

# Headgate Theatre Productions

## 'Grow Up Grandad' by Gordon Steel

Directed by Steve Wooldridge

Production week 16th October, 2017

Rehearsals two a week tba, possibly Monday and Wednesday with the odd Sunday

**The slightly trite title does not do this gem of a play justice!**

Amongst all the demographic, cultural and social shifts plus the seismic changes in the make-up of the UK society, our image of grandfathers remains locked into that Clive Dunn song. It's the same with grandmothers. Newspaper headlines still use the word "granny" with a suggestion of an inert life of tartan rugs, worn slippers and cocoa before bed. Mock surprise must be displayed should such specimens manifest behaviour beyond that of harmless sweet old ladies; thus such headlines as: "Granny Plays Golf!!!"

Yet grandparents have played an increasingly active role in bringing up their grandchildren in our age of divorce and co-habitation. Not many writers have tackled this subject; reason enough to welcome Gordon Steel's play.

**Poppy** is eleven and has attitude. When she finds herself living with her cantankerous grandfather, a man she neither likes nor loves, all hell breaks loose. **Grandad** is something of a hermit, a man living in the past who sees very little good in anything or anybody and he is suddenly and unexpectedly confronted by a tornado of energy who can't sit still and asks too many questions. He is a man with no television, no computer and no patience, and while their relationship is volatile it's also very funny and strewn with moments of real tenderness.

Grow Up Grandad is an inter-generational story that deals with love and loss, hope and sadness as the relationship between Poppy and her Grandad is first thrown together and eventually torn apart. The play is dramatic, painful, provocative and often hugely funny. It is also very human which much theatre is not. Gordon Steel writes crisp, sharp dialogue, which is both humorous and touching.

**Gordon Steel** burst on to the theatre-scene with his first play, DEAD FISH, which won a Fringe First Award at the 1993 Edinburgh Festival. It toured nationally and was the beginning of a fruitful relationship with **Hull Truck Theatre**. Since then Gordon has written LIKE A VIRGIN, STUDS, A PAIR OF BEAUTIES, ALBERT NOBBS, KISSING MARRIED WOMEN, A KICK IN THE BAUBLES and WILDE BOYZ for Hull Truck Theatre. Gordon is also the author of JUMPING THE WAVES which was commissioned for the opening of the Arc Theatre. Gordon has also worked extensively as a director, and directed the premieres of many of his own plays. He has written COCK AND BULL for television,

He set up his own theatre company, Steelworks, whose debut production GROW UP GRANDAD was produced at the ARC in 2015

There is a trailer of the original production on U-Tube  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jL8Xy9CyDds>

Steve Wooldridge (see end for contact details)

## CHARACTERS

**Young Poppy**, eleven years old  
**Poppy Senior**, thirty two years old  
**Grandad** – late 50's +

**Margaret**, Poppy's aunt, no specific age  
**Genevieve**, a social worker, no specific age  
**Molly**, Poppy Senior's daughter, twelve years old

*The play is set in North East England. It is set in the present time, but the action covers a period of 20 years or so, so we see Poppy as young teen in Act 1, and then as an adult with her own daughter, Molly, in Act 2.*

### Main Character Profiles

Steel has succeeded in creating characters with whom many of us can relate. While both the characters of Poppy and Grandad play up to stereotypes that result in predictable comedy (the grumpy grandad and moody, tech-obsessed pre-teen), this does in fact help audiences to see their own family lives reflected in the performance.

This predictability does not last forever; the second half of the performance allows for both the actors and the script writing to truly shine.

This play is neither sentimental or indulgent as in turn we see the darker, angrier side of both Young Poppy/Poppy Senior and Grandad. All three actors need to engage their audience throughout.

### Young Poppy Aged 16 plus\* Playing age 11/12

This is a golden opportunity for a young performer.

*\*Please note that we are preferably looking for a young performer who is aged 16 but who can act down in age, but if there is someone younger who auditions successfully then the theatre has trained chaperones.*

This is no walk-on role, no cameo, but a full-blooded characterisation of a young girl dealing with the mental disruptions of a lost parent, puberty and moving in with a grandparent who initially seems from another planet. Cultural differences are neatly pinpointed. At one stage she exclaims, "I'm not doing it. End of!" A pause, then he asks, "end of what?"

When Poppy wants to listen to Little Mix, grandad puts a Ronnie Hilton 78 on his Dansette record player. When he asks her if she wants to do a jigsaw, she looks at him gone out. The role of Poppy requires the ability to show a whole range of emotions.

### Poppy Senior, thirty two years old.

Poppy senior appears at the beginning of the play and then herself 20 years into the future as in Act 2 we go forward two decades. This role requires sensitive playing and the ability to show care.

In heartfelt scenes in the second Act, Grandad, now suffering Alzheimer's, is being shunted permanently into a "home" by 32-year-old Poppy on the pretext of it being merely a respite stay. It will be the second time in the play that, rightly or wrongly, he feels abandoned by her yet there is also a great sense of interdependence between two generations elsewhere separated by enormous social and cultural gulfs.

### Grandad, late fifties, sixties

A gem of a part. Needs to be able to show a broad range of emotions. Cantankerous, grumpy with a soft centre.

In the second half, the scenes switch fluidly from past to present as the heartbreaking storyline develops. In both his speech and his actions, it almost appears as if the character of Grandad is ageing in front of us.

## **Audition Arrangements**

There will be a **read through on Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> May at 1.45pm** for a prompt 2pm start (finish by 5pm)

The **auditions will start at 7.30pm** on 8<sup>th</sup> May.

Both the read through and the auditions will be in the Studio on the first floor of The Headgate Theatre.

The auditions will be open (ie everyone will see everyone else's audition), and may comprise of a set piece and informal group work (no final decision has been made yet). We try to ensure that the audition process is not too intimidating! You do not need to learn anything for the audition.

You will be given any set audition piece at the read through. **If you cannot attend the read through, but want to audition, then please let us know**, and we will prepare a copy for you on the night. Contact can either be to Steve Wooldridge the Director, or by email to [dawn66king@gmail.com](mailto:dawn66king@gmail.com)

Although the play is set in the North East we are not expecting auditionees to have perfect accents!! Work will be done on accent during the rehearsal process.

If cast, we expect regular attendance according to the agreed schedule of rehearsals which will take into account any dates that participants tell us that they are not available.

There is a £10 production charge to actors which will include the provision of the script.

For any performers aged 16 or under we will require parent/guardian information and contact numbers

**Please feel free to contact me if you have questions  
MOB 07812147025 or [s.wooldridge47@icloud.com](mailto:s.wooldridge47@icloud.com)**