

WIMBORNE
DRAMA PRODUCTIONS



Neil Simon's

BAREFOOT



in the

PARK



20-22 February 2020
Tivoli Theatre Wimborne



DIRECTOR'S NOTE



Rob Cording-Cook

Hello and welcome to the Tivoli Theatre for the first play of Wimborne Drama Productions' 2020 season, *Barefoot in the Park*.

Ever since seeing the classic film version, which made a star of Robert Redford and bolstered Jane Fonda's career further, I fell in love with the story of the two bickering newlyweds who learn to live with each other during those first few days as Mr & Mrs. Although written in the early '60s, the humour and the story is just as funny and relevant today

as it was then.

The play opened on Broadway in 1963 and became Neil Simon's longest running hit and the tenth-longest running non-musical play in Broadway history, closing with over 1,500 performances. Robert Redford also led the Broadway cast, reprising his role in the film in 1967.

Since joining Wimborne Drama Productions some 13 years ago and having been involved in numerous shows both on and off stage, *Barefoot in the Park* marks my directorial debut for the group. Talks began nearly 2 years ago when I first proposed the play for production and since then, I have been bowled over by the support, encouragement and commitment from everybody involved. As with any performance, a lot of hard work and effort goes into making what you see on stage today and this truly has been a team effort.

My thanks to the entire creative team for taking my vision and turning it into something special. I must give special thanks to Chrissie and Richard Neal who have gone above and beyond throughout the

rehearsal period; I really couldn't have done this without you both. If you're reading this after the curtains have opened, then you will by now have noticed our set for Corie and Paul's marital home. It was brave of me to ask for a set complete with broken skylight and just about every piece of set that the group own, but Chris Durham and Colin Pile have ably taken it within their stride and the results are fantastic. Special thanks to you both.



Jane Fonda and Robert Redford in the film of *Barefoot in the Park*

I have been extremely fortunate to work with such a talented and accomplished team and I must thank my cast for turning Neil Simon's words and my thoughts into a fabulous production, in particular Jemma Cable in this, her first leading role. It has been an honour to work with you all and I thank you all for your efforts.

As always, a special thanks to all of the technical staff at the Tivoli Theatre for the help and guidance this week.

One journalist wrote: "Mr. Simon was the populist whose accessible, joke-packed plays about the anxieties of everyday characters could tickle funny bones in theatres across the country". I hope we are able to tickle yours today and that you enjoy the show!

Rob Cording-Cook - Director

LAST OF THE RED HOT PLAYWRIGHTS

Neil Simon, who died in 2018 aged 91, was arguably America's most successful and popular playwright, a comic genius whose works captured the zeitgeist of American middle-class life for much of the 20th century.

He wrote *Barefoot in the Park* in 1963. The play was inspired by the early years of his first marriage, to dancer Joan Baim. Like Corie, Joan Baim was vibrant, pretty and funny, and Neil Simon was smitten.

The couple met working at a holiday camp in the Poconos, Pennsylvania. Neil Simon and his brother Danny would write and perform weekly theatre shows at the resort. Joan Baim was working as a dancer and children's counsellor.

"The first time I saw Joan she was pitching softball," Simon recalled. "I couldn't get a hit off her because I couldn't stop looking at her."

Their courtship was swift; they married in September 1953, the same year they met.

Joan's mother, Helen Baim, noted that they formed a tight duo. "I noticed one thing almost as soon as Joan and Neil were married," she told the *New York Times*. "It was almost like he drew an invisible circle around the two of them. And nobody went inside that circle. Nobody!"

After they were married, Neil Simon continued to work with his brother, writing comedy material for comics and entertainers,

such as Phil Silvers and Sid Caesar. But Joan encouraged him to turn to theatre and strike out on his own, which resulted in his first Broadway play, *Come Blow Your Horn*, in 1961, about a young man leaving home to join his older brother, a bachelor and ladies' man.



Joan Baim and Neil Simon

"The things I couldn't channel into any other human being — my mother, my father, my brother, anybody — I could channel into Joan, who understood," Neil Simon once said. "She was so open, and when I wasn't, she'd say: 'Why won't you talk? What are you afraid of?' She opened me up, and that's what allowed me to become a playwright. She had an incredible sense of honesty. I couldn't get anything past her."

Joan had a short but fairly successful career as a dancer, working with Bob Fosse, Gwen Verdon and Martha Graham. But she gave up her career to start a family and to support her husband.

The couple had two daughters. Joan died of bone cancer in July 1973, after nearly 20 years of marriage. She was just 39. Neil Simon described her diagnosis and subsequent death as “the first major unexpected blow of my life”.

Four months later, Neil Simon married Oscar-nominated actress Marsha Mason. But unable to get over Joan's death, the marriage fell apart and they eventually divorced in 1983.

Neil Simon had two separate marriages to another actress, Diane Lander, before the couple split for good in 1998. At the time of his death on August 26, 2018, Neil was married to dancer and actress Elaine Joyce.

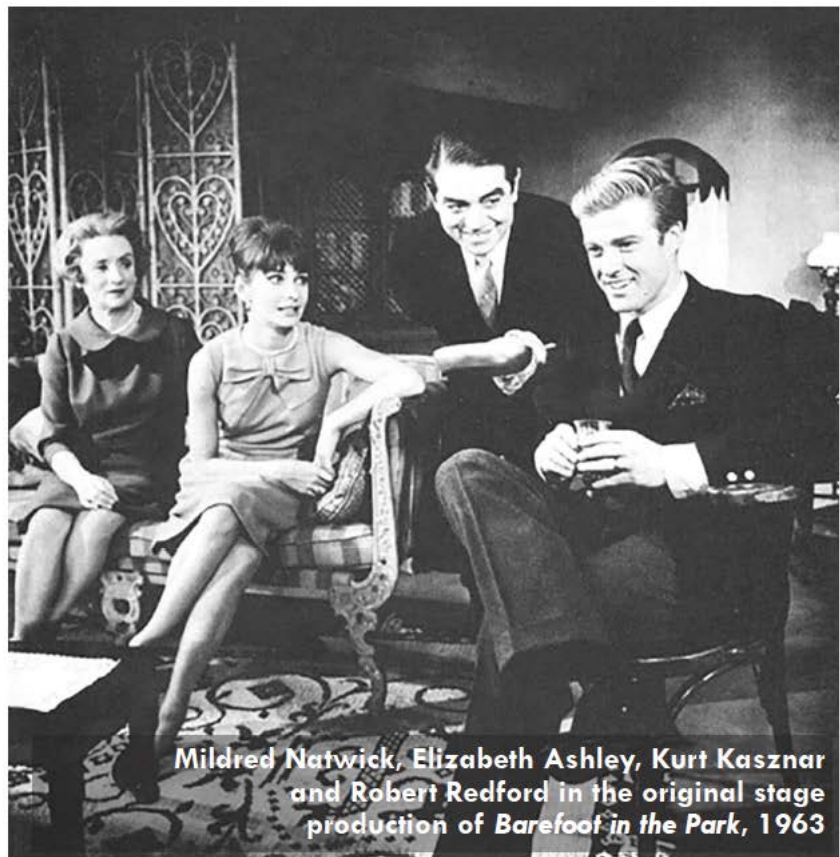
He was laid to rest in Pound Ridge, New York, next to Joan.

Born on July 4, 1927, in the Bronx, New York, Marvin Neil Simon was the son of a garment industry salesman, Irving Simon, who abandoned the family more than once during his childhood, leaving Neil Simon's mother, May, to take care of Neil and his older brother, Danny. When the family was intact, the mood was darkened by constant battles between the parents.

The tensions of the family, which moved to Washington Heights in Manhattan when Neil Simon was 5 years old, would find their way into many of his plays. When the family finally broke up for good, the young Neil Simon went to live with cousins while his brother was sent to live with an aunt. The brothers remained

close, however, and later both worked at Warner Bros, Danny in publicity, and Neil, after a short spell in the US Army, joining as a mailroom clerk. It was there that their comedy writing careers began.

Barefoot in the Park, in 1963, was Neil Simon's breakthrough hit. It made a star of Robert Redford, who was cast alongside Elizabeth Ashley. It played for nearly four years and made a hot commodity of Neil Simon in Hollywood. The movie, with the



Mildred Natwick, Elizabeth Ashley, Kurt Kasznar and Robert Redford in the original stage production of *Barefoot in the Park*, 1963

screenplay written by Neil Simon, and with Robert Redford and Jane Fonda in the starring roles, became a hit when it was released in 1967.

He followed this with other popular successes such as *The Odd Couple* (1965), based on the experiences of his brother who left his wife and shared an apartment with a friend; the musical *Sweet Charity* (1966), for which he wrote the book; *Plaza Suite* (1968); *Last of the Red Hot Lovers* (1969); *The Prisoner of Second Avenue* (1971) and *The Sunshine Boys* (1974). From 1965 to 1980, his plays and musicals racked up more than 9,000 performances, a record not even remotely touched by any other playwright of the era. In 1966 alone, he had four Broadway shows running simultaneously.

He also owned a Broadway theatre for a spell in the 1960s, and in 1983 had a theatre named after him, a rare accolade for a living playwright.

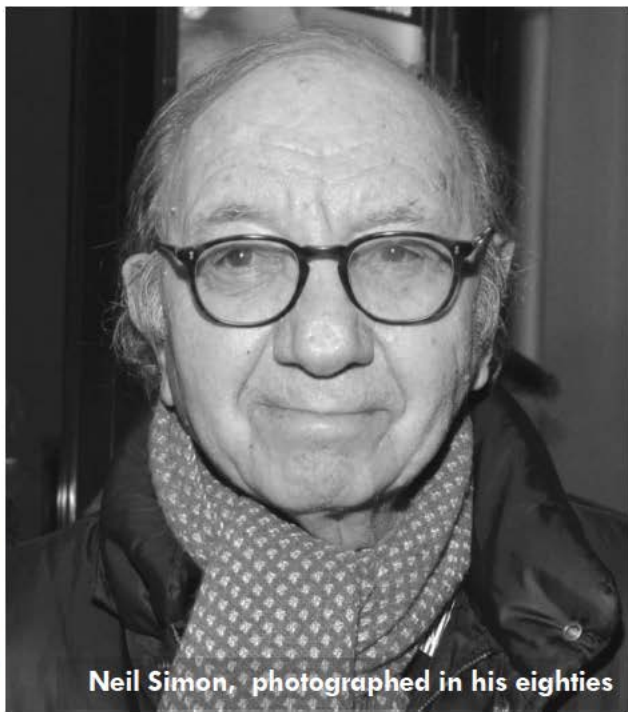
Many of his plays he adapted into successful screenplays, most notably *The Odd Couple*, with Walter Matthau and Jack Lemmon. He also wrote several original movies, including *The Goodbye Girl* and *The Heartbreak Kid*, and received four Oscar screenplay nominations in his career, although he never won.

But despite his popularity, in the early years of his fame he rarely earned wide critical acclaim, his plays dismissed for being too safe, too lightweight, with far too many punchlines. This all changed in the 1980s with his darker-hued semi-autobiographical trilogy, *Brighton Beach Memoirs* (1983), *Biloxi Blues* (1985) and *Broadway Bound* (1986). These comedy-dramas were admired for the way they explored the tangle of love,

anger and desperation that bound together — and drove apart — a Jewish working-class family, as viewed from the perspective of the youngest son, a restless wisecracker with an eye on showbiz fame.

In 1991 he won a Tony Award and the Pulitzer Prize for *Lost in Yonkers*, another autobiographical comedy, this one about a gentle, simple-minded woman controlled by her domineering mother. It was his last major success on Broadway.

“When an audience laughed, I felt fulfilled,” Neil Simon wrote in *Rewrites*. “It was a sign of approval, of being accepted. Coming as I did from a childhood where laughter in the house meant security, but was seldom heard as often



Neil Simon, photographed in his eighties

as a door slamming every time my father took another year's absence from us, the laughter that came my way in the theatre was nourishment.”

Neil Simon's **BAREFOOT** *in the* **PARK**

THE CAST (in order of appearance)

Corie Bratter

JEMMA CABLE

Telephone Man

COLIN PILE

Delivery Man

SIMON JACKSON

Paul Bratter

DAVID BEDDARD

Mrs Banks, Corie's mother

TRACIE BILLINGTON-BEARDSLEY

Victor Velasco

RICHARD NEAL

PERIOD AND SETTING

The action takes place in the Bratters' fifth floor apartment in New York, over several days, one cold February in the 1960s.

Running time approximately 2 hours 20 minutes, including a 20 minute interval.

*Produced by Wimborne Drama Productions at the Tivoli Theatre,
20-22 February 2020. By kind permission of Samuel French Ltd.*



David Beddard



Tracie Billington-Beardsley



David Beddard & Jemma Cable



**Richard Neal &
Tracie Billington-Beardsley**



Colin Pile



Richard Neal & Jemma Cable



Simon Jackson



Jemma Cable

THE CREATIVE TEAM

Director	ROB CORDING-COOK
Set Designer	CHRIS DURHAM
Stage Manager	PHYLLIS SPENCER
Book Cover	JAN STEVENSON
Properties	CHRISSIE NEAL
	TRACEY NICHOLLS
Costumes	CHRISSIE NEAL
Sound	SAM MOULTON
ASMs	RICHARD SCOTSON
	PHIL SPENCER
Set Construction	CHRIS DURHAM
	COLIN PILE
	& members of the company
	RICHARD NEAL
Publicity & Programme	
For the Tivoli Theatre:	
Head of Production	KYLE BEST
Head of Sound	CHANDLER WHITELOCK
Backstage Crew	CALUM HEARNE

PRODUCTION ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Costumes supplied by **Hierarchy Costumes**

Flowers supplied by **Carnival Flowers**

Kitchen equipment loaned by **Sid Falla** and **David Pile**

We are also very grateful to the following for their assistance:

Daisy Graphic, Forest FM, Gullivers Bookshop, Impressed Dry Cleaners

Blandford, Tina Nicholls, St Mary's Church Ferndown, The Village Stores

Child Okeford, Tivoli Theatre, Jeff Van Etten & Wimborne Royal British Legion.

YOUR GUIDE TO NEW YORK CITY

New York City is made up of five boroughs: Manhattan, Brooklyn, The Bronx, Queens and Staten Island.

Manhattan is the most densely populated of the boroughs, and is where you will find the financial and commercial heart of the city, as well as many of the cultural hotspots and iconic sites such as the Empire State Building, Central Park, Times Square and Broadway.

Most of Manhattan is laid out in a grid of streets and avenues. Avenues run north to south and streets are east to west. Fifth Avenue — or “Millionaire’s Row” — which separates the East and West sides, is famous for its hotels, museums and luxury stores including **Tiffany’s, Lord and Taylor, and Saks.**

Bloomingdales, another of New York’s swanky stores, is on 59th Street and Lexington Avenue.

The Plaza Hotel, where Corie and Paul spent their honeymoon, is on Fifth Avenue, overlooking Central Park. This 19-story French Renaissance building opened in 1907 as a residence for the wealthy. In 1966 it hosted the “party of the century”, a lavish Black and White Ball thrown by Truman Capote with more than 500 guests including newlyweds Frank Sinatra and Mia Farrow, Henry Fonda, Candice Bergen, Gloria Vanderbilt and Andy Warhol. Neil Simon set his 1968 play *Plaza Suite* at the hotel.

Corie and Paul’s apartment is located in East 48th Street, on the Upper East Side of Manhattan, today well known for its fancy restaurants and designer shops, but in the 1960s it had a large population of German, Hungarian and Czech émigrés living cheek by jowl in rundown tenements. For the film version, Neil Simon and director Gene Saks decided that Greenwich Village in Lower Manhattan would offer a more picturesque backdrop. Thus the Bratters



The Plaza

were transplanted to Waverley Place, just off **Washington Square Park**.

Washington Square Park, at the south end of Fifth Avenue, then, as now, was a popular meeting place and performance space, dominated by a marble arch and a fountain. In the 1960s it was the



epicentre of the hippie movement. Street performers, musicians and artists frequented the park in all kinds of weather. Bob Dylan sang his first folk songs there. The area, before it opened as a public park in 1849, had previously been used for burying the poor and public hangings.

In the 1960s, **Staten Island** was legendary for one thing — garbage. A giant landfill dominated the island. Opened in 1948, all the rubbish generated by the people of New York City was dumped here. At one time it was the largest landfill in the world. Up to 20



barges a day transported the waste across the river. The stench was unbearable. It closed in 2001 and a luscious green park, abundant with wildlife, has since been built on top.

THE CAST

JEMMA CABLE

(Corie Bratter)

Jemma's last role for WDP was Anne Faulkner in *Strangers on a Train*. She has also played Nancy in *Gaslight*, Tooley in *Travels with My Aunt*, Peggy in *The Ghost Train* and Connie in *Habeas Corpus*.

Jemma is very active with Wimborne Musical Theatre who also perform at the Tivoli. She most recently played The Wicked Witch of the West in *The Wizard of Oz*, and also played Maria in *9 - 5 The Musical*, Sister Mary Patrick in *Sister Act*, as well as appearing in a number of concerts including *The Best of the West End* and *Encore!*

Jemma is very excited to be playing the bubbly and care-free but slightly naive Corie, in what is also her first role as a leading lady. "Corie learns a lot about relationships and herself throughout the play and I can say the same personally throughout the rehearsal process. It has been a huge but enjoyable challenge for me and thanks

to an excellent and supportive cast, crew and director, I am now confident you will fall in love with Corie and the play as much as I have."

DAVID BEDDARD

(Paul Bratter)

Since David seriously took up acting, aged 16, in *Oklahoma!* with the group now known as St Luke's A.C.T.S., he has enjoyed various roles with Poole & Parkstone Players, University of Nottingham G&S Society, Wimborne Drama Productions and Bournemouth Little Theatre. After a two-year absence from performing due to travelling in Australia and working in London, David returned to the stage with St Luke's A.C.T.S. as Magistrate in *The Wind in the Willows* in April 2019, before taking his first role with Ferndown Drama in September, gleefully reprising Simon Bliss in *Hay Fever*. David is delighted to be on stage at The Tivoli again, more than three years since he faced audiences as the

trouserless, tranquillised Mr Shanks in WDP's *Habeas Corpus*. "It has been a pleasure and an honour to work with Rob in his directorial debut. I've particularly enjoyed the challenge of trying to portray a drunk American with the flu. It has also been fun to explore questions of marital compatibility as I'm actually getting married in the summer!"

TRACIE BILLINGTON-BEARDSLEY

(Mrs Banks)

This is Tracie's first role with Wimborne Drama Productions - a big gulp of Martini was needed when she realised she was too old to play the romantic lead! Her credits include *Antony and Cleopatra* at Poole Lighthouse - she took the role so seriously she used a live snake and ended up marrying her Antony! Other Shakespearian leads include Kate in *The Taming of the Shrew*, Rosalind in *As You Like It* and Ariel in *The Tempest* with Brownsea Open Air

Theatre. She's also played Lady Capulet in *Romeo and Juliet* with Seachange, appeared in Churchill Productions' *Lady in the Van*, *Blithe Spirit*, *Calendar Girls* (baring her buns as Celia) and *All My Sons* (Annie) as well as historical roles in site specific plays with Wimborne Community Theatre.

SIMON JACKSON

(Delivery Man)

Simon is a stalwart of WDP having appeared in many productions over the years, most recently in *She Stoops to Conquer*, *Travels with My Aunt* and *Much Ado About Nothing*. He has played Gudgeon, the butler, in *The Hollow* - twice! Other favourites include Major Courtney in *The Ladykillers* and General Mackenzie in *And Then There Were None*, both for WDP, and Igor Romanoff, in *Romanoff and Juliet*, a comedy by Peter Ustinov, for Penistone Players in Yorkshire. "This small but vital role reminds me of another Neil Simon play I took part in -

again lasting all of two minutes on stage, though I did have three words to say – ‘cool it Mimsie!’, which was three words more than I have in this play. Still the dramatic heavy breathing makes up for the lack of dialogue.”

RICHARD NEAL

(Victor Velasco)

Richard has appeared in more than twenty productions at the Tivoli, most recently playing Jack Manningham in *Gaslight*, Anthony Blunt in *Single Spies*, Richard Winthrop in *The Ghost Train*, Inspector Colqhoun in *The Hollow*, Professor Marcus in *The Ladykillers* and Arthur Birling in *An Inspector Calls*. Other plays include *And Then There Were None*, *Pack of Lies*, *Witness for the Prosecution*, *The Unexpected Guest*, *Rebecca*, *Loot*, *David Copperfield*, *Habeas Corpus* and *Forty Years On*. Richard has also directed a number of plays including *Hay Fever*, *Present Laughter*, *Relative Values*, *She Stoops to Conquer*, *On the Razzle* and *The Madness of George III*. Richard

was thrilled to be cast as the charming, colourful and eccentric Victor and has enjoyed working with the director, cast and crew on this fabulous play.

COLIN PILE

(Telephone Man)

Colin has had great fun with an American accent again, after playing the detective Arthur Gerard in *Strangers on a Train* in October. He has played many varied roles since joining WDP in 2000. Other recent parts include Tom Twist and Jeremy in *She Stoops to Conquer* and Desmond Curry in *The Winslow Boy*. Other plays include *Travels With My Aunt*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *The Hollow*, *Shadowlands*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *A Man For All Seasons*, *Pack of Lies*, *Spiders Web* and *On the Razzle*. Colin has also designed the set for many WDP plays including *Murder on the Nile*, *The Ghost Train*, *The Hollow*, *The Ladykillers* and *An Inspector Calls*.

WIMBORNE DRAMA PRODUCTIONS

Sense and Sensibility

By Jane Austen adapted by Jessica Swale

2-5 July 2020

Open air production in the
grounds of Deans Court

Directed by Tracey Nicholls

Elinor and Marianne Dashwood are left penniless after their wealthy half-brother cheats them of their fortune. They are forced to leave the comforts of Norland Park and relocate to a cold Devonshire cottage. When a devilishly handsome stranger arrives at Barton Cottage with the rain-drenched Marianne in his arms, the Dashwood girls are convinced that their fortunes are changed forever. Whilst the sensible Elinor pines for quiet Edward Ferrars, impulsive Marianne loses herself in the idea of her hero on horseback, and for a girl who feasts on poetry and music, what else is there to do in Devon but dream of rescue?

Austen's razor-sharp wit sizzles in this beloved tale of injustice, heartbreak and love in an adaptation that is as fresh as it is funny from Olivier Award-winning writer Jessica Swale.

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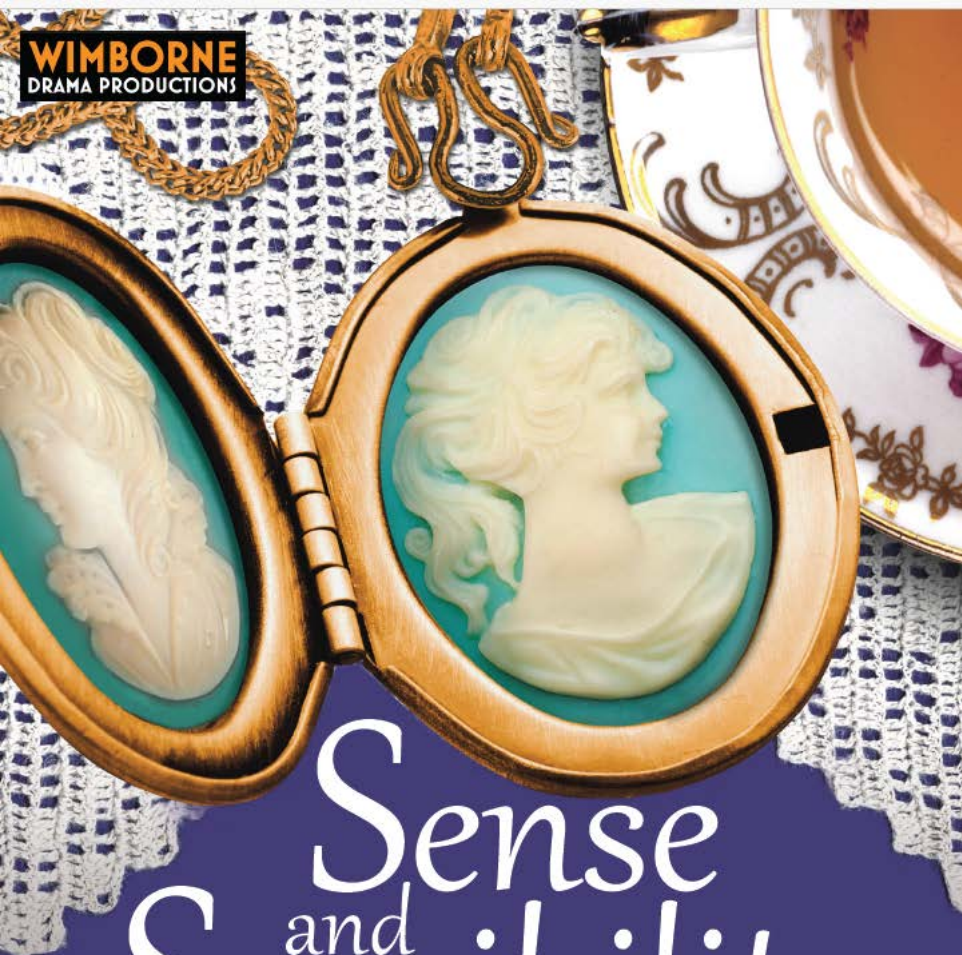


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WIMBORNE
DRAMA PRODUCTIONS



Sense and Sensibility

By Jane Austen adapted by Jessica Swale

OPEN AIR PRODUCTION IN THE
GROUNDS OF DEANS COURT WIMBORNE

2nd-4th July 2020 at 7pm. 5th July 2020 at 5pm

Tickets £15* from Tivoli Theatre 01202 885566 www.TivoliWimborne.co.uk

Grounds open 1 hour before play starts. Free parking. Ts & Cs at WimborneDrama.co.uk. By special arrangement with SAMUEL FRENCH, LTD. *Booking fees may apply.