

PREVIEW PROGRAMME

ROYAL GEORGE THEATRE, APRIL 6 TO OCTOBER 13

SHAW 20 FESTIVAL 24

TIM CARROLL, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR | TIM JENNINGS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

KIMBERLEY RAMPERSAD, ASSOCIATE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Agatha Christie's WITNESS FOR THE PROSECUTION

with KRISTOPHER BOWMAN, FIONA BYRNE,
PATRICK GALLIGAN, MARTIN HAPPER, ANDREW LAWRIE,
LYNN LAYWINE, LAWRENCE LIBOR, MARLA MCLEAN,
CHERYL MULLINGS, RYANN MYERS, MONICA PARKS,
GRAEME SOMERVILLE and SHAWN WRIGHT

Directed by ALISTAIR NEWTON

Set and Projections designed by KARYN MCCALLUM

Costumes designed by JUDITH BOWDEN

Lighting designed by SIOBHÁN SLEATH

Original music and Sound designed by LYON SMITH

Movement direction by ALEXIS MILLIGAN

"Witness for the Prosecution" is presented by arrangement with Concord Theatricals
on behalf of Samuel French Inc. www.concordtheatricals.com

We acknowledge and honour the land upon which we gather today as the historic and traditional territory of First Nations peoples. In particular, we recognize and thank the Neutral Nation, the Mississauga and the Haudenosaunee for their stewardship of these lands over millennia.

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Director's Note

by Alistair Newton

"Few things sink a reputation in posterity as irretrievably," wrote James Wolcott, "as a well-formed consensus that functions as embalming fluid, leaving behind a waxy, respectable relic." After living with Agatha Christie while preparing this production, I was delighted to discover that she — and her literary and theatrical *oeuvre* — turns out to be far more intriguing, complex, and full of fascinating contradictions than consensus had led me to believe.

Lucy Worsley's excellent recent biography argues that Agatha Christie is both "an institution," and "a breaker of new ground." Worsley's book asks us to consider what we should make of a woman who, already a major cultural figure, insisted that her occupation on important documents read "housewife", and called herself "Mrs. Mallowan" — even at the height of her fame when she enjoyed international name recognition —, much like the time Madonna agreed to present the Turner Prize on the condition that she be introduced at the ceremony as "Mrs. Ritchie". With Christie — who lived in a series of stately homes that wouldn't feel out of place as shooting locations for Julian Fellowes, but also took up residence in the radically Modernist Lawn Road Flats — there is something of the film noir double-life at play; perhaps it was Mrs. Mallowan who went to church and voted Tory, while Agatha was creating radical, cunning, and capable female characters like *Witness for the Prosecution's* Romaine Vole.

Much like the narrative of Christie's life, *Witness* poses many probing questions that can't be addressed by the kinds of simple answers which generate tidy conclusions. Is justice a concept invented by the powerful and wielded as a tool of oppression to control the marginalized, or rather a society's supreme high-ideal, enacted to safeguard it against barbarism? In either case, who is justice ultimately for when it is controlled by the state? Is *vigilante* justice worthy of the name? For that matter, what is suggested about a society whose most archetypal representation of justice is not a *blind* woman, but rather a *blindfolded* woman?

With this production, my collaborators and I strive to reflect Christie's complexity and complications, and hopefully also to keep her reputation safe from the formaldehyde of consensus.

Please enjoy the ride (and do keep the secret...).

Production History

First published in short story form as "*Traitor Hands*", *Witness for the Prosecution*, opened on October 28, 1953 at London's Winter Garden Theatre, and on Broadway the following year. In 1957 Billy Wilder directed the big screen version, starring Tyrone Power, Marlene Dietrich, and Charles Laughton. During previews test audiences had to sign pledges saying, "I solemnly swear I will not reveal the ending of *Witness for the Prosecution*." This is the first Shaw staging of *Witness for the Prosecution*, following earlier Agatha Christie productions of *And Then There Were None* (1993) and *The Hollow* (1996), *Murder on the Nile* (1985), *Black Coffee* (1996) and *Love From a Stranger* (2001) by Frank Vosper, based on a story by Agatha Christie.

UNDERSTUDIES

FIONA BYRNE, Romaine Vole; RAIS CLARKE-MENDES, Clerk of the Court, The Other Woman;
PETER FERNANDES, Plain Clothes Detective, Thomas Clegg, Policeman; JJ GERBER, Inspector Hearne,
Policeman; MARTIN HAPPER, Sir Wilfrid Robarts, QC; LAWRENCE LIBOR, Leonard Vole;
CHERYL MULLINGS, Mrs Janet MacKenzie, Mrs Brogann-Moore for the Defense; RYANN MYERS, Greta,
Court Stenographer; JOHNATHAN SOUSA, Mr Mayhew; TAURIAN TEELUCKSINGH, Carter, Mr Justice Wainwright;
SOPHIA WALKER, Dr Wyatt, Mrs Barton for the Prosecution; SHAWN WRIGHT, Mr Myers, QC;
JANE VANSTONE OSBORN, Stage Manager; FERNE HUDSON, Assistant Stage Manager

THE CAST *In Alphabetical Order*

Mr Mayhew	KRISTOPHER BOWMAN
Greta / Court Stenographer	FIONA BYRNE
Sir Wilfrid Robarts, QC	PATRICK GALLIGAN
Inspector Heame / Policeman	MARTIN HAPPER
Leonard Vole	ANDREW LAWRIE
The Mysterious Woman	LYNN LAYWINE
Plain Clothes Detective / Thomas Clegg / Policeman	LAWRENCE LIBOR*
Romaine Vole	MARLA MCLEAN
Dr Wyatt / Mrs Barton for the Prosecution	CHERYL MULLINGS
Clerk of the Court / The Other Woman	RYANN MYERS**
Mrs Janet MacKenzie /	
Mrs Brogan-Moore for the Defense	MONICA PARKS
Mr Myers, QC	GRAEME SOMERVILLE
Carter / Mr Justice Wainwright	SHAWN WRIGHT

ACT I: The Chambers of Sir Wilfrid Robarts, QC. Afternoon.

INTERMISSION

ACT II: The Central Criminal Court, London - better known as
the Old Bailey. Six Weeks Later.

INTERMISSION

ACT III: Scene 1 - The Chambers of Sir Wilfrid Robarts, QC.

The same evening.

Scene 2 - The Old Bailey. The next morning.

Stage Manager	DORA TOMASSI
Assistant Stage Manager	KEVIN ETHERINGTON
Production Stage Manager	KIM CHARLEEN SMITH
Production Stage Management Consultant	MEREDITH MACDONALD

Assistant Director	PETER FERNANDES
Assistant Lighting Designer	THEO BELC
Assistant Set Designer	XIMENA PINILLA
Fight Director	JOHN STEAD
Fight Captain	MARTIN HAPPER
Voice and Dialect Coach	JEFFREY SIMLETT

For Artist photo and bio information, please go to
shawfest.com/playbill/witness-for-the-prosecution/

Special thanks to Kim Crossley.

Running time is approximately 3 hours including two intermissions

The Author

AGATHA CHRISTIE (1890-1976) is known throughout the world as the “Queen of Crime.” As Julius Green proclaims in *Agatha Christie: A Life in Theatre*, she is the “most successful female playwright of all time. She also wrote some books.” Her books have sold over a billion copies in English with another billion in foreign languages; she is the most widely published author of all time and, in many languages, outsold only by the Bible and Shakespeare. She is the author of 66 crime novels, 150 short stories, over 20 plays, and six novels written under the name Mary Westmacott. Her work includes *Murder on the Orient Express*, *Death on the Nile*, and the genre-defining *And Then There Were None*.

Agatha Christie started life a fan of the theatre. *Black Coffee*, Christie’s first published play, was released in 1930 following her disappointment in the portrayal of Hercule Poirot in Michael Morton’s stage adaptation of *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*, *Alibi*. The play is noteworthy for two reasons: it was the first Christie play to land in London’s West End and it was her only full-length stage play to feature her famous sleuth, Hercule Poirot. *Black Coffee* was the beginning of Christie’s long career as a playwright.

Agatha Christie has broken two records in the theatre world. The first is for the longest running play with *The Mousetrap*, which opened in London’s West End in 1952 and has been running continuously to this day. Even when the play moved from The Ambassadors Theatre to St. Martin’s Theatre in 1974, it did so without missing a single performance! Her second record is for being the first female playwright to have three plays running simultaneously in London’s West End: *Witness for the Prosecution*, *The Mousetrap* and *Spider’s Web*.

In *An Autobiography*, Christie reflects on the opening night of her favourite play, *Witness for the Prosecution* in London, describing it as “the only first night I have enjoyed.” Describing her feelings on that evening Christie said, “I was happy, radiantly happy, and made even more so by the applause of the audience.”

Agatha Christie was made a Dame in 1971. In 2012, a memorial was erected in the heart of London’s Theatreland to mark Christie’s contribution to theatre. It was unveiled on 25 November 2012 to coincide with the 60th anniversary of *The Mousetrap*. Christie’s plays reached beyond London’s West End and onto Broadway since the early years of her theatre career. Her reputation continues to extend through the many successful film adaptations of her works, most recently Kenneth Branagh’s third Hercule Poirot film (*A Haunting in Venice*) released last year.

Agatha Christie Limited, managed by Christie’s great grandson James Prichard, has overseen the literary and media rights to Agatha Christie’s works around the world since 1955, working with “the best talents in film, television, publishing, stage and on digital platforms to ensure that Christie’s work continues to reach new audiences in innovative ways and to the highest standard.”

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** Ryann Myers is generously supported by the Baillie Family Fund for Education.