. It's not an easy play to rehearse, produce or indeed watch. I'm somewhat biased as I'm one of them, but I hope you agree that the company has tackled the piece with courage, commitment and creativity. I'd also be delighted if our production provokes the kind of animated discussion post-show (in the bar or back home) that it did in the rehearsal room.

It certainly stirred a few feathers at its premiere by the Royal Shakespeare Company in 1981: remember that Eleanor and James would have been born before the Second World War and married in the mid-1950's - and that their core audience would have been very similar. However, the play didn't attract the media attention that it might have, possibly because Howard Brenton's *The Romans in Britain* had opened at the National Theatre (the RSC's long-standing rival) only three months earlier.

That soon-to-be infamous play led to the private prosecution by the morality campaigner Mary Whitehouse of the play's director, Michael Bogdanov. The case related to the on-stage depiction of homosexual rape: the fact that the act was obviously simulated and highly symbolic was missed on Mrs Whitehouse, possibly because she'd never seen the show. Her main witness was sitting at the back of the circle, the cheapskate, when he witnessed the alleged offence. As he had neither bionic eyes nor an understanding of the fundamentals of theatrical invention (they use carrots), Mrs W lost the case.

This high-profile sex-storm-in-a-theatre might explain why Peter Nichols's otherwise rather shocking depiction, for the times, of inter-age infidelity, harrowing marital breakdown and other potential spoiler alerts managed to sail under the reactionary radar. Or, more likely, it could be because it's just such a wonderfully well-written play, taking the classic 'ménage à trois' plot and injecting it with psychological truth and nuance, and adding the ingenious

theatrical twist of having two actors play each of the lead roles: a real, and still stunning, coup de théâtre.

The premiere proved both a critical and commercial hit for the RSC. They had intended it as their first show to open the new Barbican Theatre, which had been specifically built to be the company's London home. In the end, for various logistical reasons, it opened instead in the West End, at the Aldwych Theatre – which, incidentally, seats 1200, as opposed to our more intimate 50: hence our needing to reign in the rather raunchy 'intimacy' that Nichols specifies in his original script. In such a tight space, none of us would feel comfortable with that, despite living in the 'post-permissive age'.

The original RSC cast included Eileen Atkins, Anton Rodgers, Billie Whitelaw and Benjamin Whitrow. *Passion Play* has subsequently been staged several times in the West End, attracting actors of the calibre of Gillian Barge, Samantha Bond, Cheryl Campbell, Barry Foster, Martin Jarvis, Cherie Lunghi, Judi Parfitt, Leslie Phillips, Nicola Walker and Zoë Wanamaker. TTC also staged it, rather daringly, in 1989, in a production directed by Ken Mason, with a cast headed by Sue Bell (who, like Ken, is still thankfully a more than active member of TTC today), Anne Low, Tony Nelson, Sara Pruce, Virginia Richmond-Scott and John Roth.

The original Broadway production featured Frank Langella as Jim and Roxanne Hart as Kate, and was just titled, rather tellingly, *Passion*, possibly to avoid the Christ connotations of the full title. The religious references, however, are fundamental to a full appreciation of Nichols's script. With our own production, the full title did (mis-)lead to some initial TTC marketing images that we had to bin: "No crosses or asses, well, certainly not of that type, Fiona!"

Nonetheless Nichols's masterpiece can be seen as part of an unholy trinity with Pinter's *Betrayal*, written in 1978 and most recently staged by TTC in 2016, and Stoppard's *The Real Thing*, written in 1982 and yet to be performed by TTC. But watch this space... all three landmark plays focus on the themes of adultery and infidelity. Chronologically, *Passion Play* sits between these other two arguably better-known works. However, I would argue that, as with any religious triptych, this is the more substantial and important panel of the trio. That's why I'm so thrilled that TTC is staging it and with such a first-rate team.

Moving from the sublime to the ridiculous, or possibly vice versa, next month we deliver our glittering, ginormous Christmas present: the pastiche-packed, marvellously madcap musical *Spamalot*. Our endeavours then continue unabated into 2024, with David Haig's *Pressure* and the UK premiere of Stephen Dolginoff's *Panic - A Live Radio Musical*, both playing in January and both directed by winners at this year's Arts Richmond Swan Awards. Then, next March, we put on our dancing shoes for both Richard Harris's hilarious, heart-warming *Stepping Out* and Anna Jordan's *Pop Music*: a rollercoaster ride of an anti-romantic wedding night.

So, an assorted abundance of theatrical delights to look forward to as we move towards the festive season and then onwards into the spring. *Passion Play* sold out well before its opening night, so I urge you to book for our forthcoming shows as soon as you can.

If you would like to play a more active role in our exciting and varied 2024 season, then we would love to hear from you! We welcome volunteers to contribute, not just with acting, but stage management, lighting, sound, set, costume, props, production management and front of house. So please go to www.hamptonhilltheatre.org.uk, follow us on social media (see the back page) or, even better, contact me at artistic@teddingtontheatreclub.org.uk.

I really hope that you enjoy tonight's show and that you return to TTC very soon, hopefully for *Spamalot* and our cornucopia of Christmas events, including Santa's Grotto, An Audience with Rula Lenska and our multi-faceted Movie Season - guaranteed to brighten that bleak mid-'Twixtmas' period. We hope to see you soon.

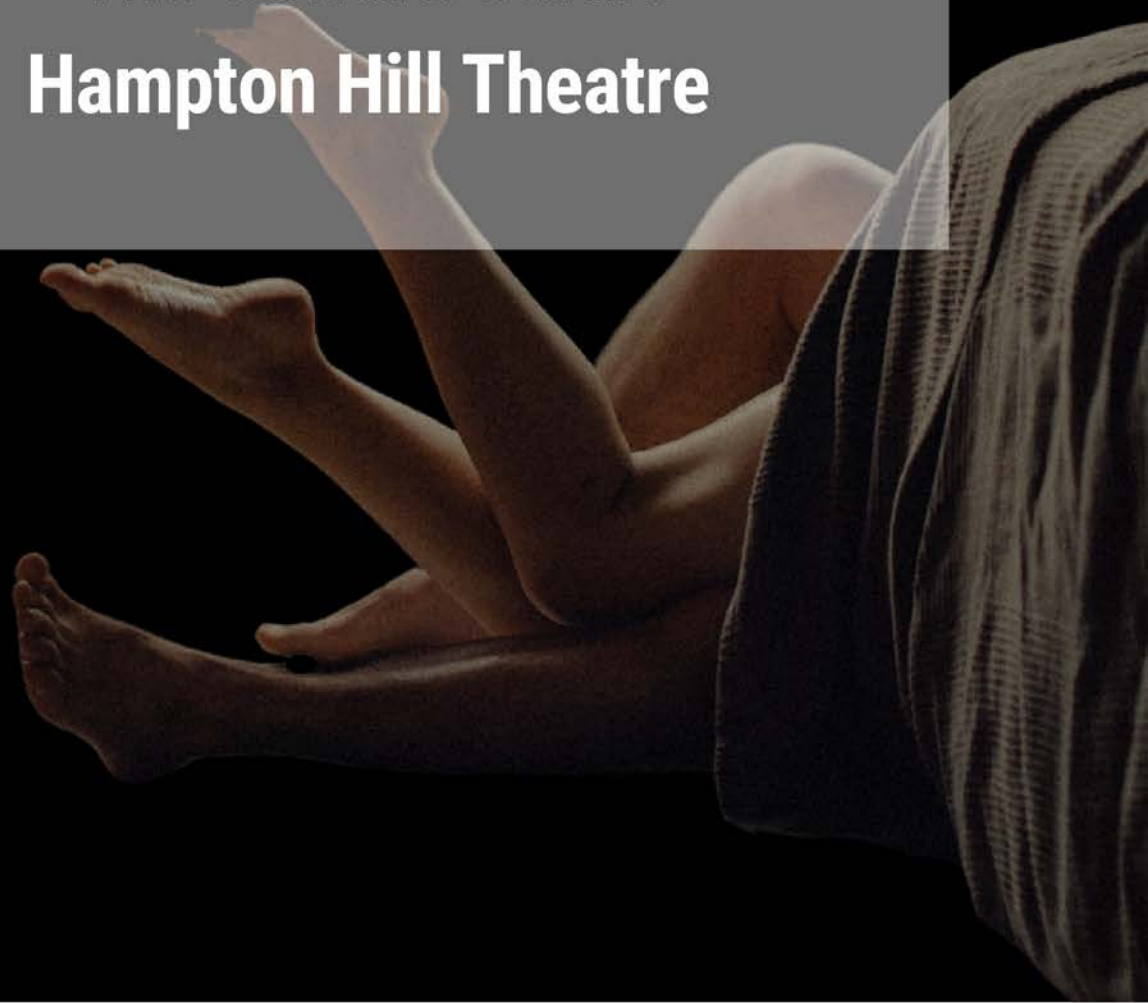
In the very short term, please say thank you to the wonderful volunteers who helm our Front of House & Bar team as you leave.

Daniel Wain, Artistic Director

PASSION PLAY

By Peter Nichols
Directed by Ben Clare

The Coward Studio
Hampton Hill Theatre



Passion

noun

1. **Passion** (capitalised)

1. the sufferings of Christ between the night of the Last Supper and his death
2. an oratorio based on a gospel narrative of the Passion, such as the St Matthew Passion, a sacred oratorio written by Johann Sebastian Bach in 1727 for solo voices, double choir, and double orchestra, with libretto by Picander. It sets the 26th and 27th chapters of the Gospel of Matthew (in the Luther Bible) to music, with interspersed chorales and arias. It is widely regarded as one of the greatest masterpieces of Baroque sacred music.

2. **Suffering** (obsolete)

3. **The state or capacity of being acted on by external agents or forces**

4. **Emotion**

5. **Intense, driving, or overmastering feeling or conviction**

6. **An outbreak of anger**

7. **Ardent affection**

8. **A strong liking or desire for or devotion to some activity, object, or concept**

9. **Sexual desire**

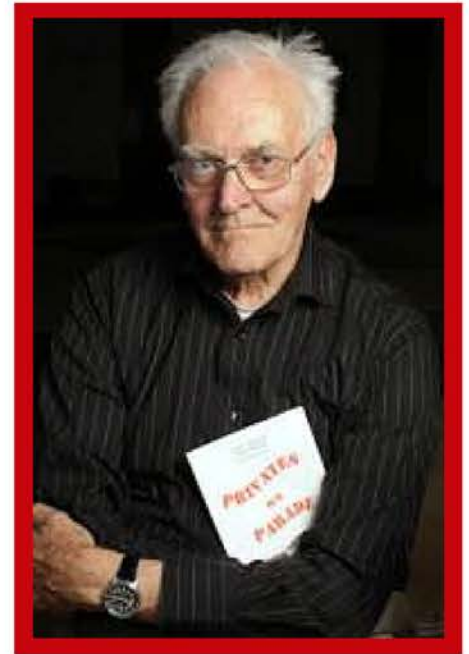
10. **An object of desire or deep interest**

Source: Merriam-Webster Dictionary



About the Writer

Peter Nichols will always be remembered as part of a period of brilliant British playwriting through the 1960's & 70's, along with Harold Pinter, Joe Orton, John Osborne, Alan Bennett and several others. He was born in Bristol and attended Bristol Grammar School. His uncle, who was a theatrical agent, introduced him to theatre by taking him to shows when he was younger. He joined the RAF in 1945 and was posted to the Far East, where he joined the Combined Services Entertainment Unit, performing revues and sketches for the troops. This experience informed his most successful play *Privates on Parade*, which also became a success on the big screen in 1982.



**Peter Richard Nichols
(1927-2019)**

After studying at the Bristol Old Vic in the 1950's he became an actor in repertory, TV and as a film extra. When he later struggled to find work, he moved to Florence and Milan to work in language schools, before becoming a teacher back in London, during which time he continued to write. His breakthrough came when he won a BBC TV playwriting competition in 1959 for his comedy *A Walk on the Grass*. He then won other script writing commissions for documentaries and screenplays including a credit for the film *Georgy Girl* in 1966. However he became best known through his plays, notably *A Day in the Death of Joe Egg* (1967), *The National Health* (1969), *Privates on Parade* (1977), as well as this piece *Passion Play* (1981).

His unique and distinctive, semi-autobiographical style combined comedic dialogue across very serious themes. *Joe Egg*, for example, was based on his own experience of raising a disabled child. In total he wrote around twenty published plays. tall and bespectacled, he was known to be cantankerous but funny. In his writing, as in his life, he was brutally frank and a risk-taker, often saying things which others would not dare. In 2018 he was awarded an OBE for services to drama.

Synopsis

James Croxley is a successful picture-restorer. His wife Eleanor sings in a choir who will perform Bach's St Matthew Passion at the Royal Albert Hall. Together, they've shared twenty-five happily married years, faithful, fulfilled and fading. Enter Kate: smart, seductive and mistress of James' recently deceased friend Albert. Despite his love for Eleanor, James all too easily falls for the excitement of an affair with this beguiling young Kate, suddenly all too aware of the destructive nature of his actions.



About the Director



Ben Clare

Ben has directed plays for Teddington Theatre Club for over 20 years, including *Shakespeare in Love*, *Handbagged*, *The City*, *The House of Bernarda Alba*, *Alphabetical Order*, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, *The Country*, *The Birthday Party*, and *Summit Conference*. In March he appeared in *Bull*. Elsewhere he directed *Sense and Sensibility*, *The Wolves*, *The Seagull* and *Look Back in Anger* at Putney Arts Theatre, and *After the Dance* and *Time and the Conways* at New Wimbledon Studio.

Next up for TTC: *Humble Boy* in October 2024.

Also a playwright, his new play *Tumbledown* premieres at Putney Arts Theatre in February.

Cast



Kate – Natasha Nicola

James – Oliver Tims

Eleanor – Kirsty MacDonald

Agnes – Cath Messum

Jim – Daniel Wain

Nell – Jane Marcus

Supporting Cast

Clare Bottomley

Joe Evans

Stuart Lamacraft

Isabella Walsh-Whitfield

Crew

Director – Ben Clare

Production Manager/Stage Manager – Steve Wayman

Set & Lighting Designer – Patrick Troughton

Sound Designer – Jacob Taylor

Wardrobe – Lesley Alexander

Wardrobe – Ann Broder

Props – Christine Wayman

Publicity – Joanna Taylor

Artistic Link – Douglas Schatz

BAT Link – Fiona Auty

SM Mentor - Jenna Powell

Intimacy Coach - Lottie Walker

Assistant PM/SM - Pip Campbell

Rehearsal Prompt - Heather Morgan

Rehearsal Photographer - Rachel Burnham

Photographer - David Shortland

Thanks also go to:

For Art Restoration advice - Lydia Kennard; The Office team led by Sarah J Carter; Box Office; Pauline Orchard; FoH and Bar volunteers; the Sales & Marketing team.





Biographies



Natasha Nicola
~ Kate

Natasha has been honing her craft for over a decade, with seven years of acting training and extensive experience in singing and dancing. Recently graduating from ArtsEd, she is thrilled to make her TTC onstage debut in *Passion Play* and we hope the first of many shows here at Hampton Hill Theatre.



Oliver Tims
~ James

In his youth Oliver performed regularly with the Green Theatre Company, New Malden, and at Exeter University he created roles in Robert Shearman's *Dented Crowns* and *Couplings* at the Northcott Theatre. His subsequent theatrical career was offstage: as Press Officer at Richmond Theatre, and Press Officer then Publications Officer for English National Opera. Since returning to the stage last year, as Henry Higgins in *Pygmalion* (TTC), he has played Captain Fitzroy in *The Madness of George III* (TTC) and Hector Hushabye in *Heartbreak House* (Rhinoceros), for which he was nominated for a Swan Award for Best Male Performance in a Play.



Kirsty MacDonald
~ Eleanor

Kirsty has recently moved to Kingston from Chipstead where she was a member of the Chipstead Players. Some of her favourite roles there were Libby in *The Last of the Hausmans*, Morris in *The Nether*, Nora in *A Doll's House*, Micheleine in *Splendour*, and Carrie in *My Boy Jack*. *Passion Play* is her TTC onstage debut. Alongside her love of theatre, Kirsty enjoys dancing, hiking and yoga.



Cath Messum
~ Agnes

Cath has been a member of TTC longer than she cares to admit and is a former TTC Chair. Having been involved in amateur theatre since a teenager, she's played a wide range of roles both on and off stage. Her most recent foray on the TTC stage was as Mademoiselle in *Daisy Pulls it Off* and behind the scenes as the Production Manager for *Pygmalion*. Her favourite thing about playing Agnes is the way she doesn't shy away from speaking her mind!



Daniel Wain
~ Jim

Daniel has appeared on the TTC stage in over 20 productions in the past 12 years, as well as writing a couple of our pantos, directing our first-ever movie and, since last November, being our Artistic Director. Favourite TTC roles include Eddie (*A View from the Bridge*), O'Connor (*Cause Célèbre*), Bernard Nightingale (*Arcadia*), Douglas (*Man of the Moment*), Nelson (*Rat in the Skull*), Sparkish (*The Country Wife*) and Captain Hook. His next appearance will be in the 25th anniversary revival of the five-star hit *Look Behind You* at the Tabard Theatre, Chiswick, from 17th January to 3rd February 2024.



Jane Marcus
~ Nell

Jane is delighted to be back in the Coward Studio, after her recent venture into history as King George III, on the HHT main stage. Other notable roles with TTC have included Margaret Thatcher in *Handbagged*, Elinor Glyn in *The Cat's Meow*, Stevie in Hugh Whitmore's eponymous play and Sara Turing in *Breaking the Code*. She has also played Goneril in *King Lear* (Rhinoceros Productions), Gertrude in *Hamlet* (RSS), Bette Davis in *Bette and Joan* (RSS) and Hester in *The Deep Blue Sea* (RSS).



HAMPTON HILL
THEATRE

Raise our Roof

TTC's wonderful Hampton Hill Theatre is beginning to show its age and needs much more than just a lick of paint to keep it ship-shape. So we're busy with a long-term programme of restoration and repair plus a fundraising campaign to pay for it. And while we're delighted that a brand-new roof now keeps us dry while an upgrade to our fire protection system keeps us safe, there is still so much to do – not least, replacing our obsolete boiler with green and energy-efficient heating.

So we're asking for your help to keep our lovely home open and thriving.

To donate, visit our website at hamptonhilltheatre.org.uk/donate

If you've a fundraising idea you'd like to share or want to help out with our fundraising campaign in any way, contact Nigel Cole:

nigelc@teddingtontheatreclub.org.uk

£150,000 TARGET



£70,000 +

Raised to date



SCAN ME!

Thank you.

Coming soon!

Teddington Theatre Club Presents



MONTY PYTHON'S SPAMALOT
A new musical ripped off from the motion picture
MONTY PYTHON and the Holy Grail

SUN 3 DEC - SAT 9 DEC 2023
teddingtontheatreclub.org.uk

ttc

SPAMALOT

Sun 3 Dec - Sat 9 Dec

A new musical lovingly ripped off from the motion picture Monty Python and the Holy Grail

#fundraiser



an audience with
SUN, 10TH DECEMBER 2023 AT 6PM
LIVE ON OUR MAIN STAGE

Rula Lenska

www.teddingtontheatre.org.uk

HAMPTON HILL THEATRE

AN AUDIENCE WITH

Sun 10 Dec - 6pm

We are delighted to welcome Rula Lenska, who will share anecdotes and stories about her life, in aid of fundraising for our theatre.

MOVIE SEASON

SHOWING AT
HAMPTON HILL THEATRE

Frozen Sing Along	Wed 27 Dec	4.00pm	£5.00
The Greatest Showman Sing Along	Wed 27 Dec	7.00pm	£12.50
Encanto Sing Along	Thu 28 Dec	4.00pm	£5.00
Rocketman Sing Along	Thu 28 Dec	7.00pm	£12.50
Singin' in the Rain	Fri 29 Dec	4.00pm	£5.00
Galaxy Quest	Fri 29 Dec	7.00pm	£12.50
Moulin Rouge! (Plus Karaoke)	Sat 30 Dec	7.30pm	£12.50

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NEW YEAR MOVIE SEASON

Wed 27 Dec - Sat 30 Dec

Affordable big screen fun, right on your doorstep!



PRESSURE
by David Haig

6 JUNE 1944: the day the weathermen fought the war

TUE 23 JAN - SAT 27 JAN 2024
teddingtontheatreclub.org.uk

ttc

PRESSURE

Tues 23 Jan - Sat 27 Jan 2024

6 June 1944: The day the weathermen fought the war!

www.hamptonhilltheatre.org.uk



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www.youtube.com/c/teddingtontheatreclub

www.hamptonhilltheatre.org.uk

Teddington Theatre Club is affiliated to Arts Richmond and this production is entered for the Swan Awards for Drama and Musicals

Teddington Theatre Club is resident at Hampton Hill Theatre.

90 High Street, Hampton Hill, TW12 1NZ

Company registration number 939448

Registered charity number 257265

HAMPTON HILL
THEATRE

