



Bournemouth Little Theatre News



1998/99 Season

Third Combined Edition (Issue #15)

Tuesday, 15 June 1999

Two one-act plays

Support Our Studio

BLTC PRESENTS

At Jameson Road
Four evenings only
Wednesday to Saturday
7 to 10 July
At 7.45 pm

S O S

After Midnight, Before Dawn



A drama by David Campton

The first play, directed by Studio Guru Jack Snell, takes place in the 15th Century or thereabouts. The drama is set, after midnight, in a prison cell. The people in the cell have been sentenced to be hanged in the morning for the crime of witchcraft. Only one of them, a woman, is a real witch! She tells the others that she will not be hanged because she has made a pact with the Devil. The remaining prisoners come to the conclusion that they would also want to make a pact with the Devil to avoid execution.

Fairly chilling material, you might think, but only the first half of an exciting evening. Hold on to your seats!



The second play is



Cup Final

A comedy by Charles Mander

No, no, no. This play has NOTHING to do with football!!

The comedy, directed by Pat Gray, is set in the dressing room of an amateur drama group who are performing in a competitive drama festival, just after they have given a particularly dreadful show.

If you enjoyed *Last Tango in Little Grimley* then you will really appreciate this very amusing play which pokes fun at amateur drama groups

THESE ARE THE BLTC STUDIO PLAYERS IN THE TWO PLAYS



From the top of the page, and reading clockwise, the artistes are Jack Snell, Kate Docker, Ian Black, Lisa Blangy, Steve Cox, Eunice Hawkins, Hilary Naylor, Don Gent, Michelle Newton, Gareth Buxton and Annette Tohill.

For everyone who has been following the exciting progress of Jack Snell's festival production of *Home Free*, the team of Amanda and Tim Garton scored very high marks at the Western Area Final at Redditch on 15 May. They were very narrowly beaten into second place. All concerned deserve our heartiest congratulations in taking this extremely difficult play so high up the festival ladder. And isn't it lovely to know, that with leadership of this sort, BLTC is once more back in the hunt for festival glory, after an absence of so many years!

There is no pre-booking for the July Studio production
Tickets will be on sale at the door
Tickets for this show are £4 with the usual concessions

New Season –Important changes

Subscriptions are up AND DOWN!

This is the time of the year when we send out membership renewal forms and we hope that our current members will all want to renew their membership.

As regulars know, we begin our financial year on July 1 of each year and that is when we would hope you will all be sending back those forms, one sent per membership family, to arrive at your home in the same envelope as this newsletter. Of course, Playgoers, who also receive this paper, will not be receiving the forms. But they, like the full members should be very interested in the subscription changes.

We have not had any change in our standard subscription rate (currently £17) for several years and

we have had steady, if not huge inflation throughout the period.

So, to be fair to all, the Committee has decided on the following revolutionary format for subscriptions on and from July 1, 1999 as follows:

— The standard membership subscription goes **UP** to **£20**;

— Because it is felt that our current subscription level may be a deterrent to younger people, many of whom may be students, from becoming members, for anyone under the age of 25 on July 1, 1999, the subscription goes **DOWN** to **£10**;

— For couples the joint membership will be **£35**;

— **AND FOR ALL MEMBERS THE COST OF A STANDARD**

PLAY TICKET GOES DOWN FROM £3 TO ONLY TWO POUNDS! For those members who take full advantage of this price reduction, the intention is that the cheaper prices will more than offset the subscription increase.

We hope the new renewal forms will also spell this out clearly for you, but in the event of any confusion, please remember that you can phone **Tony Orman**, the Membership Secretary, on **01202 554291**, to resolve any problems.

We should add that, of course, children of members, under 18 and living at home, may be added by their parents at no charge.

Any member who wishes to comment on these changes should likewise call Tony Orman, for their comments to be included in summary form in the next newsletter.

Your views *and* your subs are equally welcome!

Coward Centenary: new productions see 'The Master' in new light

Evening dress, cocktails and effortless one-liners — these are the Noël Coward trademarks that we know and love, the elements which make us think of his plays as safe, delightful entertainment. But talk to three directors staging their first Coward revivals in the run-up to December's centenary of his birth, and an altogether different picture emerges.

First up is **Philip Franks**, whose production of *Private Lives* opened on 23 May. Franks admits he had a preconceived view of the play's love-hate relationship between former husband and wife Elyot Chase and Amanda Prynne as "superficial, camp and not really about anything except posh gigs with cigarette holders, poncing about in a beautiful flat. What I read was as profound a dissection of a mutually destructive and dependant relationship as anything in Strindberg. Extremely funny, yes, but also raw."

So, he resolved to take audiences beyond the glittering surface to the weighty core of the play, ranked equal seventh in the National Theatre's poll of this century's greatest drama. He deliberately chose Juliet Stevenson and Anton Lesser, two heavyweight classical actors, to play Amanda and Elyot: "They are not people you'd associate with something that was just a polished light comedy."

Though public attitudes to individual morality have shifted radically since 1930, when Coward and Gertrude Lawrence starred in the premiere of *Private Lives*, Franks believes "there is still something very shocking in the faithlessness of Amanda and Elyot". Five years after separating, they find themselves in adjacent honeymoon suites with their new spouses, strait-laced Victor and Sibyl, and within minutes have fled together to Amanda's Paris apartment, the setting for their alternating bursts of passion and rage in Acts II and III.

Coward's explicit references to the couple's vigorously resumed sex life are also startling, Franks

suggests. "They have not left the flat for two days because they have been having so much sex and they are patently about to make love at three points in Act II. The audience should be able to smell the atmosphere of sex. It's really steamy and you think to yourself 'Hang on, they put *this* on stage in 1930?'"

Franks's conviction that Coward possessed much more than the celebrated "talent to amuse" is echoed

"titanic imagination", **Marianne Elliott**, now in rehearsals for *Nude With Violin* in Manchester, had never considered tackling one of his plays. "I've always thought Coward was exactly the sort of theatre I hated: safe, rather snobbish, frothy entertainment," says Elliott, the youngest member of this summer's Coward trio. "But I've dismissed him too lightly."

Premiered in 1956, *Nude With Violin* is set in Paris following the death of acclaimed painter Paul Sorodin. His art dealer and family, descending like crows for their share of his estate, are horrified to learn that Sorodin has perpetrated a gigantic fraud: his works were painted by a succession of hired hands.

Coward's satirical assault on modern art still rings true, as does the play's racial undercurrent — which Elliott's production is bound to accentuate. The action is controlled by Sorodin's valet Sebastian, a kind of dissolute Jeeves. Described in the stage directions as "a dark, rather swarthy man".

The race issue will be an enhanced issue at the Royal Exchange in July, since Elliott has cast Derek Griffiths, who is black.

"I chose Derek because he is a terrific comedian," she says, "but also because I felt it would be very interesting to have a black actor as Sebastian — something that would have been really extraordinary in 1956."

Racism, tragic overtones and steamy sexuality? If Elliott, Donnellan and Franks have their way, Coward's work will no longer seem so terribly, terribly familiar.

Private Lives opened 23 May at the Lyttleton (0171-452 3000) **Hay Fever** previews from June 9 at the Savoy (0171-836 8888); **Nude With Violin** previews at the Royal Exchange, Manchester from June 30 (0161-833 9833)



Noël Coward, Adrienne Allen, *Private Lives*, 1930

by **Declan Donnellan**, who has just brought *Hay Fever* to the West End. "Coward wrote greater than he knew," Donnellan says. "The whole [play] appears to have a clipped, glancing lightness," says Donnellan. "But in fact the situation is monstrous. The mother seduces the daughter's boyfriend and the daughter seduces the mother's boyfriend. Then all four paramours are sent packing because the family are so in love with each other. It's almost an incest thing — sort of funny and completely tragic."

While Donnellan has long admired Coward's

Theatre Quiz

by
Tony Orman

Below are opening lines of plays, or scenes in Shakespeare's plays. In all cases, name the speaker and the play.

(Answers at bottom of page)

1. If music be the food of love, play on.
2. Once more unto the breach, dear friends, once more.
3. Two households, both alike in dignity.
4. I thought the King had more affected the Duke of Albany than Cornwall.
5. When shall we three meet again? In thunder, lightning or in rain.?
6. Hence! home, you idle creatures, get you home.
7. Speak the speech, I pray you, as I pronounced it to you, trippingly on the tongue.
8. Now, my co-mates and brothers in exile, hath not old custom made this life more sweet than that of painted pomp?
9. Now is the winter of our discontent made glorious summer by this son of York.
10. Now, fair Hippolyta, our nuptial hour draws on apace.
11. In sooth, I know not why I am so sad: it wearies me, you say it wearies you.
12. Who keeps the gate here, ho?

AGM

We are sure that the usual 20% of you who attend our AGMs will be thrilled to learn that it will be held at the Club on **Sunday, 5 September 1999 at 7.30 pm**, and that the bar will be open. The 80% who don't ever attend can now turn over and go back to

Audition

Don Gent announces an audition of the drama

Ira Levin's Deathtrap

to be held on
Friday, 18 June 1999
at **Jameson Road**
at **7.30 pm**

There are 3 male and 2 female roles.

Production dates are 6 to 11 September 1999.

For further details please call Don Gent on **01202 389725**.

Heavenly Jan?

For those who would like to be up there with the stars, **Jan Fox**, who left us last year for drama school at Birmingham School of Speech and Drama (BSSD), is certainly reaching out for them. We found this photo of her on BSSD's Internet site, highlighting their current graduates in production. Jan, who tells us she will be changing her first name to Olivia for professional purposes, is seen here as Queen Margaret in Shakespeare's *Henry VI, Part 3*.

She will be seen next in a showcase performance in the West End at the Criterion Theatre on 7 July.

Anyone who boldly changes their life to attack the notoriously hard life of professional theatre deserves all our support and we wish her *bona fortuna*.



Pulled off the Internet:
Jan Fox at College

New Choices

We told you in May that our second production would be *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*, but amateur rights are currently unavailable. So Jack Snell went to his second choice, *The Birthday Party*. But that play is also in revival in the West End.

So Jack was getting ready to go to a third choice, when we were informed by Samuel French Company that our

urgent requests, right up to the date of this newsletter had received favourable consideration by the personal agents of Harold Pinter.

This means we can do the show after all. It also indicates how frequently these days, the amateur can come up against the brick wall of a professional revival.

Review

Linda Kirkman says of *Relative Values* in the *Daily Echo*:

"Noël Coward's story about the effects on an upper class family when son of the house decides to marry an actress can be extremely funny, but despite the high standards that both BLTC and the particular performers are capable, I found this production ultimately rather disappointing.

There seemed to be an over-emphasis on angst, meaning that much of the humour of the situation was lost, and in addition several characters' attempts to speak in a stylised fashion resulted in voices pitched too high and words consequently strangled.

I also felt that there was some mis-

casting, in particular Lin Denning as Felicity, Countess of Marshwood, and Tim Garton as Nigel, her son. Both are fine actors but on this occasion their characters just did not seem real enough. However, there was no doubting Angela Whyatt's anguished desperate Mrs Dora Moxton, "Moxie", and her outstanding performance stole the show.

There were also good characterisations from the supporting cast, especially Claire Winwood and Barclay Miller, suitably theatrical as Hollywood actors Miranda Frayle and Don Lucas, Michael Satchell as Crestwell the butler and Denise Nippard as Alice the housemaid. The cast was completed by Bill Palmer, Steve Cox and Stephanie Fereday.

Audition

Jack Snell announces an audition of the drama

The Birthday Party
by Harold Pinter

to be held on
Friday, 18 June 1999
at **Jameson Road**
at **8.45 pm**

There are 2 male and 2 female roles.

Production dates are 18 to 23 October 1999.

For further details please call Jack Snell on **01202 519994**.

Audition

Tony Orman announces an audition of the comedy

Don't Dress For Dinner
by Marc Camoletti

to be held on
Friday, 3 September 1999
at **Jameson Road**
at **7.30 pm**

There are 3 male and 3 female roles.

Production dates are 6 to 11 December 1999.

For further details call Tony Orman on **01202 554291**.

Updates

Present plans call for next season's Studio to start its usual Wednesday evening sessions on Wednesday 27 October 1999. Currently the Studio will have one presentation, next season, which will be a variety evening planned for Friday and Saturday, 21 and 22 July 2000.

The performance dates for Club Member Tim Garton's play *Chakra* are now set of Monday to Saturday, 26 June

Reminders

Fri. 18 June 1999, Audition, Death-trap Don Gent Director, at 7.30 pm.

Fri. 18 June 1999, Audition, Play TBA, Jack Snell Director, at 8.45 pm.

Wed. 7 to Sat. 10 July 1999, Performances of Two One-act plays, by the Studio, at 7.45 pm.

Fri. 3 September 1999, Audition, Don't Dress For Dinner, Tony Orman Director, at 7.30 pm.

Sun. 5 September 1999, Annual General Meeting, 7.30 pm.

Mon. 6 – Sat. 11 September 1999, Performances of Ira Levin's Death-trap at 7.45 pm.

Mon. 18 – Sat. 23 October 1999, Performances of Play TBA, at 7.45 pm.

Wed. 27 October 1999, First session of the Studio.

Mon. 6 – Sat. 11 December 1999, Performances of Don't Dress For Dinner, at 7.45 pm.

Mon. 14 – Sat. 19 February 2000, Performances of The Three Sisters, at 7.45 pm.

Mon. 3 – Sat. 8 April 2000, Performances of Intimate Exchanges, at 7.45 pm.

Mon. 22 – Sat. 27 May 2000, Performances of Move Over Mrs Markham, at 7.45 pm.

Mon. 26 June – Sat. 1 July 2000, Performances of Chakra at 7.45 pm.

Fri./Sat. 21/22 July 2000, Performances of The Variety Show at 7.45 pm.

Answers to Quiz
1. Orsino, *Twelfth Night*, Act 1 Scene 1;
2. Henry, *Henry V*, Act 3, Scene 1;
3. Chorus, *Romeo and Juliet*, Prologue;
4. Kent, *King Lear*, Act 1 Scene 1;
5. First Witch, *Macbeth*, Act 1 Scene 1;
6. Flavius, *Julius Caesar*, Act 1 Scene 1;
7. Hamlet, *Hamlet*, Act 3 Scene 2;
8. Duke Senior, *As You Like It*, Act 2 Sc. 1;
9. Richard, *Richard III*, Act 1 Scene 1;
10. Theseus, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Act 1 Scene 1;
11. Antonio, *The Merchant of Venice*, Act 1 Scene 1;
12. Lord Bardolph, *Henry IV pt 2*, Act 1 Scene 1.