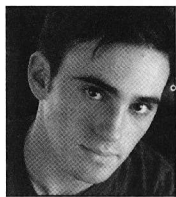


Gerald Farringdon..... Robert David Grant
 Bob Farringdon (*his elder brother*)..... Ari Brand
 Sir James Farringdon (*his father*)..... Wynn Harmon
 Lady Farringdon (*his mother*)..... Deanne Lorette
 Miss Farringdon (*his great-aunt*)..... Cynthia Harris
 Pamela Carey (*his betrothed*)..... Paton Ashbrook
 Henry Wentworth (*his friend*)..... Michael Frederic
 Thomas Todd (*his friend*)..... Andrew Fallaize
 Letty Herbert (*his friend*)..... Mia Hutchinson-Shaw
 Mason (*his old nurse*)..... Peggy J. Scott

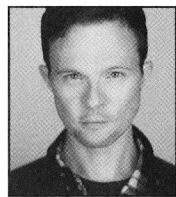
Act I At Sir James Farringdon's in the country. *A Saturday in June.*
 Act II A private hotel on Dover Street in London. *Two months later.*
 Act III..... At Sir James Farringdon's again. *Three months later.*



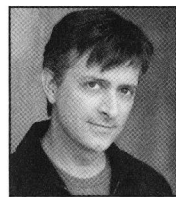
PATON ASHBROOK



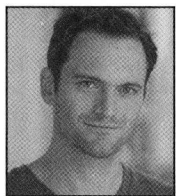
ARI BRAND



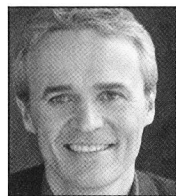
ANDREW FALLAIZE



MICHAEL FREDERIC



ROBERT DAVID GRANT



WYNN HARMON



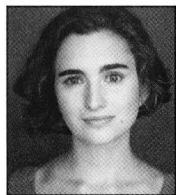
CYNTHIA HARRIS



DEANNE LORETTE



PEGGY J. SCOTT



MIA HUTCHINSON-SHAW

A BIOGRAPHY OF

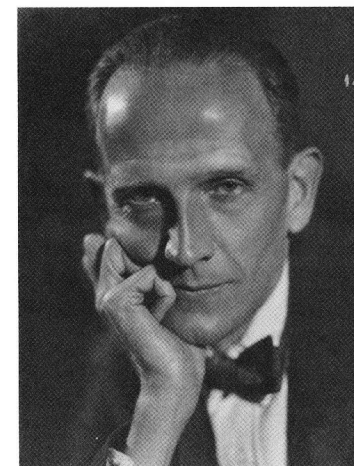
A.A. Milne

By Maya Cantu

At once ironic and fanciful, the work of A.A. Milne spanned a prolific range of novels, light verse, essays, and children's literature. Yet beyond his beloved *Winnie-the-Pooh* books, Milne wrote over two dozen plays marked by "enchanted ingenuity" (E.V. Lucas), skillful craftsmanship, and subtle wit. In plays such as *Mr. Pim Passes By*, *The Truth About Blayds*, and *The Lucky One*, Milne peered beneath the polite surfaces and semblances of English life. Throughout his work, Milne concealed a serious and penetrating eye under a charmingly light touch.

The youngest of educator John Vine Milne's three sons, Alan Alexander Milne was born in London on January 18th, 1882. A charmed fortune and jealous temperament coiled together throughout his early life. As Milne acknowledged in his 1939 *Autobiography*: "I was lucky."¹ A precocious child who started reading at two, Milne attended his father's Henley House preparatory school, where he excelled at mathematics (and where his science teacher was H.G. Wells). Although distant from his eldest brother Barry, Alan shared an "inseparable"² bond with the "sweet-tempered"³ middle child Ken, at whom he directed an equally intense sibling rivalry. As Milne recalled, "Every triumph (of Ken's) had over it the shadow of my impending triumph."⁴ At the age of eleven, he became among the youngest Queen's Scholars ever elected to attend Westminster School, where he joined Ken.

Here, Milne discovered gifts as a writer and humorist. Once again, competitive camaraderie with Ken fueled Alan's ambitions. Signing themselves "A.K.M." the two collaborated on light verse for Westminster's *The Elizabethan*. However, the two-year writing partnership ended after Alan won a scholarship to Trinity College,



Alan Alexander (A.A.) Milne, 1926

Cambridge, and Ken started training as a solicitor. After editing *The Granta* at Cambridge, Milne displayed so much promise in the pages of *Punch* that he was promoted to assistant editor of the legendary humor magazine at the age of twenty-four. At *Punch*, Milne earned renown as "already one of the foremost English humorists," as described by *The Times Literary Supplement*. His lucky streak only continued. Intending to send an effusive fan note and his book *The Day's Play* (1910) to Rudyard Kipling, Milne opted instead to send both to his greatest literary hero, J.M. Barrie; "I admired much of Kipling, but not like that.... So, not wishing to waste the letter, I sent it and the book to Barrie."⁵ Barrie, in turn, became a devoted mentor who inspired Milne to write his first one-act play, *Make-Believe*. Around this time, the vivacious socialite Dorothy "Daphne" de Sélincourt also entered Milne's life, and they married in 1913.

Over the course of World War I, Milne transformed from soldier to playwright. Leaving *Punch* in 1915, Milne served as a signals officer in England with the Royal Warwickshire Regiment. The next year, he was deployed to France. Encouraged by Barrie to attempt a new play in his spare hours before departure, Milne devised the satiric *Wurzel-Flummery*. After serving in



J.V. Milne with his sons, likely taken in 1886 when Alan (bottom) was four.

the Battle of the Somme, Milne was invalidated back to England with trench fever. The war, which Milne recalled as a “nightmare of mental and moral degradation,”⁶ left a lifelong mark. Milne embraced pacifism, even while being drafted in November 1917 to write propaganda for the English War Office. Milne remembered, “If it were not ‘patriotic’ enough... then the Major supplied the operative words in green pencil.”⁷ Yet, by then, Milne had started his rapid ascent as a dramatist. He followed the successful 1917 West End premiere of *Wurzel-Flummery*, performed on the same program as two Barrie one-acts, with the light comedy *Belinda* (1918) and the anti-war one-act drama *The Boy Comes Home* (1918). As Milne returned to civilian life in 1919, he and Daphne welcomed their only son, Christopher Robin, on August 21, 1920.

Milne’s breakthrough came with the sensational 1920 London premiere of *Mr. Pim Passes By*, which ran for 246 performances at the Gaiety Theatre, followed by its 1921 production by the Theatre Guild. A subtle farce, *Mr. Pim* followed the momentous implications of a chance encounter between Olivia Marden and the mysterious Carraway Pim, whose

revelations turn her union to husband George upside down. London’s *Daily Express* enthused, “The fun may have been as thin as gossamer, but the texture was woven with an inimitable touch.” By contrast, *The Chicago Tribune* observed the play’s dramatic undertones: “Under the somewhat fantastic and sparkling dialogue runs the threads of a perfectly sane and serious study of marriage.”

In the early 1920s, Milne established himself on both sides of the Atlantic as “one of England’s most successful, prolific and best-known playwrights.”⁸ Indeed, no less than three Milne comedies opened during the 1921–22 Broadway season: the effervescent *The Great Broxopp* and *The Dover Road*, and the sardonic *The Truth About Blayds*, in which the family of late Victorian poet Oliver Blayds discovers his life of literary fraud. Not unlike Milne’s detective novel, *The Red House Mystery* (1922), all three plays concerned the vagaries of being “mistaken for what one is not.”⁹ For *Blayds* (revived by Mint Theater in 2004, with *Mr. Pim Passes By*), Alexander Woollcott praised Milne in *The New York Times* as “the happiest acquisition the English theatre has made since it captured Barrie and Shaw.” At the same time, with *The Romantic Age* (1922), the playwright became increasingly saddled with a reputation for “whimsy.”

With Milne’s next Broadway play, the serio-comic *The Lucky One*, the playwright continued to demonstrate his versatility beyond being a “scrivener of lighter plays.”¹⁰ The play had been written in 1917 during Milne’s WWI service, but failed to find a producer in London. *The Nation’s* Ludwig Lewisohn considered it Milne’s best play to date, and observed of its 1922 premiere by the Theatre Guild, *The Lucky One* is “simply in a different world from all the other plays of Mr. Milne.... It analyzes a moral problem in strictly dramatic terms with both delicacy of touch and weightiness of intention.” By contrast, *The Stage* called the play “contrary, or perverse.” Running only 40 performances

on Broadway, *The Lucky One* received its first English production in 1924, finally making its West End debut retitled *Let’s All Talk About Gerald* in 1928.

The debut of Milne’s children’s books marked a pivotal change in his fortunes. Introduced in the 1923 poem “Vespers,” Christopher Robin reappeared in the light verse collection *When We Were Very Young* (1924), which Milne, visiting friends in Wales, had started writing to escape the incessant rain. He recalled, “I had eleven wet days in that summer-house and wrote eleven sets of verses.”¹¹ Drawing inspiration from both his three-year-old son and memories of his own childhood, Milne followed the book with a second verse collection, *Now We Are Six* (1927), and with the indelible *Winnie-the-Pooh* (1926) and *The House at Pooh Corner* (1928), both inspired by Christopher Robin’s stuffed animals.

Immortalized by his creation of the Hundred Acre Wood (based on the Ashdown Forest surrounding his home at Cotchford Farm, Sussex), Milne and his family attracted worldwide celebrity. However, Milne was increasingly passed by as a writer for adults. Infamously mocked by Dorothy Parker in her *New Yorker* “Constant Reader” column, Milne’s literary reputation would never fully recover from reviewers’ slights, nor from his combination of light verse and children’s literature: both perceived as not fully reputable genres, as noted by biographer Ann Thwaite. Milne later reminisced about his critical decline, “...The hero of my latest play, God help it, was ‘just Christopher Robin grown up.’”¹²

Milne enjoyed his last burst of Broadway and West End stage success in the late 1920s, with an eclectic string of plays. These included a satiric fairy tale parable about the susceptibility of truth to superstition, *The Ivory Door* (1927); an ingenious mystery play, *The Perfect Alibi* (1928); a romantic drama, *Michael and Mary* (1929); and *Toad of Toad Hall* (written 1921; first produced 1930), adapted from *The Wind*

in the *Willows*. After the disastrous Broadway production of *They Don’t Mean Any Harm* (1931), a moralizing satire of the Bright Young Things, Milne never had another substantial success as a playwright. As Christopher Robin Milne recalled, “He was writing just as fluently, just as gracefully. But fluency and grace were not enough: the public wanted stronger meat.”¹³ For Milne, the 1930s also brought personal hardship, as the author lost his beloved Ken to tuberculosis in 1929, and fell out permanently with eldest brother Barry in 1932.

In the 1930s and ‘40s, Milne increasingly retreated from the stage to other forms of writing, including short stories, autobiography, and the novels *Two People* (1932) and *Chloe Marr* (1946). The latter explored the enigmatic siren of the title from the perspective of her many suitors. While Milne wrote an acclaimed antiwar volume with *Peace with Honour* (1934), the advance of European fascism prompted his revised views of defending democracy in *War with*



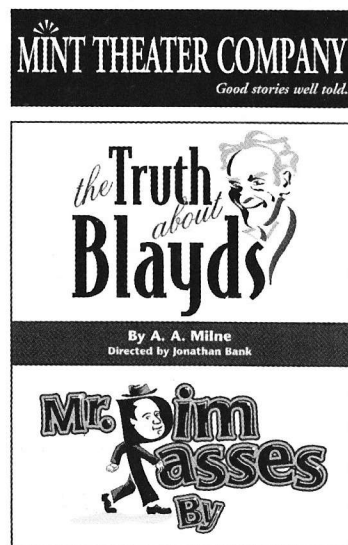
Mr. Pim Passes By, Mint (2004).
Lisa Bostnar & Stephen Schnetzer
Photo by Richard Termine

Honour (1940). His son also fought in WWII; returning from army service, Christopher Robin Milne grew increasingly distant and resentful of their shared fame. He recalled, “If I was jealous of (my father),

he was no less jealous of himself. If I wanted to escape from Christopher Robin, so too, did he."¹⁴ Yet Milne's final books picked up accolades. *The New York Times*' Irwin Edman praised *A Table Near the Band* (1950) for its "mordant geniality.... The dialogue in these tales is that of the polite comedies of Milne at his playfully ironic best."

A.A. Milne died on January 31, 1956, at the age of seventy-four, after a long period of illness from stroke and pneumonia. Although memorialized by *The New York Times* as "much more than a writer of children's fantasies," Milne was primarily remembered for his books for the young; much of his other writing fell out of print. At the time of his death, the *Pooh* books had sold some seven million copies. Starting in 1966, they also captivated new generations in their adaptations by Disney. As the legend of *Pooh* continued to grow, Christopher Robin Milne published a bittersweet 1975 memoir, *The Enchanted Places*, in which he remembered Milne's doting love as a parent, but also his deep-seated reserve: "My father's heart remained buttoned up all his life."¹⁵ A 1913 profile of A.A. Milne in *The Daily Citizen* described him similarly: "In many ways, he resembles his work. He is refined, subtle, and elusive."

For all of his recognition as an icon of children's literature, Milne's plays focus on the elusiveness of identity, as well as the caprices of fortune that contribute to



Program cover from *Milne at the Mint* (2004).

shaping it. His wry and empathetic "comedies of character" echo his insight in *Chloe Marr*: "Every human is a mystery, and nobody knows the truth about anybody else." Exploring the balance between surface and substance, his plays question stabilities of name, rank, and reputation, much as Milne himself leaped among literary genres. Yet he most enjoyed his work in the theatre: "The most exciting form of writing is the writing of plays."¹⁶ This identity Milne pursued with wit, technique, and—often—luck.

PATON ASHBROOK (*Pamela Carey*) Off-Broadway debut. TV/Film: *House of Cards* Season 5 (recurring), *Limitless*. Regional: *4,000 Miles*, *Gypsy* (Hangar Theatre), *Salvage* (musical workshop at the Pasadena Playhouse). Recently released from The Juilliard School; favorite past roles include Cleopatra in *Antony and Cleopatra*, Betty in *Landscape of the Body*, and Iris in *The Sign In Sidney Brustein's Window*. Love to the Ashbrook family for being the most supportive people on this planet.

ARI BRAND (*Bob Farrington*) is honored to be making his Mint Theater debut. His credits include, B'way: *The Neil Simon Plays* (Nederlander, dir. David Cromer). Off-B'way: *My Name Is Asher Lev* (Westside, dir. Gordon Edelstein), *Black Tie* (Primary Stages, dir. Mark Lamos), *Romeo and Juliet* (NYSF, dir. Michael Greif). Other: *Diner* (DTC, dir. Kathleen Marshall), *Bad Jesus* (Geffen Playhouse), *Arabian Nights* (Berkeley, Kansas City Rep, dir. Mary Zimmerman), *The Last Night Of Ballyhoo* (Bay Street), *Much Ado About Nothing* (New York Classical), *The Diary of Anne Frank* (Westport), *My Name Is Asher Lev* (Long Wharf), *Claw of the Schwa* (Midtown Int'l, MITF Award). Film/TV: "White Collar", *To The Flame*. More at aribrand.com. This one is for big jess.

ANDREW FALLAIZE (*Thomas Todd*) recently moved to New York from London and is delighted to be making his Off-Broadway debut with the wonderful Mint Theater. US Theatre credits include: *Cornelius* (59e59); *Hamlet* (Notre Dame Shakespeare and national tour); *Remembrance of Things Past* (92Y); *Here We Are Here* (McCarter workshop). UK: *House and Garden* (Royal National Theatre); *The Prince of Homburg* (RSC, Lyric Hammersmith); *Original Sin* (Sheffield Crucible); *King Lear* (English Touring Theatre); *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Colchester Mercury); *Venice Preserved*, *Anatol*, *The Spanish Tragedy* (Arcola Theatre); *Cornelius*, *Men Without Shadows* (Finborough Theatre). FILM/TV: *The Death Waltz*, *Reveal-*

ing Mr. Maugham, *The Call*. Andrew is also a voiceover artist with several audiobooks to his name, and multiple BBC appearances in radio drama and readings.

MICHAEL FREDERIC (*Henry Wentworth*) The Mint: *The New Morality*. National Tour: *The Great Divorce*. NY credits include *Bill W and Dr Bob* (Soho Playhouse), *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Gynecologic Oncology Unit at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center of New York City* (Clurman Lab), *The Eyes of Others* (New Ohio), *Summer and Smoke* (Theatre Row), and *Night Over Taos* (INTAR – directed by Estelle Parsons). Regional credits include *The God Game* (Hudson Stage Company), *August: Osage County*, *The Unexpected Guest*, *Doubt* (Fulton Theatre), *Doubt* (Cleveland Play House), *The 39 Steps* (Florida Studio Theatre and Actors' Playhouse), *26 Miles* (Two River Theatre and Round House Theatre), *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, *Around the World in 80 Days*, *A Christmas Carol* (Public Theatre of Maine), *Watson* (Gretna Theatre), *Play by Play* (Stageworks/Hudson). TV: "Odd Mom Out", "Royal Pains" and "The Men Who Built America". MFA from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. www.michaelfrederic.com

ROBERT DAVID GRANT (*Gerald Farrington*) is thrilled to be making his Mint Theater debut. New York credits include *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*, *Hamlet* (The Pearl Theater/Acting Company); *Mechanics of Love* (Drama League); *The Footage*, *A Light Lunch*, *The Great Recession* (The Flea Theater); *Clever Little Lies* (Westside Theatre). Regional: title role in *Macbeth* (Northern Stage); *Cymbeline*, *Hamlet* starring Paul Giamatti (Yale Rep); *Engagements* (Barrington Stage Company); *Henry IV Part 1*, *Hamlet* (Shakespeare Theatre of NJ); *Rey Planta*, *Christie in Love* (Yale Cabaret). Robert holds an MFA from Yale School of Drama, and unlike Gerald has never played golf. Many thanks to his wife, his family, the GBGGs, and friends.

1. A.A. Milne, *Autobiography*, New York: E.P. Dutton and Co., 1939, pg. 28.
2. *Ibid.*, pg. 19
3. *Ibid.*, pg. 134
4. *Ibid.*, pg. 20
5. Ann Thwaite, *A.A. Milne: His Life*, London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1990, pg. 138.
6. Milne, *Autobiography*, pg. 249
7. *Ibid.*, pg. 266
8. Thwaite, *A.A. Milne: His Life*, pg. 194
9. A.A. Milne, *Year In, Year Out*, New York: E.P. Dutton & Co, 1952, pg. 5.
10. Abel Green, "The Lucky One," *Variety*, December 15, 1922, pg. 18.
11. Milne, *Autobiography*, pg. 280.
12. *Ibid.*, pg. 287
13. Christopher Milne, *The Enchanted Places*, New York: E.P. Dutton and Co., 1975, pg. 166
14. *Ibid.*, pg. 166
15. *Ibid.*, pg. 103
16. Milne, *Autobiography*, pg. 290.