FRANK MARCUS was perhaps ahead of his time when he wrote his comedy *The Killing Of Sister George* in 1965, before most of today’s TV soaps became “serious” drama. ‘Sister George’ is the name of a popular character in the radio soap *Applehurst*, an everyday story of country folk, not a million miles away from *The Archers*. She is the village district nurse, and the soap revolves around her exploits as she goes about the village on her moped, bringing sage wisdom and medical help to the afflicted. The rôle of Sister George in the soap is played by a well-worn actress called June Buckridge, who reckons (and she believes that her ratings support her) that life in Applehurst would not be the same without her. Neither, of course, would life be the same for June. And therein lies the plot’s crisis, as we see the actress facing the threat of the ‘axe’, as she suspects that the BBC is possibly about to drop her character from the show. Her relationship with her friend and flat-mate Alice McNaught, already taut and threatened, is strained even further by the new development, and by the arrival on the scene of Miss Mercy Croft, from the BBC, who may be the bearer of bad tidings. Madame Xenia, a clairvoyant and friend of June Buckridge, is called in to give the actress some advice and hope, but is not too successful in either capacity. Frank Marcus manages to make us laugh at the interplay between these four characters without ever using a sledgehammer, and the result is a delightful piece, full of intrigue and suspicion, with some surprising twists and turns, and many knowing chuckles. The play was originally a huge success for comedienne Beryl Reid, who repeated the role in the successful film, co-starring Susannah York.

Meet the cast of ‘Sister George’

DIRECTOR ANDREW WHYATT had to search far and wide for his perfect female quartet for *The Killing Of Sister George*. And here they are!

**Yvette Leahy** gets the demanding lead role of June. This ex-convent lady from Poole starred in plays as diverse as *St Joan*, (at age 14) and later in *Loot* and *Entertaining Mr Sloan*, in a 20-year career with the Wheatsheaf Players in Coventry, before returning to BLTC where she has played leads in *Steel Magnolias*, *When We Are Married*, and *The Madwoman of Chaillot*. She also appeared memorably on Brownsea in 1995 in *Richard III*.

**Rachael De Courcy Beamish**, though young, has appeared or worked on productions of so many BLTC shows over the last few years that it is easier to say what she has not been in! Her rôle as Alice is one that she says is her strongest part to date and a wonderful challenge. Recently you have seen her in *Time And The Conways*, *Sisterly Feelings* and *Arms And The Man*.

**Angela Whyatt**, as Mercy Croft, brings her warm good looks and stylish acting skills to this tricky rôle. Recently for us she has starred in *A Lie Of The Mind*, *The Sisters Rosensweig*, *When We Are Married*, *Sisterly Feelings*, and *Hotel Paradiso*.

**Elsa Jacobs**, with BLTC for over 40 years, returns as an actor after many years as a professional voice teacher and director extraordinaire. To the rôle of Madame Xenia she brings all the skills that directed *12 Angry Men*, *All My Sons* and *The Master Builder*.

How to Book for *The Killing Of Sister George*

By telephone:
From Monday 1 December to Friday 5 December between 7.30 - 9.00 p.m. on 424640
By telephone:
From Monday 8 December to Friday 12 December between 7.30 - 9.00 p.m. on 513361 (or come in person to the club between those hours) or
By post to BLTC, 11 Jameson Road, Winton, Bournemouth BH9 2QD enclosing payment and SAE for reply.

And remember:
Payment for telephone bookings must be received in full within 48 hours of booking or the seats may be resold.
Prices:
Adults £6 (row K £5), students and OAPs £4.50. Further concessions for members.
We recently asked our charismatic Irish actor, Derek Hyde, to reminisce on his place in the theatre and his thoughts on a life spent in giving pleasure to theatregoers in Ireland, Britain and the United States. We hope you get as much pleasure out of his views, below, as we did.

My thirty years with BLTC have provided me with some of my most treasured times. Without BLTC I would never have had the opportunity of extending myself in the rôles I have been fortunate enough to play. My only reward over the years has been the knowledge that the paying audience has gone home satisfied that it has been entertained.

But where did I start? Well, I was 12 years old in Dublin during World War II. I won a talent contest at the seaside, and was offered the summer season with a company run by one Connie Ryan, and I became, God help me, one of Connie Ryan’s ‘Cute Kiddies’. My wages were 2/6d per week for June, July and August 1944, but I only got 7/6d for the season, because Connie Ryan was usually too far gone with drink to remember that I was there. While I was there I joined three brothers to form a quartet. One of them became Dave Allen, the famous comedian, and we still keep in touch to this day. I shared a dressing room with a comedian, a ventriloquist, and a young Irish dancer. This was the university of life, and where I learned to ‘act’. The comedian would make up the sketch to be done that night, and I was pushed on as the stooge. That’s how I learned to move on stage and how to time my line so that the comedian got the laughs. I would have paid them 7/6d just for the education, and I was totally hooked.

At the end of the season, Connie got me an audition with the Gate Theatre in Dublin, in front of Hilton Edwards and Micheál MacLiammóir. I was cast as the lead in a play called Tomor-ror The World. Unfortunately, as it was wartime, the German Embassy objected to the theme, and the play was withdrawn, as Ireland was officially neutral. So we did Lillian Hellman’s play Watch On The Rhine instead, and I made my professional debut at the Gaiety Theatre in Autumn 1944. Later I toured Ireland with the show and did some radio work. I did another juvenile rôle in 1948, but I then reached an age when I was either too young or too old. Still I did get another rôle at the Gaiety Theatre working with Cyril Cusack, but then my ‘day job’ intervened and my professional career in the theatre was nipped in the bud. Well, almost; I did play for four years in an Irish show band, ‘The Woodchoppers’.

I was out of the theatre for about ten years, when I was working in the day job in Swindon and was asked to help out with Irish accents in an amateur production of The Quare Fellow. I ended up playing a rôle, and from that day on I never stopped working in the amateur theatre. Then my job took me to Bournemouth on August 1, 1967. That same day, in the evening, I joined the best club in town, Bournemouth Little Theatre Club, and was cast in a small rôle in Dark Of The Moon, directed by one Keith Rawlings at the Palace Court Theatre. Keith was very kind, and a director who knew what he wanted from his actors. He still does, thirty years later: in 1997 we were playing before ‘my own’ and as I heard the Irish National Anthem before the curtain — well I can still feel the tingle factor to this day. BLTC has been so welcomed by the people of Dundalk that we played for them again in 1984, 1989, 1992 and 1997. We won the festival in 1989 with Danger Memory directed by Barbara Warde. This in turn led to our first visit to America in 1990, as the representative of England with Staircase at the American Association of Community Theatre International, in Des Moines, Iowa. There followed a week’s work in Florida with An Inspector Calls, again directed by Barbara Warde. Since then we also played in two festivals in Aruba, Netherlands Antilles. So there is a theatre life beyond Jameson Road. In my long association with BLTC I have been in over 60 plays, my favourites among them being mostly plays by Arthur Miller, including Death Of A Salesman, and All My Sons. I also have fond memories of The Dresser and On Golden Pond.

His club has given me much to be thankful for, not the least of which was the number of great friendships I have forged. The greatest has been my wife, Sue. We met through the club and were married in 1981. Sue joined our club and became a Props person with great dedication and commitment. She became, and still is, the best Props person I ever worked with. Her eye for detail and professional approach to the job I cannot fault, and long may she continue to rate me when I get things wrong on the night. Now, of course, she is better known to the club and all the playgoers as the manager of our box office. This is also a demanding job, which she carries out with thoroughness and great ability.

I have to state my ‘philosophy’ of acting, then I do not consider what I do to be ‘fun’. I do believe it to be a labour of love, and I have always tried to give my best, and will always continue to do so as long as I can work, or am asked to work. When people ask me what I get out of acting, I can only quote the great actor-manager Sir Donald Wolfit: “Being an actor is like being married and going out every night to be with your mistress.”
Ibsen’s *A Doll’s House*: World Amateur Première! Major coup for BLTC

The Club is proud to announce that Frank McGuinness has agreed that we are to be the first amateur group to perform his splendid new version of Henrik Ibsen’s famous classic. At first we were told by his agents that the version, which gives new insights relevant to our own times, was not available for amateurs. Director Barbara Warde would not take “no” for an answer. Mr McGuinness, busy working at the National Theatre, was finally reached and persuaded that we should be given our chance to show what amateurs can do.

The theme of the play is as follows:

*Nor* a Helmer, wife to Torvald and mother of three children, appears to enjoy living the life of a pampered, indulged child. But as her economic dependence becomes brutally clear, Nora’s acceptance of the status quo undergoes a profound change. To the horror of the bewildered Torvald, himself caught in the tight web of a conservative society which demands that he exert strict control, Nora comes to see that the only possible true course of action is to leave the family home.

Ibsen’s classic play was greeted with shock on its first production in 1879, with both its style and subject matter being seen as radical and subversive. One critic at the time wrote, “With the slamming of the door behind Nora, the theatres of Europe woke up.”

Frank McGuinness’s lucid version of *A Doll’s House* received its West End première in October 1996.

Barbara Warde will direct the production. The *play reading* will be on Friday, 28 November at 7.30 p.m.

**THE AUDITIONS** for *A Doll’s House* will be held on Friday, 5 December, at 7.30 p.m. There are 3 male and 4 female rôles with a wide age range.

This significant production will attract an influential audience and should receive wider press coverage than most amateur dramas.

**Reminders**

Dates to remember for the upcoming few months include:
- Fri. 28 Nov. Play reading of *A Doll’s House.*
- Fri. 5 Dec. Auditions for *A Doll’s House.*
- Mon. 15 - Sat 20 Dec. Performances of *The Killing of Sister George.*
- Fri. 2 Jan. 1998 Play reading of *Noises Off.*
- Fri. 9 Jan. Auditions for *Noises Off.*
- Mon. 23 - Sat 28 Feb. Performances of *A Doll’s House.*

March: Mondays to Fridays, rehearsals every night for *Noises Off* or for Studio production.
- Fri. 3 April. Playreading of *Grand National Night.*
- Fri. 10 April. Auditions for *Grand National Night.*
- Mon. 20 - Sat 25 April. Performances of *Noises Off.*
- Thurs. 30 April - Sat. 2 May. Performances of Studio production.
- Mon. 8 - Sat. 13 June. Performances of *Grand National Night.*

**Committee news**

Tony Orman, as editor of this newsletter, has been co-opted on to the Committee of BLTC, and has also assumed the post of membership secretary. For news or membership issues please call him on 554291.

**TEN QUESTIONS**

This time, it is the turn of Lin Denning, director of *Noises Off.* to answer our questions to her. We asked:

1. *What is your idea of perfect happiness?* World peace
2. *What is your greatest fear?* Alzheimers
3. *Which famous person do you admire?* Aung San Suu Kyi (Burmese democrat)
4. *Who is your favourite film star?* Sean Connery
5. *Who is your favourite actor or actress?* Alex Guinness
6. *What is your greatest extravagance?* Christmas
7. *What do you always carry on you?* Cigarettes and lighter
8. *Where would you most like to live?* Where I am now
9. *What is your most unappealing habit?* Smoking
10. *What is your favourite smell?* A forest after rain
11. *What is your favourite word?* ‘Hello’
12. *What is your favourite play or film?* *One Flew Over The Cuckoo’s Nest* (the movie)
13. *What is your favourite journey?* Into the unknown
14. *What do you dislike most?* Injustice — on every scale
15. *What is your greatest regret?* Never attempting professional theatre
16. *When and where were you happiest?* Now
17. *What single thing which would improve your quality of life?* Ability to fall asleep quickly
18. *How do you relax?* Meditation, reading
19. *What is your favourite quality in others?* Tolerance
20. *What is your favourite animal?* Unicorn
The Cuckoo Flies!

One Flew Over The Cuckoo’s Nest was an undoubted triumph for Director Jack Snell. Our second show of the season was our second big hit, playing to big houses, and being greeted not merely with polite applause but frequently with whistles, cheers and shouts of laughter. Who says the amateur theatre is dead! Not here, it ain’t. As they left the theatre, our playgoers told us, “This is great!” We think it is one of the finer entertainments we have done in some years.

David Ross said in the Echo that the central conflict crackled in Jack’s ‘assured production’ as it had in the movies. He also said, “Joanna Dunbar turns in a performance which is not only a wildly hilarious comedy, but is also a saga of the touring actors as they struggle with their lines and their collapsing relationships.”

Noises Off, by Michael Frayn, is directed by Lin Denning. The play reading is on Friday, 2 January 1998 at 7.30 pm. The are 5 male rôles and 4 female rôles, for varied age groups. This is a truly zany backstage comedy about an appalling touring company. Act 1 is a rehearsal of a melodrama, seen from the perspective of the audience. Act 2 is backstage on opening night, where we see the ‘set’ from behind, and also see the comic disasters affecting the actors, and Act 3 is again from the front of the melodrama set, one month into the tour when we view the ongoing saga of the touring actors as they struggle with their lines and their collapsing relationships.

**NOTE:** Lin says that this audition is very early because the words must be learnt very early!