



Press Release: 16 September 2013

BEN MILLER

in

THE DUCK HOUSE

By DAN PATTERSON and COLIN SWASH

Directed by TERRY JOHNSON

OPENS AT THE VAUDEVILLE THEATRE ON 10 DECEMBER 2013

Ben Miller leads an all-star cast in the West End premiere of *The Duck House*, an outrageous new comedy set in a world of dodgy receipts, dodgier deceit, and pure Parliamentary panic. Opening at the Vaudeville Theatre on 10th December 2013, with previews from Wednesday 27th November following a five week UK tour, *The Duck House* also stars Olivier Award Winning Actress **Nancy Carroll**, **Debbie Chazen**, **James Musgrave**, **Simon Shepherd** and **Diana Vickers**. Tony and Olivier Award winner **Terry Johnson** directs this hilarious political satire from two writers who've been making fun of politicians for decades: **Dan Patterson** and **Colin Swash**.

May 2009. Gordon Brown's Government is in meltdown and a General Election is just one year away. Labour backbencher Robert Houston (Ben Miller) loves being an MP and will do anything to save his seat – including change sides. All is going well with his switch from red to blue until, on the eve of his final interview with Sir Norman Cavendish (Simon Shepherd), a Tory grandee, the Expenses Scandal breaks.

As public fury mounts over taxpayers' millions being frittered away on second homes, hanging baskets, moat-cleaning and duck houses, Robert and his secretarial staff, aka wife Felicity (Nancy Carroll), student son Seb (James Musgrave), Seb's girlfriend Holly (Diana Vickers) and Russian housekeeper Ludmilla (Debbie Chazen) find themselves in big, big trouble.

Ben Miller said:

"They say that comedy equals tragedy plus time, and traumatic as the expense scandal was hopefully we can all now have a bloody good laugh about it. And if any MPs don't like it they can always claim for it on expenses."

Authors Dan Patterson and Colin Swash said:

"it is a real treat to hear such a brilliant cast performing the lines. Between the two of us we have written topical jokes for TV for over fifty years, but there aren't usually enough on one subject to make a play. MP's expenses were – as the MP's also found – the gift that keeps on giving".

Producer Nica Burns said:

“This wickedly funny play delights in having a good laugh at the expense of our politicians - whilst inspiring serious debate about the underlying issues which affect us all.”

The Duck House is produced in the West End by Nica Burns, TC Beech, Charles Diamond, Neil Eckersley, Ian Lenagan and Max Weitzenhoffer in association with the Yvonne Arnaud Theatre, Guildford

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Notes to Editors

CREATIVES

Director	Terry Johnson
Designer	Lez Brotherston
Lighting Designer	Mark Henderson
Sound Designer	John Leonard

CAST BIOGRAPHIES

Ben Miller plays Robert Houston, MP. Ben's recent theatre includes the original cast of *The Ladykillers* at the Gielgud Theatre and *The Armstrong And Miller Show National Tour*. He is currently appearing as grumpy detective Richard Poole in BBC1's *Death in Paradise*, with a new series due to go out in Spring 2014. Previous television roles include accident-prone Howard Steele in *The Worst Week Of My Life* (BBC1) and dinosaur-bating-mandarin James Lester in *Primeval* (ITV). Film includes spycom *Johnny English* with Rowan Atkinson for Universal and romcom *The Prince And Me* with Julia Stiles for Paramount. Ben has recently completed kidcom *What We Did On Our Holiday*, co-starring Billy Connolly and directed by Andy Hamilton and Guy Jenkin of *Outnumbered*, which will be released by Lionsgate in 2014.

Nancy Carroll plays Felicity Houston, Robert Houston's wife. Nancy's extensive list of theatre credits includes *The Recruiting Officer* (Donmar), *House of Games* and *King Lear* (Almeida), *Arcadia* (Duke of York's), *See How They Run* (Duchess), *You Never Can Tell* (Garrick) and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Sheffield Crucible). Productions for the National Theatre include *After the Dance* for which she won the Olivier Award and the Natasha Richardson Award for Best Actress, *The Magistrate*, *The Enchantment*, *The Vosey Inheritance*, *The Talking Cure* and *The False Servant*. She has also appeared in *Twelfth Night*, *Henry IV Parts 1&2*, *As You Like It*, *The Lion The Witch and The Wardrobe* and *The Winter's Tale*, all for the RSC. On television Nancy has appeared in *Holby City*, *Father Brown*, *Silent Witness*, *Dalziel and Pascoe*, *Cambridge Spies* and *The Gathering Storm* for the BBC as well as *Lewis* and *Midsummer Murders* for ITV. Films include *Iris* and *An Ideal Husband*.

Debbie Chazen plays Ludmilla, the house keeper. Debbie is best known for playing the roles of Big Claire in *Mine All Mine* for ITV, Annie in the comedy *The Smoking Room* and various roles in the sketch show *Tittybangbang* both for the BBC. Debbie's onstage credits include *A Little Hotel on the Side* (Theatre Royal Bath), *In Basildon* (Royal Court), *Calendar Girls* (West End and UK tour), *The Girlfriend Experience* (Royal Court and Plymouth), *Cinderella* (The Old Vic), *The Cherry Orchard* (Crucible Theatre), *Dick Whittington* (Barbican), *Crooked* (The Bush), *A Prayer for Owen Meany* (National), *Mother Clapp's Molly House* (National and West End). Her film credits include *Anton Chekhov's The Duel*, *Beginner's Luck* and *Topsy-Turvy*. Debbie has also made appearances in *Sherlock*, *Doctors* and *Psychoville* for the BBC and *The Spa* for Sky Living.

James Musgrave plays Seb Houston, Robert and Felicity's son. James is perhaps best known for his role as Toby in the award winning sitcom *Fresh Meat* for Channel 4. His other television credits include *Death in Paradise* (ITV), *Silk* (BBC) and *Any Human Heart* (Channel 4). James' theatre credits include *Jumpy* (Royal Court, Duke of York's), *Wanderlust* (Royal Court) for which he was nominated for the Milton Shulman Award for Outstanding Newcomer in 2010, *The Browning Version* (Theatre Royal Bath), *Tory Boyz* and *20 Cigarettes* (Soho Theatre and National Youth Theatre).

Simon Shepherd plays Sir Norman Cavendish, MP. Simon's most recently appeared in *Brakenmoor* (Tricycle) and *Posh* (Royal Court, Duke of York's). His other theatre credits include *Born in the Gardens* (Tour), *Our Man in Havana* (Tour), *The Rocky Horror Show* (Theatre Royal Bath), *Ghosts*, *The Seagull*, *Betrayal* (Bristol Old Vic), *Art* (Tour), *The Play What I Wrote* (Tour), *The Secret Rapture* (Lyric West End), *Duchess of Malfi* (Oxford Playhouse), *Dracula*, *Romeo and Juliet* (Lyric Hammersmith), *Bent* (Royal Court) and *Anatol* (Gate Theatre). On television, his credits include *Death in Paradise*, *Holby City*, *Doctors* and *The Invisibles*, *Aubrey Beardsley* and *Sweet Wine of Youth* for the BBC, *A Touch of Frost* and *Poirot* (ITV), *Peak Practice* (Carlton), *Gimme, Gimme, Gimme* (Tiger Aspect), *Chancer* and *The Jewel in the Crown* (Granada). Film includes: *Frail*, *Carmen*, *Rogue Trader*, *The Insatiable Mrs Kirsch*, *Wuthering Heights*, *Henry V* and *The Doctor and the Devils*.

Diana Vickers plays Holly, a student and girlfriend of Seb Houston. Diana is an actress, singer songwriter and fashion designer who initially came to public attention after being a semi-finalist on hit talent show, *The X Factor* in 2009. Later that year she starred as Little Voice in *The Rise and Fall of Little Voice* (Vaudeville Theatre), for which she won Whatsonstage.com Theatre Award for Best Newcomer. In 2010 Diana released her debut album, 'Songs from the Tainted Cherry Tree' which went straight in at Number 1 in the UK charts; with two number 1 singles.

Since then Diana has launched a fashion line and made a DJ debut for Vogue Fashion's Night Out. She has also been a guest presenter on *The Crush* on 4Music. Diana also stars in the forthcoming film *The Perfect Wave* which will be released later this year. Her second album 'Music To Make Boys Cry' will be released in Autumn 2013.

Dan Patterson was the creator, series producer and writer for multi award-winning shows such as *Whose Line Is It Anyway* and *Clive Anderson Talks Back* (Channel 4), *Never Mind The Horrocks*, *The Peter Principle* and *The Brain Drain* (BBC). He has also been the series producer for *Trust Us With Your Life*, *Fast and Loose*, *29 Minutes of Fame*, *Confessions*, *Room 101* and 12 series of *Mock The Week* for the BBC.

Colin Swash has written jokes for over 40 series of *Have I Got News For You* (BBC) and is a regular contributor for *Private Eye*. His other credits include *Mock the Week*, *Horrible Histories*, *The Graham Norton Show*, *The Bubble*, *The Impressions Show with Culshaw and Stephenson* for the BBC, *2DTV* (ITV), *Ten O'Clock Live* (Channel 4), *Don't Sit In The Front Row* (Sky 1), *Sports Mash* (ITV4) and for BBC Radio 4, *The Unbelievable Truth* and two series of *Paradise Lost in Space*. Colin's producer credits include 20 series of *Have I Got News For You*, *Best of the Worst* (Channel 4), *Clive Anderson Now* (BBC1), *Bognor or Bust* (ITV1), *Mob Rule* (Warner Bros, LA) and *Mr White Goes to Westminster* (writer/director: Guy Jenkin, Channel 4 film).

Terry Johnson's work has been performed worldwide and is the recipient of a dozen major theatre awards. His most recent production of *Hysteria* has just opened at Hampstead Theatre and his other theatre credits include *End of the Rainbow* (Trafalgar Studios, West End & UK Tour), *The Prisoner of Second Avenue*, *The Rise and Fall of Little Voice* (Vaudeville theatre), *La Cage aux Folles* (Menier Chocolate Factory, Playhouse Theatre and on Broadway), *Rainman* (Apollo Theatre), *Whipping it Up* (Bush Theatre, West End and UK Tour), *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (Gielgud Theatre and Garrick Theatre), *Hitchcock Blonde* (Royal Court and West End), *Entertaining Mr Sloane* (Theatre Royal Bath), *The Graduate* (Gielgud Theatre and on Broadway) and *Dead Funny* (Hampstead Theatre and Vaudeville Theatre). For the National Theatre he has written and directed *Cleo*, *Camping*, *Emmanuelle and Dick*, *The London Cuckolds* and *Sparkleshark*.

He has also written and directed numerous television drama, including *Not Only But Always* (Channel 4), *The Bite* (BBC), *The Man Who Lost His Head* and *Cor Blimey!* (ITV). His film *Way Upstream* was chosen for the London Film Festival and *Insignificance* was the official British Entry for Cannes 1985.

PERFORMANCE DETAILS AND BOX OFFICE INFO

Vaudeville Theatre, 404 Strand, London WC2R 0NH

www.the-duck-house.co.uk

Booking number: 0844 412 4663

Performance Times : Monday to Saturday at 7.30pm, Thursday and Saturday at 3pm

Dates : 27th November 2013 to 29th March 2014

Ticket Prices : £20, £35, £45.50, £49.50. Premium seats available with a free hanging basket.

Tour Dates

Guildford Yvonne Arnaud Theatre

Thursday 24th October - Saturday 2nd November

Malvern Theatres

Monday 4th - Sat 9th November

Nottingham Theatre Royal

Monday 11th - Saturday 16th November

Cambridge Arts Theatre

Monday 18th - Saturday 23rd November