

THE SEX LIVES OF PUPPETS

Blind Summit Theatre



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For Steve Shevett, a member of our volunteer family whose enthusiasm for this performance reminded us why we do what we do. We carry him with us tonight.

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The Sex Lives of Puppets

Blind Summit Theatre

Idea	Mark Down
Written and Directed	Mark Down and Ben Keaton
Lighting	James Mckenzie
Design	Mark Down
Puppet Design	Mark Down and Russell Dean
Puppets Made By	Russell Dean, Helen Foan, Nick Barnes, Fiona Clift, Natasha Burns, Rachel Salenius, Charlina Lucas
Costume Design	Mark Down and Charlina Lucas
Touring Technical Manager	Fergus Carver
Puppeteers	Mark Down, Isobel Griffiths, Dale Wylde, Elliot Liburd

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ABOUT THE COMPANY

Blind Summit is a London-based, internationally touring producer of puppet-based theatre under the vision of Artistic Director, Mark Down.

For twenty years Blind Summit has consistently subverted people's expectations of puppetry: from giant storybook characters in the opening ceremony of London's 2012 Olympic Games to *The Table*, a globally successful touring production that completely up-ended audiences' understanding of how puppet and puppeteer communicate. Blind Summit and their cohort of exceptional makers and puppeteers have contributed to the creation of some of the most extraordinary spectacles of recent years, including *The Magic Flute* on the lake stage at the Bregenz Festspiele, Complicite's *The Master and Margherita* at Avignon, and *Peter and the Wolf* at the Hollywood Bowl. Their ambition is to 'make puppetry history.'

ABOUT THE CAST

Mark Down is Artistic Director of Blind Summit Theatre which he co-founded with Nick Barnes in 1997. Before forming Blind Summit he worked as a performer with companies such as London Bubble, Cardboard Citizens, Stanley Hall Opera, Treadwell Gallery, Wireframe, Dynamic New Animation, Theatre Rites, Globe Players, Midsummer Actors, Economical Truth, Turning Point TC and had various roles on TV and commercials including *Eastenders* and *Granada Breeze*. He also did occasional stand up comedy.

For Blind Summit Mark writes, directs, designs and performs. His work in theatre includes *Peter and the Wolf* with the LA Phil at the Hollywood Bowl, 1984 (Battersea Arts Centre), *Angus, Thongs and Even More Snogging* (West Yorkshire Playhouse), *His Dark Materials* (Birmingham Rep and West Yorkshire Playhouse), *Shun-kin* (Complicite,

Setagaya Theatre Tokyo, Barbican) and *Greenland* (National Theatre). In opera he has directed *Le Rossignol* at the Bregenz Festival, and was puppetry designer and director for *The Magic Flute* (Bregenz Festival), *El Gato Con Botas* (Broadway: Gotham Chamber Opera, Tectonic Theatre Project) and *Kommilitonen!* (Royal Academy of Music and Julliard, New York). He has collaborated with choreographers such as Will Tuckett in *Faeries* (ROH2) and Akram Khan in *The Vertical Road*. He has also directed and performed puppetry for TV including *Holy Flying Circus* and *Professor Branestawm* both for the BBC. He has written, directed and performed in over 45 productions.

Mark teaches puppetry technique at all the major London drama schools. In 2022 he published *A Practical Guide to Puppetry* which sets out how to learn Blind Summit's unique "extreme puppetry style." It is on sale worldwide.

His most recent shows *The Sex Lives of Puppets*, *What to Do in a Puppet Emergency* and *The Law Of Gravity* (with The Scottish Ensemble) are currently touring.

Irishman **Ben Keaton** is a writer, director and teacher. In the past, he has been a multi-award-winning actor with an Olivier Nomination and a Perrier Award and three Manchester Evening News awards under his belt. He has acted in TV—*Father Ted*, *Casualty* (regular cast) the film *East is East* and played the lead in countless theatre productions including *Cyrano De Bergerac*, *Animal Crackers*, *Harvey*, *The Odd Couple* and *American Buffalo* in the regions and the West End. He has written six series for the BBC and Channel 4. He has directed corporate videos, short films, and documentaries. He has collaborated with circus performers, comedians, dancers, and puppet companies,

most recently as co director and writer of *The Sex Lives of Puppets* for Mark Down and Blind Summit Theatre. He is the founder of the charity The Creativity Academy, which is dedicated to bringing the creative process to young children in the deprived area of East Lindsey, Lincolnshire. At the age of six, he won the book *Mr. Man and His New Red Van* at a school prize-giving. He has been a writer ever since. His work is rhythmical, comic, and fearless—a distinctive voice in constant search of adventure.

James McKenzie is a freelance lighting designer working across all art forms and genres with a particular love of dance, opera and highly visual theatre. His designs have been seen across the UK and Internationally and he enjoys collaborating and creating on the smallest to largest of productions.

He believes strongly in working collaboratively with the whole creative team from early on in the process to create a cohesive and meaningful design.

Alongside his lighting work James McKenzie is the Artistic Director of award winning *Zoo Venues* at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, where he programmes a range of companies specialising in Dance and Physical Theatre.

Charlina Lucas is a trained stage and costume designer (University Mozarteum Salzburg in Austria). She began working with Blind Summit in February 2017 as a puppet maker and has since contributed to numerous freelance projects with the company.

Since 2022, Charlina has been a regular member of the Blind Summit team, working as an administrator and taking on a range of roles such as designer, company manager, and show operator. She has been involved in

the development of *The Sex Lives of Puppets* since the initial puppeteer auditions in May 2022.

Russell Dean is Artistic Director of *StrangeFace Theatre Company*. His roles include planning and communicating the Artistic Vision of the company, designing and making the masks and puppets, running residencies and workshops.

Russell studied at Aberystwyth University where he gained a first class degree in Drama. He worked as a freelance designer/maker and facilitator for Trestle Theatre Company, Welsh National Opera, Theatre Company Blah Blah Blah amongst many others.

Russell has been a writer, director, designer/maker, performer, project manager and facilitator on 9 productions and hundreds of workshops for *StrangeFace* since 2001.

During this time he has also developed a reputation for being one of the country's leading mask makers. He designs and makes commissions and box sets of masks for schools, groups and other artists such as *Vamos*, *Bootworks* and *Mick Barnfather*.

Fergus Carver is a freelance musician, technician and sound designer living and working in London. He studied music at Durham University specialising in electronic music composition and has worked extensively in theatre ever since, across all departments, specialising in sound.

He has worked in technical management since 2021 and most recently has held the position of deputy technical manager at Southwark Playhouse, where he has managed teams of freelancers, run get ins, get outs, seating

turnarounds and oversaw many productions.

He first worked with *Blind Summit* in January 2024, helping install the show at Southwark Playhouse. Similarly when the show returned to London in September 2024 he worked on the show again, managing the production period from the venue and helping with programming and rigging. Fergus is a regular at the Edinburgh fringe, working with all major venues and as an operator, lighting designer, sound designer and performer.

Upcoming projects include sound designing fishing 4 chip's production of *It's Gonna Blow* (Pleasance Edinburgh 2025), lighting programming and operating for *Josie Long: Now is the time of Monsters* (Pleasance Edinburgh 2025) and a production of *The Trials* at Southwark Playhouse at the end of August.

Dale Wylde is a teacher, director and performer. He trained at East 15 (BA Hons Physical Theatre) and has since worked with many diverse pedagogs, directors and artists. These include David Glass (*The David Glass Ensemble*) Briony O'Callaghan (*Created a Monster*) Matej Matejka (Grotowski institute, Studio Matejka, Poland) Marie-Gabrielle Rotie; Mark Down (*Blind Summit Theatre*) Saga Kobayashi, Minoru Hidoshi and Matsuko Tanaka, (Hijikata Memorial Museum, Otsuki, Japan) Dale Wylde is an associate artist with *Flabbergast theatre*, *Created a Monster* and *The David Glass Ensemble*.

He was an associate director for *Flabbergast theatres Macbeth* which was nominated for two offie awards, one of which was for his performance, and was recently the puppetry director for David Glass's original show *Galapagos*.

As a teacher Dale Wylde has facilitated workshops, for both children and adults, for some of the most accredited institutes in the country including most recently for EDUQAS, where he facilitated workshops for secondary school teachers all around the UK.

Dale Wylde's work brings together a broad range of influences from mask, mime and puppetry to his work in poor theatre, butoh and commedia del arte.

Elliot Liburd graduated from Kent University and then trained at The Fourth Monkey. Recent theatre includes: *Alice in Wonderland* at the Marylebone Theatre (2025) and Punch Drunk's *The Lost Lending Library* (2025). He played John Grenville in Exeter Northcott Theatre's *The Commotion Time* (2024), *The Instrumentalists* at The Southbank Centre (2024), and Jay Gatsby in *The Immersive Great Gatsby* in London's West End (2023).

Other credits include Les Enfants Terribles' *Sherlock Holmes: An Online Adventure* (2021). Television includes *The Third Day: Autumn* for Punch Drunk and Sky TV (2020).

Isobel Griffiths is an actor, puppeteer and theatre-maker from Bristol. She trained at Rose Bruford College and graduated in 2021. Isobel has been working and devising with Blind Summit since 2023.

Theatre credits Include: *The Sex Lives Of Puppets* (Southwark Playhouse, Edinburgh Fringe) and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Antic Disposition). In training: *Boudica* (The Unicorn Theatre); [BLANK] (Rose Bruford College). Film/TV credits include: *The Fence* (Red Anchor Films); and *Dust* (UWE Film).



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