1963.
THE SCANDAL THAT SHOOK SOCIETY.

STEPHEN WARD

MUSIC BY ANDREW LLOYD WEBBER
BOOK AND LYRICS BY CHRISTOPHER HAMPTON AND DON BLACK

EDUCATION NOTES
In the Blackpool branch of Madame Tussauds, Stephen Ward stands as a waxwork exhibit alongside Jack the Ripper and Vlad the Impaler. How did a well-connected society osteopath and portraitist end up here, side-by-side with some of the most notorious criminals in history?

Back in Beak Street in 1961, Ward visits Murray’s cabaret club, where topless girls stand motionless, as the law requires, and grass-skirted hoola dancers move suggestively. Here, he is introduced to a dancer, Christine Keeler, whom he discovers lives in a converted railway carriage in Buckinghamshire with her mother and stepfather. He offers her friendship and a place to stay in London and introduces her to his friends, including Lord Astor.

A year later, still living with Ward, Christine and her dancer friend Mandy Rice-Davies are introduced to a Russian Navy Captain and spy, Yevgeny Ivanov, and it’s not long before Christine starts to have an affair with him. She is also going out with a West Indian drug dealer named Johnny Edgecombe.

At Cliveden, Lord Astor’s estate, Ward introduces Christine to John Profumo, the Conservative Minister for War. They too begin a brief affair. Discovering that she has been unfaithful, Edgecombe decides to take his revenge and heads for Ward’s house, where Christine is living. He takes a gun with him to teach her a lesson.

Determined to protect his reputation from the fall-out of Christine’s argument and the subsequent police investigation of the shooting, Ward insists she moves out. She then speaks to the tabloid press, who develop a keen interest in the story and everything begins to unravel for Ward.

He meets with Profumo to warn him about Christine’s revelations and they decide to speak to their lawyers to try to prevent the disclosure of the affair in the press. When stories do begin to surface, Profumo is questioned by the Chief Whip, he denies the affair with Christine and threatens legal action. He also denies the affair in the House of Commons.

The Home Secretary and the Head of MI5 begin to look for a scapegoat to take the heat off the Tory government and focus on Stephen Ward. The police start some hard-hitting interviews with the protagonists whilst Profumo has to admit his affair both to his wife and to the House of Commons. He is forced to resign from the government. As the net closes in on Ward, everyone deserts him and Lord Astor is one of the last to withdraw his support and friendship. Ward is left alone.

His trial at the Old Bailey accuses him of living off immoral earnings. With the desertion of his friends and a frenzy in the tabloid press attacking him, he realises that he is being sacrificed by the British Establishment and he commits suicide, just prior to sentencing by the judge. He’s posthumously found guilty of the charges.
Stephen Ward
Society osteopathic physician Dr Stephen Ward was seen by some as a traitor and by others as a scapegoat. Initially self-proclaimed as ‘the best osteopath in London’, Ward built up a reputation amongst the rich and famous and was soon treating the great and the good including Winston Churchill, Ava Gardner and Mary Martin. Patron of the notorious ‘Thursday Club’, a society drinking club, Ward developed friendships with many people in high society including some members of the Royal Family. With a penchant for young women, he described himself as “sensitive to their needs and the stresses of modern living”. Soon, he was introducing them to his society friends as well as dating many of them himself. At a party at Lord Astor’s Buckinghamshire mansion Cliveden in July 1961, Ward introduced one of his protégées, Christine Keeler, to Secretary of State for War, John Profumo. Thus began one of the most notorious affairs in modern political history, which ended in the fall of Profumo; revelations of Keeler’s simultaneous affair with Russian naval attaché Yevgeni Ivanov; accusations of cover-ups; and the ultimate defeat of the Conservative government in the 1964 general election. Ward’s trial in 1963, on charges of living on the earnings of prostitution, ended prior to sentencing with Ward’s suicide from barbiturate poisoning. Later, Ward was enshrined as an exhibit in the Chamber of Horrors in Madame Tussauds in Blackpool.

Christine Keeler
Just 19 when she was introduced by Stephen Ward to Secretary of State for War, John Profumo, Keeler began a short affair that was to have far reaching consequences. Simultaneously having an affair with drug dealer Johnny Edgecombe and Russian spy, Yevgeni Ivanov, model and showgirl Keeler later admitted that she sought details of American nuclear missile movement from Profumo to pass to Ward and Ivanov. As a result of her affair with the cabinet minister Keeler became a celebrity, posing nude later in 1963 sitting astride a faux Fritz Hansen plywood chair, for a photograph by Lewis Morley that was to become iconic.

Mandy Rice-Davies
Along with Christine Keeler, Mandy Rice-Davies worked as a dancer at Murray’s Cabaret Club in Soho, where Keeler introduced her to Stephen Ward. She began an affair with Keeler’s ex-boyfriend, slum landlord Peter Rachman, who set her up in a house in Marylebone. She was with Keeler, who by then lived with Ward, when one of Keeler’s boyfriends, Johnny Edgecombe, tried to break in by shooting a gun at the door. It was Edgecombe’s trial that first brought to public attention the girls’ involvement with the extremely well-connected Stephen Ward and the names of some of the society glitterati that they had been having affairs with, particularly John Profumo. Later, at Ward’s trial, when told that Lord Astor denied having an affair with her, Rice-Davies famously replied, “he would, wouldn’t he?”, an example of the legal ad hominem argument.

John (Jack) Profumo
From a privileged Oxbridge background, Profumo later rose to the rank of Brigadier in the British Army, before becoming a Conservative politician. He held a number of increasingly high profile government positions, including Minister of State for Foreign Affairs (1959), before being appointed to the role of Secretary of State for War in 1960. In 1954 he married the actress Valerie Hobson, who stood by her husband following the revelations about his affair with Christine Keeler and his subsequent fall from grace. He met Keeler at Lord Astor’s mansion in Cliveden and, although his affair with her lasted for only a matter of weeks, the national security questions that were raised by her simultaneous affair with Yevgeni Ivanov finished Profumo’s political career, despite no breach ever being proven. Later, Profumo’s charity work somewhat redeemed his reputation and he was made a Commander of the Order of the British Empire (CBE) in 1975.
STEPHEN WARD provides curriculum opportunities for students at KS5 and degree level, as well as those reading contemporary history or studying musical theatre. It covers a broad range of themes, including politics, morality, ambition, honesty, power and integrity.

Students of drama, theatre studies and performing arts will discover in STEPHEN WARD a musical theatre production that is able to approach and deal with a contemporary story and characters from the recent past. The atmosphere and mood of 1960's Britain is recreated, providing a point of reference for students of modern history, as well as those who are students of the psychology and morality of this period.

Students of government and politics will recognise the political characters of the time, and those who were able to exert influence, including government ministers, civil servants, aristocrats and lawyers. The workings of government, particularly in terms of the role of the Chief Whip, is apparent in STEPHEN WARD, as is the length that some politicians will go to protect their careers and reputations. In this respect, there are clear links to the expenses scandal of recent years and other high profile political events, scandals and resignations.

For students of media studies, STEPHEN WARD covers the role of journalism in relation to legal affairs and the political processes, the power of the media to influence the development of a story and the ethical issues surrounding the identifying of a scapegoat. The presentation of a news story is key to the public’s understanding of its characters and narrative, and STEPHEN WARD raises pertinent questions about both the public’s appetite for scandal and the need to deliver a story in a palatable and often over-simplistic way. Where does truth sit in the fight for a ‘good story’? Such questions are as relevant today as they were in the 1960’s of STEPHEN WARD.

Students of crime and justice, the wider social sciences, public affairs and citizenship studies will find many areas of study are covered in STEPHEN WARD. The moral issues that are often raised in relation to the wider 1960’s appear as a microcosm in the world of Christine Keeler, Mandy Rice-Davies and Stephen Ward. Ward was never convicted of ‘living off immoral earnings’, and many felt that this was a trial that should never have been brought. The British Establishment needed a scapegoat after the furore of the Profumo scandal and Profumo himself was one of their own. Stephen Ward was, in many ways, an easy target, but what is the right balance between morality and self-preservation?

1960’s style is a key factor in the creation of atmosphere in a production such as STEPHEN WARD and provides study opportunities for students of fashion, textiles, art and photography. Christine Keeler, a showgirl at the beginning of STEPHEN WARD, later became a model and the subject of Lewis Morley’s iconic photograph. In relation to the way that the media interacts with the other creative industries, students will notice the way that Keeler developed a career on the back of her infamy.

STEPHEN WARD is a production that challenges the stereotype of musical theatre. It tells a complex contemporary story of high drama, immorality, sex and politics in an irresistible interpretation of one of the most famous scandals in British political history.
Andrew Lloyd Webber (Composer)

I didn’t really know much about the character of Stephen Ward, apart from the fact that he was the one who was convicted, but then I happened to read an interview with him from 1962 which said he was a bore about the Cold War.

And then I read the Ludovic Kennedy book about the trial. He called it ‘The Martyrdom of Dr Stephen Ward’ and so I thought, “this is getting very very interesting”.

He was the man who was, wrongly in my view, convicted of pimping (although he committed suicide before the court could sentence him) because he introduced Keeler to Profumo.

It’s a fascinating period of history because it is exactly at the time that everything is changing... I can just about remember it. I was about 13 and it was so big you couldn’t miss it.

[Christopher Hampton, Don Black and I] talked over dinner and we concluded how extraordinary this man Stephen Ward was, probably the most sought after dinner guest in London, the world’s top osteopath and a man who knew absolutely everybody from Kennedy to Gandhi to Churchill. He also did portraits of members of the Royal Family including Prince Phillip.

People think of it as The Profumo Affair, but I am much more interested in the character of Stephen Ward.

It’s quite interesting how a whole series of small events led to people, even J Edgar Hoover in America, thinking there was an international call-girl ring of spies. Of course, everyone had become paranoid because it played out against the backdrop of the Cold War and the Cuban Missile Crisis.

The thing that really made Christopher think “yes it’s a stage show” is that Ward ended up as a waxwork at the Chamber of Horrors in Madame Tussauds in Blackpool next to the acid bath murderer.

I do think it is an incredibly strong story, especially as a lot of the key players are still alive.

Funnily enough, Sarah Brightman [Lloyd Webber’s ex-wife] told me her mother Paula was one of the girls in Murray’s Cabaret Club [where Christine Keeler and Mandy Rice-Davies worked]. I remember Sarah telling me this hysterical story about when she was about five or six years old; they were all asked at her school to bring pictures of what their parents did at work and she brought in a picture of her mum with the dancers of Murray’s Club which would have been with Mandy and Christine.

from interviews with Andrew Lloyd Webber
by Charles Spencer in The Daily Telegraph, 26 March 2013
and Liam Rudden in The Scotsman, 4th October 2012
CREATIVE OVERVIEW

Christopher Hampton (Book and Lyrics)

STEPHEN WARD deals with the victim of the Profumo Affair - not, as is widely supposed, John Profumo himself, the disgraced Minister for War, nor even the fatally wounded Conservative government of Harold Macmillan, but the society osteopath whose private libertarian experiments blew up in his own and everyone else's face.

In a trial as emblematic to the twentieth century as Oscar Wilde's was to the nineteenth - from which he was the only protagonist to emerge with some dignity and honour - Ward became the targeted scapegoat of a furiously self-righteous Establishment.

By no means a hero, he was a reluctant martyr, thanks to an unholy alliance between Press and police of a kind we can all too readily recognise today; inadvertently, he was the hinge between two worlds and the harbinger of a revolution in manners, music and morals when the ordered, stuffy, respectful universe of the fifties gave way to the classless, truculent, unstoppable sixties.

Don Black (Book and Lyrics)

It's a wonderful story. This was the beginning of the swinging 60s - it's a wonderful period. You know, it was post-war stuffiness beforehand. Andrew called me one day and said, “Christine Keeler, Profumo,” and I said, “Is that a good idea?” And, then, he went to the piano and said, “This is Christine's theme,” and it was just to die for! “This is Profumo’s melody”; the goosebumps come and you just say, “Yes! Yes! Yes!”

It's a wonderful story and there are so many famous people involved because Stephen Ward was the most popular man in London. He was osteopath to people like Ava Gardner, Mahatma Gandhi, Winston Churchill - an incredible man-about-town.

You never know what's going to make a new musical. Andrew Lloyd Webber and I did SUNSET BOULEVARD together - with Christopher Hampton; the three of us - that was twenty years ago! And, we'd been looking to work together again! Our story, basically, we could have called SCAPEGOAT because it was very unjust what happened to him.

Richard Eyre (Director)

It's Stephen Ward's story. He's the narrator and the protagonist.

The connection with MI5 was genuine, but in his mind, he saw himself as a broker between East and West, capable of saving the world from nuclear disaster.

But I was talking to an actress the other day who knew him very well and she remembered how terribly kind he was to people. There is no question that he was stitched up.

[Hypocrisy about sex, in STEPHEN WARD] acts as a metaphor for hypocrisy about everything else.

from interview with Richard Eyre by Paul Taylor in The Independent, 1st August 2013
RESOURCES & LINKS

Books
An English Affair
Sex, Class and Power in the Age of Profumo
Richard Davenport-Hines
Harper Press
ISBN: 978-0007435852

An Affair of State
The Profumo Case and the Framing of Stephen Ward
Phillip Knightley & Caroline Kennedy
Jonathan Cape Ltd
ISBN: 978-0224023474

Secrets and Lies
Christine Keeler with Douglas Thompson
John Blake Publishing Ltd
ISBN: 978-1843587552

The Scandal of Christine Keeler and John Profumo
Lord Denning’s Report, 1963
(Moments in History Series)
Tim Coates
ISBN: 978-1843810247

Mandy
Mandy Rice-Davies with Shirley Flack
Sphere Books (1980)
ISBN: 978-0722128480

DVD’s
Scandal (1989)
Starring John Hurt, Ian McKellen, Joanne Whalley
and Bridget Fonda
Directed by Michael Caton-Jones
Icon Home Entertainment
Classification: 18

Websites
Official website of the Andrew Lloyd Webber musical STEPHEN WARD
http://www.stephenwardthemusical.com/

Spartacus Educational (Online Encyclopaedia with primary sources)
http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/SPYwardS.htm
http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/SPYkeeler.htm

You Tube – Christine Keeler talks about journalistic ethics from her own experience (1988)
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cpyel-EEd1A

Education Notes
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