

methuen | drama



# Madame Rubinstein

John Misto

BLOOMSBURY

**PARK**  
THEATRE CAFE BAR



**John Misto**  
**Madame Rubinstein**

Bloomsbury Methuen Drama  
An imprint of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc

B L O O M S B U R Y  
LONDON • OXFORD • NEW YORK • NEW DELHI • SYDNEY

**Bloomsbury Methuen Drama**

An imprint of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc  
Imprint previously known as Methuen Drama  
50 Bedford Square                      1385 Broadway  
London                                      New York  
WC1B 3DP                                NY 10018  
UK    USA

**www.bloomsbury.com**

**BLOOMSBURY, METHUEN DRAMA and the Diana logo  
are trademarks of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc**

First published 2017

© John Misto, 2017

John Misto has asserted his right under the Copyright, Designs  
and Patents Act, 1988, to be identified as author of this work.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or  
transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including  
photocopying, recording, or any information storage or retrieval system,  
without prior permission in writing from the publishers.

No responsibility for loss caused to any individual or organization  
acting on or refraining from action as a result of the material in  
this publication can be accepted by Bloomsbury or the author.

All rights whatsoever in this play are strictly reserved and application  
for performance etc. should be made before rehearsals by professionals to  
Smith & Jones Management, Level 8, 10–14 Waterloo Street, Sydney,  
NSW, 2010, Australia and by amateurs to Permissions Department, Methuen  
Drama, Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 50 Bedford Square, London WC1B 3DP  
*Performance.Permissions@bloomsbury.com*. No performance  
may be given unless a licence has been obtained.

No rights in incidental music or songs contained in the work are hereby granted  
and performance rights for any performance/presentation whatsoever must be  
obtained from the respective copyright owners.

**British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data**

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN: PB: 978-1-3500-5197-3

ePDF: 978-1-3500-5199-7

eBook: 978-1-3500-5200-0

**Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

A catalog record for this book is available from the Library of Congress.

Cover design: Olivia D'Cruz

Cover image: Mark Douet

Front cover design: Kathrin Jacobsen

Typeset by Mark Heslington Ltd, Scarborough, North Yorkshire

To find out more about our authors and books visit *www.bloomsbury.com*. Here you  
will find extracts, author interviews, details of forthcoming events and the option  
to sign up for our *newsletters*.

Please note, this script is accurate at time of publication  
but may not reflect rehearsal room edits.

MADAME  
RUBINSTEIN

# PARK

THEATRE CAFE BAR

## WELCOME TO PARK THEATRE

I first met Miriam Margolyes through mutual friends when we were building Park Theatre. She was performing her one-person show *Dickens' Women* at the time, very successfully touring it around the world. When we opened our doors she became a regular patron and, seeing each other in the foyer, we'd find moments to chat and catch up about our respective projects.

Last year she sent me an early draft of Australian playwright John Misto's *Madame Rubinstein* (then titled *Lip Service*) which she had come across in Australia, where she spends a lot of time (she has dual citizenship). I had the same reaction as she did – that the titular part would be *perfect* for her. We did a reading, after which I began working with John – albeit at rather unusual hours given the time difference between London and Sydney – and, taking on the feedback from the reading, we began to develop the play.

Despite having taken the decision not to produce another show in 2017, for well-founded financial reasons, what followed was a perfect example of the stars aligning: a late space became available in the season, Miriam happened to be free during that narrow window, a number of investors and donors indicated they were keen to support, we found a brilliant co-producer in Oliver Mackwood, and John and his agent were pulling out the stops to make things happen quickly...

A year or so later, and for your viewing pleasure, ladies and gentlemen  
– *Madame Rubinstein!*

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jez Bond', with a horizontal line underneath.

Jez Bond | Artistic Director

## FAKE NEWS OR HONEST FICTION?

She was a cross between a Munchkin and a hand grenade. Plump, uneducated Helena Rubinstein, with her fondness for eating sausage from a knife, was an accidental revolutionary.

Like Stalin, Castro and Donald Trump, her frankness was unnerving: 'There are no ugly women, only lazy ones' provoked both terror and hope in millions of females. Its sequel: 'If your skin is coarse and unpleasant, your husband will probably leave you' could make Germaine Greer reach for Zoloff.

Rubinstein lived in a world where women were regarded as dangerous creatures. While they didn't possess libidos themselves, they could arouse excitement in decent chaps, to a point where sexual frenzy obliterated memories of home and hearth, of innocent children and loyal, sex-hating wives.

Because cosmetics magnified women's awful powers, the British Parliament drafted the following law in 1779:

'All women... whether virgins, maids or widows that shall seduce into matrimony any of His Majesty's subjects by the use of scents, paints, cosmetic washes, artificial teeth, false hair, Spanish wool, iron stays (corsets), hoops, high-heeled shoes and bolstered lips shall be... charged with witchcraft and the marriage shall be null and void.'

One hundred and twenty years later, when Rubinstein opened her first salon in Melbourne, women everywhere were still shackled by this horror of their potential. Because there was money to be made in freeing them, Rubinstein, and later Elizabeth Arden, took on the Male Establishment. With their powders, lipsticks and perfumes they gave women the confidence to leave the kitchen and enter the workforce. They unwittingly created a revolution Che Guevara would have envied. Today their legacy is so all-pervasive that their memories have been buried beneath the weight of their achievements.

Now the big question: Did Arden and Rubinstein ever meet? 'Never!' some biographers will howl. Rubinstein and Arden would agree with them completely. After all, it was in both their interests to keep a feud percolating. It generated more free publicity than an air-kissing mutual admiration society. Like today's mega-pixelated super-stars, they understood that image was everything.

Lying was a national sport in the first half of the twentieth century. When Charles Revson, the founder of Revlon, was caught doing a make-over on his less than glamorous past, he described his 'porky pies' as 'honest fiction'. Unrepentant, he insisted his clientele expected him to make his life seem as interesting as possible. Rubinstein and Arden heartily agreed. They carefully concealed any lumps and bumps that might be bad for business and replaced them with glossy, untraceable tales.

In fact Rubinstein and Arden lied about everything – their names, their ages, their backgrounds, their qualifications, their formulas, their families, their finances and their romances. You could do that in the days before Google spoiled the fun. Arden told the world that she met her banker-husband on board the *Lusitania*. He was actually a stocking salesman and Arden had never set pedicured foot on that ill-fated vessel. Fake news, perhaps, but what a great story.

Rubinstein claimed she learned about herbs during a long apprenticeship with a kindly country chemist. The chemist, unfortunately, never existed. Perhaps Helena imagined him after ingesting too much of one of her herbs.

The events in *Madame Rubinstein* certainly took place. But in the spirit of these two great ladies, I have clothed them in Honest Fiction so that their characters and lives can be displayed in the most interesting way possible. For the next two hours, allow me to resurrect them, these feisty, neurotic Titans who camouflaged their lives with myth and lies. They would probably be appalled by what you are about to see, unless, of course, it helped to sell their products.

John Misto

# MADAME RUBINSTEIN

By John Misto

This production was first performed at Park Theatre,  
London on 26 April 2017 with the following cast:

## CAST

Helena Rubinstein	<b>Miriam Margolyes</b>
Elizabeth Arden	<b>Frances Barber</b>
Patrick O'Higgins	<b>Jonathan Forbes</b>

## CREATIVE TEAM

<i>Director</i>	Jez Bond
<i>Designer</i>	Alistair Turner
<i>Lighting Designer</i>	Mark Howland
<i>Composer</i>	Dimitri Scarlato
<i>Sound Designer</i>	David Gregory
<i>Casting Director</i>	Ellie Collyer-Bristow
<i>Assistant Director</i>	Max Elton

## PRODUCTION TEAM

<i>Production Manager</i>	Simon Streeting
<i>Company Stage Manager</i>	John Pemberton
<i>Assistant Stage Manager</i>	Harriet Saffin
<i>Technical Assistant</i>	Sophie Paterson
<i>Production Coordinator</i>	Rebecca Abbott
<i>Production Assistant</i>	Harry Totham
<i>Costume Supervisor</i>	Kat Smith
<i>Wigs, Wardrobe and Makeup</i>	Natalie Cole
<i>Production Electrician</i>	Tom Turner
<i>Set Blue Scenery</i>	Chris Musgrave
<i>Press and PR representation</i>	Arabella Neville-Rolfe and Nick Pearce for Target Live

## CAST BIOGRAPHIES

Miriam Margolyes | Helena  
Rubinstein



**Theatre credits include:** *Wicked* (West End); *Blithe Spirit, I'll Eat You Last* (Melbourne Theatre Company); *The Importance of Being Earnest* (Brooklyn Academy of Music, dir. Sir Peter Hall); *The Way of the World* (Sydney Theatre Company); *The Vagina Monologues, Romeo and Juliet* (Los Angeles, dir. Sir Peter Hall); *She Stoops to Conquer, Orpheus Descending* (West End, dir. Sir Peter Hall); *The Killing of Sister George, The Threepenny Opera* (West End, dir. Tony Richardson); *Dickens' Women* (World tour); *Endgame* (Complicite/West End); *Me and My Girl* (Crucible Theatre, Sheffield); *A Day in the Death of Joe Egg* (Citizens Theatre, Glasgow); *Neighbourhood Watch* (Adelaide State Theatre); *The Importance of Being Miriam* (Australian tour).

**Television credits include:** *Bucket, Old Flames, Freud, The Life and Loves of a She Devil, Blackadder, The Girls of Slender Means, Oliver Twist, The History Man, Vanity Fair, Supply & Demand, Frannie's Turn, Dharma & Greg, Murder at the Vicarage, Dickens in America, Merlin, Doc Martin, The Miss Fisher Murder Mysteries, Trollied, Rake, Plebs, The Real Marigold Hotel, The Real Marigold on Tour, Lady C and the Castle.*

**Film credits include:** *Yentl, Little Shop of Horrors, I Love You to Death, End of Days, Sunshine, The Age of Innocence, Cold Comfort Farm, Magnolia, The Life and Death of Peter Sellers, Modigliani, Being Julia, Ladies in Lavender, Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets, Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows – Part 2, The Legend of Longwood, Outlier.*

**Voice credits and audio book credits include:** *Oliver Twist, Great Expectations, Alice in Wonderland, Alice Through the Looking-Glass, Matilda, Pinnocchio, The Worst Witch series, The Queen and I, The Little White Horse, The Sea, Troy & Wise Child, The Human Body, Nina Needs to Go, Nina Needs to Eat, Bottersnike & Gumbles, Mulan, Babe.*

**Radio credits include:** *The Gloomburys.*

**Awards include:** WhatsOnStage Award for Best Supporting Actress 2010 for *Endgame*; WhatsOnStage Award for Best Supporting Actress 2007 for *Wicked*; BAFTA Award for Best Supporting Actress 1993 for *The Age of Innocence*, Los Angeles Critics Circle Award for Best Supporting Actress 1989 for *Little Dorrit*; Sony Radio Award for Best Actress 1993 for *Oliver Twist*.

In 2002, HM the Queen awarded her the Order of the British Empire for her services to drama. In 2013 she achieved dual citizenship by becoming an Australian citizen.

(Headshot © Jennifer Robertson)