

*told by an idiot*



Theatre  
Royal  
Plymouth

A Told by an Idiot and Theatre Royal Plymouth production

# THE STRANGE TALE OF CHARLIE CHAPLIN AND STAN LAUREL

with Royal & Derngate, Northampton and Unity Theatre, Liverpool  
created by Told by an Idiot



ROYAL &  
DERNGATE  
NORTHAMPTON

UNITY  
Theatre

The Strange Tale of Charlie Chaplin and Stan Laurel was first performed on Thursday 14th November 2019 at The Drum, Theatre Royal Plymouth.

## DIRECTOR'S NOTE

***“Without him I would never have made a film. With Keaton he was the master of us all. His work is always contemporary, yet eternal, and what he brought to the cinema and to his time is irreplaceable”***

Jacques Tati on Chaplin

***“They made us laugh because in them we kind of saw ourselves - ridiculous, frustrated, up to our necks in trouble, but nevertheless ourselves”***

Danny Kaye on Laurel and Hardy

At Told by an Idiot we have often been fascinated by the deconstruction of an iconic figure and the idea of creating a ‘true fantasy’ has always appealed to us.

As a company who has consistently sought to inhabit the space between laughter and pain, we were intrigued to uncover a hidden and poignant chapter of comedy history. In some ways we set out to create a comically unreliable tribute to two extraordinary artists. We were determined to value fiction over fact, fantasy over reality, and shine a very unusual light on a pair of show business legends.

### **Paul Hunter**

Writer and Director of The Strange Tale of Charlie Chaplin and Stan Laurel

# CAST

## Sara Alexander

Pianist, Hannah Chaplin (Charlie's Mother)

Sara is Brit-Sardinian and a graduate of the University of Bristol and Drama Studio London.

Theatre Credits include: *A Pacifists Guide to the War on Cancer* (Complicite); *Rejoicing at Her Wondrous Vulva The Young Woman Applauded Herself* (Offie nominated, All About Me & Oval House); *World's Apart* and *The Wizard of Oz* (RSC); *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (National Theatre Outreach); *Romeo and Juliet/Twelfth Night* (Globe Players Theatre Company); *Much Ado About Nothing* (Bedouin Shakespeare Company/Globe Theatre Rome); *Pygmalion* (Tour De Force Theatre Company).

TV credits include: *The Mysti Show*, *Hounded*, *Doctor Who*, *Waking the Dead*, *Eastenders*, *Doctors*, *Casualty* (BBC); *Presenter* (CBeebies).

Film credits include: *Harry Potter & The Deathly Hallows Part 1* (Warner Bros); *Sparrow* (Franco Zeffirelli).

Sara is an associate artist with All About Me theatre company and is also a published novelist with HarperCollins. Her latest novel, *The Last Concerto* was released August 2019. Previous titles are *Under a Sardinian Sky* and *The Secret Legacy*. [saraalexander.net](http://saraalexander.net)

## Nick Haverson

Fred Karno, Charlie's Dad, Arthur, Savoy Guest, Oliver Hardy, Charlie's Butler

Nick trained at LAMDA.

Theatre credits include: *Loves Labour's Lost & Won* (Much Ado About Nothing) (RSC Stratford & Haymarket London); *Too Clever By Half* (Royal Exchange Manchester, Told by an Idiot); *Ben Hur* (Watermill Newbury); *The Devil and Mr.Punch* (Improbable, Philadelphia USA/ Barbican UK); '1984' (Northern Broadsides); *Low Pay, Don't Pay* (Salisbury Playhouse); *The Last Voice* (Southbank Centre); *The Venetian Twins* (Bolton Octagon); *Ruby Moon* (Northern Stage); *Satyagraha* (Improbable at London Coliseum/Metropolitan Opera House, NY); *Theatre Of Blood* (Improbable at The National Theatre); *The Hanging Man* (Improbable US tour & Sydney Opera House); *And The Horse You Rode In On, Beauty & The Beast* (Told by an Idiot); *The Pirates of Penzance* (Orange Tree, Richmond); *The Solid Gold Cadillac* (Garrick); *By Jeeves* (Duke of York /Lyric); *The Magic Carpet* (Lyric Hammersmith).

TV credits include: *Scott & Bailey*; *Tales from the Old Bailey*; *The Mimic*; *Thank God You're Here* (series); *Ashes to Ashes*; *Spooks*; *New Tricks*; *Casualty*; *Head over Heels* (series, for which he also recorded the title song); *Murder Rooms -The Dark Beginnings Of Sherlock Holmes*; *Sunday*; *A Fatal Inversion*; *Last Days of Ashenden*; *The Bill*; *Redemption*; *Devices and Desires*; *Absolutely True*; *Wyrd sisters* (The Worst Witch 2).

Films include: Tim Burton's *Sweeney Todd*; *Hilary & Jackie*; *Susie Gold*; *Sherman* (short); *The Tales of Despereaux* (cartoon); *Gullivers Travels*; *Gli Zii* (short); *Muppets Most Wanted*; *Men Who Sleep in Cars*.

Radio: *Hilda*, *The Barchester Chronicles*, *Two to Tander*, *Men Who Sleep in Cars*, *By Jeeves*, (BBC Radio 4); *The Edge* (BBC Radio York).

## Jerone Marsh-Reid

Stan Laurel, Bell Boy, Doctor, Landlord

Jerone Marsh-Reid trained on the Physical Theatre course at East 15 Acting School.

Theatre credits include: *The Deep* (Cliffdown Theatre, Rich Rusk from Gecko); *The Things I've Dismissed* (Cliffdown Theatre, Project Lockout); *Feel The Fear* (Camden Fringe/Fusion Festival, Project Lockout); *Mood* (Cliffdown Theatre, Simon Hunt); *Catch Me* (Upswing, European Tour); *Breathe The Beat* (UK Tour, Lucie Talbot).

Films and music videos include: *Still Got Time* (Zayn Malik Ft PartyNextDoor); *Not Letting Go* (Tinie Tempah and Jess Glynne); *You Want Me* (Tom Zinneti); *Maybe?* (The Beach); *Fam Thats Peak* (Arnold Jorge and Stormzy \*Parody\*).

Commercials include: *BBC Radio 1 Summer Mix* (BBC).

Jerone is an Artistic Associate of Project Lockout. He was engaged as Movement Director for their recent production *The Maniac Complex*, which can be seen as part of the Vaults Festival 2020.

## Amalia Vitale

Charlie Chaplin

Amalia trained at the Birmingham School of Acting.

Theatre credits include: *War of the Worlds* (Rhum and Clay); *Trap St* (Kandinsky Theatre); *Bon Ami / Love Sick* (All in Theatre); *Beginners and Jeramee*, *Hartleby and Ooglemoore* (Unicorn Theatre); *The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe* (West Yorkshire Playhouse); *Primetime* (Royal Court); *Beauty and the Beast* (Cambridge Junction); *The Light Princess* (Tobacco Factory); *Hysteria* (Theatre Royal Bath); *The Toy Theatre* (Birmingham REP); *Hunting of the Snark* (Latitude Festival).

TV credits include: *Midsomer Murders* and *Endeavour* (ITV); *Casualty* (BBC).

Film and feature credits include: *Christmas Eve* (Unstuck Productions); *Really Modern Times* (Channel 4 Random Acts); *Lula the Alien in Shaun the Sheep 2: Farmageddon* (Aardman Animations).

Amalia co-runs All in Theatre which is currently touring their latest show *Bon Ami*.



**'Anarchically inclusive joy... I now believe in the transformative power of theatre'**

The Sunday Times on Told by an Idiot's *Gef Happy*

## Paul Hunter

### Writer And Director

Paul Hunter is co-founder and Artistic Director of Told by an Idiot and has been involved in all of their work to date.

Directing credits include: *The Ghost Train* (Told by an Idiot / Royal Exchange, Manchester); *Too Clever By Half* (Told by an Idiot / Royal Exchange, Manchester); *Every Last Trick* (Royal & Derngate, Northampton); *You Can't Take It With You* (Told by an Idiot / Royal Exchange, Manchester); *The Mouse and his Child* (RSC); *Low Pay, Don't Pay* (Salisbury Playhouse); *Senora Carrar's Rifles* (Young Vic); *The Opium Eaters* (Brouhaha); *The Underpants* (Hope Street, Liverpool); *The Firework Maker's Daughter* (Swedish Theatre, Helsinki); *One Set to Love* (National Theatre, Hungary); *Jiggery Pokery* (Tour/ BAC); *Ordago* (for Punto Finco in Bilbao).

As Associate Director at the Octagon Theatre, Bolton, Paul Hunter directed: *The Venetian Twins*, *The Beauty Queen of Leenane* (Best Production, Manchester Evening News award), *Accidental Death of an Anarchist* and *Cleo, Camping Emmanuelle* and *Dick*.

## Ioana Curelea

### Designer

Ioana is the recipient of the inaugural Naomi Wilkinson Award for Stage Design with Told by an Idiot and supported by The Charles Mason and Naomi Wilkinson Foundation.

Ioana Curelea is a set and costume designer who was born and raised in Romania. She studied Fine Art for 10 years in Bucharest, before moving to the UK in 2013 to train as a theatre designer. She holds a BA and an MA in Set Design for Theatre from Wimbledon College of Art. She has an active interest in radical art and unorthodox theatre making.

Her recent credits include set and costume design for *The Others* (Camden People's Theatre); *Welcome to the UK* (Bunker Theatre); *Affix* (King's Head Theatre); *CLAY* (Pleasance Theatre) and *Crestfall* (RADA Studios).

Ioana is also a member of the award winning company We Are Kilter [wearekilter.co.uk](http://wearekilter.co.uk).

Supported by The Charles Mason and Naomi Wilkinson Foundation.



## Aideen Malone

### Lighting Designer

Theatre credits include: *Death of a Salesman* (Young Vic); *Worst Witch* (Royal & Derngate); *Princess and the Husler* and *Raisin In The Sun* (Eclipse); *A Monster Calls* (Old Vic & Bristol Old Vic); *Jack Lear* (Hull Truck); *Much Ado About Nothing* (Watford Palace); *Brighton Rock* (York Theatre Royal); *Napoleon Disrobed* (Told by an Idiot); *La Strada* (Belgrade Theatre); *Jane Eyre* and *Peter Pan* (National Theatre & Bristol Old Vic); *Fiddler On The Roof / Conquest To The North Pole* (Liverpool Everyman); *Hetty Feather* (Duke of York); *Frankenstein* (Living Spit).

Dance credits include: *Darbar Festival* (Sadlers Wells); *Kaash* (Akram Kahn Co); *Raft* (GED); *Unkindest Cut* (Sadhana); *Time Over Distance Over Time* (Liz Roche); *La Tete* (Jasmin Vardimon).

Opera credits include: *Ariodante*, *Turn of the Screw*, *The Marriage of Figaro*, *A Midsummers Night's Dream*, *Mary*

*Queen of Scots*, *Cosi Fan Tutte*, *Jenufa* and *Tosca* (English Touring Opera).

Aideen is currently working alongside Sadler's Wells Theatre and O'Donnell + Tuomey Architects to create the foyer lighting design for their new theatre Sadler's Wells East.

Future Productions: *Outwitting The Devil* (Akram Khan Co); *Mold Riots* (Theatre Clywd).

## Zoe Rahman

### Composer

Described in The Observer as "a remarkable pianist by any standard", Zoe has firmly established herself as one of the brightest stars on the contemporary jazz scene. She won a MOBO Award for best Jazz Act in 2012 and was nominated for the Mercury Music Prize for her 2006 album *Melting Pot*, which also won Jazz Album of the Year at the UK's first Parliamentary Jazz Awards.

A vibrant and highly individual pianist/composer, her style is deeply rooted in jazz yet it reflects her classical background, British/Bengali heritage and her very broad musical taste. Known for her powerful technique, wide-ranging imagination and exuberant performance, she has become a highly sought-after musician, working with the likes of Courtney Pine, George Mraz, Jerry Dammers Spatial AKA Orchestra, Martha Wainwright, among many others.

Zoe studied classical piano at the Royal Academy of Music, took a music degree at Oxford University and then won a scholarship to study jazz performance at Berklee College of Music, Boston. She has toured extensively throughout the UK and internationally, including performances in USA, Japan, Australia, Sweden, Norway, Italy, France, Barbados, Romania, Hungary, Algeria, Germany, Estonia, India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka.

Zoe has been a featured artist on numerous TV and radio programmes and is frequently invited to sit on high-profile panels — most notably, the Mercury Music Prize and BBC Young Jazz Musician of the Year and Nottingham International Jazz Piano competition. She shares her passion for music through teaching in a variety of contexts, inspiring musicians of all ages and abilities.

## Jos Houben

### Physical Comedy Consultant

Jos Houben is internationally acclaimed as a leader in the field of Comedy and Physical Theatre.

Performing, writing, teaching, and directing world-wide for the past 30 years he has worked with leading international organisations and artists including: Peter Brook, Ecole Jacques Lecoq, The Right Size, Georges Aperghis, Theatre de Complicite- Simon McBurney, National Theatre London, Ragdoll Ltd, Thames TV, Opera North, Centre National Des Arts Du Cirque, British Council and Opéra Comique.

He has received the prestigious Perrier Comedy Award (1986, *Theatre de Complicite*) and Olivier Award for Best Entertainment (1999, *The Right Size*).

Houben's one man show *The Art of Laughter* has been touring the world for the past 12 years. He has played month long stints to sell out audiences at the prestigious Rond Point Theater on the Champs Elysees three years in a row. The show is such a success that Jos was featured on the front page of France's Le Monde and interviewed on national news channels.

In 2016 Jos did comedy directing for the hit West End musical *Girls* and toured extensively with the comedy duo *Marcel*.

He directed Czech Physical Theatre Company Squadra Sua's new hit show *Crossings* which opened to wide acclaim in Prague in May 2019.

He is currently preparing two Operas for the Opéra Rennes and Opera Caen as well as a new movement based show with contemporary dancer Raphaëlle Delaunay.

### **Sophie Coffon** Song Arrangement

Sophie is a graduate of the Royal College of Music where she studied composition with Jonathan Cole. Since graduating she has worked in theatre, film and television as a composer / arranger, including roles at Shakespeare's Globe, RSC, The National Theatre, St James's Theatre and Park Theatre.

Highlights include: *Romeo and Juliet* (RSC); *Remains of the Day* (Out of Joint / Royal & Derngate Northampton); *Rosenbaum's Rescue* (The Park Theatre); *All You Need Is LSD* (Told by an Idiot UK Tour); *A Short History of Tractors in Ukrainian and Mighty Atoms* (Hull Truck Theatre); *Bang Bang* (dir. Nicky Henson and written by John Cleese); *Don't Wake Me: The Ballad of Nihal Armstrong* (St James's Theatre); *Little Black Book* (Park Theatre); *Unlined* (film - dir. John Michael Muskos - shortlisted for National Independent Film Awards 2015).

Sophie assisted Claire Van Kampen in her arrangements for the Olivier-nominated *Farinelli and the King* at both The Sam Wanamaker Playhouse and The Duke of York's Theatre and she has also recently composed a section of score for the BFI / Shakespeare's Globe collaborative film *Play On*, alongside five other Globe composers.

### **Nuna Sandy for ZooNation: The Kate Prince Company** Dance Choreography

Nuna is a member of ZooNation: The Kate Prince Company and Lawrence Olivier award-winning company Boy Blue Entertainment. She was one of the founding members of the dance group Plague and has appeared as a backing dancer for various artists.

As a freelancer Nuna has worked as teacher, choreographer, movement director and Facilitator for companies such as ZooNation: The Kate Prince Company, Boy Blue Entertainment, Company 3, Lyric Hammersmith and London Studio Centre.

Nuna's choreography credits include: *Allstars* (2013), *Apple Tree House* (2018) and Assistant choreographer and dancer for *Emile Sande* (Brits 2017). She has also choreographed performances at Sadler Wells, Barbican Centre, The Place and The Pleasance Theatre.

### **Dom Baker** Video Designer

Dom studied trained at Guildhall School of Music and Drama on the Technical Theatre BA.

Theatre video design credits include: *Captain Corelli's Mandolin* (Harold Pinter Theatre, UK Tour); *Knights of the Rose* (The Arts Theatre); *Jersey Boys International Tour* (Selladoor Productions); *An Evening with Primrose* (ACCA); *Beyond the Fence* (The Arts Theatre); *Valhalla* (Theatre 503); *Le Donne Curieuse* and *Opera Makers* (Guildhall School of Music and Drama); Associate Video Designer on *I Wish to Die Singing* (Finborough Theatre).

Other work includes: Video Design *Porth Festival* (Pontio Arts Centre); Video Design for *The Common at Glastonbury Festival*; Editor and Director of Photography on *Don't Eat Anything Blue- Advice on Life*.

### **Andrea Cabrera Luna** Assistant Director

Andrea is the artistic director of Anahat Theatre.

Directing credits include: *The Arsonists* (Royal Conservatoire of Scotland); *Scenes from The Duchess of Malfi* (Shakespeare's Globe, London); *Hotel Juárez* (University of Edinburgh/ Assembly Roxy); *I Am That Girl* (Scottish Storytelling Centre); *Waterfront Wasteland Medea Material Landscape with Argonauts* (Etcetera Theatre, London); *Seven Jewish Children* (El Taller, Mexico).

Prior to training as a director at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, Andrea won a FONCA scholarship to read an MA in Performance and Culture at Goldsmiths College, University of London. She holds a BA in Acting from the National School of Performing Arts (ENAT) and a BA in English Literature from the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM).

Andrea is currently working on *Instructions on How to Cry*, a devised dance theatre performance exploring the science and mystery of human crying.

[anahattheatre.com](http://anahattheatre.com)

### **From an idea by Irene Coffon**

The events in this play are fictional. This play is certainly not endorsed by the estates of Charlie Chaplin, Stan Laurel or anyone else for that matter!

### **PRODUCTION TEAM**

**Production Manager** Hannah Blamire  
**Technical Stage Manager** Sophie Tetlow  
**Deputy Stage Manager** Leona Nally  
**ASM (rehearsal and Theatre Royal Plymouth)**  
Rachel Middlemore  
**Wardrobe ASM (tour)** Sophie Fuller  
**Relighter** Ben Cowens  
**Costume Supervisor** Delia Lancaster  
**Set Build** Adrian Snell Production Services Ltd

### **FOR TOLD BY AN IDIOT**

**Artistic Director** Paul Hunter  
**Executive Director** Jenni Grainger  
**Producer** Jennifer Holton  
**Participation Manager** Natasha Bergg  
**Finance Manager** Julie Renwick  
**Press Representative** Nancy Poole

### **FOR THEATRE ROYAL PLYMOUTH**

**Producer** Louise Schumann  
**Artistic Associate** David Prescott  
**Production Manager** Hugh Borthwick  
**Drum Technician** John Purkis  
**Head of Sound** Dan Mitcham  
**Media and Communications Officer** Rebecca Pettitt  
**Digital Content and Website Officer** Richard Bailey  
**Production Assistant** Lauren Walsh  
**Assistant Director** Freddie Crossley

**Marketing Artwork** Dragonfly Design  
**Artwork Photography** Hugo Glendinning  
**Transport** Southern Van Lines

### **WE WOULD LIKE TO THANK**

Stephen Harper, Iain Johnstone, Scarlett Plouviez-Comnas, Will Merrick, Chioma Uma, Glen Stewart, Kes Hayter & Milligan, Kate Holliday, Kaos Productions, Michael Vale, Anthony Wilkinson, Patrick Wilkinson.

Photograph of Fred Karno Company onboard SS Cairnrona from the archives of Roy Export Company Ltd.

## TOLD BY AN IDIOT

Told by an Idiot have been creating the unexpected since 1993, exploring the human condition through theatre that is 'bigger than life'. We acknowledge the artifice of performance and make no attempt to put reality on stage, but we inhabit the space between laughter and pain which exists in the real world.

Our work is rooted in the live event and thrives on a sense of spontaneity and risk, celebrating the unpredictability of performance. Through playful collaborative writing, anarchic physicality and a comedic sensibility we create genuinely spontaneous experiences for audiences.

We consistently experiment with what art can be and who can be involved and, in doing so, our work blurs the lines between artist, participant and audience. Our commitment to accessibility informs the entwined relationship between our productions and our participation work. Through our work on stage, and through our Taught by an Idiot Programme, we foster a sense of openness, curiosity and the desire to play.

We take creative risks, we tell universal stories and we include everyone.

[toldbyanidiot.org](http://toldbyanidiot.org)

Taught by an Idiot, our education and participation strand, offers projects and workshops that are anarchic, spontaneous and accessible to the widest possible audience with no regard to age, ethnicity, ability or training. The only thing that is asked of participants is a sense of openness, curiosity and the desire to play. We run workshops for theatre professionals and we also work with schools, colleges and universities to provide bespoke Idiot participation opportunities within their institutions. For more information and to book an upcoming workshop, visit: [toldbyanidiot.org/taughtbyanidiot](http://toldbyanidiot.org/taughtbyanidiot)

**'Theatre about as inventive, imaginative and fantastical as it gets'** Time Out

**'Their work is never less than sublime'** The Independent on Told by an Idiot

## THEATRE ROYAL PLYMOUTH

Theatre Royal Plymouth is a registered charity providing art, education and community engagement throughout Plymouth and the wider region. We engage and inspire many communities through performing arts and we aim to touch the lives and interests of people from all backgrounds. We do this by creating and presenting a breadth of shows on a range of scales, with our extensive creative engagement programmes, by embracing the vitality of new talent and supporting emerging and established artists, and by collaborating with a range of partners to provide dynamic cultural leadership for the city of Plymouth.

Recent productions and co-productions include *God Of Chaos* by Phil Porter, *The Kneebone Cadillac* by Carl Grose, *You Stupid Darkness!* by Sam Steiner (with Paines Plough), *The Unreturning* by Anna Jordan (with Franfic Assembly) and *One Under* by Winsome Pinnock (with Graeae).

TRP has a strong track record of presenting and producing international work from companies and artists including Ontroerend Goed, Big In Belgium at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, Robert Lepage and the late Yukio Ninagawa. In March 2019 TRP unveiled *Messenger*, the UK's largest bronze sculpture created by the artist Joseph Hillier.

**Chief Executive** Adrian Vinken OBE

**Engagement & Learning Director** Mandy Precious

**Director of Strategic Projects** Marianne Locatori

**Operations Director** Helen Costello

**Director of Audience and Communications** Dylan Tozer

**Board of Directors Chairman** Nick Buckland OBE

**Vice Chair** Bronwen Lacey

**Board Members** Francis Drake | Paul Woods | James Pidgeon | Shona Godefroy | Sarah Fysh

## ROYAL & DERNGATE, NORTHAMPTON

Royal & Derngate Northampton Royal is the main venue for arts and entertainment in Northamptonshire, with attendances for live events and films numbering 358,000 last year, and an additional 119,000 seeing its work on tour at over 100 venues. Named Regional Theatre of the Year in The Stage Awards in 2011 (and nominated again in 2016), the theatre won the UK Theatre Awards for Best Presentation of Touring Theatre in 2015 and Best Touring Production in 2016 for *The Herbal Bed*, and The Stage Ensemble Award and a Fringe First for *Education, Education, Education* in 2017. In 2019 Royal & Derngate was nominated for the UK Theatre 'Excellence in Inclusivity' Award.

[royalandderngate.co.uk](http://royalandderngate.co.uk) / @royalderngate

## UNITY THEATRE, LIVERPOOL

Unity Theatre gives audiences and participants opportunities to engage with live performances that excite, entertain and inspire. Our theatre spaces are intimate, allowing visitors to experience the exhilaration of live performance, up close.

We've been behaving radically onstage since the 1930's and to this day, our theatre serves as a counterpoint to the mainstream, championing equality for diverse audiences and artists. [unitytheatreliverpool.co.uk](http://unitytheatreliverpool.co.uk) / @unitytheatre

## Co-commissioned by London International Mime Festival.



**At Wilton's Music Hall, London, *The Strange Tale of Charlie Chaplin and Stan Laurel* is presented by London International Mime Festival.**