

**WIMBORNE**  
DRAMA PRODUCTIONS



# VON RIBBENTROP'S WATCH

By Laurence Marks and Maurice Gran

**19TH - 21ST FEBRUARY 2026**  
**TIVOLI THEATRE, WIMBORNE**

# Director's Notes

Meet the crew...



Paul Senitt  
Director

When I first heard about Von Ribbentrop's Watch two years ago, the idea lodged itself in my mind and refused to leave. There was something unsettling and compelling about its central moral dilemma — the way a single object can force us to confront questions we'd rather avoid, and how history has a habit of placing uncomfortable truths in our hands.

Of course, wanting it and getting it are two different things. Convincing Wimborne Drama Productions to take on a piece like this — one that doesn't offer easy answers or comfortable resolutions — took time, persuasion, and a fair bit of passion. But that challenge only deepened my belief in the play. If a story makes us hesitate, it's usually because it's touching something important.

This production has been an exploration of that tension: between what we inherit and what we choose, between the stories we tell and the ones we try to forget. Watching the cast wrestle with these ideas — sometimes fiercely, sometimes playfully — has been one of the great joys of this process. Their commitment, curiosity, and courage have shaped every moment you'll see on stage.

I'm equally grateful to the crew, whose work often happens in the shadows but is felt in every detail. Their patience, creativity, and steady hands have carried this production from a spark of interest to the performance you're about to experience.

To everyone involved — thank you. And to you, the audience, thank you for stepping into this moral puzzle with us. I hope the questions linger long after the final scene.

# Laurence Marks & Maurice Gran

## Playwrights

Laurence Marks and Maurice Gran have sustained a creative partnership spanning more than six decades, evolving from youthful collaborators into established writers whose work bridges popular comedy and serious historical drama. They began their creative partnership in North London, having first met as teenagers in the Jewish Lads Brigade in 1960. After sharing youthful interests in football, music and performance, they discovered writing through the Player-Playwrights scriptwriting group in central London during the early 1970s. Initially pursuing separate careers in journalism



*Photograph: The Guardian*

and the Civil Service, they began collaborating on comedy writing and quickly attracted attention for their sharp dialogue and character-driven humour. With encouragement from legendary writer Barry Took, they broke into professional broadcasting, writing for BBC Radio 2's Frankie Howerd Variety Show, including material for Howerd's Royal Command Performance celebrating the Queen Mother's 80th birthday

Their television breakthrough came in 1980 with the ITV sitcom *Holding the Fort*, which marked the start of their full-time writing careers. This success was followed by a string of highly popular and long-running series that firmly established them as leading figures in British television comedy. Most notably, they co-created the hit BBC sitcom *Birds of a Feather*, which ran for over a decade and became one of the corporation's most successful comedies, praised for its blend of broad humour, sharp social commentary and memorable characters.

Alongside *Birds of a Feather*, Marks and Gran were responsible for several other well-known sitcoms, including *Goodnight Sweetheart*, which

combined romantic comedy with time-travel fantasy, and *Love Hurts*, showcasing their ability to move between traditional studio comedy and more emotionally driven storytelling. Their work consistently demonstrated a talent for creating strong central characters.

In later years their focus increasingly shifted toward stage work. Von Ribbentrop's *Watch* is a prime example of their ability to use humour to illuminate serious subject matter.

*Adapted from [www.marksandgran.com](http://www.marksandgran.com)*

## Who Was Joachim von Ribbentrop?

Joachim von Ribbentrop was born in 1893 into a middle-class German family with modest aristocratic pretensions. Although he later styled himself as a traditional Prussian nobleman, his background was far removed from the elite diplomatic circles he would eventually enter. His father was an army officer, and Ribbentrop's childhood was marked by frequent moves within Germany and abroad. As a young man, he spent time in Switzerland, Canada, Britain, and the United States, where he gained working knowledge of English and French. During this period, he developed a fascination with high society, luxury, and social status - traits that would later shape both his ambitions and his insecurities.

During the First World War, Ribbentrop served as an officer in the German army. Although he was not distinguished as a battlefield hero, he emerged from the conflict deeply embittered by Germany's defeat and the harsh terms of the Treaty of Versailles. Like many veterans, he viewed the Weimar Republic as weak and humiliating. These resentments would later provide fertile ground for his embrace of extreme nationalism.

After the war, Ribbentrop reinvented himself as a businessman. Through his marriage to Annelies Henkell, the daughter of a wealthy champagne producer, he entered the lucrative wine trade. This brought him financial security, social standing, and access to influential networks. He cultivated an image of cosmopolitan sophistication, hosting lavish social events and presenting himself as a man of culture and international experience.

Beneath this polished exterior, however, lay a deep hunger for recognition and power.

Ribbentrop joined the Nazi Party in 1932, relatively late compared to many early supporters, but quickly distinguished himself through personal ambition and unwavering loyalty to Adolf Hitler. He used his wealth, social connections, and international contacts to make himself useful to the regime, hosting meetings and acting as an informal foreign policy intermediary. Unlike trained diplomats, he relied on flattery, ideological alignment, and personal access to Hitler to advance his position. His rapid rise reflected the regime's preference for loyalty over professional competence.



*Photograph : Wikipedia*

Ribbentrop's early diplomatic successes elevated his standing within the Nazi regime. He played a prominent role in negotiating the Anglo-German Naval Agreement of 1935, which allowed Germany to rebuild its navy beyond the restrictions imposed by Versailles. Although the agreement had limited strategic value, Hitler praised it as a symbolic victory, and Ribbentrop claimed personal credit. This reinforced his belief that loyalty and theatrical diplomacy mattered more than genuine expertise.

In 1936, Ribbentrop was appointed ambassador to Britain - a posting he regarded as the pinnacle of his career. He arrived in London convinced that he could engineer a natural alliance between Nazi Germany and the British Empire. Instead, his arrogance, rigid behaviour, and inability to read political nuance alienated both British officials and his own diplomatic colleagues. His mission was widely regarded as a failure, yet Ribbentrop interpreted this rejection as evidence of British hostility rather than a reflection of his own shortcomings.

In 1938, Hitler rewarded Ribbentrop's loyalty by appointing him Foreign Minister. By this time, German foreign policy was already dominated by

Hitler's personal ambitions, leaving Ribbentrop largely as an executor rather than an architect of strategy. Nevertheless, he embraced the role enthusiastically. He helped strengthen alliances with Fascist Italy and Imperial Japan and supported the aggressive expansionist policies that would soon plunge Europe into war.

Ribbentrop's most infamous achievement was the Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact of August 1939, signed with Soviet Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Molotov. The agreement shocked the world by temporarily aligning two ideologically opposed regimes. The pact enabled Hitler to invade Poland without fear of immediate Soviet intervention, directly triggering the outbreak of the Second World War. Ribbentrop later boasted of this "diplomatic triumph," viewing it as proof of his own brilliance.

Once the war began, Ribbentrop's influence gradually declined. As Germany's fortunes deteriorated, Ribbentrop became more isolated, defensive, and detached from reality. He continued to present overly optimistic assessments to Hitler, often ignoring or suppressing unwelcome information.

Ribbentrop was not merely a passive bureaucrat. He was directly involved in policies that facilitated war crimes and genocide. Under his leadership, the Foreign Ministry cooperated with the SS in deporting Jews from occupied territories and pressuring allied governments to adopt anti-Jewish measures. Diplomatic correspondence reveals that he was aware of mass murder operations in Eastern Europe. Although he later attempted to portray himself as ignorant or powerless, the historical record shows that he played an active role in enabling the machinery of persecution.

Privately, Ribbentrop was known to be pompous, status-obsessed, and thin-skinned. He demanded elaborate displays of respect and was deeply sensitive to perceived slights. His relationship with Hitler bordered on religious devotion. Ribbentrop remained fiercely loyal even in the final months of the regime, clinging to Hitler as the system collapsed around them.



*Vyacheslav Molotov, Russian foreign minister, signs the non-aggression pact negotiated between Soviet Russia and Germany, at the Kremlin, Moscow. Standing behind him is his German counterpart Joachim von Ribbentrop (left), and Joseph Stalin (centre), 23 August 1939. Photograph: Keystone/Getty Images*

After Germany's defeat in 1945, Ribbentrop was captured by Allied forces and put on trial at the Nuremberg War Crimes Tribunal. Throughout proceedings he maintained his innocence, portraying himself as a misunderstood diplomat who had merely followed orders. He expressed little genuine remorse and continued to defend Hitler's leadership. The tribunal found him guilty of crimes against peace, war crimes, and crimes against humanity.

On 16 October 1946, Joachim von Ribbentrop became the first of the condemned Nazi leaders to be executed by hanging. His final words reportedly expressed loyalty to Germany rather than regret for his actions. In death, as in life, he clung to the belief that he was a misunderstood servant of history rather than an architect of catastrophe.

Today, Ribbentrop is remembered less for diplomatic skill than for what he represents: the dangers of ambition without principle, loyalty without conscience, and power pursued through flattery rather than wisdom. His story stands as a cautionary tale of how ordinary insecurities, when combined with authoritarian systems and ideological fanaticism, can help produce extraordinary destruction.

# Von Ribbentrop's Watch

Laurence Marks & Maurice Gran

## The Cast

Gerald Roth **STUART GLOSSOP**

Ruth Roth **MOLLY JACKSON**

Mrs Lila Roth **JUDY GARRETT**

Sasha Roth **SALI PIKE**

David Roth **ANDY GILL**

Mr Blackburn **MICHAEL MACKEY**

The Collector **SAM MOULTON**

### Production Acknowledgements

This production would not have been possible without the generous help and support of Beaucroft College, Daisy Graphic, Forest FM, Gullivers Bookshop, Radio Wimborne, Stour and Avon Magazine, Tivoli Theatre, Viewpoint and All Fired Up.

*Produced by Wimborne Drama Productions at the Tivoli Theatre, February 19 - 21, 2026. This amateur production of "Von Ribbentrop's Watch" is presented by arrangement with Stagescripts Ltd.*

# The Creative Team

|                                |  |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Director                       | <b>PAUL SENITT</b>   |
| Set Designer                   | <b>CHRIS DURHAM</b>  |
| Stage Manager                  | <b>MICHELLE BARTER</b><br><b>SUZANNE VINEY</b>   |
| Properties/ASMs                | <b>DEE HAWES</b><br><b>JAMES TURRALL</b><br><b>ANTHONY CUTLER</b><br><b>CHARLIE CASH</b> |
| Sound                          | <b>CAL PORTER</b>  |
| Costume Supervisor             | <b>KIRA BRADFORD</b>   |
| Book Cover for rehearsals      | <b>HEATHER BIRCHENOUGH</b>   |
| Publicity & Programme          | <b>BOO FELTHAM</b>   |
| <i>For the Tivoli Theatre:</i> |  |
| Production Manager             | <b>CHANDLER WHITELOCK</b>  |
| Lighting                       | <b>JOSH BRINDLEY</b>   |

The play takes place in the family home of Gerald and Ruth Roth in Pinner, North West London.

Act one, scene 1, late afternoon February 2008.

Act one, scene 2, late afternoon on 19th April 2008.

Interval : Approx 20 minutes

Act Two, early evening on 19th April 2008.

Meet the cast...



**Stuart Glossop**  
Gerald Roth

Meet the cast...



**Molly Jackson**  
Ruth Roth

Meet the cast...



**Judy Garrett**  
Mrs Lila Roth

**Did you know...**

The first wristwatch was made in 1810 for Caroline Murat, Queen of Naples.

**Did you know...**

Men mostly used pocket watches until World War I made wrist-watches practical for soldiers.

Meet the cast...



**Sali Pike**  
Sasha Roth

Meet the cast...



**Andy Gill**  
David Roth

Meet the cast...



**Michael Mackey**  
Mr Blackburn

Meet the cast...



**Sam Moulton**  
The Collector

## Did you know...

The most expensive watch ever sold at auction was the Patek Philippe Grandmaster Chime Ref. 6300A-010. It sold for CHF 31,000,000 (Approximate £29 Million)

## Railway Time

Before railways, every town kept its own local time, set by the sun. In Bristol, noon was about 10 minutes behind London. In Edinburgh, it was 14 minutes ahead. Then the trains arrived.

Suddenly, time became dangerous. Different station clocks showed different hours. Timetables clashed. Missed connections were common and in some cases, collisions happened because engineers were working from conflicting times.

To solve this chaos, railway companies began to synchronise their clocks. By the 1840s, most British railways had adopted London time - Greenwich Mean Time - creating the first nationwide standard time system. In a few places, stations displayed *two clocks*: local time and railway time.

In 1880, Greenwich Mean Time became the official legal time for the entire country, transforming daily life and making Britain the first country in the world to legally standardise time nationwide.

**Meet the crew...**



**Paul Senitt**  
Director

**Meet the crew...**



**Michelle Barter**  
Stage Manager

**Meet the crew...**



**Suzanne Viney**  
Stage Manager

**Did you know...**

High-ranking Nazi officials favoured luxury German and Swiss watches. These were used as visible markers of authority, wealth and international prestige

**Meet the crew...**



**Chris Durham**  
Set Design

**Meet the crew...**



**Dee Hawes**  
Properties - ASM

Meet the crew...



**James Turrall**  
Properties - ASM

Meet the crew...



**Charlie Cash**  
Properties - ASM

Meet the crew...



**Anthony Cutler**  
Properties - ASM

Meet the crew...



**Cal Potter**  
Sound

Meet the crew...



**Kira Bradford**  
Costume Supervisor

Meet the crew...



**Heather Birchenough**  
Prompt

# About Wimborne Drama Productions

Established in 1928, we are a renowned, award-winning amateur theatre company producing plays at the Tivoli Theatre in Wimborne.

# Join us!

Would you like to be part of a sociable, kind, inclusive group of friends? Our members have more than a shared interest in drama we also have a book club, host dinner parties, meet for regular evenings at the pub and go on theatre trips.

We stage three productions each year. We always welcome new members, with or without previous experience. As well as those with a liking for acting or directing, people with a keen interest in the less glamorous, but equally valuable backstage roles (set construction, properties, make-up etc) are warmly welcomed into the group.

We are actively seeking:

- Male and female actors in their 20s and 30s.
- Members interested in backstage roles such as:
  - \* Stage Manager
  - \* Assistant Stage Manager
  - \* Sound
  - \* Props
  - \* Costumes
  - \* Make-up
  - \* Set Design and/or construction
  - \* Prompt

Our current members can teach and mentor anyone new to a role. Backstage members are welcome to audition for acting roles and tread the boards, but are never put under pressure to perform.

The group members meet at 7.30pm on the last Wednesday of the month and rehearsals take place on Monday and Wednesday evenings. Membership costs £35 per annum, for more information email [secretary@wimboredramaproductions.com](mailto:secretary@wimboredramaproductions.com)

Coming soon to The Tivoli

# AND THEN THERE WERE NONE

By Agatha Christie

14 -16 May 2026

Directed by  
Chris Durham

Follow us on social media:

@wimbornedrama



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*(H signifies honorary)*

To enquire about becoming a Patron please email [secretary@wimbornedramaproductions.com](mailto:secretary@wimbornedramaproductions.com)

**Membership costs £45.00 per year and includes:**

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