

PENELOPE WILTON · DIANA QUICK
JON CANTER · VINCENT FRANKLIN · CRAIG BROWN
MONTSERRAT ROIG DE PUIG · CLIVE MERRISON · HUW BRETNALL
HILARY GREATOREX · SASHA MITCHELL · DEAN PARKIN · ROB GILDON
MATT PRENDERGAST · ANNIE FIRBANK · ROB JARVIS · ANN BRYSON
JESSICA MARYON-DAVIES · MARTINA SCHWARZ · MELANIE PAPPENHEIM
PETRA MARKHAM · JEHANE MARKHAM · BEN HARLAN · ROSY MAY
ANUSHA SUBRAMANYAM · THE WONDERFUL BEAST SINGERS

DESIGNERS ACTORS WRITERS DANCERS SINGERS MUSICIANS POETS VISUAL ARTISTS STORYTELLERS

25 YEARS
OF
WONDERFUL
BEAST



ALDEBURGH JUBILEE HALL
4PM SUNDAY 27TH NOVEMBER 2022

ONCE UPON A TIME

As well as celebrating our work over the past 25 years, this event marks the end of Wonderful Beast's time as a charitable company, and the start of its new life as a creative hub – a theatrical consultancy for anyone who wants to use it. Over the years we have amassed a huge library of stories, experience and material that I hope can become a rich resource for schools, arts organisations, individuals, writers, composers, performers, as well as a facility for providing practitioners on request for specific projects. As always, the Beast leads us off on another magical path.

In 1997 I decided to form a theatre company, to dramatise folk and fairy tales, myths and legends. It seemed to me that these stories were not only invaluable for children but for all ages. They're rooted in timeless moments that eschew age division, when families, friends, children and babes in arms gather together to entertain one another, grow sleepy listening, or stay up all night quarrelling about the 'right' version of the tale.

As a primary school teacher, I'd seen how the words 'Once upon a time...' could captivate children, opening the door to an inner place where they could explore all those powerful emotions evoked by the stories. Seeing Tim Supple's productions of Grimm fairy tales at the Young Vic clinched it for me. Despite being told I must be mad, I recruited a group of friends, including the poet Adrian Mitchell and actor Roger Lloyd Pack, all passionate about these stories.

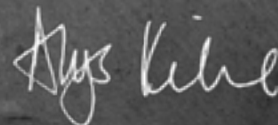
Wonderful Beast came to life. Our first play, *The Birth of Pleasure* (an apt title to herald the 25 years that would follow), based on the Apuleius story of Cupid and Psyche,

was produced at the Rosemary Branch Theatre in Islington. Since then, we have never stopped.

The company relocated from London to Aldeburgh in 2005. Whilst staging new plays – many based on East Anglian folk tales – we toured nationally, collaborating with English Touring Opera, introducing *Orpheo* and *The Cunning Little Vixen* to thousands of children. We worked with Suffolk schools, residents of care homes and alms houses, created interactive music theatre shows for babies and toddlers, and formed The Wonderful Beast Singers.

Our festival series, *Storm of Stories*, which ran from 2012-2016, included two community operas and a glorious mixture of amateur and professional talent – East Anglian step dancers and folksingers, local people telling their own stories, and professional international performers.

Our latest production, *First the Dance, Then the Feast*, based on a Hungarian folk tale, gave children from three local primary schools the opportunity to perform Eastern European songs and dances, working with professional musicians and actors. Families, friends, children, and babies filled the audience, sharing in this joyful culmination of everything for which Wonderful Beast has always stood.



Alys Kihl
Artistic Director



ONCE UPON A TIME...
25 YEARS OF WONDERFUL BEAST

THE BIRTH OF PLEASURE

From Wonderful Beast's first production, written by Jehane Markham
Performed by Petra Markham, Sasha Mitchell
and Montserrat Roig De Puig

WHERE DOES SHE COME FROM?

From *The Six Swans* community opera, composed by Richard Chew,
lyrics by Jehane Markham. Sung by Melanie Pappenheim

STORM OF STORIES FESTIVAL (2014)

Film clip by Josh Allott

JUST SAY HIÇ!

A Turkish folk tale performed by Ann Bryson and Rob Jarvis

WHAT IS JAMES BOND'S MIDDLE NAME?

Written and performed by Craig Brown

CINDERELLA

Written and performed by Vincent Franklin and Hilary Greatorex

LOWLANDS

Shanty performed by The Wonderful Beast Singers

THE DEAD MOON

East Anglian folk tale performed by Diana Quick

YES, THE ADRIAN MITCHELL SHOW

Film clip from the Wonderful Beast Archives

THE PLAYS WHAT I WROTE

Written by Adrian Mitchell. Performed by Clive Merrison

BAD FRIDAY

Written by Adrian Mitchell
Sung by Matt Prendergast and Sasha Mitchell

INTERVAL

OLD ABRAM BROWN

Composed by Benjamin Britten. Sung by The Wonderful Beast Singers

MUSIC MATTERS MOST

From *Imogen Holst: A Life in Music*, ed. Chris Grogan (Boydell, 2007)
Read by Dame Penelope Wilton and Jon Canter

TREES GROW TALL

Composed by Nickomo Clarke. Sung by The Wonderful Beast Singers

THE LAST WOODWOSE

Extract from the play, written by Thea Smiley
Performed by Annie Firbank. Filmed by Hector Leris

PLEASANT AND DELIGHTFUL

Sung by Huw Brentnall

THE BUBBLE WRAP

Written and performed by Dean Parkin

BUBBLE WRAP

Clip from the film created by Emma Close-Brooks

THE WONDERFUL WANDERING
TIME TRAVELLIING BEAST

Written and performed by Dean Parkin with Anusha Subramanyam

TAKITA

Created and danced by Rosy May and Anusha Subramanyam,
with music by Martina Schwarz

WHAT ON EARTH IS GOING ON?

From *First the Dance, Then the Feast*. Composed by Martina Schwarz,
lyrics by Emma Bernard. Performed by Rob Gildon, Hilary Greatorex and
Matt Prendergast

FIRST THE DANCE THEN THE FEAST

Film clip by Nathan Berry

THE BEAST

Composed by Ben Harlan, lyrics by Emma Bernard
Sung by Melanie Pappenheim, Rob Gildon
and The Wonderful Beast Singers





CAST

Huw Brentnall
Craig Brown
Ann Bryson
Jon Canter
Vincent Franklin
Rob Gildon
Hilary Greatorex
Rob Jarvis
Jehane Markham
Petra Markham
Rosy May
Clive Merrison
Sasha Mitchell
Melanie Pappenheim
Dean Parkin
Matt Prendergast
Diana Quick
Montserrat Roig de Puig
Anusha Subramanyam
Dame Penelope Wilton

MUSICIANS

Ben Harlan: clarinet, alto saxophone
Jessica Maryon-Davies: piano
Martina Schwarz: accordion

THE WONDERFUL BEAST SINGERS

Bob Frost
Annabel Gault
Jacky Linney
Denise Mahood
Jane Mardell
Gabrielle Maughan
Anthony Mehan
Mark Nicholls
James Norman
Lucy Rowan-Robinson
Pat Wood
John Wood

CREATIVE TEAM

Director: Alys Kihl
Associate Director: Emma Bernard
Artistic Coordinator: Eleanor Beck
Publicity and programme design: Emma Close-Brooks
Finances: Louisa Thorp
Blackwing Lighting



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Dame Penelope Wilton

HEARTFELT THANKS

To Wonderful Beast's Friends, donors, funders, board of directors, patrons, and volunteers who have supported our work by believing in, encouraging, and helping us to continue and develop over the past 25 years.

To all the artists, collaborators and partners who have contributed to the work of the company in so many different ways; helping to expand, inspire, and develop the artistic breadth and quality of our work.

To the actors, musicians, singers, dancers, poets and writers who recorded stories for our *Lockdown Tales* podcast during the pandemic, cheering up, amusing and entertaining children, families, and distant loved ones.

To the amazing teachers and thousands of school children, who have given us such joy in seeing them develop their skills, confidence and commitment, and rising to the challenges we put before them.

To our hard-working team of administrators, project leaders, and colleagues, who have played such an integral role in Wonderful Beast over the years, with their collaborative, imaginative and practical skills, and patience and humour.



WONDERFUL BEAST



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