



Griff Rhys Jones

Griff Rhys Jones was born in 1953 in Cardiff. Educated at Brentwood School in Essex, he won an exhibition to Emmanuel College, Cambridge to read History, transferring later to English. After a varied gap year including a job looking after a plethora of Canadian schoolgirls on the P&O ship Uganda, he took up his place at Cambridge. He joined the Footlights Club (becoming its Vice President in 1976), & was President of the Mummers & the ADS, appearing in & directing various productions.

After University (and after a short stint as a bodyguard to visiting Arabs) he joined the BBC as a trainee radio producer. Having played a selection of minor roles in the first series of **Not the Nine O'Clock News**, he was brought in as a regular member of the cast after Chris Langham's departure alongside Rowan Atkinson, Pamela Stephenson & Mel Smith.

When **Not the Nine O'Clock News** finished Griff continued working with Mel Smith & in a bid to stave off unemployment, they founded Talkback Productions to produce their own shows & those of other performers. His writing & performing partnership with Mel Smith took off in 1984 with **Alas Smith & Jones**, one of the most successful & long running double acts on TV, running until the late 90s. Talkback Productions went on to produce & manage some of the major British comedy performers of the last 20 years. He & Mel sold the company in 2000 & it has continued to produce major hits for both the BBC & commercial television.

Griff has continued working in the theatre, primarily in comedy & farce. He won *Olivier Awards* for *Best Comedy Performance* in **Charley's Aunt** (1984) & **An Absolute Turkey** (1994) & went on to appear at the National Theatre as *Toad* in the **Wind in the Willows**. He also undertook some more serious acting roles for television including **A View of Harry Clarke** in which he starred alongside Elaine Paige. In December 2009 he returned to live theatre as *Fagin* in **Oliver!** at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane in London's West End.

He is also known as a Presenter, firstly of **Bookworm** & latterly of **Restoration**, which ran for three series. Griff was the driving force behind the restoration of the Hackney Empire Theatre in London. He has undertaken several projects of his own, most notably the restoration of a Pembrokeshire farm which was filmed for the BBC & inspired by his own interest in architecture & conservation.

He has also written & presented documentaries on **Arthur Ransome**, **Rudyard Kipling**, **John Betjeman** & one on **Thomas Hardy**. Griff presented the **Three Men in a Boat** films with Dara O'Briain & Rory McGrath, **River Journeys with Griff Rhys Jones & Mountain** which won a Scottish BAFTA in 2007 & was asked to take over as presenter of **It'll Be Alright on the Night** in 2008. He has continued to work as a television actor starring in Russell T Davies's **Mine All Mine**, as well as roles in **Riot at the Rite**, **Marple**, **Casualty** & **Jonathan Creek** & providing the voices for the children's cartoon **Funnybones**.

Griff holds Honorary Degrees from the University of Essex, East Anglia, APU & the University of Glamorgan & is a Fellow of the Welsh College of Music & Drama, Emmanuel College, Cambridge & the Royal Society of Arts. He gives a lot of time to charitable causes from **Comic Relief** to the Lucie Blackman Trust & in 2004 led the demonstration at Senate House, Cambridge to prevent the closure of the Architecture degree course at Cambridge. In 2007 he became Vice-President of the River Stour Trust & in 2008 President of the Civic Trust; since its demise in 2009 he has been instrumental in setting up the Civic Society Initiative to replace it. An enthusiastic sailor, he owns the classic yacht Undina, which took the starring role in **Three Men in Another Boat** in 2007.

He has written & co-written many of the shows in which he appears, together with a number of books associated with them & in 2002 began writing his first "*proper*" book, **To the Baltic with Bob**, an account of a haphazard journey to St. Petersburg. In 2006 his early autobiography **Semi-Detached** was featured as one of the recommended reads on Richard & Judy's Book Club & **Mountain**, the book accompanying his television series, was published in 2007. His most recent book, **River Journeys**, accompanies the 2009 BBC series of the same name.

Griff has been married for near on 30 years to designer Jo, whom he met when she had to throw water over him in a state of semi-nakedness for a **Not the Nine O'Clock News** sketch. They have a son & daughter (& a dog) & divide their time between homes in central London & Suffolk.

**For more information on Griff Rhys Jones,
Contact: 0113-239-2222**