



**DAVID LEARNER
DOUGLAS WALKER
MARY HIGGINS**

**THE
DAME
AND
THE
ACTOR**

A BENEDICT O'KEEFE FILM

LOGLINE: A miserable pantomime dame risks his career and friendships attempting to achieve artistic satisfaction.

SYNOPSIS:

The Dame is an aging successful actor most known for his role as pantomime dame Fanny Coddle, but he wants more. He wants realism, to portray reality, he is tired of not doing 'legitimate' acting. He wants to abandon his identity of the panto dame to be a real actor. So he throws away all of his success, gambling it on a new play, one he writes himself. Strongarming his oldest and most loyal friend Williams into helping him, together the two navigate balancing a new play and the Dame's ego. Young and fresh-faced new actor Julia Price is recruited onto the project and begins to test the Dame's directorial patience. The acting generations begin to clash as the Dame is proven to be falling behind the times. This is only further illuminated when the Dame gives a disastrous interview in attempt to promote the play. With things falling apart Williams attempts to hold it all together, sticking by his friend despite the abuse, but he has doubts, he's not sure he can do it for much longer.

FILMMAKER BIO:

Benedict O'Keefe is a non-binary writer and director based in Brighton where they study film, graduating in July 2024 with "The Dame and the Actor" as their graduate project. They have been involved in over 100 shows at the Edinburgh Fringe in 2022 and 2023 as a technician with renowned performance groups such as the Oxford Imps, and Ghost Writers (The Adventures of the Improvised Sherlock Holmes) as well as individual performers such as Tom GK (Chemodian, How to Record the Greatest Album of All Time). Benedict is director, writer and producer for the film, initially believing that he may have to make the project alone, shouldering much of the responsibility, before signing on a talented creative team of friends to assist him.

STARRING:

Sir Michael Stewart played by David Learner – previously seen as Marvin the Paranoid Android in the BBC's "The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy" series and in the 90's children's TV series "Knightmare". More recently he was in the 2023 Haverhill panto production of Dick Whittington, building to his performance as our lead Dame in "The Dame and the Actor".

James Williams played by Douglas Walker – a writer and actor who first met the director in Edinburgh 2023 as Douglas performed his show "My Father's Nose". Douglas was also in a production of "The Visit" at the National Theatre in 2020.

Julia Price played by Mary Higgins – a non-binary actor and creative, their show "the Last Show Before We Die" has recently finished a successful second run at the YARD THEATRE in London and another at the OLD VIC in Bristol, all of this off the back of their popularity at the 2023 Edinburgh Festival Fringe.

DIRECTOR'S VISION:

"In creating this film my intention was to tell a story of someone that was tired of pretending to be someone he wasn't, pretending to be a pantomime dame when that's not what he wants to be. It was written at a time when I felt the same way, I felt so hard that I had to put on a face for other people, and so writing this was my way of expressing that. I also wanted to have a story that encapsulated this wonderful and varied world of entertainment we inhabit. In theatre,

gender is very regularly messed with, especially in pantomime. Things that have been done for centuries by actors and pantomime dames, are suddenly issues when it comes to queer people. And the Dame himself is a part of this, shunning the queerness that comes with being a dame, insisting that he is instead a “legitimate actor”.

This film also highlights the evolution of the industry, the older actor from a bygone era, still clinging on to his past successes. His bigotry protected by the career he hates. Comforted but ultimately moved on by the present, shown in James Williams. The more progressive actor, socially aware but still reflecting the straight white male of the past. Both confronted by the future in Julia Price. An outwardly queer individual that challenges the Dame, but even they continue to embody the limited progression in our industry, allowed to be queer, but still resembling the actors of the past, middle to upper-class and white.”

PUBLICITY SHOTS:







