

Lyceum Theatre Season Launch 2008/09

The Royal Lyceum Theatre Company is delighted to reveal yet another outstanding season under artistic director Mark Thomson for 2008/09. Directors Tony Cownie and John Dove and composer Philip Pinsky will continue their work for the company as associate artists to assist Thomson in delivering and enhancing their commitment to producing exceptional drama.

Following a successful season 2007/08, this entertaining and ambitious line up for 2008/09 sees our co-productions with Perth and Nottingham re-affirm the Lyceum's commitment to celebrate our work beyond Edinburgh and position ourselves as Scotland's premier producing theatre company.

Mark Thomson said: "We are delighted to present a season of plays that together celebrate how vivid and elastic a theatre experience can be. Great writers and original voices mean the journey through our season should engage our audiences with a thrilling and unpredictable odyssey driven by masters of their craft and genre. From Shakespeare's powerhouse, *Macbeth* through J M Barrie's hauntingly beautiful ghost story, *Mary Rose* to Sam Shepard's visceral and comic *Curse of The Starving Class* each play stakes its claim as the finest of its kind."

We are pleased to welcome talented director Lucy Pitman-Wallace who will be kicking off the season with Shakespeare's *Macbeth* our first co-production that will then tour to Nottingham Playhouse. We're delighted to be able to confirm Liam Brennan will be playing the part of Macbeth, a welcome return following his performances in last season's *A Winter's Tale*, as well as *The Merchant of Venice* (2006) and *Othello* (2004). Our other co-production, *The Mystery of Irma Vep*, directed by Perth Theatre's artistic director Ian Grieve, will then transfer to Perth.

John Dove is returning to direct his third Arthur Miller play for the Lyceum, *The Man Who Had All The Luck*, while Tony Cownie will direct *Mary Rose* and our season finale, *Copenhagen*. Other highlights for the season include, *Curse of the Starving Class* and Glyn Robbins stage adaptation of CS Lewis's classic *The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe*, both directed by Mark Thomson.

Last year's Lyceum Christmas production of the *Wizard of Oz* broke all box office records, and exceeded our wildest expectations. With this production of CS Lewis's magical children's' fantasy novel, *The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe* is set to be another Lyceum Christmas delight from director Mark Thomson.

This autumn the Lyceum is also delighted to welcome back Catherine Wheels and The National Theatre of Scotland with their production of ***Something Wicked This Way Comes***, directed by Gill Robertson, following her hugely successful 2007 Christmas production, *The Wizard of Oz*.

-Ends-

Notes to editors

Season 2008/09 The Plays

Macbeth

By William Shakespeare

Directed by Lucy Pitman-Wallace

12 September – 11 October 2008

A co-production with Nottingham Playhouse Theatre Company, 22 October - 15 November 2008

Mary Rose

By JM Barrie

Directed by Tony Cownie

24 October – 15 November 2008

CHRISTMAS SHOW

Tickets go on sale 2 June

The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe

By CS Lewis adapted by Glyn Robbins

Directed by Mark Thomson

28 November 2008 – 3 January 2009

The Man Who Had All the Luck

By Arthur Miller

Directed by John Dove

16 January – 14 February 2009

The Mystery of Irma Vep

By Charles Ludlam

Directed by Ian Grieve

20 February – 14 March 2009

A co-production with Perth Theatre, 19 March - 4 April

Curse of the Starving Class

By Sam Shepard

Directed by Mark Thomson

20 March – 11 April 2009

Copenhagen

By Michael Frayn

Directed by Tony Cownie

17 April – 9 May 2009

Visiting Production

Catherine Wheels and the National Theatre of Scotland present

Something Wicked This Way Comes...

Written and adapted by Ray Bradbury

Directed by Gill Robertson

15 – 18 October 2008

The Plays

Macbeth

William Shakespeare

Directed by Lucy Pitman-Wallace

Designed by Lucy Osborne

A co-production with Nottingham Playhouse

“Foul whisperings are abroad, unnatural deeds do breed unnatural troubles”

What is there to say about *Macbeth* that hasn't already been said a hundred times? It's a brilliantly exciting, thrillingly dark tale of power, ambition and the supernatural in medieval Scotland, told with all of Shakespeare's skill as a dramatist.

Confronted by three witches as he returns from battle, Macbeth, Thane of Glamis, is given a tantalising vision of the future - he will acquire great power in his homeland, first as Thane of Cawdor and then as King of Scotland. Intrigued by this prophecy, his personal ambitions are aroused - and when word arrives that his valour in the King's service has been indeed rewarded with the title of Cawdor, his thirst for power begins to control him.

Obsessed with the prophecy, he and his scheming wife set their sights on achieving this ultimate honour and authority. And when King Duncan comes to stay at his trusted nobleman's home, the scene is set for bloody murder, a power grab, and a dark period of tyranny and fear in Scotland. As Macbeth's powerlust, paranoia and guilt grow stronger by the day the bodies begin to mount up, and he finds himself haunted by the past and tormented by the fear of losing his new kingdom.

It's a classic tale and one which we're delighted to be presenting for Lyceum audiences once again. Lucy Pitman-Wallace (new to the Lyceum, but an experienced director with RSC Sadler's Well, York Theatre Royal and *Macbeth* co-producers Nottingham Playhouse) will direct Shakespeare's "Scottish Play", with Liam Brennan (*The Winter's Tale*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Othello*) playing Macbeth, as Season 2008/09 gets off to a flying start.

Mary Rose

JM Barrie

Directed by Tony Cownie

Designed by Neil Murray

“I dare say, to a timid thing, being a ghost is worse than seeing them”

Barrie’s wonderful Edwardian ghost story, *Mary Rose*, begins in a mysterious old house, where a young man is being shown round by an old caretaker. Her evident uneasiness is matched only by her distaste for his jaunty, overconfident air, and though she is unwilling to speak of it, we learn that this house has a dark secret...

Suddenly we are taken many decades into the past, where the Morland family are at leisure in their home, and where their eighteen-year-old daughter Mary Rose is about to receive a proposal of marriage. Before assenting though, her parents feel honourbound to inform her suitor in private of a curious, unnerving incident from her childhood.

All seems well until a few years later Mary Rose is, unwittingly, brought back by her husband to the scene of those events, and the mystery begins to take hold once again.

Barrie’s play is unsettling and fascinating in equal measure, its tone recalling modern exercises in the supernatural such as *The Woman in Black*. The relationship of humankind with nature is less clear than we may think and the dark places at the back of our minds are brought to the fore with frightening ease.

Yet while there is a dark side to this story, there is also the light, with moments of great humour and fun. Mary’s husband Simon is an appealingly foolish young man, all bluster and bravado, and her parents are endearing in their good-natured squabbling. Barrie’s wit and warmth here serve both to relieve and heighten the haunting tone of the rest of the piece.

A compelling tale then, but one which will leave you shivering with more than just the cold as the dark nights draw in this winter...

The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe

By CS Lewis adapted by Glyn Robbins

Directed by Mark Thomson

Associate Director (Movement) – Malcolm Shields

Designed by Ken Harrison

28 November – 3 January 2009

“The wardrobe is magic. There’s a wood inside it, and a lamppost, and a country called Narnia where it’s snowing all the time. And I met a faun called Mr Tumnus, and we had tea together...”

CS Lewis’s wonderful tale of the magical land of Narnia has delighted children and families for over fifty years since it was first written in 1950. Recent blockbuster film *The Chronicles of Narnia* revived the much loved fantasy novel, with iconic characters brought to life on the big screen. Now the Lyceum will bring to the stage this enchanting tale, directed by artistic director Mark Thomson, and there’s no doubt that this will be another Lyceum Christmas delight!

Join evacuees Lucy, Edmund, Susan and Peter as they step through an old wardrobe into the mysterious land of Narnia, where the ruthless White Witch ensures it’s always winter but never Christmas. Alongside a host of forest friends, including Mr Tumnus the faun and Mr and Mrs Beaver, the four siblings join with the

magestic lion Aslan to battle the Witch and bring happiness – and Christmas – to the land of Narnia once again.

Last year's Lyceum Christmas production of *The Wizard of Oz* broke all Box Office records, and exceeded our wildest expectations. This year we're taking you and your family on another awfully big adventure, with this production of C.S Lewis's magical children's' fantasy - voted the best children's book of all time in a poll by literary charity The Book Trust.

The Man Who Had All the Luck

Arthur Miller

Directed by John Dove

"Isn't it better to feel that what you have come to you because of something special you can do? Something, something...inside you? Don't you have to know what that thing is?"

The Man Who Had All the Luck encompasses the same great creativity and values identified in Miller's other masterpieces of that early period of his work. It remained one of his least known plays for more than fifty years until it was revived in 2000 and staged thereafter in several productions. *The Man Who Had All the Luck* was inspired by a story once told to Miller and questions how one man can fail and another, though no less capable, can prosper in life. It sits confidently beside the other more famous works that followed such as *Death of a Salesman* & *All My Sons* – both staged at the Lyceum in recent years.

Set during the Depression, the play is a moral drama that questions the American Dream and centres around David Beeves, who is seemingly immune to disaster and wonders when his luck will catch up with him. However, his good fortune seems to highlight the tragedies of those around him as he tries desperately to find justification behind his successes. David's quest for validation of his identity results in a deepening paranoia that questions the existence of God and meaning in life.

Directed by John Dove, whose previously acclaimed productions at the Lyceum include Arthur Miller's *All My Sons* (2007) and *Death of a Salesman* (2004), *The Man Who Had All the Luck* is a powerful and tragic drama concerned with human freedom, centred on an American family struggling to find reason in their world.

The Mystery of Irma Vep

Charles Ludlam

Directed by Ian Grieve

A co-production with Perth Theatre.

'It's a terrible thing to marry an Egyptologist and find he's hung up on his mummy...'

Subtitled 'A Penny Dreadful' and taking its lead from tales of gothic romance, *The Mystery of Irma Vep* is a fast-paced and wickedly funny parody of the genre, mixing in references to a whole host of novels and films, from *Rebecca* and *The Hound of the Baskervilles* to *The Mummy*, *Frankenstein* and *Dracula*. If Daphne du Maurier had written a post-modern episode of *Midsomer Murders* starring the Marx Brothers, this might very well be the blood-curdling result!

Eminent Egyptologist Lord Edgar Hillcrest has happily re-married after the violent death of his first wife, Irma. But her memory still lingers in the house, as does the mystery of the demise of their son Victor at the hands of a suspected werewolf (also named Victor). And what hope does the new Lady Hillcrest have of shaking off the curse of Mandacrest when her husband returns from his latest trip to Cairo with an ancient mummy in tow?

This deliciously irreverent romp employs just two actors to play the upstairs and downstairs residents of Mandacrest, as well as a ghoulish supporting cast of vampires, werewolves and Egyptian goddesses. No cliché is left un-mocked, from portraits with moving eyes to secret passages behind the bookcase - ready

yourself for a night of ribald punnery, glorious over-acting and unbridled silliness, the perfect antidote to the midwinter blues!

Curse of the Starving Class

Sam Shepard

Directed by Mark Thomson

'I'm going into crime. It's the only thing that pays these days.'

Sam Shepard presents a comic dissection of the corruption of American values. On a run-down Californian farmstead, at the edge of the desert and within migrating distance of the Mexican border, an alcoholic husband and a philandering wife are each scheming to sell off their family home without the other's knowledge, whilst their children struggle to come to terms with the harsh reality of the world they've been born into. Debt, stolen dreams and a fear of the future fuel the family's self-destructive behaviours, as they sacrifice their meagre values, and each other, to attain something of the better life they envision for themselves.

Behind Shepard's exploration of the corrupting power of money and the all-consuming lure of corporation is a wickedly funny portrait of a family in decline, unsure whether to reject or embrace the label of America's 'starving class' whilst teetering on the edge of poverty, sanity and society itself.

Shepard's work explores many similar themes to playwrights such as Arthur Miller and Eugene O'Neill, but through more contemporary eyes, and with a brash, raw energy. The drama is underpinned by a scathing sense of humour, ensuring these characters never become simple archetypes, but are instead living, breathing contradictions of themselves, deranged and uncivilised, hysterical in the face of tragedy, and doomed despite their best efforts to survive the world.

Copenhagen

Michael Frayn

Directed by Tony Cownie

"A chain reaction. You tell one painful truth and it leads to two more"

This intense, absorbing and powerful piece of theatre from Michael Frayn brings our 2008/09 Season to a pulsating end.

Copenhagen is a gripping drama in which the mysterious actions of German physicist Werner Heisenberg in 1941 are pored over and questioned intensely. Frayn's piece is a fictional exploration of Heisenberg's real-life meeting with his old friend and mentor Niels Bohr, and the huge significance it may have held for the entire world. Years after the event, their ghosts debate the true meaning of the encounter, and try to understand exactly what happened that night.

This ill-fated meeting splintered their friendship, and provoked decades of speculation and debate. Having laid down the guiding principles of quantum physics in the 1920s, the two now found themselves on opposite sides of the Second World War.

Led by Heisenberg, German science rushed to develop a nuclear capability - both to generate power and to create a bomb. But were Heisenberg's motives so clear cut? Did he really want to put the atom bomb in Hitler's grasp? And if so, why did he come to Copenhagen and consult so freely with his half-Jewish teacher and colleague?

There emerges a fascinating portrait of the lives and work of these two men. Driven to explore the boundaries of science, they were also placed by history in a time when their work could and would cause unthinkable

THE LYCEUM PRESS RELEASE

Royal Lyceum Theatre Edinburgh

Tuesday, 13 May 2008

suffering and horror. With Bohr's perceptive wife Margrethe alongside them, the two scientists try to decipher what Heisenberg hoped to achieve, and the full implications of their meeting in Copenhagen.

Visiting production

Catherine Wheels and The National Theatre of Scotland present,

Something Wicked This Way Comes

Written and adapted by Ray Bradbury

Directed by Gill Robertson

14 – 18 October

One strange and wild autumn, a little while ago, Hallowe'en came early. It came at exactly the same time as Cooger and Dark's Pandemonium Shadow Show rolled into town.

That year, James Nightshade of 97 Oak Street was thirteen years, eleven months, twenty-three days old. Next door, William Halloway was thirteen years, eleven months, twenty-four days old. Both almost fourteen. Almost, but not quite.

For Jim and Will, the lure of the funfair is irresistible. But they soon discover that a sinister secret lies behind the smoke and mirrors and the carnival holds a dark desire to destroy the whole town. Only Jim, Will and Will's mild-mannered dad can save the day.

Adapting his own novel for the stage, the legendary Ray Bradbury has created a spine-tingling battle between good and evil, packed with a terrifying collection of characters including the mysterious flying Dust Witch and the deadly Mr. Dark.

A fantastic book and now a new show for everyone aged nine and up, *Something Wicked this Way Comes* is a deliciously scary adventure about friendship & innocence and perfectly captures the wondrous belief we possess when we are fourteen.

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Sponsors & Funding



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