

AGATHA CHRISTIE'S

# A MURDER IS ANNOUNCED

MISS MARPLE,  
ARE YOU THERE?



**JULY 8 TO 29 2023**

**A MURDER MYSTERY ADAPTED BY LESLIE DARBON  
DIRECTED BY MATTHEW COUSINS**



HOWICK LITTLE THEATRE  
SIR LLOYD DRIVE – PAKURANGA  
[HLT.NZ/CHRISTIE](http://HLT.NZ/CHRISTIE)

BOOK ONLINE  
[ITICKET.CO.NZ](http://ITICKET.CO.NZ) OR  
PHONE 361 1000



Please switch off cellphones before entering the theatre.  
The taking of photographs and use of recording devices during the performance is forbidden by law.

Please note: the play contains brief flashes of light.

*This community theatre production of A Murder Is Announced is by special arrangement with Samuel French Ltd and NZ Play Bureau Ltd.*



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## DONATIONS

Our mission is to perform plays and hold workshops and acting classes, but we also spend a lot of time and money maintaining our building.

You can help by attending productions, becoming a member or a sponsor or by making a donation. Every little bit helps.

Howick Little Theatre is a non-profit organisation registered with the Charities Commission (No. CC21274). Any donations are greatly appreciated. Donations over \$5 are tax deductible.

## JOIN US!

Have fun, make new friends, and become a part of something really special

You don't have to be on stage to be a part of Howick Little Theatre. We are always looking for people to help backstage, with set construction, costuming, props, lighting or sound, etc. So whether you're skilled or unskilled, call us now on 534 1401 or visit our website: [www.hlt.org.nz](http://www.hlt.org.nz)

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PROUDLY SUPPORTING  
HOWICK LITTLE THEATRE

# A MURDER IS ANNOUNCED

## From the Director

First of all, I'd like to say a big thank you for coming to see our show. Without you, none of this would be possible.

Theatre has been a major part of my life since childhood, hopefully I've gotten a bit better at it since then, but I'm not completely sure and no one will tell me. However, I'm very grateful to the theatre for offering me this play to direct after the first seven directors they called turned it down. I'm a big fan of the classics and especially Agatha Christie, and for me, the light-hearted and twisty-turny whodunnits make for a lovely night out and a great distraction from

the troubles of the world when we need it most.

Directing this play has been an absolute joy from start to finish. I was lucky to get an amazing cast, which is half the battle, and a terrific team around me bringing it all together to fulfil my vision of what this could look like.

A lot of people have put a lot of time into this and I hope that comes across in the quality of the production as it does for all plays done here at Howick Little Theatre. Everybody here loves doing this, and I hope you enjoy it just as much.

**Matthew Cousins**  
*Director*

**Setting** - Little Paddocks, the home of Letitia Blacklock, in the English village of Chipping Cleghorn, over four days in October. There will be a 15-minute interval between Acts I and II.

## The Cast

**Carleena Walsh**  
Letitia Blacklock

**Jo Crichton**  
Dora "Bunny" Bunner

**Emily Briggs**  
Julia Simmons

**James Calverley**  
Patrick Simmons

**Lisa Inman**  
Mitzi

**Stephanie Liebert**  
Miss Marple

**Shelby Sparks**  
Phillipa Haymes

**Viktoria Jowers-Wilding**  
Mrs Swettenham

**John Edwards**  
Edmund Swettenham

**Barrie Graham**  
Inspector Craddock

**Stephen Moratti**  
Sergeant Mellors/  
Rudi Scherz

**Standbys**  
Bronwen Arlington  
Ellie Barrow  
Romain Mereau  
Matthew Cousins

## Production Creatives

**Director**  
Matthew Cousins

**Production Co-ordinator**  
Ellie Barrow

**Trainee Production Co-ordinator**  
Lyneil Gray

**Stage Manager**  
Trevor Hynes

**Assistant Stage Managers**  
Rosie Elder,  
Sho Okumoto

**Set Designer**  
David Gifford

**Lighting Designer**  
Nigel Windsor

**Assistant Lighting Designer**  
Parag Londhe

**Technical Assistant**  
Dylan Day

**Lighting Rigging**  
Nigel Windsor, Parag Londhe, Dan Lockett, Dylan Day

**Sound Designer**  
Nicole Ashley

**Prompt**  
Laurie Mills

**Wardrobe**  
Jenny Connors,  
Amandeep Nanua,  
Ginny Jones

**Props**  
Margaret Nash  
Laurie Mills

**Decor**  
Linda Le Verne  
Nicole Harvey

**Intimacy Adviser**  
AJ Johnson

## Sound/lighting operators

Blake Ingram  
Parag Londhe  
Blake Elliott

## Set Builders/Painters

David Gifford (foreman)  
Pat Hudson  
David Guthrie  
Doug Johnston  
Dan Lockett  
Dan Vlad  
Laurie Mills  
Roger Grice

## Graphic Design

Emma Love  
**Photography**  
AJ Johnson

## Special Thanks

Val Lott & Allan Parker, Nicole Ashley & Evie Millar-Rolls, David Pitman, Honeybun Jewellers - Howick Village, and Dolphin Theatre.

# Matthew Cousins

## DIRECTOR

Matthew has been involved in community theatre for over 40 years, both in the UK and in NZ. He has acted in a huge variety of productions over the years, at Howick Little Theatre, Dolphin Theatre, The Rose Centre and Harlequin Theatre, among others. He turned his hand to directing in the past decade, most recently directing another Agatha Christie play, *Spider's Web*, at Dolphin Theatre in 2021. He loves the classics and has enjoyed working with this exceptional cast and crew on Miss Marple's first outing at HLT.



# Carleena Walsh

## LETITIA BLACKLOCK

Carleena has been in many plays at HLT: personal highlights are *Backstage*, *Punch & Judy* and *Ladies in Lavender*. Other memorable roles away from HLT have been the dream role of Martha in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* and Annette in *God of Carnage*, where she received high praise for her very technical on-stage vomit. Working with the great cast and crew of old and new friends that Matthew has assembled has been such a treat, especially the opportunity to work alongside good friend Jo Crichton. They were last seen together on stage as spinster sisters in *Ladies in Lavender*. Having worked previously with Matthew as an actor, she says it's exciting to see him directing this highly entertaining production that will keep you guessing.



# Jo Crichton

## DORA "BUNNY" BUNNER

Jo leapt at the chance to be in a play with her good friend Carleena, whom she met 21 years ago in *Waking Eve* at HLT. Until now, they have managed to be in only one other play together, *Ladies in Lavender*, in 2016. Jo has been associated with HLT for more than 40 years (starting in children's drama classes) and has performed in more than 20 plays here – most recently *Hilda's Yard* in 2022. *A Murder Is Announced* has been a great opportunity to finally work with Matthew Cousins and play with other actors she has enjoyed watching onstage in the past.



# Emily Briggs

## JULIA SIMMONS

Emily is thrilled to be back at HLT. She most recently appeared on stage in 2022 as Louise in *My Cousin Rachel* and Victoria in *Shepherd*. Outside of the theatre, Emily works as a legal graduate law clerk and holds Bachelor's degrees in both LLB (Hons) and Classical Performance (Classical singing).



While *A Murder Is Announced* has far fewer drones crashing through sets and less liberal use of gold spray paint than her last show, she has enjoyed every second working with the talented cast and crew that have made these performances possible.

# James Calverley

## PATRICK SIMMONS

James returns to the Agatha Christie-verse, after playing Giles Ralston in *The Mousetrap* in 2021. You may have also previously seen him in *The House*, *Deathtrap*, and *Moonlight and Magnolias*. We must tactfully omit mentioning his involvement in the very, very tedious geometry-themed *Angles in America*.



Offstage, he immerses himself in collecting ceramic goats dressed as famous detectives, but won't comment on the rumour that he dabbles as a part-time consultant for the Scooby-Doo gang. Brace yourself for a mystery abundant in twists and turns, rivalling a rollercoaster crafted by an illiterate cartographer. Kindly direct all feedback to his mother.

# Lisa Inman

## MITZI

This is Lisa's first time performing at HLT. Her last two roles were the subtly charming and mainly delightful Nancy in *Nell Gwynn* and Ass in *Flint Street Nativity*, both at Dolphin Theatre.



Mitzi, however, is as subtle as a brick and has all the charm of a cornered badger, so, of course, she's great fun to play. Lisa hopes the audience has as much fun deciding whodunnit as the cast did during rehearsals. Thank you. You're welcome.

## Stephanie Liebert

### MISS MARPLE

Steph took to the stage at a young age, and has never left it for long. A trained singer, her recent musical theatre history includes roles in *Hairspray* in 2014, *A Little Night Music* in 2016 and *Little Town Liars* in 2018. In 2021, she won two awards for her supporting role in *Spider's Web* at Dolphin Theatre, also directed by Matthew.

Steph's working life centres around TV and radio, where she has played many characters. A passionate animal advocate, gardener and style lover, she is honoured to have been chosen to portray Christie's gentle and surprising sleuth.



## John Edwards

### EDMUND SWETTENHAM

Classically trained through Actors Centre Australia, NIDA Open, and esteemed tutors, John returns to HLT after appearing as Joel Cairo in *The Maltese Falcon*. He has performed in many productions throughout Auckland and Sydney, the likes of which include *Nell Gwynn*, *The Crucible*, *Ladies Night*, and *Cosi*. John also directed *Spotlight* for the 2021 One-Act Play Festival and works as a professional voiceover artist in the industrial and narrative fields.



## Shelby Sparks

### PHILLIPA HAYMES

Having spent most of her life playing on stages, Shelby refers to the theatre as her home. Performing on stage and working behind the scenes in costuming, she says it's all about bringing stories to life. She's currently studying drama at the University of Auckland, and this is her second time performing at HLT, the first being in another Agatha Christie, *Love From a Stranger*, in 2020.



## Barrie Graham

### INSPECTOR CRADDOCK

*A Murder Is Announced* will be Barrie's third Agatha Christie in a row, having been Hodgson the gardener in *Love From a Stranger* at HLT in 2020, and Inspector Lord in *Spider's Web at the Dolphin* in 2021 (also directed by Matthew). He's enjoying eking out the humour in the role, and feels humbled and privileged to be among such a stellar cast, director and support crew.

The theatre is a happy, creative outlet to contrast his day-to-day world, lubricating the wheels of commerce and industry at the BNZ. Barrie is dedicating his performance to his brother, who was sadly and suddenly taken during rehearsals.



## Viktorija Jowers-Wilding

### MRS SWETTENHAM

Viktorija has been an Agatha Christie and whodunnit fan for as long as she can remember. She shares with Mrs Swettenham a love of honey but dislikes red herrings and chocolate cake. When not dropping in on her friends unannounced, she enjoys walking her King Charles Cavaliers, Dash and Bear, or a spot of yoga or pilates. Viktorija is happy to be back at HLT after appearing in *Neighbourhood Watch* in 2019. Previous shows include *Persuasion* and *Goodnight Mr Tom* at the Dolphin Theatre, as well as a number of musicals at Libretto Theatre and Harlequin Theatre.



## Stephen Moratti

### SERGEANT MELLORS/RUDI SCHERZ

Stephen is returning to the theatre having not performed since university days many centuries ago, in plays such as *As You Like It*, *Barefoot in the Park* and *The Seventh Seal*. He is excited to be performing with such a talented cast. When not pretending to act, Stephen can be found terrorising the locals at his croquet and bridge clubs and the slugs in his garden. In a former life, he was a research chemist, but he's now forgotten everything since retiring.





## The Playwright

### LESLIE DARBON

A British playwright since the 1960s, Leslie Darbon has adapted two Agatha Christie novels for the stage. Her first (based on the novel *A Murder is Announced*) opened in 1977, and in 1981, her version of *Cards on the Table* premiered. Her other plays include: *Time To Kill* (2006), *A Cold Wind Blowing Up* (1983), *Correspondents' Course* (1976), *Double Edge* (1975) written with Peter Whelan, *Who Goes Bare?* (1974) written with Richard Harris, *Two And Two Make Sex* (1973) written with Richard Harris, *Dead On Time*,

*Murder By Proxy*, *Shadow Of Doubt*, and *The Spouse Girls*. For television, Leslie has written for *Crossroads*, *Moon And Son*, *Bergerac*, *Shoestring*, *The Adventurer*, *Jason King*, *Department S*, and *Suspense*.

## The Play

The villagers of Chipping Cleghorn, including Miss Jane Marple, are perplexed by an advertisement in the local gazette that reads: "A murder is announced and will take place on Friday October 29th, at Little Paddocks at 6.00pm. A crowd begins to gather at the appointed time when, without warning, the lights go out.

## 2023-2024 Management Committee

Roger Mudford (Acting President & Treasurer), Ellie Barrow, Judith Clarke, Trevor Hynes, Alison Mudford and Kate Taylor

### Founder

Alma Woods, MBE

### Patron

Irene Fryer

### Membership

Sign up online at [hlt.org.nz](http://hlt.org.nz) or ask for a membership form at the office. A year's subscription is \$20.

### Showcard Subscriptions

Subscribe to receive discounted tickets and priority bookings. Showcards also make ideal gifts. See [hlt.org.nz](http://hlt.org.nz) for details and payment options.

## Information

### Office hours

9.30am-1.30pm Tues-Fri,  
ph 534-1401 (general enquiries),  
email [info@hlt.org.nz](mailto:info@hlt.org.nz).  
PO Box 82-003, Highland Park,  
Auckland 2143  
Website: [hlt.org.nz](http://hlt.org.nz).

### Bookings

Book at [iticket.co.nz](http://iticket.co.nz),  
or phone 361 1000.

### Costume Hire

HLT hires costumes.  
Phone office for details.

## Fundraising and Group

### Bookings

PlayDate nights are available for your group, school, office or club for fundraising or socialising. A PlayDate booking reserves all the theatre for a performance,

and guests will enjoy the friendly social atmosphere before the show with our full bar facilities. For details, including catering options, contact the office.

## HLT Studio

The HLT Studio, supported and developed by HLT, is a platform for new works and creatives. Short seasons of plays and play readings are staged each year. For more details see: [facebook.com/thestudiohlt](https://facebook.com/thestudiohlt)

## Acting Classes

HLT offers acting classes for all ages, including a new daytime class for seniors, taught by a leading professional. For details, see [hlt.org.nz](http://hlt.org.nz) or call the office.



## WAIT UNTIL DARK

SHINES A LIGHT ON  
THE POWER OF DARKNESS

A THRILLER BY FREDERICK KNOTT,  
ADAPTED BY JEFFREY HATCHER  
DIRECTED BY CARLOS LEHMANN

SEASON: SEPT 9 TO 30, 8PM. MATINEES: SEPT 10 & 17, 2PM.

In this adaptation of the 1966 classic, Susan Hendrix, a blind yet capable woman, is terrorised by a trio of men in her apartment in Greenwich Village in 1944. As the climax builds, Susan discovers her blindness might be the key to her escape, but she must wait until dark to play out this thriller's chilling conclusion.

*By arrangement with Music Theatre International Australasia Pty Ltd, on behalf of Dramatists Play Service, Inc.*

A COMEDY BY NORM FOSTER.  
DIRECTED BY TRACEY HOLDSWORTH  
SEASON: NOV 11 TO DEC 2, 8PM.  
MATINEES: NOV 12 & 19, 2PM.

A story of courtship, rekindled romance and the indomitability of hope, *Old Love* spans three decades, and half-a-dozen meetings between Bud, a salesman, and Molly, his boss's wife. One of them is smitten from the first, the other less so. Another hit from Canada's Norm Foster, this clever and witty heartwarming journey celebrates the never-ending pursuit of love – old and new.

## OLD LOVE

*Broken hearts and  
second chances*



Supported and developed by HLT, the Studio is a platform to encourage new creative talent and scripts. For details of the 2023 Studio line-up see [hlt.nz](http://hlt.nz).

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