

# NOISES OFF

## 39 STEPS IT'S LOOKING LIKE A SELL-OUT!



There are now fewer than 39 seats available for APS's upcoming show *The 39 Steps*. And no wonder - Director Jane McKenna has created a dazzling, fast-paced comedy-mystery which has challenged APS's creative resources like never before. Our hero, Richard Hannay, has to escape a dastardly German spy ring and stop vital information leaving the country. 4 brilliant comic actors create 40 roles between them. There is a chase from London to Scotland and back by car, train and biplane, a flock of sheep, a marching band and a line of dancing girls! Oh yes - and the Forth Bridge, too, all on the stage at the Sherborne Studio Theatre from 2nd to 7th June...

<https://www.aps-sherborne.co.uk/39-steps.html>



# DEAD ON CUE: A SPOOKY THRILLER BY MARK CAREY

Mark Carey, the man who enthralled us with **'Into The Breach,'** last year has captivated Sherborne audiences once again with his latest work, **'Dead on Cue.'** This spooky thriller takes place in the same theatre dressing room in two time periods.

The unique premise of **'Dead on Cue'** is the intertwining of two performances of Shakespeare's **'Hamlet,'** set 65 years apart, in 1958 and 2023. The phrase "time is out of joint" becomes hauntingly literal as strange and unexplainable events seem to repeat themselves in both time periods. Carey masterfully weaves these two narratives together, with the character in the later period, Hamish Fife, attempting to uncover the mysterious disappearance of an understudy on the opening night of Hamlet.

Bertie Tindell had been a popular and successful music hall performer, touring the country for forty years with his **'Man In The Mirror'** act. But after the war, the nation's appetite for variety



theatre had waned, leaving Bertie scrabbling for work, ending up as an undervalued and frequently humiliated understudy in the 'legitimate' theatre. His lowly status, and fondness for the bottle, left him musing nostalgically over better times, and wanting to capture his happier memories on tape for his soon-to-be-born daughter, 'Rosemary; for Remembrance'.

Bertie finds it ironic and difficult to reconcile that in music hall, the actors address the audience, whilst in serious drama, they address each other. But Hamlet talks directly to the audience. "How can that be right?" asks Bertie – of course, directing his question to our Sherborne Studio Theatre audience, channelling the comedic performer and the tragic Hamlet at the same time!

The play delves deeply into the mysterious connection between the two productions of Hamlet and exposes how some things never change despite the passage of time. The play lifts the veil on the supposed glamour of an actor's life; The status hierarchy of the cast, the long hours waiting for the 'tech', the loneliness, boredom, poor remuneration and lack of respect for the minor members of the drama company.

The sole remaining link between the two productions is Claude Mason, who played the part of Hamlet in 1958 as a rising young star of the stage and returns in the 2023 production as Sir





Claude Mason, now playing the ghost of Hamlet's father. Having been a giant of the London stage throughout his long career, he is now way past his best and feels that it is only right to go on stage when 'a bit squiffy'. Hamish is his understudy, confidante and companion for 'prinks', Claude's affectionate name for pre-show drinks.

What is the connection between the two productions? How can the same things be happening to different people 65 years apart? These questions drive the suspense, keeping the audience on the edge of their seats. A central element of the thriller is the old dressing room under the stage, a place shrouded in secrets and mystery. What secrets have been buried there? This setting, cluttered with actors' paraphernalia, vodka and Pot Noodles, yet rich with atmosphere and tension, adds depth and intrigue to the narrative and becomes a character in its own right.

Among the most fascinating and eerie elements of **'Dead on Cue'** is the old dressing room mirror. Bertie and Hamish – both played by Mark Carey, of course – find themselves inexplicably drawn to it, and it becomes a symbol of the play's supernatural themes. It seems to hold the key to the mysteries of **'Dead on Cue'** but it also serves as a warning: just don't look into it... you might not like what you see.

The play's conclusion, much like its beginning, leaves you pondering the deeper questions it raises

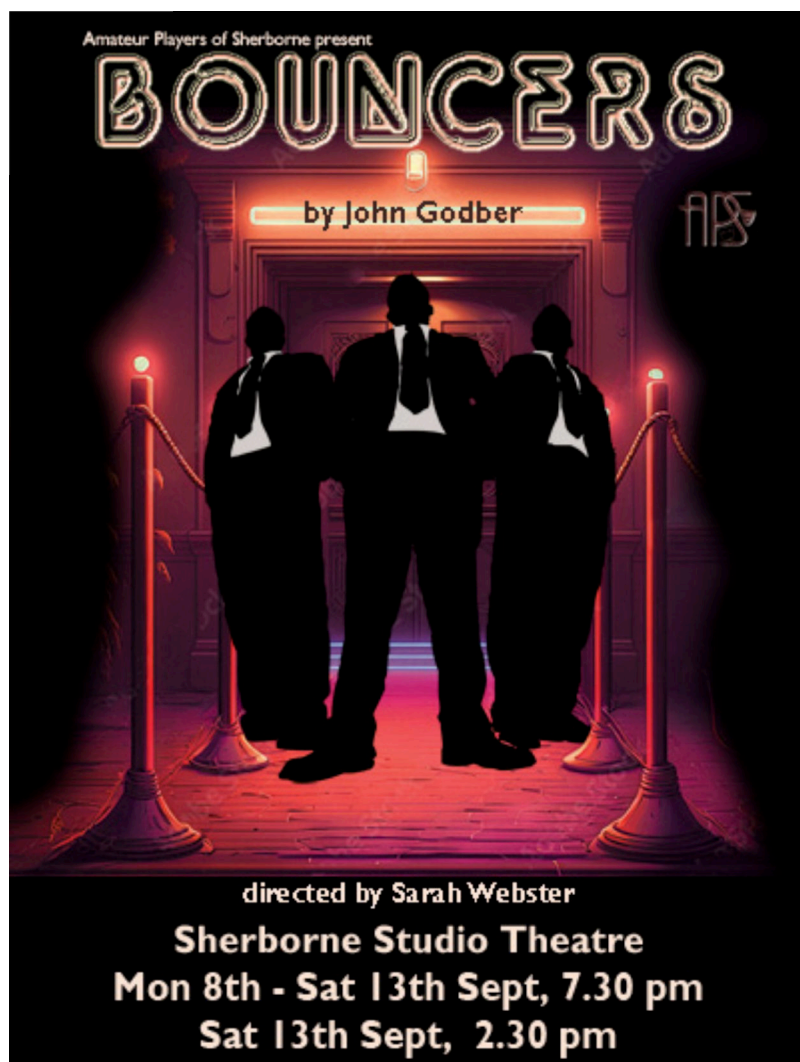
about time, reality, and preconceptions. As the play ends, Hamish hears the words on the autobiographical tape explaining Bertie's state of mind on opening night, bridging the gap of the intervening 65 years. It reveals why he disappeared, what happened to Rosemary (the biggest surprise of the evening), and aptly justifies the vengeful conclusion of Claude Mason's life on stage, echoing Hamlet. In all thrillers, we have come to expect a twist – but not this one!

**'Dead on Cue'** is a tour de force for Carey, having written the play and taken all the roles, mastering the personalities and accents of a range of characters, and having designed the spooky special effects in conjunction with friend and colleague Giles Shenton. It is an experience that leaves a lasting impression, bringing Carey's complex characters to life and creating a chilling atmosphere that leaves the audience spellbound.

We left the theatre believing that there are indeed 'more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in your philosophy'.

Mark Carey's **'Dead on Cue'** is a brilliantly crafted thriller that combines elements of suspense, horror, and drama. Its unique premise, compelling narrative, and outstanding performance make it a must-see for anyone who enjoys a good mystery with a supernatural twist.

Adrian Harding



John Godber's brilliant social commentary on the disco scene of the 1980's is listed among the National Theatre's top 100 plays of the 20th Century. This dissection of club culture is as funny, touching and fresh today as it was in the days of Culture Club.

Join Sarah for a reading of Bouncers on 19th May. If you like the reading, bring your attitude and your best moves to the audition on 10th June. If you're man enough, that is...

## DIARY DATES

SHERBORNE STUDIO THEATRE

### Play Reading – Bouncers

Mon 19<sup>th</sup> May 7.30pm

### The 39 Steps

Mon 2<sup>nd</sup>-Sat 7<sup>th</sup> June 7.30pm

Sat 7<sup>th</sup> June 2.30pm

### Auditions – Bouncers

Tue 10<sup>th</sup> June 7.30pm

### Bouncers

Mon 8<sup>th</sup>-Sat 13<sup>th</sup> September 7.30pm

Sat 13<sup>th</sup> September 2.30pm

### Much Ado About Falstaff

Fri 31<sup>st</sup> October 7.30pm

Sat 1<sup>st</sup> November 2.30pm & 7.30pm

### She Stoops to Conquer

Mon 15<sup>th</sup>-Sat 20<sup>th</sup> December 7.30pm

Sat 20<sup>th</sup> December 2.30pm

## SOCIAL EVENINGS

SHERBORNE STUDIO THEATRE

Fri 30<sup>th</sup> May 7.00pm

Fri 27<sup>th</sup> June 7.00pm

Fri 25<sup>th</sup> July 7.00pm

Fri 29<sup>th</sup> August 7.00pm

**Come and join us!**