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CONCORD
THEATRICALS

BEACONS

by Tabitha Mortiboy

SAMUEL FRENCH

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BEACONS was commissioned by Attic Theatre Company and the play was first performed on 21st March 2016 at Park Theatre, London, directed by Philip Wilson, Set Designer Tom Rogers, Lighting Designer Matt Daw, Sound Designer Max Papenheim. The cast was as follows:

JULIE ..... Tessa Peake-Jones
BERNARD ..... Paul Kemp
SKYE ..... Emily Burnett

BEACONS was performed on 14th July 2022 at Devonshire Park Theatre, Eastbourne Theatres, directed by Samuel Clemens. The cast was as follows:

JULIE ..... Moira Brooker
BERNARD ..... Steven Pinder
SKYE ..... Polly Jordan

CREATIVE LIST

Writer – Tabitha Mortiboy
Director – Samuel Clemens
Original Design – Geoff Gilder and Andy Newell
Lighting Design – Douglas Morgan
Sound and Video Design – Sam Clemens
Production Manager – Ryan Tate
Deputy Stage Manager – Elliott Davis
Assistant Stage Manager – Sasha Louise Buckwell-Bailey

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Beachy Head Chaplaincy Team
Tom Allen Media
Rebecca Fielding at Jordan Productions
Shelley Claridge
The Beachy Head Story

CAST

MOIRA BROOKER | JULIE

Moira trained at Bristol Old Vic School going on to perform leading roles at Manchester Royal Exchange, Young Vic and the Royal Court. She acted in and produced many new plays for New Vic Productions – often in partnership with Eastbourne Theatres, lastly in *Miss Dietrich Regrets*. Moira's extensive TV credits notably include Judith in BBC's *As Time Goes By*.

STEVEN PINDER | BERNARD

Steven has spent the past few years touring UK and Asia as The Wizard in hit musical *Wicked*. His vast theatre credits include: *The Memory of Water*, *Footloose* and an award-winning performance in UK tour *Dead Funny*. His most noted TV character is Max Farnham in Channel 4's soap *Brookside*.

POLLY JORDAN | SKYE

Polly trained at the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama. Credits include: *Trespass* (UK Tour); *Blithe Spirit* (Swansea Grand Theatre); *Black Roses* (Ribcaged Productions/Lancashire Theatre Workshop); *White Feather Boxer* (UK Tour); *Blood + Chocolate* (York Theatre Royal/Pilot Theatre); *I Walk In Your Words* (Tamasha Theatre/Rich Mix).

CREATIVES

SAMUEL CLEMENS | DIRECTOR

Samuel Clemens trained at the Drama Centre London and is an award-winning director of film, stage, audio drama and commercials. His extensive work includes films *Surgery* (multi-award winning), *A Bad Day to Propose* (Straight 8 winner 2021), *Say No* & *Dress Rehearsal*, plus audio dramas *Doctor Who*, *The Avengers*, *Thunderbirds*, *Stringray*, *Gallifrey & Callan* for Big Finish Productions & Anderson Entertainment.

Samuel directed new writing: *You Thought I Was Dead Didn't You?* at Waterloo East Theatre 2019, UK stage tour of *Strictly Murder* by his late father Brian Clemens OBE 2017, which he is currently making into a feature film.

Samuel's last piece of theatre before the pandemic was directing *Beacons* for Eastbourne Theatres in February 2020 and he is delighted to be back!

TABITHA MORTIBOY | WRITER

Tabitha is a writer based in London. Her latest production *The Amber Trap* ran at London's Theatre503, directed by Hannah Hauer-King and produced by Damsel. Her most recent theatre script *Daffy Grod and The Shaking Lights* was shortlisted for the Papatango Prize and longlisted for the Bruntwood Award. Her first play *Billy Through the Window* was shortlisted for the Brighton Fringe Excellence Award. In 2020 she was named runner up in the Alpine Fellowship Theatre Prize; in 2021 her script *Kissing Rice* was shortlisted for the inaugural Hope Playwriting Prize, and later that year her original seven-part audio drama *Life Sentence* was produced by Mags Creative and won the Gold Award at the ARIAS 2022 for Creative Innovation. *Beacons* was originally produced at The Park Theatre, London in 2016, where it picked up nominations for three Off West End Awards including Best New Play and Most Promising New Playwright. It first transferred to The Devonshire Park Theatre in March 2020 and is now returning for its second run.

DOUGLAS MORGAN | LIGHTING DESIGNER

Douglas's work as a lighting designer encompasses a wide range of productions, including musicals, plays, dance festivals and corporate work. National tours include: *She Stoops to Conquer*, *Travels With my Aunt* for Creative Cow; *Relatively Speaking*, *Nunsense*, *Dames at Sea*, *Deadly Game*, *Private Lives*, *Boogie Pete Live*, *By Jeeves*, *Gotta Sing Gotta Dance Tours*, *Last of the Summer Wine* for Eastbourne Theatres. Recent credits include: *Beacons*, *Return to the Forbidden Planet*, *The 39 Steps*, *One Man, Two Guvnors*, *Don't Dress for Dinner*, *Peter Pan*, *Round and Round the Garden*, *Summer Ice Spectacular* for Wild Rose Ltd; *The Quest* for New Vic Productions, *Stepping Out*, *Barnum*, *Neville's Island*, *Aladdin*, *Jack & the Beanstalk*, *Cinderella*, *Dick Whittington*, *Sleeping Beauty*, *Beauty and the Beast*, *Snow White*, *Robin Hood* all for Eastbourne Theatres.

EASTBOURNE THEATRES
CONGRESS · DEVONSHIRE PARK · WINTER GARDEN

Eastbourne Theatres comprises the Congress Theatre, Winter Garden and Devonshire Park Theatre. It is the largest Theatre complex on the south coast welcoming over 350,000 patrons each year.

Eastbourne Theatres take pride in its reputation as the premier producing house on the south-east coast, being the only local authority-owned theatre in the country to not only produce in-house but then also tour its own productions.

Eastbourne Theatres began producing in 2001 with a highly acclaimed production of Alan Ayckbourn's *Relatively Speaking*, starring John Challis and Sue Holderness. Subsequent productions have included: *Stepping Out*, *Taking Steps*, *You're Only Young Twice*, *Barnum*, *Nunsense*, *Dames at Sea*, *Neville's Island*, *By Jeeves*, *Gotta Sing Gotta Dance*, *One Man, Two Guvnors*, *Return to the Forbidden Planet* and *The 39 Steps*, many of which have toured nationally. The theatres have produced the annual Devonshire Park Theatre pantomime for the last 20 years.

As co-producers Eastbourne Theatres have worked with New Vic Productions on shows including: *Telstar* (Tour and West-End); *The Quiz* starring David Bradley (Tour and West-End;, national tours of *Blonde Poison*, *Miss Dietrich Regrets* and *Swimming at the Ritz*, as well as seasons of new work including several world premiere productions.

Other collaborators include; Original Theatre Company with *The Madness of George III*, *Twelfth Night*, *See How they Run*, *Wait until Dark* and *Night Must Fall*.

Eastbourne Theatres have even co-produced an *Ice Show* with sixteen international ice skaters and a cast of West End singers!

In 2020 Eastbourne Theatres first produced *Beacons* and are delighted this production is now returning to the Devonshire Park Theatre, a perfect homecoming for it being the venue is within such a short distance of the play's setting.

CHARACTERS

JULIE – (50s)
BERNARD – (50s)
SKYE – (16)

SETTING

Beachy Head, Eastbourne

AUTHOR'S NOTES

// indicates that someone takes a breath as if to interrupt the speaker.
/ indicates an actual interruption.

Beacons was the first play I ever wrote, and it is still the closest to my heart. It's a story about love and hope and human kindness. It's about resilience and magic and bravery and beauty. It's easy to lose sight of those things when the world feels threatened in so many ways, but they burn brightly even in the darkest moments. I hope the story of these three wonderful people reminds us all to be good to one another, to look for the light in the world, and to always eat ice cream x

For my parents, Sally and Steve.
You have always been my lighthouse: my constant guidance,
and my way back home.

Scene One

(A low light rises on **SKYE**.*)*

SKYE. There was a young man once. And he lived near here, near Beachy Head. He lived right down by Sovereign Harbour where the boats come in and the air tastes like the sea and smells a bit like fish and chips. And he fell in love with a girl. He used to say he fell for her hook, line and sinker. He was besotted. From the old English *sot*, to be drunk and silly. To be drunk on someone. He was drunk at the sight of her. He was devoted. And then, one day, years later, she left. And he climbed up here. And walked over the edge.

Or… or, sometimes, it goes like this –

(Quicker now.)

There was a young man once and he lived near here. He lived right down by Sovereign Harbour with the salty air and the fish and chips and he fell hook, line and sinker for this girl. This wild, untouchable, beautiful girl. And he was drunk on her, and giddy and happy and then one day she disappeared…

But he knows. He knows that she's out there somewhere. And every night he comes up here and stares across the water and pictures her in the distance. And he feels her, somehow, on the wind and in the air. And now, at night, as the summer gets colder, and the sky goes black and the sea goes black, something magical starts to happen. He closes his eyes, and this girl that vanished – she is suddenly beside him. And this piece of earth lights up like a dawn, and they dance together in this secret, honey-coloured light, and nobody asks

how she's flown across the ocean. How she's flown in a moment over miles of water, stood softly beside him, and started to dance.

(The light spills outwards to reveal an ice-cream van and scattered tables.)

BERNARD. I know how to dance.

SKYE. Go on then, let's see.

BERNARD. I learnt from a master of the Bavarian Waltz. Keep your chin up. And your back nice and straight, and keep exactly four inches between us.

SKYE. Exactly four inches?

BERNARD. Exactly. Four inches. Ready? Chin up. Chin up – one two three, one two three, that's how it goes, one two three, one two three, everyone knows /

SKYE. Hey Julie watch this!

BERNARD. Shh, she's counting, you know how she struggles.

JULIE. I heard that Bernard.

BERNARD. Did you? Good God, you've got ears like a bat.

JULIE. Well I've lost count now.

BERNARD. Surprise surprise.

JULIE. There's a mountain of coppers.

BERNARD. Do it later.

(He picks up a chocolate flake.)

JULIE. I've a business to run, that's fifty p.

BERNARD. Fifty p?

SKYE. It's a pound, he's got two.

BERNARD. You bloody snitch.

*(**SKYE** has picked up a book of Beachy Head myths.)*

SKYE. Shh, I'm reading.

JULIE. This is why Kyle makes a bloody fortune. He's getting a brand new freezer and a brand new sign because he doesn't have two bickering babies by his van.

SKYE. And he's got an offer on his Mr Whippy's.

JULIE. Has he? What offer?

SKYE. Two for two fifty.

JULIE. Two for t – one for one twenty five?

SKYE. He'll have made a killing.

JULIE. One twenty five? They'll be the cheapest in Eastbourne.

BERNARD. They should be ninety nine p.

SKYE & JULIE. They're not ninety nine p.

BERNARD. Aren't they?

JULIE. No wonder we've got leftovers.

BERNARD. I thought they were ninety nine p.

SKYE. They're called ninety nine's because that's how you pour them.

(She swings into the van and pours herself an ice cream.)

JULIE. You know that Kyle stole this pitch? I got here first and he skulked in later /

SKYE. You swirl it like that on top of the cone.

*(**SKYE** goes for a flake – **JULIE** bats her away.)*

JULIE. 2003 I opened this van. In 2012, Kyle parks on the verge, a few hundred yards away, and starts pinching my customers.

SKYE. *(over.)* Pinching my customers.

*(***SKYE** *lathers the ice cream in chocolate sauce.)*

JULIE. It's not funny Skye.

SKYE. *(With a mouthful of whippy.)* Well who changed the footpath?

JULIE. Kyle and his mob.

BERNARD. Well. The town council. But egged on by Kyle.

JULIE. This used to be busy, it used to be lively. I had hikers and trekkers non stop when I started.

BERNARD. Ey, it's exclusive, it's just off the beaten track.

JULIE. It's forgotten more like. Lay one new footpath, let mine grow over, let Kyle in with his big brash van /

SKYE. Why did they change it? What's wrong with the old one?

BERNARD. Because the sea is eating the earth.

JULIE. Because of coastal erosion. Every year we lose a bit of land and my van's getting closer and closer to the edge.

SKYE. *(With awe.)* Oh my God.

JULIE. *(In his general direction.)* So thank you Kyle you lump of lard.

(She returns to the till.)

He's an invader.

SKYE. An imposter.

BERNARD. A sodding interloper.

SKYE. Yeah, loping into this land of ours.

BERNARD. Though technically we're invaders Skye.

SKYE. We're not invaders!

JULIE. No you're part of the furniture.

BERNARD. Aren't you lucky.

SKYE. What, have you lived in Eastbourne your whole, whole life?

JULIE. Mm, hereabouts.

BERNARD. Her bones are made of chalk and clay.

JULIE. I'm not a fossil.

SKYE. *(To* **BERNARD**.*)* Not like you.

JULIE. And I was once a bright young thing.

SKYE. I can't imagine when you were younger.

JULIE. What d'you mean?

SKYE. I just can't imagine a younger you.

JULIE. I was trendy back then. I was pretty back then. I had bell bottom jeans and hair down to my waist. And I was dating a boy called Fred Makardo.

SKYE. Fred Makardo?

BERNARD. Was he chubby and dull?

JULIE. No, he was gorgeous. Really gorgeous. And we had our first date at the bandstand in town and the band was playing Mr Bojangles and Fred was a fantastic dancer.

BERNARD. I bet he couldn't waltz.

JULIE. Oh he could do anything. He was a sea cadet. He married Mary, a mariner.

SKYE. *(Enjoying the sound.)* Married a mariner.

JULIE. He was very chivalrous. You don't get that nowadays.

BERNARD. I'm bloody chivalrous.

SKYE. When are you ever, ever chivalrous?

BERNARD. Right, last November, when the kettle was broken, I carried two cups of hot chocolate all the way up from town and I didn't even take a sip.

JULIE. No alright, that was nice, you're a good egg Bernard.

BERNARD. A good bloody egg?

JULIE. Yeah, salt of the earth.

BERNARD. Oh, a salty egg.

JULIE. Don't be grumpy.

SKYE. Humpty Dumpty.

*(***BERNARD** *scowls into his paper.)*

*(***SKYE** *nudges* **JULIE**.*)*

Shall we do our celebration?

JULIE. Oh God, I forgot! Yeah go on, get it out.

BERNARD. What celebration?

JULIE. You know damn well.

BERNARD. I don't want to celebrate.

*(***SKYE** *digs out a bottle of bubbly wine.)*

JULIE. Grab the big blue mugs.

SKYE. *(Pinching* **BERNARD***'s cheek.)* The big blue mugs.

BERNARD. Cut it out.

SKYE. *(To* **JULIE**.*)* Right. You make a speech.

JULIE. Put the paper down.

BERNARD. I'm stuck on a clue.

SKYE. It's *The Water Babies*.

BERNARD. Y – how d'you know that?

SKYE. I did it already and rubbed it out.

BERNARD. You've done the whole crossword?

SKYE. Yeah it's easy that one.

BERNARD. You little bugger.

JULIE. Right, put it down.

SKYE. Can I open the bottle?

JULIE. You can but don't shake it.

(She turns to **BERNARD** *as* **SKYE** *shakes the bottle.)*

Here's your cup and give us a smile.

(The bottle pops and covers **SKYE**.*)*

*(***JULIE** *wipes down her face.)*

You silly sod.

BERNARD. I saw you shake it.

SKYE. *(In his accent.)* You bloody snitch.

JULIE. Right, now, give it here. Give us your mugs. Come on, on your feet. Right, OK. To a wonderful friend, and a wonderful man, who's finally got a home of his own. And here's to the glorious powers that be for finally putting your name on that list.

SKYE. To a room of one's own.

JULIE. To a brand new start.

SKYE. To a brand new chapter.

JULIE. And to the end of a wonderful summer. Cheers.

SKYE. Cheers.

BERNARD. OK. Cheers.

(The lights fall.)

Scene Two

(Two weeks later down at the van.)

(Most of the tables have been cleared away.)

(There is a sense of quiet, of Autumn setting in.)

*(***SKYE** *sits on a bench with a ball of wool. It stretches back to* **JULIE** *who's knitting in the van.)*

(There's a laptop set to one side.)

SKYE. When you were little...

JULIE. Mm?

SKYE. Did you want to be an ice-cream lady?

JULIE. No.

SKYE. Did you want to be someone who saves lost souls?

JULIE. No I wanted to be an acrobat. I wanted to be an aerial dancer. You know with the silk that hangs from the ceiling.

SKYE. Is that why you like it up here? Up high?

JULIE. I don't know.

SKYE. It's unusual, you know, to be happy up high. Most people get queasy from vertigo.

JULIE. I'm a capricorn – I'm a mountain goat. We're sure footed and sturdy on rough terrain.

SKYE. Some people think it's 'subconscious desire'. They say vertigo isn't a fear of falling. It's not that you're afraid, it's that part of you wants to. And part of you wants to feel it, sort of like you're tempted.

JULIE. *(As if unconvinced.)* Hmm.

SKYE. Maybe it feels like flying.

JULIE. I don't think it feels like flying.

SKYE. No. We don't know.

JULIE. Here, give us more wool.

*(***SKYE** *spools out the wool.)*

SKYE. What are you making?

JULIE. A jumper for Bernard. It's his birthday next month.

SKYE. *(Quietly, happily.)* No way.

JULIE. It's bloody hard work.

SKYE. Who taught you to knit?

JULIE. My mother. She was very good. She lost the knack towards the end, but she knitted me gloves when I was little. They're fiendish, gloves. Almost impossible.

SKYE. Can you teach me?

JULIE. You'd get restless.

*(***SKYE** *smiles.)*

SKYE. Maybe.

(They lapse into silence, the click of **JULIE***'s needles tapping at the sea air.)*

I wanted to be a lighthouse keeper.

JULIE. Did you? You know they're automatic.

SKYE. Be nice up there. Dad says when it's clear you can see Paris from here. He said he once saw the Eiffel Tower. And he said he saw a woman on top feeding onions and macaroons to a poodle in a beret.

JULIE. Well he's got good eyesight.

…

When are you off home?

SKYE. I don't know yet.

JULIE. Your mum must miss you. Your mum and dad.

SKYE. No, they're alright. They're away for a bit… dad's in the army.

JULIE. Is he?

SKYE. Yeah, I reckon I'm just gonna stay for a bit.

JULIE. How long for?

SKYE. I don't know yet. It's just quiet when they're away. It's just me at home.

JULIE. Course. It's just… well, it'll be even quieter now. I can't really afford /

SKYE. I know. I thought that.

JULIE. I'd love to have you /

SKYE. No, it's OK. I'm starting a new job.

JULIE. Are you? Where?

SKYE. At a dog grooming parlour down in town. It's called 'Pampered Pooch'.

JULIE. *(Over.)* Not Pampered Pooch? The one with the glitter?

SKYE. Yeah, and the feathers, she's mad that lady. My trial shift last week, this dog came in, it was half pug, half poodle, it looked like a cushion. They're called pug-a-poos, here look I'll show you /

(She goes to the laptop.)

JULIE. No wait, wait a minute /

SKYE. What are you doing?

JULIE. No it's nothing.

SKYE. Julie what is it?

*(**JULIE** takes the laptop.)*

JULIE. It's nothing. It's nothing /

SKYE. Give it back! Show me!

JULIE. Look, the thing is. And just, don't laugh.

SKYE. I won't. I won't laugh.

JULIE. It's. The thing is… I'm doing online dating.

SKYE. No. No way, can I have a look?

(She grabs the computer.)

I like your picture.

JULIE. Oh God. Shut up.

SKYE. Julie McCarthy, Eastbourne, Sussex /

JULIE. No stop it, stop it.

SKYE. Alright OK sorry /

JULIE. Oh the internet's gone.

*(**JULIE** takes the laptop and hovers it ahead of her – scanning the air as if to 'catch' the Wifi.)*

SKYE. Has it?

JULIE. Well done Skye.

SKYE. Me? What did I do?

JULIE. You knocked it out when you grabbed it like that.

SKYE. Knocked what out?

JULIE. The internet connection.

SKYE. You can't knock it out. What – what are you doing?

JULIE. It's over here somewhere, I caught it this morning.

*(**SKYE** takes a small device from her pocket and approaches **JULIE**.)*

SKYE. Here, try using this.

JULIE. What's that?

SKYE. It's a dongle. Give it here.

*(**JULIE** surrenders the laptop suspiciously.)*

JULIE. A what?

SKYE. It gives you the internet.

JULIE. It's a what?

SKYE. It's a dongle.

JULIE. A dongle.

SKYE. There you are.

JULIE. Oh right, OK.

SKYE. Right, let's have a look.

JULIE. Now, I've had a few – offers, from men on here. And I've narrowed it down to just these three.

SKYE. You're sneaky Julie /

JULIE. Stop it, be nice.

SKYE. I don't like this one.

JULIE. Why, what's wrong with him? He likes maple syrup, and rambling and badminton.

SKYE. He spelt badminton wrong.

JULIE. No, lay off.

SKYE. He's got a funny hairline.

JULIE. Has he? Where?

SKYE. There look, it's all scraggy.

JULIE. Oh. Maybe you're right.

SKYE. OK, who's the next one. Wentworth. Where's that?

JULIE. No that's his name.

SKYE. What Wentworth? Wentworth?

JULIE. Yes, that's a name /

SKYE. His name is Wentworth?

JULIE. Yes, that's his name /

SKYE. OK not him. So, last and least /

JULIE. Hey come on, be fair.

SKYE. No he's alright. Oh – wait, OK no.

JULIE. What's wrong with him?

SKYE. He's called Julian, Julie. You'd be Julie and Julian.

*(***JULIE** *snaps shut the laptop.)*

JULIE. OK that's enough.

SKYE. No sorry, sorry. He does look alright.

JULIE. He is alright. We might meet up.

SKYE. Will you? When?

JULIE. I don't know, he's – he's better than nothing.

SKYE. You can do better than 'better than nothing'.

JULIE. Well I'm sick of sitting up here on my own.

SKYE. You're not on your own.

JULIE. You're shampooing poodles.

SKYE. I'll still come up. And there are customers here – and Bernard, sometimes.

JULIE. Bernard comes, I'll give you that. But customers come when the blue moon rises.

SKYE. Since the weather?

JULIE. Since the summer stopped.

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