

# ◆ Little Theatre News ◆

Bournemouth (Issue #10)

Members' Edition

Friday, 2 October 1998

## TWO SHOWS IN TWO WEEKS!



THE  
BRITISH TELECOM

BIENNIAL



World Première of

### *Ladies Who Lunch*

By Tudor Gates

Presented for six evenings at BLTC  
Jameson Road, Winton, from  
Monday, 26 to Saturday, 31 October

IAN DAVIES, the Director of

### *Ladies Who Lunch*

says



Only the first half of this play had been delivered to BLTC, but I knew I wanted to direct it. Tudor Gates was writing what he calls 'a criminal comedy' and the second half was not yet ready. You see, every two years, British Telecom offers a newly written play to be per-

formed by many amateur companies all over England, all within the same fortnight. This season they sent us a choice of two plays and we liked the idea of *Ladies Who Lunch*, so that is the one we're performing, concurrently with 32 other drama groups in different English regions.

The plot is about three ladies, one English, one Australian and the third American, who are the wives of three of the most important and daring businessmen and stock manipulators in those three countries. These ladies, who have no need of paid employment, are running a big charity, which could benefit from the infusion of really huge funds. What they devise over lunch is a plot to manipulate their husbands so as to extract the cash from them without their being aware that they are being 'taken'.

Their methods are hardly legal and the results they achieve, both financially and in the unexpected marital problems they land up with, not to mention the international implications of their depredations, are the themes of this extremely witty comedy.

A mirror is held up to modern life in the fast lane, and what the ladies find out about themselves and their spouses ..... Well, I do hope the rest of the play arrives soon because the girls have got themselves in *such* a pickle, and I just don't see how they can get out of it.

Look, why not come to see the show, because we're sure the script will arrive before opening night and however the plot ends, we are sure you will be

On three evenings only  
Thursday, 5 November to  
Saturday 7 November

### *Soirée*



Written and

Directed

by

Tim Garton

*Soirée* is the story of a marriage so tempestuous that an evening of murder, punch-ups, police investigation and supernatural phenomena is the only thing with a chance of saving it.

George and Sally (sassily played by Gareth Buxton and Lisa Blangy) reach new heights of bickering on the evening of a dinner party planned to 'set up' two repressed and quirky friends of theirs, Frank and Ann (played with more than a little flair by Harvey Brice and Michelle Newton). However, George's best friend, Hank (played by the highly frightening Andy Joiner) has not been invited for one very good reason.

The reason? HE'S DEAD!

So when Hank decides to turn up anyway, and George and Sally — prime suspects in his murder — happen to remember that one of their guests is a police detective, things *really* start to go wrong.

Aptly enough, the play opens on Bonfire Night, but there will be more fireworks on stage that evening than anywhere else.

It has been said that this play is so controversial that within one week of seeing it, you will either have got married, or had a divorce.

Good luck!

# Please meet the Ladies Who Lunch



Hannah Strange as the



Angela Whyatt as the English Lady Amelia



Barbara Ward as the Australian Joane Stocks

Accompanied by David Hinton, Noel Davenport, Lee Tilson, Rachael de Pourcy Beamish, Joanna Gabbay, Liz Atkinson and Karen Evans

Director Ian Davies is well-known to BLTC audiences. He was last seen as Greg in last season's award-winning comedy *Relatively Speaking*. In 18 years at the Club he has done it all and seen it all! His earliest credit as a director was the Francis Durbridge thriller *The Small Hours*. He most recently directed *The Exorcism*. Of *Ladies Who Lunch*, he muses:

"Tudor Gates describes the play as 'a criminal comedy'. Far better, I think, is the tag of 'light hearted drama'. Tudor Gates agreed with me that the comedy is not high comedy, but rather is ironic and sarcastic. The comedic elements should not be allowed to get in the way of the story. The plot is the strongest element of the play. I see my task is in concentrating on the storytelling. The development of the characters and their humour is the task of the actors."



Andy Joiner

Writer-Director Tim Garton has selected a talented cast of young, emerging actors to give voice to his first major play

Lisa Blangy



# Soirée



Harvey

Tim Garton will be recalled by playgoers in BLTC's *A Lie of the Mind* where he played a seriously weird young American with great distinction. His first novel is with his literary agent in London. In other plays he has been a psychotic wife beater, a murderer and a lunatic asylum inmate! Of *Soirée* he says, "It doesn't tell people how to live: it's to give them a good time and get them thinking. If I accomplish that, then I've done what I set out to do."



Michelle Newton



Gareth Bux-

## ADVANCE TICKET BOOKINGS (price £6, with concessions)

1. WRITE enclosing cheque and S.A.E. to  
Box Office, BLTC, 11 Jameson Road, Bournemouth BH9 2QD OR
2. CONTACT SUE at home **ONLY between 7.30 p.m. and 9.00 p.m.** Monday 12 October to Friday 16 October  
on her home number **424640** OR
3. BOX OFFICE OPENS Monday 19 October to Friday 23 October, **between 7.30 p.m. and 9.00 p.m.**  
for personal callers OR by telephone on **513361**

# AGM

So the widely advertised meeting was duly held. Last year about 20 members showed up — this year it was about 30. The Committee must be doing something right if the rest of you didn't feel it necessary to voice your opinions.

Only one member of the Studio section attended. It is to be hoped that the Studio group do not develop an 'us' and 'them' attitude. The purpose of the Studio is to bring on new talent for the benefit of the Club as a whole and not as a separate organisation.

Particularly striking was when the Secretary read the minutes of last year's AGM. Last year's chairman's report was a litany of depression, gloomily picking at the scabs covering the fairly downbeat 1996/97 season. By comparison, Andrew Whyatt's report on the year 1997/98 was a paean of triumph! Well, we are entitled to praise ourselves when things improve. We all know they have: the problem is how to build on success and not lose the momentum. Some member of the Committee resigned by design. Some retired by rotation and offered themselves for re-election. Some new members of the Committee who had been co-opted during the previous season were ratified by the meeting, then stood down and put themselves up for re-election. It sounds awfully complicated, but put simply, at the end of the meeting the following worthy members had

retired:

- \* Bill Palmer
  - \* Ian Davies
  - \* Simon Truick
  - \* Joanna Dunbar
- The new Committee consists of:
- \* Andrew Whyatt
  - \* Hugh Norris
  - \* Noel Davenport
  - \* Derek Hyder
  - \* Tony Orman
  - \* Hilary Jeffreys.

Hilary is the only member new to the Committee. She is doubly welcome, not only for her undoubted talents but because she is the first female in some time willing to join the Committee.

Other names were suggested, and it is clear that Committee numbers will swell by co-option during this season.

Amazingly, there was so little dispute on any front (even the accounts sailed through!), that we were able to retire to the bar by about 8.30 p.m.

Regretfully, this newsletter has to be printed before the meeting of the Committee to elect its officers for the coming season. So watch this space.

## Andrew's Plea

**Despite much hard work in the renovations, the ladies' loo still needs to be painted and decorated. Please call Andrew on 624221 to volunteer to help in this worthy activity. You can't all just want to be actors and directors, can you?**

## Angela's

**Angela Whyatt needs you! She has taken on the invidious task of securing members to volunteer for help with the bar and/or tea and coffee making and/or front-of-house. She herself is performing in *Ladies Who Lunch* and urgently asks you for your help front of stage during that show. So please call her NOW on 624221 to tell her on what evenings and in what capacity you are offering to help her. If she doesn't answer, leave a message on her answering machine. She will get back to you.**

## Review

Linda Kirkman wrote in the Daily Echo of *Nightmare: the Fright of Your Life*, "[The plot] concerns a honeymoon couple caught up in a situation involving blocked chimneys, locked cupboards and more horrific situations than most of us would experience in a lifetime.

Don Gent's absolutely superb production is also, bizarrely, extremely funny, and I began to wonder if that was his intention from the outset, as his excellent cast — Mary Adams, Amanda Garton, Neil West, Freddie Merchant, Derek Hyder and David Hinton — are all far too experienced for it to be mere chance.

The "converted chapel" set looked nothing like as classy as it should — well, I wouldn't have paid the required £800 a month for it — a blood-covered spade was too paint-like, a "dead" body breathed alarmingly — and as for the gardener's beard ...

No matter. In a highly entertaining evening the audience clutched each other and screamed as intruders appeared, often, often laughing helplessly as they did their worst. If that's a nightmare then give me more."

# So, What is a Biennial?

WELL, once every two years, British Telecom sponsor a play to be performed by amateur drama groups all over England. They started doing this in 1989. They put an advertisement in *The Amateur Stage*, which we imagine is the favourite bedtime reading for every BLTC member. They offer the play (or plays plural this time around) to any group interested in joining up. Our Favourite Member, Derek Hyder, actually read the advertisement, and we ultimately applied. BT offered us two plays to consider, but only the first half of each play was sent to us. Marvellous! The first half of Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale* is a tragedy, the second half is 16th Century Whitehall farce: as calm rational intellectuals, your Committee chose to perform *Ladies Who Lunch* by Tudor Gates. In other words, we stuck in a pin and took a chance. Ian Davies volunteered to direct, and a grateful Committee accepted.

Naturally, British Telecom do not leave you on your own. They *do* offer full support. They also tell you what you can and cannot say and how to spell the name "BT". (*Heavy stuff, eh?*) AND they hold workshops, to be attended by the potential directors of each production. The workshops, this time around, were held at Wells, Sheffield, Formby, Woodley, Walton-on-Thames, and Chorley and hosted by local drama groups. The workshops were designed to show the chosen plays to potential directors. Mr John Hague, Project Manager for BT, later wrote to tell us that the authors of the two plays (God love them!) had actually been present at the workshops, and *allegedly* benefited "from the comments, criticism and discussion which contributed so much to the final drafts of the two plays." Mind you, John Hague's postscript in the same letter read,

"I have just had a note from Tudor Gates that says at the bottom of page 62 of *Ladies Who Lunch*, 'Stupid old dong' should be 'Stupid old dag', (Not to be confused with the creature with a luminous nose). Please amend this major error immediately!!!"

Well, what's in a name?

## And, How was it for you, Ian?

Ian Davies' view of  
The BT Biennial



Read through at Wells Little Theatre

The BT Biennial is the country's largest sponsor of amateur theatre: it can be found in the Guinness Book of Records for the world's biggest opening night of a new play. The problem for me was that, having been accepted by BLTC to direct the chosen play, *Ladies Who Lunch*, I had to work with a play which was still being written. A series of workshops was set up to involve each participating group in

further development of the play. So it was that I went to The Little Theatre in Wells, Somerset one bright day in May 1998.

It was with some sense of unease that I approached this venture. You may imagine the visions of village hall drama companies (*à la* the characters in The Studio's memorable *Last Tango in Little Grimley*) all fawning round a gushing luvvy of an Author, holding court in his element. Well, it wasn't quite like that. The author of *Ladies Who Lunch*, Tudor Gates, and the project manager, John Hague, were at times perhaps a little condescending to us amateurs, but never by intention. Indeed, Tudor Gates was unassuming and had no fear of altering his creation for the sake of getting it right, whoever made suggestions.

The plan for the day was for the host group, The Wells Operatic Society, to perform a rehearsed reading of *Ladies Who Lunch* under the direction of the author. Later, everybody else could work through scenes and take part in an open forum on the script.

We all sat down in the air-conditioned auditorium, and listened to our hosts' play reading. I was relieved to find that the play sounded a lot better than it reads. A subsequent playreading and audition at BLTC Winton happily confirmed this view.

The Wells Little Theatre's auditorium seats about the same number as ours, but comparison of facilities stops there. Theirs is a purpose-built theatre, with a Green Room Bar that we can only dream about. There is a huge scenery dock with room and equipment to manufacture and paint anything required for plays and musicals. They have real dressing rooms, and their rehearsal-cum-exhibition space is larger than the actual stage. Their membership is about the same as ours. They put on 5 or 6 shows a year, usually two musicals, two straight plays and a pantomime. They receive a small local authority grant but the musicals keep the place open. Mind you, unlike Bournemouth, they are the only theatre in a small town, and they are well patronised. They even have a newsletter remarkably similar in style to this one.

If the read though of the BT play was anything to go by, they are also a talented bunch of players.

I personally wish to take this public opportunity of thanking them for their hospitality.



BT's John Hague with Author Tudor Gates

# Theatre Quiz

by **Tony Orman**

1. In which play, by which author do Goldberg and McCann terrorise Stanley?
2. Which play by Tennessee Williams was prosecuted in Dublin as "an indecent and profane performance" in 1957?
3. Name the author of *Nightmare: the Fright of Your Life*.
4. Name the novel by Voltaire turned into a musical by Leonard Bernstein.
5. Which 3,000 seat London theatre opened in 1732 with a revival of *The Way of the World*?
6. Who created the title role in *Billy Liar* in 1960?
7. Name the most prominent two of the Lord Chamberlain's Men.
8. In America it was called 'vaudeville'. What was it called in England?
9. Name two characters created by Barry Humphries.
10. Name Sir Michael Redgrave's three children.

Answers at foot of page.

## Opinion

**We will never win the Best Young Performer Award, but we do encourage young performers and writers to rise through the ranks of The Studio.**

Jack Snell is a real Pied Piper, leading on seekers after artistic truth every Wednesday evening in truly charismatic fashion.

We have in recent seasons supported Keith Rawlings and Hugh Norris to put on their own plays under our aegis. And now we have Tim Garton, who submitted his first play to us on 25 March, when we were met to call for suggestions for the new season. We said, "Hey, this kid can write dialogue!" So we are now supporting his production in November.

Even more recently, another new young member, who has just now joined, has submitted short pieces of such promise that he has been requested to submit a one-act play for consideration. And new teenage performers are cast in our October and December shows.

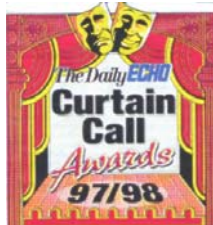
But, remember, children, that Philip Mutton, in his 91st year, is this year's Best Supporting Actor (Drama) at the Curtain Call Awards. So younger members must realise that we will give them every chance to shine. With at least 7 shows a year we need them.

However, they must also realise that they have yet to prove themselves over the long term, and will have to work hard and diligently, and with a certain humility, to establish their amateur or professional reputations in the Theatre.

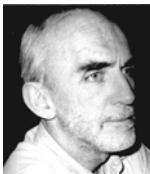
*Tony Orman*

Editor

# BLTC dominates Curtain Call Awards



**Best Comedy**  
**Winner: BLTC for**  
***Relatively Speaking***  
**Directed by**  
**LIN DENNING**



**Best Actor, Drama**  
**Winner:**  
**ALAN JARVIS as**  
**'Torvald Helmer' in**  
***A Doll's House***

### Best Drama

**Winner: BLTC for**  
***One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest***  
**Directed by**  
**JACK SNELL**



### Best Supporting Actor, Drama

**Winner:**  
**PHILIP MUTTON as**  
**'Morton' in**  
***Relatively Speaking***



## Strength in Depth - BLTC's 23 Award Nominations

It is not the winners, but the *nominations* which give the best impression of a club's achievements. This year BLTC achieved an astonishing 23 nominations. In the non-musical categories we missed out only in Best Lighting/Effects and Best Young Performer.

*The Sisters Rosensweig* achieved an incredible 6 nominations. Eileen Rawlings, Derek Hyder, Andrew Whyatt, Barbara Warde and Angela Whyatt were nominated for acting, and Keith Rawlings was nominated as Best Director (comedy or farce).

In the same category, Lin Denning was nominated for Best Director, for *Relatively Speaking*, Lee Tilson and Pat Richardson received acting nominations, and BLTC\* was nominated for Best Comedy.

Barbara Warde had a second nomination — as Best Director (drama or thriller) for *A Doll's House*. BLTC was nominated for Best Set (thank you, David Weeks!), Jan Fox was nominated for acting, and Alan Jarvis\* was nominated as Best Actor.

But Alan was competing in the same category with Lee Payton who was nominated for his role in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*. This show achieved an amazing 5 nominations, including BLTC\* for Best Drama or Thriller, and Tim Garton, Neil West, and Joanna Dunbar for other acting roles.

But there is more! BLTC was nominated a second time in the Best Drama category with *Grand National Night*. In

this show, Philip Mutton\* received an acting nomination, and Hugh Norris competed with Barbara Warde for the title of Best Director (drama or thriller).

A mystery to us is why Jack Snell was not also been nominated in that category for *Cuckoo's Nest*. And he also directed *The Donahue Sisters*, in which Yvette Leahy was nominated as Best Actress (drama or thriller).

Lee Payton is doubly to be congratulated. His drama nomination is to be matched with his nomination as Best Actor (Comedy or Farce) in Brownsea Open Air Theatre's *As You Like It*. BOAT is a special category for BLTC. We provided 7 actors who racked up 3 acting nominations. Apart from Lee, Tracie Beardsley\* was nominated as Best Actress, and David Hinton as Best Supporting Actor.

Our members were also prominent in other shows outside the Club. Lin Denning\* was nominated as Best Actress (Drama or Thriller) for her role as Queen Eleanor in ImpAct Theatre's *The Lion in Winter*, and Penelope Goddard was nominated in the same category for her role as Ellen Terry in *The Guv'nor*, by KCA Players. Mike Satchell was nominated as Best Actor (Drama or Thriller) for his role in *Shadows* (Castle Players). In Best supporting nominations we also had Barry Hanmer in Upton Players' *Gaslight* and Jena Killingback\* in ImpAct Theatre's *Brimstone and Treacle*.

We are also happy to note that non-members last season

# Nominations confirm "Brilliant season"

who have since joined BLTC were also nominated. John Billington was nominated as Best Actor (Drama or Thriller) for his Antony in Stages Studio Theatre's *Antony and Cleopatra*. Joanna Gabbay and Hannah Strange\* (both already cast in our next production, *Ladies Who Lunch*) were both nominated as Best Young Performer for their roles in BOAT's *As You Like It*.

To all of the above, we congratulate you and we salute you.

\* Won category

## Reminders

- Mon. 26 thru Sat. 31 October.** Performances of *Ladies Who Lunch*, directed by Ian Davies.
- Thurs. 5 thru Sat. 7 November.** Performances of *Soirée* written and directed by Tim Garton.
- Mon. 7 thru Sat. 12 December.** Performances of *My Fat Friend*, directed by Tony Orman.
- Mon. 15 thru Sat. 20 February 1999.** Performances of Two one-act plays (directed by Jack Snell).
- Mon. 12 thru Sat. 17 April.** Performances of *An Evening with Gary Lineker*, directed by David Hinton (Audition date to be announced).
- Mon. 7 thru Sat. 12 June.** Performances of play to be selected, which will then travel to Des Moines, Iowa, performing there in mid-July, 1999.

1. *The Birthday Party* by Harold Pinter.
2. *The Rose Tattoo*.
3. Roger S Moss.
4. *Candide*.
5. The Theatre Royal, Covent Garden, now rebuilt as The Royal Opera House.
6. Albert Finney.
7. Richard Burbage and William Shakespeare.
8. Music-hall.
9. Dame Edna Everage and Sir Les Patterson.
10. Vanessa, Lynn and Corn.

Answers to quiz