

The outrageous 2,000 year old comedy



The
Satyricon

The Satyricon

by Gaius Petronius

adapted and directed by Martin Foreman

Arbery Theatre & Edinburgh Graduate Theatre Group

Assembly Roxy, Edinburgh, 5 - 8 October 2022 (preview 4 Oct)

Arbery Theatre is an occasional group of theatre creatives with a track record of successful productions. Most recently we produced Mike Bartlett's *Bull* and Martin Foreman's *Sunset* at the 2019 Fringe. During the pandemic Arbery created podcasts based on classic and modern short stories.

The **Edinburgh Graduate Theatre Group** (EGTG, "The Grads") has been putting on theatre productions in the capital for nearly seventy years and is one of the city's most respected community drama companies. In recent years, EGTG has mounted productions of plays by Mark Ravenhill, Abi Morgan, Patrick Marber, Martin McDonagh and Caryl Churchill, as well as Shakespeare and other classics.

The Satyricon is not the first collaboration between the two companies. In 2016 Arbery brought EGTG's production of J B Priestley's *The Rose and Crown* to the Fringe. Martin Foreman's adaptation of *Volpone* was an EGTG success at the 2017 Fringe and brought back to the Fringe by Arbery the following year.

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The first act is 75 minutes, followed by a 20 minute interval and a 60 minute second act. It ends about 10.10pm. Interval drinks can be ordered in advance at the bar.

Some audience members may find some scenes upsetting.

The Satyricon is about life and life is sometimes offensive, painful and unpleasant.

"It's only a story, a collection of stories. From long, long ago."

The play you are about to see is based on a story, part prose part poetry, written almost two thousand years ago. Encolpius, a student - or is he a gladiator? - narrates his adventures with his sometimes-best-friend-and-sometimes-bitter-rival Ascyltos and with Encolpius's young lover/servant/cook Giton.

In this picaresque tale there is theft and deception, kidnapping and slavery, death and torture, feasts luxurious and nauseating as the trio meet characters across the spectrum of Roman society. Throughout the story there is sex: between men, between women and men; sex that brings pleasure or pain; sex that is sought, refused, imposed and denied. Impotence raises its unwelcome head - or, more accurately, keeps its head down. Throughout, there is comedy which still resonates today - although some scenes are distasteful or repugnant to modern minds.

The Satyricon is in many ways a masterpiece. Its language is inventive, its characters depicted with keen humour, the pace and settings of the story never dull. Above all, it is one of the first narratives to deal with the lives of ordinary people - not gods or heroes but men and women of every age and class.

The tale that has come down to us is long but incomplete. What remains begins abruptly in the forum of a provincial town with Encolpius giving a speech on education; many pages later it ends in the middle of a scene where - well, we won't spoil the story because it might spoil your appetite. Gaps in the text mean that the trio sometimes disappear from one place and turn up in another; there are references to people and episodes that have not come down to us; and characters that intrigue us pass out of the story and are never heard of again.

The original text has been translated many times in the last four hundred years, with each new version giving contemporary insights and shedding more light on the story's exuberant sexual behaviour. Time and again from Francis Nodot's seventeenth-century translation to Federico Fellini's and Gian Luigi Polidoro's 1969 films, Petronius' story has been embellished without distinguishing which episodes were original and which newly created. Meanwhile, in academia and art Ascyltos, Encolpius and Giton have been analysed and interpreted this way and that; are they selfish or selfless, calculating or guileless, moral or immoral. Should we like or despise them? What binds them together or tears them apart?

We confess to the same sins. The trio you will meet is as much ours as Petronius'. Most of our story can be found in the original but we have invented characters and events, including one scene much darker than the rest. To compensate for our audacity, our version is introduced by and commented on, not always approvingly, by Petronius himself. And because we live in the twenty-first and not the first century, our group of Actors straddles past and present and watches with a critical eye. Consider our offering a tribute to Petronius - we hope you enjoy watching as much as we have enjoyed creating it.

"He passed his days in sleep and his nights in business, joy and revelry"

Gaius Petronius was born into a wealthy family in Marsalla (modern-day Marseilles) in AD/CE 27. According to the historian Tacitus quoted above, he became an efficient provincial governor and consul. In later life he became close to the Emperor Nero and as was considered the ultimate authority - Arbiter (judge) - on questions of taste and luxurious living. Like many servants of an unstable dictator, however, he was eventually cast aside and accused of treason. His death was reminiscent of that of Socrates:

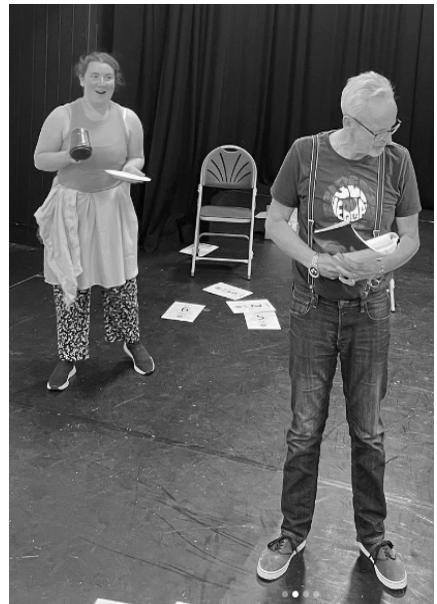
"Detained and unwilling to face fear or hope, he did not hurry to take his life but caused his severed arteries to be bound up as he conversed with friends and listened as they rehearsed light songs and frivolous verses. He took his place at dinner and drowsed so that his death should at least resemble nature. In his will he did not follow the custom of flattering Nero but detailed the Emperor's debauches and each act of his lust."

(adapted from Tacitus)

That Petronius existed is certain; whether he was the author of *The Satyricon* is less so and is based on a comment in a manuscript written more than a thousand years after his death. Given what we know of the man's life, however - Tacitus comments that he "spent his days in sleep, his nights in attending to his official duties or in amusement ... and by his dissolute life he had become famous and regarded as an accomplished voluptuary" - Petronius is the most likely candidate.



"Friends?" "Whatever."



"Do I have a name? A gender?"

"We're only actors, aren't we? Bring us on when you need us.
Put words in our mouths then send us home and forget us.
But some of us, we watch, we think."

Scott Adair Giton

Scott Adair grew up in France with a Scottish mother and French father and acted in local theatre there as Christian in *A la croisée des chemins*, as well as taking part in comedy sketches. This is his first stage appearance since moving to Edinburgh and he is both surprised and grateful to be offered the part of Giton in *The Satyricon*. It has been a great learning experience for him and he hopes it will lead to many more roles. He has no more theatrical experience to offer but he's proud to have recently given a home to Titus, a tabby kitten.



Ben Blow Ascylos

Almost thirty years have passed between Ben's first treading the boards in his native Scunthorpe and taking on the challenge of *The Satyricon*. In that time, he has been involved in countless theatre projects, written over 25 plays and co-founded Reality Funds Theatre, a regular contributor to Edinburgh's Fringe theatre scene. He received a first class degree in Drama and Theatre Arts from Queen Margaret University in 2006. Primarily a playwright, his most recently produced plays include *Cadaver Synod* and *Nothing But The Gallows*. In 2021 his first short story *How the Orchard Became Haunted* was published in *Shoreline of Infinity* magazine.



Joseph Cathal Encolpius

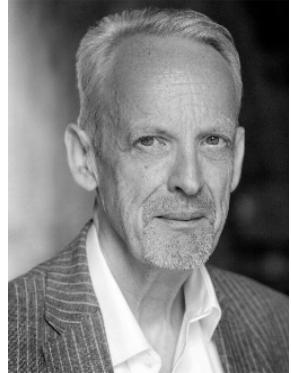
Joseph studied acting and performance at Kelvin College in Easterhouse and later went on to do his BA (Hons) at West College Scotland in Paisley. several amateur productions which have taken him all over Scotland. Joseph is a Glasgow-based actor but he has loved working in Edinburgh on *The Satyricon*. His roles pre-Covid included Macbeth in the Scottish Play and Martin in *A Tale Etched In Blood And Hard Black Pencil*. In 2022 he has been Mooney in *Hangmen* then Sandy Tyrell in Noel Coward's *Hay Fever* and Lorenzo in *The Merchant of Venice*, the last two both produced by EGTG.



"We're actors. We can make the audience believe anything!"

Stephen Corral Petronius

Stephen has been involved in many stage, TV and screen productions, including a recent Netflix mini-series *The Puppet Master* and *The Wavel Dragon* at the Edinburgh StagEHd Festival . He is a regular Fringe performer and this year played two characters in *The Collie's Shed*, with previous appearances in *Volpone* and *A Midsummer's Night Dream*. Stephen came into acting through amdram, with lead roles in *Dad's Army*, *Whisky Galore* and *My Boy Jack*. He has a Trinity College London Diploma in Speech and Drama and is very much the Muso who and has played various roles and instruments in several bands over the years.



Kelly Louise Edie Actor (Innkeeper, Veg Seller etc)

Kelly received her Trinity College ATCL Diploma in Speech and Drama with Edinburgh Acting School. Her first role was a survivor in Craft Theatre's *The Island*. Her Edinburgh debut came as Cecily Cardew in Edinburgh People's Theatre's 2017 production of **The Importance of Being Earnest** (as Kelly Simmonds); she has performed in many EPT shows since. Most recently she was Samantha Morris in *A Matrimony of Murder* written and directed by Angela Milton with Edinburgh Acting School. An active member of the National Youth Film Academy, she is currently participating on their Set Ready programme.



Alastair Lawless Trimalchio (and ...)

Alastair Lawless started acting seriously at Oxford University and is not remotely bitter that his castmates included at least one future Olivier Award-winner. In Edinburgh, he has played Macduff with "smouldering Calvinistic intensity" (*The Scotsman*), Banquo, Petruchio and Volpone (twice). His most recent stage appearance was as Arlecchino in Tony Cowrie's version of *The Venetian Twins* (Arkle Theatre). He is available for funerals, weddings and Bar Mitzvahs.



"You actors, what did you think of the stories?"

Trev Lord Actor (Agamemnon, Mate etc)

Trev was born in Scotland, bellowed "Bah, humbug!" in his first play, and departed Scotland aged 9. He was Pistol in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* during his A level years and at university, appeared in comedy skits and as Patrice Bombelles in Jean Anouilh's *Ring Round the Moon*. While living in Japan, he was Scrooge again in an English-speaking theatre group; later roles included Elyot Chase in Noël Coward's *Private Lives*, Brindsley Miller in Peter Shaffer's *Black Comedy* and Sir Toby Belch in *Twelfth Night*. Since returning to Scotland he has worked in short films. *The Satyricon* marks his first steps on stage after a 15-year hiatus due to life getting in the way. He foresees no further hiatuses.



Wendy McEwan Actor (Quartilla, Sailor etc)

When Wendy's midlife crisis hit, she thought about getting a motorbike but instead decided to take up acting. She studied with Acting Out drama school, where she received a Trinity College ATCL Diploma in Speech and Drama. During the 2022 Edinburgh Fringe Wendy appeared in Independence with the Edinburgh Little Theatre company. While training she portrayed the Nurse in Romeo and Juliet, Billing in An Enemy of the People and Lampito/Chorus in Lysistrata. Wendy is excited to be part of The Satyricon and when not on stage she enjoys gardening and hanging out with her dog, Fudge.



Rhona O'Donnell Actor (Daphne, Circe etc)

Rhona is a recent graduate from Kingston University London with BA (Hons) in Dance and Drama. She also has an HND in Acting and Performance from Edinburgh College. Starting in amateur theatre with Guys and Dolls for the Innerleithen Operatic Society and Grease The Musical, she has gone on to professional productions such as The Riots, Fissure and Art in Motion. Rhona has also directed and produced her own works, including Fiecare Duine at the Romanian Babel F.A.S.T. Festival, Innocence is Bliss and Other White Lies and High Five!, a sell-out production at the 2022 Edinburgh Fringe with her own theatre company, Encapulus Productions.



"They'll all play several characters, so pay attention and don't get confused when they turn up as different people in different scenes."

Karolina Oleskiewicz Actor (Doris, sailor etc)

Karolina started acting, moved to translation then playwriting and finally back to acting. In 2019 she graduated from MSc Playwriting at the University of Edinburgh. In 2021 she got the ATCL Diploma in Speech and Drama and performed in *The Enemy of the People* and *Lysistrata* with Acting Out Scotland. She has also studied Acting at IDSA. She thinks Edinburgh is the greatest city in the world but when she's here she misses her three rescue dogs and four rescue cats that live a very happy life with her family in a Polish village.



Lachlan Robertson Actor (Lichas, Steward etc)

Lachlan is a New York-born, Edinburgh-based actor of Scottish and Irish descent. Since leaving university this year with a BA in Drama and Performance from Queen Margaret University, he has appeared in *The Comedy of Errors* (Theatre Garden) and *Ondine* (Underground Productions) in the Edinburgh Fringe. During his time at QMU he specialised in writing and acting for the stage and wishes to continue this as a career. However he is not neglecting work on camera and will take part in two short films later in 2022: *In Her Shoes* and *Lost In A Game*.



Lois Williams Actor (Tryphaena, Fortunata etc)

Lois is an Edinburgh/Fife based actor, having trained in Musical Theatre at Performing Arts Studio Scotland and portraying Emcee/Viktor in *Cabaret* as part of her studies. She most recently portrayed Jackie Coryton in Noël Coward's *Hay Fever* with EGTG and Jessica in *The Merchant of Venice*, also EGTG, at this year's Fringe. As a dancer, Lois has received training in Latin American, Jazz, Tap and Ballroom. Also an accomplished saxophonist, she gained her Grade 8 with Distinction from Trinity College London in 2015 and now pursues the craft mainly as a hobby along with painting and screen-writing.



"I have many more such stories."

Robert Wylie Old Woman, Eumolpus

Robert has performed on stage for most of his life from school, where it started with T M Watson's *Johnny Jouk the Gibbet*, continued at university in Glasgow, where he studied Drama as a subsidiary subject for two years, and onto theatre groups in Paris and Berlin. He has been cast as young and old in Shakespeare and Chekhov, Sophocles and Ionesco, with some Music Hall, Pantomime and Burlesque thrown in along the way. He particularly enjoys farce (Feydeau, Orton) and early German language Expressionist pieces (Frisch, Wedekind) and occasionally directs or designs sets where he feels particularly inspired.



Do we break the door down?

More rehearsal pictures and background information on the play at thesatyricon.uk.

Behind the Scenes

Martin Foreman writer & director

Martin has won several awards as a playwright and director and critical acclaim for his dramas and comedies. These include his one-woman play *Sunset*, J B Priestley's *The Rose and Crown*, his adaptation of Ben Jonson's *Volpone*, and *Death on the Lido* (aka *Tadzio Speaks*) - his version of *Death in Venice* that views the classic story from the beautiful youth's eyes. He is also the author of two novels and two collections of short stories, many of which can be heard on the Arbery YouTube channel and his website: martinforeman.com.

Gordon Hughes lighting

Gordon started doing lighting and other back stage jobs when at school, and spent his latter school and early university years assisting with productions at the Byre Theatre, St Andrews, before moving to Edinburgh and working in most of the Edinburgh theatres, including the Kings Theatre, Festival Theatre and Usher Hall. This has included almost 45 years of lighting shows for EGTG, as well as other Edinburgh theatre, musical and opera groups. He has lit four EGTG productions which have won the SCDA Eastern Divisional Full Length play festival, and won an award from the Edinburgh Playhouse for services to amateur drama.

Lois Adams (stage manager) recently become involved in the world of theatre through stage management. She is enjoying her time in this ancient comedy and hopes to be involved in more productions in the future. **Richard Graveling** (sound) has wrangled more SFXs than he has had hot dinners. *The Satyricon* is a dim and distant school-aged memory and he is delighted to reacquaint himself with this ancient story. **Ross Hope** (crew) has been involved with EGTG for over twenty years, first as an actor, recently as a director. He is very happy assisting the team by making sure all the unique props appear at the right time. **Elissa Webb** (crew) has enjoyed working on *The Satyricon* after getting involved with EGTG earlier this year. She is looking forward to her next challenge - stage managing *A Christmas Carol* also for The Grads. **Claire Wood** (crew) thought she was happiest writing and directing theatre but is loving doing odd jobs backstage for this boldly, brilliantly ambitious two thousand years in the making venture.

Thanks also

Richard Bell (sound design assistance); **Fraser Smith** (publicity), **Nigel Jarvis** (lighting), **Mr B Photobooth/Patrycja Zajac** (costumes) **Robert Pereira Hind** (photography) **Ben Wilson** (Trimalchio's feast). Cast members Ben Blow, Kelly Louise Edie, Alastair Lawless and Wendy MacEwan also made essential contributions to set, props and costumes.

Special thanks to **Junior Cross**, without whom this version of *The Satyricon* would not exist and whose early involvement helped cast and director find their feet in this complex and challenging play.

Spot the anachronism - or . . .

A twenty-first century audience and group of actors finds itself in the first century - except the first century isn't exactly real and the present-day keeps butting in. Which means there will be plenty of anachronisms. Is that the kind of drinking vessel that a Roman would drink from? What exactly was grown in Sicily two thousand years ago?

What material was that costume made of? How were slaves treated? Did they have artichokes and aubergines? Is that the music people would have heard? And so on.

We freely admit that we might get low marks for historical accuracy, but that's not the point. What you are about to see is only one version of reality, with anomalies and uncertainties and confusion. If you leave *The Satyricon* in laughter or concern or confusion, asking yourself what exactly you saw and what did it mean and was it fair to the characters and actors and what was the difference between them and was its perspective on life different from yours and question after question so on we will have succeeded in our ambition of entertaining and challenging you.

Tell us

How was it for you? We'd love to know if you enjoyed the show. Connect with us on social media, using our handles or #TheSatyricon. Praise preferred, but be honest if you hated it - after all one person's poison is may be another's meat or aphrodisiac.



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What's next?

For The Grads (EGTG): *A Christmas Carol*, 29 Nov to 3 Dec, see back page ad

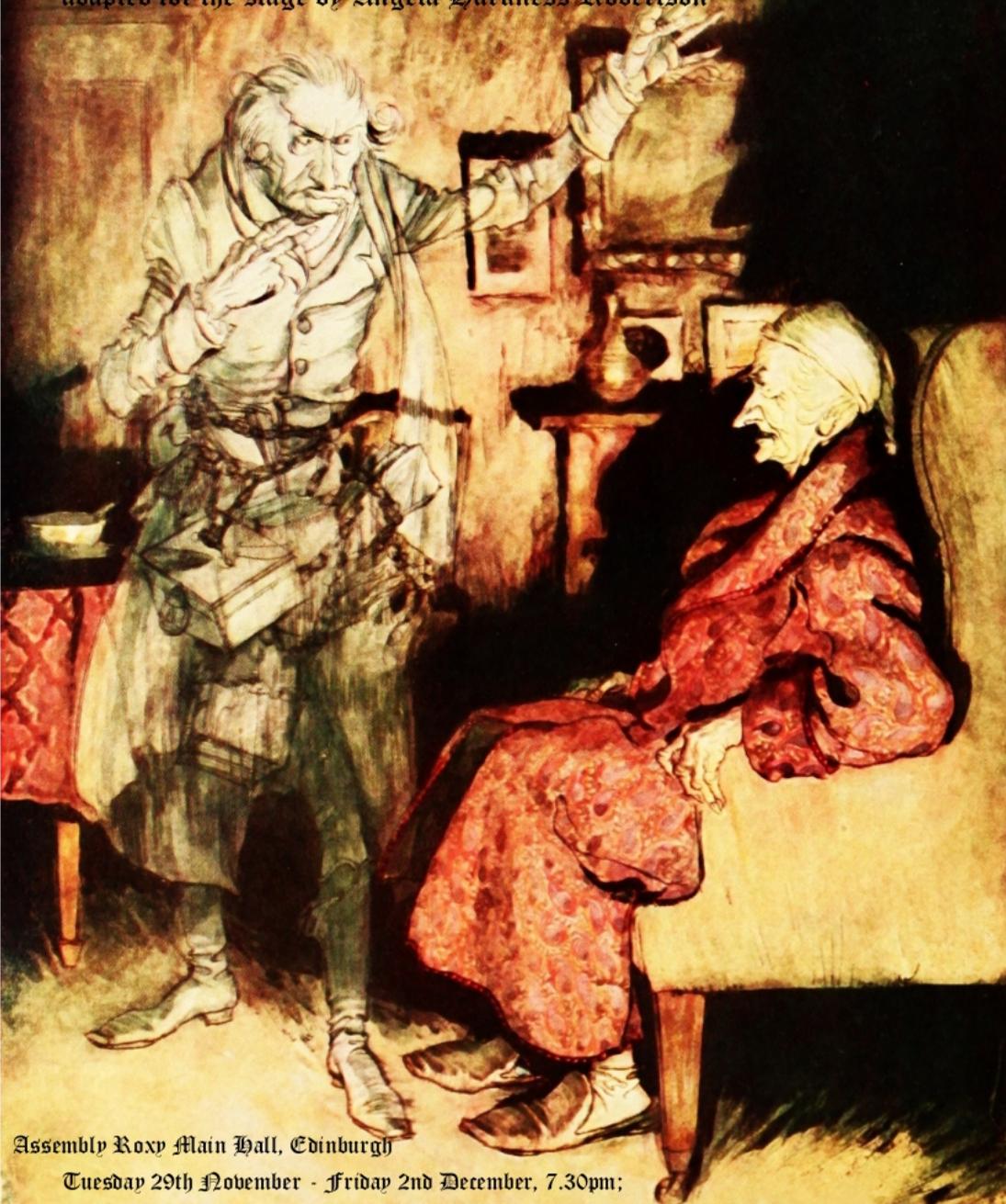
For Arbery Theatre: who knows?

For the cast and crew: we can't predict details but we know that some will reach the heights of drama and film. Remember their names a few years from now you can tell everyone you first saw them in **The Satyricon**.

A Christmas Carol

by Charles Dickens

adapted for the stage by Angela Harkness Robertson



Assembly Roxy Main Hall, Edinburgh

Tuesday 29th November - Friday 2nd December, 7.30pm;

Saturday 3rd December 2.00pm and 7.30pm