



STAGE TWO
DOWNHAM



DIAL M FOR MURDER

At Downham Village Hall

Wednesday 26th to Saturday 29th November 2025

Programme by donation

Directors' notes

Dial M For Murder is a director's dream of a play, and not just because Frederick Knott is fastidious in his stage directions.

It twists, it turns, it has tension by the kilonewton, and it has five wonderfully drawn characters for the actors to really get their teeth into. Every one of the five characters has a significant role in the overall plot and almost every line, sometimes every word they say is pivotal. There is very little wasted dialogue and yet it flows beautifully.

Dial M For Murder isn't the first play by Frederick Knott that Stage Two Downham has produced. You may remember our very well received 2019 production of *Wait Until Dark*, which also featured Chris Bowers and Richard Hubbard in the cast.



Jacqui Shepherd



Richard Hubbard

While both Jacqui and Richard have directed for Stage Two before, this is their first time directing together, and they have both thoroughly enjoyed it.

Jacqui has been with Stage Two Downham for 8 years and has been involved in some way with every Stage Two production in that time. Supporting backstage, from props to Production Manager, she has also appeared in a number of productions such as *The Admirable Crichton*, *Pygmalion*, *Under Milk Wood* and she particularly enjoyed the role of Tabby in *We Are Three Sisters* last autumn.

In 2021 Jacqui had her directing debut with *The Winslow Boy*, which took place in Hurst Green and then *The Dresser* in 2023. *Dial M For Murder* is her first thriller.

Richard has previously co-directed *The Admirable Crichton* and *God Of Carnage* with Chris Bowers (who is on stage tonight as Tony), and *Educating Rita* with his co-star for that show, Jennifer Whiteside, for which they shared a Noda award.

He finds directing hugely rewarding, but as you can tell, he also can't quite resist the draw of being on stage.

The action takes place in the living room of the Wendices' flat in London's fashionable Maida Vale.

Scene 1 A Friday evening in September, 1952

Scene 2 An hour later

Scene 3 Saturday evening

Scene 4 Later that night

Interval 20 minutes
during which refreshments will be available

Scene 5 Sunday morning

Scene 6 A few months later. Early afternoon

Directed by Jacqui Shepherd, and Richard Hubbard

Original music Lucas Bowers

Set design and build Warren Seddon, Alex McFall, and Roger Astin

Props Jacqui Shepherd

Stage Management Mel Crook, and Darren Moss

Lighting & Sound Paddy Keane, and John Bradshaw

Continuity Julie Laing

Front Of House Kim Croydon

Poster Design Alan Herron

Our thanks also go to Fran Osborne, and her team of volunteers
Pendle Hippodrome
Blackburn Drama Club
Clitheroe Parish Church Amateur Operatic And
Dramatic Society



Chris Bowers

plays Tony Wendice

Chris is celebrating his 12th year with Stage Two having tread his first board with the society in 2013's *The Ghost Train*. Playing the ruthless and sinister Tony Wendice in *Dial M for Murder* is a far cry from Chris' role as the doting lovesick husband Felix Ungar in Stage Two's last production of *The Odd Couple*. But according to Chris, the diversity of characters is what keeps him coming back for more, that and the biscuits.

When not acting in Stage Two Chris enjoys singing bass in the Ribble Valley's premier barbershop group Wrong Direction, and has been known to join the chorus of the odd musical here and there.



Jennifer Spurrett

plays Sheila Wendice

Jennifer has appeared in several Stage Two productions, including leading roles in *The Winslow Boy*, *God Of Carnage* and, more recently, *The Odd Couple*.

She is looking forward to appearing in this thriller, but isn't sure about any comparison to Grace Kelly!



Richard Hubbard

plays Captain Lesgate

Richard's first show with Stage Two was 2014's *Confusions*, and he has appeared in several since then, including *Educating Rita*, and most recently *The Odd Couple*.

As well as Stage Two, Richard has appeared on stage for Blackburn Musical Theatre Company, and Blackburn Drama Club, where he has had the privilege of bringing to life some iconic roles, such as Tevye in *Fiddler On The Roof*, and Perks in *The Railway Children*.



Kate Herron

plays Inspector Hubbard

Kate always wanted to try acting, following in her late mother's am dram footsteps. She finally started with three lines in the Stage Two production of *A Bunch Of Amateurs*. Her first real role came in 2022 as Grace in *The Winslow Boy*. This was followed by another formidable character, Mrs Higgins in *Pygmalion* in early 2023. Then came Her Ladyship in *The Dresser* - another formidable woman, whom Kate really enjoyed playing.

Kate is about to embark on an exciting challenge playing a role normally played as/by a man! Quite a departure from her previous roles. A bit of a leap but one she feels she can make with the support of her Stage Two friends.



Alan Herron

plays Max Halliday

Having recently appeared in a couple of Clitheroe Parish Church Amateur Operatic & Dramatic Society's productions, Alan is delighted to be back performing with Stage Two Downham. This is a great little play with a few dramatic twists that he knows the audience will enjoy. It's also wonderful to be reunited onstage with some old mates from past productions.

He is also superexcited (apparently it's what young people say) to be acting with his wife who "is a much better actor than what I am".

Ralph Assheton

plays the BBC news reader

Darren Moss

plays PC Williams

About Stage Two Downham

Stage Two Downham is based right here in the beautiful village of Downham in the Ribble Valley. We stage an autumn and a spring production and as you can see from the diary dates on the back page, we are planning to stage a further event in early summer.

Since formation in 1989, and we have produced over 60 plays, including our COVID production of Dylan Thomas's *Under Milk Wood*, which you can watch for free on our website. Other recent highlights have included *The Odd Couple*, *The Dresser*, *Educating Rita*, *God Of Carnage*, which we presented "in the round", and *The Winslow Boy*, which brought the society back to live performances after lockdown.

We are members of Noda, a national society for amateur theatre groups, from whom we are proud to have received seven regional awards so far. (See if you can spot some of them...)

Like any drama group, Stage Two Downham relies on its members, without whom no production would be possible. Backstage and onstage, we will always welcome new members. If you are interested, get in touch with us! We will be really pleased to meet you!

About Frederick Knott

The son of English missionaries, Frederick Knott was born in China during The Great War, and got his love of theatre from watching local productions of Gilbert and Sullivan operas. He studied Law at Cambridge in the late 1930s, where he was a tennis Blue. It was only the outbreak of the Second World War that prevented him from competing in the Wimbledon Championships.

Although he didn't continue to play after his military service, that love of tennis never left him, and he made the *Dial M For Murder*'s Tony Wendice a former player.

He wrote comparatively little, but what he did write has become firmly embedded in theatre and film history. *Dial M For Murder* was originally written for BBC TV, and was subsequently adapted for the big screen by Alfred Hitchcock, starring Ray Milland and Grace Kelly. In the 1960s, his play *Wait Until Dark* was a big hit both on stage and screen, with Audrey Hepburn receiving an Oscar nomination for her role.

He retired to New York, where he died peacefully in 2002.

Downham Village Hall

As well as being home to all the wonderful Stage Two performances, and a personal trainer, did you know that Downham Village Hall is available to hire for weddings, parties, celebrations, childrens' events, business seminars, meetings and other functions?

The Village Hall is spacious, light and can be dressed in a number of creative ways depending on taste and budget. We can also extend the space with gazebos in the car park to put on a barbecue or hire a local food van. The main hall seats up to 100 people. There's the stage area for speeches or music performances, and there is also a smaller room which can be used as an onsite 'creche' or quieter seating area. The kitchens are available for catering and we can provide tables and chairs and crockery/glasses if needed.

There is parking for up to 50 cars on site, we are heated by a carbon-friendly biomass system, there is modern lighting in the main hall, and free Wifi throughout. With prices starting at £1,500 for a whole weekend booking, we're one of the most cost-effective venue hire options in the Ribble Valley.

Look out for news about all our events at <https://www.downhamvillage.org.uk/index.php/village-hall-home>

Whether you are staging a musical, an opera, a play, a concert or a pantomime, as the UK's leading amateur theatre membership organisation, NODA is here for every show, every rehearsal, every curtain call – here for our members every step of the way.

From just starting out to centre stage; village halls to professional venues; NODA exists to celebrate, connect, support and amplify amateur theatre and theatre groups across the UK.

We provide invaluable services, expertise and resources – that help thousands of our member groups create and produce theatre, that enhances lives and benefits communities everywhere.

Whatever your passion, level of experience or stage of life, we are here to help everyone enjoy the unique benefits, opportunities and sense of community that live performance can bring.

NODA
For every stage

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[noda.org.uk](https://www.noda.org.uk)

Brilliant Women

Wednesday 25th to Saturday 28th March 2026

Stage Two Downham presents the true stories of pioneering women in this double bill. Book now on our website!

Eighty Days: The Nellie Bly Chronicles

No companion. No experience. No patience. Just relentless ambition and one small grip sack - Bly made history before most women could even vote.

*The world premiere of this comedy-drama
by Clitheroe author, David Cawley.*

How The Vote Was Won

"Women don't need votes as they are all looked after by men."
said the Government!

So what did the women do?

by Cicely Hamilton & Christopher St. John



Dates for your 2026 diary

March 25th - 28th (*details above*)
June 24th - 27th
November 25th - 28th

More details will be announced in the new year.

Keep an eye on our website, or ask to join the email list.

www.stagetwodownham.co.uk

