

FINBOROUGH | THEATRE

VIBRANT NEW WRITING | UNIQUE REDISCOVERIES

Spring-Summer Season 2017 | April-July 2017

The first London production in over 60 years

MR GILLIE

by James Bridie.

Directed by Jenny Eastop.

Presented by Mercurius in association with Neil McPherson for the Finborough Theatre.

"I find most good men occupied in designing and strengthening cages.

I do not like cages.

I think that the few minutes between the door of the cage and the jaws of the cat make life worth living."

In a new production commissioned by the Finborough Theatre and continuing their rediscovery of **James Bridie**, one of the West End's most successful dramatists of the 1930s and 1940s, the first London production since its 1950 premiere of **Mr Gillie** runs at the Finborough Theatre, playing Sunday and Monday evenings and Tuesday matinees from Sunday, 25 June 2017 (**Press Night: Monday, 26 June 2017 at 7.30pm**).

Village headmaster William Gillie is killed by the furniture van coming to take away his possessions, as he is being evicted from his home when his school is closed down. He has spent his entire teaching career fighting the Education Board's narrow idea of schooling, trying to inspire his pupils to strive for great creative lives. Having lost his school and his home and with none of his pupils quite finding the wings to fly free, his life is examined by a heavenly Procurator and Judge. For all his efforts to inspire great artistic freedom, did he actually achieve anything in his life? Or is the very act of trying and hoping enough?

Combining lovingly drawn characters with James Bridie's trademark dry wit, this wry comedy explores the impact one individual human life can have.

Mr Gillie was first produced at the King's Theatre, Glasgow, in 1950, starring Bridie's regular collaborator Alistair Sim; transferred to the Garrick Theatre in London for a successful West End run and was subsequently filmed by Tyrone Guthrie for the BBC

Playwright **James Bridie** (the pseudonym of Dr Osborne Henry Mavor) was born in Glasgow in 1888. He studied medicine at Glasgow University. His best known works include *Dr Angelus* (1947), recently a huge success when rediscovered by the Finborough Theatre; *Tobias and the Angel* (1930); *The Anatomist* (1931), Tyrone Guthrie's first London production; *A Sleeping Clergyman* (1933), featuring a tour de force performance by Robert Donat; *The King of Nowhere* (1938), starring Laurence Olivier; *Mr Bolfry* (1943); and *Daphne Laureola* (1949), a huge hit for Edith Evans and Peter Finch which ran for a year at the Wyndham's Theatre. He also wrote memoirs, adapted Ibsen, Molière and Chekhov and collaborated on three screenplays for Alfred Hitchcock: *The Paradine Case* (1947), *Under Capricorn* (1949) and *Stage Fright* (1950). His commitment to Scottish theatre included co-founding both the Citizens Theatre, Glasgow, and the first school of drama in Scotland (now the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland). He was also instrumental in the creation of the Edinburgh Festival, and a tireless campaigner for a National Theatre for Scotland. He died in Edinburgh in 1951.

Director **Jenny Eastop** is the Artistic Director and Producer of Mercurius for which she has directed *The Waiting Room* (Leicester Square Theatre and Above the Arts Theatre), *The Alchemist*, *The Devil Is An Ass*, *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside* and *A Trick to Catch the Old One* (all at The Rose Playhouse, Bankside), Anton Chekhov's *Vaudevilles* (Jermyn Street Theatre), and *School for Wives* (White Bear Theatre) for which she received an OffWestEnd nomination for Best Director. Jenny has also directed for companies such as Shakespeare's Globe, National Theatre Studio and London New Play Festival, including the premiere of Peter Nichols' new play *So Long Life* (Tobacco Factory, Bristol), *Warde Street* (Park Theatre) for which she received an OffWestEnd nomination for Best Director, and *Henna Night* (Leicester Square

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www.finboroughtheatre.co.uk Artistic Director Neil McPherson

Press Information

Theatre). Jenny has worked as Associate Director to Michael Blakemore on *The Life* (Southwark Playhouse), *Blithe Spirit*, with Angela Lansbury (Gielgud Theatre and US Tour), *Embers* (Duke of York's Theatre), *Democracy* (National Theatre, Wyndham's Theatre, Broadway, and Sydney Theatre Company), *Afterlife* (National Theatre), *Three Sisters* (Playhouse Theatre). Resident Direction includes working with Roger Michell on *Blue/Orange* (Duchess Theatre) and *The Homecoming* (National Theatre), and Matthew Warchus on *The Devil Is an Ass* (Royal Shakespeare Company).

The press on the original production of Mr Gillie

"A vivid, touching and memorable study of a well-meaning man" *The Tatler*

"The play is marked by Mr Bridie's customary dry humour and penetrating wit" *Theatre World*

"The finest character study that had come his [Alistair Sim's] way" *The Times*

"Mr Bridie does set out to amuse us, and in this he succeeds splendidly" *The Spectator*

The press on the Finborough Theatre's recent rediscovery of James Bridie's Dr Angelus

"A splendid evening...James Bridie was once a power in the theatre, but is long forgotten and this revival at the Finborough reveals just how good he was...The Finborough's decision to look again at Bridie is fully justified." William Russell, *Reviewsgate*

"Dr Angelus deserves to be seen by a much bigger audience than its present run at the Finborough will permit." Robert Tanitch, *Mature Times*

"Bridie's lost play is in fact a classic, and highly timely." Stuart McMillan, *The Upcoming*

The Press on director Jenny Eastop

"Great credit to the show's director Jenny Eastop" ★★★★★ Five Stars, *LondonTheatre1* on Warde Street

"Bang on direction by Jenny Eastop" ★★★★★ Four Stars, *WhatsOnStage* on Warde Street

"A very tight production" ★★★★★ Five Stars, *LondonTheatre1* on *The Devil Is An Ass*

"Director Jenny Eastop tightened the tension in the air and distilled whisky-strong, plastic-melting performances"

★★★★ Four Stars, *QX Magazine* on *The Waiting Room*

"This production is further proof of the exceptional theatre we have in the UK" ★★★★★ Five Stars, *The New Current* on *School for Wives*

PRESS NIGHT: MONDAY, 26 JUNE 2017 AT 7.30PM

PHOTOCALL: MONDAY, 26 JUNE 2017 AT 5.00PM-5.30PM

Finborough Theatre, 118 Finborough Road, London SW10 9ED

Box Office 0844 847 1652 Book online at www.finboroughtheatre.co.uk

Sundays, Mondays and Tuesdays, 25, 26, 27 June, 2, 3, 4, 9, 10, 11 July 2017

Sunday and Monday evenings at 7.30pm. Tuesday matinees at 2.00pm.

Tickets £18, £16 concessions. (Group Bookings – 1 free ticket for every 10 tickets booked.)

For more information, interviews and images, please contact

Neil McPherson on e-mail admin@finboroughtheatre.co.uk or **07977 173135**

Download press releases and images at <http://www.finboroughtheatre.co.uk/press-resources.php>