

SHAKESPEARE HIS WIFE AND THE DOG

JAN 18–28 / THE EDYE



Photo credit: Issy Whitchurch

Theatre at The Broad Stage made possible in part by generous gifts from Laurie & Bill Benenson and Susan Stockel.

There will be no intermission.

CAST

Anne Sally Edwards
Will Philip Whitchurch

LOCATION

New Place, Stratford-upon-Avon
April 1616

Written by Philip Whitchurch
Directed by Julia St John
Movement Shona Morris
Designed by Aline Jeffrey
Photographs Paul Grundy
Costumes Hilary Lewis
Film/trailer Patrick Baldwin
Music Simon Slater
Accent Coach Charmian Hoare

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Lesley Nicol
Aly Spiro (ALRA)
Gail McIntyre
Simon Slater
Michael Powell Jones
St Michael and all Angels Church Chiswick

PROGRAM NOTES

“And as imagination...”

Over 400 years ago a boy is born in a small provincial town in England, into a family of modest means. He is baptized in the local church. He goes to the local grammar school, and gets married at the age of 18 to a woman eight years his senior. He moves to London and in a short span of time becomes the greatest playwright of all time. He stays married to the same woman for the rest of his life, they have three children, one of whom dies tragically in childhood. He himself dies at the age of 52 and is buried in the same church where he was baptized.

Not much else is known about Will Shakespeare. He left no letters or correspondence. No diary. We never hear his thoughts or opinions. We don't really know what he looked like, or where he laid his head all those years away from home. The only whisper from the man is in the will he made shortly before he died, but even this is a voice devoid of emotion, dressed up in the legalese of his lawyer, Francis Collins.

So what was he really like? Who was this person who over 400 years ago wrote so profoundly and perceptively about the astounding breadth and complexity of the human condition? Academics for years have pondered this question. A whole industry has been constructed to wrestle with the possibilities of his life yet the man remains deliciously elusive. Who did he really love? Was he unfaithful, was he gay? Why did he leave home for London? How did he become an actor... a writer? How could he write these brilliant plays without a university education? Did he like a pint? Was he kind to animals?

.... and on and on.

“Shakespeare his wife and the dog” imagines a tiny moment in Shakespeare's life, a miniature portrait painted the night before he died. An alternative title to the play might have been “Shakespeare's last night,” except this is not just about Will, this is about his relationship with the most important person in his life – his wife, Anne.

Many people have imagined their relationship as a cold loveless compact, a young man saddled with an older woman, as if this might somehow explain his long absences. But Shakespeare remained married to Anne for 36 years, and they had three children together.

He never bought property in London like his fellow artists and when he retired, he moved back to Stratford to be with Anne. There must have been something tugging him back home...

Today, we can see his plays with the full benefit of modern technology, but let us invite you to a barer stage, as it would have been in Shakespeare's day, a company of actors in simple costume inviting the audience to use their imagination -

"And as imagination bodies forth
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
Turns them to shapes and gives to airy nothing
A local habitation and a name..."

So what was he really like?

Imagine.

BIOS

PHILIP WHITCHURCH, Will, playwright,

Film credits include: *Peterloo*, by Mike Leigh (in post production), *Interview with a Hitman*, *Einstein and Eddington*, *Beowulf and Grundle*, *Wondrous Oblivion*, *Treasure Island*, *The English Patient*. Television credits include: *Doors Open*, *Taggart*, *Silent Witness*, *Place of Execution*, *Waking the Dead*, *Rocketman*, *Macbeth*, *New Tricks*, *My Hero*, *Wire in the Blood*, *Foyle's War*, *Midsomer Murders*, *Monarch of the Glen*, *The Gift*, *Plotlands*, *Sharpe*, *The Bill*, *GBH*, *The Brothers McGregor*, *Coronation Street*. Theatre credits include: *King Lear* (Royal Exchange), *As You Like It*, *The Changeling*, *The Broken Heart* (Globe Theatre), *Ghost stories* (West End), *Dark Road* (Royal Lyceum Edinburgh), *The Orphan of Xhao* (RSC), *Boris Godunov* (RSC), *Life of Galileo* (RSC), *Billy Elliot* (West End and Broadway), *Summerfolk* (National Theatre), *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* (Young Vic), *An Inspector Calls* (West

End), *The Changing Room* (West End), *The Crucible*, (The Royal Exchange), *Othello* (Lyric Hammersmith), *A Doll's House* (Oxford Stage Company), *The Alchemist* (Cambridge Touring Company), *Waiting for Godot* (Belgrade Theatre), *Lennon* (Liverpool Everyman). Writing credits: *1984-like*, *The Blitz Show*, *Infirmity Tales* (Co-author, Liverpool Everyman), *In the Midnight Hour* (Bolton Octagon, *The Young Vic* and National Tour), *La Bete Humaine* (adaptation for Nottingham Playhouse), *Pro Patria* (Adaptation for Hampstead Theatre), *Face* (Musical adaptation of *The Alchemist*, co-author Bob Carlton. Watford Palace, Hornchurch, and Belgrade Theatre), *Shakespeare his wife and the dog* (Edinburgh Festival, UK tour).

SALLY EDWARDS, Anne, Theatre credits include: Royal Lyceum Edinburgh (*Hedda Gabler*, *Copenhagen*, *The Price*), Globe/ETT (*Eternal Love* by Howard Brenton), Royal National Theatre (*Broken Glass* by Arthur Miller, *Fanshen* by David Hare), Royal Shakespeare Company (*Pericles*, *The Duchess of Malfi*), Young Vic (*Macbeth*, *Owners*), Lyric Hammersmith (*Lady Audley's Secret*), Chichester (*Arsnick and Old Lace*), Greenwich (*Gaslight*), Oxford Stage Company (*Hay Fever*, *Easter*), Bath Theatre Royal Productions (*The Browning Version*, *The Twelve Pound Look*), Queen's Theatre Hornchurch (*A Taste of Honey*), Theatre Clwyd (*Three Sisters*) and many regional repertory theatres. Television appearances include: *Doc Martin*, *Silent Witness*, *Trial and Retribution*, *Wire in the Blood*, *London Bridge*, *Casualty*, *Holby City*, *Coronation Street*, *Attachments*, *Doctors*, *Sugar Rush*, *Empathy*, *The Bill*, *Wycliffe* and *Autopsy*. Films include: *Green Fingers*, *Princes in the Tower* and *Nature of the Beast*.

JULIA ST JOHN, director,

Directing credits: *Shakespeare His Wife and the Dog*, Edinburgh Festival and UK tour, *Walter & Lenny*, Chichester Festival Theatre, *Looking for Vi*, Riverside Studios. Theatre credits include:

I Capture the Castle, *Jefferson's Garden* (Watford Palace), *The History Boys* (Crucible Theatre Sheffield), *The Seagull*, *The Archbishop's Ceiling* (Southwark Playhouse), *Our Father* (Watford Palace), *The Madness of George III* (West Yorkshire Playhouse/Birmingham Rep), *The Three Sisters* (Chichester Festival Theatre), *A Tale of Two Cities* (Cambridge Theatre Company), *Nana* (Shared Experience/Almeida), *Private Lives*, *Far From The Madding Crowd*, *King Lear*, *Amadeus*, *She Stoops To Conquer* (New Victoria Theatre), *McGrotty and Ludmilla* (Tron Theatre, Glasgow), *Larkrise* (Leicester Haymarket/Almeida), *Gullivers Travels* (Gate Theatre), and seasons at Theatr Clwyd and Westcliff Theatre. TV credits include: *A Place of Execution*, *A Touch of Frost*, *In The Line of Beauty*, *Lewis*, *Casualty*, *Julian Fellows' Most Mysterious Murders/Happy Valley*, *Doc Martin*, *The Glass*, *The Grand*, *High Stakes*, *The Brittias Empire*, *Harry Enfield and Chums*, *Poirot*, *GBH*, *A Question of Attribution*, *The Blackheath Poisonings*, *Gone To The Dogs*, *The Victoria Wood Show*, *Doctors*, *Joint Account*, *Lovejoy*, *Boon*, *Bloodrights*. Film credits include: *The Young Victoria*.