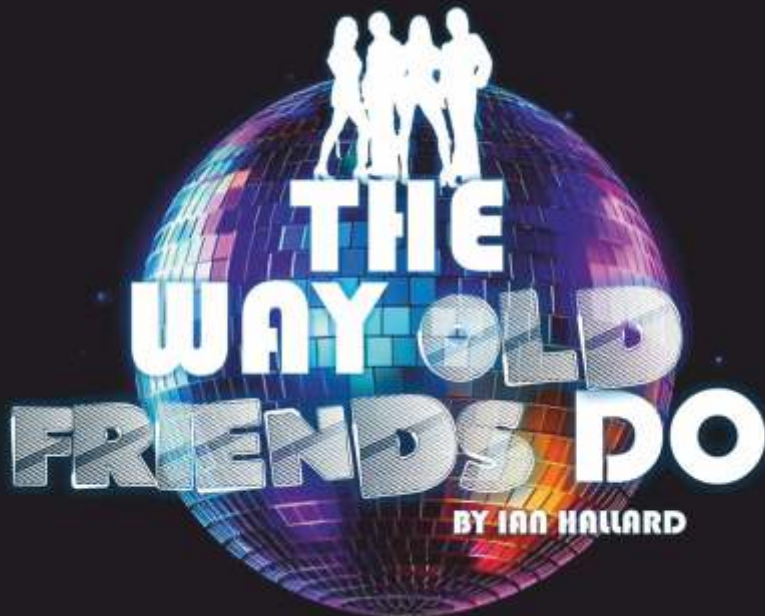


THE  
gallery  
PLAYERS  
present

DEVOTION, DESIRE and DANCING QUEENS...



THE  
WAY OLD  
FRIENDS DO  
BY IAN HALLARD



"A SUPER-TROUPER  
OF A SHOW"



"BANG ON THE MONEY,  
MONEY, MONEY"

## DIRECTORS NOTES



Directing the regional premiere of *Ian Hallard's The Way Old Friends Do* has been a joy, a privilege, and, quite honestly, a little bit of a dream come true. This is a play that sparkles with humour and warmth while speaking honestly about friendship, identity, acceptance, and the bonds that endure through time and change. It reminds us of friends – especially those who've shared our history - are the ones who see us for who we truly are, sequins and all.

At its heart, the play is about connection. It's about the people who help us carry our past, celebrate our present, and face the future with courage and laughter. Like a favourite ABBA song, it's a story that makes you smile, brings a tear to your eye, and lingers long after the final note.

It has been an honour to direct for the *Gallery Players*, whose commitment to staging exciting, heartfelt, and challenging work continues to inspire me. My deepest thanks go to *Helen Clarke, Steve Taplin, Steve Wooldridge, and Wade Ablitt* for their unfailing support, encouragement, and guidance throughout this production.

To our incredible cast – thank you for your dedication, your trust, and the joy you've poured into bringing these characters to life. You've made the rehearsal room a place of creativity, laughter, and true ensemble spirit.

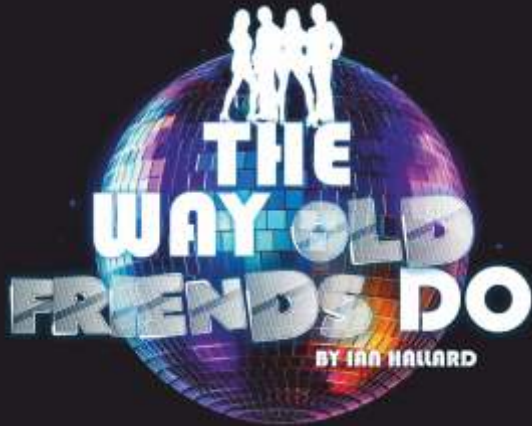
To our audience – you are the reason we do this. Theatre is nothing without the people who come to share in its stories, and your presence keeps the magic alive.

A very special thank you to *Ian Hallard*, not only for writing such a funny, moving, and heartwarming play, but for also giving so generously of his time to talk with me about the work and for supporting me whenever I needed it.

And finally, to ABBA – thank you for the music, for the joy, and for reminding us that no matter where life takes us, the way old friends do will always matter.



**Tony Flack**



### WITH THANKS TO:-

Alan Ayres - Coop Juniors  
Dario Vitellini - Video Publicity  
Leo & Dan - La Vida Show Bar Felixstowe  
Laura Locke - Felixstowe Radio  
Georgy Jamieson - Suffolk Theatre  
Martine Silverstone - Suffolk Onstsg  
Steph MacIntyre - Ruby Shoes  
Anthony & Graham Malster Smith  
Norman Rutterford

## CREATIVE TEAM

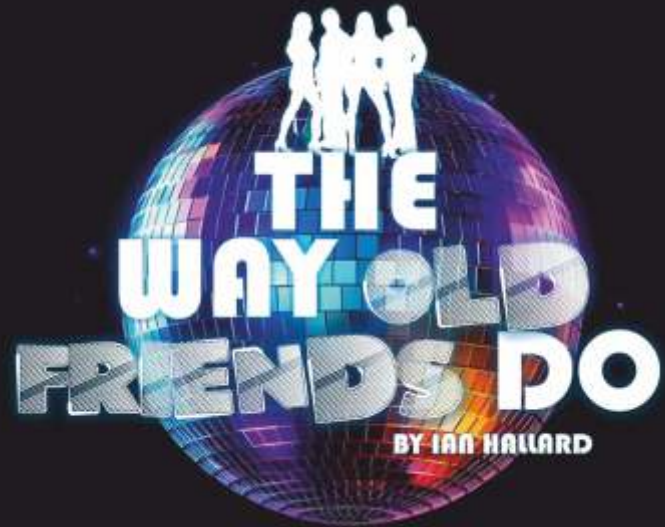
**Director** Tony Flack  
**Set Design** Tony Flack  
**Set Construction** Dave Borthwick  
**Lighting Design** James Aleksic  
**Costumes** Hal Darling  
**Wigs** Charlotte Sampson  
**Stage Manager** Rachel Doy  
**Assistant Stage Manager** Gavin Real  
**Lighting Operative** Cian Moore  
**Publicity/Social Media** Wade Ablitt  
**Programme Content** Tony Flack  
**Programme Design** Steve Taplin  
**Photography** Mike Kwasniak



**Charlotte Sampson**

# CAST

**Jodie** Lily Griffiths  
**Sally** Kelly Fletcher  
**Peter** Grant Filshill  
**Nan** Joyce Burnside  
**Edward** Darren Nunn  
**Waiter** Jordan Peck  
**Mrs Campbell** Lesley Burrows  
**Christian** Jordan Peck  
**Radio Host** Jordan Peck



## IAN HALLARD- PLAYWRIGHT AND ACTOR

*Ian was born in Birmingham. He studied English Literature at Sheffield University before commencing drama training at Mountview Theatre School.*

*His acting career has encompassed West End Theatre, The National Theatre, UK Tours, regional productions, and has included musicals, classical theatre and new writing.*

*Television roles include Alan-a-Dale in the Doctor Who episode 'Robot of Sherwood' and Moriarty's barrister, Mr Crayhill, in Sherlock. He is also an accomplished radio performer and pantomime Dame.*

*Ian's writing work includes three episodes of ITV's Poirot, and his debut play 'Adventurous', which premiered online in March 2021.*

*His comedy 'The Way Old Friends Do' opened at the Birmingham Repertory Theatre in February 2023, before embarking on a national tour and ultimately transferring to the Criterion Theatre in the West End.*

*Ian lives in London with his husband Mark Gattis.*

## DARREN NUNN



Darren was delighted to be invited back for his fourth outing with *Gallery Players*. Darren has been performing with several local amateur Companies for many years. As well as supporting & then leading *IODS Children's group First Stage* for several years in the 2010's. Not being the biggest ABBA fan around, he was intrigued by the script & could not stop laughing once he received a copy. So, he simply had to accept the role to find out more about his character *Edward*.

His most enjoyable & demanding role was playing *Alan Bennetts' alto ego* in *The Lady in the Van* with *Gallery* back in 2019. Darren has performed in numerous shows over the years from his first outing with *IODS* as a 'lad' in their production of *Oliver* in 1980. Here are some of his most memorable. *Fiddler On the Roof* (*Lazer Wolf*). *Oliver Twist 2011* (*Mr. Sowerberry*). *Shrek* (*Lord Farquaad*). *Drowsy Chaperone* (*Man in Chair*). *9 to 5* (*Franklin Hart*). *Gypsy* (*Herbie*). *My Fair Lady* (*Alfred Doolittle*). *Witches of Eastwick* (*Clyde Alden*). *Spamalot* (*Sir Denis Galahad/The Black Knight/Prince Herbert's father*). *The Mystery Of Edwin Drood* (*Nick Cricker*). *Jesus Christ Superstar* (*King Herod*). *Calamity Jane*, *The Producers*, *The Full Monty*, *Sunset Boulevard*.

He has also loved singing in many concerts with *IODS*, *Sounds Familiar* shows, and looks forward to new & exciting roles in the future.

## LILY GRIFFITHS



This is Lily's debut with *The Gallery Players* and was so delighted to be invited to perform alongside some long-term friends. Lily has been performing locally for over 20 years and obtained a BA(hons) in *Theatre and Drama* from *The Atrium* in Cardiff. She is the current Chairman of her beloved *Company of Four* where she is often found on stage, as well as in a writing and directing capacity. Lily has also been a member of *IODS* for 15 years and has enjoyed many ensemble roles in shows such as *Oliver*, *My Fair Lady*, *Dirty Rotten Scoundrels*, *Addams Family*, *Sweeney Todd* and *Sweet Charity*. Lily has recently joined *Clacton Amateur Dramatics Society* and played her most demanding role of late, *Judy* in *Home I'm Darling*. She now teaches Drama at *Northgate High School*

where she enjoys introducing the next generation to theatre.



## **GRANT FILSHILL**

This will be Grant's 3<sup>rd</sup> production for Gallery Players having appeared in *Piaf* and *Playhouse Creatures*. You may have seen him performing locally with *Deben Players* in *A Flea in your Ear* and *It Runs in the Family*. Although a relative newcomer to Ipswich, Grant has been a member of various drama groups in the *Waveney Valley* for over 25 years. Some of his favourite roles include *Jack Worthing - The Importance of Being Ernest*, *Elyot Chase - Private Lives*, *Sir Wilfred Robarts - Witness for the Prosecution* and *Phileas Fogg - Around the World in 80 Days*. Grant is currently waiting to see if he will be on the cutting room floor when his first film appearance in a *Midsuffolk Night's Dream* is released in the autumn. This will be his first experience of playing a character on the "rainbow spectrum" and hopes that you will enjoy the play as much as he has in rehearsals. Grant lives with a very long-suffering partner and two aged but still adorable dogs. When not acting he is equally happy watching anything on stage.



## **JORDAN PECK**

This will be Jordan's fifth Gallery show, previous shows being *Xanadu 2023*, *Piaf 2023*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream 2024*, and *Fun Home 2025*.

Earlier this year, Jordan also appeared in *Limelight Performers'* production of *9 to 5 - the Musical* as well as *Brantham Amateur Theatrical Society's* production of *The Addams Family*.

Jordan also participates in regular improv shows as a member of the improv troop, *Insert Laughter Here*.

## **JOYCE BURNSIDE**

This is Joyce's theatrical debut. She has found the experience challenging but very enjoyable. At the grand age of 93, whether she will allow her nephew, Grant, to persuade her to do it again, only time will tell !!



## **KELLY FLETCHER**

Kelly is thrilled to be returning to *The Gallery Players* for her third production with the company. She was recently seen as Mrs. Marshall in *Playhouse Creatures 2024* and in the lead role of Mona in *Come Back to the 5 and Dime, Jimmy Dean, Jimmy Dean 2022*. A passionate and dedicated theatre maker, Kelly is a trustee for *Limelight Performers*, where she has directed a number of musicals including *Return to the Forbidden Planet*, *Annie Jr.*, *Matilda Jr.*, and *High School Musical*. She also recently performed as Violet in *Limelight's* production of *9 to 5: The Musical*. Kelly has been a proud member of the *IODS Theatre Company* for many years, performing supporting roles in shows such as *The Full Monty*, *Oliver* as well as taking on the lead role of the Wicked Witch in *The Wizard of Oz*. Outside of the theatre, Kelly is a *Performing Arts Lecturer* at *Suffolk New College*, where she teaches *Musical Theatre and Drama*. She is absolutely delighted to be performing once again alongside such a talented cast and great friends



## **LESLEY BURROWS**

Lesley has been part of the local community theatre scene for more than 40 years. She's a trustee of *IODS Theatre Group* but has performed in several *Gallery Players* productions over the years including *Cabaret*, *Into the Woods* (1994) and *The Baker's Wife*. More recent appearances with *Gallery* include our 2024 tribute to *Stephen Sondheim*, *The Bridges of Madison County* and, earlier this year, as *Alison Bechdel* in *Fun Home*. She's also looking forward to joining the production team for *A Little Night Music* next spring. Off stage Lesley works as a fundraiser for *St Elizabeth Hospice* and loves spending time with her partner and family, especially her three energetic grandchildren.



PHOTOS- MIKE KWASNAK



IN REHEARSAL



PHOTOS:- MIKE KWASNIAK

## OVER THE SUMMER OF 2019, I SAT DOWN TO WRITE MY FIRST PLAY.....

Having been an actor for over twenty years, I did so with two aims at the forefront of my mind:

1. to write something that was close to my heart and,
2. to write something that I could appear in myself.



If my agent were to ring me right now, I pondered, what would be the role I would most want to play? I decided it would have to be Agnetha from ABBA. Now I merely had to come up with an idea that would enable me to do just that.

Other elements combined to inspire my imagination: I wanted to write something for my dear friend, Matthew (with whom I'd appeared in panto on three separate occasions, most enjoyably and memorably as Ugly Sisters a few years earlier) and me to appear in. And I was also intrigued to write about friendship between gay men, which it seemed to me, to be somewhat unexplored, thematically. There was even a perfect ABBA song title for the purpose: 'The Way Old Friends Do', which ABBA debuted on their World Tour in the autumn of 1979.

From there, it was a short leap to the idea of a drag ABBA tribute band, and I was off...

My little play - which if I thought might, if I was very fortunate, play for a couple of weeks at a little fringe venue in London - ended up being produced by the Birmingham Rep in my home town, before touring the UK in the Spring and Summer of 2023, and then even transferring to the West End.

The journey of 'The Way Old Friends Do' has exceeded my wildest dreams, and I'm now delighted to see it being produced by amateur companies as well. All of which means, having been in it for 150 performances, I am now able, finally, to sit down and watch my own play!



Ian Hallard

## TONY FLACK – DIRECTOR



Tony has been a passionate figure in Suffolk's community theatre for over 20 years, taking on roles both on and off stage – from performing and directing to producing. His producing credits include *Shirley Valentine*, *Gulls*, *Steel Magnolias*, *Wit*, *Duet for One*, *The God of Carnage*, *Bette and Joan*, *The Killing of Sister George*, *Sanctuary*, *Death and the Maiden*, *Someone Who'll Watch Over Me*, *Duets* and *Mamil*.

As a director, Tony has brought to life productions such as *Steel Magnolias*, *Shirley Valentine*, *Duet for One*, and most recently *9 to 5 The Musical* for *Limelight Performers*.

In recent years, Tony has expanded into film production as an executive producer, with three feature length films slated for release in 2026 through *Thinskinproductions*, of which one is currently making the rounds on the film festival circuit.

For *Thinskinproductions*, he also co-produced his first professional international stage production, *The Opera Singer*, which recently premiered in Salzburg. Plans are already underway to bring the show to the UK and South Africa in 2026.

This project marks Tony's first collaboration with *Gallery Players* – a partnership he has long hoped for – and he looks forward to future projects together. He extends heartfelt thanks to the *Steering Group* for their support, and a special nod to 'the legend' herself, *Helen Clarke*.

## A BRIEF HISTORY OF ABBA TRIBUTE ACTS: FROM NOSTALGIC IMITATION TO GLOBAL PHENOMENON

Since ABBA's initial split in 1982, the world has never quite been ready to let them go – and that's where tribute acts stepped in, keeping the spirit of Sweden's most iconic pop group alive. What began as a niche corner of musical nostalgia has grown into a thriving global industry, with tribute acts playing to sold-out crowds, headlining festivals, and even helping fuel ABBA's modern revival.

The earliest ABBA tribute acts began emerging in the late 1980s and early 1990s, as the band's music saw a resurgence in popularity, particularly in the UK and Australia. These early performers largely focused on faithfully recreating the sound and look of the group, complete with retro costumes, vintage microphones, and choreographed moves – often performing in small clubs or retro-themed nights.



By the mid-1990s, the tribute scene exploded. This was partly due to the success of *ABBA Gold*, the best-selling compilation album released in 1992, and the 1994 film *Muriel's Wedding*, which prominently featured ABBA's music. Suddenly, a new generation was discovering the magic. This was soon followed by the blockbuster stage musical *Mamma Mia!* in 1999, which turbocharged global interest in all things ABBA and led to a surge in tribute bands worldwide.

Groups like *Björn Again*, founded in Australia in 1988, were among the first to gain international fame, blending spot-on musical recreations with tongue-in-cheek humour. They opened the door for countless others - *ABBA Mania*, *Arrival* from Sweden, *Dancing Dream*, and many more - each offering a unique spin, from faithful re-enactments to symphonic ABBA experiences.

In recent years, the tribute scene has only grown more diverse and theatrical. Some shows now tour with full orchestras; others incorporate multimedia effects or immersive audience interaction. ABBA tribute cruises, themed dance parties, and drag performances have expanded the way fans can experience the band's legacy.

These tribute acts have done more than just preserve the music; they've helped turn ABBA into a living, breathing cultural force. Long before the band reunited in 2021 with *Voyage*, tribute artists were the lifeblood of ABBA fandom - and they remain essential to its future. In venues large and small, they bring joy, sparkle, and a sense of community to fans who still believe in the magic of four voices, a disco beat, and a whole lot of heart.

As long as the world wants to dance and sing, ABBA's spirit - through their tribute acts - will keep the party going.

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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 Magnolias, 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 Spider Woman, 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, Hairspray, A Streetcar Named Desire, 2016 Jumpers For Goalposts, The House Of Bernarda Alba, Spring Awakening, Ushers, 2017 Urinetown, Far From The Madding Crowd, 2018 Wolf Hall, Grow Up Grandad, Lucky Stiff, 2019 The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee, The Lady In The Van, A New Brain, 2020 Gallery @ 35 (an online celebration), 2021 The Mystery of Edwin Drood, Macbeth, Bully Boy/Mortuary Sisters (a double bill), 2022 Celebrating Sondheim, Gutenberg - The Musical, Di & Viv & Rose, Come Back to the Five & Dime Jimmy Dean, Jimmy Dean, The Secret Diary of Adrian Mole aged 13 3/4 - The Musical, Sunday in the Park with George, 2023 Daddy Long Legs, The Kitchen Sink, Xanadu, Kiss of the Spider Woman, Piaf, 2024 Playhouse Creatures, A Midsummer Night's Dream, Lovesong, The Bridges of Madison County, Parade, 2025 Fun Home, God of Carnage, The Great British Bake Off Musical, The Way Old Friends Do. **Future Productions:-** For info on our 2026 season please check out:- [www.galleryplayers.co.uk](http://www.galleryplayers.co.uk)

***Gallery Players are a Charity and operate out of the Gallery Studio Theatre. We are guided by a small 'Steering Group' of theatre 'lovers' and aided by a melee of invaluable volunteers!***

***We don't receive any grants or subsidies for our day to day running and rely solely on tickets sales and kind donations to keep doing what we do, and to maintain and improve our wonderful studio theatre.***

***To find out more about us, how you might be able to help and the 'Are You Sitting Comfortably?' campaign for improved auditorium seating, please scan the QR code or visit our website.***

***[www.galleryplayers.co.uk](http://www.galleryplayers.co.uk)***



**GALLERY PLAYERS** started back in 1985. *Pat Taplin* decided, with a group of friends, that in order to get the kind of *Theatre* they wanted to see performed locally, they'd have to do it themselves.

Mounting lesser known, rarely produced plays and musicals has always been our forte and we'd like to think we've been doing it rather well for close to 40 years!

Although this direction brings many freedoms, to uncover hidden and forgotten gems of theatre that other groups wouldn't tackle, it can also be financially challenging for us, as we inevitably take more box office risks.

In 2021 we took another 'leap', moving into our very own premises, **The Gallery Studio Theatre**. A dream for a decade had been realised.

The opportunities the **Studio** gives us are immense, no rushed get-ins a couple of days before opening night, the ability to rehearse and build a show in the same space it will be performed in - all huge positives.

The 'flip' side, of course, is paying a 'commercial' rent and all the associated costs that go with running and maintaining the building.

Since 2019 **Gallery Players** has been a *Charity* and every penny we make goes back into the shows and the upkeep and improvement of **The Studio**.

**So, we're asking for a little help from you, our dear friends and supporters.**

**We don't just want to 'get by with a little help .....** as the *Beatles* sang, we want to *Thrive and Flourish!*

We were hoping you'd consider making a manageable monthly donation?

Perhaps **£2.50, £5 or £10**, nothing silly (unless you wanted to!) which over a year would build to be incredibly useful to us and most welcome. Furthermore, if you are a tax payer this amount could grow 25% at no cost to you through *Gift Aid*.

More details of the scheme and other ways to help, such as 'one off' donations, are on our website ([www.galleryplayers.co.uk](http://www.galleryplayers.co.uk)), scan the QR code below or pick up a leaflet in the Studio foyer .

*Our current friends are:-*

**Hattie Bennett, Di Borthwick, Julian Bradbrook & Liz Stevens, Sarah Caddick, Lisa Cheadle, Chris Dunnett, Tony Flack, Stuart Hume, Teresa & Paul Jennings, Liz Pettman, Sammi Morgans, David Sutton and Brian Theodore Ralph**

*What a lovely bunch you are!*

*Thank-you all for supporting our shows and perhaps you to will consider becoming a 'Gallery Friend' too?*

**THE**  
*gallery*  
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**[www.galleryplayers.co.uk](http://www.galleryplayers.co.uk) for more info.**

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