

GALLERY  
PLAYERS

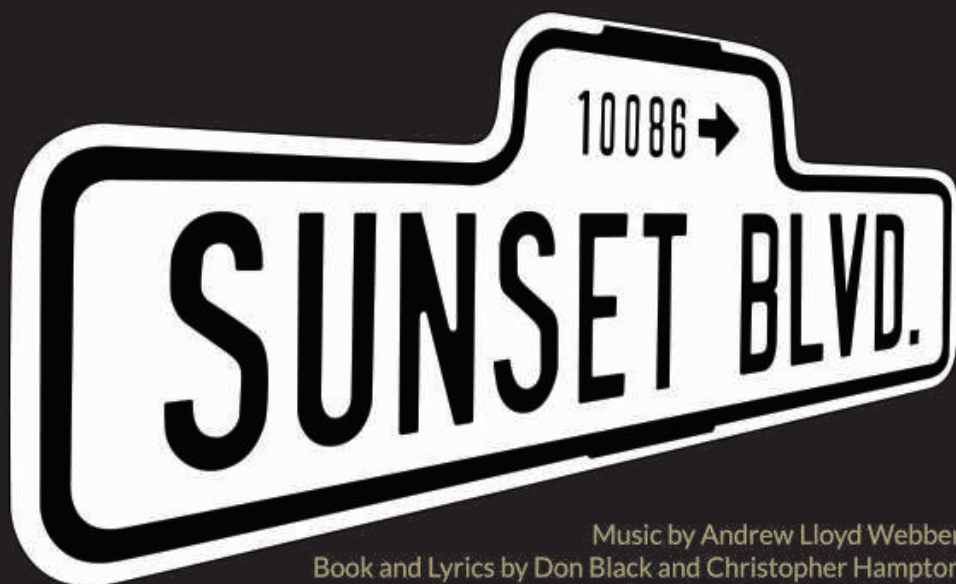
A Day  
in the Death of  
Joe Egg  
by Peter Nichols



SIR JOHN MILLS THEATRE  
GATACRE ROAD  
IPSWICH

The Award Winning  
**Ipswich Operatic & Dramatic Society**  
proudly presents

*An Amateur production by arrangement with  
The Really Useful Group Ltd.*



Music by Andrew Lloyd Webber  
Book and Lyrics by Don Black and Christopher Hampton  
Based on the Billy Wilder film

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## 20th - 23rd May 2015

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**The Regent Theatre Ipswich**  
Box office: 01473 433100  
Website: [www.ipswichregent.com](http://www.ipswichregent.com)

Tickets £18.00 & £16.50


Concessions only on first night and Saturday matinee £16.00 & £14.50

Family ticket (2 adults and 2 children) £50.00

Group offer - buy 10 tickets and get 11th ticket free

Orchestrations by David Cullen & Andrew Lloyd Webber  
Original production by The Really Useful Group Ltd.

Sunset Blvd Logo: TM & © 1993 RUG Ltd.

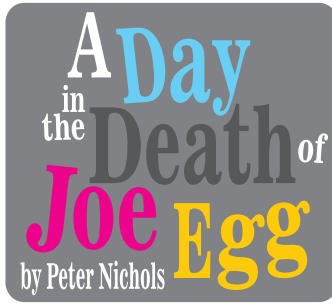
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[www.iods.co.uk](http://www.iods.co.uk)



Ipswich Operatic & Dramatic Society  
registered charity number 800129



## Production Team

Director – Helen Clarke

Movement Director and Consultant – Michael Platt

Stage Design – Dave Borthwick

Lighting Design – Dan Scarlett

Sound Design – Steve Rowe

Stage Manager – Saskia Grundmann

Lighting Operator – Jacob Woods

Sound Operator – Andrew Clarke

Wardrobe – Helen Clarke and the cast

Properties – Dave Borthwick and Helen Clarke

Production photography – Zoe Gibbs of Bushfire Studios,  
Felixstowe

Poster and programme design – Steve Taplin

Front of House – Mike Wadman and members of the Gallery  
Players

Chaperones – Judy Wadman, Margaret Mudd, Wendy  
Peakman, Katrina Simmonds

Scenery construction and painting – Dave Borthwick, Matt  
Meyrick, Peter Phillips, Helen Clarke, Steve Wooldridge.



# the birth of **Joe Egg**

A Day in the Death of Joe Egg opened at the Citizens Theatre on May 9th 1967 and ran for three weeks.

Joe Egg was rejected by many theatres in London's West End including the Royal Court and Hampstead. Sending it to Michael Blakemore at the Citizens was a last resort for Nichols. However, following its successful Glasgow opening the Director of the Royal Shakespeare Company questioned Nichols as to why he hadn't send them the script to which he answered 'I did, but you never replied.'

As surprising as it seems now, it was the serious portrayal of disability on stage that almost prevented the play being staged on several occasions. Blakemore and Nichols not only had to do battle with the Lord Chamberlain's office (which at that time still licensed all theatrical performances) but they also had to persuade the board of governors at their own theatre that it was suitable for public consumption.

Blakemore remembers the meeting well: "I went into the meeting coldly resolved that this time I would use the threat of resignation as a weapon. Tom Taylor (vice-chairman of the committee) was the first to speak. He described the play as a disgrace, a travesty in appalling taste that made cruel fun of the disabled, and one which, if performed on the stage of the Citizens' would force him to consider his position.

"Then Michael Goldberg began to address the meeting...very gently he turned the argument back towards the play itself. Certainly it was shocking, but was this because it was a bad play? Might it not be true that it was a very good play attempting to say something that had not been said before, and daring to say it in a way which itself was unprecedented.

"Slowly it was becoming clear that Michael not only understood the material but wanted to see it staged at the Citizens as much as anyone in the room. 'When something like this comes our way' he concluded 'we have a duty to do our best by it.'"

With the board giving the production green light, now all they had to do was get the Lord Chamberlain's seal of approval. Easier said than done.



The Lord Chamberlain felt very strongly that audiences would be upset by the sight of disability and that the child should not actually appear onstage. However as Blakemore, and later many critics, pointed out 'her presence is crucial to the style of the play.'

The Lord Chamberlain relented and disability was seen on stage for the first time. Blakemore writes of the moment when Bri pushes Joe in her wheelchair on stage for the first time: 'The Theatre was now so absolutely silent it was as if the air had been sucked out of the building and we were all sitting in a vacuum. I was rigid in my seat wondering if the audience would ever make a sound again...Very cautiously the laughter started again, first in the gallery then little by little in the rest of the house, as the audience was forced to acknowledge the honesty of what they were watching and the skill with which it was being represented.'

Cordelia Oliver, from The Manchester Guardian, wrote: "To think, said someone behind me 'that one can laugh and not feel guilty.' But that is what is so marvellous about Peter Nichols new play "A Day in the Death of Joe Egg" now in its first production at the Citizens Theatre, Glasgow: you can and do laugh, and the laughter turns the awfulness of the thing into something nearly normal, like almost any other everyday problem...."

The psychological problem of her parents is many fold and layers deep and these the author (who, you never need to be told, understands the thing from the inside) organises and controls so brilliantly as to leave one lost in admiration."

The author, Peter Nichols, was more affected than most. Michael Blakemore remembers the play's first run-through. "When I turned to Peter at the end of the act he had tears streaming down his face, and was reaching for a handkerchief to wipe them away. 'Don't!' I said. 'Come into the green room and let Joe and Zena see you just as you are'. So a sniffing, swallowing Peter who had never once been able to shed a tear over the real-life Joe Egg, but whose feelings this performance of his own story had unlocked, presented himself to the cast and said a few eloquent words. But for all of us those tears were praise enough."

# Joe Egg

meet  
**Joe Egg**



meet  
**Joe Egg**



# A Day in the Death of Joe Egg

by Peter Nichols

## Cast

Bri – Jo Raishbrook  
 Sheila – Jo Lewis  
 Joe – Beatrice Carpenter  
 Freddie – Liam Gregory  
 Pam – Emilia Petryszyn  
 Grace – Helen Leeder

*The play takes place in the living room of Bri and Sheila's home on an evening in December.*

## meet Joe Egg

Joe's Mum,  
 Sheila thinks:  
 "Joe's no trouble  
 It's Brian .. I don't  
 know who's the  
 biggest baby."

Joe's Dad, Brian,  
 thinks: "I'm Instant  
 Man. I'm made up  
 as I go along..."

Freddie's wife,  
 Pam, thinks: "She's  
 got - really - a  
 rather pretty face,  
 hasn't she?"

Joe's Grandma,  
 Grace, thinks: "She's  
 the loveliest girl in all  
 the wide wide world."

Their friend,  
 Freddie, thinks:  
 "When I see a young  
 couple giving up their  
 lives to a lost cause,  
 it gives me the  
 screaming  
 habdabs".





meet  
**Joe Egg**





# Joe Egg

## A Play In The Life of Peter Nichols

A Day in the Death of Joe Egg was Peter Nichols second play and his first big hit. He originally planned to write it for television but then turned it into a stage play because he thought it would be unacceptable for television at the time.

Joe Egg is based on Nichols' own experiences of raising a handicapped child,

After its premiere in Glasgow in 1967, A Day in the Death of Joe Egg opened in London's West End in 1967 then transferred to Broadway the next year.

On Broadway, the play received four nominations for Tony Awards, including Best Play, Best Actor (Albert Finney), Best Featured Actress (Zena Walker) and Best Director (Michael Blakemore). Walker won the Tony for Best Featured Actress.

A 2002 television version was directed by Robin Lough, with stars Eddie Izzard, Victoria Hamilton, Prunella Scales, and Robin Weaver.

Joe Egg instantly made Peter Nichols one of the top English playwrights at a time when British theatre was undergoing a quiet revolution – finding its voice with playwrights like Nichols, Tom Stoppard and Alan Bennett, who wanted to discuss ideas as well as provide an entertaining evening.

Nichols started his career in showbusiness not as a writer but as an actor. He got a taste for performing during World War II when he was a member of the same ENSA troupe as Kenneth Williams, Stanley Baxter and John Schlesinger.



After demob, Nichols enrolled at the Bristol Old Vic Theatre School to study acting. After a while he started writing television plays which encouraged him to submit his first stage play *The Hooded Terror*, part of a season of new plays at Bristol's Little Theatre in 1964.

After the success of *A Day in the Death of Joe Egg*, Nichols began to turn out a series of plays which all went on to become contemporary classics. Although, Nichols' work tackles serious subjects, his love of variety and stand-up comedy, stops his work from ever seeming like a lecture.

*A Day in the Death of Joe Egg* (1967) has clear elements of music hall in its writing style, while *The National Health* (1969) is a fantasy farce, also interrupted by vaudeville. *Privates on Parade* (1977) is a musical comedy, partly inspired by Nichols's own experiences in the Combined Services Entertainments Unit while *Poppy* (1982) takes the form of a Christmas pantomime.

Nichols is adept at mixing laughter with genuine pathos. The patients of *The National Health* suffer and die, as do the singing soldiers of *Privates on Parade*. In *Poppy*, a pantomime take on the Chinese opium wars, Dick Whittington's sister becomes a drug addict while *Passion Play* focuses on adultery and betrayal.

Nichols is often considered an especially autobiographical playwright, and has chronicled much of the background to his plays in his autobiography *Feeling You're Behind* and in published diaries covering the years 1969–1977. *Joe Egg* is based on Nichols' own experiences of raising a handicapped child, *The National Health* draws on a hospital stay of his own, while *Privates on Parade* draws on his own military experiences.

Times critic said of the Peter Nichols revealed in his diaries: "Nichols tends to be touchy, crusty, disappointed with himself....yet wonderfully observant, honest and likeable."

**Joe Egg**

# A Day in the Death of Joe Egg

by Peter Nichols

**Original cast members:  
West End, Broadway & Film**



*A Day in the Death of Joe Egg: Joe Melia and Zena Walker with the handicapped child, Glasgow Citizens' and Comedy Theatre, London, 1967*

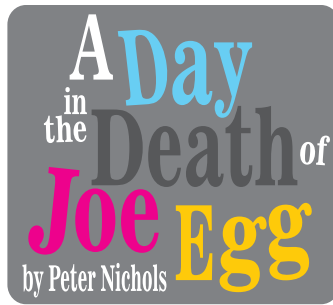
The same living-room, Brooks Atkinson Theatre, New York, 1968:  
back row, the producers: Henry Fownes, Michael Medwin, Joe Cates;  
front row, me, Michael Blakemore and Albert Finney



alan bates



joan hickson



## Acknowledgements

Mike & Zena Steward, Station Farm

Jon Taverner and everyone at the Sir John Mills Theatre

David Henshall, EADT

Wayne Savage, Ipswich Star

Chris Finbow, Museum St. Methodist Church

Alan Ayres

Richard Rumbellow

Mrs Julia Edwards

Grandma and Badge

Maggie Thrower

Sue Simmons

Thomas Haigh

Di Borthwick

Emily Bennett

Denis Taplin

Thomas Frost and Kingsfleet Primary School Choir,  
Felixstowe

## Friends of Gallery Players - 2015

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**Gallery Players** were formed in 1985 by Pat Taplin to produce rarely performed plays and musicals that larger companies would find uneconomic or which only use a few actors. The company quickly established a reputation for quality and excellence. Our aims are broadly speaking:

**To exploit a niche for staging productions that are progressive and exciting in both content and execution.**

**To embrace both new and established works.**

**To act as vehicle for engaging new talent as well as established members.**

**To foster a group of actors and technicians that are truly a community.**

**To foster links with schools and colleges.**

We generally stage three productions a year.

Performing lesser known shows is always difficult, particularly when it comes to building an audience and balancing the books, but by sticking to our aims we have grown an audience, that, hopefully, trust us to produce interesting work.

Although we have a strong pool of performers new blood and talent is always welcome as are people who want to work on the technical side.

The company is run by a small steering group: Dave Borthwick, Helen Clarke, Richard Healey, Steve Taplin and Steve Wooldridge .

We encourage other directors to take the reins of their own pet projects, allowing them to cast freely and create individual shows with the backing of our excellent technical and production crew. Our only insistence is that the final show should entertain and stimulate our discerning audience and should exude that sense of professionalism we strive for.

Gallery have won several awards including the NODA Eastern Area Shield for Best Production with 'Carnival' & 'Putting it Together' and the Councillors Cup for 'The Bakers Wife' and 'Kiss Me Like You Mean It'.

Please visit our website at [www.galleryplayers.co.uk](http://www.galleryplayers.co.uk) for details of all our shows past and future. Please sign up with your email address if you would like us to keep you informed of what we are doing and receive our 'newsletters' which will give details of any workshops/auditions we may be holding.

Our Motto is '**Making Theatre Exciting**' which we like to think we do, most of the time!



## Past Shows:-

1985 Cowardy Custard, 1986 Happy as a Sandbag, 1987 Sail Away, 1988 Something's Afoot, 1989 Company, 1990 The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas, 1991 The Hired Man, 1992 Snoopy - The Musical, A Little Night Music, 1993 Stepping Out, Cabaret, 1994 Assassins, The Ghost Train, Into the Woods, Hobson's Choice, 1995 Man of La Mancha, Steel Magnolia's, City of Angels, Scent of Flowers, 1996 Little Shop of Horrors, The Most Happy Fella, Blue Remembered Hills, 1997 Dancing at Lughnasa, Pacific Overtures, Chicago, Hard Times, 1998 The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui, Sweeney Todd (The Demon Barber of Fleet Street), Shadowlands, Something's Afoot, 1999 Carnival, Trip to Bountiful, The Boys From Syracuse, Tons of Money, 2000 On Golden Pond, The Bakers Wife, Kiss of the Spiderwoman, A Slice of Saturday Night, One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest, 2001 Mrs Warren's Profession, A Funny Thing Happened On The Way To The Forum, Billy, Breezblock Park, 2002 The Memory of Water, Flora The Red Menace, A Slice of Saturday Night, Radio Times, 2003 Kiss Me Like You Mean It, Days of Hope, Honk!, And A Nightingale Sang, 2004 Bouncers, Merrily We Roll Along, Talking Heads, You're A Good Man Charlie Brown, 2005 Kindertransport, She Loves Me, A Night At The Dogs, 2006 Amy's View, Passion, With Love, Colder Than Here, 2007 This Happy Breed, Grand Hotel, You Want Chilli Sauce With That & Marry Me A Little, The Sunshine Boys, 2008 Oh Kay!, Spend Spend Spend, To Kill A Mockingbird, 2009 The Long Road, Follies, Flare Path, 2010 Ordinary Days, Rent, Spring & Port Wine, 2011 My Mother Said I Never Should, Our House, Heroes, 2012 Putting it Together, Love Story, Be My Baby, 2013 A Man of No Importance, Into the Woods, The Importance of Being Earnest, 2014 Oh What a Lovely War!, Galileo, The History Boys, 2015 A Day in the Death of Joe Egg.

### Friends of Gallery Players

If you would like to help us to continue to present our shows to a high standard and, just as importantly, help to raise money to help others, perhaps you would like to become a '*Friend of the Gallery Players*'?

You will receive advance information and discount booking forms for all our productions & newsletters.

To become a 'Friend', or for any information on other forms of sponsorship or advertising please contact Steve Taplin on 07941 360786 or email [stevet@galleryplayers.co.uk](mailto:stevet@galleryplayers.co.uk)

### Honorary Friends

Gary Avis, Margaret Haddock & Michael Morton



July  
8th-11th

# hairspray



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