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SRM154-115

Rookery Nook

by Ben Travers

CREATIVE TEAM

Director	Bindon Kinghorn
Set Designer	Jessica P. Wong
Costume Designer	Kat Jeffery
Lighting Designer	Bryan Kenney
Sound Designer	Neil Ferguson
Stage Manager	Caitlinn O'Leary
Vocal Coach	Linda Hardy
Assistant Lighting Designer	Denay Amaral

CAST

(in the order of appearance)

Gertrude Twine	Hayley Feigs
Mrs. Leverett	Breanna Wise
Harold Twine	Lucas Hall
Clive Popkiss	Jonathan Mason
Gerald Popkiss	Derek Wallis
Rhoda Marley	Taryn Lees
Putz	Alex Frankson
Admiral Juddy	Simon Walter
Poppy Dickey	Brooke Haberstock
Clara Popkiss	Alysson Hall
Mrs. Possett	Chelsea Graham
The Cat*	Played by Itself

**For your peace of mind, please note that no animals were harmed during the making of this play.*

There will be one 3-minute scene change between Act I and Act II
and one 15-minute intermission following Act II.

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Director's Notes

Why does a director choose a particular play to direct? Well, not all directors are so lucky as to be able to choose. Most may be asked to direct a play already chosen; it may even be cast for them. I was lucky. Not only was I able to choose **Rookery Nook** and cast it, but I've had the support of colleagues throughout.

Before I came to the University of Victoria in 1973, **Rookery Nook** was one of the first plays I worked on professionally in England, so it seems appropriate at this stage in my career to direct it. I love the silliness of the English farce, which delights by violating 'sacred cows' turning them into comic situations. I have been thrilled with the ability of our actors and production team to embrace this genre with their youthfulness and talent so we can all enjoy a good laugh. Ben Travers brings 'pure and simple' farce to the stage and it is this that we want to create for you tonight.

Farce in the 1920s was a mockery of familiar characters and situations known to the audience from outside the play itself, such as interfering busybodies and insignificant twits. It used 'types' who lack flexibility and are dominated by a rigid mindset. It is the inelasticity of these types that prevents them from adapting to situations and, so, they become targets for ridicule. Farce favours direct, visual and physical jokes over flowery dialogue, treading a thin line between offence and entertainment. Farce is not slapstick, although that is an important component. Farce is not satire, although satire might make use of farcical techniques.

Farce has changed considerably since the 1960s. Joe Orton (e.g. **Loot** and **What The Butler Saw**) casts dark shadows and forces the audience to wake up to the conundrums of life today. **Monty Python**, **Fawlty Towers** and **Mr. Bean** use farce to mock the pretensions of class-status and the oddities of the British way-of-life. However, the comic tone is no longer pure and simple, it has transformed itself into satirical, 'in-group' joking.

But that is now, **Rookery Nook** is then, and it's the then that we are trying to discover and recreate for you tonight - FARCE, 'pure and simple'.

Please enjoy!

Bindon Kinghorn

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Ben Travers *and the Aldwych Farces* by Denis Johnston

The playwrighting career of Ben Travers (1886-1980) was one of the longest and most successful in the history of theatre. After false starts in his family's provisioning business and in publishing, and after service as a flying instructor during World War I, Travers pursued his dream of theatrical success by writing some comic novels and adapting them for the stage. While the first of these, *The Dippers* (1922), enjoyed some modest success, the second struck gold – though in a roundabout way.

The rights to Travers' second play, *A Cuckoo in the Nest*, were originally optioned by a minor West End producer and later sold to a company specializing in farce at the Aldwych Theatre. *Cuckoo* opened to popular acclaim in July 1925 and ran almost a year. The Aldwych management quickly asked Travers for another farce, then another, then another. In all, there were nine of these Aldwych farces in nine years, the most popular of which were *Cuckoo*, *Rookery Nook* (1926), *Thark* (1927) and *Plunder* (1928). They had lengthy runs – almost 2700 performances in all – and spawned multiple touring companies. They made stars of actor-manager Tom Walls and regular cast members Ralph Lynn, Mary Brough, and Robertson Hare, and they quickly became staples of regional professional and amateur companies throughout the English-speaking world.

Travers made a successful shift into screenwriting in the 1930s, while occasionally writing more stage farces such as *Banana Ridge* (1938), *Spotted Dick* (1939), and *Outrageous Fortune* (1947). In 1976 – his ninetieth year – and after decades of relative obscurity, Travers enjoyed his best-ever year in the theatre, with three plays running simultaneously in the West End: a new farce *The Bed Before Yesterday* (starring Joan Plowright), a commercial revival of *Banana Ridge* (starring Robert Morley), and a revival of *Plunder* at the Old Vic and the new National Theatre. Travers revelled in his surprising resurgence, and was honoured with the title of Commander of the Order of the British Empire.

In an obituary in 1980, the London Times noted: “[Farce] can be one of the happiest of theatrical forms. It is also among the most difficult to write. Ben Travers, undeniably, was the twentieth century’s chief practitioner.”

Now living on a farm in Metchosin, UVic grad Dr. Denis Johnston taught theatre history at UBC before becoming head of publications and audience education at the Shaw Festival in Ontario.

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Creative Team



Bindon Kinghorn *Director*

Since emigrating from England in 1973, Bindon has been Assistant General Manager of The Citadel Theatre in Edmonton, the Artistic Director of The Nanaimo Theatre Festival, Associate Production Manager of the Opening and Closing Ceremonies of the XV Commonwealth Games, and founding director of the Parliamentary Players in Victoria. He is currently the Theatre Manager and an instructor with the Department of Theatre, University of Victoria. He has acted, designed and directed shows in England, Madeira and Canada, including *Colours In The Storm*, *The Days of the Commune*, *The Thwarting of Baron Bolligrew*, *Hay Fever*, *Blithe Spirit*, *The Suicide, Rodgers & Hart*, *The Pirates of Penzance*, *Round and Round the Garden*, *Loot* and *Peter Pan* (which he also co-directed for CHEK TV). He also created and directed the musical *All Aboard!* with colleague Dale McIntosh.



Jessica P. Wong *Set Designer*

Jessica is honoured to be the set designer for *Rookery Nook*. She will be graduating from the University of Victoria in the spring and looks forward to what is to come. Past design credits include: *The Ethical Six-some* (SATCo), *Struwwelpeter* (SATCo), *Three Angry Pigs* (SATCo), and *Wrath* (Impulse Theatre). She also assisted with the set design for *Yerma* (Phoenix) and lighting design for *Inside* (Phoenix). During the summer, she presented her designs in the student exhibition at the Prague Quadrennial representing UVic and Canada. Please enjoy the show!



Kat Jeffery *Costume Designer*

Kat is a third year student focusing on costume design at the University of Victoria. She was the assistant to the designer for the Phoenix Theatre's production of *Inside* as well as the wardrobe supervisor for *Yerma* and worked behind the scenes on *Romeo and Juliet*. Kat is more than thrilled to be focusing on the fashion of the 1920s for this production. Originally a classically trained dancer, some of Kat's other credits include SATCo's *Z-Day-The Musical* and *Ghost Train*. She is hoping to attend grad school in Europe and plans on going to many other far off places through design.



Bryan Kenney *Lighting Designer*

Bryan received his BA in Technical Scenography from Dalhousie University in Halifax. This is his second year in the MFA Theatre Design program at UVic. Some of his most memorable credits include lighting designs for Phoenix Theatre (*Inside*), Opera Nova Scotia (*Zaide*), Ship's Company Theatre (*Ferry Tales*), DMV Theatre (*The Blue Light*, *The Leisure Society*) and set designs for Halifax Theatre for Young People (*Merlin*, *Gravesaver's*). Bryan has designed lighting for Theatre Inconnu's *Pornography*, *Shining City* and, most recently, *Love Kills*.

Creative Team



Neil Ferguson *Sound Designer*

Neil has enjoyed being a part of the creative team for *Rookery Nook*. Most recently Neil worked alongside Andrew Wade at the Victoria Fringe Festival's presentation of *BFA: The Musical*. At the Phoenix, Neil has been fortunate enough to work on both *Romeo and Juliet* and *Twelfth Night* as well as design and technical work for a number of productions for the Student Alternative Theatre Company. Hear more from Neil as he makes his compositional debut this February with Jeffrey Pufahl's rendition of Eurydice.



Caitlinn O'Leary *Stage Manager*

Caitlinn is elated to be making her first stage management appearance with *Rookery Nook*! This is her third year at the Phoenix. Her previous Phoenix mainstage credits are *Romeo and Juliet* (dresser), and *Twelfth Night* (Assistant Stage Manager). She has also been involved with SATCo's *The Three Angry Pigs* (Stage Manager), and *Katkaista* (Stage Crew). Caitlinn has been involved with performance and production long before her university career including dance, singing, acting, modeling, production construction, as well as sound and lighting board operation. She hopes to continue stage managing in her years after the Phoenix.

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Cast



Hayley Feigs *Gertrude Twine*

Hayley is a fourth year acting specialist with experience in applied theatre. *Rookery Nook* marks her fourth mainstage appearance. Past credits include *The Unusual Case of Mr. Morton*, *Medea*, *Yerma* as well as *The Long Good-Bye* (SATCo), and *Orangedale Whistle* (Studio Series). This summer, Hayley played Queen Victoria with the Parliamentary Players and performed in *The Tirades of Love* (Impulse Theatre) at the Fringe.



Alex Frankson *Putz*

Alex has enjoyed being a part of *Rookery Nook*. Recently he played Antonio in the Phoenix Theatre production of *Twelfth Night*, and Sir James Douglas in the Parliamentary Players. Alex will also be performing in *The Marowitz Hamlet* this spring. He hopes you enjoy the farce!



Chelsea Graham *Mrs. Possett*

A second year student in the theatre program, Chelsea is honoured to make her mainstage debut at the Phoenix theatre as Mrs. Possett, the elderly mother of few words. Formerly from Vancouver, Chelsea enjoyed getting to know the island this summer. She is thrilled to be working with the talented cast of *Rookery Nook*.



Brooke Haberstock *Poppy Dickey*

Brooke is in her second year of the department's acting specialization. She is absolutely thrilled to have had the pleasure of working on *Rookery Nook* as her first mainstage production at the Phoenix. Previous credits include: SATCo's *Struwwelpeter* and *Thought Talk* as well as several third and fourth year directing scenes.



Alysson Hall *Clara Popkiss*

Is in her fourth and final year in the Department of Theatre in the acting specialization. She is pleased to be in her second mainstage, with such a hysterical cast. Previous credits include: *Yerma* (Phoenix Theatre), *The Children's Hour* (directing scene) and *Orangedale Whistle* (Studio Series).



Lucas Hall *Harold Twine*

Lucas Hall is a fourth year student in the acting specialization, and he is very excited to be working with such a great team on this production. Past credits include last season's production of *Twelfth Night*, and Suspicious Mustache Theatre's *Struwwelpeter*.



Taryn Lees *Rhoda Marley*

Taryn is in her second year at the Phoenix and is delighted to be taking part in her first main-stage. She is also very excited to be participating in the spring production of *Eurydice*. Enjoy the show!



Jonathan Mason *Clive Popkiss*

A fourth year acting specialist, *Rookery Nook* marks Johnathan's third Phoenix production including *Wreckage* and *Yerma*. He will also be performing in *The Marowitz Hamlet*. Jonathan works as an acting coach for young actors at Victoria's Screen Actors Studio and has appeared in the Victoria Shakespeare Society's summer productions. It has been a pleasure to work on such a fun and fantastic production. Thank you to the cast, crew and direction that made it all possible.

Cast



Derek Wallis *Gerald Popkiss*

Derek is delighted to take part in his second mainstage production at UVic, *Rookery Nook*. A third year acting student, Derek has previously been cast in Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, as well as several SATCo productions: *Crossdress for Success*, *Struwwelpeter* and *Our Cannibal Fathers*. He wishes theatregoers to enjoy this resurrection of Travers' farcical, nonsensical wit.



Simon Walter *Admiral Juddy*

Simon is in his fourth year of the acting program at the Department of Theatre and he is thrilled to be appearing in this autumn's mainstage! Recent Phoenix Theatre credits include the Soldier in *Yerma* (Fall 2010) and the Sea Captain in *Twelfth Night* (Spring 2011).



Breanna Wise *Mrs. Leverett*

As a third year design student, Breanna is thrilled to have the opportunity to be in this year's production of *Rookery Nook*. Recently, Breanna acted in, wrote and directed the SATCo *Thought Talk*. Breanna will also be an assistant to both the set designer for *Eurydice* and the costume designer *The Marowitz Hamlet*.



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