



BLIND SUMMIT THEATRE

THE SEX LIVES OF PUPPETS

CONCEPT Mark Down

WRITTEN & DIRECTED BY Mark Down and Ben Keaton

PUPPETEERS Mark Down, Isobel Griffiths, Dale Wylde, Elliot Liburd

LIGHTING DESIGNER 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

Harold Prince Theatre

Wednesday, February 4 @ 7 PM

Thursday, February 5 @ 7 PM

Friday, February 6 @ 2 PM

Friday, February 6 @ 7:30 PM

Saturday, February 7 @ 2 PM

Saturday, February 7 @ 7:30 PM

There will be an intermission.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Blind Summit Theatre

Blind Summit Theatre 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 its 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. The company's ambition is to make puppetry history.

Mark Down (Concept, Writer, Director, Designer, Puppeteer)

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, and Turning Point TC, in addition to having various roles on TV and commercials, including *Eastenders* and *Granada Breeze*. He also did occasional standup comedy.

For Blind Summit, Down writes, directs, designs and performs. His work in theatre includes *Peter and the Wolf* (Los Angeles Philharmonic 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, Down 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 Juilliard, 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.

Down 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." 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.

Ben Keaton (Writer, Director)

An Irishman, Keaton is a writer, director and teacher. He is a multi-award-winning actor with an Olivier nomination, a Perrier Award and three Manchester Evening News awards under his belt. He has acted on TV in *Father Ted* and *Casualty* (regular cast), in 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* regionally and on the West End. Keaton has written

six series for the BBC and Channel 4 and 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* in a school prize-giving, and he has been a writer ever since. His work is rhythmical, comedic and fearless, a distinctive voice in constant search of adventure.

James McKenzie (Lighting Designer)

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. He enjoys collaborating and creating for the smallest to largest of productions, believing strongly in working with the whole creative team from early on in the process to create a cohesive and meaningful design. Alongside his lighting work, McKenzie is the Artistic Director of the award-winning Zoo Venues at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, where he programs a range of companies specializing in dance and physical theatre.

Russell Dean (Puppet Design)

Dean is the Artistic Director of Strangeface Theatre Company, where he plans and communicates the company's artistic vision, designs and makes the masks and puppets, and runs residencies and workshops. Dean 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 and Theatre Company Blah Blah Blah, among many others. Dean has been a writer, director, designer, maker, performer, project manager and facilitator on nine 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 (Touring Technical Manager)

Carver is a freelance musician, technician and sound designer based in London. He studied music at Durham University, specializing in electronic music composition, and has worked extensively in theatre ever since across all departments with a focus on sound. He has been in technical management since 2021 and worked as deputy technical manager at Southwark Playhouse, where he managed teams of freelancers, ran seating turnarounds and oversaw many productions. He first worked with Blind Summit in 2024, helping install *The Sex Lives of Puppets* at Southwark Playhouse. Similarly, when the show returned to London, he managed the production period, helping with programming and rigging. Carver is a regular at Edinburgh Festival Fringe, working with all major venues as an operator, lighting designer, sound designer and performer. Recent and upcoming projects include sound design for Fishing 4 Chips' production of *It's Gonna Blow* (The Pleasance Edinburgh, 2025), lighting programming and operating for *Josie Long: Now is the Time of Monsters* (The Pleasance Edinburgh, 2025), and a production of *The Trials* at Southwark Playhouse at the end of August.

Charlina Lucas (Costume Design)

Lucas is a trained stage and costume designer who studied at the University Mozarteum Salzburg in Austria. She began working with Blind Summit in 2017 as a puppet maker and has since contributed to numerous freelance projects with the company. Since 2022, Lucas has been a regular member of the Blind Summit team, working as an administrator and taking on 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 2022.

Isobel Griffiths (Puppeteer)

Griffiths is an actor, puppeteer and theatre-maker from Bristol. She trained at Rose Bruford College, graduating in 2021. Griffiths has been working and devising with Blind Summit since 2023. Theatre credits: *The Sex Lives of Puppets* (Southwark Playhouse, Edinburgh Fringe) and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Antic Disposition). In training: *Boudica* (The Unicorn Theatre) and *[BLANK]* (Rose Bruford College). Film/TV credits: *The Fence* (Red Anchor Films) and *Dust* (UWE Film).

Dale Wylde (Puppeteer)

Wylde is a teacher, director and performer. He trained at East 15 in physical theatre and has since worked with many diverse pedagogues, directors and artists including David Glass, Briony O'Callaghan, Matej Matejka (Grotowski Institute and Studio Matejka), Marie-Gabrielle Rotie, Mark Down (Blind Summit Theatre), Saga Kobayashi, Minoru Hidoshi and Matsuko Tanaka (Hijikata Memorial Museum). Wylde is an associate artist with Flabbergast Theatre, Created a Monster and the David Glass Ensemble. He was an associate director for Flabbergast Theatre's *Macbeth*, which was nominated for two Offie awards (including one for his performance). Wylde was also the puppetry director for David Glass's original show, *Galapagos*. As a teacher, Wylde has facilitated workshops for both children and adults for some of the most accredited institutes in the country. Most recently, he facilitated with EDUQAS for secondary school teachers all around the UK. Wylde brings together a broad range of influences from mask, mime and puppetry to his work in poor theatre, butoh and commedia dell'arte.

Elliot Liburd (Puppeteer)

Liburd graduated from Kent University and trained at The Fourth Monkey. Recent theatre credits include *Alice in Wonderland* at the Marylebone Theatre; Punch Drunk's *The Lost Lending Library*; John Grenville in Exeter Northcott Theatre's *The Commotion Time*; *The Instrumentalists* at The Southbank Centre; and Jay Gatsby in *The Immersive Great Gatsby* in London's West End. Other credits include Les Enfants Terribles' *Sherlock Holmes: An Online Adventure* in 2021. Television credits include *The Third Day: Autumn* for Punch Drunk and Sky TV.