

Macready!

Dickens' Theatrical Friend

Written & performed by Mark Stratford



Broadway Baby



ReviewsGate



LondonTheatre1

'What a performance!' **Southwark News**

'A masterclass in how to do a one-man play' **Cambridge Critique**

TOUR PACK 2024-25 (Small Scale)

www.stratfordproductions.co.uk

ABOUT THE SHOW



This compelling show - written and performed by Mark Stratford - tells the story of the great Victorian actor-manager, William Charles Macready - the man to whom Charles Dickens dedicated *Nicholas Nickleby*.

A universal tale of love, devotion, ambition and sacrifice, it is one of the most remarkable ever to come out of the theatre.

With passion, humour, emotion, and an array of characters, Stratford takes us on a journey through the fascinating world of Victorian theatre and the extraordinary, yet conflicted life of Macready, from his first tentative steps on stage in a tatty country theatre to his final ever performance at the mighty Drury Lane!

[View show trailer](#)

Written, performed & staged by:
Mark Stratford

Duration:
80 mins (no interval)
95 mins (with interval)

Age Suitability: 12+

Venue:
Small scale (Ideal = 50 to 250 capacity)

Available: All year round



PRESS

"Stratford's remarkable ability to tell Macready's story and create characters brings it all to life"

★★★★★ (Broadway Baby)

"A fascinating and insightful production" ★★★★★ (LondonTheatre1)

"An entertaining, informative and impressive production... Stratford's account of Macready's life whizzes by in the company of one remarkable actor sharing the story of another"

★★★★★ (Fairy Powered Productions)

"Mark Stratford has come up with a fascinating show which brings Macready to life"

★★★★★ (ReviewsGate)

"A very masterclass in how to do a one-man play...a joyous tribute to the acting profession... Stratford's warm, engaging personality shone through each of the many characters he portrayed"

(The Cambridge Critique)

"An entertaining portrait...a timeless story of struggle, perseverance and sacrifice in making a living from one's art" (British Theatre Guide)

"What a performance! Mark Stratford truly becomes Macready" (Southwark News)

"The play shows us the many ups and downs of Macready's career and it's gripping to watch"

(GScene)

"An absolute joy of a production" (Watford Fringe Reviews)



ABOUT THE COMPANY

Hi, I'm Mark Stratford and I set up Stratford Productions in 2019 in order to produce and tour my solo plays. Currently these are:

Macready! Dickens' Theatrical Friend - which tells the remarkable story of the great Victorian actor-manager, Macready - the man to whom Charles Dickens dedicated *Nicholas Nickleby*

...and...

The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde - adapted from the novella of the same name by Robert Louis Stevenson.

Since September 2022 - after a pause over the previous years due to the pandemic - I've been touring both shows to various venues and festivals round the UK.

My aim now is to continue to reach more audiences around the UK and beyond.

The creation of these shows has been a labour of love for me and I feel passionate about telling these fascinating stories to as many people in different places as I can.

Macready! Dickens' Theatrical Friend is a little-known story of a man who did so much to influence the theatre of today, while *Jekyll and Hyde* has great relevance to the modern day with its themes of identity and addiction.



Mark Stratford



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CREDITS

West End: *Singin' in the Rain* (Palladium); *Blood Brothers* (Phoenix Theatre); *Peter Pan* (Cambridge Theatre); *The Enchanted Toyshop* (Fortune Theatre); and *The Magic Flute* (Arts Theatre).

International tours: *Blood Brothers* (Royal Alexandra Theatre, Toronto) and *Macbeth* (British Council tour to Japan and Argentina). National No.1 UK tours include: *Peter Pan*; *The Lion, The Witch & The Wardrobe*; and *The Horse & His Boy*.

Mark has also appeared in seasons in Swansea, Edinburgh, Chesterfield, Eastbourne and the Watermill Theatre in Newbury; and has also played the principal villain in pantomimes at various theatres throughout the UK.

Almost exclusively a theatre performer, Mark has also appeared in film (*Parting Shots*, *That English Woman*) and TV (*The Four Minute Mile*).

MACREADY - BACKGROUND



William Charles Macready occupied that time between the great actor, Edmund Kean, at the start of the 19th Century and the distinguished actor-manager, Sir Henry Irving, at its end. Macready is not as well-known as them, but his influence on the theatre of today is huge.

Charles Dickens was Macready's best friend and Robert Browning wrote *The Pied Piper of Hamelin* to amuse Macready's son Willie when he was ill.

When Macready first stepped onto the stage as Romeo in 1810, theatres were lit by candlelight and the acting style of the day consisted mostly of bravura gestures and histrionics - with the actor facing front and addressing the audience rather than a fellow player.

At that time, theatres were associated with idleness, drunkenness, frivolity and prostitution, and those who worked in them were considered to be social and artistic outcasts. Against this backdrop, Macready set about learning his craft.

But he never wanted to be an actor. Although he was born into the profession - his parents both actors - he dreamed of becoming a barrister and a gentleman. But after his education was cut cruelly short as a result of his father's bankruptcy, Macready was plunged into the ungentlemanly world of the stage.

He became a man of many conflicts: he loved his art, especially Shakespeare, but hated his profession; in the theatre he had a violent temper but could be the kindest of men outside it.

"I wish I were anything rather than an actor - except a critic; let me be unhappy rather than vile!"

(William Charles Macready)

Nevertheless, Macready became a pioneer - revolutionising the theatre of his day.

He was the first to insist on full and proper rehearsals, and ensured that the smallest part was as well rehearsed as the largest.

He restored many of Shakespeare's texts to their original versions after a century-and-a-half of rewriting by various post-Restoration "improvers."

He was also the first to banish prostitutes from plying their trade in the auditorium, and he did more to encourage new playwrights in his day than anyone else; Byron, Browning, Knowles, Bulwer-Lytton, and many others, all wrote plays for him - many of which he helped to rewrite!



It is said, in fact, that Macready became - in every sense of the word - a founder of modern theatre practice. During his time as an actor-manager, he put into effect nearly every principle we now take for granted; of directing, design, lighting, costuming, as well as the training of actors.

Macready's greatest rival was Edmund Kean and they enjoyed a few "gladiatorial contests" on stage in Kean's latter years. But after Kean's death in 1835 the way was clear for Macready to become the undisputed head of his profession.

TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS



The set for *Macready! Dickens' Theatrical Friend*

PERFORMING RIGHTS	Fully available and owned by Mark Stratford
NUMBER IN TOURING COMPANY	1
PERFORMANCE SPACE	Minimum of 5m wide x 3m deep x 3m high.
STAGING TYPE	End-on staging works best, but will look to adapt where possible.
VENUE TECHNICIAN & EQUIPMENT	Use of venue's lighting and sound equipment needed. Venue technician also needed for LX and SX set-up and operation. Fully marked hard copy LX and SX cue script provided at get-in.
LIGHTING REQUIREMENTS	LX plan available at get-in or in advance. Ideally the show will use 5 different lighting states, with 2 optional extras and 2 'effects'. These are all 'standard,' i.e. no special effects or specialist lighting equipment required. There are approx. 28 lighting cues (assuming all states and effects)
SOUND REQUIREMENTS	SX plan and sound files (mp3) available at get-in or in advance, or a laptop with Multiplay installed with all sound cues pre-programmed, can be provided. There are approx. 40 sound/music cues. The cues are all 'standard,' i.e. no special effects or specialist sound equipment required.
SET	Minimal set provided by the company: 1 small table and 4 chairs.
GET-IN	2 to 3 hours ideal for physical get-in, LX / SX plotting, and a cue-to-cue rehearsal.
GET-OUT	30 minutes minimum.
OTHER INFORMATION	It is assumed that standard front-of-house duties will be arranged and provided by the venue. No backstage staff or stage manager required.

TARGET AUDIENCE & MARKETING

GENRE	Solo show, storytelling, historical biography
THEMES	Universal themes of love, devotion, ambition, sacrifice, and morality. Victorian theatre, Shakespeare, a man before his time, a pioneer.
KEY SELLING POINTS	The connection with Charles Dickens. Little known story of theatrical and historical significance. The show is delivered with passion, humour, drama, and emotion. Powerful and faithful storytelling by an experienced solo performer using a dynamic combination of narration and the portrayal of an array of characters.
POTENTIAL AUDIENCES	People interested in Charles Dickens. People interested in theatre, showbusiness, and history (especially the Victorian period) Students of Drama and Performing Arts. People who like a good story - in this case a true one - faithfully and passionately told. Minimum recommended age is 12. Suitable for families.



COPY	<p>This compelling show - written and performed by Mark Stratford - tells the story of the great Victorian actor-manager, Macready – the man to whom Charles Dickens dedicated <i>Nicholas Nickleby</i>.</p> <p>A universal tale of love, devotion, ambition and sacrifice, it is one of the most remarkable ever to come out of the theatre.</p> <p>With passion, humour, emotion, and an array of characters, Stratford takes us on a journey through the fascinating world of Victorian theatre and the extraordinary, yet conflicted life of Macready, from his first tentative steps on stage in a tatty country theatre to his final ever performance at the mighty Drury Lane!</p>
PRESS RELEASE	Press release / article available (Word/PDF)
PRODUCTION PHOTOS	JPEG production images, online 1-minute trailer, and e-flyer available.
POSTERS & FLYERS	A5 flyers and various sized posters can be provided and shipped directly (included in cost).
SOCIAL MEDIA	Stratford Productions is active on Facebook, Instagram and X and will link in information about venues and tour dates. Will also promote the show and gather audience feedback through relevant hashtags.
PHOTO CREDIT	origin8photography.com
ADDITIONAL INFO	Happy to include a post-show Q&A by advance request at no extra cost.

CONTACT, AVAILABILITY & DEALS



Touring Availability:

All year round.

Currently booking for February 2024 onwards

Performances:

Assume a one-show engagement, but happy to consider more.

Deals:

Ideally a guarantee of £650 (including travel, accommodation, posters and flyers) but happy to consider other types of deals (e.g. box office splits, etc.)

Contact:

For more information or to book, please contact Mark Stratford:

Email: markstratford01@gmail.com

Mobile: 07710 162928

Footage Links:

[Short trailer](#)

[Full performance](#)

Social Media:

Facebook: [stratfordproductions](#)

Twitter: [stratfordprods](#)

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