



Bournemouth Little Theatre News



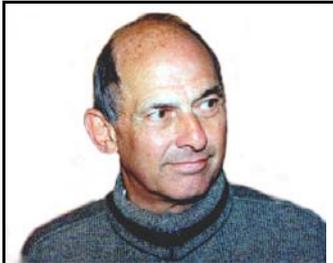
1998/99 Season

Second Combined Edition (Issue #14)

Thursday, 13 May 1999

Noël Coward Centennial Production

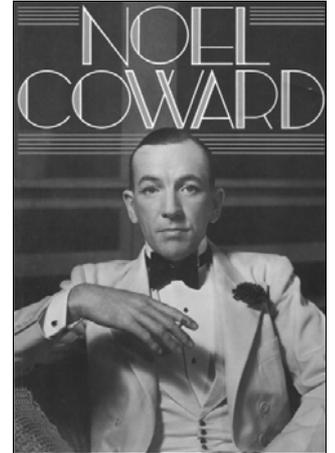
Celebrating the hundredth anniversary of the birth of 'The Master'



Don't miss director Andrew Whyatt's sure-footed handling of Noël Coward's friendly and of course, typically wry examination of social mores

**Bournemouth Little Theatre Club
Presents for six evenings
Monday, 7 to Saturday, 12 June
At Jameson Road, at 7.45 pm**

Noël Coward's acclaimed post-war comedy



RELATIVE VALUES



Mike Satchell



Lin Denning



Bill Palmer



Steve Cox

**“The Stately Homes of England,
How Beautiful they stand,
To prove the upper classes
Have still the upper hand ...”**

But at one Stately Home, Marshwood, all is in flux. For, the son of the House, Nigel, Earl of Marshwood, has announced to the world that he is engaged to be married to world famous Hollywood movie star, Miranda Frayle. And she is just about to arrive as a house guest. Nigel's mother Felicity, Dowager Countess of Marshwood, appears to be taking it all in her stride. But what of the servants? Crestwell, the butler is readying the household in his usual unflappable manner. But Dora Moxton, 'Moxie', Felicity's personal maid, is taking things very hard, and it looks as though the social classes are heading for a bumpy ride! Will the upper classes stand against this combination of an unsuitable match for the son and heir, combined with social rebellion below



Tim Garton



Stephanie Fereday



Angela Whyatt



Claire Winwood



Barclay Miller



Denise Nippard

About Noël Coward

Notes compiled by Tony Orman

When Noël Coward, playboy of the West End world, jack of all its entertainment trades and master of most, died in 1973 he was as old as the century and its most constant, if often controversial, showbusiness reflection. He left behind him over fifty plays, twenty-five films, hundreds of songs, a ballet, two autobiographies, a novel, several volumes of short stories and countless poems, sketches, recordings and paintings, not to mention the memories of three generations of playgoers on both sides of the Atlantic for whom he had been the most inefably elegant and ubiquitous of entertainers.

Noël Coward was born on 16 December 1899, just before the last Christmas of the nineteenth century (hence the name Noël). The second son of an unsuccessful piano-tuner-cum-salesman and a dotting, ambitious mother, he grew up in suburban, middle-class South London in genteel poverty. When he was ten, his mother answered a call for child actors in the *Daily Mirror*, and within three months Noël was on stage at the Crystal Palace in a play called *The Goldfish*. A few months later he played 'Slightly' in *Peter Pan* (Kenneth Tynan was to comment years later that he had been 'Wholly' in it ever afterwards).

By 1917 he was already making his first film, *Hearts of the World*, for D. W. Griffith. In 1924, at the Everyman Theatre, Hampstead, came the literally overnight success of his drama *The Vortex*, a play about drug addiction written at a time when even alcoholism was scarcely mentioned on the British stage. The roughly equal amounts of interest, indignation, admiration and money generated by the play, which Noël had written, directed and starred in, meant that at the age of twenty-four he went from being a mildly unsuccessful playwright, actor and composer to being the hottest theatrical figure in London -- a change so fast that even he took several months and one nervous breakdown to come to terms with it.

There followed, in rapid succession, such hits as *Hay Fever*, *Fallen Angels* and the revue *On with the Dance* (all of which ran in the West End simultaneously with *The Vortex*, a quadruple feat achieved before Noël in this century only by Somerset Maugham and then not again until Alan Ayckbourn), one year of total critical and public reversal when boos greeted *Sirocco* and Noël was spat at by irate theatre-goers, and then in 1929 the start of a period of successful activity remarkable even by Noël's standards.

Within the next two years Noël wrote and staged three of his greatest successes -- the operetta *Bitter Sweet*, the comedy *Private Lives* and the epic *Cavalcade* - so that by 1931 the boy wonder of the 1920s had settled into an altogether more stable pattern of theatrical triumph, one which was best characterised by the partnership that he formed with Gertrude Lawrence. For her he had written *Private Lives*, redolent of Riviera balconies, filled with the potency of cheap music and shot through with the sadness of a couple who could live neither together nor apart, a couple who were in many incidental

ways Noël and Gertie themselves. Six years later they played together again in his nine short plays, among them *Red Peppers*, *Shadow Play* and *Still Life* that became the film *Brief Encounter*, which made up the three alternating triple bills of *Tonight at 8.30*.

Between these two towering landmarks of their relationship, Noël also found the time to write *Design for Living* for Lynn Fontanne and Alfred Lunt, *Words and Music* for the producer Charles B. Cochran, *Conversation Piece* for Yvonne Printemps and soon afterwards *Operette* for Fritzi Massary.

If theatrically the 1930s were Noël's best years, politically and socially he cared for them less and less: 'For me', he wrote, 'the pre-war period died on the day Mr Neville Chamberlain returned with such gay *insouciance* from Munich.' He became rapidly and fervently anti-Chamberlain and anti-Munich; having always been bleakly uninterested in any kind of politics he suddenly found himself, on the brink of his forties, increasingly horrified by a world that was rapidly falling apart at the seams. Refuge in the theatre was no longer possible, though ironically the moment when Noël most wanted to leave it was also the moment when most people were telling him he was only useful so long as he stayed there. Churchill told him to go out and sing to the troops, leaving him to reflect uneasily that if the morale of the British Army was at such a low ebb that soldiers could be cheered into battle by his singing 'Mad Dogs and Englishmen' then the country was in even more trouble than he had realised.

So, during World War II, he entertained the troops, wrote the acclaimed farce *Blithe Spirit* made movies, such as *In Which We Serve*, and discovered, as the War ended, that his own 'gay *insouciance*' was no longer the fashion.

For Noël, 1951 was a year of death and quite remarkable rebirth. Before it was half over, news reached Noël in Jamaica of the London demise of Ivor Novello and Charles Cochran, both of whom he had known since the very beginning of his career in the theatre and whose names were synonymous with his own in the annals of 1930s West End success. It was the end not only of a couple of friendships but also of a whole chapter of British showbusiness.

But then, abruptly, the tide turned. Noël returned to England towards the middle of the year, found that two of the comic numbers he had recently written were at the heart of the success of that year's hit, *Lyric Revue*, and then, almost accidentally, discovered a whole



Noël in conversation with Mel Ferrer in rehearsal for an audio version of Sheridan's *The Rivals*

new career for himself as well. Faced with the inevitable charity garden party in aid of the Actors' Orphanage, Noël decided to dispense with the usual boring autograph session and instead took a tent, outside which he put up a sign reading simply 'Noël Coward At Home: Admission Three Shillings'. Inside it, he and Norman Hackforth, the pianist who had faithfully accompanied him on years of gruelling wartime troop concert tours, presented a sequence of medleys of all the old Coward songs from 'Parisian Pierrot' across thirty years to 'Sail Away'.

The triumph Noël had in the tent on that one wet afternoon was to lead within a few weeks to the last major development in his career: his emergence at the Café de Paris -- to his own and everyone else's surprise -- as one of the most highly paid and highly successful cabaret entertainers of the 1950s.

And that was not all. Noël's first successful comedy in almost a decade, *Relative Values*, opened at the Savoy Theatre a few nights after his Café première, with a cast headed by Gladys Cooper, Angela Baddeley and Judy Campbell, and reviews nearly good enough to make him forget the insults to which he had been treated by the Press in the long years since *Blithe Spirit*. The play had started with the working title *Moxie*, named for the heroine, but he soon renamed it. His star, Gladys Cooper, was being a little difficult, and Binkie Beaumont had to travel to Bournemouth to "deal firmly with her". On Wednesday, 28 November 1951, Noël received the Duchess of Kent and Princess Margaret at the Savoy Theatre for the First Night. He got rave notices for the show and he predicted a smash hit!

By Christmas 1951 he noted in his diary, with commendable restraint, 'On the whole, a good year.' In fact, it was one of the best he ever had.

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. BOX OFFICE OPENS Monday 31 May to Friday 4 June, between 7.30 p.m. and 9.00 p.m.
for personal callers OR by telephone on 513361

Into the Millennium: Next Year's Shows

It is something we repeat every season: we can only offer the public those plays that directors are willing to direct. The days are gone when the lordly Committee can choose plays and then dictate to aspiring directors that they must do the plays as selected.

Nowadays we invite offers from directors as we did at our official "Directors' Evening" at the Club on 26 March. The play-choosing sub-committee, this year consisting of Andrew Whyatt and Tony Orman, then attempts to work out which plays by which directors will create a balanced programme for the season.

We then have to ask directors if they are willing to put on their chosen productions at the dates that we feel it is suitable to offer them. Only when this has been done are the list and the proposed dates submitted to the Executive Committee for its approval, or otherwise.

At a meeting of the full Committee in late April the following plays and dates were approved:

6-11 September 1999. *Death Trap* by Ira Levin, directed by Don Gent

18-23 October 1999. *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* by Edward Albee, directed by Jack Snell

6-11 December 1999. *Don't Dress For Dinner* by Marc Camoletti, directed by Tony Orman

14-19 February 2000. *The Three Sisters* by Anton Chekhov, directed by Andrew Whyatt

3-8 April 2000. *Intimate Exchanges* by Alan Ayckbourn, directed by Don Cherrett

22-27 May 2000. *Move Over Mrs Markham* by Cooney and Chapman, directed by Hugh Norris

A date in July 2000. *Chakra* by Tim Garton, directed by Jack Snell

During the season, at a date not yet fixed there will also be a **Variety Evening**, for two nights, presented by the Studio, also under the direction of Jack Snell.

Thus for a third season in a row we will be offering eight productions for your entertainment.

As we said in our last edition, there is enough there to satisfy the needs of all our actors, as well as our backstage supporters, without the need to dash off to other companies.

Anyone interested in acting or in working backstage in any of the above shows should contact the named directors to offer themselves for audition. To make this easier for you the contact phone numbers are set out below:

Don Gent 389725
Jack Snell 519994
Tony Orman 554291
Andrew Whyatt 624221
Hugh Norris 761400
Don Cherrett 690952 (BOAT Box Office: will take a message for Don)

The coming season's shows are a balanced blend of classic drama, high comedy, thrillers, the lot! Don't be left behind. Join in one or more of these fine productions.

One-act Festival: New Triumph



Jack Snell

"It wasn't until the play was over that I was astounded by the news that Tim and Amanda Garton are brother and sister," proclaimed Festival Adjudicator Marie O'Sullivan at Andover on 25 April, as she announced to an excited audience that BLTC had won the All England Theatre Festival Second Round six-play competition. Our entry, *Home Free*, was the very last play of the day, so our team must have been quite weary by the time they started their performance. And what a show they gave us. If they were good when they had first performed in Bournemouth and splendid when they won the First Round at Shaftesbury, Tim and Amanda were quite superb at Andover. But even so, as the adjudicator pointed out, they only won by the narrowest of margin of a single point over a strong performance by Weymouth Drama Club. Marie O'Sullivan stated in her adjudication that the Weymouth group had been heavily marked up for their costumes. Perhaps she was unduly impressed when the muscular young Weymouth actor portraying the Greek God Zeus pulled back his cloak to reveal himself naked save for a golden codpiece. As we have said before, we believe that the real-life brother and sister team of Tim and Amanda Garton are being very brave to tackle the theme of the dysfunctional siblings in *Home Free*, and, with increasing experience of performing this difficult and complex play, are more and more finding and dealing with all of its nuances. The production, and its continuing evolution, once more demonstrates the vast talents of its director, Jack Snell in bringing out the very best in his actors, and drawing them ever closer to the highest standards achievable.



A scene from the play

For those who have never followed the course of such contests, BLTC's achievement so far means that effectively the show has been voted the best of the approximately twenty clubs competing in the Southern Region. So now, on to the Western Area (of England) Final of this nationwide competition, which will take place at the Palace Theatre Red-ditch, Worcs., on Saturday, 15 May. For further details, please contact Jack Snell on 519994.



Amanda Garton



Tim Garton

Shakespeare in Vogue

Wonder of wonders, the movies have come to the rescue of Shakespeare and of live theatre itself. One film especially, *Shakespeare in Love*, has captured the imagination of the world in general and of young people in particular. The glamour of Gwyneth Paltrow combined with the brilliant script of Tom Stoppard and Marc Norman, have produced an effortlessly funny comedy. Nor should one forget the talents of Joseph Fiennes as Shakespeare. Not much has been said of him, although the film's director declared at the BAFTA Awards that the film could not have been made but for Joseph. He is so much in demand that he turned up the next week in the role of Lord Robert Dudley in the impressive film *Elizabeth*. Although this movie was nothing to do with Shakespeare, both the subject and the actors have only served to heighten the Shakespeare effect. (Mind you, seeing the above two films in succeeding weeks, with Shakespeare turning into Dudley, the confusion is palpable.)

So now, we hear that there are seven Shakespeare plays in production as movies, including *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, soon to premiere in the USA. Lest we forget, BLTC member Don Cherrett, who last month directed Ayckbourn's *Absent Friends* for Castle Players, will be directing *The Dream* for Brownsea Open Air Theatre. That show opens on Friday 23 July and runs on alternate nights until Friday, 6 August. BOAT was founded by our Club, and we always support it. A

number of our members are involved in the show, both on stage and in support. If you want tickets, you should call the BOAT Box Office on 01202 690952. But hurry. Word is that tickets are selling fast as they always do. One or two nights are already nearly sold out.



On screen:
Judi Dench, Cate Blanchett and Gwyneth Paltrow

Now we hear that Shakespeare studies have returned to the classroom. On TV news last week we saw 8 year olds cheerfully rehearsing bits from *The Dream*. We assume these were not the same children who walked out of the Royal Shakespeare Company's version of *The Dream* in April, being disgusted by the sight of Titania (Josette Simon) having simulated sex with what the Times decorously called 'a man dressed as a donkey'. The RSC, appalled by the bad publicity (allegedly — hah!) say that they are warning all primary schools that this is a very adult production. Secondary school pupils, however, are turning up in droves, tossing away Cliffs' Notes as they giggle excitedly in the crush bar at the interval. The RSC, in the meantime, is laughing all the way to the bank.



On the Island: Don Cherrett

Meanwhile, Judi Dench has bought the set of the interior of the Rose Theatre, used in *Shakespeare in Love*, and is donating it for the use of drama students. So, then — it's all's well that ends well, eh, Judi?

Theatre Quiz By

The theme is performers

1. Which movie star was the eponymous hero of *Jeffrey Barnard is Unwell* in 1989?
2. Who was "our Marie"?
3. In 1967, who set the record for the longest-running solo performance in John Aubrey's *Brief Lives*?
4. What was the name of the successful touring company formed by Kenneth Branagh with David Parfit in 1987?
5. Which fabled queen of Parisian variety and revue from the 1880s, starred later with Maurice Chevalier and toured in the USA in the 1920s?
6. Which famous stage actress gained an Oscar in the film *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*?
7. Which Oscar Winner was famously welcomed by Johnny Carson on the *Tonight Show* with the immortal greeting "Or may I call you 'F'?"
8. Name the Prime Minister's daughter who was a leading lady on stage and screen, including the film *The Winter's Tale* in 1968?
9. Which Australian actress was married to which British actor by whom she had a son, Jason, also an actor?
10. Which American actress, satirised by Orson Welles in *Citizen Kane*, was the mistress of William Randolph Hearst?

Answers at bottom of this page

REVIEW

This is how **Kelly Reynolds** of the **Daily Echo** viewed *An Evening With Gary Lineker*.

"For 90 minutes the Bournemouth Little Theatre Club transported us back to the 1990 World Cup semi-final between England and West Germany and gave us a glimpse of the lives and loves of four Brits and a German as they avidly follow the match from a Spanish hotel room.

Claire Winwood is Monica, who fantasises about leaving her husband Bill (Andy Joiner), and running off to marry Gary Lineker, dubbed the Queen Mother of football.

Meanwhile, Ian (Mark Lange) has designs on a young German girl, Birgitta, Joey Gabbay).

They are joined by Dan (Peter Evans), who it transpires, has been playing away with Monica but also manages to score with Birgitta!

A slightly hesitant start but the action soon hotted up as the audience warmed to the theme, and the five-strong side captured the memory of Italia'90 with great gusto and much gratuitous bad language — not for the faint-hearted.

No man of the match on this occasion, but a team effort in every sense of the word as this company once more lived up to its own exacting standards.

Incidentally, did I spy a multi-pack of Walkers Max crisps on stage?

Not even Salt 'n' Lineker back then!!"

Welcome Home



Lin, as Felicity, Countess of Marshwood, reviews preparations for the Village fête

It seems some time ago since we saw Lin Denning on stage at BLTC. Now she plays the leading role of Felicity in our June production, *Relative Values*. A BLTC member for 12 years, Lin first came to prominence as Chelsea in *On Golden Pond*. A favourite role was in *Round and Round the Garden*. For us, most recently she directed *Relatively Speaking* which won the 1998 Curtain Call Best Comedy

Angela's appeal

Not every actor starring in a production has the unenviable task of finding volunteers to pour the teas, dole out the biscuits, employ the bartender, sort out the front-of-house manager and the programme seller for each show. This season, Angela Whyatt has drawn the short straw for this attractive job. But she is playing one of the leading roles in the forthcoming production of *Relative Values*, which plays Monday to Saturday, 7 – 12 June. Because she will be under the gun, feverishly rehearsing during the two weeks before the show, she begs, nay she implores on bended knees for volunteers to help with front-of-house activities. But she wants you, yes you, hiding in the corner, to call her **now**, don't wait until just before the week of the show. Don't be one of those folk who call late, saying "I've been meaning to phone you. Help her, please, to get the rota sorted out early, so that she can concentrate on her role. Call her as soon as you read this, she won't mind, on **624221**. Never mind King and Country, it's our Angela who needs you.

Call early and help a good cause.

Award. As a director she takes great pride in having directed two Shakespeare shows on Brownsea, *Much Ado About Nothing*, and *The Winter's Tale*. At the same venue she memorably performed *Mistress Quickly* in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. But perhaps her greatest role was as Queen Eleanor in ImpAct Theatre's *The Lion in Winter*. Those fortunate

enough to have seen that performance will recall that every turn of the head, every utterance, every emotion she displayed could be summed up by saying that one could not imagine how the role could ever be played in any other way. Our audience in June will be seeing a great actress in her prime. This is something not to be missed.

Anyone for Ferndown?

The Ferndown Community Centre is considering the idea of a Millennium Celebration by presentation of a "Street Scene 2000" in the open air in front of the Centre, and has asked BLTC to participate. The present idea is that several organisations would present an item of interest which is allied to their usual function eg: a playlet, music sketches, poems, dance, demonstrations, novelty entertainments etc; anything which would be of interest to the public and could be utilised in a Street Scene. It is envisaged that the event would take place in the mornings and afternoons of the week 14-19 August 2000. They suggest the involvement could be for one morning or afternoon with three periods of 15/20 minutes or both morning and afternoon. It would depend on what groups could provide and how it could fit into the programme. The possibility of a "Children's Day" and other "Special" days is being explored. BLTC has not yet formulated its response.

TWENTY QUESTIONS

Andrew Whyatt, director of *Relative Values* answers:

1. What is your idea of perfect happiness?

Having my wife and family around me.

2. What is your greatest fear?

To run out of time.

3. Which famous person do you admire?

Winston Churchill.

4. Who is your favourite film star?

Gregory Peck.

5. Who is your favourite actor or actress?

Judi Dench.

6. What is your greatest extravagance?

Good wine.

7. What do you always carry on you?

A clean handkerchief.

8. Where would you most like to live?

The Lake District.

9. What is your most unappealing habit?

Being untidy.

10. What is your favourite

smell?

Good red wine.

11. What is your favourite word?

'Succulent'.

12. What is your favourite play or film?

Bend of the River (1952) starring James Stewart.

13. What is your favourite journey?

To the food shop.

14. What do you dislike most?

Liars.

15. What is your greatest regret?

I don't have any

16. When and where were you happiest?

In Dorset when my children were young.

17. What single thing which would improve your quality of life?

More money.

18. How do you relax?

Wining and dining.

19. What is your favourite quality in others?

Patience.

20. What is your favourite animal?



Hilary Jefferys (above, in the Green Room) has rapidly impressed since she joined the Club not so long ago. She has since joined the Committee as Wardrobe Mistress and has already shown her deft skills in shows such as *My Fat Friend*. She will be having a watching brief over all our shows and we are grateful for her tireless activities.

Marriage

Marcia Giles and Paul Caton are tying the knot on Sunday, 16 May 1999.

We wish them great happiness for their lives together in the future.

Reminders

Mon. 7 thru Sat. 12 June. Performances of *Relative Values* by Noël Coward, directed by Andrew Whyatt.

Wed. 7 thru Sat. 10 July. Performances by The Studio of two one-act plays directed by Jack Snell.

Answers to Quiz
1. Peter O'Toole; 2. music hall star Marie Lloyd; 3. Roy Dotrice; 4. The Renaissance Theatre Company; 5. Mistinguett; 6. Maggie Smith; 7. F Murray Abraham, Sallie in *Amadeus*; 8. Diana Churchill; 9. Diane Cilento formerly wife of Sean Connery; 10. Marion Davies.