

HUGH WOOLDRIDGE

Director and Writer, Producer and MasterClass Leader

Hugh Wooldridge has produced, directed, devised and designed lighting for theatre, television and large-scale musical events all over the world. He also teaches and gives MasterClasses internationally in the UK, Denmark, Italy, Australia, South Africa and the United States.

Training

Having trained on the Theatre Projects Technical Training Course at the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art (LAMDA), Hugh Wooldridge started as an ASM in Canterbury rep and working for Peter Saunders and Michael Codron in the West End. He made his West End debut as an actor in *The Dame of Sark* with Dame Celia Johnson and Tony Britton, and subsequently with English National Opera in *Il Trovatore* and *Salome*; and with the London Festival Ballet (now English National Ballet) in the world premiere production of *Romeo and Juliet*, choreographed by Rudolf Nureyev.

He began his career as a professional theatre director by assisting leading UK directors including Alan Ayckbourn, Michael Blakemore, Philip Grout, Frank Hauser and Eric Thompson; however, he had been directing and lighting plays professionally in his own right since the age of 17 at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival. Where he returned at 22 to direct and light with the Fringe First Award-winning team from the University of Bradford under the leadership of Richard Crane and Chris Parr.

The First 10 Years

In the first 10 years of his career Hugh directed more than 60 productions in London and throughout the UK – from Alan Ayckbourn to René de Obaldia, and Pam Gems to Athol Fugard. From the Bush Theatre to the Royal Opera House. He was the Resident Director at the Haymarket Theatre, Leicester and the Thorndike Theatre, Leatherhead, and the Staff Director at the Old Vic Theatre, London.

For The Royal Ballet's Ballet For All he directed *The World of Giselle* for Dame Ninette de Valois and Peter Brinson. At the same time, alongside his directing work, having assisted Michael Northen and John B. Read, he developed an international reputation as a lighting designer for dance, creating lighting for new choreography with companies including The Royal Ballet, Dance Theatre London, Rambert Dance Company, the National Youth Ballet, the English National Ballet and *DASH – Wayne Sleep And Friends*.

He then directed numerous premieres and productions in theatre and music theatre. These included the world premieres of the Graham Collier / Malcolm Lowry jazz suite, *Under A Volcano* and *The Undisput'd Monarch of the English Stage* with Gary Bond portraying David Garrick at The Old Vic; the Charles Strouse opera, *Nightingale* with Sarah Brightman and Peter Knapp at the Buxton Opera Festival; and Francis Wyndham's *Abel and Cain* at the Haymarket Theatre, Leicester with Peter Eyre and Sean Baker.

His work also included directing and lighting the original Olivier Award-winning production of *Jeeves Takes Charge* with Edward Duke at the Lyric Hammersmith; the first productions of the Andrew Lloyd Webber and T. S. Eliot *Cats* at the Sydmonton Festival; the Andrew Lloyd Webber / Don Black song-cycle *Tell Me On A Sunday* starring Marti Webb at the Royalty Theatre (now the Peacock Theatre); and Lloyd Webber's *Variations* at the Royal Festival Hall, later combined with *Tell Me On A Sunday* to become *Song and Dance*. He also directed *Just Liz*, Liz Robertson's one-woman show compiled by Alan Jay Lerner at the Duke of York's Theatre, London. This later was shown on the opening night of ITV's Television South.

The Jolly Good Production Company

During the next 10 years, Hugh Wooldridge ran his own multi-media company, The Jolly Good Production Company, which produced plays and TV programmes, managed artistes and published an award-winning book of fine art pencil drawings of dancers from New York City Ballet, *The Still Point* by Betti Franceschi.

TVS and Television

In 1983, as the Associate Head of Music for ITV's TVS, he was responsible for a wide range of music and light entertainment programmes including *The A-Z of Music* with Richard Stilgoe and his own late-night series, *Showcase*, which featured artists including Nigel Kennedy, Andrew Lloyd Webber, Paul Jones, Benjamin Luxon, Rod Argent, Teresa Cahill, Ian Hobson, Julian Lloyd Webber and Sarah Brightman. He also devised and was the Creative Consultant of BBCTV's Saturday night, prime-time programme, *Challenge Anneka*.

Large Scale Fund-Raising Gala Concerts

In 1987 he co-produced with Liz Robertson and wrote *An Evening with Alan Jay Lerner* at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane with Placido Domingo and many other leading performers to raise funds for Cancer Research. This event was remounted in Manchester in 1988 with Richard Harris and later, in 1989, he wrote and directed *An Evening with Alan Jay Lerner* at the New York State Theatre at Lincoln Center featuring Julie Andrews, Leonard Bernstein, Robert Goulet, Sally Ann Howes, Liza Minnelli, Rudolf Nureyev and many others. This was widely televised by PBS in the US.

Subsequently, over the following decades, he has become known for creating and directing large-scale gala concerts and fundraising events. These have included *The Night of 1000 Voices* at the Royal Albert Hall (1999–2016); *DANCEPOWER* at the London Palladium for the Red Cross; *Comedy Tonight* at the Royal National Theatre for The Roy Kinnear Trust; *Around the World* at the Royal Albert Hall with Elaine Paige and Michael Flatley and the first live appearance of *Riverdance* in aid of the Royal National Institute for the Blind; the 125th Anniversary of the Red Cross with Dame Shirley Bassey; the all-star Ira Gershwin centenary celebration *Who Could Ask for Anything More?* at the Royal Albert Hall for Mencap; an all-star fund raiser of *The Wonderful World of Captain Beaky and His Band* at the Royal Albert Hall for UNICEF hosted by Roger Moore and with Joanna Lumley, Vanessa Redgrave, Jessie Buckley, Cantabile and many others, introduced by its author, Jeremy Lloyd; and *Seasons of Love*, the all-star 10th Anniversary Celebration of the original Calendar Girls for Leukaemia and Lymphoma Research.

In the US, he created and directed the inaugural Bernard Jacobs Award for Excellence in Theatre in New York presented to James Nederlander and he created and directed the Richard Rodgers Award and the 50th Anniversary of the Civic Light Opera, Pittsburgh at the Benedum Center for the Performing Arts. In the UK he directed three concert productions of *Jesus Christ Superstar* introduced by Tim Rice at the Barbican Centre; the first European tour of *The Rocky Horror Show* and served as UK Associate to Jerry Zaks on his long-running West End production of *Smokey Joe's Cafe* at the Prince of Wales Theatre, London.

Other Major Productions

Other major productions include the workshop production of the Andrew Lloyd Webber and Ben Elton film screenplay for *The Phantom of the Opera*; the live stadium version of BBC TV's *Robot Wars*; the first large-scale revival of the Rice / Lloyd Webber musical *Evita* with a cast of 125 at the Grand Theatre, Leeds; a *Millennium Musicals Celebration* with the Bayerischer Rundfunk Orchestra in Munich; the UK tour of the Rodgers and Hammerstein revue *Something Wonderful*; the all-star Noël Coward – *The Centenary Celebration* at the Savoy Theatre; and a major revival of *Peer Gynt* for orchestra, chorus, dancers and actors at the University of Illinois, the first such production since 1876.

He also devised and directed *Sondheim Tonight* at the Barbican Centre and *BAM Salutes Sondheim* at the Brooklyn Academy of Music; the Royal Anniversary Gala celebrating the Golden Wedding Anniversary of HM The Queen and HRH Prince Philip at the Royal Festival Hall; *Jack In Review* for Cameron Mackintosh at the London Palladium; and an international celebration, *A Gala Concert for Hal Prince* in Munich, his family's home city.

The Music of Andrew Lloyd Webber

In 1989, he created and directed the original UK and US productions of *The Music of Andrew Lloyd Webber*, later seen in London at the Prince Edward Theatre and the London Palladium and subsequently touring globally. He also directed the UK tour of *The Magic of the Musicals* starring Marti Webb; the 20th Anniversary tour of *Jesus Christ Superstar – In Concert* starring the original Jesus, Paul Nicholas, and two large-scale US productions of *Jesus Christ Superstar* that toured throughout Europe. He also directed the 150th Anniversary celebrations of Thomas Cook Ltd in the presence of Diana, Princess of Wales.

His own Alan Jay Lerner revue, *The Night They Invented Champagne* was staged in Cape Town and Johannesburg for Pieter Toerien, and later appeared in the UK under the title *Almost Like Being in Love* at the Royal National Theatre starring Sian Phillips, John Standing, Clive Carter, Anita Dobson and Anna Francolini. Also in South Africa for Pieter Toerien he directed *House Guest* and *Extremities*.

Chess in Concert

In 2008 he adapted with Tim Rice and directed *Chess in Concert* at the Royal Albert Hall with Josh Groban, Idina Menzel, Adam Pascal, Kerry Ellis, Clarke Peters, David Bedella and Marti Pellow. (www.chessinconcert.com) In 2010, this production was broadcast by PBS in the United States and internationally, and was the first musical theatre concert to be screened in mainstream cinemas in the UK.

In 2010 he devised and directed the 10th Anniversary production of *The Night of 1000 Voices* at the Royal Albert Hall featuring Kerry Ellis, Philip Quast, Adam Pascal and Queen guitarist, Brian May. (www.thenightof1000voices.com) He also directed *ANTHEMS: The Concert* at the Royal Albert Hall featuring Kerry Ellis with Brian May, Adam Pascal and Escala, which won the Jo Hutchinson International WhatsOnStage Award for Best Solo Performance.

In recent years Hugh Wooldridge has directed two major new productions of *Rebecca* for the Du Maurier Estate and Paul Elliott with Simon Williams and Carmen Silvera then Patrick Mower and June Brown; and three UK tours of *The Haunting*, an adaptation of short stories by Charles Dickens for Bill Kenwright, starring Paul Nicholas, Sean Maguire and Charlie Clements, later with David Robb and James Roache.

The University of Oklahoma

Between 2010 and 2012 he served as the Beatrice Carr and Ray Wallace Visiting Professor at the A. Max Weitzenhoffer College of Fine Arts at the University of Oklahoma, where he devised and directed the 21st Anniversary production of *The Music of Andrew Lloyd Webber* and premiered his own musical revue *There Is More To Love* featuring the music of Andrew Lloyd Webber. He regularly gives lectures and masterclasses at home and abroad.

BelCanto

In 2013–14 he directed the European and US productions of *BelCanto* in collaboration with Luigi Caiola and the Luciano Pavarotti Foundation, first seen at New York's City Center and later in Naples, Rome and Paris. In 2016 he directed a new production of *Twist of Lemmon* at The Other Palace in London with Christopher Lemmon portraying his father, Jack Lemmon.

The Circle of Life

In 2017 he devised and directed *The Circle of Life*, a musical celebration of the songs of Tim Rice for Young Artists of America at the Strathmore Center in Maryland. Hosted by Tim Rice, this production was later broadcast on PBS as *Can You Feel The Love Tonight* and nominated for three regional Emmy Awards, winning the Emmy for Best Lighting.

In 2018 he directed *Play on Words* – a celebration of PG Wodehouse and his fellow wordsmiths, with Hal Cazalet and Simon Beck and VIP guest artistes at Crazy Coqs/Live at Zedel in London as well as in New York and Mumbai. The same year he directed a new production of *Jesus Christ Superstar* at Teatru Astra in Gozo, Malta with David Michael Johnson playing Jesus with Rachel Fabri, Chris Greck, Roger Tirazona, Noel Galea and Chris Dingli.

In 2019 he produced and directed a reboot of *The Night of 1000 Voices* for a younger audience, *The Best of Rock Musicals*, at the Eventim Apollo, Hammersmith hosted by Tim Rice, Christopher Biggins and Richard O'Brien in aid of the suicide awareness charity, The Charlie Waller Memorial Trust. www.thebestofrockmusicals.com

The Pandemic Years

During the pandemic in 2020, he produced and directed twenty-six short films about osteopathy titled, *Watering The Withering Fields – Discovering Osteopathy with Barrie Savory* www.barriesavory.london/video-series and a season of new play-readings streamed globally from Riverside Studios in London under the title *Riverside Reads* (patron: Michael Codron).

In 2023, Hugh Wooldridge directed *A Murder Has Been Arranged* for Bill Kenwright for whom he has also written with Nicholas Bromley a new comedy with music about a girl band titled, *Heads Up!*

Jeeves Takes Charge (2024/6)

In 2024/5 he has been working on a new production of *Jeeves Takes Charge* with Sam Harrison in the leading roles. First seen at the Jermyn Street and Tabard Theatres, then for a Christmas run at the Ustinov Theatre, Bath; and soon to be seen in the Charing Cross Theatre and the WatchTower Theatre, Texas.

Also, in 2025 he directed the first solo *My Way* UK Tour and the London performances by the winner of *Britain's Got Talent*, Sydnie Christmas.

Throughout his career, Hugh Wooldridge has directed many showcases, workshops and first productions of new writing, and has been much in demand helping others to improve their own productions – he is currently mentoring four authors, two composers and a producer. He hopes to direct a production every year at a drama school in the UK or internationally – as at BADA with his own adaptation of *Under Milk Wood* with music by Julie Cooper. He continues his international teaching and MasterClass work and recently returned from a US tour with Trevor Nunn promoting their William Shakespeare Marquee TV series, *A Man For All Time* with Dame Judi Dench and Roger Allam.

In the future, in addition to his commitment to working on large-scale productions, Hugh Wooldridge hopes to spend time directing smaller projects, similar to those he thrived on during his first 10 years, and being available to help others achieve their goals.

Hugh Wooldridge is a member of the Dramatists' Guild (USA), The Stage Directors and Choreographers Society (USA), and the Stage Directors (UK).

www.hughwooldridge.com

NOTE TO EDITORS:

**Please make sure your edited version receives written confirmation BEFORE publication.
Many thanks.**