



# Bournemouth Little Theatre News



Issue # 23

2000/2001 Season

Friday, 21 July 2000

## It's that time of year!

Announcing our *next* season, and asking for your subscriptions once again

WHETHER you say the Millennium was in 2000 or, as some folks say, it is really the year 2001, for BLTC the official year starts on July 1st in each year, so we are now announcing the shows we are going to present in the Season 2000/2001 (and still the Millennium).

### Next Season's Shows



OUR FIRST presentation will be the detective drama *Trap For a Lonely Man*. This show will be performed at the Pier Theatre, from Tuesday 19 to Saturday 23 September 2000. This is an 800 seat theatre, and we hope it will appeal not only to all our regular patrons, but also to the passing tourist trade. More particulars on the show, and how to book, in our next edition. The show will be directed and produced by Keith Rawlings. Cast includes Derek Hyder, Mike Satchell, Andrew Whyatt, Jane Wright, Angela Whyatt and Michael Ellison.



NEXT WE have a complete change of pace and venue. Yes, it's back to Jameson Road with Jack Snell's production of the Irish Drama *Donny Boy*, by Robin Glendinning. This will be Monday 16 to Saturday 21 October 2000.



OUR THIRD show will be Lin Denning's presentation of the Alan Ayckbourn comedy *How The Other Half Loves* from Monday 4 to Saturday 9 December, 2000 which will be just the thing to kick off your Christmas entertainment.



WE KICK off Y2K+1 — Latin for year AD 2001 — with J B Priestley's mysterious time play *I Have Been Here Before*. Don Cherrett will be directing this one, with performances from Monday 12 to Saturday 17 February.



PAT GRAY will be returning to direct the Thomas Hardy short story converted to a finely written drama: *The Day After the Fair*, by Frank Harvey. This is set in Salisbury in the period around 1905. Incredibly it reads as though written yesterday. Performances Monday 2 to Saturday 7 April 2001.



IT'S ANOTHER trip down local memory lane next with Terence Rattigan's romantic drama *Separate Tables*. This is actually set in a Bournemouth hotel in the period not long after WW2. Tony Orman will direct this one. Performance dates are Monday 21 to Saturday 26 May 2001.

IN ADDITION, we will have evenings of one-act plays. Jack Snell will be entering the Dorset Drama Festival one more time, and his chosen play will be performed at Jameson Road for two nights in

### Pay up — *Please*

OUR current members will be receiving with this newsletter a membership renewal form. We remind all our members that the fiscal year of the Club starts on the First day of July in each year. This year, for various boring reasons, it has not been possible to send you the reminders before the start of the new season. Please bear in mind that we do value each and every one of you. Some of you give much of your spare time to assist in the Club's productions, some may help in small ways whenever they get the opportunity. There are some of you who enjoy being a member, but do not wish to become involved in the day-to-day mission of this performing group — and that's okay too. You are supporting our efforts with money, which is very important.

The cost of operation of even a

side-street company such as ours mounts every year. We may make an operating surplus on each of the plays we perform. That is down to good management — and to confining ourselves mainly to the performance of plays that mostly don't require expensive sets or period costumes. Frequently we are performing in our own clothes!

But we do need to improve the premises from time to time. We have to replace carpets, and lighting, and repair the Green Room — now that is something that affects all persons attending all performances. If we didn't all of us give our own services for nothing, the circle couldn't be squared: we just wouldn't be able to survive at all. So — your subscriptions are a vital part of our survival. So please — pretty please — show us the money! Every penny goes to the benefit of your Club.

## Hello, Playgoers

WHEN we started this newsletter in its modern format, we had no intention of sending it to any non-members. Then we thought — why shouldn't we bring non-members and members together. So we began sending our Club news out beyond the reach of the membership, to those of you who come to see our plays on a regular basis.

To all of you we have this message: keep on coming to see the shows. But we also have another suggestion for your consideration: would some of you like to become members?

If you read the message to our members in the article at the top of the page you will see some of the reasons why we need financial help. If you were to join our Club, even if you did not wish to participate actively, you can see

that you would be contributing to something that you actually do support with your presence at our shows.

Put it another way: for only £20 a year (£35 for couples, £10 for those under 25) you can enjoy the privileges of membership of Bournemouth Little Theatre Club. Membership enables you to play a full part in the Club's continued success, and to join in its myriad activities. You may not want to learn lines or clean loos (you have to be specially selected to clean loos!), but you might want to help with coffees and teas. Or you might just want to demonstrate your solidarity with the workers in our theatre. You would, of course, be able to see plays for only £2. If you came to all seven productions (including one-act plays) it would cost you only £14. A non-member would have paid £42!

## The Critic reviews

Linda Kirkman of *The Daily Echo* assesses *Move Over Mrs Markham*



THE dictionary definition of farce is: "To cram; to stuff; to swell out; comedy of extravagant humour; buffoonery;

improbability; a ridiculous or meaningless display" – in other words, completely silly and over the top.

Hugh Norris's production, though faultlessly acted, was unfortunately none of those things and the characters, with one glorious exception, were really rather ordinary.

That isn't to say that Ray Cooney and John Chapman's 1969 farce was not enjoyable, because it certainly had its moments, not least in the antics of camp interior designer Alistair Spenlow (Don Gent), re-vamping the London flat of Philip and Joanna Markham (Mike Satchell and Angela Whyatt) and teaching au pair Sylvie (Anna Isaksson) the meaning of "to goose". Also trying to arrange illicit liaisons in the same flat are Philip's business partner Henry (Andrew Whyatt), who has designs on telephonist Miss Wilkinson (Denise Nippard) and Henry's wife Linda (Nicola King) and bowler-hatted Walter Pangbourne (Noel Davenport).

But the ensuing chaotic situations and mistaken identities somehow failed to provoke as much laughter as they should have done until the arrival of Janet Chiesa, playing famous author Olive Harriet Smythe. Her wonderfully eccentric portrayal

## Annual General Meeting

THE Annual General Meeting of the Club will be held at the Theatre at 7.30 pm on Sunday, 10 September 2000.

Please do come along. After all, if there is something you think we could be doing better, the AGM is the place to air your grievance or present your ideas. Or do you wish to be considered for the Committee, or to nominate someone else? In either of those cases, please contact Hugh Norris, the Club Secretary, either by writing to him at the Club, or by phoning him on 761400. There will be more particulars about the meeting



Who is the boy in the photo directed by Keith Rawlings at Cranbourne School, Potters Bar, in 1954? He's a current member: the first Playgoer — not member — to write with the correct name gets two free tickets to any BLTC show. The Editor's decision is final.

## The Director responds

Hugh Norris, director of *Move Over Mrs Markham*, takes exception to The Echo's critique



BY tradition, theatre critics enjoy the privileged status of demi-gods against whose doom-laden judgements there is never any appeal. BLTC are lucky in having our own in-house newsletter with which we can fire back at the bullies and criticise THEM!

In her review of *Move over Mrs Markham* Linda



Nicola King, Andrew Wyatt, Janet Chiesa and Angela Whyatt — being ordinary

Kirkman stated that by definition a farce should be completely silly and over the top, but that my production was neither of those things; and that with one exception (Janet Chiesa, in the role of Olive Harriet

Smythe, who did not appear until the second act) the characters were "really rather ordinary". She was also concerned that the first night audience failed to laugh uproariously throughout the entire performance.

Perhaps we should start by defining what a farce is all about; it is essentially about a core of recognisably ordinary people – yes, Linda, ordinary – who are caught up in a set of events which progressively lead them into ever more hilariously embarrassing situations. The author has to start by setting out his parameters while introducing us to who is what; of course everything has to end up going over the top, but one cannot have situations going over the top until we are told exactly where the top is. All plays deal with aspects of real life unnaturally condensed into a couple of hours of theatre time. Like the few strokes of a cartoonist's pencil, the script of a play needs to contain just enough to convince the audience that what they are seeing is recognisably real. In a farce the thread of logic on which the plot hangs is so

## Editor's note

HUGH is right. We are lucky to have our own paper in which we can respond to outside criticism. But I don't want to encourage every director or actor to offer a response to every critique. Sometimes the critics love you, sometimes they dump on you. It's all part of life's rich tapestry, and we shouldn't try to reinvent the wheel. However, on this occasion, Hugh is entitled to his

response, not as a director, but as a playwright and an author of farces himself. His farce *Filthy Lucre* was performed by us a few seasons ago to great acclaim. And yes, the audiences laughed like drains. So we take it he knows what a farce is and what it should be. And he does have a valid point. The Penguin Dictionary of the Theatre says a farce is a "species of humorous drama, usually distinguished

thin that any production errors kill the reality stone dead. Any attempt by me to have made the core characters "silly and over the top" would have spelled disaster of the worst Coarse Acting variety. If our critic cares to study the printed text of the play, she will see that the authors specify in very great detail exactly how they intend the actors to perform their roles; we followed the scripted instructions very closely indeed and if there is any consolation to be drawn from Linda Kirkman's critique, she did have the kindness to say that the acting was "faultless".

So why did the audience on the first night not fall about in the aisles all the time? Frankly, I don't know. The timing of words, movement and effects was consistently impeccable and the actors achieved a stunning pace; any attempt at slowing it down in order to milk laughs would have been dreadfully amateurish. The script throughout is polished and witty. Laughter tends to be infectious, but belly laughs are not the only measure of enjoyment: smiles simply cannot be heard. Audiences are different on every night; the standards produced by both actors and back-stage crew at the remaining five performances was identical to that on the opening night, and all the other audiences responded very audibly indeed.

Don't get the wrong idea that I am smug about the production: I know that I could have directed it much better. The actors and crew did exactly what I asked them do; if there is any fault to be found in the finished article, that fault is mine and mine alone. I could have done better.

My life-long motto is "things can always be improved". This applies not only to things I do myself, but also to reviews written by theatre critics.

There, I have got my own back, and now feel a

from comedy by its tendency to extract amusement from the ingenious manipulation of a series of intricate situations in which stereotyped human figures are involved, rather than from the reactions of more complex, credible characters to one another and to their situation."

And now, I hope we can get back to the business of pleasing the critics!

Tony Orman



But are Anna Isaksson and Don Gent being ordinary?

## And resuming normal service...

Linda Kirkman, unfazed by Hugh Norris, reviews *Abigail's Party* for *The Daily Echo*

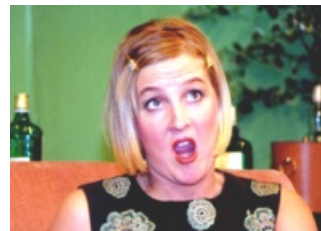


Denise Nippard, Matthew Meehan and Ginnie Waters

JACK Snell's production of this Mike Leigh black comedy,

chosen as a last-minute replacement and rehearsed in double-quick time, proved to be, for me, one of the season's highlights.

It positively screamed it's 1970s origins, from the lurid flowery and paisley clothing to a colour-changing fibre optic lamp and cheesy music playing on the stereo, and I felt the same desire to throttle some of the characters as I had when I first saw the play some twenty years ago.



Michelle Newton: a star is born

The action is set at a small drinks party given by Beverly and Laurence for their new neighbours — seemingly an innocuous event, but Beverly is the wife and neighbour from hell. She was superbly portrayed in all her irritating glory by Michelle Newton, who kept up an impressive — albeit intentionally ghastly — nasal

London accent throughout as she berated her unfortunate husband Laurence (Mike Satchell),

swapped confidences with the equally obnoxious Angela (Denise Nippard), flirting with Angela's husband Tony (Matthew Meehan) and plied the nervous Susan (Ginnie Waters) with drinks.

Without exception the performances were well-measured and captured each character's personality to perfection, and the attention given to detail ensured that the



Mike Satchell

# Redgrave works gentle magic as female Prospero

Benedict Nightingale of *The Times* recently reviewed the new Shakespeare's Globe production of *The Tempest*

LAST year it was the Mark Rylance Cleopatra, this year it's Vanessa Redgrave's Prospero, and next year it may be Ralph Fiennes' snarling Goneril or Felicity Kendal's hefty Coriolanus.

Gender-bending is clearly part of the policy at Globe, and I have no quarrel in principle with it, especially when it gives older actresses the chance to play Shakespearean roles more challenging than the Nurse in *Romeo and Juliet*.

It worked well at the recent first night of the new Shakespeare's Globe production, too. Redgrave is, of course, a wonderfully resourceful actress, as capable of defying conventional casting as she did the heavy rain that left the groundlings in their see-through macs looking like a convocation of contraceptives. Only for a moment at the end, when she does a triumphant, catwalk-style twirl on the line "behold the wronged Duke of Milan", did I fail to believe she was a banished prince, and a formidable one.

The director, Lenka Udovicki, is from Belgrade, which must explain the cast's Balkan look. In her boots, breeches and old patchwork jacket, the shaggy-haired Redgrave might be a blend of Gypsy, warlord, explorer and Robinson Crusoe. Add an eccentric Ulster accent and you have a



photo courtesy The Times

tough, weather-beaten duke who nevertheless produces some touching, tender moments. I haven't seen a male Prospero who left me so convinced that he could have nurtured Miranda (witness the love Redgrave injects into "a cherubin thou wast that did preserve me") or so genuinely cherishes Ariel.

She also gives us Prospero the visionary magician who still finds it hard to renounce his powers and Prospero the flinty northerner who must think long and hard before forgiving his foes. I cannot say, though, that the supporting cast radiates consistent distinction, though Paul Chahidi's Billy-Bunter Trinculo is hilarious and Jasper Britton's Caliban, caked in woad and clay, a refreshingly sensitive, pained and pitiable representative of the island underclass.

Some production touches are silly — should Caliban and Prospero really be reconciled to the accompaniment of back-slapping and thumbs up? — but one or two not at all silly. I liked the opening in which Geraldine Alexander's pale, spooky Ariel plays with a paper boat, her voodoo causing parallel chaos on the one carrying Prospero's foes. Actually, that's an idea other directors could take further. It's imaginative

Shakespeare's Globe  
Bankside, London SE1  
0202 7401 9919

Brownsea Open Air Theatre's *The Tempest*, now playing alternate nights to August 4, is equally innovative, directed by Mark

# You can trust the British to raise the Tonys

BROADWAY: They came, saw and made gracious acceptance speeches. Joanna Coles of *The Times* describes a night of British triumph in New York

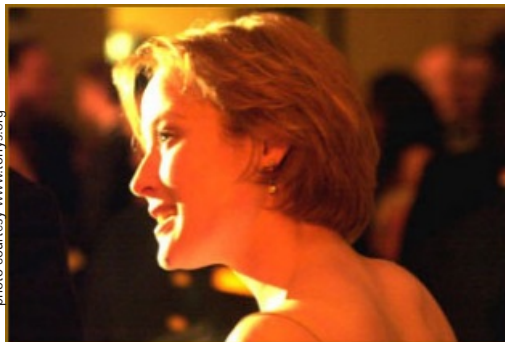
SO we didn't do too badly after all, then. Best Play, Best Director, Best Actor, Best Actress, Best Supporting Actor, Best Revival, Best Director for a Musical, Best Original Score and Best Scenic Design. We let them keep Best Musical a traditional American strength after all but even that was not without controversy. Although it won, to great applause, Susan Stroman's *Contact* infuriated many of this year's voters because they felt it wasn't actually a musical. Essentially, *Contact* is a dance revue with not one quaver of original music and not one crotchet of original singing — the music is all on tape.

But who's quibbling? Even Elton John and Tim Rice got a look in with Best Musical Score for *Aida*, not bad considering it failed to get even a nomination for Best Musical and John stalked out of a rehearsal shortly before it opened. Brits won 9 out of 21 awards — 22 if you count the special award handed out to Dame Edna Everage's Royal Tour. It was indeed the night the Brits stormed Broadway.

Accepting her award for her role in Tom Stoppard's *The Real Thing*, Jennifer Ehle even managed to out-Gwyneth Paltrow. "Oh my goodness," she shrieked. "This play, I love. Thank you Tom, thank you David [Leveaux, the director]. But I wouldn't be here without my beautiful, beautiful, beautiful parents. Thank you for teaching me to walk and to talk and to read."

Her mother, Rosemary Harris, who in a Tony first was also nominated in the Best Actress category, and was sitting directly in front of her all evening, looked absolutely astonished. As were the bookies and critics alike who had largely predicted Ehle would be overlooked in favour of the home-grown talent, Cherry Jones. "At least young Ehle won't have to face beating her great mum and meeting her at the party afterwards," said Clive Barnes, the senior critic of the *New York Post* in his annual list of Tony predictions. Oh, yeah?

Less of a surprise was Ehle's co-star and Best Actor Stephen Dillane, who had already picked up the Drama Desk award, a forerunner of the Tonys in much the same way that a Golden Globe often precedes an Oscar.



Jennifer Ehle at the Tony Awards on June 4. You'll recall her from BBC TV's ground-breaking *Pride and Prejudice*.

The Real Thing's third award of the evening, for Best Revival, ensures a boost for the production which, despite excellent reviews, has not been playing to full houses. It's also another victory for the Donmar Warehouse, where the production and cast originated. "I'm shaking," cried Anita Waxman, the co-producer, accepting the award. "Tom and David, I don't know where you are. But Sam [Mendes], the Donmar's Oscar-winning creative force, it's great to be up here!"

Michael Blakemore's astonishing triumph in picking up directing awards for both *Play (Copenhagen)* and *Musical (Kiss Me, Kate)* was also a Tony first. Stroman was the bookies' favourite to win Best Director of a

Musical, not least because she had been nominated twice in the same category for both *Contact* and *The Music Man*. "Michael Blakemore should win. Susan Stroman will win," predicted Barnes confidently. Wrong again.

These were Blakemore's first Tonys, having previously been nominated for both *Lettice and Lovage* and *City of Angels*. His legendary partnership with Michael Frayn (*Copenhagen's* author) — their six previous shows together include *Noises Off* — ensured the "snob hit of the season", as one critic put it. Frayn thanked his "recklessly brave producers" for persisting with his notoriously complicated play about physics. "This is a story which could only be told by live actors in a living theatre."

If there was one theme among the British acceptance speeches, it was to thank Americans for their generosity. Roy Dotrice, Best Featured (supporting, in other words) Actor for his performance alongside Gabriel Byrne in Eugene O'Neill's *A Moon for the Misbegotten*, kicked off by telling the audience he had first come across Americans 55 years ago, when he was a prisoner of war and noticed their "ability to applaud and not envy ...". Blakemore was similarly grateful. "All I can say is thank you America, and when I say America I mean New York and when I say New York I mean Broadway!"

As always there were losers too, most notably Gabriel Byrne, whom *The New York Times* had tipped by describing his role in *A Moon*

## David Hinton's Film Quiz

This quiz is called "Sinners in real life."

1. Who was accused of taking heroin while pregnant?
2. Who denies taking body-building drugs?
3. Which British novelist accused Shirley Temple of encouraging paedophilia?
4. Which Hollywood superstar admitted over 200 LSD trips?
5. Who was Hollywood's most famous marijuana bust?
6. Who was found guilty of 'wicked wicked ways' with an underage girl?
7. The gangster Johnny Stompanato married which star?
8. The criminal Ronnie Knight was wed to which star?
9. Who was the gangster/actor refused entry to Britain?
10. Which recent Oscar nominee was blackmailed?
11. Who was the singer/actor made a drug enforcement officer by Nixon?
12. Which star's wannabe lover tried to kill the President?
13. Which infamous Russian was tempted to his murder by a film star?
14. Name the actor friend of Bob Hoskins and Princess Margaret accused of murder.
15. Which French actor/singer was accused of collaboration in World War II?
16. Who moved Dorset to France because allegations of crimes stopped him from coming to Britain or America?
17. Which Reservoir Dog was an ex-convict?

## Auditions

Jack Snell is holding an audition for the drama *Donny Boy* at the Club on Wednesday 2 August 2000, at 7.30 pm. There are parts for 2 males (who must be between 20 and 40) and 1 female. Production dates are Monday to Saturday 16 to 21 October 2000. Anyone interested should call Jack for further information on 01202 519994.

Lin Denning is holding an audition for the comedy *How The Other Half Loves* by Alan Ayckbourn at the Club on Wednesday 30 August 2000, at 7.30 pm. There are parts for 3 males and 3 females.

Production dates are Monday to Saturday 4 to 9 December 2000. Anyone interested should call Lin on 01425 270274.

# An absolutely true fairy story

ONCE upon a time there was a club which had four members, whose names were Everyone, Somepeople, Anyone and Nobody. Somepeople complained that there was a lot of work to be done. Everyone agreed, and suggested that Anyone could do it.

Everyone left it at that, but unfortunately none of the work got done. This was because Anyone could see that it was a thankless task.

Nobody volunteered to step into the breach, but months passed and the work still did not get done.

Everyone started bitching that Nobody had done nothing.

Somepeople suggested that Anyone be conscripted into action.

Nobody wanted to know anything about Anyone.

Somepeople said it wasn't Anyone's fault, but that Everyone should contribute more.

In the end, Nobody did anything, and Everyone was blamed for the Club having to close because Somepeople thought that Anyone could have done what Nobody wanted to do.

## Struttin' with some barbecue

LEE Tilson, our newest Committee member, took up the complaint from some members that we weren't a social club any longer: he and his wife Gail very kindly offered their beautiful home for what turned out to be an extremely well attended Members' Barbecue, on Sunday 9 July.

Lee demonstrated that he is more than just a pretty face by producing about six barbecue pits, acquired over a busy international lifetime.

Nay, he went further and expertly broiled all manner of flesh and fowl to perfection.

It is interesting to note, however, that those attending the function were almost all those same members who are extremely active in the club's presentations and administration. It would have been nice to see some of those members who have told us we don't have any social events any more — and then don't show up when we do!



## Bookings

IN the new season, we won't be open for sales of tickets in the Monday to Friday of the week before each show: you'll be able to book by post as before, and you'll be able to book by phone in the two weeks before each show, so most people will have the booking service they always had. You just won't be able to come to the theatre in person in the week before the show and book in person. Of course, you will also be able to buy tickets at the door before each performance, subject



## Triumph at Ferndown



Jane Wright and Derek Hyder in action

LAST May we had an amazing triumph, when Jack Snell's

festival one-act play, *Some Kind of Love Story*, which had been marked very low at the Dorset Festival in March, came back to win the one-week-long local Drama Festival in Ferndown. Not only that, but Jack Snell once more garnered the Producer's Cup (as Best Director).

Congratulations are due not only to Jack, who had been voted Best Director with the same play at the Dorset Festival, despite the play's lowly marking, but also to Jane Wright and Derek Hyder, whose joint consummate acting in difficult roles at last received due recognition.

The show's domination at Ferndown was even more remarkable, as the play broke the rules by overrunning by eight minutes for which a four point

## Competition

WE asked in our last edition for the name of the novel allegedly plagiarised by the scriptwriters of the film *Shakespeare in Love*. Nobody wrote in so, sorry, no two free tickets! That doesn't mean nobody knew the answer. We put the question to film guru David Hinton who immediately replied, "The book was *No Bed For Bacon* by Caryl Brahms and S J Simon." But David doesn't get the prize — because he didn't write in and because he is a professional librarian — and a genius on the subject of film trivia. When we try to make up a quiz without him, we have to resort to reference books. David, on the other hand, can pick up a pen and paper and write a quiz straight off the cuff. We are grateful for his

- Answers to Quiz
1. Courtney Love.
  2. Arnold Schwarzenegger.
  3. Graham Greene.
  4. Cary Grant.
  5. Robert Mitchum.
  6. Errol Flynn.
  7. Lana Turner.
  8. Barbara Windsor.
  9. George Raft.
  10. Russell Crowe.
  11. Elvis Presley.
  12. Jodie Foster.
  13. Rasputin.
  14. John Bird.
  15. Maurice Chevalier.
  16. Roman Polanski.
  17. Eddie Bunker (Mr Blue).