


A killer comedy by Steven Moffat



THE UNFRIEND

Where manners could be your last mistake!

 BARN THEATRE

SEASON 2025/2026 | £1.50

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

When Clive invited me to direct *The Unfriend* in January 2025, I was eager to accept the opportunity. Now, as we arrive at show week one year on, I am so proud of the exceptionally talented cast and the outstanding crew who have made this production possible.



Following my directorial debut with *Oliver!* in 2024, I was eager to return to the director's role and embrace this opportunity once more. While I did not have the benefit of a co-director or assistant director on this occasion, I consider myself fortunate to work with such a highly skilled and experienced cast, some with directorial backgrounds themselves. Their guidance and support throughout this process has been invaluable.

This production would simply not have been possible without the dedication and expertise of our crew. Their fantastic work behind the scenes has been integral to the success of this show. I extend my sincere gratitude to everyone who has contributed behind the scenes for their commitment and professionalism in bringing this production to fruition.

I hope you enjoy the show as much as I have enjoyed rehearsing and directing it.

Hannah Humbles

STEVEN MOFFAT

Steven Moffat is an award-winning television writer and producer. He was lead writer and executive producer of BBC One's *Doctor Who* from 2009 - 2017. He was also the co-creator, writer and executive producer of the BBC series *Sherlock* and the BBC/Netflix series *Dracula*. His earlier work included all forty-three episodes of the teen drama *Press Gang* and the sitcoms *Coupling*, *Chalk* and *Joking Apart*. Other credits include the TV adaptation of *The Time Traveler's Wife* for HBO and Sky Atlantic, an original four-part series *Inside Man* for BBC/Netflix, the TV series *Jekyll* and the feature film *Tintin*.



His numerous awards include BAFTAs for *Press Gang* and *Doctor Who*, two BAFTAs and two Emmys for *Sherlock* and the BAFTA Special Award in 2012. In 2015, he was awarded an OBE for services to drama.

The Unfriend was developed by Matthew Byam Shaw for Playful Productions and first performed at the Minerva Theatre, Chichester on 21st May 2022, starring Reece Shearsmith, Amanda Abbington and Frances Barber as Peter, Debbie and Elsa. The production transferred to the Criterion Theatre, London on 15th January 2023 with the same cast and then to Wyndham's Theatre on 16th December 2023 with Lee Mack and Sarah Alexander as Peter and Debbie and saw Frances Barber return to the role of Elsa.

AN AVERAGE SET?

At first glance, *The Unfriend* is a simple box set. As the play opens, we see a cruise ship deck with a luscious blue sky and a blue sea. It is here where British husband and wife Peter and Debbie meet the enigmatic and loud American 'holiday friend' Elsa who invites herself to visit them.

The remainder of the play is set in Debbie and Peter's family home back in England: a home they share with their teenage son and daughter. The set represents a modern suburban home with the knick-knacks and contained chaos to give the home a lived-in feel. A believable home of a normal middle-class family with two moody teenagers.

We see a split set showing their cosy living room and open kitchen with breakfast bar. There is a wall-hanging TV used to show the visuals of news flashes and phone calls central to the play. In the centre of the stage is the front door and there is also a back door, a toilet door and stairs leading to the upper floor to facilitate the frequent and unexpected comings and goings.

The conservative decoration of the home is chosen to highlight the cultural clash and the contrast in personality between the very polite Debbie and Peter and the colourful and flamboyant Elsa. The ordinariness of the décor supports the very extraordinary farcical events that unfold as the family try to politely deal with their visitor being a potential serial murderer.

The original set model is shown here, which of course is adapted once the set builders get to work!

Christine Neal

HOW IT BEGAN



The kitchen platform has disappeared in real life

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CAST

PETER	JON BROWN
DEBBIE	JESSICA WALL
ELSA	CRYSTAL MARTIN
NEIGHBOUR	CARL WESTMORELAND
ROSIE	OLIVIA PALMER-WALKER
ALEX	JON GAVAGHAN
PC JUNKIN	ANDREW SIBLEY
REPORTER	AMY WALKER

The play is set in the living room of a suburban house; an adjoining kitchen and bathroom. Present day.

This play runs for approximately 2 hours 15 minutes, with one interval.

There are almost 3,000 participants listed in our online archive. These are members past and present, and other volunteers who have been involved in our productions since 1969!



Barn Fact File

CREATIVE TEAM

DIRECTOR	Hannah Humbles
PRODUCTION MANAGER	Francine Ross
STAGE MANAGER	Sharon Francis
ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER	Rosie Barker
SET DESIGN	Christine Neal
SET BUILDING	Ian Bage, Bob Cameron David Fairhurst Ian Major, Nigel Rive, John Sear John Sparrow, Nigel Ward
SET PAINTING	Hannah Cobb, Colin Hickey Christine Neal
SET DRESSING	Kris Moore, Sheila Grimmant
LIGHTING	John Gardner, Nick Mogg
SOUND DESIGN	James Rowles
SOUND	Tallan Cameron, Tristan Cameron
PROPERTIES	Sheila Grimmant, Sarah Kerr
WARDROBE	Yvonne Bartlett
PROMPT	Stephanie Dunn
VIDEO	Georgie Holgate-Stuckey
PHOTOGRAPHY	Simon Wallace
POSTER & PROGRAMME	John Cook, Ian Major Clive Weatherley



CRYSTAL MARTIN — Elsa

What to do with a precocious child? Why send her to the theatre, of course! And thus, at age 7, Crystal's love of the theatre began with a role in *The Music Man* at Purdue University. Since then, alongside acting and directing, she has been working her way through every backstage position possible and spent a year co-running the Entity Theatre Workshop in Munich. Back on stage, she is trying to remember how to be a proper, Trump-loving American in the role of Elsa.



JON BROWN — Peter

Jon's stage credits at the Barn include, *Art*, *The Elephant Man*, *Brassed Off*, *The God of Carnage* and *The 39 Steps*. Recent stage credits include Elwood. P. Dowd in *Harvey*, and Johnny in Laura Wade's *Home*, *I'm Darling*. Directing credits include *A Taste of Honey*, *The Thrill of Love*, *Dinner*, and Rory Kinnear's *The Herd*; the witty and poignant opening play of the current season.



JESS WALL — Debbie

Jess began her love of theatre through working and performing with Chickenshed Theatre in her younger years. After a long (long) break, she returned, as Nurse Mary in *Blackadder* in 2022. Since then she has been involved both on stage (*Alys*, *Always*, *It's a Wonderful Life*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*) and behind the scenes. *The Unfriend* has been a joy, working and laughing with cast and crew, and Debbie is a gift for Jess: a sarcastic mother of older children!



JON GAVAGHAN — Alex

This is Jon's second production at the Barn. He is very grateful for the chance to relive his teenage years for this production. It was also an excuse to hide grey hairs and have a shave. Apparently moody teenager vibes wasn't that much of a stretch for him. It's been great to be part of such a fun production with such a lovely team.



OLIVIA PALMER-WALKER — Rosie

This is also Olivia's second production at the Barn, recently playing Evelyn in *The Children's Hour*. Olivia has been a part of many theatre and drama groups since she was about 8 years old and is currently part of the Barn youth group, Hermes. She has also just completed Grade 8 acting solo with LAMDA, and says she has learnt so much from the cast and crew during rehearsals and looks forward to trying for more roles at the Barn and beyond.



CARL WESTMORELAND — The Neighbour

Carl's acting career has seen him play many and diverse character roles ranging from bumbling fools to foolish bumblers. Some favourites have included Teddie (*Ghost Train*), Stanley Stubbers (*One Man, Two Guvvners*), Basil (*Fawlty Towers*) and Captain Darling (*Blackadder goes Forth*). He's having to dig deep to find his inner irritating pedant in the role of The Neighbour!



ANDY SIBLEY — PC Junkin

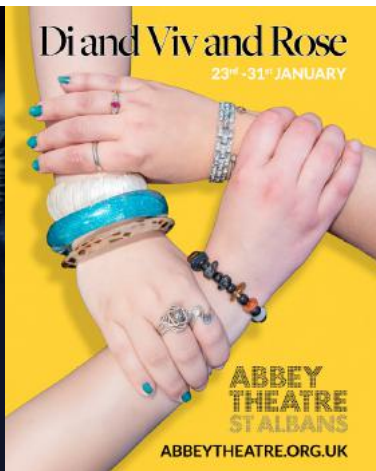
PC Junkin plays Andrew Sibley in this, his third occasion treading the boards at the Barn. A veteran of many pantomimes both here and overseas (insert cliched panto line here), he has also fronted several bands that you won't have heard of and written several books that you won't have read.



AMY WALKER — Reporter

This is Amy's second show at the Barn, the first being *Stop the Play!* Amy has enjoyed her cameo role in this production and looks forward to being part of future Barn productions.

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THE UNFRIEND IN REHEARSAL



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COMING UP AT THE BARN



6th – 14th February 2026

A summer of joy and heartbreak as five sisters dance on the brink of change.

Brian Friel's much loved play. The Celtic harvest festival brings a brief break from the realities of the hard life of five sisters in Donegal in the 1930s. But celebrations and possible romance soon give way to the realisation that their life is about to be torn apart...

27th March – 4th April 2026

One voice of courage in a world of silence.

Set in 1941 in a small German clinic, *All Our Children* unfolds over the course of one winter's day in the lives of people quietly trying to navigate a world losing its moral compass. Into this enclosed space come voices that challenge, soften and inspire: a weary doctor rediscovering his conscience, a mother holding fiercely to love, a maid whose practicality masks deep compassion, and a bishop whose remarkable real-life courage lit a spark of resistance across the country.



24th April – 2nd May 2026

The most dangerous victim is the one who refuses to stay dead.

This atmospheric Victorian thriller begins with an air of barely concealed relief. The domineering Edwina has finally died, liberating her husband Gregory from years of her tyrannical control. His wife's paid companion Elizabeth and the devoted housekeeper Ellen also seem strangely affected by their mistress's passing. This ingeniously plotted mystery will leave audiences questioning everything they thought they knew. Some secrets, it seems, are powerful enough to reach from beyond the grave.



20th – 21st February 2026

Love stories told in song, verse and heart.

Our next Studio production is an original piece of theatre fusing poetry, songs and prose together. With a cast of familiar Barn faces... what's not to love?

