

Stepping out Theatre in association with Chrysalis and Simon James Collier present

The London Premiere

Lullabies of Broadmoor – A Broadmoor Quartet

Venus at Broadmoor • The Demon Box • The Murder Club • Wilderness

Four plays by Steve Hennessy

Directed by Chris Loveless. Design by Ann Stiddard. Lighting by Tim Bartlett.

Sound by Hoxa Sound. Costumes by Rebecca Sellors.

Cast: Chris Bianchi. Chris Courtenay. Chris Donnelly. Violet Ryder.

Eight years in the making – the four linked plays of Steve Hennessy's *Lullabies of Broadmoor – A Broadmoor Quartet* weave together the closely linked stories of five of Broadmoor's most notorious inmates of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century with the stories of those they murdered. The sequence of plays form a rich, dark, Gothic tragicomedy about murder, love, madness, personal responsibility and redemption.

As part of preparations for this production, the creative team were given special access to Broadmoor Hospital. The four plays are also scheduled to be performed inside various mental health facilities. The production arrives at the Finborough after performances in Frome, Bristol, Brighton and a full run at the Edinburgh Festival.

The quartet is bound together by John Coleman, Principal Attendant on the Gentlemen's Block at Broadmoor. The four plays use the same cast, and some characters appear in more than one play. Following the acclaimed London premiere at the Finborough Theatre of the first two plays in the quartet in 2004, now all four plays can be seen together for the first time ever. The plays are performed in a repertoire of two doublebills. Each doublebill works on its own, but each will gain from being seen in conjunction with the other. The doublebills can be seen separately and in either order, but ***Venus at Broadmoor*** and ***The Demon Box*** are better seen first. On seven days during the run, it will be possible to see all four plays in a day.

Venus at Broadmoor

1870. The madness of love. A string of random poisonings around Brighton result in the admission of Christiana Edmunds to Broadmoor Criminal Lunatic Asylum. The penny dreadfuls call her the Chocolate Cream Poisoner, but she prefers to be called Venus. Dr. Orange is struggling to understand why. Principal Attendant Coleman is struggling to stay off the drink. The Broadmoor Annual Ball is approaching. Christiana just wants to dance. Based on the true story of Broadmoor's most notorious female patient.

The Demon Box

1872. Inside Broadmoor. Inside the black box of the theatre. Inside the head of Richard Dadd. On a trip to Egypt, the great Victorian artist Richard Dadd believed that he had been contacted by the god Osiris. Upon his return, at the god's bidding, he murdered his father. He spent the rest of his life in Bethlem and Broadmoor. While there he spent nine years working on his eerie masterpiece 'The Fairy Feller's Master Stroke'. In 1872 he was given the job of renovating the theatre at Broadmoor ...

The Murder Club

1922. Murder is in the air. The British Government is engaged in a genocidal war in Iraq using poison gas and other weapons of mass destruction and two notorious murderers are meeting in Broadmoor for the first time. Small time conman Ronald True murdered the prostitute Olive Young. Embittered out of work actor Richard Prince murdered matinee idol William Terriss at the stage door of the Adelphi Theatre. Now the two men have been put in charge of an evening of entertainment at Broadmoor. *The Murder Club* was commissioned by the Finborough Theatre to tell the infamous history of a murder committed on the Finborough Road itself, just down the road from the theatre.

118 Finborough Road, London SW10 9ED Telephone 020 7244 7439

e-mail admin@finboroughtheatre.co.uk www.finboroughtheatre.co.uk Artistic Director Neil McPherson

The Finborough Theatre is managed by The Steam Industry. Registered in England and Wales as a company limited by guarantee, no. 3448268. Registered Charity no. 1071304. Registered address: 118 Finborough Road, London SW10 9ED. A member of the Independent Theatre Council.

Wilderness

A journey from the battlefields of the American Civil War to the cells of nineteenth century Broadmoor by way of one of the most famous murders in Victorian Lambeth. This is the story of William Chester Minor, one time surgeon in the American Union Army and a major contributor to the Oxford English Dictionary.

Playwright **Steve Hennessey** has had twenty one plays staged throughout the UK including Bristol, London, as well as four radio plays broadcast in the UK and Ireland. He was Playwright-in-Residence at the Finborough Theatre from 2004 to 2007 where the first two plays in the quartet – *The Murder Club* and *Wilderness* – were produced in 2004. His play *Still Life* won the *Venue Magazine* Best New Play Award, and *Moonshadow* (2009) was a recent *Time Out* Critics' Choice.

Acclaimed young director **Chris Loveless** trained at the Bristol Old Vic Theatre School. He is Artistic Director of Fallen Angel Theatre Company and an Associate Director of the White Bear Theatre and Stepping Out Theatre. Directing credits include *The Demon Box* at the Finborough Theatre as part of *Vibrant – An Anniversary Festival of Finborough Playwrights* (2010), *The Remains of the Day*, named Evening Standard Critics' Choice (Union Theatre), *Normal* (Tobacco Factory), *Moonshadow*, named Critics' Choice and Show of the Week in Time Out, *Dracula*, and *The Custom of the Country*, named Time Out Critics' Choice (all White Bear Theatre), *Venus at Broadmoor*, *Vampire Nights*, *Ray Collins Dies On Stage*, *Walter's Monkey* and *Thursday Coma* (all Alma Tavern Theatre, Bristol), *Stairway to Heaven*, for which he was nominated for OffWestEnd.com's Award for Best Director (Blue Elephant Theatre) and *Blavatsky's Tower* (Brockley Jack Theatre). www.chrisloveless.com

The cast includes **Chris Bianchi**, **Chris Courtenay**, **Chris Donnelly** and **Violet Ryder**.

Chris Bianchi's theatre includes *King Lear*, *The Provok'd Wife*, *The Seagull* (The Peter Hall Company at The Old Vic), *The Nutcracker*, *Filumena* (Bath Theatre Royal), *Julius Caesar*, *Antony and Cleopatra* (Shakespeare at the Tobacco Factory), *A Christmas Carol*, *Alice Through the Looking Glass*, *Blue/Orange* (Tobacco Factory), *Aesop's Fables* (Bristol Old Vic and International Tour), *No Loud Bangs* series, *The Rivals*, *The Owl Who Was Afraid of the Dark*, *Penetrator* and *Addicted to Love* (Bristol Old Vic), *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, *Charlotte's Web* (Duke's Theatre, Lancaster), *Ministry of Fear*, *A Flying Visit*, *The Crowstarver*, *Bonjour Bob* (Theatre Alibi National Tour) and *Clown* (Travelling Light).

Chris Courtenay's theatre includes *A Christmas Carol* (Trafalgar Studios), *Henry VIII* (Shakespeare's Globe), *The New Morality*, *Wilderness*, *The Murder Club* (Finborough Theatre), *The Master and Margarita*, *Akhmatova's Salted Herring* (Menier Chocolate Factory), *Romeo and Juliet* (Jermyn Street Theatre), *The Dybbuk* (King's Head Theatre), *Fallen Angels* (Vienna's English Theatre), *Julius Caesar* (Leptis Magna), *The Blue Room* (Tabard Theatre), *Rumplestiltskin and Other Grizzly Tales* (Wimbledon Studio Theatre), *The Public Eye* (Etcetera Theatre) and *Macbeth*, *Hamlet* (Cambridge Shakespeare Festival). TV, Film and Radio includes *The Chilcot Enquiry*, *Royal Wealth*, *Alice and Camilla*, *Credo*, *Déjà Vu*, *The Furred Man*, *The Bed Guy*, and Thor Heyerdahl in BBC Radio 4's *A Thor in One's Side*.

Chris Donnelly's theatre includes *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Tempest*, *Othello*, *The Winter's Tale*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Measure For Measure*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Troilus and Cressida* (Shakespeare at the Tobacco Factory), *The Winter's Tale* (Southwark Playhouse), *Twelfth Night* and *Macbeth* (US Tours), *Bent* (Courtyard Theatre), *Edge of Darkness* (National Tour) and *One Flea Spare* (Old Red Lion Theatre). TV includes *Four Seasons*, *Vital Signs*, *Fat Friends*, *Silent Witness*, *Wire in the Blood*, *EastEnders*, *Drop the Dead Donkey*, *Casualty*, *Reckless*, *Wycliffe* and *The Verdict*. Radio includes *Soldier Soldier*, *Call Waiting* and *Gilgamesh* – all award winning plays for BBC Radio 4.

Violet Ryder's theatre includes the critically acclaimed *Brief Encounter* (Kneehigh Theatre), *Pride and Prejudice* (Bath Theatre Royal and National Tour), *Venus at Broadmoor* (Alma Tavern Theatre), *The Walker Tribe*, *A Case of Deception* (The London Quest Company), *Richard III*, *Love's Labour's Lost* (Cambridge Shakespeare Festival), *From Lamplight to Limelight* and *The Passing Preciousness of Dreams* (Canterbury Festival).

The Press on *The Murder Club* and *Wilderness*, the first two plays in the quartet, performed at the Finborough Theatre in 2004 as part of our Playwrights-in-Residence season (which included Laura Wade's London debut)

"Powerfully performed...by the same set of actors, the dramas are like distorted images of each other, as they juggle with issues such as responsibility and redemption and the relationship between illegitimate individual acts of murder and publicly sanctioned mass killing. The result is a piquant mix of witty Gothic ghoulishness and serious moral questioning..."

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Press Information

absorbing and atmospheric" Paul Taylor, *The Independent*

"This macabre, grisly, but often funny double bill grabs the audience by the dramatic throat and hardly lets go for more than two hours...the psychological carnage is left behind long after the blood has been hosed away...every character is created with care and finely executed...a consistently interesting, though harrowing evening." Derek Smith, *The Stage*

"Tragi-comic, black humour leavens these sad stories ...Multi-layered, clever, compact, yet ranging widely, *Lullabies of Broadmoor* demonstrates sensitive writing...Hennessy has written and produced a gem as part of the Finborough's writers-in-residence season." Vera Liber, *Plays International*

"A double bill of plays that remind you why intimate fringe venues can touch parts other theatres can't. *The Murder Club*, is a rumination on the glamorisation of murder, the public's lust for gory details and the mass murders that go unpunished (and unreported) on the other side of the world. Set in 1922, Hennessy has intelligently woven in, as backdrop, the British Commission in Iraq...the play is a thought-provoking piece, directed with fluidity and poise in a restricted space. In the final minute it swiftly shifts from its established delicacy of manner to a visceral wrenching; bringing form and content into focus to make a very powerful end." Adam Brace, *The Irish Post*

"Steve Hennessy's entertaining script revels in macabre surrealism tempered by shrewd psychology and historical research ...Drawing on real cases, Hennessy weaves an ornate tapestry of emotional manipulation...Such is the fertility of Hennessy's mind that his shadowy gothic world compels you to keep watching." Helen Chappell, *What's on in London*

"This isn't a musty period drama or a whodunnit, but a no-holds-barred assault on our moral and sexual conventions, our assumptions about sanity and madness and on a society that claims to be civilised, yet seems to thrive on war ... Hennessy has done an outstanding job of using this macabre true story of 'moral insanity', murder and sex to lay bare the hypocrisy of our own tormented society." Tom Mellen, *The Morning Star*

"Darkly funny...frequently disturbing...a combination of acute psychological insight and political and historical breadth ...A rich mix of characters and themes" Tom Philips, *Venue Magazine*

"No doubting the quality both of writing and construction in Steve Hennessy's double-bill; his characters resonate in the mind the morning afterHennessy has a flair for visual moments that summarise character and writes satisfyingly gritty, fluent dialogue... The Finborough has searched out yet another individual theatre voice from whom we ought to hear more. Timothy Ramsden, *Reviewsgate*

PRESS NIGHTS:

***Venus At Broadmoor* and *The Demon Box* – FRIDAY, 2 SEPTEMBER 2011 AT 3.00PM**

***The Murder Club* and *Wilderness* – FRIDAY, 2 SEPTEMBER 2011 AT 7.30PM**

PHOTOCALL: TUESDAY, 30 AUGUST 2011 AT 1.00-1.30PM.

LISTINGS INFORMATION

Finborough Theatre, The Finborough, 118 Finborough Road, London SW10 9ED

Box Office 0844 847 1652 Book online at www.finboroughtheatre.co.uk

Tuesday, 30 August – Saturday, 1 October 2011

The doublebills can be seen separately and in either order, but ***Venus at Broadmoor*** and ***The Demon Box*** are better seen first.

Tuesday to Saturday evenings at 7.30pm. Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday matinees at 3.00pm (as listed in the schedule below.)

Tickets £14, £10 concessions, except Tuesday evenings £10 all seats, and Saturday evenings £14 all seats.

Previews (30 and 31 August and 1 September) £10 all seats, and £5 tickets for under 30's.

£10 tickets for residents of the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea on the first Saturday of the run only.

Performance Length of each double bill: Approximately 2 hours and 30 minutes including one interval.

Strong language and sexual content mean these plays are not suitable for children.

REPERTOIRE SCHEDULE

Tuesday 30 August	7.30	<i>Venus at Broadmoor</i> and <i>The Demon Box</i>	Preview
Wednesday 31 Aug	3.00	<i>Venus at Broadmoor</i> and <i>The Demon Box</i>	Preview 4 Plays in 1 Day
Wednesday 31 Aug	7.30	<i>The Murder Club</i> and <i>Wilderness</i>	Preview 4 Plays in 1 Day

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Thursday 1 September	7.30	<i>The Murder Club</i> and <i>Wilderness</i>	Preview
Friday 2	3.00	<i>Venus at Broadmoor</i> and <i>The Demon Box</i>	Press 4 Plays in 1 Day
Friday 2	7.30	<i>The Murder Club</i> and <i>Wilderness</i>	Press 4 Plays in 1 Day
Saturday 3	7.30	<i>Venus at Broadmoor</i> and <i>The Demon Box</i>	
Sunday 4	3.00	<i>The Murder Club</i> and <i>Wilderness</i>	
Monday 5	No Performance		
Tuesday 6	7.30	<i>Venus at Broadmoor</i> and <i>The Demon Box</i>	
Wednesday 7	7.30	<i>Venus at Broadmoor</i> and <i>The Demon Box</i>	
Thursday 8	7.30	<i>The Murder Club</i> and <i>Wilderness</i>	
Friday 9	7.30	<i>Venus at Broadmoor</i> and <i>The Demon Box</i>	4 Plays in 1 Day
Saturday 10	3.00	<i>Venus at Broadmoor</i> and <i>The Demon Box</i>	4 Plays in 1 Day
Saturday 10	7.30	<i>The Murder Club</i> and <i>Wilderness</i>	
Sunday 11	3.00	<i>The Murder Club</i> and <i>Wilderness</i>	
Monday 12	No Performance		
Tuesday 13	7.30	<i>The Murder Club</i> and <i>Wilderness</i>	
Wednesday 14	7.30	<i>The Murder Club</i> and <i>Wilderness</i>	
Thursday 15	7.30	<i>Venus at Broadmoor</i> and <i>The Demon Box</i>	
Friday 16	7.30	<i>The Murder Club</i> and <i>Wilderness</i>	
Saturday 17	3.00	<i>Venus at Broadmoor</i> and <i>The Demon Box</i>	4 Plays in 1 Day
Saturday 17	7.30	<i>The Murder Club</i> and <i>Wilderness</i>	4 Plays in 1 Day
Sunday 18	3.00	<i>Venus at Broadmoor</i> and <i>The Demon Box</i>	
Monday 19	No Performance		
Tuesday 20	7.30	<i>The Murder Club</i> and <i>Wilderness</i>	
Wednesday 21	7.30	<i>The Murder Club</i> and <i>Wilderness</i>	
Thursday 22	7.30	<i>Venus at Broadmoor</i> and <i>The Demon Box</i>	
Friday 23	7.30	<i>The Murder Club</i> and <i>Wilderness</i>	
Saturday 24	3.00	<i>Venus at Broadmoor</i> and <i>The Demon Box</i>	4 Plays in 1 Day
Saturday 24	7.30	<i>The Murder Club</i> and <i>Wilderness</i>	4 Plays in 1 Day
Sunday 25	3.00	<i>Venus at Broadmoor</i> and <i>The Demon Box</i>	
Monday 26	No Performance		
Tuesday 27	7.30	<i>Venus at Broadmoor</i> and <i>The Demon Box</i>	
Wednesday 28	3.00	<i>Venus at Broadmoor</i> and <i>The Demon Box</i>	4 Plays in 1 Day
Wednesday 28	7.30	<i>The Murder Club</i> and <i>Wilderness</i>	4 Plays in 1 Day
Thursday 29	7.30	<i>Venus at Broadmoor</i> and <i>The Demon Box</i>	
Friday 30	7.30	<i>The Murder Club</i> and <i>Wilderness</i>	
Saturday 1 Oct	3.00	<i>Venus at Broadmoor</i> and <i>The Demon Box</i>	Last Performance 4 Plays in 1 Day
Saturday 1 Oct	7.30	<i>The Murder Club</i> and <i>Wilderness</i>	Last Performance 4 Plays in 1
Day			

For more information, interviews and images, please contact

Neil McPherson on e-mail admin@finboroughtheatre.co.uk or **07977 173135**

Download press releases and images at <http://www.finboroughtheatre.co.uk/press-resources.php>

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