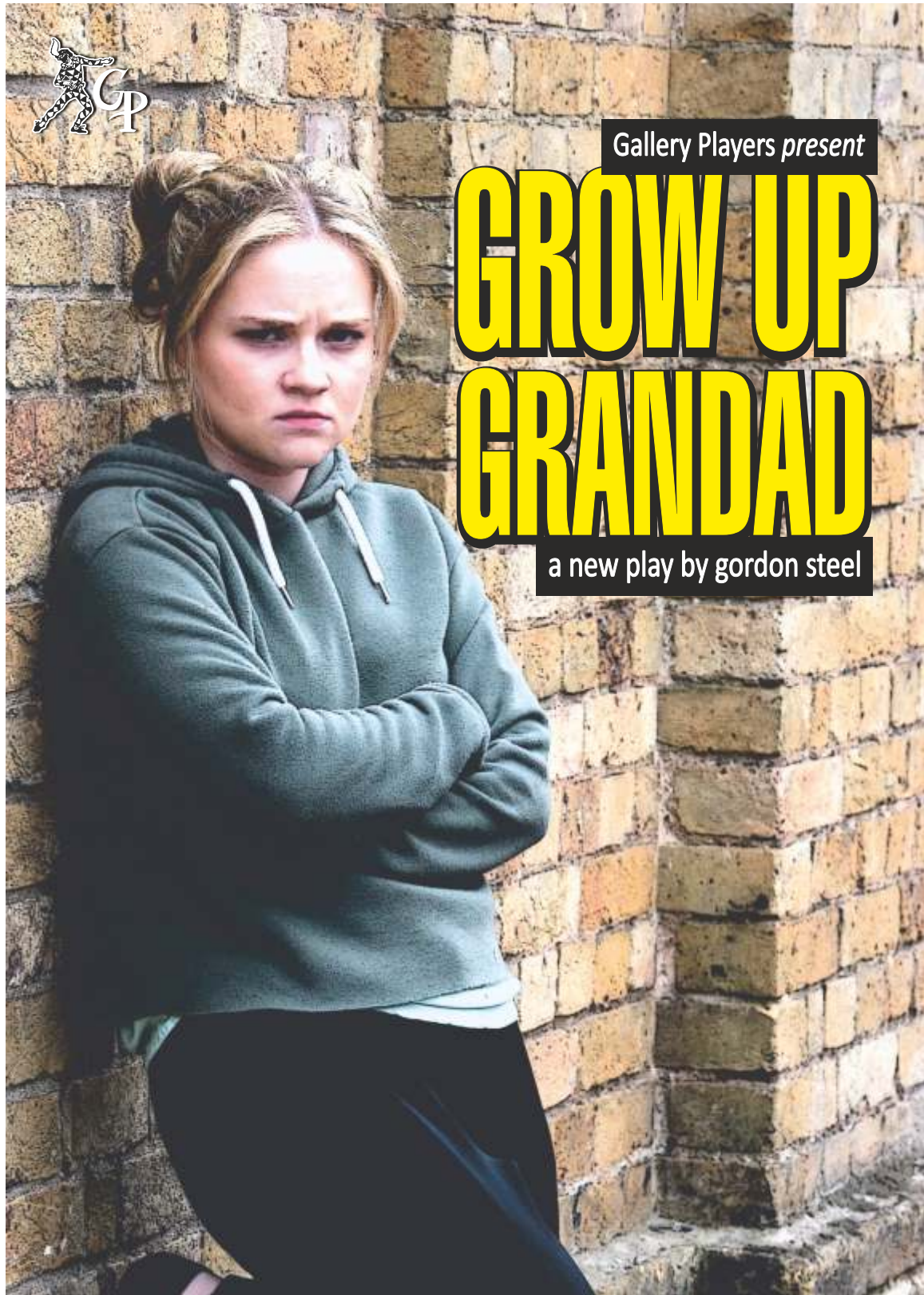




Gallery Players present

GROW UP GRANDAD

a new play by gordon steel



Directors Notes

The slightly trite title does not do this little gem of a play justice. When I was first introduced to it by Jess Daley, a professional actress with whom I worked at the Sunderland Empire and a good friend of the playwright, I thought it was going to be a play for children; how wrong I was.

Despite all the demographic, cultural shifts and seismic changes in the make-up of UK society, our image of grandfathers remains locked into Clive Dunn song. Similarly with grandmothers; newspaper headlines still use the word 'granny' with a suggestion of an inert life with tartan rugs, worn slippers and cocoa before bed. In eastern societies the elderly are venerated in a way that is alien to us; they are often patronised and disrespected. It is easy to understand why things have not changed with regard to grandparents. Perhaps it is time for this to happen; reason enough to welcome Gordon Steel's lovely play.

Grow Up Grandad draws strongly on themes of family, love and loss with some heart-breaking twists. Nor is it sentimental or indulgent as we see the darker yet understandable side of both Grandad and Poppy Senior. The play is hugely funny yet also touching, provocative and painfully dramatic, exploring the consequences of abandonment and the pressures of parenthood. Nobody teaches us to be parents and none of us are perfect.

Grow up Grandad premiered in the North East in September 2015 at the Stockton Arts Centre and was staged by Gordon Steel's own Theatre Company, Steelworks, a double pun on both his name and the company's Teeside pedigree.

I directed this play in October 2017 at the Headgate Theatre in Colchester. It was a pleasure then and revisiting it with only two of the original cast has been a fascinating experience. It has prompted me not only to delve even deeper and re-examine what I did but I have greatly welcomed the change in dynamics and ideas that all members of the cast, new and old, have brought to the table. I have to confess that I have an absolute passion for the rehearsal process and working with such a lovely bunch of people in a collaborative way has been amazing.

I sincerely hope you enjoy the fruits of our labours.

Steve Wooldridge
Director



Creative Team

Director **Steve Wooldridge**
Set Design **Dave Borthwick**
Stage Manager **Georgie Beard**
Assistant Stage Managers **Will Dowe, Ruth Ellis**
Lighting Design and Operation **Jeremy Chuter**
Lighting Assistant **Alan Dix**
Sound Design **David Gilhooly**
Sound Operation **Liz Moss**
Original Music **David Gilhooly**
Music **Steve Wooldridge**
Costumes **Isobel Sullivan and the Cast**
Props **Sue Simmons and Lydia Clough**
Graphic Design **Steve Taplin**
Cover Photograph **Kevin Topple**
Front of House **Mike Wadman assisted by Lorena Cenci, Helen Clarke, Andrew Clarke, Sue Goodall, Sue Hayes, Maggie Mudd, Judy Wadman, Linda Wooldridge.**
Set Construction **Dave Borthwick, Norman Rutterford, Georgie Beard, Steve Wooldridge and members of the Cast**

Cast *(in order of appearance)*

Poppy Senior **Jo Lewis**
Grandad **Phil Cory**
Poppy **April Rand**
Margaret, Poppy's Aunt **Emily Watt**
Genevieve, A Social Worker **Jeni Horne**
Molly, Poppy Senior's daughter **Amelie Goulbourn**



Poppy is eleven when she first goes to live with Grandad; she is twelve when she leaves.

We then move on twenty years in Act 2.

The play takes place in Middlesbrough.

There will be an interval of twenty minutes during which refreshments will be served in the bar.

Some language may offend.

an amateur production by kind permission of josef weinberger

Reflections by the Cast

Poppy

I was lucky to have both sets of grandparents as I grew up which meant that I had two very different relationships with both sets.

Playing the role of poppy has given me the opportunity to see both sides of a conflicting relationship and one that is constantly changing. Poppy is a very real and complex character to play because she tumbles through so many emotions at such a young age. It has taught me never to take important relationships for granted.

April Rand

Grandad

It has been a total pleasure to take on the role of Ken. Steve mentioned to me a while back that he was reading this play and it really appealed. The rehearsal process has compounded my theory though that in real life I am a grumpy old man! Don't get me wrong, I do not agree with everything that Ken says but I am 'old school' and some of the things he thinks and says do ring true ,at least to me. It has been a joy to discover the relationship he has with his granddaughter and to explore the generation gap and the varying outlooks that the older and younger generation have on life.

In parts ,though ,it has been heart-breaking – especially in the way that poppy's life has changed dramatically because of one inexplicable decision made by her mother. And the way that Grandad also has his entire life turned upside down because of that decision too. I do believe it also causes him to re-evaluate the kind of parent he was himself.

Phil Cory

Poppy Senior

My own experience of having a Grandad is very limited. I had one Grandad who I visited very infrequently for about five years. I remember his wet sloppy kisses which must have meant he loved me, but I find it hard to recall the memories and feelings I have about him. What I do know about having a Grandad comes from my two children, who have 3 Grandads (how greedy!) - one of which they get to see all the time. And boy do they love their Grandads. My kids have worked out that they can sneak a chocolate bar at any time, make a bit of money by drawing a picture, play endless games with said Grandads for hours and just generally own them. It's a beautiful relationship to be outside of and to watch unfold. To be able to explore a play that focusses on this relationship has been a really unique experience. It has been great to jump into the role of Poppy Senior for the Ipswich run of Grow Up Grandad. To be able to step into the shoes of a girl whose Grandad means everything to her has been a really wonderful opportunity.

Jo Lewis

Genevieve

I have very little experience of social workers but I am aware that they have ever increasing workloads and frequently get the blame when situations are problematic. Genevieve goes beyond dealing with her immediate clients as case histories ;she sees through surface impressions and cares deeply about the best interests of the people with whom she deals. I get the impression that she works far longer hours than she should and I've become very fond of her. I have tried to avoid playing her character as stereotype which would have been all too easy. It has been great fun being involved with this lively and absorbing production.

Jeni Horne

Margaret

Margaret is a very busy working mother, doing what she can to better herself and herself and her community for the sake of her three children and devoted husband, Donald. She is a great example of how some people when faced with a problem, try to bypass it to suit themselves. It's not that she's uncaring. She is a proud Northerner, although she doesn't live there any more. In fact she finds it easier to be a proud Northerner the further from the North she actually is. Her family and extended family from 'The Boro' are something of an embarrassment. She feels it's her job to help them by telling them exactly what it is they are doing wrong. She has been a lovely part to play and I have had great fun with a great cast.

Emily Watt

Molly

When I first read about Poppy and Grandad, I instantly wanted to know more about how their relationship developed.

Molly can talk very comfortably with her Great Grandad and isn't at all phased when he gets a little confused about who he is. I hope I can show that Molly and her Great Grandad have a great love for one another.

I've loved being in the play and being able to show my understanding and respect of elderly people.

I have always enjoyed spending time with my Grandparents and our relationship now is one of mutual help and admiration I show Granny how to use WhatsApp on her tablet, and Grandad shows me his woodworking skills in the shed and tells me about the war, I am so lucky to have them in my life.

Amelie Goulbourn



Gordon Steel



Gordon Steel burst onto the theatre-scene with his first play, *Dead Fish*, which won a Fringe First Award at the 1993 Edinburgh Festival. It toured nationally and was the beginning of a fruitful relationship with Hull Truck Theatre. Since then he has written *Like A Virgin*, *A Pair Of Beauties*, *Albert Nobbs*, *Kissing Married Women*, *A Kick In The Baubles*, and *Wild Boys* for Hull Truck Theatre. Gordon is also the author of *Jumping The Waves* which was commissioned for the opening of the Arc Theatre.

He has worked extensively as a director and has directed the premieres of most of his plays.

For television, Gordon wrote *Cock and Bull* which was included in the Channel Four Sitcom Festival. He is currently working on some new ideas for television, including an adaptation of *Studs*.

He recently set up his own theatre company, Steelworks, whose debut production was *Grow Up Grandad* and was staged at the Arc in September 2015 before it toured the North East.

Gordon is a lifelong supporter of Middlesbrough Football Club.

Acknowledgements

Jon Tavener and everyone at Eastern Angles
Michelle Emerson Grey and New Wolsey Theatre
Emmaus, Suffolk.

Stephen Foster, BBC Radio Suffolk
Playgolf Seniors, Colchester for loan of Jigsaws
Colchester Rollerworld

Alan Ayres, Co-op Juniors

Andrew Clarke and David Henshall East Anglian Daily Times

Jess Daley and Judith Robinson for loan of Middlesbrough football scarf

Kevin Barker at Felixstowe Care Home
Red Cross Shop, Felixstowe

David George, Tea & Antiques Felixstowe

Richard Rumbellow



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