



Blind Summit presents

The Sex Lives of Puppets

By Mark Down and Ben Keaton

January 22–24, 2026

7:30pm

Studio Theatre



PROGRAM

Blind Summit presents

The Sex Lives of Puppets

By Mark Down and Ben Keaton

MARK DOWN

Idea

MARK DOWN & BEN KEATON

Writer/Directors

JAMES MCKENZIE

Lighting

MARK DOWN

Design

MARK DOWN & RUSSELL DEAN

Puppet Design

MARK DOWN & CHARLINA LUCAS

Costume Design

FERGUS CARVER

Touring Technical Manager

PUPPET MAKERS

Russell Dean, Helen Foan, Nick Barnes, Fiona Clift,
Natasha Burns, Rachel Salenius, Charlina Lucas

PUPPETEERS

Mark Down, Isobel Griffiths, Dale Wylde, Elliot Liburd

REPRESENTATION

Mark Price at Amanda Howard Agency represents
Mark Down and Blind Summit for Direction and
Puppetry Direction worldwide.

Glynis Henderson Productions represents *The Sex
Lives of Puppets* worldwide.

Blind Summit is a theatre company notorious for using puppets to address unlikely subjects. *The Sex Lives of Puppets* is a multi-layered piece of theatre. On the surface, it offers a fun and frank exploration of puppet desire at the hands of their Dionysian puppet-masters, and on a deeper level, it offers engaging, skilled puppetry to express human moods, fears, worries, hang-ups, and desires that will immediately resonate. This collaboration between Blind Summit's puppets and Great Britain's National Survey of Sexual Attitudes and Lifestyles is described by *The New York Times* as "oddly adorable" and by *The Stage* as "a refreshingly positive message about sharing intimacy, shedding inhibitions, and finding your own joy."

This performance includes strong language and sexual references.

There will be a 20-minute intermission.

"Boundary-pushing puppetry specialists Blind Summit explore sexual behavior in this inventive, silly, and visually arresting comedy (but), as silly as it all is, there are moments of real, heartfelt tenderness. And the play delivers a refreshingly positive message about sharing intimacy, shedding inhibitions, and finding your own joy." (*The Stage*)

"Overflows with humor and pointed honesty." (*Shadows on the Wall*)

PROFILES

BLIND SUMMIT

Blind Summit is a London-based, internationally touring producer of puppet-based theatre under the vision of Artistic Director Mark Down. For 20 years, Blind Summit has consistently subverted people's expectations of puppetry: from giant storybook characters in the opening ceremony of London's 2012 Olympic Games to *The Table*, a globally successful touring production that completely up-ended audiences' understanding of how puppet and puppeteer communicate. Blind Summit and their cohort of exceptional makers and puppeteers have contributed to the creation of some of the most extraordinary spectacles of recent years, including *The Magic Flute* on the Lake Stage at the Bregenz Festspiele, Complicité's *The Master and Margherita* at Avignon, and *Peter and the Wolf* at the Hollywood Bowl. Their ambition is to "make puppetry history."



MARK DOWN

**Artistic Director, Writer, Director,
Performer**

Mark Down co-founded Blind Summit in 1997 with Nick Barnes. Before forming Blind Summit, he worked as a performer with companies such as London Bubble, Cardboard Citizens, Stanley Hall Opera, Treadwell Gallery, Wireframe, Dynamic New Animation, Theatre Rites, Globe Players, Midsummer Actors, Economical Truth, and Turning Point TC, and had various roles on TV and in commercials, including *Eastenders* and *Granada Breeze*. He also did occasional stand-up comedy.

For Blind Summit, Down writes, directs, designs, and performs. His work in theatre includes *Peter and the Wolf* (Los Angeles Philharmonic at the Hollywood Bowl), *1984* (Battersea Arts Centre), *Angus and Thongs and Even More Snogging* (West Yorkshire Playhouse), *His Dark Materials* (Birmingham Rep and West Yorkshire Playhouse), *Shun-kin* (a Complicité co-production with Japan's Setagaya Theatre and The Barbican), and *Greenland* (National Theatre). In opera, he directed *Le Rossignol* and was puppetry designer and director for *The Magic Flute* (Bregenz Festival), *El Gato Con Botas* (Broadway: Gotham Chamber Opera, Tectonic Theatre Project), and *Kommilitonen!* (Royal Academy of Music and The Juilliard School, New York). He has collaborated with choreographers such as Will Tuckett in *Faeries* (ROH2) and Akram Khan in *The Vertical Road*. He has also directed and performed puppetry for TV including *Holy Flying Circus* and *Professor Branestawm*, both for the BBC. He has written, directed, and performed in over 45 productions.

Mark Down teaches puppetry technique at all the major London drama schools. In 2022, he published *A Practical Guide to Puppetry* which sets out how to learn Blind Summit's unique "extreme puppetry style." It is on sale worldwide. Down's most recent shows – *The Sex Lives of Puppets*, *What To Do in a Puppet Emergency*, and *The Law Of Gravity* (with The Scottish Ensemble) – are currently touring.



BEN KEATON

Writer, Director

Irishman Ben Keaton, a writer director, and teacher, has been a multi-award-winning actor with an Olivier nomination, a Perrier Award, and three *Manchester Evening News* awards under his belt. He has acted in TV shows *Father Ted* and *Casualty* (regular cast), the film *East Is East*, and played the lead in countless theatre productions including *Cyrano de Bergerac*, *Animal Crackers*, *Harvey*, *The Odd Couple*, and *American Buffalo* in the regions and London's West End. He has written six series for the BBC and Channel 4; has directed corporate videos, short films, and documentaries; and has collaborated with circus performers, comedians, dancers, and puppet companies, most recently as co-director and writer of *The Sex Lives of Puppets* with Mark Down for Blind Summit. He is the founder of the charity The Creativity Academy, which is dedicated to bringing the creative process to young children in the deprived area of East Lindsey, Lincolnshire. At the age of six, Keaton won the book *Mr. Man and His New Red Van* at a school prize-giving. He has been a writer ever since. His work is rhythmical, comic, and fearless – a distinctive voice in constant search of adventure.



JAMES MCKENZIE

Lighting

James McKenzie is a freelance lighting designer working across all art forms and genres with a particular love of dance, opera, and highly visual theatre. His

designs have been seen across the United Kingdom and internationally, and he enjoys collaborating and creating on both small and large productions. McKenzie believes strongly in working collaboratively with the whole creative team from early in the process to create a cohesive and meaningful design. Alongside his lighting work, McKenzie is the Artistic Director of award-winning Zoo Venues at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, where he programs a range of companies specializing in dance and physical theatre.



RUSSELL DEAN

Puppet Maker

Russell Dean is Artistic Director of Strangeface Theatre Company. His roles include planning and communicating the artistic vision of the company, designing and making the masks and puppets, and running residencies and workshops. Dean studied at Aberystwyth University where he gained a first-class degree in drama. He has worked as a freelance designer/maker and facilitator for Trestle Theatre Company, Welsh National Opera, and Theatre Company Blah Blah Blah among others. He has been a writer, director, designer/maker, performer, project manager, and facilitator on nine productions and hundreds of workshops for Strangeface since 2001. With his reputation as one of the country's leading mask makers, he designs and makes commissions and box sets of masks for schools, groups, and other artists such as Vamos, Bootworks, and Mick Barnfather.



FERGUS CARVER **Touring Technical Manager**

Fergus Carver is a freelance musician, technician, and sound designer living and working in London. He studied music at Durham University, specializing in electronic music composition, and has worked extensively in theatre across all departments but specializing in sound. He has worked in technical management since 2021 and, most recently, held the position of Deputy Technical Manager at Southwark Playhouse where he managed teams of freelancers, ran load-ins and load-outs, handled seating turnarounds, and oversaw many productions.

Carver first worked with Blind Summit in January 2024, helping install *The Sex Lives of Puppets* at Southwark Playhouse. When the show returned to London in September 2024, he again managed the production for the venue and helped with programming and rigging. Carver is a regular at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, working with all major venues and as an operator, lighting designer, sound designer, and performer. His recent projects included sound design for Fishing 4 Chips' production of *It's Gonna Blow* (Pleasance Dome, Edinburgh, 2025); lighting, programming, and operating for Josie Long: *Now Is the Time of Monsters* (Pleasance Dome, Edinburgh, 2025); and a production of *The Trials* at Southwark Playhouse (August, 2025).



CHARLINA LUCAS **Puppet Maker, Costume Design**

Charlina Lucas is a trained stage and costume designer (University Mozarteum, Salzburg, Austria). She began working with Blind Summit in February 2017 as a puppet maker and has since contributed to numerous freelance projects with the company. Since 2022, Lucas has been a regular member of the Blind Summit team, working as an administrator and taking on a range of roles such as designer, company manager, and show operator. She has been involved in the development of *The Sex Lives of Puppets* since the initial puppeteer auditions in May 2022.



ISOBEL GRIFFITHS **Puppeteer**

Isobel Griffiths is an actor, puppeteer, and theatre-maker from Bristol. She trained at Rose Bruford College and graduated in 2021. Griffiths has been working and devising with Blind Summit since 2023. Her professional theatre credits include *The Sex Lives of Puppets* (Southwark Playhouse, Edinburgh Fringe) and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Antic Disposition). Her student credits include *Boudica* (The Unicorn Theatre) and *[BLANK]* (Rose Bruford College). Film/TV credits include *The Fence* (Red Anchor Films) and *Dust* (UWE Film).



DALE WYLDE

Puppeteer

Dale Wylde is a teacher, director, and performer who trained at East 15 (BA Hons Physical Theatre) and has since worked with many directors and artists, including

David Glass (David Glass Ensemble), Briony O'Callaghan (Created a Monster), Matej Matejka (Grotowski Institute, Studio Matejka, Poland), Marie-Gabrielle Rotie, Mark Down (Blind Summit Theatre), Saga Kobayashi, Minoru Hidoshi, and Matsuko Tanaka (Hijikata Memorial Museum, Otsuki, Japan). Wylde is an associate artist with Flabbergast Theatre, Created a Monster, and the David Glass Ensemble. He was an associate director for Flabbergast Theatre's *Macbeth*, which was nominated for two Off West End Theatre awards ("The Offies"), one of which was for his performance. He recently served as puppetry director for David Glass's original show *Galapagos*.

As a teacher, Wylde has facilitated workshops for both children and adults for some of the most accredited institutes in the country, including EDUQAS (workshops for secondary school teachers from all around the United Kingdom). Wylde's work brings together a broad range of influences from mask, mime, and puppetry to work in poor theatre, commedia dell'arte, and butoh.



ELLIOT LIBURD

Puppeteer

Elliot Liburd graduated from Kent University and then trained at The Fourth Monkey. His recent theatre credits include *Alice in Wonderland* at the Marylebone Theatre (2025),

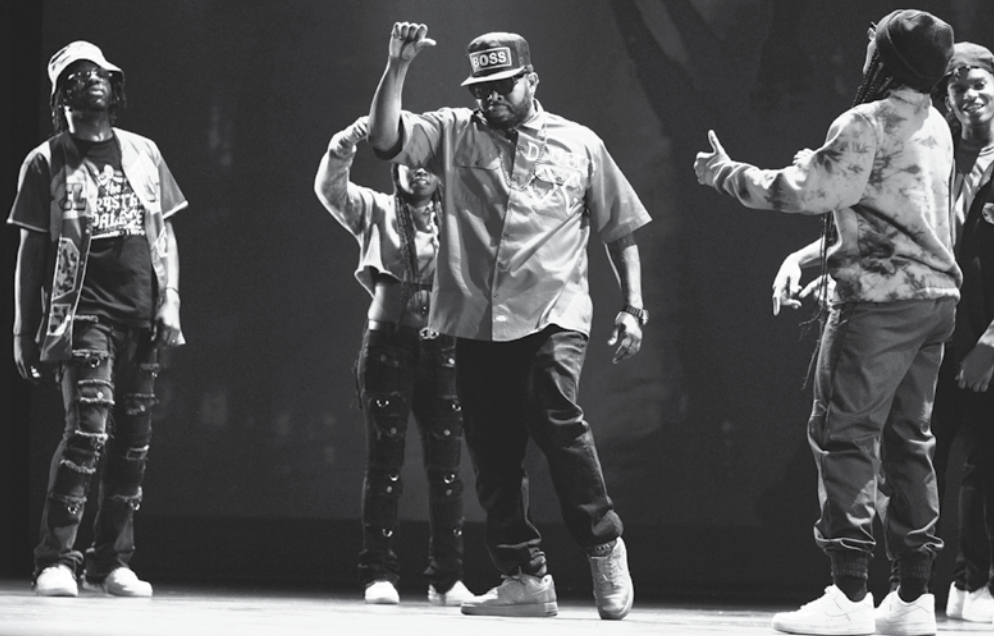
Punch Drunk's *The Lost Lending Library* (2025), the role of John Grenville in Exeter Northcott Theatre's *The Commotion Time* (2024), *The Instrumentalists* at The Southbank Centre (2024), and *Jay Gatsby* in *The Immersive Great Gatsby* in London's West End (2023). Other credits include Les Enfants Terribles' *Sherlock Holmes: An Online Adventure* (2021) and *The Third Day: Autumn* for Punchdrunk and Sky TV (2020).



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Kathleen Henry
Jill Hieronymus

Marcy Joncich
Mary Ann Judd
Carl Kagawa
Bruce Kruger
Rudy Leon
Lynda Lopez
Penny Lopez
Pezz Lopez
James McEnerney
Linda Meachum
Brenda Mehnert
Kathleen Metcalf
David Mies
Sharron Mies
Carol Miles
Carol Miller
Julie Mills
Patrick Mills
Frank Modica
Heather Munro
Christina Myers
Marjorie Olson
Natalia Ospina-
Munoz
Brenda Pacey
Jane Pica
Jerry Pica
Renee Potter
Rosa Pullen
Carol Sato
Barbara Schleicher
Christel Seyfert
Lei Shanbhag

Carrie Storrs
Neil Sullivan
Alice Taylor
John Taylor
Rodney Vanous
Yuankun Wang
Kelly Warner
Jay Weber
Jean Weigel
Liesel Wildhagen
Benjamin Williams
Douglas Williams
Julie Wirth
Krystal Ye
Hahwi Yoon
Joseph Zumalt

Krannert Center Student Ambassadors

Kaitlyn Adaya
Fiyin Adekoya
Saksham Aggarwal
Emily Aldrich
Smaya Anand
Aditya Barman
Zuzana Bielak
Ann Bijou
Thomas Bobitz
Zoe Bohannon
Zach Bottoms
Lexi Cao

Kayla Cash
Xixi Chen
Leon Chien
Iyesha Childress
Rachel Choi
Leanna Cui
Nooriyah Doriwala
Nicole Dudek
Joseph Edamala
Nia Ellis
Maricruz Figueroa
Myra Gallant
Andros Gao
Shuoyuan Gao
Jada Giddens
Finn Gray
Vedansh Gupta
Jiho Han
Grace He
Atalhea Herman
Kaye Hidalgo
Yanshu Hou
Justin Huff
Hemanth Itte
Uma Iyer
Fasih Javed
Hyorim Jin
Yixuan Jin
Jade Johnson
Rachana Kanathur
Asheera Kaul
Sophie Kim
Ellen King

Pallavi Kochar
Kyle Krisdakumtorn
Amelia Lamis
Maddie Lawson
Irie Lee
Isabella Lee
Julianna Lee
Jungeun Lee
Leo Lee
Tristan Lee
Zachary Lee
Ava Lendman
Tavisha Lijhara
Hanning Lin
Sara Lin
Marlo Lindquist
Chenzhi Liu
Chunyu Lu
Yamini Malli
Julian Martinez
Maddie McCammon
Margaret Meagher
Daniel Mend
Zixiang Meng
Audrey Miller
Francis Moffatt
Emily Murawski
Samuel Naatz
Ruka Nakatani
Stuti Pai
Dhairya Vibhav
Parikh

Diana Patiño-	Lixin Wu
Carreon	Sissi Wu
Karol Penuelas	Lily Xie
Christopher Perez	Ziruo Yang
Niranjana Pillai	Qingping Ye
Adithya Raman	Haelly Young
Carolina Rosas	Qihao Zhan
Sukhbir Singh Saggi	Canwen Zhang
Ava Saldana	James Zhang
Eva Santoyo	Jie Zhang
Ellie Schmidgall	Qi Zhang
Santino Schrieber	William Zhang
Carissa Schultz	Xinyu Zhang
Megna Sivakumar	Yijia Zhang
Julia Stern	Jiesheng Zheng
Cliff Sun	Ryan Zhou
Aiki Suzuki	Yifna Zhu
Mann Talati	Margaret Zywicki
Greyson Talkington	
Thomas Valerius	
MacKenzie Van	
Ryne	
Alex Von Holten	
Connor Waddell	
Rebekah Wakayama	
Archie-Em Walker	
Tess Walker	
Jiaxin Wan	
Xile Wang	
Elodie Ward	
Ari Warner	
Jastina Washington	
Trey Weitner	

KRANNERT CENTER STAFF

Mike Ross, Director
Cheryl Snyder, Director of Advancement
Terri Anne Ciofalo, Associate Director for Production
Maureen V. Reagan, Associate Director for
Administration and Patron Experience
Lindsay Dalrymple, Assistant Director for Operations
Julianne Ehre, Assistant Director for Programming
and Engagement
Craig Miles, Assistant Director for Marketing and
Communications

EVENTS

Andrew Almeter, Senior Production Coordinator
for Events
Bree Brock, Production Coordinator for Events
Rebecca Russell, Assistant Technical Director for Events
Rachel Gladd, Performing Arts Events Coordinator

PROGRAMMING AND ENGAGEMENT

Julianne Ehre, Assistant Director for Programming
and Engagement
Jason Finkelman, Artistic Director of Global Arts
Performance Initiatives
Emily Laugesen, Director of Community Engagement
Sam Smith, Director of Civic Engagement and Social
Practice
Nick Wurl, Engagement and Programming Coordinator

ADVANCEMENT

Cheryl Snyder, Director of Advancement
David Drake, Advancement Team Assistant
Frank Niemeyer, FAA Annual Giving Officer

OPERATIONS

Lindsay Dalrymple, Assistant Director for Operations

Director's Office

Vanessa Lane, Office Manager
Zia Moon, Krannert Center Showcase Director, Office
and Communications Support Specialist

Building Operations

John O. Williams, Facility Manager
Tony Mapson, Assistant Facility Manager
Joe Butsch, Building Electrician
Steven Lessor, Assistant Chief Building Operations
Engineer
Scott Butler, Eric Carr, Emmett Catlin, Austin Dearth,
Sara Dietrich, John Ekstrom, Jessica Fancher, Bryan
Franzen, Salatheo Kindle, Jacob Lerch, Chabu Nsokoshi,
Chad Schwenk, Robert Shaw, Attendants

MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS

Craig Miles, Assistant Director for Marketing and
Communications
Sean Kutzko, Assistant Communication Director
Nicholas Mulvaney, Art Director

ADMINISTRATION AND PATRON SERVICES

Maureen V. Reagan, Associate Director for
Administration and Patron and Patron Experience

Food Services

Amy Thomas, Food Services Director
Michael Bunting, Hospitality Supervisor
Elizabeth Henke, Stage 5 Bar Manager
John Ingalls, Intermezzo Kitchen Lead

Ticketing and Patron Services

Whitney Havice, Ticketing and Patron Services Director
Ann-Marie Dittmann, Patron Services Assistant Director
Ty Mingo, Assistant Ticket Services Director
Jon Proctor, Ticket Sales Supervisor
Adrian Rochelle, Front of House Performance Supervisor

PRODUCTION

Terri Anne Ciofalo, Director of Production
Maria Miguens, Production Manager

Audio Department

Rick Scholwin, Audio Director
Alec LaBau, Associate Audio Director and Video Director
Tyler Knowles, Assistant Audio Director, Live Stream
Engineer

Costume Shop

Andrea Bouck, Costume Director
Richard Gregg, Costume Rentals Director and Associate
Costume Shop Director
Paige Stewart-Rankins, Hair and Makeup Supervisor
Julianna Steitz, First Hand
April McKinnis, EB McTigue, Cutters/Drapers

Kari Little-McKinney, Theatrical Stitcher
Chantel Renee, Costume Crafts

Lighting Department

Lisa Kidd, Lighting Director
David Krupla, Associate Lighting Director
Nicole Rataj, Assistant Lighting Director

Properties Department

Adriane Binky Donley, Properties Director
Kira Lyon, Assistant Properties Director

Scene Shop

Ryan Schultz, Technical Director
Tatsuya Ito, Associate Technical Director
Bill Kephart, Office Administrator
Bobby Reynolds, Theatrical Scene Shop Coordinator
Anna Atkinson, Theatrical Scene Shop Assistant
Rebecca Russell, Acting Crew Head
Kayley Woolums, Theatrical Scene Shop Assistant

PERFORMING ARTS BUSINESS SERVICE CENTER

Jenell Hardy, Director of Business Services
Macauley Allen, Business Services Specialist
Debbie Delaney, Accounting Staff
Angela Wang, Business Services Specialist

WE'RE SO GLAD YOU'RE AT THE CENTER

We work to create the best possible setting for the experiences you seek and find here.

Necessaries

Restrooms are located in the foyers of Foellinger Great Hall, Tryon Festival Theatre, and Colwell Playhouse; the east entrances on the Lobby level; and in each elevator lobby on Level 1 and Level 3. Lobby restrooms and one restroom in each elevator lobby are fully accessible and contain baby-changing stations.

Ushers will be happy to provide you cough drops courtesy of St. Joseph Apothecary, or disposable foam earplugs if the place starts rockin'.

If you or a companion needs medical assistance, contact an usher or other staff member.

Please take a moment before the performance to note the theatre exits nearest to you. If it becomes necessary to evacuate the theatre, please remain calm, follow the instructions of the house staff, and exit in an orderly fashion to the appropriate safe meeting location which will be announced to you.

Phones and Devices

The use of cell phones, cameras, and recording devices during performances is prohibited unless otherwise announced from the stage.

Late Arrivals

As a courtesy to performers and audience members, latecomers will be seated only at times selected in advance by the artist. Should you find that you've arrived late to a performance, our Patron Services staff will keep you informed about the earliest seating opportunity.

Lost Items

If you are in need of Lost and Found, please visit the Patron Services counter. We will do our best to reunite object and owner!

Ticket Returns

If you find you can't attend a performance, please contact the Ticket Office in advance, preferably by 6pm the day before the performance (kran-tix@illinois.edu or 217.333.6280). We never charge a handling fee on ticket transactions.

Accessibility

Krannert Center for the Performing Arts is committed to making experiences accessible for all patrons, and we are delighted to provide a number of services to assist you. Krannert Center is equipped with an assisted listening system, wheelchair-accessible and no-step/few-step seating, and large-print programs, Braille programs, and American Sign Language interpreters are available with three weeks' advance notice.

For assistance regarding your visit please contact patronservices@krannertcenter.illinois.edu or 217.333.9716 or visit go.KrannertCenter.com/Accessibility.

Para ayuda en relación con su visita, favor de enviar un email a:

Pour vous aider dans votre visite, prière de nous envoyer un courriel à:

欢迎! 如若您对您的造访需要帮助, 请发送电子邮件至:

स्वागत हे! अगर आपको अपने रहने के लिए मदद चाहिए, ईमेल कीजिए:

환영합니다! 방문에 관해 도움이 필요하실 때에는...
에게 이메일로 문의하시기 바랍니다:

PATRONSERVICES@KRANNERTCENTER.ILLINOIS.EDU
217.333.9716



COME BE MOVED.

Art at Krannert Center isn't something you just watch—it's something you feel.

COME ON IN.
WE'LL SAVE A SEAT FOR YOU.



krannert center

FRI JAN 30 AT 7:30PM



CIRQUE KALABANTÉ

AFRIQUE EN CIRQUE

 krannert center