

Director's Note

I've been visiting Stratford-upon-Avon to see the plays of William Shakespeare and his contemporaries at the (now almost rebuilt) Memorial Theatre and its sister the Swan for over 40 years. But it was at the Royal Shakespeare Company's now vanished third venue The Other Place that I first encountered The Herbal Bed.

The Other Place was an intimate space, originally housed in a prefabricated iron shed that had been built as a storage space and rehearsal room and converted to a studio theatre in the 1970s. Over the years the building and facilities had been improved and by the 1990s was the home of the RSCs 'theatre in the round' productions. Behind the venue lay a large car park which was bounded, on the left hand side, by a large perimeter wall. On the other side of that wall lay Hall's Croft the beautiful house and garden of John and Susannah Hall and setting for Peter Whelan's play The Herbal Bed.

And so it was that in the summer of 1996 my wife Jane and I sat in the small auditorium at The Other Place and watched the story of this turbulent episode in the life of Shakespeare's favourite daughter unfold. It was a strange and moving experience entering into Whelan's imaginary herb garden with the real one sited only yards away.

Although the play itself is based on real events little is actually known about Susanna or indeed her famous father William. What is known is that she was eldest child of Anne Hathaway and William Shakespeare and that she was married in 1607 to John Hall who was a successful physician and one of the most renowned herbalists of his day. Five years later she was publicly slandered by Jack Lane, a young man from a good family, of committing adultery with Rafe Smith a local haberdasher. She took the case to the church court herself. She is buried in Holy Trinity Church, Stratford next to her father and her husband and on her tomb-stone is written

**Witty above her sexe, but that's not all,
Wise to salvation was good Mistris Hall.
Something of Shakespeare was in that, but this
Wholly of him whom she's now in blisse**

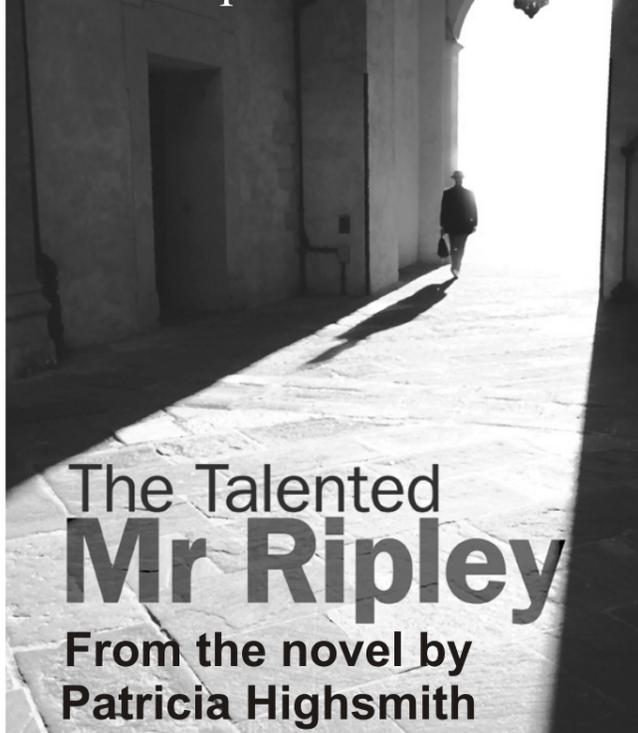
Peter Whelan has used these basic facts to create a clever and enjoyable play with strong and believable characters.

The Other Place has now gone and has been incorporated into the new temporary home of the RSC – The Courtyard. But Hall's Croft is still there after almost 500 years and it is still a magical and evocative place. If you haven't been there go and sit and delight in the smell and sight of John and Susanna's herb garden and think of these memorable characters and their remarkable story – perhaps they'll be watching you!

Keith Railton

www.criteriontheatre.co.uk

Our next production



The Talented Mr Ripley

From the novel by
Patricia Highsmith

Adapted by Phyllis Nagy
4th to 11th September 2010



BOX OFFICE (Direct)

024 7667 5175

This is a notice to members

When Tom Ripley is sent to Italy to track down Richard Greenleaf, the errant son of a wealthy American couple, his mission takes on a sinister twist as their lives become inextricably entwined. Phyllis Nagy's stage adaptation of Patricia Highsmith's novel explores the mind of one of crime fiction's great anti-heroes; an intelligent, suave and charming psychopath whose amorality is at the centre of a plot about duplicity and murder.

Following the success of the play the book became a hit film starring Matt Damon, Gwyneth Paltrow and Jude Law.

"Nagy's script is superb., the clever fractured construction matching the thriller's emphasis on inner psychology. Intelligent and gripping."

THE EXPRESS



Production photography by
Richard Johnson
079 0450 6280

The Criterion is a non-smoking theatre.

*Forbidden love, scandal and betrayal -
one family's struggle to protect a dark secret.*

The Herbal Bed

by
Peter Whelan

Programme

By arrangement with Josef Weinberger



Andy Chaplin (*Rafe Smith*)

Andy first appeared on the Criterion stage as Cancer Man in the 2007 production of Holy Ghosts, and more recently in Blue Remembered Hills, both directed by Geoff Bennett. His last appearance at the Criterion was as Joe Gargery in Great Expectations



Doug Griffiths (*Bishop Parry*)

Doug's first interest in the theatre was stage effects and set design but he soon started performing, first with Tempo Theatre. He has played many leading roles with the Guildhall, Blue Triangle, Hinckley and Nuneaton Operatic Societies and at The Loft. He has been designing, building sets and performing at The Criterion for 30 years, most recently playing roles in Oh! What a Lovely War, Brassed Off, Holy Ghosts and Lady in the Van. His most recent production was Chorus of Disapproval



Tim Willis (*Barnabus Goche*)

Tim first appeared on the local theatre circuit at the Talisman Theatre, Kenilworth in 1984, subsequently leaving the area in 1987 to pursue a career as an actor in the professional theatre. Trained at Mountview Theatre School, his subsequent career highlights include Fiddler on the Roof, Mother Courage, and the Heather Brothers' Lust all in London's West End. Other credits include an 18-month stint as Riff-Raff in The Rocky Horror Show, European tour, an international tour of The Mousetrap, and numerous national tours including Arcadia (NT) and Neil Simon's Laughter on the 23rd Floor. In 2002, he was offered a "proper job" and returned to the area and the local theatre circuit where he continues to act and direct. Having recently directed the rock musical Rent, Tim makes his directorial debut here at the Criterion later this year when he directs another cult show, the highly popular Little Shop of Horrors.



Calum Speed (*Jack Lane*)

Calum is currently enrolled on an acting course at Stratford-Upon-Avon where he has performed a number of roles including Larry from Patrick Marber's Closer and Jerry from Edward Albee's The Zoo Story. Calum's first appearance at The Criterion was in Great Expectations last year. He is hoping to win a place at drama school next year.

The Herbal Bed

Cast

Doctor John Hall	<i>David Eardley</i>
Susanna Hall	<i>Libby McKay</i>
Hester Fletcher	<i>Kat Cooper</i>
Rafe Smith	<i>Andy Chaplin</i>
Jack Lane	<i>Calum Speed</i>
Bishop Parry	<i>Doug Griffiths</i>
Barnabus Goche	<i>Tim Willis</i>
William Shakespeare	<i>Edward Alleyn</i>



David Eardley (*John Hall*)

Originally from Coventry, David has spent the last ten years performing on stage and on radio in the 'Muskoka' area of Canada, playing roles as diverse as 'Norman' in all three of 'The Norman Conquests', 'Mr Toad' in 'Toad Of Toad Hall' and Bob Cratchit in 'A Christmas Carol'. Having recently returned, David is delighted to be making his first UK appearance in his home town at The Criterion. He would like to thank this talented cast and crew for making 'The Herbal Bed' such a wonderful experience. Thank you to everyone involved, but especially to my loves Louise and Willow.



Libby McKay (*Susanna Hall*)

Libby began acting aged 8 and is now employed as an actor in the dungeon at Warwick Castle. She is thrilled to be back at the Criterion this year, having previously played Evelyn in The Shape of Things, Veronique and the Beast's maid in Beauty and the Beast, Vera Claythorne in And Then There Were None and in her latest performance she played Paulina in Death and the Maiden.



Kat Cooper (*Hester Fletcher*)

Kat Cooper has been involved in theatre for as long as she can remember, first appearing on stage as a rather confused fairy helper in Cinderella in her native Hong Kong.

She has appeared in numerous shows in both Hong Kong and UK, including The Blue Room, The Pirates of Penzance, Annie Get Your Gun, King Henry VIII, Robin Hood and Good Night Desdemona, Good Morning Juliet. In 2007 Kat founded her own theatre company "Red Room Productions", which mounted two productions of her own writing, "The Real Suzie" and "HKID", at The Hong Kong Fringe Club. She has also done countless Youth Theatre workshops and English thru Drama productions for EAL children in Hong Kong.

This is her first time at the Criterion and she really hopes that she can do the part of Hester justice!

The action takes place in the garden of John Hall's house in Stratford-upon-Avon and in Worcester Cathedral during the summer of 1613.

- Act 1 Scene 1 - The garden, early morning
- Scene 2 - The same, half an hour later
- Scene 3 - The same, at night
- Act 2 Scene 1 - The same, two days later
- Scene 2 - Worcester Cathedral
- Scene 3 - The garden, evening, some weeks later

Production Team

Director:	Keith Railton
Assistant Director:	Debra Relton-Elves
Stage Manager:	Ben Woodward
Set Design:	Bob Morley
Set Construction:	Bob Morley, Doug Griffiths, John Griffiths, Mike Tooley, Ben Woodward, Pete Bagley
Lighting:	Ian Knight, Pete Bagley
Sound Design:	Dave Cornish
Sound Operation:	Matt Hadlum, Andy Stamper
Props and Set Dressing:	Annie Woodward, Les Rahilly, Aileen Rahilly, Chris Jones, Joe Fallowell, Matt Waters
Costume:	Maureen Liggins, Pam Coleman, Sharon Evans, Nikki Muckle
Prompt:	Jonathan Rees