

About Agatha Christie

Agatha Mary Clarissa Miller was born in Torquay, Devon, on 15th September 1890, the third child of an upper middle-class family. Her father was an American stockbroker and her mother was born in Belfast. She enjoyed a happy well-travelled childhood and was home-schooled until her father died when she was eleven. She was sent to school in Torquay but finished her education in France. Agatha married soldier Archibald Christie on Christmas Eve in 1914 but the marriage was not to last and the couple divorced in 1928. Agatha's second marriage in 1930 to the young archaeologist Max Mallowan lasted until she died in 1976 but she continued to use the Christie name for her writing.

Agatha had been an avid reader as a child and began writing from an early age but it took several attempts to get her writings published. *The Mysterious Affair at Styles* was accepted by a publisher, after the ending was rewritten, in 1920, introducing Hercules Poirot to the world and Agatha Christie was on her way to becoming one of the most popular authors of all time. Miss Jane Marple was first introduced to us in a short story *The Thirteen Problems* and the first full length Marple novel was *Murder at the Vicarage*. Miss Marple is said to have been based on Christie's grandmother and her friends who, like Miss Marple, 'always suspected the worst of everyone and everything, and were, with almost frightening accuracy, usually proved right', a quote from Agatha's book *Come, Tell Me How You Live* about her life on an archaeological dig. Although Agatha much preferred Miss Marple to the pompous Hercules Poirot there were far more Poirot books than Marple books largely because the Poirot books came at the beginning of her career when she was more prolific.

Like most writers Agatha used her experience as an unpaid nurse during the war and her training as an apothecary's assistant in her novels. She also drew on her travels to the Middle East for novels such as *Death on the Nile* and *Murder on the Orient Express*. She may also have drawn on her experience of village life for her novels featuring Miss Marple, as for a large part of her life she lived in Winterbrook, near Wallingford in Oxfordshire. Christie wrote several plays including the legendary *The Mousetrap* and was President of the local amateur dramatic society, based in Wallingford, for many years, however, she did not write *A Murder is Announced*, the play was adapted from the book of the same name by writer Leslie Darbon.

Crew

Director	Chris Hynd
Stage Manager	Peter Clark
Light & Sound	Kerrie Thompson, Derek Thompson, Andrew Coulson
Props	Marji Waterhouse, Allister Kay and team
Prompt	Lesley Godwin
Set Design	Mark Kitchener
Set Construction	Mark Kitchener, Luke Taylor, Derek Thompson, Peter Clark
Wardrobe	Carol Clark and cast

The play is set in 1949 and takes place in the drawing room of Miss Blacklock's house, Little Paddocks, Chipping Cleghorn.

Act 1	Scene 1	The morning of Friday the 13 th
	Scene 2	6.10pm the same day
	Scene 3	Saturday morning
Act II	Scene 1	Sunday afternoon
	Scene 2	Monday morning
	Scene 3	6pm the same day

There will be an interval of around fifteen minutes between Act 1 and Act 2

Cast (in order of appearance)

Hayley Bullivant as Julia Simmons

Hayley is thrilled to be appearing in *A Murder is Announced* as Miss Blacklock's sharp-tongued relative Julia. This is Hayley's fourth production at MLT, having previously appeared in *Dirk Gently's Holistic Detective Agency*, *Lord Arthur Saville's Crime* and *Return to the Forbidden Planet*. She has previously been a member of the Young Actors Studio at the Brook Theatre and the drama society at Manchester Metropolitan University.

Nan Morran as Letitia Blacklock

Nan Morran has been a member of MLT for about five years. Her first role was the titular aunt in *Charlie's Aunt* followed by a brief appearance as a dotty old lady in *The Ladykillers*. In *Oliver Twist* as several characters she tried more serious parts but it would appear that comedy is her forte as she got one of the biggest laughs from the audience when she died as 'Old Hag 1'. Nan made a return to intended comedy as Aunt Clementina in *Lord Arthur Saville's Crime* and is now ready to try a serious part again as Miss Blacklock in *A Murder is Announced*.

Hania Simons as Dora Bunner

This is Hania's first play at Medway Little Theatre. She has previously acted at The Oast Theatre, Tonbridge, with the STAG Theatre Company and with HADS.

Ian Sagar as Patrick Simmons

This is Ian's debut performance at MLT. He has a background in theatre, acting in plays at the Hazlitt Youth Theatre. He graduated from university in 2013 with a degree in Theatre and Professional Practice. Ian is looking forward to playing Patrick, who he says is a bit of a joker.

Alexandra Lawes as Mitzi

A Murder is Announced marks murder mystery fan Alex's first foray into the world of Agatha Christie. This is her second MLT production in a little over six months, having played Dolly in *One Man, Two Guvnors* in June 2018. Some of Alex's more memorable performances include three prominent roles in *The 39 Steps* and Mary's sister, Fanny, in *Mary Shelley*. Alex is thrilled to be playing

Mitzi in *A Murder is Announced*, although she would like to take this opportunity to apologise in advance to any Hungarian members of the audience for the impending assault on their wonderful language.

Maggie Coleman as Miss Marple

Maggie has been a member of MLT for 26 years in which time she has directed a number of plays including *Noises Off* and *Oliver Twist*. She has appeared in many plays during those years including *Veronica's Room*, *The Ladykillers* and *Misery*. Maggie is a big Agatha Christie fan and jumped at the opportunity to appear as one of her most famous sleuths.

Jade Boxall as Phillipa Haymes

Jade has been a member of the youth group at Medway Little Theatre since 2011 and has acted in plays such as *Oliver Twist*, *Peter Pan* and *An Unexploded Bomb* to name a few. This is her first performance in the adult theatre group. Jade also enjoys singing in her spare time.

Carol Wrate as Mrs Swettenham

First time on stage for MLT though a stalwart of teas and coffees, Carol has acted in the past and this is her first time on stage in over 20 years.

Joe Marr-Phillips as Edmund Swettenham

This is Joe's first play with Medway Little Theatre but we hope that it will be the first of many. Playing the part of 'layabout' Edmund seems to suit him but he has been one of the first through the door for rehearsals so we don't think that it can be typecasting.

Jez Walters as Rudi Scherz and Inspector Craddock

Jez is one of MLT's newer members but last season he appeared in *Dirk Gently's Holistic Detective Agency* and *One Man, Two Guvnors*. He has also acted with our friends Alternate Shadows. Jez is looking forward to the challenge of bringing Inspector Craddock to life.

Allister Kay as Sergeant Mellors

Allister joined MLT in 2010 and since then has appeared in about a dozen productions here. In 2014 he was one of the murder victims in an earlier Agatha Christie play *And Then There Were None*.