



COMPANY THEATRE

*presents*



NEIL SIMON'S

# RUMOURS

AN HILARIOUS FARCE  
DIRECTED BY

KATE BIRCH

THE  
ROSE  
CENTRE  
Belmont

11 - 25 NOVEMBER 2023





## Welcome

from *Stephen Hood*

PRESIDENT OF **COMPANY THEATRE**

Welcome to Company Theatre's final show of 2023 – an hilarious comedy of errors and confusion to follow up the more serious fare of *The History Boys* and *Death of a Salesman* earlier this year. Kate Birch makes a welcome return to direct *Rumours* after last year's *God of Carnage* and 2017's *Deathtrap*. Kate's involvement with Company Theatre started with prompting for *Calendar Girls*. In addition to directing, she has also shone with us in several on-stage and backstage roles. We're glad to welcome back our talented cast of Company Theatre veterans, all of whom I'm delighted to say you will recognise from recent productions with Company Theatre, supported by an awesome crew. Merry Christmas, and it would be great to see you here again next year!

## Thoughts on the Play

from *Kate Birch*

**DIRECTOR**

Welcome to our production of Neil Simon's uproarious comedy, *Rumours*. As the director of this play, I am thrilled to bring this riotous farce to life on the stage. In a world filled with so much unhappiness, I chose this play to give our audiences a fun night out, and a chance for a good laugh.



*Rumours* is an unapologetically absurd and chaotic comedy.

It's a rollercoaster of ridiculous situations and a symphony of misunderstandings that will have you in stitches. While it may seem far-fetched at times, the truth is that we can all relate to the human tendencies that lead to this delightful chaos. Life often takes unexpected turns, and we've all been in situations where things spiral out of control.

Neil Simon's brilliance lies in his ability to take these relatable moments and crank up the absurdity to hilarious levels. In *Rumours*, we witness a dinner party gone awry, as a group of well-intentioned friends tries to cover up an unfortunate incident. As the secrets and lies pile up, the result is a comedic avalanche that keeps the audience guessing and laughing throughout.

Amid the absurdity, there are moments of truth and genuine human connection. We've all been in situations where we've had to put on a facade, pretend everything is fine, or even exaggerate the truth to save face. In this play, you'll see characters grappling with these very relatable predicaments. It's a reminder that even in the midst of chaos and confusion, there's a universal thread of humanity that connects us all.

I am incredibly fortunate to work with a talented cast and crew who have poured their hearts and souls into bringing this hilarious production to life. Their dedication and passion shine through in every scene, and I am immensely proud of what we've created together.

So, sit back, relax, and let the laughter wash over you. Enjoy the absurdity, the chaos, and the moments of truth. Most of all, I hope you leave the theatre with a smile on your face, knowing that, despite all the troubles we face, there is always room for laughter and joy in our lives. Thank you for joining us, and let the merriment begin!

## About the Director

Kate's lifelong love of performing began at the tender age of three, a passion that has never waned. Despite her parents' initial attempts to "get it out of her system" at dance and drama school, Kate's involvement in amateur dramatics has remained a constant throughout her life.

In 2011, she embarked on a bold adventure with her family by moving to New Zealand where she swiftly became involved with Company Theatre. Her on-stage performances have included "**Fawlty Towers**," "**Hay Fever**," and "**Arms and the Man**".

More recently Kate has harnessed her creative energies in a new role as a director, bringing productions like "**Deathtrap**" and "**God of Carnage**" to life.

Beyond the stage, Kate channels her passion for developing people and fostering teamwork as a Coach and Facilitator in her own company '**Thrive Together**'. Her ability to inspire and unite people mirrors her directorial talents, making her a dynamic force in both the business and theatrical worlds.

# The Cast

<b>Ken Gorman</b>	<i>Duncan Preston</i>
<b>Chris Gorman</b>	<i>Rebecca Wright</i>
<b>Len Ganz</b>	<i>Jimmy Carrick</i>
<b>Claire Ganz</b>	<i>Chlöe Smith</i>
<b>Glenn Cooper</b>	<i>Oliver Roberts</i>
<b>Cassie Cooper</b>	<i>Liz Cannon</i>
<b>Erica Cusack</b>	<i>Marissa Willson</i>
<b>Cookie Crumb</b>	<i>Robyn Donnelly</i>
<b>Conklin - A Police Officer</b>	<i>Dion Hunt</i>
<b>Casey - A Police Officer</b>	<i>Jessica Silva / Vettinia Ross</i>

## Setting the Scene

*ACT 1*

House outside of London, 8:30pm

### INTERMISSION

*ACT 2*

Later that night



There will be **ONE INTERMISSION** of 15 minutes

Refreshments, ice cream and a variety of drinks will be available.

# Meet The Cast



## DUNCAN PRESTON

Ken Gorman

Duncan played school teachers in both *The History Boys* and *Peninsula*, which was a welcome break from his job as a school teacher. He is looking forward to the character of Ken, a bumbling, well meaning individual with a good heart and a very bad ear. This is Duncan's 5th time working with the Company Theatre, having been in *Peninsula*, *Neville's Island*, *Jerusalem* and *The History Boys*. He hopes one day to play a character called Duncan.



Photos Credit: Chris Chase

## REBECCA WRIGHT

Chris Gorman

Rebecca is excited to be back at Company Theatre acting alongside a talented cast on one of the great American classics subsequently set in London in Neil Simon's English version. Recently, Rebecca was on stage with TheatreWorks' production of *Sham* playing Meryl. Last year Rebecca performed in Company Theatre's *God of Carnage* as Annette and this year as "the woman", Willy Loman's mistress, in *Death of a Salesman*.





## JIMMY CARRICK

Len Ganz

A local, award-winning actor, Jimmy is happy to be treading the boards once again with Company Theatre. This is his first performance since last year's award-winning Company Theatre production of Jez Butterworth's *Jerusalem*. He says, acting with Company Theatre gives him the opportunity to be with friends as well as his personal leading lady, Liz Cannon. *Rumours* is an absolute riot of a play, or at least that's what he's heard!



## CHLÖE SMITH

Claire Ganz

Chloe is a Performing Arts teacher for an Intermediate School in Auckland on the North Shore. Prior to being a teacher, she worked behind the scenes at TVNZ for the *Breakfast Show*. Her passion in drama has seen her land roles in shows at the Rose Centre and Centrestage. Some of the shows include *All my Sons*, *Deathtrap*, *A Streetcar Named Desire* and *The History Boys*. She also directs an annual performance on stage at the Aotea Centre for NZ's biggest student drama and dance show called "*Showquest*" in which her entries have placed 1st in Auckland for 3 years in row. Chloe is thrilled to be a part of *Rumours* playing the role of materialistic and affluent 'Claire' with such a great director and hilarious cast!

## OLIVER ROBERTS

Glenn Cooper

This is Oliver's second show for Company Theatre at the Rose Centre, having worked with director, Kate Birch, and other cast members in last year's *God of Carnage*. He joined the cast late (not the first time he's been called on to play someone morally questionable) and says he couldn't resist the play's chaotic fun, plus the chance to work with such a talented group. He's been promising for a while that he'll "play someone nice next time"... but it's a promise he's enjoyed not keeping.





## LIZ CANNON

### Cassie Cooper

Liz is delighted to be back treading the boards, in her fifth production with Company Theatre: **Calendar Girls** (2013), **Fawlty Towers** (2015), **One Man Two Guv'nors** (2016), and **Steel Magnolias** (2019). She had a Shakespearean sojourn in Shoreside Theatre's **Twelfth Night** (2020) and produced and directed James Carrick's dark comedy **Welcome to Hellansville** as part of the Auckland Fringe Festival in 2022. She's now back in her happy place on stage at The Rose Centre with the most amazingly talented and fun bunch of fellow lovies! "**Rumours** is an absolute blast of a farce, and has been so much fun. I can't wait to help bring this brilliant comedy to the stage to delight everyone who sees it. The rumours are indeed true - it's an hilarious romp of a comedy. Enjoy!"



Photos Credit: Chris Chase

## MARISSA WILLSON

### Erica Cusack

Over the last 5 years Marissa has played a variety of roles in local theatre including Shakespeare, Dickens and Agatha Christie. In 2021 she was in **Speaking with Tongues** which won best Drama at the ACTT Awards. In 2022 she played Veronica Novak in **God of Carnage** in which she received a NAPTA nomination for Outstanding Leading Actress and later that year she played Fawcett in the award-winning play **Jerusalem** both with Company Theatre. She is thrilled to be playing Erica, another strong female character in **Rumours**.





## ROBYN DONNELLY

### Cookie Crumb



Robyn Donnelly started in musical theatre by playing her mother's character's baby as a baby and continued from there. She broadened her realm to include non-musical theatre, operetta, children's entertainment as a clown and an elf – incorporating magic and balloon animals, writing and directing. Robyn has gained an "A" pass in her post-graduate DipDrama, has received a musical theatre scholarship and was awarded Best Female in a Leading Role in Auckland community theatre, 2017. Robyn involves herself in all sides of production and as "Thespianage", has turned her hand to anything required to get the show on the road! She has improvised with many improv troupes in New Zealand, and runs children's drama classes and casual drop-in improv sessions for adults.



## DION HUNT

### Conklin - A Police Officer

Dion returned to the NZ stage in 2022 as Michael Novak in ***God of Carnage*** (Dir: Kate Birch, Company Theatre) and later as Wesley in ***Jerusalem*** (Dir: Kristoff Haines, Company Theatre) for which he was nominated for a NAPTA award. He has since played various roles in the sold-out musical ***Catch Me If You Can*** with DeBase Theatre. His return to performing in NZ came after a hiatus from the theatre world having spent time on stage in Sydney and throughout Australia, in the UK (where he studied at LAMDA, Pineapple Studios and various other institutions), and after performing as a youth and then a young man in Auckland where he grew up.

## JESSICA SILVA

### Casey - A Police Officer

This is Jessica's second time being involved on-stage with Company Theatre with her debut role as Miss Forsythe in ***Death of a Salesman***. Jessica is originally from Brazil where she studied theatre at university and kick-started her career, ten years ago. Now, she hopes to pursue her acting career, here in New Zealand, both on stage and in film.







Photos Credit: Chris Chase

Hair styling by Cheree Lacassie - Glenfield Hair Design



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# The Crew

<b>Director</b>	Kate Birch
<b>Company Theatre's Production Manager</b>	Kathy Gent
<b>Stage Manager</b>	Vettinia Ross
<b>Set Design</b>	Scott Thomas
<b>Lighting Design</b>	Stephen Hood
<b>Sound Design &amp; Tech Operation</b>	Stephen Hood
<b>Props</b>	Vettinia Ross, Alastair Fletcher
<b>Set Construction &amp; Dressing</b>	Scott Thomas, Stephen Hood, Sherry Berg, Joe Rouse, Tony Sandy, Vettinia Ross, Kathy Gent, Oliver Roberts, Caroline Parker
<b>Set Painting &amp; Dressing</b>	Caroline Parker, Tony Sandy
<b>Costumes</b>	Lisa Percy, Cathie Sandy
<b>Programme, Poster &amp; Billboard Design</b>	Sherry Berg
<b>Facebook/Instagram/Newsletter</b>	Stephen Hood
<b>Website</b>	Sherry Ede
<b>Advertising</b>	Kathy Gent
<b>Billboards</b>	Alastair Fletcher, Stephen Hood
<b>Box Office</b>	Kathy Gent, Sarah Dettwiler, Stephen Willson, Sherry Ede
<b>Bar Manager</b>	Alastair Fletcher
<b>Front of House Manager</b>	Lesley Hawkey
<b>Hair Stylist</b>	Cheree Lacassie
<b>Rehearsal Photos</b>	Chris Chase



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    [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC...)

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Chris Chase,  
Photographer

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and

The volunteers who look after front of house





# Cookie Crumb's Lemon Tart Recipe



## PASTRY

- 120g unsalted butter, softened
- 80g icing sugar, sifted
- 2 egg yolks
- 250g flour
- 1 medium size egg, beaten (for glazing)

## FILLING

- 5 medium sized eggs
- 150g caster sugar
- 140ml double cream
- Finely grated zest of 3 lemons and juice of 4



1. To make the pastry, beat the butter and icing sugar in a large bowl until creamy, then beat in egg yolks. Add the flour, and with your fingertips, rub it with the butter mixture to get a crumbly texture. Add 1-2 tbsp iced water, quickly mix with a knife, and press to form a ball. Lightly knead the pastry on a floured work surface until well blended.

2. Flatten the dough with your palm into a thick disc, wrap in cling wrap and chill for 30 minutes. Lightly flour a work surface and roll out pastry to 2-3mm thick, to fit a 21cm loose-bottomed fluted tart tin. Place pastry in pie tin and gently tuck it into the bottom edged so it fits tightly. Cut off excess pastry and place in fridge for 30 minutes.

3. Preheat oven to 180C/gas 4 and put a baking sheet in the oven to heat up. Line the pastry case with parchment paper and fill with baking beans or rice. Bake on the hot baking sheet for 10-15 minutes. Remove the beans and paper, return to oven and bake for another 5 minutes until pastry is golden. Remove, brush the pastry with beaten egg and return to oven for 7 minutes. Remove and leave to cool a little.

4. Turn oven up to 190C/gas 5. To make the filling, put the eggs and sugar in a bowl and whisk together. Gently whisk in the cream, lemon zest and juice until just combined. Pour filling into pastry shell. Cook for 20-25 minutes. Remove from oven and cool for 1 hour. Dust tart with icing sugar, slice and serve.