



Bournemouth Little Theatre News



Issue #20

1999/2000 Season

Friday 10 March 2000

Bournemouth Little Theatre Club
Presents
From Monday April 3 to Saturday April 8, 2000
at Jameson Road at 7.45 pm

The sparkling comedy

Intimate Exchanges

by

Alan Ayckbourn

directed by

Don Cherrett



IN this running battle of the sexes, a middle class couple are living in a cosy London suburb, languishing in a marriage that has run out of petrol. Toby Teasdale is the slightly stuffy, somewhat tipsy, headmaster of a prep school. His wife, Celia, also slightly stuffy, is somewhat fed up. Their home, which goes with Toby's job as headmaster, adjoins the school and its playing field. In the background is their useless housemaid, Sylvie, and Lionel Hepplewick, the school's grounds keeper, odd-job man, and part-time gardener. Sylvie is smitten with Lionel, but Lionel becomes obsessively in love with Celia.

Playwright Ayckbourn, effortlessly capable of turning an offhand remark into a laugh line, gently yet incisively dissects the lives of his characters in a way that will keep you on your toes, and gently chuckling throughout the evening, as the action reaches an unexpected conclusion.

Intimate Exchanges

The Director

Don Cherrett



Earlier this season Director Don Cherrett played Jonathan Brewster in Castle Players' version of *Arsenic and Old Lace*. In BLTC's *The Three Sisters* he was the schoolmaster Kulygin. He recently directed Castle Players *Absent Friends*, and most recently he directed *A Midsummer Night's Dream* for Brownsea Open Air Theatre.

The Players

Although there are two male and two female roles in this play there are by design only two performers, so
Tess Hutton plays Celia and Sylvie,
while
Lee Tilson plays Toby and Lionel



We welcome new member Tess Hutton. Playgoers will recall her memorable performance as Audrey in *As You Like It*, for Brownsea Open Air Theatre. More recently she was Marj in Castle Players' production of Alan Ayckbourn's *Absent Friends*.



Well-known Club member Lee Tilson played the leading role of Vershinin in our last play, *The Three Sisters*. He starred as Sidney in our season opener, *Deathtrap*. He was *Macduff* in Brownsea Open Air Theatre's production of *Macbeth*.

The Playwright and his play

SIR Alan Ayckbourn is today confirmed as England's master theatrical wit. His career has been established in many great comedies, which he usually commences at the Stephen Joseph Theatre in Scarborough. His latest show, *Comic Potential*, whose leading actress Janie Dee has just been voted the 1999 Best Actress at the Olivier Awards, is still wowing audiences at the Lyric Theatre in London's West End.

He is fond of setting himself theatrical puzzles to solve. In his trilogy *The Norman Conquests* simultaneous events are seen from three different angles, each play taking place in a different room of the same house. Another play, *Taking Steps*, is set in a three-storey building, but acted on a flat stage.

Intimate Exchanges is the most complicated and

daring of all Ayckbourn's comic jigsaws. Starting with a single preliminary scene, he leads up to the point where a character in the play either decides to smoke, or not to smoke a cigarette. From this point, he spins out multiple variations on his recurring theme, marital discontent. The result is organised as eight separate plays, with no less than 16 possible endings.

Fortunately for those of us who are not rocket scientists, Director Don Cherrett has picked his way through the possibilities, taking a route not entirely planned by Ayckbourn, to present the most comically satisfying of all the different variations, so that our audiences will be unconcerned with the potential possibilities. Our version takes you through in one seamless direction, to an amusing and most satisfying denouement..

ADVANCE TICKET BOOKINGS (price £6, with concessions)

1. WRITE enclosing cheque and S.A.E. to
Box Office, BLTC, 11 Jameson Road, Bournemouth BH 9 2QD OR
2. CONTACT Sue at home **ONLY between 7.30 pm and 9.00 pm** Monday 20 March
To Friday 24 March on her home number **01202 424640** OR
3. BOX OFFICE OPENS Monday 27 March to Friday 31 March
between 7.30 pm and 9.00 pm. For personal callers at the Club
OR by telephone on **01202 513361**

PLEASE NOTE

Tickets for early bookings (with money and SAE) will be dispatched within two weeks before the show in the order in which the bookings were received.

Dame Judi: Queen of the South (bank)

AS we reported in May 1999, Dame Judi Dench is backing a full-size reconstruction in London of The Rose Theatre, the Shakespearean playhouse that rivalled The Globe.

The Theatre was the set for *Shakespeare in Love*. Dame Judi, Oscar winner in the film, was so impressed by the set's authenticity that she urged David Parfitt, the producer, not to pull it down.

Unlike traditional, wobbly, theatre sets, this was carved in oak and topped with a thatched roof. "It took my breath away when I saw it," Dame Judi said, and, in her determined way, set out about finding another use for it.

Through her involvement, there are now plans to rebuild it on the site of the Sam Collins Music Hall, which was built in 1850 and burnt down in 1958. Since then the site – on the corner of Islington Green and Essex Road in North London – has become derelict and is now a car park.

The reconstruction is part of a £27 million development that would involve building the theatre three storeys underground, with a ground-level glass roof. The theatre alone would cost about £7 million. To fund it, an innovative £20 million residential development above is planned. To raise funds for the theatre's running costs, a restaurant and pub with a Shakespearean theme are planned.

The Rose was first opened in 1587. Shakespeare wrote for it and performed on its stage. In reaction to its success, The Globe was opened 12 years later.

The Rose – to be reconstructed from hundreds of sections (it is being stored in eight 40 ft trailers) – will offer a mix of Shakespeare,

commercial and experimental work. There will also be educational programmes throughout the day, to make full use of the premises.

Unlike The Globe, which is open to the elements and closes during the winter, The Rose, protected by glass, will be able to open all year, with its audience always kept warm and dry.

Meanwhile, just to keep her hand in, on February 3 Dame Judi opened a new exhibition at The (reconstructed) Globe Theatre on London's South Bank. The exhibition's finishing touch for future visitors is a chance to "join the cast". Would-be luvvies attending the venue will find cubicles into which they can huddle to be cast into a happy company of thespians – and not as mere spear carriers in the parade. They can play leading roles in a selection of Shakespeare's most famous scenes. As karaoke combines with the bard, they can ham their way through *Hamlet*, do what they will in *As You Like It*, speak sooth to Julius Caesar, send Malvolio skipping mad.

Technically, the attraction features two booths with interactive screens and microphones. Tourists will have a choice of short scenes in which to participate. Among them are Hamlet's encounter with the gravedigger and poor Yorick's skull, Julius Caesar's meeting with the baleful soothsayer who reenacts the



The Great Dame, seen above in her Oscar-winning role as Queen Elizabeth in *Shakespeare in Love*

tells him to beware the Ides of March, and the balcony scene from *Romeo and Juliet*. The touch screen sets the scene before inviting them to rehearse. At an appropriate touch, a recording of an actor is heard intoning the Bard's lines by way of cue, while the screen provides the amateur with the lines that follow.

When the short extract is completed, there is applause, no matter how woeful the amateur's contribution has been. Thus fortified, the visitor can perform a slightly longer sequence.

The exhibition is the largest in the world dedicated to Shakespeare. It uses film and sound to provide much of its narrative. Among other interactive exhibits are opportunities to compose Elizabethan music.

At the very least, locked away in a little booth, budding thespians can be assured of a full house.

Exhibition tickets range from £7.50 to £23 for a family ticket.



A theatre student does a Bard karaoke

Police pay Kurd actors after theatrical blunder



Pinter for the Defence

SCOTLAND YARD has agreed to pay eleven Kurds a total of £55,000 after armed police arrested them as they rehearsed a Harold Pinter play about persecution and injustice.

Two men will receive extra damages because they were tortured in Turkey and the incident brought back memories of their treatment and post-traumatic stress.

The refugees, including three women and a boy of 15, were part of a New Life Theatre group rehearsing Pinter's *Mountain Language*, which contains a scene with actors in combat uniform pointing guns at "prisoners", in June 1996. They had hired plastic guns from the Royal National Theatre after consulting their local police station, which told them they did not need special

permission.

But someone saw them inside a hall used by the Kurdish Workers' Association in Haringey, North London, and they called the police, a helicopter appeared overhead, and the hall was surrounded by marksmen and armed response cars.

The actors were held for more than four hours and ordered not to talk to each other in their native Kurdish language. The central theme of the play is that Turkey banned Kurds from using their own language. In one scene an actor says: "You are mountain people? You hear me? ... It is not permitted to speak your mountain language in this place ... it is outlawed."

After the arrests, Pinter offered to give evidence for them in a civil action. Later he went to watch their production of his play.

Recently, as a £4000 payment was finalised for Ahmet Yuksel, who was 12 when the arrests occurred, District Judge Wigfield told Central London County Court that the incident was "quite an extraordinary state of affairs."

No sex please, we're French performance artists

Report by Adam Sage of The Times from Paris

Zoë lent back on a salmon-coloured sofa and prepared for sex. "We don't do it here," she explained after a long silence. "We just talk about it."

This, after all, is contemporary art, the strangest and one of the most successful exhibitions in Paris.

Created by Nadine Norman, a Toronto-born performance artist, the work, called *Call Girl*, features Zoë and seven other actresses in a role fixed somewhere between prostitute and sex therapist.

Visitors make an appointment to see Zoë, Nadine, Simone, Demiane, Lara, Betty, Penelope or Lola. Their phone number is distributed on blue cards around the French capital with a footnote, "100 per cent dialogue", in such small letters that many miss it.

Some customers think they will meet a real prostitute and begin to have doubts only on arrival at the plush gallery of the Canadian Culture Centre behind the French Parliament. They are shown into a yellow waiting room and then on to the sofa for a personal encounter with one of the women. The "call girls", wearing distinctly provocative clothes, smile.

"We are not offering sex," Madame Norman said. "We are exploring the issue of women's availability and putting in place the conditions for a human exchange that is troubling and creative. This is a fragment of human culture.

Is that not art?"

The question is difficult to answer. What is clear, however, is that Madame Norman has a hit on her hands.

The "call girls" were booked up until the exhibition closes. MPs, diplomats, Left Bank intellectuals and frustrated voyeurs are among the visitors.

"This is a place of paradox and ambiguity, Zoë said. "I'm not a therapist, so all I do is listen. But ... can you imagine the effect if I was to hitch up my skirt and roll around on the sofa as someone was telling me the innermost secrets of his marriage?"



Zoë at work, above: below, the invitation



Oscar Quiz

The ceremony, slated to air at 1 am on Monday, March 27, is celebrated by David Hinton



1. Who played Lord 'Bosie' Douglas to Stephen Fry's Oscar Wilde?
2. Who already has an Oscar, but not many people know that?
3. A British film in Welsh and Yiddish has been nominated for best foreign language film. Which other British 'foreign' film had a nomination, and in what language?
4. Which current Oscar nominee works in a warehouse in London?
5. Which TV cartoon series has ended up with a best song nomination?
6. Who played a prison governess, and a Catherine Cookson heroine before becoming a nominee this year?
7. How did 78-year-old best actor nominee Richard Farnsworth get his start in films?
8. Name Madonna's ex-husband, now a nominee?
9. Which member of Genesis is up for a statuette?
10. Which film nominated for best visual effects may be the fourth, but is the first?
11. Who 'had a farm in Africa' probably to house all her Oscars?
12. Who was the first wife of best supporting actor nominee Tom Cruise?
13. Unbelievably, the year's most shagadelic film is up for a best make-up Oscar. Name the film.
14. Who's getting a lifetime award this time?
15. What country do the musicians of the documentary feature nominee *Buena Vista Social Club* come from?
16. How does 11 from a sixth leave Bruce Willis?

Answers at bottom of page.

Directors' Evening

Friday, March 24
at 7.30 pm

Bring along that play you've always wanted to direct!

You can also call Andrew Whyatt on 624221 if you have any ideas for the season 2000/2001.

Change of address

James and Sheila Westgate wish to announce that their new address is
The Marsh House
Paglesham
Rochford
Essex SS4 2EJ
tel: 01702 258208

IT is worthwhile pausing to reflect on the fact that, because our theatre premises are so limited in size, both as to auditorium and backstage, we are extremely constrained as to the type of show we can mount, and as to the size of show budgets.

So it is only very rarely that we can afford to put on a show like *The Three Sisters*, calling as it does for the kind of period costumes that our small company could never afford to store, let alone manufacture. And when we do, we have to cut costs somewhere else, such as the set.

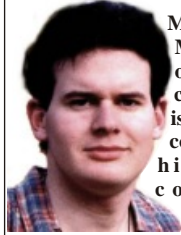
So as a reminder of what can be achieved on occasion, we show (right) some late rehearsal snaps, so you can see where the money went!

A very "little" theatre



From left to right, Ginnie Waters (Masha), Don Gent (Baron Tusenbach), Lee Tilson (Vershinin), and Angela Whyatt (Olga).

Feedback



MATTHEW MEEHAN, one of our younger club members, is to be warmly commended for his brilliant concept of handing out questionnaire

forms to our patrons during the run of Harold Pinter's *The Birthday Party*.

His idea was to seek answers to questions such as "How did you find out about BLTC productions?", "How often do you come to see BLTC productions?", "If you are here for the first time, what are your first impressions of the venue and staff?", and "If you are a regular audience member, how do you rate the general standard of our productions?". There were 'tick-box' categories for responses. There was space on the form for further comments. Matthew was disappointed by the fact that only 17 audience members took time out to fill in the forms, and some people only partially completed them.

However, some trends were observed even from the tiny sample. Out of the 17 submissions, 13 heard about the show from this newsletter, three from friends and one from another source. Again, 14 attended regularly, one occasionally, and two were first timers. The latter both found us "impressive". Of the regular attenders, 10 found the shows to be "impressive/good", and three found them to be "good/average".

Under the further comments sections, we were amused to note that although one patron found the Pinter production "the best for some time", this was cancelled by the heartfelt plea from another who said: "No more Harold Pinter plays!". That patron also preferred "mysteries and comedies".

We were gratified that a number of patrons specifically praised this newsletter. One said we had a "good varied programme always well-acted. Pleasant cosy atmosphere. Helpful staff, everyone taking turns with various duties. I enjoy receiving the newsletter and learning about how the Theatre is run and information of future productions."

Another patron pleaded for better light to read the programmes, another wanted more information in them. More classic plays were requested, some thought not all the plays were impressively acted, though another said: "The productions are of a consistently high standard, with a good variety." We have sympathy with the patron who requested a "loop system for the hearing impaired" and stated "we love the bar staff, but perhaps some training would be in order."

A number of comments were made to the effect that we did very well in cramped conditions. One first timer said: "Although this was my first time, I was very

Andrew Whyatt's production contains moments of stasis which hinder the building up of heightened tension. There are lost opportunities for sound narrative, suggested by Chekhov, yet missing here.

The three sisters are played with sincerity by Hilary Naylor, Angela Whyatt and Ginnie Waters. Baron Tusenbach (Don Gent) has charm, while Vershinin is played with restraint by Lee Tilson. Old Doctor Chebutykin (Hugh Norris) has a natural warmth. This production has promising elements but would benefit from development.

Editor's Note

I begin to worry a bit when local papers such as the Daily Echo start using words like "stasis".

impressed, would not have thought they were amateur actors, and would definitely come again. Also, I didn't know this theatre was here, I thought we only had the Poole Arts Centre."

One patron pleaded for "more opportunity for other members of the club to act and gain confidence, instead of the same excellent few!" and queried, "Larger theatre in the future?"

But our favourite comment was from the patron who told us, "Actresses wearing short skirts may not realise just how revealing they are to those seated near the stage — particularly when lounging on a sofa which is placed close to the audience. 'Knees together girls' might be good advice!"

Yeah, right!

Reminders

Friday, 24 March 2000

PLAYDIRECTORS MEETING
at 7.30 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 Jun-Sat. 1 July 2000.

Performances of *Chakra* at 7.45 pm.

- Answers to Quiz
1. Jude Law, best supporting actor nominee.
 2. Michael Caine, best supporting actor nominee.
 3. *Hedd Wyn* (1994) also in Welsh.
 4. Sam Mendes, best director nominee, also directs at the Donmar Warehouse.
 5. *South Park*.
 6. Janet McTeer.
 7. He was a horse wrangler and stuntman with credits in films such as *The Grey Fox* and *Through the Night*.
 8. Sean Penn.
 9. Phil Collins.
 10. *Star Wars IV, The Phantom Menace*.
 11. Meryl Streep in *Out of Africa*.
 12. Mimi Rogers.
 13. *Austin Powers: The Spy Who Shagged Me*.
 14. Steven Spielberg.
 15. Cuba.
 16. Haley Joel Osment, up for best supporting actor in *The Sixth Sense*.

Review

Joanne Street reviewed *The Three Sisters* in the Daily Echo. She said:

"Anton Chekhov's fine play — in Brian Friel's translation, originally intended to make the work more accessible for an Irish audience — deals with hopes for the future and regrets for things past. This alone makes it a fascinating choice as the first production of the Bournemouth Little Theatre Club in a new century. The three sisters of the title long to return to Moscow, in a story punctuated with questions on the meaning of life, full of flickering symbolism and superstition.