

### March-July 2024 season at the Finborough Theatre

The first production in over 30 years

## KAFKA

Translated, Devised and Performed by Jack Klaff.

Directed by Colin Watkeys.

Original Production Directed by Nick Ward.

Presented by Bonne Idée Productions in association with Neil McPherson for the Finborough Theatre.

*'We should be interested only in writing that bites and stings. If writing doesn't whack us and wake us up, why bother with it?'*

Franz Kafka died in June 1924, one hundred years ago.

To commemorate his centenary, ***Kafka***, written and performed by **Jack Klaff**, receives its first production in over 30 years at the multi-award-winning Finborough Theatre, for a four week limited season, opening on **Tuesday, 11 June 2024 (Press Nights: Thursday, 13 June and Friday, 14 June 2024 at 7.30pm)**.

Franz Kafka - even more than James Joyce – is still the presiding genius of experimental storytelling in the West.

A hundred years on from his terrible death at the age of just 40, Kafka remains the voice of the outsider and the disempowered – struggling between the agony of solitude and the pains of intimacy, isolated in the big city and in the world, whilst never quite forgetting the mordant black humour of existence.

Kafka himself presented an actor friend of his in Prague in a series of theatrical one man shows. Inspired by this knowledge, multi-award-winning writer and performer Jack Klaff created his internationally acclaimed solo evocation of Kafka's life, works and times.

Featuring a tremendous array of indelible characters from Kafka's unmatched imagination, drawing on all of Kafka's works including *Metamorphosis*, *The Trial*, *Amerika*, *The Castle*, and his letters, diaries, and fragments, Jack Klaff also impersonates a star-studded cast of Kafka's friends, lovers, fans and commentators, including – amongst many others – Alan Bennett, Bertolt Brecht, Max Brod, Albert Camus, Anthony Perkins, Orson Welles, Melvyn Bragg, Ben E King, Harold Pinter, David Baddiel, Samuel Beckett, and Albert Einstein. And the many Kafka "scholars and intellectuals" whose pomposity and pretension are satirised without mercy.

In 75 minutes within an empty space, this bracing, off-kilter, always-surprising show recreates the life, work and times of a unique human being with a unique mind. Standing 'head outwards on this spinning planet'. Just like everyone else. Like all of us.

*Kafka* premiered in 1983 at the Cheltenham Literary Festival to commemorate the centenary of Kafka's birth. It was then presented at Edinburgh's Assembly Rooms, Australia's Perth Festival, Prague's Culture Club and London's Bloomsbury Theatre. Radio and television versions were broadcast in Australia, the Czech Republic, the United States and the UK. It was last seen as part of a *Jack Klaff Retrospective* at the Riverside Studios in 1994, and is now specially revived for the centenary of Kafka's death.

## PRESS INFORMATION

Playwright and Performer **Jack Klaff's** productions at the Finborough Theatre include *The Representative*, *Drama at Inish*, *Trilby*, *Nagging Doubt*, *But it Still Goes On* and as a regular host for the Finborough Forum.

Theatre includes *Behan* (Irish Cultural Centre and Lennon-Ono Hall, Liverpool), *Catastrophe* (Zoom), *Ice Cream Boys* (Jermyn Street Theatre), *Ballad of the Cosmo Café* (St Peters, Belsize), *Shirleymander* (Playground Theatre), *Richard II* (Rose Theatre, Kingston), *Screaming Secrets* (Tristan Bates Theatre), *The Cherry Orchard*, *The Lower Depths* (Arcola Theatre), *Beyond Price* (Summerhall), *Dracula* (New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme), *Ivy and Joan* and *Statements* (Jermyn Street Theatre), *Henry VI*, *Sons of Light*, *As You Like It* and *Tamburlaine* (Royal Shakespeare Company), *Othello*, *Troilus and Cressida*, *Donkey's Years* and *I'm Not Rappaport* (Bristol Old Vic), *Map of the Heart* (Globe Theatre), *Insignificance* (Donmar Warehouse) and *Stockwell* (Tricycle Theatre).

Film includes *Two Decadent Years*, *The Eyes of Orson Welles*, *For Your Eyes Only*, *King David*, *Pasternak and Olga, 1871*, *Ten Pence* and *Star Wars*.

Television includes *Citizens' Jury*, *Behan*, *The English*, *Last Duel*, *Red Dwarf*, *Vanity Fair*, *Ruth Rendell's Road Rage*, *Midsomer Murders* and his own works *Nagging Doubt*, *Fifty Minute Hour* and *Maybe Baby*.

Radio includes *Fountainbridge Spy*, *Sea Wolf*, *Comandante*, *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, *Byron*, *I Regress* and *Bleeding Edge*.

Radio includes Radio 4 *Books of the Week* – *Young Orson*, *Last Resort*, *Tynan Diaries*; *Books at Bedtime* – *The Phantom of the Opera* and *The Promise*; and his own works *Flying Backwards*, *Three-Five-Silly-Twerp*, *Nagging Doubt*, *Freud and Jung the Sitcom* and *Kafka*.

Theatrical works he has written and performed include *The Cuddles Trilogy*, *Kafka*, *The Fifty Minute Hour*, *Bosom Buddies*, and verses for *The Shakespeare Revue* (West End and International Tour).

He has written for *The Guardian*, *The Independent*, and *Vogue*, and has presented on BBC Radio, LBC, BBC Four TV, Discovery and Granada. He has rewritten his theatrical show *Whole Shebang* as a book, and he is also the author of *Bluff Your Way in the Quantum Universe*. Jack has held Visiting Professorships at Starlab – a science and technology think tank in Brussels – and at Princeton University.

Klaff has won two Fringe Firsts, a Summerhall Lustrum award for Heartstopping Moments, the Three Weeks Editors' Award, the Seabiscuit Award for Science and Art, Two Sony Certificates for radio acting, and a Glasgow Herald Archangel statuette. He has been nominated for a Golden Rose Award at Montreux, and a Writers Guild Tinniswood Award for Radio Writing. He won BBC TV's Jack Hargreaves Award for Innovative Use of TV Drama.

Director **Colin Watkeys** returns to the Finborough Theatre after founding and running the Finborough Cabaret in the early 1980s. He is the founding director of the Face to Face Festival of Solo Theatre, and has been directing solo performers for over thirty years. He specialises in working with writers who perform their own work including Ken Campbell, Claire Dowie and Jack Klaff. He studied philosophy in London, Japanese theatre, music and dance in Tokyo, and worked at the Royal Court Theatre for the Young Writers Festival. He is currently Associate Theatre Director at Lyric Arts in Medway, and is directing Desiree Baptiste in *Incidents in the Life of an Anglican Slave* (Lambeth Palace Library, All Souls College, Oxford and Jesus College, Cambridge). Amongst his many notable productions are *Adult Child/Dead Child*, *Why Is John Lennon Wearing a Skirt*, *Death and Dancing* and *H to He (I'm turning into a man)* by Claire Dowie (Finborough Theatre, Drill Hall and Worldwide), and *Pigspurt*, *Jamais Vu* and *Theatre Stories* by Ken Campbell (National Theatre and Royal Court Theatre). Colin's previous collaborations with Jack Klaff span revivals of his fringe classics as well as original productions of *Jack the Knife* (Edinburgh Festival and The Drill Hall), *Newton* (Gravity Festival and Edinburgh Festival) and *Hunger* (Biscuit Factory).

### The press on Kafka

'With Kafka the protean Jack Klaff takes the one man show and the art of theatrical performance generally to new heights.' *The Scotsman*

'Not since Peter Sellers have critics and pseudos been skewered with such relish. Blissful.' *London Evening Standard*

'You want to know what good is? This is good. However much you know about Kafka - and whether you think Kafka is Gothic and depressing or a scathing satirist - Klaff's one person offering is for you. Unmissable.' *ABC, Perth Australia*

'Like the man says, Jack Klaff 's *Kafka* 'bites and stings'. *Orlando Sentinel*

'I don't know how he does it. Mountains of unimpeachable research so lightly deployed; flabbergasting insights with every breath; time for more spot-on and staggering dramatisations than even the greediest Kafka nut deserves; comic brilliance – a 'stand up' as it were for our entire species. Someone recently called Jack Klaff's work a 'precious theatrical

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e-mail [admin@finboroughtheatre.co.uk](mailto:admin@finboroughtheatre.co.uk) [www.finboroughtheatre.co.uk](http://www.finboroughtheatre.co.uk) Artistic Director Neil McPherson

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## PRESS INFORMATION

secret'. This makes me very cross. Time for him to be a secret no more. People should bash down doors to see *Kafka*.' *Cheltenham Notes*

### The press on writer and performer Jack Klaff

'Five stars aren't enough.' *The List* on *Bosom Buddies*

'The best thing I saw on the Fringe. Indeed it was enough to make the Festival worthwhile.' James Fenton, *Sunday Times* on *The Fifty-Minute Hour*

'A triumph.' *The New York Times* on *Nagging Doubt*

'A gift for clarifying even the most complex and confusing material with joy, wonder, emotion and hilarity'. *Jack Tinker, Daily Mail* on *Klaff's Donmar Season: Cuddles and Nagging Doubt*

'He fills every corner of the stage with his twisting tale and holds your attention every step of the way. This is touching, vital, humanistic drama that in its scope and intelligence strips all else bare before it. Remarkable.' *The List* on *The Whole Shebang*

'It's remarkable to encounter tragedy and comedy in such full measure within the work of a single present-day artist'. *Times Literary Supplement*

'When the actor plays all the parts we are reminded of our and their common humanity. Klaff also writes or compiles his own material. Actor and writer are literally of the same mind. .... This is the most talented and powerful drama I have seen for a very long time.' Godfrey Hodgson, *Financial Times* on *Nagging Doubt* on Channel 4

'He may be a smart arse but he's a fantastically entertaining one.' Lyn Gardner, *The Guardian* on *The Whole Shebang*

**PRESS NIGHTS: THURSDAY, 13 JUNE 2024 AND FRIDAY, 14 JUNE 2024 AT 7.30PM**

**PHOTOCALL: TUESDAY, 11 JUNE 2024 AT 1.00PM–1.30PM**

Finborough Theatre, 118 Finborough Road, London SW10 9ED

Book online at [www.finboroughtheatre.co.uk](http://www.finboroughtheatre.co.uk)

Box Office 020 7244 7439

No booking fees

### **Tuesday, 11 June – Saturday, 6 July 2024**

Tuesday to Saturday evenings at 7.30pm. Saturday and Sunday matinees at 3.00pm.

**Prices until 23 June 2024** – Tickets £20, £18 concessions, except Tuesday evenings £18 all seats, and Friday and Saturday evenings £20 all seats. Previews (11 and 12 June).

£10 tickets for Under 30s for performances from Tuesday to Sunday of the first week when booked online only.

£15 tickets for residents of the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea and the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham on Saturday, 15 June 2024 at 7.30pm when booked online only.

**Prices from 25 June 2024** – Tickets £23, £20 concessions, except Tuesday evenings £20 all seats, and Friday and Saturday evenings £23 all seats.

Group Bookings for all performances – 1 free ticket in every 10 purchased.

Performance Length: Approximately two hours with one interval of fifteen minutes.

For more information, interviews and images, please contact

**Finborough Theatre** on e-mail [press@finboroughtheatre.co.uk](mailto:press@finboroughtheatre.co.uk) or **020 7244 7439**

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

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