



entertainment • lifestyle • music

**Bristol Old Vic & Trafalgar Entertainment Group
present the Bristol Old Vic production of**

THE GRINNING MAN

“The best puppetry since War Horse” The Mail on Sunday

“The best British score in years” WhatsOnStage

*“An extraordinary amalgam of fairytale, puppetry,
romantic drama and black comedy”* StageTalk

A new musical based on the novel by Victor Hugo

Directed by Tom Morris

Trafalgar Studios

Opens 5 December 2017

Tickets on sale now

The critically acclaimed production of *The Grinning Man*, directed by Tony award-winning Tom Morris (*War Horse*) and based on the classic Victor Hugo (*Les Misérables*) novel, *The Man Who Laughs*, will take over Studio 1 at Trafalgar Studios from 5 December, following a hugely successful autumn 2016 premiere at Bristol Old Vic. Tickets will go on sale on Wednesday 11 October.

This romantic gothic musical love story, set in a fantastical world with a dark heart, is brought to life by Kneehigh writer Carl Grose (*Dead Dog in a Suitcase*) and “powered by an outstanding score” (Sunday Times) by Tim Phillips and Marc Teitler. The cast is led by Louis Maskell, in the title role of Grinpayne, and Julian Bleach, who plays Barkilphedro, a vengeful clown with a heart of lead. Macabre, magical and visually astonishing, this ultimately elating love story is a distinctive delight that barges through the gateway carved by the Nineties cult hit *Shockheaded Peter* with the full-blooded emotion of *Les Misérables*.

A strange new act has arrived at the fairground. Who is this youth and how did he get his hideous smile? Helped by an old man, a lone wolf and a blind girl, his story must be told. A tale of an abandoned child with a terrible secret. Paraded as a freak, then celebrated as a star, but only the sightless girl can truly love him for who he is. Let the darkness seduce you.

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The Grinning Man reunites Tom Morris with two puppeteers who began their careers inside Joey and Topthorn in the original production of *War Horse* – Finn Caldwell and Toby Olié - now leading their own brilliant puppetry company Gyre & Gimble.

When the show opened last year as the climax of Bristol Old Vic's 250th anniversary programme the critics raved: the Telegraph cited its "blackly comic brilliance"; the Daily Mail hailed it as "weird and wonderful, a dark delight"; the Guardian said the production "deftly walks a tightrope between romantic and grotesque... it defies theatrical convention by keeping its hand on its heart and its tongue in its cheek".

The producers are delighted to present the show in a specially configured space in Trafalgar Studios for an open-ended run from 5 December. *The Grinning Man* underlines Trafalgar Entertainment's on-going commitment to staging new work. This production joins several other recent Bristol Old Vic hit shows in transferring to the London stage, including *Swallows & Amazons* at the Vaudeville, *Peter Pan* and *Jane Eyre* at the National Theatre and *Long Day's Journey Into Night* starring Jeremy Irons and Lesley Manville at the Wyndham's opening early 2018.

The Grinning Man is produced by Bristol Old Vic, Trafalgar Entertainment Group, Eilene Davidson, Richard O'Brien, David Adkin and Neil Laidlaw.

CAST

Rising star Louis Maskell takes the title role of Grinpayne, *The Grinning Man*. Louis has just been nominated for Best Performance in a Musical for this role at the UK Theatre Awards. Fresh from Chichester Festival Theatre's *Fiddler on the Roof*, he has recently appeared in *Flowers for Mrs Harris* (Sheffield Crucible) and is well-known for the role of Freddy in the award-winning *My Fair Lady* (Sheffield Crucible) and as Tony in the UK tour of *West Side Story*. He also played the lead role in *The Fix* (Union Theatre).

Julian Bleach takes the role of the deliciously corrupt court clown, Barkilphedro. He is an actor best known for his defining role in the Olivier Award-winning *Shockheaded Peter*. His other theatre roles include *Gormenghast* at BAC, playing Ariel to Patrick Stewart's Prospero in the RSC production of *The Tempest* and Ivanov in the NT production *Every Good Boy Deserves Favour*. His television roles include Davros, creator of the Daleks, in the 2008 season finale of *Doctor Who*, returning to reprise the role in 2015. He also appeared as Machiavelli in Showtime/Sky Atlantic's *The Borgias* and is currently appearing as the Dragon in *St George and the Dragon* at the National Theatre.

CREATIVE TEAM

Tom Morris is Artistic Director of Bristol Old Vic and was previously Artistic Director at BAC where he met many of the creative team behind this show. Previous productions at Bristol Old Vic include: *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *King Lear*, *The Crucible*, *Swallows & Amazons*, *Juliet & Her Romeo*, and *Messiah* (Bristol Proms). Tom has been Associate Director of the National Theatre since 2004 and was co-director of *War Horse*, widely considered to be amongst the most successful theatre productions of all time.



Tim Phillips is a Canadian composer who has written music for many screen productions, including HBO's *Entourage*, the ITV serial *Talk To Me* and (with Murray Gold) the Channel 4 series *Shameless*. He honed his theatrical craft at BAC through Filter Theatre. Marc Teitler is a composer whose work spans musicals, opera, film soundtracks and albums and has had music featured in *Game of Thrones*. His current commissions for original musicals include *The Ghost Map* (dir. Bijan Sheibani). In collaboration, Marc and Tim have composed music and lyrics for *The Circle* (National Theatre).

Writer Carl Grose has worked extensively with Kneehigh theatre as writer and actor. His writing for the Cornish-based company includes *The Tin Drum*, *Dead Dog in a Suitcase*, *The Wild Bride* and *Tristan & Yseult*. Other recent writing credits include *Grand Guignol* (Southwark Playhouse) and *Oedipussy* (Spymonkey).

Puppetry will be created by Gyre & Gimble, founded in 2014 by Finn Caldwell and Toby Olié having met whilst performing in the original production of *War Horse*. Their work has appeared in productions as varied as *The Hartlepool Monkey* (Stratford Circus and Touring), *The Lorax* (Old Vic), *The Light Princess* (NT), *Running Wild* (Regents Park), *Elephantom* (NT and West End) and *Shrek: The Musical* (West End).

The creative team is completed by designer Jon Bausor (London 2012 Paralympic Games Opening Ceremony, *Bat Out of Hell* - West End), Costume Designer Jean Chan (*Lionboy* – Complicite), Music Supervisor Tom Deering (*Wonder.Land* - National Theatre, *Jesus Christ Superstar* – Regents Park), Lighting Designer Rob Casey (*Up Next* – National Theatre) and Sound Designer Simon Baker (*Matilda The Musical* - Olivier for Best Sound, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* - Shakespeare's Globe and *The Caretaker* - Old Vic).

LISTINGS INFORMATION

Previews: From Tuesday 5 December
Press night: Monday 18 December at 7.00pm
Performances: Monday – Saturday at 7:30pm, Thursday and Saturday matinees at 2:30pm
Box Office: www.atgtickets.com/trafalgarstudios/08448717632
Ticket Prices: From £15.00
Website: TheGrinningManMusical.com
Twitter: @GrinningManLDN

The producers of *The Grinning Man* are delighted to continue Bristol Old Vic's commitment to ensuring that tickets to the highest quality productions remain affordable and accessible, particularly to younger audience members, by offering the following special rate:

£25 UNDER 25 RATE: A general under 25 rate of £25 (redeemable for any standard-priced seat, subject to availability at time of booking) will be available throughout the run for every performance Monday – Thursday inclusive. Meaning that anybody under 25 will be able to see the show during the week at this special accessible rate. This rate will be available through ATG Tickets, the principal ticketing provider for Trafalgar Studios.



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BRISTOL OLD VIC

Bristol Old Vic is the longest continuously running theatre in the UK, and celebrated its 250th anniversary in 2016. Under Artistic Director Tom Morris, the historic playhouse aims to inspire audiences with its own original productions, both at home and on tour, whilst nurturing the next generation of artists, whether that be through their 350-strong Young Company, their many outreach and education projects or their trailblazing artist development programme, Bristol Ferment.

Bristol Old Vic uses its funding to support experiment and innovation, to allow access to their programme for people who would not otherwise encounter it, or be able to afford it, and to keep their extraordinary heritage alive and animated.

Since 2016, while the theatre continues to present work, it has simultaneously been undergoing a multi-million pound redevelopment project to transform its front of house space into a warm and welcoming public building for all of Bristol to enjoy, create a new studio theatre and open up its unique theatrical heritage to the public for the first time. The project is due to be completed in autumn 2018.

www.bristololdvic.org.uk

TRAFALGAR ENTERTAINMENT GROUP

Trafalgar Entertainment Group is a live entertainment business that owns and operates distinctive, stylish cultural buildings as well as creating, distributing and live-streaming innovative content. Based at the iconic Trafalgar Studios in London's West End, it is the latest venture from Sir Howard Panter and Rosemary Squire OBE – two of the most influential entertainment entrepreneurs of the last 20 years.

www.trafalgarentertainment.com

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