

The Baxter Theatre Centre in association with the National Arts Festival, Grahamstown, presents

I Am My Own Wife

Written by	Doug Wright
Direction	Janice Honeyman
Cast	Jeremy Crutchley
Design	Dicky Longhurst
Lighting	Mannie Manim
Sound design and recording	Warrick Sony
Props	Koos Marais
Scenic Artist	Yolandi van Jaarsveldt

Production Manager	Patrick Curtis
Stage Manager	Marisa Steenkamp
Assistant Stage Manager	Anri Schoeman
Technician	Pule Setlhako
Set Builder	Alec Murphy
Photography	Mark Freeborough

Running time: 2 hours 20 minutes, including interval.

Draft press release

Doug Wright's 2004 Pulitzer prize-winning drama about the will to survive, *I Am My Own Wife*, will make its South African premiere when it opens at the National Arts Festival, Grahamstown, followed by a season at the Baxter Golden Arrow Studio from July 9 to August 1, at 7.30pm nightly.

Janice Honeyman directs the multiple award-winning Jeremy Crutchley, who plays 40 different characters as he slips into the heart and mind of Charlotte von Mahlsdorf, a German transvestite caught up in the great European dramas of the 20th century and the subject of author Doug Wright's fascination.

In a performance bound to be described as nothing short of alchemy, the play offers insights into von Mahlsdorf's perspectives and tells the amazing story of a mild-mannered human being who triumphed over a violent childhood and the brutalities of both the Nazis and the Communists to carve out a dignified life as an open cross-dresser in East Berlin at the time.

The multi-award-winning one-hander could not have been more appropriately timed to coincide with the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall. Born Lothar Berfelde, von Mahlsdorf, who died in 2002, at the age of 74, unlike so many contemporaries survived the Nazi regime and its replacement, the Soviet-dominated communist dictatorship.

On Broadway the play scooped eight top theatre accolades including two Tony Awards, the Drama Desk Awards and the Lucille Lortel Awards and went on to receive several others. The *New York Times* described it as "Nothing short of breathtaking. A terrific story," with "A play of heart-stopping beauty" from *The Journal News* and "A rich, riveting and thrilling mystery" from *Newsday*, while *The Washington Post* cautioned, "Don't even think of missing it" and the *Wall Street Journal* said "The show deserves every prize there is."

It has been performed throughout the United States of America and Canada (where it was also translated and performed in French in Montreal), the West End in London, Sweden, Poland, Ireland and Australia.

Author Doug Wright, who has garnered recognition and awards for his writing, made his screenplay debut when he adapted his hugely successful play *Quills* for the big screen. Starring Geoffrey Rush, Michael Caine and Kate Winslet, the film received Oscar and Golden Globe nominations. Some of his other plays include *The Stonewater Rapture*, *Interrogating the Nude*, *watbanaland*, *Buzzsaw Berkeley* and *Unwrap Your Candy*.

This year Jeremy Crutchley, who has received eight Best Actor awards and several nominations, celebrates 30 years in theatre. Earlier this year he was seen in the highly acclaimed Baxter Theatre Centre and Royal Shakespeare Company's collaboration of *The Tempest*, directed by Janice Honeyman, which transferred to the Courtyard Theatre in Stratford-upon-Avon and thereafter toured five cities in the UK.

After its South African premiere at the National Arts Festival, Grahamstown, with just five performances from July 2 to 4, *I Am My Own Wife* transfers to the Baxter Golden Arrow Studio from July 9 to August 1 at 7.30pm nightly.

Book through Computicket on 083 915 8000, online at www.computicket.co.za or at any Shoprite Checkers outlet countrywide.

For further media enquiries, interview or picture requests please contact Fahiem Stellenboom, Marketing Manager, Baxter Theatre Centre on 021 680 3971, cell 072 2656 023 or email fahiem.stellenboom@uct.ac.za or contact Jane Boxall on 021 680 3963, 083 412 3955 or email jane.boxall@uct.ac.za

Doug Wright, Playwright

Doug Wright won an Obie Award for Outstanding Achievement in Playwriting and the Kesselring Award for Best New American Play from the National Arts Club for his play *Quills*. He went on to write the screenplay adaptation, making his motion picture debut. The film was named Best Picture by the National Board of Review and nominated for three Academy Awards. His screenplay was nominated for a Golden Globe Award and received the Paul Selvin Award from the Writers Guild of America. Doug's stage work has been produced at New York Theatre Workshop, Lincoln Center, WPA Theater, Geffen Playhouse, Wilma, Woolly Mammoth, McCarter Theater and La Jolla. Titles include *The Stonewater Rapture*, *Interrogating the Nude*, *watbanaland*, *Buzzsaw Berkeley* and *Unwrap Your Candy*. Doug has been published three times in *The Best Short Plays* series and his work has appeared in *The Paris Review*. He is a member of the Dramatists Guild, the Writers Guild of America, East and the Society of Stage Directors and Choreographers. He serves on the board of the New York Theatre Workshop.

Janice Honeyman, Director

Janice Honeyman has had a prolific and successful career as a director. In 2002 she was nominated for the Best Director Award in the Fleur du Cap Theatre Awards and won an FNB Vita Award in the same category for *The Beauty Queen of Leenane*.

A year later, she won the Fleur du Cap award for Best Director for *Nothing But the Truth* and *Vatmaar*. Janice has directed Athol Fugard's *Hello and Goodbye* with Antony Sher and Estelle Kohler for the Royal Shakespeare Company, and *Madiba Magic* at the Baxter Theatre Centre. She also directed *Freedom Too*, a Gala Concert at the Royal Festival Hall, as part of the Celebrate South Africa Festival.

In 2005 she received a Best Director Fleur du Cap award for *Oom Wanja/Uncle Vanya*. In 2005 she directed *Twaalfde Nag* and *Exits and Entrances*. In 2006 she directed the world premiere of Athol Fugard's play *Booitjie and the Oubaas*, which was praised by audiences and media alike, as well as the Baxter Play>Ground performed reading of *Shirley, Goodness and Mercy*. Her production of *Begeerte* in 2007 won the Kanna award for Best Production at the Klein Karoo National Arts Festival.

In 2007 she directed the full-scale world premiere of Chris van Wyk's *Shirley, Goodness and Mercy*, which won three Naledi awards, John Patrick Shanley's *Doubt* and Edward Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* at the Baxter Theatre Centre, the Market Theatre and the State Theatre.

Janice had Johannesburg audiences in stitches with her festive pantomime *Aladdin*, before directing the offbeat nativity play *Starbrite* at the Baxter in 2008. Most recently she directed the highly acclaimed Baxter Theatre Centre and Royal Shakespeare Company's production of *The Tempest* which was performed at the Baxter and in Stratford-upon-Avon and toured five cities in the UK, as well as John Kani's *Nothing But the Truth* at the Market Theatre in Johannesburg.

Jeremy Crutchley

This year Jeremy celebrates 30 years of theatre performance. Recently, he has brought to life great roles in contemporary and modern classics, such as Jerry in Pinter's *Betrayal*, and Father Flynn in *Doubt*, as well as creating three notable Shakespearean characters: Malvolio in *Twelfth Night*, Shylock in *The Merchant Of Venice* (Fleur Du Cap Best Actor 2009) and King Alonso in *The Tempest* (for The Royal Shakespeare Company and Baxter Theatre Centre) in the recent sell-out tour of the UK, directed by Janice Honeyman.

He also works extensively in film and is one of South Africa's most experienced voice-over artists. In 2004 he was invited to London to re-create his role as Dr Drabble in the black comedy *The Dice House*, for a successful West End run. To date, he has received nine Best Actor Awards and several nominations for his work.

Film includes Richter in *Doomsday* (UK/USA), Johnstone in *Skin* (UK/RSA), Jansen in *Krakatoa* (BBC), Baldo in *The Scorpion King - Rise Of The Warrior* (USA), Ian Chadwick in *The Deal* (USA), Dr Chenislav in *Supernova* (USA), Solomon in *Ask The Dust* (USA), Arms Dealer in *Lord Of War* (USA), Ramsay Harrison in *Out on a Limb* (UK), Father Dalton in *Forgiveness* (RSA), Copeland in *The Poseidon Adventure* (USA), Sir in *Speeding* (Italy/RSA), Dalmire in *A Good Man in Africa* (UK), Charl in *Angels in a Cage* (for which he received a Best Actor nomination), and Pictureman in Stephen King's *The Mangler* (Ashanti Best Supporting Actor Award).

TV includes Will Atkins in *Crusoe* (NBC), Sloane in *Diamonds* (CBS), Toop in *The Devil's Whore* (CH4), Fr Giacometti in *Lost City Raiders* (NBC), Bullman in *Flood* (BBC), Pallitz in *Love in Saigon* (Germany), Mancuso Keyes in *Charlie Jade* (Canada), Woodcock in *Dirty Work* (BBC), Marcus in *City Central III* (BBC), The Floating Outfit (USA), Jourdan in *Rhodes* (BBC); Roderick and Madeleine in *The Fall of the House of Usher*; *Death of a Teddy Bear*; Gravedigger in *Hamlet* and Solanio in *The Merchant of Venice* (SABC).

Theatre includes Shylock in *The Merchant Of Venice* (Fleur Du Cap Best Actor 2009), Malvolio in *Twelfth Night*; King Alonso in *The Tempest* (RSC/Baxter), Fr Flynn in *Doubt*, Jerry in *Betrayal*, Emperor Joseph in *Amadeus* and Charlie Conlon in *Stones in his Pockets*. Various roles in the UK include Rufus in *The Lady in the Van* (Birmingham Rep), Serge and others in *Passing Places* (Greenwich Theatre and Derby Playhouse), Don in *Shadow of Doubt* (Theatre Royal Windsor). As a leading actor in the 1998 Repertory Company for The Orange Tree Theatre, Richmond, he played Mirabel in *The Way of the World*, Matt in *Sperm Wars*, Josephat-le-Violon in *House among the Stars*, Sgt. Poche in *Court in the Act*, Cody in *Low Flying Aircraft*, Cattley in *The Last Thrash*, and Major Warrington in *The Cassillis Engagement*. Earlier work, especially with The Market Theatre includes Vince in *Buried Child*, Slim in *Cowboy Mouth*, Pentheus in *The Bacchae*, Barclay in *Another Country*, as well as roles in *Forbidden Fruits*, *And Green and Golden*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Macbeth*, and Orlando in *As You Like It*.

As with many productions for Pieter Toerien, Jeremy made an impact as Alan Strang in Peter Shaffer's *Equus* and has won awards for his portrayal of Bessmertny in *Sarcophagus*, Song Liling in *M. Butterfly*, and HRH The Duke of Windsor in the solo-show *I Was King*. He wrote and

played the music and lyrics for his own Rock Theatre work *Bloodbreath Anaesthetic* (1978), later *Sloper* ('82), and composed and performed original material for Brian Aldiss' *Brothers Of The Head*. When *The Rocky Horror Show* finally hit South Africa in 1992, he was the original Dr Frank'n'Furter.

He now lives in Cape Town, is married and, in precious free time, loves to paint the odd picture, ride the occasional horse, and play the frequent electric blues guitar.

Dicky Longhurst, Designer

Dicky Longhurst obtained his degree in Fine Art in 1970 majoring in History of Art, painting and sculpture. His professional career started with PACOFS in 1971.

During this period his work included a variety of productions by Genet, Ionesco, Beckett, Shakespeare, Chekhov, Tennessee Williams, Athol Fugard and many other playwrights. In 1976 Longhurst joined the staff at UCT's Little Theatre, where he designed a large number of productions. After this he returned to PACOFS for a year until he joined CAPAB in 1978 as part of the resident design team under the guidance of Peter Cazalet, working on all the major Shakespeare and Chekov plays as well as many other drama, opera, musical and ballet productions.

While freelancing Longhurst worked for all five performing arts councils as well as The Baxter Theatre Centre, the Space Theatre and the Market Theatre. He twice received the Vita award and was nominated for the Piers Nicholson Award as well as the Nederburg Award for Ballet for his designs of *The Tales of Hoffmann*. His theatre career also led him to work in the USA, designing for Ballet West.

In 1989 he set out on a new career path in the fashion world. Twice he was awarded The South African Fashion Award and the J&B Rare Designers Award. As chairman of the judging panel for Smirnoff's Young Designer Competition he served for five years locally and internationally. He was also associated with the Miss South Africa Pageant for many years while working on television and film productions as well as international rock concerts and video productions.

In 1996 he moved to the Karoo to paint full-time. He returned to Cape Town in 2002 to pursue a career in film as art director, which led to this re-association with the Baxter Theatre designing Stephen Berkoff's *The Secret Love Life of Ophelia*, for which received a Fleur du Cap nomination.

He has worked extensively in the film commercial industry for the past six years concentrating mostly on production design, wardrobe design and wardrobe styling. Currently he is designing sets and costumes for a new musical film by W. Adair Baker which will be released locally as well as internationally.

Recent theatre productions include *As You Like It*, *My Fair Lady*, *Unforgettable*, *The Return*, *Noah of Cape Town* and *Billie Holiday*.

Mannie Manim, Lighting Designer

Mannie Manim has been in theatre for over 50 years and is Director and CEO of the Baxter Theatre Centre at the University of Cape Town, as well as an award-winning lighting designer with an international reputation.

Most recently, he lit *The Tempest* at the Baxter Theatre Centre, the RSC's Courtyard Theatre in Stratford-upon-Avon and five other cities in the UK and *Sheila's Day* and *Nothing but the Truth* at the Market Theatre.

He was also responsible for the lighting on *The Magic Flute* and *A Christmas Carol* at the Young

Vic and in the West End; *Sizwe Banzi is Dead* at the National Theatre, London; *Nothing But the Truth* at the Hampstead Theatre, London, the Lincoln Center in New York, the Mark Taper Forum in Los Angeles and the National Theatre of Namibia in Windhoek; *The Real Thing* at the Strindberg Intima Theatre in Stockholm; Janet Suzman's production of *Hamlet* in Stratford-upon-Avon, and *Porgy and Bess* in Umea, Sweden.

Other lighting designs include *The Island* at the National Theatre and the Old Vic in London, in Toronto, at the Kennedy Center in Washington and at BAM in New York; *Carmen* and *The Mysteries* at Wilton's Music Hall in London, at the Cathedral of St John the Divine in New York, at the International Theatre Festival in Perth, at the Queen's Theatre in London and at the World Stage Festival in Toronto, and *Sorrows and Rejoicings* at the Tricycle Theatre in London. In 1980, he received the Shirley Moss Award for the Greatest Practical and Technical Contribution to Theatre in South Africa, and in 1981 he received the South African Institute of Theatre Technology Award for Outstanding Achievement as a Theatre Technician, Administrator and Lighting Designer. In 1985, Mannie received the first Vita Award for the Most Enterprising Producer. He received the Vita Best Original Lighting Award ten times. In December 1990, Mannie was made Chevalier des Artes et des Lettres by the French Government and in 1996 he was awarded a gold medal for Theatre Development from the South African Academy of Arts and Science.

In 2004, he was awarded the Naledi Lifetime Achievement Award by the Theatre Managements of South Africa. He is the co-founder of the Market Theatre.

What the media had to say about the Broadway production

The Dramatic event of the Year – *New York Post*

See *I Am My Own Wife* please – *New York Post*

A rich, riveting and thrilling mystery – *Newsday*

Brilliant – *The New Yorker*

Vibrant, vital and fascinating – *USA Today*

The most exquisite offering of the Broadway season – *New York Times*

The show deserves every prize there is – *Wall Street Journal*

Don't even think of missing it – *The Washington Post*

A play of heart-stopping beauty – *The Journal News*

Astonishing and extraordinary – *Daily News*