

LA BÊTE

A COMEDY OF TRANSATLANTIC PROPORTIONS

STARRING MARK RYLANCE, DAVID HYDE PIERCE AND JOANNA LUMLEY

DIRECTED BY MATTHEW WARCHUS

TO PLAY IN THE WEST END AND ON BROADWAY

Booking opens today (16 February 2010) in London for **Matthew Warchus'** production of **David Hirson's** *La Bête* starring **Mark Rylance**, **David Hyde Pierce** and **Joanna Lumley**. *La Bête* will preview from 26 June at the Comedy Theatre in the West End, playing until 28 August, with press night on 7 July. The production will then immediately transfer to Broadway, to a Shubert Theatre to be announced shortly, along with specific dates. *La Bête*, produced in London and New York by Sonia Friedman Productions & Scott Landis, Roger Berlind, Robert Bartner and Roy Furman, is designed by Mark Thompson, with lighting by Hugh Vanstone, music by Claire van Kampen and sound by Simon Baker. Further casting will be announced shortly.

American playwright David Hirson's rollicking 1991 play, *La Bête*, is a comic tour de force about Elomire (Pierce), a high-minded classical dramatist who loves only the theatre, and Valere (Rylance), a low-brow street clown who loves only himself. When the fickle princess (Lumley) decides she's grown weary of Elomire's royal theatre troupe, he and Valere are left fighting for survival as art squares off with ego in a literary showdown for the ages.

Internationally award-winning actor **Mark Rylance** (Valere) can currently be seen in London at the Apollo Theatre in *Jerusalem* for which his critically-acclaimed performance has won him the Critics' Circle and Evening Standard Best Actor awards as well as a nomination for the forthcoming Laurence Olivier Awards. Previously he played Hamm in Samuel Beckett's *Endgame* at the Duchess Theatre in London. In 2007/08 Rylance played Robert in *Boeing-Boeing* in the West End and on Broadway, a role for which he won the Tony Award for Best Performance by a Leading Actor in a Play. As Artistic Director of Shakespeare's Globe Theatre his work as an actor included the title roles in *Henry V* and *Hamlet* as well as Cleopatra in *Antony and Cleopatra* and Olivia in *Twelfth Night*. His other theatre work includes many productions for the Royal Shakespeare Company and the National Theatre as well as roles at the Donmar Warehouse and the Royal Court. In the West End he played Benedict in *Much Ado about Nothing* directed by Matthew Warchus, for which he won the Olivier Award for Best Actor. His film and television work includes *The Other Boleyn Girl*, *Prospero's Books* and *The Government Inspector* for which he won the BAFTA Best Actor Award for his role as David Kelly.

Best known for his performance as Dr Niles Crane in the multi award-winning American sitcom *Frasier*, Tony and four-time Emmy award-winning **David Hyde Pierce** (Elomire) will make his West End stage debut in *La Bête*. On Broadway he starred in *Curtains*, for which he won the Tony Award for Best Performance by a Leading Actor in a Musical, and he originated the role of Brave Sir Robin in *Monty Python's Spamalot*. He created roles in the

Off-Broadway and regional productions of Mark O'Donnell's *That's it Folks!*, Richard Greenberg's *The Author's Voice* and *The Maderati*, Harry Kondoleon's *Zero Positive*, Jules Feiffer's *Elliot Loves* and Richard Alfieri's *Six Dance Lessons in Six Weeks*. His other stage credits include appearances in *Hamlet* and *Much Ado* at the New York

Shakespeare Festival, *Holiday* and *Camille* at the Long Wharf Theatre, *The Seagull*, *Tartuffe*, *Cyrano*, and *Midsummer Night's Dream* at the Guthrie Theatre, and Peter Brook's production of *The Cherry Orchard* in New York, Moscow, Leningrad, and Tokyo. His film credits include *Bright Lights*, *Big City*, *Crossing Delancey*, *Little Man Tate*, *Sleepless in Seattle*, *Wolf*, *Nixon*, *Isn't She Great*, *Wet, Hot, American Summer*, *Full Frontal*, *Down With Love*, *A Bug's Life*, *Osmosis Jones* *Treasure Planet*, and the recent Sundance Film Festival Selection *The Perfect Host*.

Comedienne and actress **Joanna Lumley** (Princess Conti) is best known for playing Patsy Stone in the award-winning BBC television series, *Absolutely Fabulous*. Previously her television appearances included Purdy in *The New Avengers* as well as major roles in *Sapphire and Steel*, *Jam and Jerusalem* and *Sensitive Skin*. Lumley will make her Broadway debut in ***La Bête*** having previously been seen on stage in the UK as Madame Ranevsky in *The Cherry Orchard* for Sheffield Theatres, as Gertrude Lawrence in *Noel and Gertie* for the King's Head, Elvira in *Blithe Spirit* at the Vaudeville Theatre, as well as roles in *The Letter* for the Lyric Hammersmith, the title role in *Hedda Gabler*, *The Cherry Orchard* and *Private Lives* all for Dundee Rep. Her other screen appearances include *Shirley Valentine*, *Trail of the Pink Panther* and *Curse of the Pink Panther* and, more recently, she starred opposite Ben Kingsley as Mrs Lovett in *The Tale of Sweeney Todd*, *Mad Cows*, *Maybe Baby* and she was the voice of Aunt Spiker in *James and the Giant Peach*. Author of several best-selling books and human rights and animal welfare activist, Lumley recently headed a successful campaign in recognition of the Gurkhas. Lumley was awarded an OBE in 1995.

International Theatre Director **Matthew Warchus'** many award-winning theatre credits include *The Norman Conquests*, *Boeing-Boeing*, *God of Carnage*, *Art* and *Follies*, all of which he directed in the West End and on Broadway. Warchus has directed many productions for the National Theatre, the Royal Shakespeare Company, the Old Vic and the Donmar Warehouse as well as the following musicals - *Tell Me on a Sunday*, *Our House* and *The Lord of the Rings*. Warchus will direct a new musical version of the children's story *Matilda* for the Royal Shakespeare Company later this year and next year plans are underway for him to direct *Ghost*, a musical of the Academy Award-winning film.

David Hirson was born in New York City and was educated at Yale and Oxford. He is the author of two plays for the theatre, *La Bête* (1991) and *Wrong Mountain* (2000), both of which have been produced on Broadway. He has received numerous honours for his work, including the 1992 Laurence Olivier Award for Best Comedy. The original Broadway production of ***La Bête*** was nominated for five Tony awards in 1991. A collected edition of his plays is published by Grove Press. He is currently working on a new version of *Die Fledermaus* for the Metropolitan Opera.

Booking information

London

Dates:	26 June – 28 August 2010
Performance schedule:	Monday – Saturday at 7.30pm Wednesday and Saturday matinees at 2.30pm Nb there are no matinee performances on 30 June and 7 July
Box Office:	0844 871 7622
Ticket prices:	£15 - £50 Previews £5 off all prices