



The Great Gatsby

By F. Scott Fitzgerald

Adapted by Mark O'Sullivan

Directed by **Kelly Ann Stewart**

8th - 24th August 2025
The Roman Theatre of St Albans

Running time is approximately 2 hours 20 minutes including interval

Writer's Notes

When we set out to do another classic this year, The Great Gatsby quickly rose to the top of the list. Kelly and I both love the novel – it has a dream-like quality. At the time, we hadn't realised we were coming up to its centenary, which made it feel even more like the right choice. I love it because it's full of unresolved things. There are definite, sometimes catastrophic events, but so much is left hanging in the air. I'm always drawn to things like that.

We set it in 1929. The biggest challenge with Gatsby is that, on one level, not much actually happens. There's a lot of description, a lot of flavour and atmosphere. Some big things do happen, but to make it visual and suitable for performance, it needed something more.

We started to think about the Wall Street Crash in 1929, and how it could be used as a layer of drama running underneath the main narrative. So our retelling happens as the crash is about to take place. This othernarrative layer echoes the drama in The Great Gatsby.

It was really important to me – as with A Christmas Carol – that even though I moved parts of the story around, I kept as much of the original text as possible. Even when adding things to help it work on stage, I borrowed from elsewhere in the novel. To include the 1929 crash, I used real newspaper headlines, real testimonies, real names, and real events. Probably about 5% of it is dialogue I've created, and I've tried to keep everything as much in keeping with the linguistic style and tone of the original text and period. Everything else comes from the novel or from real things that were happening at the time.

So much of it is funny. Daisy is hilarious. So much of what she says is hilarious. But she's also tragic and awful. There's pain underneath everything, and longing. There's disturbance underneath her jokey, whimsical exterior.

Setting it in a speakeasy cabaret – the Green Light Club – does two things. First, it makes it complicated because we set ourselves the task of telling the story through a cabaret, its performers, and its acts. On one hand, it's very difficult. On the other hand, it gives us a framework that's fun to use. Using a magician's act to tell Gatsby's backstory, or a silent movie – those are things you wouldn't do in a straight retelling, but you can here. The cabaret is mostly fun, and massively challenging.

I was away for the first week and a half of rehearsals, doing A Midsummer Night's Dream in Cornwall, which I performed in. Whenever I'm writing, I picture it in my head. I've got a version of it in my head that moves as I'm writing and exploring ideas.

The picture I had in my head for this was really good. I found it exciting to follow as I worked on it. But there's always a danger that the reality won't live up to the version in your head.

When I got back from Cornwall and saw the first stagger-through, I said to the cast and to Kelly – and it was absolutely genuine – that it was better than anything I had imagined.

I'm thrilled with what Kelly's done, and what the whole team have made. It's way beyond what I thought would be possible.

There are always things I look at and think, "I wish I'd structured that differently," or "That doesn't work as well as it should." Like everything I've ever made, it's never finished. I can't watch anything I've made – even years later – without thinking, "If only I'd done that..."

But all that aside, I'm thrilled with what they've done here. I'm thrilled with the show and hope that you will be too.



Director's Notes

"I like large parties. They're so intimate.

At small parties there isn't any privacy."

~ Jordan in F Scott Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby

That is one of my all time favourite quotes from the book. I think I love it so much because it summarises the deceptively simple tone that punctuates the novel: the layers of meaning throughout that makes up how this incredible story is told, and consequently, all the challenges that come in adapting it for the stage.

From the moment we chose to stage Gatsby, one question lingered: How do we create something that's shimmering and savage, intoxicating and aching, hedonistic and brutally destitute all at once? The novel's seductive glamour fractures as quickly as it seduces you, its yearning as fragile as the American Dream it portrays. Every time I revisit Fitzgerald's words, I see something new — and working on Mark's adaptation has been an absolute gift.

The main challenge presented was: how do we stay faithful to Fitzgerald's lyricism, while opening up the story for new truths and deeper intimacy? As Mark has already discussed, we chose to frame the story within a cabaret world, a choice that felt natural for the Roman Theatre, where nothing can be hidden. It allowed us to lean into the novel's theatricality, its shifts between reality and performance, its rhythm of seduction and disillusionment. I won't repeat what he's already covered, but there are a few things that felt especially key for me throughout the process of creating this piece.

One of my first priorities was tackling Nick Carraway, the unreliable narrator at the heart of the novel. Too often in adaptations, Nick's easy charm makes us forget that he is deeply complicit in the careless behaviour of Daisy, Tom and Gatsby. It's been a joy to work with Jonathan again on this: embracing that complexity, finding moments where Nick's version of events doesn't quite add up. Keep an eye out for those cracks in his carefully curated story!

The women of *Gatsby* were just as important to me. Daisy is often treated as a symbol — "the American dream," "Gatsby's desire" — and loses her humanity in the process. Yet Fitzgerald, drawing on his wife Zelda's wit and intelligence, gave her some of the novel's sharpest observations. Jordan, the independent golfer who lives a rare life for women of the era, pays for her freedom with a loss of empathy — "to be one of the boys, she must behave like one." Myrtle, by contrast, is all vitality and ambition, even if her dreams are tragically small in the eyes of the elite. Jessica's Daisy, like Monica's fiercely independent Jordan and Rochelle's vibrant, life-filled Myrtle, reclaim these women as fully realised people, each with their own agency, flaws, and dreams. Together, they offer a fuller picture of womanhood in the 1920s — and, perhaps, today.

Tom Buchanan remains one of literature's most unpleasant men — arrogant, hypocritical, and prejudice — he is the definition of the "old money" conservatism that stops the Gatsbys, Wilsons and Myrtles of the world being able to achieve their green light dreams. Yet Fitzgerald allows us glimpses of his insecurity, his fragile masculinity, even his loneliness. As a result, becomes Gatsby not just his opposite and rival, but his mirror: the dreamer chasing the green light, full of charisma but not without moral shadows of his own. Which is exactly the dichotomy between which Gatsby exists – caught between who he was, is and wants to be. In many ways, they are two sides of the same coin — and David and Nathan have brought these tensions thrillingly to life.

The 1920s is such an exciting era to play in, and we tried to make each scene feel like a new language of performance from the era: from cabaret songs and Charleston dances, to magic shows, silent movies, switching from naturalism to revuesque theatricality. Live jazz doesn't just accompany the action — under Andrew McCormack's musical direction, it becomes a co-storyteller, charting the glitter and the grit. It also allowed me to play with the logistical moments that had to happen on stage – the brainstorming for things like the cars, the large parties, the rapid location changes, the tragic endings. I've never been pushed more as a director, and as Mark says, you always watch your work thinking about what you could have done better – but the level of creativity that this format has given me as the director, the cast and creative team is beyond any other theatre show I have yet to work on.

This has been one of the richest rehearsal rooms I've ever entered. My heartfelt thanks go to Simon Nicholas (set), Ciéranne Kennedy-Bell (costume), Caitlin McGregor (lighting), Hannah Stanley and Ross Krige (sound), and our stage manager Rosie Bowers, without whom none of this would be possible.

Thank you for joining us in this fleeting dream. I hope you feel the glow—and the bittersweet ache - and leave thinking about what your green light might be, and to remind yourself to keep reaching for it, despite it all.

Kelly Ann Stewart, July 2025



Cast

Gatsby / Wilson / Horace
Nathan French

Tom / Gus

David Joseph Healy

Myrtle / Texas Rochelle Jack

Jordan / Helen Monica Sharp

Nick **Jonathan Tynan-Moss**

Daisy / Belle
Jessica Vickers

The Green Light Club Pianist

Andrew McCormack

Creative Team

Directed by

Kelly Ann Stewart

Adapted by

Mark O'Sullivan

Musical Director

Andrew McCormack

Choreographer

Ryan Munroe

Set Designer

Simon Nicholas

Costume Designer

Ciéranne Kennedy-Bell

Costume Supervisor

Thea Peacock

Stage Manager

Rosie Bowers

Technical Manager

Martin Ruff

Sound Designer & Operator

Hannah Stanley

Lighting Designer & Operator

Caitlin MacGregor

Producer

Mark O'Sullivan

Production Assistant

Honey Kirby



Nathan French

Nathan is an actor and musician originally from East Sussex. He is thrilled to be making his debut with OVO in The Great Gatsby and incredibly excited to share it with you all. Previous credits include: To Save the Sea (Sleeping Warrior Theatre), Robin Hood and Once Upon a Time (South Mill Arts). Credits in training: Urinetown, Sweet Charity and Into the Woods (Royal Conservatoire of Scotland).





David Joseph Healy

David is an actor and singer from Glasgow, Scotland. He is a graduate of the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland (MA and BA in Musical Theatre). Recent theatre credits include: 35mm (Phoenix Arts Club), A Little Night Music (Edinburgh Festival Fringe), Fountain of You (Edinburgh Festival Fringe).





Rochelle Jack

Rochelle trained at Mountview Academy of Theatre Arts. Theatre credits include: Swing in Napoleon: Un Petit Pantomime. Credits whilst training include: Queen of Hearts / Red Cross Nurse in Alice by Heart, Mama Ro in Sisters of the Wood of Life, Matron "Mama" Morton in Chicago, Daddy Brubeck in Sweet Charity. Rochelle is represented by Brewis Scott Associates and is thrilled to be joining the cast of The Great Gatsby. She would like to thank her family and friends for their continued love and support.





Monica Sharp

Monica is a Scottish performer based in London. After graduating in from The MGA Academy of Performing Arts in Edinburgh, she went into working aboard Marella Voyager as part of an immersive "Roaring 20's" experience. Monica then joined the luxury cruise line Explora as a singer and saxophonist. The Great Gatsby will be her first professional credit on land and she is thrilled to be part of this wonderful production.





Jonathan Tynan-Moss

Jonathan trained at The Royal Central School of Speech and Drama. Recent theatre credits include: The Merchant of Venice (OVO), The Mousetrap (West End), Dr Who Time Fracture (BBC), Vessel (Arch 468). Other Theatre Includes: Romeo and Juliet, As You Like It, Measure for Measure, Hamlet, Twelfth Night, Much Ado About Nothing (Pop-up Globe) The Return of the Unknown, ...If We've Never Been to the Moon?, The Hound of the Baskervilles (The Marlowe Theatre) Film: Flight 149: Hostage of War (Sky), The Completely Made Up Adventures of Dick Turpin (Apple TV)





Jessica Vickers

Jessica Vickers is an Australian actor trained at the National Institute of Dramatic Art (NIDA). Her most recent credit is playing Delphi in the West End production of Harry Potter and the Cursed Child at the Palace Theatre. Before moving to the UK, she played Delphi Diggory in the Melbourne production and was part of the original Australian cast, playing Polly Chapman in Year 1 and Moaning Myrtle in Years 2 and 3. Jessica was nominated for Best Actress at the Manhattan Short Film Festival for her role in the film #30. Other notable roles include Chava in Fiddler on the Roof and June in Gypsy at Hayes Theatre Co. She is excited to make her OVO debut and bring The Great Gatsby to life.





Kelly Ann Stewart Director

Having studied English Literature at the University of Cambridge, Kelly has a passion for re-imagining classic plays, making them accessible and exciting for a new audience. Her past directing credits include: Jekyll and Hyde (Food for Thought), Singin' in the Rain (ADC Theatre), King Lear, and Much Ado About Nothing (Siege Theatre). As an Associate Director for OVO, Kelly has directed and/or been on the directing team behind many OVO shows including: Beginning/Middle, Private Lives, The Railway Children, The Changeling R&D, The Merry Wives of Windsor, Gawain & The Green Knight, The Merchant of Venice, and A Christmas Carol. Kelly also specialises in dramaturgical work for new writing, as well as BSL-integrated theatre.



Mark O'Sullivan Adaptor

Mark is a writer, actor and producer. He is best known for his Channel 4 sitcom Lee and Dean which he wrote and played Dean. He created ITV drama Tell Me Everything, and his Channel 4 documentary, My Sexual Abuse: The Sitcom won Best Arts programme at the RTS Awards. Mark made his OVO acting debut earlier this summer as Phil O'Strate in A Midsummer Night's Dream.



Andrew McCormack Musical Director

Andrew McCormack is a celebrated British pianist and composer renowned for his dynamic contributions to film and theatre. He has orchestrated and composed original music for major Clint Eastwood films, including Flags of Our Fathers, Letters from Iwo Jima, Changeling, and Grace Is Gone, and is set to score his first feature film, Nightmares, in 2025. McCormack's other composing work includes commissions from the London Symphony Orchestra, with his overture Incentive premiered at the Barbican and featured on the Panufnik Legacies CD. Alongside acclaimed jazz albums and prestigious international touring, he has established himself as a versatile artist, blending cinematic, classical, and jazz influences into a compelling, ever-evolving body of work.



Rosie Bowers Rosie has been stage managing for a little under a year, gaining credits with Watford Palace Theatre, The National Youth Theatre, and Little Angel Theatre. Rosie made her OVO debut earlier this summer in A Midsummer Night's Dream.

Ciéranne Kennedy-Bell Ciéranne is an award-winning costume designer for film and television and theatre. Recent credits include 2025 BAFTA-winning short film Quiet Life, Netflix hits Boudica: Queen of War and Three Day Millionaire, BBC's Starstruck and Apple TV's Still Up. A highly skilled and versatile costumier, Ciéranne cut her cloth on the likes of Charlie Brooker's Black Mirror and, on stage, Matthew Bourne ballets including The Red Shoes. While she has worked across contemporary style and Roman Britain with equal flair, she specialises in period recreation and design with a particular interest in 1920s-1970s fashion. Ciéranne approaches each project with an eye on character and narrative, using her costuming skills to enhance the vision of the director, actors and audience alike.

Honey Kirby Honey holds a Certificate of Higher Education in Acting and Theatre Arts from East 15 Acting School and is currently pursuing a degree in Acting for Stage, Screen and Digital Media at Performers College.

Caitlin MacGregor Caitlin is an emerging lighting designer, having recently graduated from RADA. She is London based, and has particular interest in new writing and contemporary takes on classic works. Caitlin is thrilled to be working on this production as her first design as a graduate.

Ryan Munroe Ryan trained at London Contemporary Dance School, whilst maintaining a keen interest and practice in other dance styles and genres. His work includes choreography for Universal Records, NBC Universal, independent site-specific pieces and dance theatre. Ryan also teaches across the UK, taking an interest in both moving bodies and individuals and the physical 'lived' experience. He was the choreographer for OVO's recent production of A Midsummer Night's Dream.

Simon Nicholas As a Co-Founder of OVO, Simon helped get the ball rolling, playing the Friar in OVO's inaugural production of Romeo and Juliet. He pioneered the innovative use of film in the company's work, most recently for the tour of Mosquitoes. Simon has built OVO's theatre within the Roman Theatre since 2016. He has created sets for dozens of OVO open air shows including As You Like It, Much Ado About Nothing, The Winter's Tale, Peter Pan, The Comedy of Errors, The Importance of Being Earnest, Little Women, Romeo and Juliet, The Railway Children, The Threepenny Opera, The Merry Wives of Windsor and The Secret Garden. This year his designs will feature in all four of OVO's productions.

Thea Peacock Thea is making her theatre debut as Wardrobe Supervisor in this production of The Great Gatsby. She is eager to learn and grow in the world of live performance. Thea is excited to be part of the collaborative effort that brings this production to life and looks forward to supporting the cast and crew behind the scenes.

Martin Ruff Martin trained as a sound engineer and began his career in Grease in the West End. From there he moved into regional theatre and spent several years as a technician at the Gordon Craig Theatre. Martin specialises in outdoor events and has supported many OVO shows in all technical departments.

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Directors of OVO Productions Ltd: Kiffer Weisselberg, Chad Tatum

Trustees of OVO Charitable Incorporated Organisation: Andy Sawford, Tim Boatswain

Company Secretary: David Widdowson Creative Producer: Mark O'Sullivan Associate Director: Kelly Stewart Marketing: Faye Ferriday, Holly Anglin

PR: PR4

Casting Director: Emma Wright Venue Manager: Helena Davies Technical Manager: Martin Ruff

Membership Ambassador: Liz Widdowson

Front of House Duty Managers: Freya Woolgrove, Alex Edwards, Natalie Sharman and Anna

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Lord and Lady Verulam and the Grimston family, Jess Waddington at Knight Frank, Big Issue Invest.









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