

**John Godber, one of the UK's most-performed living playwrights, revisits his classic school comedy *Teechers* with a newly updated 2026 tour. Sharper, fresher and more relevant than ever.**

## **'Teechers: New Year, Same Problems' touring the UK 2026**

Interview with John Godber OBE January 2026

### **1. *Teechers* has been a fixture of British theatre for nearly forty years. What made now the right moment to revisit and update the play for a 2026 audience?**

I had addressed some changes in the state education system after the Covid pandemic for the production at Hull Truck a couple of years ago, but whilst in discussion with some local teachers, I realised that things had changed since Covid. I was also aware that drama, art and music in schools, generally has a lower status now, than it did when I went into teaching in 1978. I was also mindful of the potential for the Labour government to address this anomaly, I guess only time will serve to see if they put the arts back into the centre of the curriculum. Having trained as a Drama specialist teacher at Bretton Hall College in the 1970's I believe that the arts are central to the development of young people no matter their backgrounds.

### **2. When you first wrote *Teechers*, the education system and the pressures on teachers and students looked very different. What feels most urgent or relevant about those themes today?**

It's rather sad to report that the pressures I felt as a probationary teacher, and then eventually as the Head of a Drama department of four, were nothing compared to the pressures teachers are under today. From my understanding, having spoken at length to recently qualified teachers who have opted out of the profession, the level of burn out is higher now than it has ever been.

### **3. What can audiences expect when booking tickets for the show?**

It is always dangerous to mend something that isn't broken, but I felt that in order to make the play feel more relevant to today's audiences, and especially young audiences it deserved a re-boot. It was the influential director theatre director Peter Brook who said, theatre that stands above fashion is dead theatre! Fashion has certainly changed in the last forty years .

### **4. *Teechers* famously uses just three actors to create an entire school community. Why do you think this playful, imaginative style still connects so powerfully with audiences?**

Muti role playing has become far more popular and widespread than it was when I wrote first *Bouncers* in 1981, and *Shakers with Jane*; and of course *Teechers*. At its best it is purely theatrical and allows the audience to enter into a playful role with the actors. It also facilitates within the actors a virtuoso style which has more to do with Commedia D'Arte than the traditional well made play. On the face of it it looks easy, but it is an exquisite skill that not many actors can achieve without falling into adult pantomime, which has always made me feel uneasy.

**5. The 2026 tour visits a wide range of venues across the UK. What does touring mean to you, particularly when taking a play like *Teechers* into communities beyond major cities?**

I have been touring my play since I started running Hull Truck in 1984, so I have a pretty good take on the various areas of the country and how they respond to my work. I have always said that touring really gives you a sense of what we are like as a nation. One region which may only be several miles from another may be completely different in terms of response to the play, no matter how long you might have been touring each night is a unique experience, it is this which makes it endlessly fascinating.

**6. Education and access have long been important themes in your writing. How does *Teechers* speak to issues of opportunity, class and social mobility in Britain today?**

I'm not an educational specialist, I simply write what I see, but as far as I can make out the differences between the haves and the have not doesn't seem to be getting closer, it seems to be getting further apart. If there is one major change in this new version the drama teacher leaves the state system to work in the private system. In the earlier iteration of the play it wasn't so cut and dried. Sadly, given where we are with the status of the arts in state education I can fully understand why a drama teacher might be seduced by a school that respects her subject. Unpalatable perhaps but dramatic yes!

**7. What do you hope audiences – whether they're teachers, students or former pupils – leave the theatre thinking or talking about after seeing *Teechers* in 2026?**

I'm a real believer that an audience gives of themselves to the theatrical experience as long as they believe it to be true and authentic. If we can create the notion of unfairness in the face of naive enthusiasm from Salty, Gail and Hobby, then we will have done our job. As for what the audience may take away from the theatre even after doing this for over forty years, you never have a clue.

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