

Living Spit

The Six Wives of
HENRY VIII



Written & Performed by Stu Mcloughlin & Howard Coggins
Directed by Craig Edwards

Cast

Henry VIII	Howard Coggins
Henry VII King Of England	Stu Mcloughlin
Catherine Of Aragon	Stu Mcloughlin
Mary Boleyn	Stu Mcloughlin
Anne Boleyn	Stu Mcloughlin
Desmond The Vicar	Stu Mcloughlin
Tricky Dicky	Stu Mcloughlin
Tommy Cranmer	Stu Mcloughlin
Jane Seymour	Stu Mcloughlin
The Ghost of King Henry VII	Stu Mcloughlin
Edward Prince Of Wales	Stu Mcloughlin
Catherine Howard	Stu Mcloughlin
Cindy from Dublin	Stu Mcloughlin
Anne of Cleves	Stu Mcloughlin
Catherine Parr	Stu Mcloughlin

All other parts played by members of the company.

Director	Craig Edwards
Stage Manager	Fiona Trim
Producer	Ali Robertson

So, how did it all begin?"

So. In 2009 I was living in Purley, Surrey, and one boring Sunday my then girlfriend and I decided to go on a day trip to Hever Castle in Kent (the childhood home of Anne Boleyn). We wandered around the grounds, umming and ahing at the various bits of armour and grandiose furniture when suddenly my eye was caught by a rather ostentatious portrait of Henry VIII.

Odd, I thought, to put a portrait of the murderer in the victim's house. But this was no ordinary murderer, after all. This was King Henry VIII.

As I studied the portrait a strange feeling came over me. You know that odd feeling when you've seen somebody before and you can't quite decide where, or in what capacity you know them?

I puzzled on this for some time, and then it came to me – by Jingo! It was Howard Coggins!

Howard Coggins...

I first met Howard in probably 1997 or so. I was in the Bristol Old Vic Young Company, and Howard was a fairly new-to-the-scene actor, having graduated from the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama back in 1994. He was in a show called *Up the Feeder, Down the 'Mouth* at Bristol Old Vic, and I went along to watch.

I'd seen him around, in the cafe or bar, swaggering in and out of the building like a bald, portly Clint Eastwood, but hadn't actually ever spoken to him. Then I ended up being asked to perform some scenes from *Up the Feeder* on the docks in Bristol as part of the Marine Festival – *Living History* it was called. Howard was also asked, as were five or six other local actors, most of whom were friends of Howard's from the show.

I don't actually remember the first time we spoke or what was said. What I do remember

is that we were asked to do *Living History* for a further six consecutive years, (as well as a revamped version of the full show, out on the docks), each time with the cast shrinking and shrinking until it was just the two of us.

By this point we had struck up quite a rapport from working closely together every day. Howard was (and still remains) the only actor I've worked with who has ever been able to make me corpse. And we corpsed a hell of a lot during *Living History*.

So, back in Hever Castle. Howard, it seemed, bore a striking resemblance to Henry VIII. I called him up there and then.

"Has anyone ever told you that you look like Henry VIII?"

"No they haven't."

"It really is uncanny, Howard. You look a lot like Henry VIII. I'm standing in front of his portrait now, and it's just you in a costume."

"Ah right. Well, there's a show in there somewhere!" he laughed.

"Yeah, you play Henry and I'll play all the wives!" I said.

He stopped laughing and went very quiet.

"That's a great idea", he murmured reverently.

"I was just joking" I replied.

"No, seriously", said Howard. "That's a great idea. I'll play Henry and you play all the wives. Let's write it."

So I wrote a bit, and emailed it to Howard. He reacted enthusiastically, so I wrote some more. We formed a company (because otherwise we wouldn't get paid). We called it 'Living Spit'.

And the rest, as they say, is poorly-researched history...

Howard Coggins

Theatre work includes:

Treasure Island, Short Fuses, Around the World in 80 Days, Alice's Adventures In Wonderland, Beasts & Beauties, A Midsummer Night's Dream, Up The Feeder Down The 'Mouth, Babes In the Wood, Jack & The Beanstalk, Aladdin, The Great Big Story Mix Up, Myrtle On The Mainline (Bristol Old Vic), The Wind in the Willows, Treasure Island (Watermill), The Lion The Witch and The Wardrobe (West Yorkshire Playhouse), Aladdin, Jack and the Beanstalk (Watford Palace), Cinderella (Roses, Tewkesbury), City of One (Myrtle Theatre Company), The Magic Carpet (Lyric Hammersmith), The Wizard Of Oz (Hall For Cornwall), Aladdin (Reading Hexagon), Elsie & Norm's Macbeth (Show Of Strength), Still Waters (Theatre Gwent), Aladdin (Cheltenham Everyman), A Midsummer Night's Dream, Watchers Of The Night Sky (Theatre Iolo).

He has also appeared many times on the telly, and occasionally in film

Craig Edwards

As a director Craig's work includes: Mother Savage (Travelling Light) Penetrator (Bristol Old Vic), Romeo & Juliet (Bath Theatre Royal Storm On The Lawn), Danny King Of The Basement (M6 Theatre Co), The Nothing Show (Mysterio Productions), and the forthcoming The Nothing Vanishment Of Pobby & Dingan (Travelling Light).

He has also worked extensively as an actor, but Howard and Stu said there wasn't room to list all the things he's been in.

He is co-founder of Shoofly Theatre with Designer Katie Sykes.

Craig has known both Howard and Stu for a great many years and strangely still wants to work with them

Stu Mcloughlin

Stu trained at the Royal Welsh college of Music and Drama where he won a Carleton Hobbs Radio Bursary award and subsequently spent six months working for the BBC as part of the radio drama company.

Theatre work includes:

The Odyssey (Bristol Old Vic/Lyric Hammersmith), Coram Boy (National Theatre), A Matter of Life And Death (National Theatre/ Kneehigh), Brief Encounter (Kneehigh West End/ USA tour), Suspension (Bristol Old Vic), The Wild Bride (Kneehigh Asylum / UK tour / Berkely Rep / New Zealand International Arts Festival).

Television and film work includes:

Waking The Dead, Little Dorritt, Trevor Island, Clone, Elizabeth: The Golden Age, The Deep Blue Sea and Made In Dagenham.

Fiona Trim

Fiona studied at the University of Leeds and trained in Stage Management at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama. She has worked as Assistant/Deputy Stage Manager for companies including Opera North, Opera Holland Park, the Royal Court Theatre, and as Company Manager for English Touring Opera and Grange Park Opera. Fiona has been working as Stage Manager for Living Spit since their first tour of 'The Six Wives of Henry VIII' in September 2012. She also works for Theatre Orchard across North Somerset, and has been Technical Manager of The Theatre Shop in Clevedon since it was opened by Theatre Orchard and Living Spit in 2015.

Living Spit

started out as a bit of a joke.

After many years working as actors, both together and apart, Howard Coggins and Stu McLoughlin had an idea for a show, *The Six Wives of Henry VIII*, based purely on the notion that



Howard looks a bit like Henry VIII. (He really does!). In 2012, after cobbling together a script, Bristol Old Vic said they could put it on as a tryout but told them that first they'd have to form a company, or they wouldn't get paid. Never ones to allow small details to stand between them and cold, hard cash, and with the addition of Craig Edwards on directing duties, *Living Spit* was born.

They bought the costumes from charity shops, never spending more than a tenner. They made the props from various bits they had lying around their respective houses. Despite this people came to see the show and liked it and told them they should take it on tour and to Edinburgh, which they did. When they felt that literally no-one wanted to see it anymore, they thought they ought to make another show, so in 2013 *Adolf & Winston* was born and played to packed houses at Bristol Old Vic and all over the country.

Since then there have been fourteen further shows: "*In Cider Story*" (2013); "*The Devil and the Shopkeeper*" (2013); "*Elizabeth I -Virgin on the Ridiculous*" (2014); "*One Man & His Cow*"; "*The Devil and The Shopkeeper 2 (A sequel)*" (2015); "*Living Spit's A Christmas Carol*" (2015); "*The Fabulous Bacon Boys*"; "*Living Spit's Frankenstein*" (2016); "*Tortoise Vs Hare*" (2017); "*Living Spit's Nativity*" (2017); "*Giants of Science*" (2018); "*Living Quiz*"; "*Living Spit's Odyssey*"; "*Living Spit's Swan Lake*" (2019). Shows generally open in Bristol, Salisbury or Clevedon (you won't have heard of it but it's near Bristol and it's lovely)



Until 2015 all shows were 2 handers with Howard and Stu.

In 2016 the Salisbury Playhouse asked to collaborate with *Living Spit* on a main house show and the result "*Living Spit's Frankenstein*" subsequently played at the Tropicana in Weston-super-Mare, site of Banksy's "*Dismaland*". Subsequent to that they made two four handed shows: *Living Spit's Odyssey* (with Kate Dimpleby) and *Living Spit's Swan Lake*.

As well as making and touring shows *Living Spit* help run Theatre Shop in Clevedon: an 80 seat venue in a shopping unit that the owner apparently can't rent to anyone else. It's brilliant there. You should come.