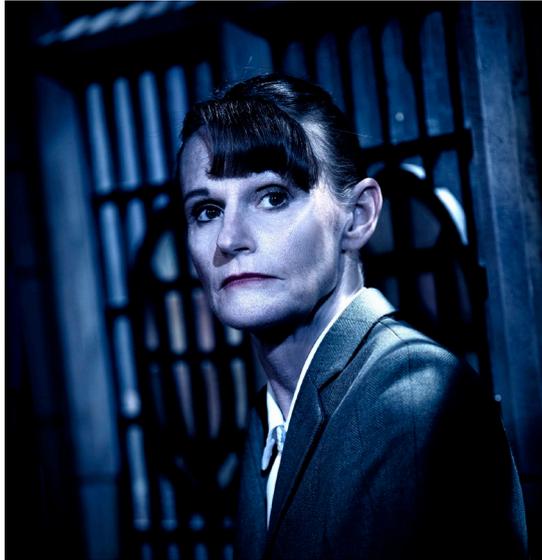


GWYNETH STRONG Interview

The Mousetrap



Tuesday 29 January – Saturday 2 February at Guildford's Yvonne Arnaud Theatre

BEST known for her role as Cassandra in the BBC sitcom *Only Fools and Horses*, Gwyneth Strong celebrates the New Year by starring as Mrs Boyle in Agatha Christie's record-breaking stage phenomenon, *The Mousetrap*, which opens at Guildford's Yvonne Arnaud Theatre on Tuesday, January 29.

"I really am looking forward to getting back on stage. I love theatre and I don't like to leave it too long because it's like a muscle that you need to use. I really like being part of a company and being on stage in front of an audience – once I've got over my nerves and into in my stride! I love it.

"I've never done any Agatha Christie so I really fancied doing that style of theatre – and I was very attracted to the character, Mrs Boyle. She's very bombastic and angry, and as an actress I was drawn to having a go at taking on a role like this. I haven't played an angry character in a period piece before, so it will be a brilliant new challenge for me."

Celebrated for being the world's longest running show of any kind in the history of theatre, *The Mousetrap* is a hugely iconic and successful show for an actor to join.

"It's really exciting to be part of something that has a historical background like this; you know you're becoming part of a cannon of actresses that have played the role and I think that shows real trust; it's lovely."

Renowned for its tantalising script and intricate plot, the combination of Agatha Christie's immaculate writing and brilliant storytelling must be a joy to perform?

"Yes, absolutely. I hadn't read or seen *The Mousetrap*, and when I settled myself down to read the script, I was supposed to be phoning somebody back – and I completely forgot. I became so immersed in the story, I just carried on reading right through to the end. I was completely sucked in and I think that must be what happens to audiences; the story consumes you."

Gwyneth started her performance career at very young age, gaining her very first acting role on stage at the age of just 10 years old.

"Yes, my first job was at the Royal Court Theatre, which is unbelievable now. It's funny when you look back and think 'how did I know that as a child' but I'm sure that even then, I knew I wanted to pursue acting as a career.

"At the same age I met an actress who lived in the flat at the top of the house where we lived and I think it was then that I understood that acting could be a job. And it appealed to me because I was always a child that loved

to show off and wanted my family to watch me perform so I think it was a natural progression! My family probably thought, 'Oh, yes, let her get out of the house and perform to someone else for a while!'"

While Gwyneth has enjoyed an extensive career across stage, film and television, it is her role as Cassandra in the BBC sitcom *Only Fools and Horses* which really launched her profile on a national level, making her a household name. Did Gwyneth ever imagine the sitcom would become quite as successful as it did?

"No, I don't think any of us thought it would be as huge as it was – but of course when I went into the sitcom it was already a successful comedy show, so I had an idea, but I didn't realise that it would just get bigger and bigger.

"I'd been acting for a long time before playing Cassandra, and I'd been in television shows so I'd experienced some recognition every now and again, but absolutely nothing on this scale! It changed everything really.

"The feeling towards that programme and that character; the sentiment is so generous and so loved that you can't really feel anything but happy that people are still so fond of *Only Fools and Horses*. The warmth that people bring when they want to say something about it is lovely and I'm very lucky to have been in a show like that."

Tickets for *The Mousetrap* are on sale now! You can book yours by calling the Yvonne Arnaud Theatre Box Office on (01483) 44 00 00 or by visiting the website at www.yvonne-arnaud.co.uk