

Ha  
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Ah

  
MINACK  
THEATRE

THE  
**MASSIVE**  
Tragedy  
OF  
**MADAME  
BOVARY**

BASED ON THE NOVEL BY  
GUSTAVE FLAUBERT

LOVINGLY DERAILED BY  
JOHN NICHOLSON

*Programme*



**The Minack Theatre Trust CIO**

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Cornwall, TR19 9JU

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# Director's Note

This has been such a joy to work on. Four inventive, playful actors showing off their multi-roling skills as we tackle one of the most famous stories of all time. John Nicholson's adaptation of Madame Bovary is really clever and theatrical. I love that the story is absolutely there in this play - but with a comic slant and a whacky framing device. When I re-read the novel I was really surprised how much humour is actually in the story: Charles really is as bad a doctor as he is in this adaptation, Rodolphe is as roguish. Emma Bovary is a complex character - immediately engaging as she tries to find a way to be happy in this life, but also cruel where her daughter is concerned and easy prey for a man like Lheureux who plays on her vanity and need to escape the banality of her life by purchasing luxury goods she can ill afford.

The set pieces have been both a challenge and exciting to work on. How many plays demand you to come up with an entire magic sequence to present a seduction? Or a Ball which ends with the smashing of windows? But in keeping with the original material you are left with the woman at the heart of this piece not able to see a way forward. Even as she dreams of Paris... Cue accordion...





# Gustave Flaubert

Gustave Flaubert (12 December 1821 – 8 May 1880) was a French novelist often considered one of the leading early figures of literary realism in France and abroad. According to the literary theorist Kornelije Kvas,

*"in Flaubert, realism strives for formal perfection, so the presentation of reality tends to be neutral, emphasizing the values and importance of style as an objective method of presenting reality"*

He is most commonly known for his debut novel *Madame Bovary* (1857), his many correspondents, and his unwavering and exacting devotion to his style and aesthetics.

Flaubert believed in and pursued the principle of finding "the right word", which he considered as the fundamental means to achieving high quality in literary art. He worked in solitude, sometimes toiling for a week on the completion of one page, never satisfied with what he had written. In Flaubert's correspondence he expands upon this, explaining that correct prose did not flow out of him naturally and that his style was achieved through work and revision. Flaubert said he wished to forge a style...

*"that would be rhythmic as verse, precise as the language of the sciences, undulant, deep-voiced as a cello, tipped with flame; a style that would pierce your idea like a dagger, and on which your thought would sail easily ahead over a smooth surface, like a skiff before a good tail wind."*

He famously said that ...

*"an author in his book must be like God in the universe, present everywhere and visible nowhere."*



When *Madame Bovary* was first published in *Revue de Paris* between 1 October 1856 and 15 December 1856, public prosecutors attacked the novel for obscenity. The resulting trial in January 1857 made the story notorious and scandalous. After Flaubert's acquittal on 7 February 1857, *Madame Bovary* became a bestseller. A seminal work of literary realism, the novel is now considered Flaubert's masterpiece, and one of the most influential and important literary works in history.

The writing style was of supreme importance to Flaubert. While writing the novel, he wrote that it would be

*"a book about nothing, a book dependent on nothing external, which would be held together by the internal strength of its style"*

an aim which, for the critic Jean Rousset, made Flaubert

*"the first in date of the non-figurative novelists"*

such as James Joyce and Virginia Woolf. Although Flaubert professed no liking for the style of Balzac, the novel he produced became arguably a prime example and an enhancement of literary realism much in the vein of Balzac. The "realism" in the novel was to prove an important element in the trial for obscenity: the lead prosecutor argued that not only was the novel immoral, but that realism in literature was an offence against art and decency.

The realist movement was, in parts, a reaction against romanticism. Emma may be said to be the embodiment of a romantic. Both mentally and emotionally she has no relation to the realities of her world. Although in some ways he may seem to identify with Emma, Flaubert frequently mocks her romantic daydreaming and taste in literature. Nobel laureate Mario Vargas Llosa commented

*"If Emma Bovary had not read all those novels, it is possible that her fate might have been different."*

*Madame Bovary* has been seen as a commentary on the bourgeoisie, the trappings of aspirations that can never be realised or a belief in the validity of a self-satisfied, deluded personal culture, associated with Flaubert's period especially during the reign of Louis Philippe.



# *In conversation with John Nicholson*

*Where did the idea of tackling  
Flaubert's French classic and  
turning it into a play come from?*

I suppose, that adage/truth of comedy being so close to tragedy. I thought Madame Bovary would be very rich territory to explore that.

*When did you first come  
across Madame Bovary?*

About 11 years ago. I realised it was a classic that I'd never read.







*What were the big challenges in transforming this novel into a dramatic piece of work?*

Flaubert called his novel 'a story about nothing,' by which he meant that it was a story about everything. The main challenge was in trying to do justice to that.

*Is there anything in the book you wish you could have put in the adaptation that you didn't?*

No. There have been quite a few drafts over the years and there's actually quite a lot that's been removed. The first draft was very long!

*Do you have a favourite character, if so who and why?*

Madame Bovary, bien sur! I think she represents so many aspects of human nature.



*What was the process like in developing the play? Was there a devising R&D process?*

Yes, my company Peepolykus spent a week with Gemma Bodinetz researching how to best capture Emma Bovary's feeling of living in a world where she felt no-one really understood her. Comedy played a big role in exploring that central premise.







*How did you come up  
with the framing device  
of the ratcatchers?*

I originally adapted the book for a Radio 4 series called A Trespasser's Guide To The Classics in which well known fictions get accidentally derailed (by 2 ratcatchers in the case of Madame Bovary - you'll see why). I developed this framing device further for the stage adaptation because it allowed for Emma Bovary to tell her own story.



# *Cast & Production credits*



## **GEORGIA NICHOLSON**

EMMA BOVARY, MDME CODOUX

## **STEPHEN CAVANAGH**

BLIND MAN, BAILIFF, MARCHIONESS, HOMAIS,  
SISTER MARY, FARM HAND, FOOTMAN, HIPPOLYTE,  
JUSTIN, LHEUREUX, GIRARD, BEADLE, CURE,  
CHARLES' MOTHER, MAYOR TUVACHE

## **BEN KERNOW**

RATMAN 1, LEON, RODOLPHE, ROUAULT, DR. CAVINET,  
VISCOUNT

## **DARREN SEED**

RATMAN 2, CHARLES BOVARY, MOTHER SUPERIOR



**WRITTEN BY**

John Nicholson

**DIRECTOR**

Kirstie Davis

**DESIGNER**

Marion Harrison

**MOVEMENT DIRECTOR & CHOREOGRAPHER**

Grace Murdoch

**COMPOSER & SOUND DESIGNER**

Dan Bottomley

**LIGHTING DESIGNER**

Simon Hutchings

**ASSISTANT DIRECTOR**

Millie Brolly

**COVER ACTOR**

Ellie Leah





**PRODUCTION MANAGER**

Simon Hutchings

**ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER**

Millie Brolly

**COSTUME ASSISTANT**

Yasmin Baird

**LIGHTING & SOUND OPERATOR**

Craig Brown, Lucy Gaskell  
& Rory Lock

**SET BUILDING**

Graham Cole, Lynn Batten  
& David Gibson

**PRODUCTION PHOTOGRAPHY**

Neal Megaw & Lynn Batten

**PRODUCER**

Zoë Curnow & Ben Kernow

**ASSISTANT PRODUCER**

Sian Kennedy

**GRAPHIC DESIGNER**

Matt Travis



# Thank You to

- All the staff at the Minack
- Island Partnership
- Arts Council England



#madamebovary



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*Georgia Nicholson*

Georgia trained at The Academy of Live and Recorded Arts.

Credits include: The Unlikely Pilgrimage of Harold Fry (Embankment), Inspector George Gently (BBC), Carrie's War (Minack Theatre) Mother Goose (Cambridge Arts Theatre), The Massive Tragedy of Madame Bovary (Minack Theatre) Hetty Feather (Minack Theatre), The Cinder Path (Ion/ Cookson productions), Aladdin (Whitley Bay Playhouse), The Lambton Worm (Customs House), The Dolly Mixtures (Customs House), My Uncle Freddie (Customs House), Beauty and the Beast (Customs House).

Previous Ha Hum Ah productions include A Dickensian Christmas (London production), Loveplay (Minack Theatre) and It's Grimm an audio musical series.

Georgia is thrilled to be returning to the whirlwind life of Emma Bovary and hopes you enjoy all of the mishaps, missteps and mistakes of this massive tragedy.



*Stephen Cavanagh*

Stephen Cavanagh is from Derry, Northern Ireland and trained at the Gaiety School of Acting, Dublin, and the British-American Drama Academy, Oxford.

Stephen previously appeared at the Minack in Stones In His Pockets in 2019 and 2020, and the original run of The Massive Tragedy of Madame Bovary in 2023. Other recent theatre appearances include The Last Cigarette (Canal Cafe Theatre), The Dresser (Theatre Royal Bath and National Tour), The Easter Rising and Thereafter (Jermyn Street Theatre), The Elves and the Shoemakers (Sheffield Theatres).

Other theatre work includes: Observe The Sons Of Ulster Marching Towards The Somme, Pleasure And Pain and Dial M For Murder for the Citizens Theatre, Glasgow; Romeo And Juliet, Death Of A Salesman, Coriolanus, A View From The Bridge, The Dance Of Death, Journey's End and The Lonesome West for the Mercury Theatre, Colchester; Blackwater Angel and Spokesong for the Finborough Theatre, London; The Night Pirates for Theatre Hullabaloo; Bell Book And Candle for Greenwich Playhouse.

Work with Irish theatre companies includes Torch Song Trilogy for Kabosh; Three Tall Women for Prime Cut; Melmoth The Wanderer for Big Telly; Comical Mysteries and A Midsummer Night's Dream for the Civic Theatre, Dublin.

Recent film and TV work includes The Crown (Netflix); Belfast (Kenneth Branagh Company); The Witcher (Netflix).





*Ben Kernow*

Ben grew up on a small farm on the north Cornish coast before training at the Academy of Live and Recorded Arts (ALRA).

Theatre credits include: Superstition Mountain (The Minack Theatre/ Ha Hum Ah). The Beauty Queen of Leenane, The Wolves of Willoughby Chase, Hetty Feather, Stones in His Pockets, Tom's Midnight Graden, Carrie's War & The Secret Garden (The Minack Theatre). Finnegan & Tweed (Ha Hum Ah). Hell's Bells, Sleeping Beauty, A Perfect World, The Cherry Orchard, The Third Policeman, Life's a Dream & The Magnificent Three (Miracle Theatre). Giselle (Birmingham Royal Ballet), Lucy and the Lost Ones (Quirk Theatre), Product & A Doll's House (New Model Theatre), The Mousehole Cat (Cousin Jack's Theatre). Relatively Speaking & The Importance of Being Earnest (Frinton Repertory Theatre), The Seagull (Baron's Court Theatre).

Film credits include: Magic Man (The Road Productions), Organs of Business (Phenascope Films), At Sea (LFS), The Expert: Progress Report (Meshes) and The Legend of Bob Leonard (Mandrake media).

When not acting he can be found in his small vineyard tending to his vines.

Originally from Cornwall, Darren trained at Bristol Old Vic Theatre School graduating with the Peter Ackerman Award for outstanding comedy performances. Darren has toured both nationally and internationally and regularly works with new writers, co-devising productions for Kenny Wax, Tobacco Factory Theatres, Oxford Playhouse and Bristol Old Vic.

In 2020 Darren co-founded Jam First Theatre which tours Cornwall with original work and has played The Pleasance at The Edinburgh Fringe with their sell out production 'Hellish'.

Theatre credits include: Oi Frog & Friends! (West End/UK Tour), We're Going On A Bear Hunt (USA Tour), Room On The Broom (UK Tour), The Last Days Of Mankind (Bristol Old Vic), Bedtime (Oxford Playhouse), Tiddler and Other Terrific Tales (West End/Leicester Square Theatre), A Funny Thing Happened On The Way to The Forum (Tobacco Factory), Pericles (Redgrave Theatre), Edward Gant's Amazing Feats Of Loneliness (Alma Tavern Theatre), To Kill A Mockingbird (Bath Literature Festival), 140 Million Miles (A Play, A Pie and A Pint, Òran Mór/Traverse Theatre), Oh No Isn't! (Barbican Theatre), Superstition Mountain (Minack Theatre)

Television credits include: Father Brown (BBC), The Lost Honour Of Christopher Jefferies (ITV), Poldark (BBC). Voiceover credits: His Dark Materials (BBC), Tore (Netflix)



*Darren Seed*



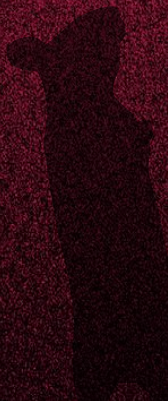
# *John Nicholson*

John is an Artistic Director of the award-winning Peepolykus, with whom he has toured the UK and the world for 25 years.

Writing includes: The Hound Of The Baskervilles (Leeds Playhouse, West End, National tour) No Wise Men (Liverpool Everyman & Playhouse), Treasure Island (Bristol Old Vic, National Tour), The Massive Tragedy of Madame Bovary (Northampton Royal, Jermyn Street Theatre, National Tour), A Christmas Carol (Exeter Northcott), Spyski – The Importance of Being Honest (Lyric Hammersmith, National Tour), The Ramsbury Players (National Theatre), Richard's Rampage (The Old Vic, International Tour), Origins (Pentabus, National Tour), The Arthur Conan Doyle Appreciation Society (Edinburgh Traverse), Help! Get me Out Of This Musical (South Hill Park), A Trespasser's Guide To The Classics series 1 and 2, Rik Mayall's Bedside Tales series 1 and Marley Was Dead (BBC Radio 4), Off Their Rockers (ITV), The Time Machine (Original theatre, national tour)

Physical comedy director/consultant credits include: One Man Two Guvnors (Bolton Octagon, National Tour), A Little Hotel On The Side (Theatre Royal Bath), The Secret Adversary (Newbury Watermill), Watson and Oliver, The Wrong Door (BBC), Playtime (Northampton Royal), Accidental Death Of An Anarchist (Sheffield Theatres).

Directing (with writing) Credits include: Partners in Crime (Queens Theatre, Hornchurch), Dracula - the Bloody Truth, 400 (Plymouth Theatre Royal/National), Shaun The Sheep Live (Aardman/International), Nina Conti - Dolly Mixtures (Soho Theatre and West End) Paul Merton – Out Of His Head (West End), Spymonkey's Spook Show (Blackpool Winter Gardens), Coulrophobia (London International Mime Festival) Aladdin, Dick Tracy (Plymouth Athenaeum), The Three Musketeers (York Theatre Royal, National Tour), King Arthur (National Tour), The Light Princess (Tobacco Factory Theatre, Bristol), A Christmas Carol (Exeter Northcott).





## *Kirstie Davis*

Kirstie has worked at many theatres around the country including the Lyric Theatre Hammersmith, Salisbury Playhouse and Cheltenham Everyman. For six years she was the Associate Director and then Acting Artistic Director of Watford Palace Theatre where she directed acclaimed productions of *Top Girls*, *The Daughter-in-law* and *The Beauty Queen of Leenane*. She was CEO and Artistic Director of Forest Forge from 2009 to 2016 where she commissioned and directed over 20 new plays, which included: *Free Folk* by Gary Owen, the first adaptations of *The Wolves of Willoughby Chase* and *Stardust* by Russ Tunney and *Woman of Flowers* by Kaite O'Reilly.

Recent projects include: *Kiss me Quickstep* by Amanda Whittington at Queens Theatre, Hornchurch, *Daddy Long Legs* by Paul Gordon and John Caird and *The Girl on the Train* by Rachel Wagstaff and Duncan Abel at The Barn Theatre, *Ladies That Bus* and the sequel *Ladies That Dig* by Joyce Branagh, both of which went on national tours; *Robin Hood* by Andrew Pollard at The Dukes Theatre, Lancaster and a revival of *The Wolves of Willoughby Chase*, *The Massive Tragedy of Madame Bovary* by John Nicholson and *Tom's Midnight Garden* by David Wood at The Minack Theatre.

## *Marion Harrison*

Marion has worked in the theatre and film industry since graduating from Leeds University in 2002 with a BA Hons in Theatre Design & Technology, and later gained a Post-Graduate Diploma at the Linea Academy in Durban, South Africa.

After spending the first part of her career as a Touring Wardrobe Manager for companies such as the RSC, National Theatre, Headlong and The National Theatre of Scotland, Marion now works as a Costume and Set Designer for theatre and film.

Marion has worked as designer on many productions across the county, including *Hetty Feather*, *And Then Come The Nightjars*, *The Wolves of Willoughby Chase* and *Orfeo* for The Minack, *Superstition Mountain* and *Loveplay* for Ha Hum Ah/Minack co-production. *The Comedy of Errors* (RSC Shakespeare Nation) and *Melior Opus Griot* for Hall For Cornwall.

For film she has worked as Production Designer on *Sensibility* and *Art for Ha Hum Ah* and *Voyage and Heva Heva* for o-region.

Marion is thrilled to be returning to the Minack as Set and Costume Designer for this production of *The Massive Tragedy of Madame Bovary*.



## *Dan Bottomley*

Music, sound and composing credits include: A Skull in Connemara (Oldham Coliseum) A Dickensian Christmas, Grimms' Fairy Tales (Ha Hum Ah); Talk Radio (Off West End Award nom for Best Sound Design), and Fox (Old Red Lion); Peter and the Wolf (Offie nom Best Show for Under 7's); The House of Usher (The Hope Theatre).

Dan also trained as an actor in London. Acting credits include Once and Mike Leigh's Peterloo.

This is Dan's second glorious jaunt at the Minack, the former also involving antics onstage as well in Loveplay back in 2020.

## *Grace Murdoch*

Grace is a Choreographer and Director based in the South West, working as a freelance artist with Theatre, Opera, Dance and Comedy. Grace is Director of Cheap Date, a combined arts company and Murdoch Design, creating bespoke sculptural pieces/sets, which she runs with her husband Nick. She is currently an Associate Artist for Hall for Cornwall.

Grace's collaborations include: Falmouth University, The Minack Theatre, ICON Théâtre, Tête à Tête Opera, Trebah Gardens to name a few. Creating original touring work with Cheap Date for audiences in the UK and Sweden. Grace also passionately enjoys her work with young people and the community across the UK, including running youth company Propeller in collaboration with Falmouth University.

Recent and current projects include: Dirty Words with Cheap Date at Edinburgh Fringe, Glassworks, the music by iconic composer Philip Glass explored and interpreted through Contemporary Dance. Body of Water, a movement exploration of the Cornish Communities relationship to the Sea. Body of Water is part of the Festival of the Sea at the Minack September 2024.



## *Millie Brolly*

Millie has just moved back to West Cornwall from London where she has recently graduated with an MA in Theatre Directing from Mountview. She is so pleased to be back at the Minack just days after finishing assistant directing on *Carrie's War*. Previous to this her credits include *ASM on Peter Pan* (Hall for Cornwall), *Director of Cafe on the Beach* (The Backstage Theatre), *Assistant Director on Vinegar Tom* (The Mack), *Director of The Tempest* (Regent's Park Open Air Theatre queue entertainment).

Previous credits with Ha Hum Ah include *Director of Superstition Mountain* and *Assistant Director on Loveplay*. Millie is so excited to join the cast at the Minack and on tour as their assistant director and assistant stage manager.

## *Ellie Leah*

Training: Birmingham School of Speech and Drama

Theatre includes: *Everybody's Talking About Jamie* (UK Tour), *Calendar Girls the Musical* (UK Tour), *SisterAct* (West End London Palladium/On Broadway press launch), *Nell Gwynn* (West End), *Mamma Mia!* (International Tour), *Fat Friends The Musical* (UK Tour), *Legally Blonde* (Leicester Curve/Monaco Opera House), *Priscilla Queen of the Desert* (UK Tour/West End Live!/ New Zealand Civic Theatre Auckland), *Disneys Beauty and the Beast* (UK Tour), *Marry Me A Little* (Cheltenham Everyman), *Treasure Island* (Liverpool Everyman), *Stepping Out* (UK Tour), *Annie* (UK Tour), *Heartbeat* (UK Tour), *Annie* (Madinat Theatre Dubai) CBBC Playdays (UK Tour), *The Blues Brothers* (UK Tour), *The Fair Maid of the West* (UK Tour) Production Vocalist (Aurora world voyage) Ellie is also one third of Jam First Theatre as co-writer, performer and director, making and producing work in Cornwall.

Television includes: *The Sound of Music Live* (ITV), *This Morning* (ITV), *Bands Reunited* (VH1), *National Lottery* (ITV), *Juniper Tree* (BBC)

Ellie has worked as an audience compère on *The One Show* and *Strictly Come Dancing* and can be heard on an ident for the BBC World Service.





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