



"The very first tune I ever learned to play was 'That'll Be The Day'. My mother Julia taught it to me on the banjo, sitting there with endless patience until I managed to work out all the chords" – JOHN LENNON

FIRST CASTING ANNOUNCED FOR STORY OF LENNON'S MISSING BANJO

Lennon's Banjo – one of the most hotly-anticipated new plays of 2018 - will premiere at Liverpool's **Epstein Theatre** next spring.

And today producers reveal the first four cast members who will appear in this fascinating romp through Beatledom to find the **holy grail of pop memorabilia** - the first instrument John Lennon learnt to play - **missing for 60 years** and now worth millions!

Coronation Street and *Doctor Who's* **Eric Potts** will play tour guide and Beatle nerd Barry in the world premiere. Barry's love for the Fab Four is all consuming but his obsession and relentless ramblings is a constant irritation to his so-called friends.

Jake Abraham takes on the role of disgruntled Beatles Shop co-owner Steve, a guy who has heard Yellow Submarine once too often and is now desperate to escape to a new life. Also signed up to appear are **Lynn Francis** and **Roy Carruthers**. Lynn will play work-weary pub landlady Brenda, and Barry's only true friend, while Roy takes on the role of ruthless Texan businessman Tony DeVito.

Produced by **Pulse Records Ltd** in association with **Bill Elms**, **Lennon's Banjo** will open at **Liverpool's Epstein Theatre** on **Tuesday 24 April 2018** for a **two-week run**, continuing through until **Saturday 5 May**.

On 9 October 1957, a young **John Lennon** turned 17. It was the last birthday he would spend with his mother, Julia, who was killed the following summer in a road traffic accident. 2018 marks the 60th anniversary of Julia's death and the banjo's disappearance.

It is well documented that Lennon was estranged from his parents and brought up by his Aunt Mimi. He said in many of his interviews: *"I lost my mother twice. Once when I was five-years-old when she left me with my Aunt Mimi, and again at 17 when she was run over by a drunken off-duty police officer."*

It was Julia Lennon who introduced John to the world of pop music, teaching him to play rock and roll on a banjo, given to her by John's grandfather. Lennon often recounted how he would sneak off to visit his mum who lived only a few miles away. There, he would learn to play songs like 'That'll Be The Day'. He has been quoted as saying: *"Mum would sit there with endless patience until I managed to work out all the chords."*

Mysteriously, the banjo went missing shortly after Julia Lennon's death and no-one has set eyes on it since. One thing is certain though, if it did resurface it is estimated to be worth in the region of five million pounds.

"The intrigue and mystery surrounding Lennon's missing banjo, and the logic that it could be sitting in somebody's attic right now, has the potential to make headlines around the world. The story crosses over beautifully from fiction to fact and back again to tease and tantalise you into believing every word is true." Trinity Mirror

So where do the facts end and the fiction begin? Everything **will** be revealed in this intriguing, colourful and fast-paced comic caper starring a talented cast of actors.

Bristol Old Vic-trained **Eric Potts** played baker Diggory Compton in *Coronation Street*, and has also starred in *Still Game*, *Doctor Who* and *Last of the Summer Wine*. His theatre appearances include *Brassed Off*, *When We Are Married*, *Art*, *Footloose* and *Cissie and Ada*.

And the actor, writer and director is also a panto legend, writing many of the First Family Entertainments' Christmas shows.

Lock, Stock And Two Smoking Barrels star **Jake Abraham** has an extensive list of film, TV and theatre credits to his name including *51st State*, *Game of Thrones*, *Justice*, *Red Dwarf*, and, on stage, *On the Ledge*, *You'll Never Walk Alone*, *The Ale House* and *Council Depot Blues*.

Lynn Francis is a regular on the Liverpool theatre stage. She has recently appeared in two runs of *The Royal* at Royal Court Liverpool. Other credits include *Ladies Day*, *A Nightmare On Lime Street* and *The Salon*.

Roy Carruthers' stage credits include *Twopence To Cross The Mersey*, *Ladies Night*, *Funny Money* and *Night Collar*. His screen appearances include *Good Cop*, *Longford* and *Sparkle*.

Lennon's Banjo is written and co-produced by **Rob Fennah**.

Rob said: *"It's like The Beatles meets the Da Vinci Code. As a huge Beatles' fan myself, I have matched the story to historical reality including dates, places and events. I want everyone to enjoy the romp through Beatledom in search of the holy grail of pop memorabilia and come out of the theatre believing, as I do, that the banjo is still out there somewhere just waiting to be found."*

The new play is based on the 2012 novel **Julia's Banjo** by **Rob Fennah** and **Helen A Jones**.

No stranger to theatre, Fennah wrote both the musical and stage play adaptations of **Helen Forrester's Twopence to Cross the Mersey**. He is currently working on the stage play sequel to Twopence, **By The Waters Of Liverpool** which is being premiered at the Liverpool Empire in October 2018.

Lennon's Banjo is directed by **Mark Heller**.

Mark said: *"I'm really excited to be a part of Lennon's Banjo, and to work with such a talented experienced cast."*

"I can't wait to jump, full steam ahead, into rehearsals and start exploring this adventurous mystery caper that Rob has created with his marvellous script – working with the cast to bring these fun, eclectic bunch of characters to life."

The creative team behind the show have previously announced the **Fab Four Production Partners** onboard as being **The Cavern**, **The Beatles Story**, **Hard Days Night Hotel**, and **The Beatles Shop**.

Missing for 60 years... The holy grail of pop is now worth millions to whoever finds it!

Watch the Promo Video here <https://youtu.be/ddpVnRStAmo>

For more info visit www.lennonsbanjo.com

LISTING INFORMATION

LENNON'S BANJO

Epstein Theatre

Tue 24 April – Sat 5 May 2018

Tickets from £16

Group Rates Available

HOW TO BOOK

Tickets are on sale now.

EPSTEIN THEATRE

ONLINE: www.epsteinliverpool.co.uk

CALL: 0844 888 4411

IN PERSON: Hanover Street, Liverpool, L1 3DZ | Mon-Thu 2pm-6pm, Fri & Sat 12pm-6pm

TICKETQUARTER

ONLINE: www.ticketquarter.co.uk

CALL: 0844 8000 410

IN PERSON: Echo Arena Box Office, Kings Dock, Liverpool, L3 4FP | 12noon on Echo Arena event days, and from 9am - 6pm on Fridays.

ENDS

For more information, please contact Bill Elms at Bill Elms Associates on 0151 245 0136 or email bill@billelms.com

High res images available on request.

EDITORS NOTES

Press Night Performance – Wednesday 25 April 2018 at 7.30pm

Partners and supporters

