

WINCHESTER MUSICALS AND OPERA SOCIETY

# THE PRODUCERS



9th-12th November  
**THEATRE ROYAL WINCHESTER**



# THE PRODUCERS

A New Mel Brooks Musical  
Book by MEL BROOKS and THOMAS MEEHAN

Music and Lyrics by  
MEL BROOKS

Original direction and choreography by Susan Stroman

By special arrangement with StudioCanal

This amateur production is presented by arrangement with  
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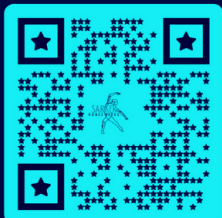
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## A Message from Our President

Welcome to *The Producers*, a light-hearted and somewhat politically incorrect romp through the ups and downs of trying to lose money in the musical theatre world!

Written in 2001, it is based on the 1967 cult film by Mel Brooks. Winning 12 Tony Awards, it starred Nathan Lane and Matthew Broderick, who also headlined the film musical in 2005.

The show proudly proclaims to be 'an equal opportunity offender' – a satirical black comedy crammed with humour, over the top characters, and an outrageous story that dashes from one crazy scenario to another.

We are delighted to welcome Gina Thorley in her WMOS directorial debut having performed on stage with us in the past, notably in *Made in Dagenham*. She has been wonderfully assisted musically by WMOS veteran and vice-chairman, Katie Hickson.

We welcome Nico Bray (Leo Bloom) in his first WMOS show, joining many familiar faces in this celebration of camp and anarchic humour.

In July 2023, we are pleased to announce that we shall be back in the Open Air to perform *H.M.S. Pinafore* with a 1940s slant – tickets already available from our website.

Our previous open air production *The Pirates of Penzance* in 2021 won the *Best Gilbert and Sullivan in the South East Region*, awarded by NODA. We are very grateful to NODA for their continued support of our society.

Meanwhile, allow the unscrupulous Bialystock and mousey Bloom plus the array of 'interesting' characters to entertain you – but as we all know it's 'Bad Luck to say Good Luck'

Iain Steel

President



Wesley Buckeridge

# plot

## New York 1959

Theatre Producer Max Bialystock's latest musical is a huge flop and closes on opening night. He finances his musicals by sleeping with old ladies so wants to find a sure-fire way of making money. The accountant Leo Bloom notices that more money could be made from a flop than from a hit and after much persuasion, Leo agrees to become A Producer with the following plan:

- Step 1: Find the worst play ever written.
- Step 2: Hire the worst director in town.
- Step 3: Raise two million dollars. ... One each (There's a lot of little old ladies out there!)
- Step 4: Hire the worst actors in New York and open on Broadway
- Step 5: Close on Broadway, take the two million, and go to Rio.

Max and Leo choose the play *Springtime for Hitler*, written by the German Franz Liebkind and hire the director Roger DeBris who decides the show needs to be more....GAY. With Ulla (the Swedish herring-loving actress) on board all is set for a gigantic Broadway flop.....

But wait, there are guns, and policemen, and prisons, and broken legs and broken dreams.



# Mel Brooks

*My message to the world is "Let's swing, sing, shout, make noise! Let's not mimic death before our time comes! Let's be wet and noisy!"*



Mel Brooks, the writer of *The Producers*, is one of America's most prolific writers and directors with a career spanning over seven decades.

In 2001, having previously won an Emmy, a Grammy and an Oscar, he joined a small list of EGOT winners with his Tony Award wins for *The Producers*.

Brooks was born on a tenement kitchen table, in 1926, in Brooklyn, New York City. His father's family were Jewish people from Gdańsk, Poland; his mother's family were Jews from Kyiv. His father died at 34 when Brooks was two years old.

At age nine, he went to a Broadway show with his Uncle Joe—a taxi driver who drove the Broadway doormen back to Brooklyn for free and was given the tickets in gratitude—and saw *Anything Goes* with Ethel Merman at the Alvin Theatre. After the show, he told his uncle that he was not going to work in the garment district like everyone else but was **absolutely going into show business**.

When Mel Brooks was 18 he joined the United States Army and was sent to Europe in 1944 to aid the allies in their fight against the Nazis. Here, he saw first hand the devastation caused by Hitler's army.

'More than anything the Holocaust by the Nazis is probably the great outrage of the 20th century. .... I was never crazy about Hitler ... If you trade rhetoric with a dictator you never win ... That's what they do so well: they seduce people. If I get on the soapbox and wax eloquently, it'll be blown away in the wind, but if I do Springtime for Hitler it'll never be forgotten. ... if you ridicule them, bring them down with laughter, they can't win. You show how crazy they are....'

On returning from the war, Brooks began working as a drummer and a pianist in nightclubs. Then, as if from a movie plot, one night a regular comic at one of the clubs was too sick to perform, so Brooks started working as a stand-up comic, telling jokes and doing movie-star impressions. A star was born.

At the opening of the Broadway version of "The Producers", he was asked by a reporter if he was nervous about the play's reception, since it cost \$40 million to produce. Brooks joked, **"If it flops, I'll take the other sixty million and fly to Rio."** He did not have to worry, since the play was a smash hit, both a critical and financial success.

## Cast

Max Bialystock - Wesley Buckeridge

Leo Bloom - Nico Bray

Roger DeBris - Daniel Williams

Carmen Ghia - Simon Meanwell-Ralph

Franz Liebkind - David Tatnall

Ulla - Molly Moffitt-McGrath

Hold Me/Touch Me - Anne Croudass

Soloist Stormtrooper - Conner Handstock



*All other roles played by the ensemble:*

Adrian Hickford

Amarantha Fennell-Wells

Amy Leddy

Anne Croudass

Charlotte Upfold

Chris Salter

Conner Handstock

Cressida Bullough

Isabel Wylde

Juliet Surridge

Kimberley James

Lydia Simpson

Max Bullough

Olivia Conroy

Penny Bullough

Rachel Potter

Sally Male

Shannon Cronin

Steve Gleed





**Director** - Gina Thorley

**Musical Director** - Katie Hickson

**Choreography** - Gina Thorley and Molly Moffitt-McGrath

**Production Manager** - Juliet Surridge, mentored by Sally Male

**Stage Manger** - Angie Barks

**Lighting and Sound Design** - Tony Lawther

**Costumes** - Jo Barker with Pam Jones, Anne Slevin, Aysha Jones , Amy Leddy, Simon Meanwell-Ralph

**Props** - Suzanne Hall

**Set Design** - Liz Petley-Jones and David Freemantle

**Set Construction** - David Freemantle, Liz Petley-Jones, Ian White, Brian Hurst, Iain Galley, Tim Stanbrook, Terry Madden, Kim Barry, Peter Theobald, Sue Larcombe, Christina Freemantle

**Stage Crew** - Marc Scott, Tony Lawther, Alan Morgan, Lorraine Morgan, Katie Hickson, Kim Barry, Jan Baerselman, Suzanne Hall, Rey Mackey, Peter Lucas

**Orchestra Secretary** - Anne Croudass

**Rehearsal Pianist** - Alison Benton

**Publicity** - Kimberley James

**Poster** - Molly Moffitt-McGrath

**Programme** - Suzanne Hall

**Website** - Simon Meanwell-Ralph

**Front of House** - Jan Baerselman

### **The Band**

**Conductor:** Martin Paterson

**Keyboard:** Alison Benton

**Violin:** Jo Molloy

**Reeds:** David Anderson, Paul Stiles, Alice Bartlett

**Trumpets:** Wayne Landen, Sue Williams

**Trombones:** Edward March, Tim Clarke

**Bass:** Perri Seymour; Toby Oliver (Saturday)

### **Thanks to:**

Eve Horan for loan of chaise longue, Naomi at United Church, King Edward VI School, Churcher's College, Olivia Conroy for photos, the staff at Theatre Royal Winchester.





### Max Bialystock—Wesley Buckeridge

Wesley is a sales manager and lives in Eastleigh. He directed the award winning *Made in Dagenham* for WMOS and almost stole the show as Cosmo in *Singin' in the Rain*. He also appeared in *Jekyll and Hyde*, *Utopia Limited* and *Sweeney Todd*. Wesley has played Puck and Bottom in *A Midsummer's Night Dream* numerous times. In his spare time he enjoys writing novels and anything and everything nerdy.

**Guilty Pleasure:** 'Glamorous' by Fergie

### Leopold Bloom—Nico Bray

Nico is a full-time student studying English and Creative Writing at the University of Winchester. This is his debut with WMOS. Nico's last stage role was playing Seymour in the award-winning production of *Little Shop of Horrors* with Spot On Productions in Eastleigh. His hobbies include theatre and screen writing.



**Guilty Pleasure:** Eating peanut butter out of the jar.

### Ulla—Molly Moffitt-McGrath



Molly is a teacher who has recently moved to Arborfield. For WMOS she has appeared as Jacqui in *Me and My Girl*, Lucy in *Jekyll and Hyde* and Jennifer in *The Witches of Eastwick*. Molly also choreographed *Made in Dagenham*. In her spare time she enjoys dancing, sewing and baking.

**Guilty Pleasure:** Frozen Milky Way Bars®

### Franz Liebkind—David Tatnall

David is a teacher who lives in Chandlers Ford. For WMOS he has directed *Sweeney Todd*, *Utopia, Ltd.*, *Patience* and *The Gondoliers*. Last year David played the Major General in WMOS' *The Pirates of Penzance* and once played a maypole in *Merrie England*. He is the founder and resident director of Pocket Theatre. In his spare time David enjoys cricket, Shakespeare, *The Simpsons* and walking.



**Guilty Pleasure:** Tights and Frocks (only at Christmas)

### Roger DeBris—Daniel Williams

Daniel is an applications research and development specialist who lives in Southampton. His WMOS debut was last year in *The Pirates of Penzance* and he then played Gerald in *Me and My Girl*. Daniel has performed with LOpSoc and Wokingham Theatre. He enjoys visiting historic buildings, reading local history, and country walks.

**Guilty Pleasure:** Watching his Jane McDonald at the Palladium DVD with a glass of sherry.



### Carmen Ghia—Simon Meanwell-Ralph

Simon is a millinery designer living in Winchester. Simon has appeared in every show since he joined the society in 2011. Highlights include Prince Harry in *Utopia, Ltd.*, Frances Fryer in *Calamity Jane*, Flute in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and Parchester in *Me and My Girl*. Simon enjoys dog walking, swimming, theatre and cinema.

**Guilty Pleasure:** Chocolate and glitter.



### Hold me/Touch me—Anne Croudass

Anne is a lead research nurse with Cancer UK and lives in Winchester. Since joining the society in 2001, Anne has been Chairman and has played an array of comedic characters and multiple roles in *Oh What a Lovely War*, her favourite show. Anne can often be found playing in the WMOS band. She enjoys choral singing, cats and cooking.

**Guilty Pleasure:** Gin Rummy (i.e. Gin and Rum).



### Stormtrooper—Conner Handstock

Conner is a drama teacher and lives in Eastleigh. He is making his WMOS debut but has recently performed with Spot On Productions, Mountbatten Players and Titchfield Festival Theatre. Conner's favourite role has been Sweeney Todd. In his spare time he enjoys video games and Dungeons and Dragons.

**Guilty Pleasure:** A rare steak with peppercorn sauce and a few episodes of Friends.



### Director—Gina Thorley



Gina lives in Eastleigh and is the creative project producer at The Point. This is her directorial debut for WMOS having previously performed in *Sweeney Todd*, *White Christmas*, *Singin' in the Rain* and played Beryl in *Made in Dagenham*. Gina is the director of Mudlarks Theatre and they recently toured the play *My Soulmate's Husband's Soulmate*, which she wrote. In her spare time, she enjoys writing, swimming, playing ukulele and being a nuisance.

**Guilty Pleasure: Dungeons and Dragons and Tia Maria**

### Musical Director—Katie Hickson

Katie is a vocal coach and lives in Andover. She was MD for *White Christmas*, assistant MD for singing for *Pirates of Penzance*, *Singin' in the Rain* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Katie has taken several lead roles for WMOS, favourites include Reno Sweeney in *Anything Goes*, Tracey Lord in *High Society*, Mrs Lovett in *Sweeney Todd*, Lina Lamont in *Singin' in the Rain* and Ruth in *The Pirates of Penzance*. Katie enjoys baking.



**Guilty Pleasure: Sausage roll with tinned tomatoes**



### Conductor—Martin Paterson

Martin is a software engineer from Southampton. He has played in the band or been MD for many WMOS productions including *The Sorcerer*, *42nd Street*, *Billy*, *The Witches of Eastwick*, *Sweeney Todd*, *Made in Dagenham*, *The Pirates of Penzance*, *Utopia, Ltd.*, and *Jekyll and Hyde*. Martin has been involved in over 150 productions in the last 30 years as MD, chorus, stage manager, band, LX operator and principal.

It don't mean  
a thing if it  
ain't got that  
shweigen-  
reigen-schone-  
schutzen-  
schmutzen  
sauerbraten



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### Executive Committee 2022

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Vice Chair: Katie Hickson

Treasurer: Alan Morgan

Secretary: Jess Eades

Website: Simon Meanwell-Ralph

Publicity: Kimberley James

Membership: Sally Male

Props: Amy Leddy

Audience: Jan Baerselman

Social Media: Molly Moffitt-McGrath

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Nathalie Gordon

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Tony Reid

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Carole Steel

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Margaret Williams

Angela Winteridge

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Brian Hurst

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