



ROYAL  
DERNGATE &  
NORTHAMPTON

ROSE  
THEATRE  
KINGSTON

## CAST AND COMPOSER ANNOUNCED FOR THE FIRST NATIONAL TOUR OF PETER WHELAN'S *THE HERBAL BED*

English Touring Theatre, Royal & Derngate, Northampton and Rose Theatre Kingston present

### THE HERBAL BED

THE SECRET LIFE OF SHAKESPEARE'S DAUGHTER

By Peter Whelan

UK tour: 5 February – 7 May 2016

Press Night: Tuesday 9 February at Royal & Derngate, Northampton at 7pm

English Touring Theatre, Royal & Derngate, Northampton and Rose Theatre Kingston today announce casting for the first national tour of Peter Whelan's *The Herbal Bed*. Two time Manchester Evening News award winner **Emma Lowndes** (*Downton Abbey*, *Cranford*, *The Musketeers*, *Children of the Sun* and *Thérèse Raquin* at the National Theatre) leads the cast. Royal & Derngate Artistic Director **James Dacre** directs a company including two time Olivier nominee **Charlotte Wakefield**, **Philip Correia**, **Patrick Driver** **Jonathan Guy Lewis**, **Michael Mears** and **Matt Whitchurch**.

This is the first major revival of Peter Whelan's *The Herbal Bed* and features original music by acclaimed Icelandic composer **Valgeir Sigurðsson**, founder of Bedroom Community. The production reunites James Dacre and Jonathan Fensom from the team who won the 2014 UK Theatre Award for Best Design for Peter Whelan's *The Accrington Pals* (also starring Emma Lowndes) at the Royal Exchange Theatre. The tour opens at **Royal & Derngate** in February, with a press night on **9 February** ahead of performances at **Cambridge Arts Theatre**, **Liverpool Playhouse**, **Exeter Northcott Theatre**, **Brighton Theatre Royal**, **The Lowry**, **New Theatre Royal Portsmouth**, **Theatre Royal Bath** and **Oxford Playhouse**. The tour will complete its run at the **Rose Theatre Kingston** in May.

Based upon real events from Stratford-upon-Avon in the summer of 1613, *The Herbal Bed* is an emotional thriller recounting the public trial of Shakespeare's daughter. Accused of adultery with her neighbour, Susanna and her husband fall under the glare of intense public scrutiny as they sue her accuser for slander.

A powerful exposé of the contradiction between human desire and social convention which seeks to repress it, Peter Whelan's moving and uplifting play provides a beautiful evocation of life in Shakespearean England. It was first produced to great acclaim by the Royal Shakespeare Company before transferring to the West End and Broadway, winning the Writer's Guild and TMA Awards. **Valgeir Sigurðsson** composes original music for *The Herbal Bed*. He is the acclaimed founder of Bedroom Community, the influential Icelandic collective described as 'the best record label in the

whole of Iceland and maybe even the entire world' (Drowned in Sound) and 'a lightning rod at the juncture where the ambition of classical music meets the aesthetics of indie music' (Pitchfork). Valgeir has released several albums including *Architecture of Loss*, *Dreamland* and *Equilibrium*. He has recently collaborated with Bjork, Bonnie Prince Billy, Kronos Quartet, Thom Yorke, Damon Albarn and Nico Muhly amongst others and collaborated on films including *Drawing Restraint* and *Being John Malkovich*.

**Philip Correia** plays Rafe Smith. His theatre credits include *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Holy Warriors*, *Antony and Cleopatra* (Shakespeare's Globe Theatre and International Tour), *Keepers of Infinite Space* (Park Theatre), *National Theatre: 50 Years on Stage* (Olivier Theatre, NT Live), *The Pitmen Painters* (National Theatre/Live/BKL), *Judgement Day* (The Print Room), *The Syndicate* (Chichester Minerva Theatre), *Bus Stop* (New Vic/SJT), *The Cherry Orchard* (Birmingham Rep), *Country Music* (West Yorkshire Playhouse), *Northern Odyssey* (Live Theatre), *Romeo and Juliet* (Jermyn Street Theatre), *Hobson's Choice* (Chichester Festival Theatre & National Tour), *The History Boys* (Wyndham's Theatre & national tour), *The History Boys* (National Theatre & national tour), *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (RSC). His television credits include *Atlantis*, *Inspector George Gently*, *Vera*, *Canoe Man*, *Lewis*. His film credits include *The Hunters Matchmaker* and *Bliss*.

**Patrick Driver** plays Bishop Parry of Worcester. His theatre credits include *Measure for Measure*, *As You Like It*, *The Heresy of Love*, *Dr. Scroggy's War*, *Julius Caesar* and *The Taming of the Shrew* (Shakespeare's Globe), *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* (Apollo Theatre), *For Once* (Hampstead Theatre, Traverse Theatre and UK Tour), *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*, *London Assurance* and *Volpone* (Royal Exchange Manchester), *Anthropology* (Latitude Festival), *Reverence* (Southwark Playhouse), *No, It Was You* (Arcola Theatre), *Highs And Lows* (Hackney Empire), *Hunger*, *Imperfect Librarian*, *Theatre Dream*, *Half Machine*, *Icarus Falling* and *Poseidon* (Primitive Science). His television credits include *Friday Night Dinner*, *Whistleblowers*, *The Last Chancers*, *The Worst Week Of My Life*, *Grass*, *Peep Show*, *The Office*, *Vortex*, *My Hero*, *Ed Stone Is Dead*, *People Like Us*, *Ghosts*, *Mr Charity*. As actor and joint Artistic Director of Dialogue Productions, he has appeared in *Scorched* (Old Vic Tunnels); *Wedding Day at The Cro-Magons* (Soho Theatre); *The Furies/ Helter Skelter* (Bush Theatre, UK Tour); *Top Dogs* (Southwark Playhouse and UK Tour); *Merlin* (Riverside Studios); *Heroes Like Us* (Edinburgh Festival); *The MC of a Striptease Act Doesn't Give Up* (Edinburgh and Kilkenny Festivals, UK, US and European tours) and was Assistant Directors on their production of *Monsieur Ibrahim* and *The Flowers of the Qur'an* (Bush Theatre, Edinburgh and tour).

**Jonathan Guy Lewis** plays John. His theatre credits include *An Inspector Calls* (Aldwych Theatre), *A Few Good Men* (Haymarket Theatre), *Elephants* (Hampstead Theatre), *I Found My Horn* (Trafalgar Studios and Hampstead Theatre), *Alphabetical Order* and *Speaking In Tongues* (Hampstead Theatre), *Green Wash*, *Mountain Hotel*, *Protest and Myth*, *Propaganda & Disaster* (Orange Tree Theatre), *I Found My Horn* and *My First Trainers* (Tristan Bates/Orange Tree/Chichester/Hampstead Theatre), *A View From The Bridge* (The Touring Consortium Theatre Company), *A Comedy Of Arias* (Pleasance/New Ambassadors), *Exclude Me* (Chelsea Theatre). His television credits include *Agatha Raisin*, *Skins Redux: Rise*, *Endeavour*, *I Shouldn't Be Alive: Blizzard Of Death*, *Desperados*, *Vincent*, *Sea Of Souls*, *London's Burning*, *Peak Practice*, *Soldier Soldier*. His writing credits include *Our Boys*, *A Level Playing Field*, *I Found My Horn*, *A Comedy Of Arias*, *My First Trainers*, *All Mouth* and *Pitch Perfect*.

**Emma Lowndes** plays Susanna Hall. Her theatre credits include *Children Of The Sun* and *Therese Raquin* (National Theatre), *The Glass Menagerie* (Shared Experience Tour), *Measure For Measure* (Thelma Holt/ Plymouth), *Topless Mum* (Tricycle Theatre), *Great Expectations* (RSC), *The Storm* (The Globe), *Whose Life Is It Anyway?* (Comedy Theatre), *The Accrington Pals*, *The Rise and Fall of Little Voice*, *The Seagull*, *Cold Meat Party*, *Port* (Royal Exchange Theatre). Her television credits include

*Musketeers, Downton Abbey, Vera, Paradox, Silent Witness, Survivors, Cranford, Moving On, Jane Eyre, Waking The Dead: Straw Dog, After Life, Von Trapped, Burn It, Lenny Blue.* Her film credits include *Mother's Milk, All Or Nothing, This Little Life, Frozen, The Walk.*

**Michael Mears** plays Barnabus Goche. His theatre credits include *Hamlet, Jubilee, The Comedy Of Errors, Epicene or The Silent Woman, Clockwork Orange* (RSC), *All's Well That Ends Well, Nation, Harper Regan* (National Theatre), *Conversations with my Father* (Old Vic), *The Goodbye Girl* (Albery Theatre), *Therese Raquin, The Tempest, Henry IVth Parts 1 and 2* (Theatre Royal, Bath), *A Tale Of Two Cities* (Royal & Derngate, Northampton), *Rats' Tales* (Royal Exchange, Manchester), *The Woman In Black* (West End), *Measure for Measure* (Theatre Royal Bath & RSC), *You Never Can Tell* (Theatre Royal Bath and Garrick Theatre, London), *Love's Labour's Lost* (Rose Theatre, Kingston), *Life After Scandal, Osama The Hero* (Hampstead Theatre). His television credits include *Londongrad, Parade's End, The Colour of Magic, Sharpe's Rifles, Mary and Jesus, The Seventh Scroll, The Old Curiosity Shop.* His film credits include *Private Peaceful, Invisible Eyes, Sylvia, Four Weddings & A Funeral, Queen of Hearts, Little Dorrit.* His writing credits include *Tomorrow We Do The Sky* and *Soup* (two solo plays written and performed by him at the Traverse Theatre, Edinburgh and Lyric Studio, Hammersmith, and on BBC Radio 4. 'Soup' was a Salisbury Playhouse production and winner of a Scotsman Fringe First award, and Best Actor nomination at Edinburgh Festival). *A Slight Tilt To The Left, Slow Train To Woking, Uncle Happy, Jam* and *Arnold Darwin's Getting Better* (solo radio plays written and performed by him and specially commissioned for BBC Radio 4). His new solo play about Britain's First World War conscientious objectors, *Comrades In Conscience*, will be produced later this year.

**Charlotte Wakefield** plays Hester Fletcher. Her theatre credits include *Monsieur Popular* (Theatre Royal Bath), *Oklahoma* (Music and Lyrics and Royal and Derngate/No 1 Tour), *Noel Coward's Christmas Spirits* (St James Theatre), *The Sound of Music* (Regent's Park Open Air Theatre), *Mamma Mia* (West End and International Tour); *Such Tweet Sorrow* (RSC), *Spring Awakening* (Novello Theatre and Lyric Hammersmith) and *Jungle Book, Merlin and Arthur* (Chester Gateway). Her television credits include *Occupation, The Royal, An Angel For May* and *Leap of Faith.*

**Matt Whitchurch** plays Jack Lane. His theatre credits include *Pine* (Hampstead Theatre), *We Know Where You Live* (Finborough Theatre), *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Liverpool Everyman), *Dog Death in Macedonia* (RADA Festival). His television credits include *The Outcast, Call the Midwife* and *Some Girls.*

**Peter Whelan** began his career in advertising and screenwriting before starting to write for the stage. In 1996 he was appointed an Honorary Artistic Associate of the Royal Shakespeare Company. His play *The Herbal Bed* won the Writers' Guild Award, Lloyd's Private Banking Award, TMA Award and Eileen Anderson Award. For theatre his other writing credits include *A Revolutionary Marriage, The Earthly Paradise, A Russian In The Woods, Divine Right* (which won Writers' Guild Award; TMA Award; Eileen Anderson Award), *Shakespeare Country, The Night Before The Morning After Show, The School Of The Night, The Bright And Bold Design, Worlds Apart, A Cold Wind Blowing Up, Clay, The Accrington Pals, Captain Swing* and *Double Edge Lakota.* For television, his credits include *In Suspicious Circumstances* and *The Trial of Lord Lucan.*

**James Dacre** directs and is Artistic Director of Royal & Derngate, Northampton. He was previously Artistic Associate at the New Vic Theatre and Associate Director at Theatre503. For Royal & Derngate his credits include *Brave New World* (UK Tour), *The Hook, The Body of an American, Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (UK Tour) and *A Tale of Two Cities.* For Shakespeare's Globe his credits include *King John* (UK Tour), *Holy Warriors, As You Like It* (International tour). His other credits include *The Mountaintop* (Theatre503 and West End), *King James Bible* (National Theatre), *Accrington Pals* (Royal Exchange Theatre), *Precious Little Talent* (Trafalgar Studios), *4000 Miles* (Bath Theatre Royal, The Print Room),

*The Thrill of Love* (New Vic Theatre, Stephen Joseph Theatre and St James Theatre), *Orpheus and Eurydice* (National Youth Theatre and Old Vic), *The Unconquered* (Stellar Quines, UK Tour and Off-Broadway transfer) and *Nightshifts* (Traverse). Off Broadway-work includes *Baal*, *The Error of their Ways*, *Work* and *Come and Go*. He has been awarded Fulbright and Schubert Fellowships in Theatre Directing and trained on the ITV/Channel 4 Regional Theatre Director's Scheme.

## **The Herbal Bed**

## **Tour Listings**

### **Royal & Derngate, Northampton**

5-27 February      Box office: 01604 624811 / [www.royalandderngate.co.uk](http://www.royalandderngate.co.uk)

**Press night: Tuesday 9 February at 7pm**

### **Cambridge Arts Theatre**

29 February-5 March      Box office: 01223 503 333 / [www.cambridgeartstheatre.com](http://www.cambridgeartstheatre.com)

### **Liverpool Playhouse**

7-12 March      Box office: 0151 709 4776 / [www.everymanplayhouse.com](http://www.everymanplayhouse.com)

### **Exeter Northcott Theatre**

14-19 March      Box office: 01392 493 493 / [www.exeternorthcott.co.uk](http://www.exeternorthcott.co.uk)

### **Brighton Theatre Royal**

21-26 March      Box office: 0844 871 7627 / [www.atgtickets.com/brighton](http://www.atgtickets.com/brighton)

### **The Lowry, Salford**

28 March-2 April      Box office: 0843 208 6000 / [www.thelowry.com](http://www.thelowry.com)

### **Theatre Royal Bath**

11-16 April      Box office: 01225 448 844 / [www.theatreroyal.org.uk](http://www.theatreroyal.org.uk)

### **Oxford Playhouse**

18-23 April      Box office: 01865 305305 / [www.oxfordplayhouse.com](http://www.oxfordplayhouse.com)

### **Rose Theatre Kingston**

26 April- 7 May      Box office: 020 8174 0090 / [www.rosetheatrekingston.org](http://www.rosetheatrekingston.org)

### **For further information, please contact:**

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