

Murder, Margaret and Me

by Philip Meeks



directed by
Bryony Weaver



**NEW
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THEATRE**

Bedford Place
Brighton BN1 2PT

PERFORMANCES:

Fri 15th to Sat 23rd May 2026 at 7:30pm

Matinée: Sun 17th May at 2:30pm

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Registered Charity no. 268607

Murder, Margaret and Me



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**This year, 2026, is a special year for the
Agatha Christie legacy.**

Notable celebrations include a major British Library exhibition (30 October 2026 – 20 June 2027), which coincides with the centenary anniversary of the publication of *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*. Also, it's 70 years since the publication of *Dead Man's Folly* and 50 since *Sleeping Murder*, Miss Marple's last case. Other events include the yearly Agatha Christie festival in Torquay (12-20 September 2026).

Most importantly for our story, December 2026 is the centenary of Christie's famous disappearance, and the ensuing nationwide search that generated sensational international newspaper headlines. The world speculated wildly on the mystery, giving birth to as many theories of dark doings as underpinned the plots in her crime novels.

Also important is the fact that in 1960, for tax reasons, she had to sell the rights to some of her books. When MGM took up some of the Miss Marple titles to turn into films, it was with horror that Christie learned they'd cast Margaret Rutherford as her beloved lady sleuth – she bore no resemblance to her image of her 'dearest creation'.

Playwright Philip Meeks is a Rutherford fan, and wrote *Murder, Margaret and Me* originally for the 2012 Edinburgh Fringe, as a one-person play that told Rutherford's story. What intrigued him was that she, too, had a secret she was determined to keep hidden at all costs, one that would ruin her career if it were known. After the play's sell-out run, and a repeat triumph at the 2014 New York Fringe, he re-wrote it to include Christie's story.

Cast

AGATHA CHRISTIE	Sharon Drain
MARGARET RUTHERFORD	Denise Evans
THE SPINSTER/PEARL/ SECRETARY	Janice Jones
FLOOR MANAGER	Rob Shepherd
FLOOR MANAGER'S ASSISTANT	Guy Dixon
COSTUME LADY	Laura Scobie
COSTUME LADY	Sarah Donnelly
STUDIO CREW	Linda Rothwell
STUDIO CREW	Carol Croft



He recounts in the play's Author Notes, "As I researched this mysterious incident [Christie's disappearance] I began to realise how much Agatha and Margaret had in common... Their life experiences and personalities seemed to be so entwined, they felt like the same soul. I began to feel quite sad that I'd only imagined their friendship for the purposes of writing the play." However, an encounter with a Christie fan at the Agatha Christie Festival proved his assumption of a friendship to be correct. The fan produced letters from his Christie collection that had been written by Agatha to Stringer Davis, Margaret's husband, in which Christie declared how much she had admired Rutherford's portrayal of Miss Marple.

Murder, Margaret and Me is a wonderful story to tell – it's not only honours two incredible, creative women, but is also a celebration of a beloved, enduring literary creation, Miss Jane Marple, whose curious, keen-eyed spirit brings it to life.

I've been blessed with an exceptional cast of skilled actresses and actors who have thrown themselves 'with gusto' into the making of this play. With their keen love of the material, they've paid homage to three great women.

Bryony Weaver, Director



DIRECTOR: Bryony Weaver

PRODUCTION MANAGER: Ulrike Schilling

PRODUCTION ASSISTANT: Ben Pritchard

STAGE MANAGER: Katie Brownings

ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGERS: Anne-Marie Harrison, Ayshen Isfan,
Natalie Sax-Hammond

COSTUME DESIGN: Mary Weaver, Marion Dean

COSTUME ASSISTANT: Botond Szilvagy

COSTUME MAKER: Jackie Jones, Margaret Parkes

MAKEUP AND HAIR: Richard Blennerhassett

SET DESIGN: Bryony Weaver

SET CONSTRUCTION: Sinon Glazier, Ally McDermott,
Wiktor Piatrowska, Yago Bracalenti, Chris Tew

LIGHTING DESIGN: Strat Mastoris

LIGHTING OPERATION: Chris Dent, Elizabeth Acedo Polo, Liam O'Sullivan

SOUND DESIGN: Ian Black

SOUND OPERATION: Ian Black

PROPERTIES: Carrie Hynds

POSTER: Tamsin Mastoris

PROGRAMME: Ian Amos

PHOTOGRAPHY: Strat Mastoris, Ben Pritchard

PUBLICITY AND MARKETING: Elysa Hyde

HEALTH AND SAFETY: Ian Black

Thank you: The following people deserve an Oscar, too: Rod Lewis and Mark Wilson for excellent advice and encouragement, Jackie Jones for her superb reproduction of the 'Rutherford' cloak, Shuna Neilson for a great deal of forbearance, my super-supportive and long-suffering production team, our wonderful backstage, Box Office and FOH/ Bar volunteers – NVT wouldn't exist without them – and Katie Brownings, who once again stepped in and saved the day.

SHARON DRAIN – Agatha Christie:

Sharon graduated drama school at 50, and worked in the early days as a professional singer. Theatre credits include: Hella Granger (*Superstar* - devised and performed in France, then translated and adapted for Brighton and Edinburgh Fringe, 2016).

For NVT: *Jumpy*, directed by Diane Robinson, 2018. For Different Theatre: *Sary*, Brighton Fringe and award-nominated at Edinburgh Fringe, 2019. *Clean*, Best New Play at Brighton Fringe, 2019. *Clean - The Musical*, Outstanding Theatre award, 2021. All created/directed by Sam Chittenden. For The Conor Baum Company: *Four seasons with One Fell Swoop*, annual Summer Shakespeare-in-a-day festival. Homestead, part of Brighton Festival, 2024. *Electra*, Brighton Fringe, 2025 - Outstanding Theatre Award and OFFIE winner. *Suddenly Last Summer*, BOAT, 2025. For Southwark Playhouse: *Who is Claude Cahun*, 2025. For Savage Heart: *Dark Bites*, 2025.



DENISE EVANS - Margaret Rutherford:

Denise Evans has been performing professionally in physical and ensemble theatre since 1982 with various companies, some of whom she founded or managed as well as performed with. She has acted in productions all over the world, including Japan, Hong Kong, USA, Scandinavia, Greece, Cypress, Albania and most of Europe. She has played in tiny studio theatres, outdoor amphitheatres, car parks, borstals, art galleries, boxing rings and many of Britain's reps. She has played light comedy, Greek tragedy, Shakespeare, devised work, experimental work and modern classics. She stopped acting professionally after being diagnosed with RA and now delights in acting for fun. Most recently she played Marjery Kempe in *Talking to Marjery* at Brighton Fringe 2025, and Madame in *Pen of My Aunt* (Five Shorts at NVT). She is also a theatre director and acting teacher.



JANICE JONES - The Spinster/Pearl/

Secretary: Janice has been involved in theatre for many years, both on stage and behind the scenes. She has taken part in small film projects and performed her own poetry at open mic nights, most recently at Shoreham Wordfest. Productions at NVT include *Talk*, *A Kind of Alaska*, *Bedroom Farce*, *Mixie* and *The Heresy of Love*. Janice has loved being part of *Murder, Margaret and Me*, working with such talented actors, director and crew.



BRYONY WEAVER - Director: Bryony's been involved for over 40 years in both amateur and professional theatre. Professional work has included being PA to Richard van Allen at the National Opera Studio, and to actor/ theatre practitioner Steven Berkoff.

Directing: For profit-share ENR Productions: *Equus* (Co-Director). For NVT: *Laundry & Bourbon/ Lone Star* (Assistant Director), *The Sweet Science of Bruising* (Co-Director with Gaby Bowring).

This is Bryony's 31st NVT show, and currently she's sharing the role of Company Stage Manager with long-term collaborator Gaby Bowring.

It's been a joy to work with this excellent cast and creative team, who have poured such commitment and skill into the production. Thank you.



Photo: Ben Pritchard



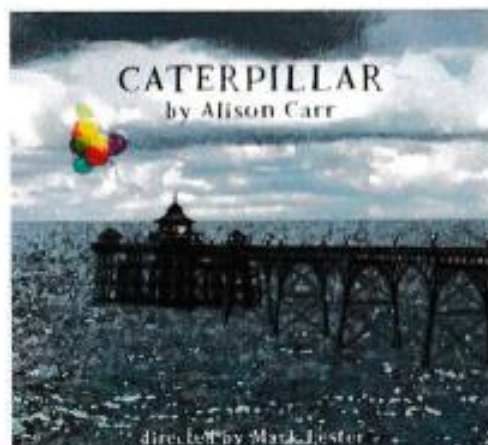
Photos: Ben Pritchard

Booking NOW at newventure.org.uk



CATERPILLAR by Alison Carr

Fri 19th to Sat 27th June



Owing to her illness, Maeve's seaside B&B is closed for the foreseeable future. Daughter Claire has been helping out but is she making things worse? Though Simon didn't get Claire's email cancelling his booking, he won't be put off, as he must fulfil a promise to fly in the town's annual Birdman competition.

Claire relents and lets him in for the night. Over the course of the weekend, we discover that all three have secrets, and we watch them drop their facades as they attempt to navigate grief and complex family ties.

Caterpillar is a darkly funny, emotionally-charged drama which explores the moments when we find ourselves teetering on the edge.

APPROPRIATE by Brandon Jacobs-Jenkins

Fri 17th to Sat 25th July

APPROPRIATE

A play by Brandon Jacobs-Jenkins



When the Lafayette siblings return to their late father's crumbling Arkansas plantation home to settle his estate, tensions explode as they uncover disturbing artefacts among his belongings. Appropriate is a bold, biting and darkly comic play that explores legacy, race and what we choose to remember – or forget – about our past.

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We all need a little 'care and maintenance' from time to time and our lovely Grade II listed theatre is certainly no exception. Whether it's fixing the roof or upgrading equipment, it is all increasingly expensive. So any donation you can make to help keep the New Venture alive and kicking will be hugely appreciated, and you can do it either via the donations box by the fireplace in the bar, or using the Donate Button on the homepage of our website - www.newventure.org.uk

Contacting the NVT

For ticket information only, call the Box Office - 01273 746118. To book tickets or for other information, check our website at www.newventure.org.uk
All other enquiries 01273 808353

NVT Acting Class

Monday evenings at 7.30pm for all levels of acting skills. Acting classes are open to anyone over 18. It will cost you just £8 per session (£4 for NVT members). Please see website for details.

Become a Sponsor

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Contact finance@newventure.org.uk

Or why not become an Angel, Archangel or even Archangel Gabriel to help us support the current and future improvements to our theatre. For further information please contact the Angels Coordinator, Gerry McCrudden: angels@newventure.org.uk

Membership

Company membership - £15 per year.
There is a discounted rate of £10 for Full Time students and unwaged (on means tested benefit) - (Proof of status is required)