



Bournemouth Little Theatre News



Issue # 26

2000/2001 Season

Friday 10 November 2000

Bournemouth Little Theatre Club Presents
Monday 4 to Saturday 9 December, 2000
At Jameson Road
At 7.45 pm

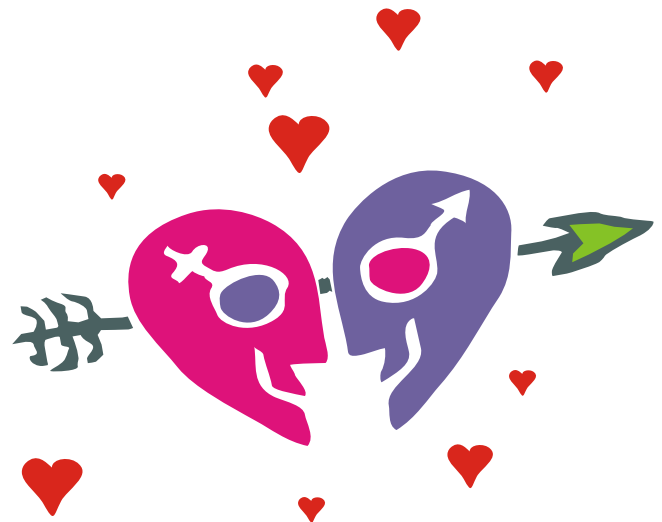
The Hilarious Comedy

How
the

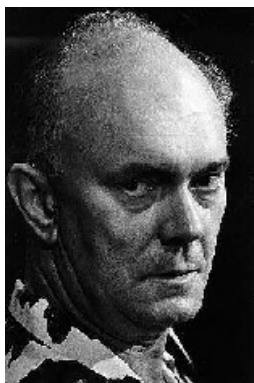
Other

Half

LOVES



By



Alan Ayckbourn

Directed by



Lin Denning

For booking arrangements see page 2



How the Other Half Loves

The Performers



Jacqui Keyse



Tess Hutton



Pat Richardson



Don Gent



Tom Swadling



Don Cherrett

About the Play

How the other half loves is about three married couples. There's a fair bit of boredom in some of their lives, there's an affair going on, there's a frustrated intellectual, a put-upon wife, a bossy husband. But this is Ayckbourn, so all of the characters grow in some way.

People often think of Ayckbourn's plays as farces, but he himself has always called them comedies. While hilariously funny, they are character-led: real and recognisable people in believable situations that he manages to tweak into the surreal; this time it's when one of the couples is entertained by the other two on consecutive nights, but at the same time on stage. However, there's always an underlying serious point.

This, for me, explains Ayckbourn's enduring popularity (this play is nearly 30 years old, yet it has not dated.) Good comedy writers can too easily be judged on their "laugh factor" alone. Ayckbourn is an exceptionally good comedy writer: the laughs come thick and fast, but there is plenty of meat to chew on for theatrical carnivores.

Lin Denning's view

ADVANCE TICKET BOOKINGS Tickets £6, (with concessions) Members £2.

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 EITHER
Monday 20 November to Friday 24 November OR
Monday 27 November to Friday 1 December
on her home number 01202 424640

IMPORTANT NOTE — BOX OFFICE AT JAMESON ROAD IS NO LONGER OPEN FOR CALLERS BY PHONE OR IN PERSON THE WEEK BEFORE ANY SHOW

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.

The Beautiful Game

Tony Orman reviews the new Andrew Lloyd Webber/Ben Elton musical drama which recently opened at London's Cambridge Theatre

Sitting in the Royal Circle of the Cambridge Theatre at a matinee performance one week after the premiere, I was slightly surprised to see a few empty seats at the rear to the side: not what you expect at a Lloyd Webber show.

The reason may be because *The Beautiful Game*, whose joint themes are soccer and racial hatred in Northern Ireland in the period 1969 to 1973, is about real, modern people — the sort of decent working-class people who inhabit the real world, and whose great love of football is thrown into chaos by the growth of violence and the descent into the near civil war which alas is still with us. Perhaps the real world is too uneasily close for the kind of cosy escapist experience that most of us associate with musical theatre: the present show could not be more disparate from previous Lloyd Webber shows.

The opening is relatively light-hearted, introducing us to the members of the youthful Catholic football team, being coached by an elderly priest. They mime football in dance, they actually kick footballs around the stage with an accuracy one can only admire, and in a ballet they play a key match against the Protestant team where, this time without a ball onstage, they manage to convey all the moves of a football game.

But the 'troubles' soon split up the team. By the end of the play, some are dead, one is kneecapped, others have fled to a new life in America — shades here of the final scene in *Fiddler on the Roof* where the Russian Jews escaping a pogrom swap their new addresses in New York and Chicago.

To match the gloomy nature of the plot, the set is decidedly minimalist, with bits of furniture pushed on and off the stage by the cast. Most of the time, the set is virtually non-existent — we can see through to the rear of the stage, brickwork painted black, with electrical wires and such. The gloom is even more pointed by the Act I close, where sheets of genuine rain shower down on the coffin of one of the lads, left alone on the bare stage. Never was the pre-ordered drink at the interval bar more welcome.

The characters, if a little stereotypical, do look and sound very believable. There are fat ones, thin ones, pretty ones and plain ones. As the play unfolded, I came to respect them and hope for their future well-being. The virtually unknown actors radiated vitality and charm. Not only that — all the youngsters



Courtesy The Times

had impregnable Belfast accents, when speaking and when singing. If the very right-wing composer, Lloyd Webber, and the left-wing playwright and lyricist, Ben Elton, sound like the ultimate odd couple they do in fact make a good team. I thought Elton's plot was a little predictable, but in his musical lyrics and much of his dialogue he managed to inject earthy modern humour. Most importantly, Lloyd Webber's music perfectly reflected the plot, with Celtic strains infusing the more recognisable types of Lloyd Webber ballad. I particularly enjoyed the light-hearted love duet "I don't like you".

The most impressive element of the show, however, was the way in which one was drawn into the lives of these young people, so that the almost insoluble Northern Ireland problem was, for me at least, made meaningful in a personal way: I left the theatre, not humming the tunes but in a reflective mood and with a greater understanding than ever before of the nature and causes of the religious divide.

In short, it was a powerful and moving experience.

What a Farce!

While the Pier Theatre Bournemouth suffered the ultimate ignominy when *No Sex Please, We're British*, starring Linda Lusardi closed weeks early in the face of consumer apathy, Daniel Rosenthal of *The Times* explores the rocky state of a very British form of wit.

By rights, farce should have its own awards categories: Outstanding Achievement in Synchronised Door-Opening, perhaps, or Best Performance by Underwear in a Supporting Role. From the bedroom shenanigans of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, past cross-dressing Charley's Aunt and the 1920s hits of Ben Travers, and on through the twisted vision of Joe Orton and the frantic antics of Ray Cooney, this is a genre at which the British have excelled for centuries, and one which has universal appeal.

Yet you have to be 50-plus to remember the golden age of the Whitehall Theatre, where Brian Rix presented farces continuously from 1950 to 1967, and it's more than a decade since *No Sex Please, We're British!* ended its record-breaking West End run. Since then, no farce has come remotely close to emulating that kind of longevity.

These days, when so much comedy wears an ironic smirk, are theatrical tales of unexpected guests and adulterous chaos about to pass their stage-by dates? Or will last October's National Theatre revival of Michael Frayn's *Noises Off*, and the imminent arrival of Cooney's sequel to *Run For Your Wife* ensure farce's return to, well, rude health?

Judging by the enthusiasm of Jeremy Sams, the man

in charge of the revised *Noises Off*, directors will always queue up to sustain comedies which "belong entirely to the theatre. Farce is a trick you can only pull off with a set and a live audience."

On plays such as *Noises Off*, Frayn's brilliantly constructed farce-wit-in-a-farce about actors whose off-stage peccadilloes disrupt their touring production of a sex comedy called *Nothing On*, directors are drawn to a unique dual challenge.

Sams must sustain the emotional realism (however outrageous the situation, the characters in farce must remain credible), while also choreographing his cast with split-second precision. "*Noises Off* is so logistically complicated that before rehearsals began, I spent ten days working with a model of the



BLTC and Mrs Markham keep the farce flag flying

set and some coloured beads representing the actors," explains Sams, "just to start figuring out how to move everybody around."

Recently, in rehearsal, he put his actors through three hours of solid "door practice", to ensure that the on-stage slamming and opening "has a music of its own: perfect and beautiful."

Actors are equally enamoured of the genre. Farce is very unfunny in rehearsal, because it's so technical. But when you have an audience, the laughter is extraordinary. The other thing actors love about farces is that they're very democratic — real ensemble pieces with no great big starring roles. They're about teamwork, particularly something like *Noises Off* which is so physical that you're just not responsible for each other's cues and laughs, you're responsible for the others' safety. Make a mistake

and you can really hurt somebody. Theatre practitioners' passion for farce evidently endures, but what about its audiences? In the 1990s, Ray Cooney found West End attendance for his new comedies, *Out of Order* and *Funny Money*, was by his standards comparatively poor, and he is unsure how theatregoers will receive *Run For Your Wife 2*, in which John Smith, the bigamist cabby hero of the original play, must prevent the teenage son and daughter he has fathered by his two wives from meeting and discovering his double life.

He has been encouraged by the level of interest from overseas. "I've had lots of letters and calls from producers all over the world who are interested in staging the sequel. It's good to know that there's still a huge market out there. People still want to laugh."

Cooney is nonetheless concerned for the future of farce in one crucial respect. He is 68, Frayn is 67; where, he asks, are the younger farce writers? "The rep theatre system nurtured me, and other writers, as an actor, performing in Travers and Pinero," he says. "But that system is long gone. That was one of the reasons why I set up the Theatre of Comedy company at the Shaftesbury Theatre in the early 1980s, to make sure the baton of comedy was passed on. In six years as artistic director there I tried to find new comic plays. We read about 200 and did a lot of rehearsed readings, but I didn't unearth one good new comedy. The situation hasn't got any better since. The actors capable of performing farce are still out there, but the playwrights who can write them aren't."

The trouble, he says, is that young writers now only want to write half-hour sitcoms for television. "Once you're hooked into that short format you'll find it almost impossible

Show Quiz by Tony Orman

1. Name the 1989 film of an Alan Ayckbourn comedy; two later Best Actor Oscar winners appeared in this film. Who were they?
2. Name one connection between the films Titanic (1997), The Phantom (1995) and Dead Calm (1988).
3. Name the son of stage musical star Mary Martin who loved Jeannie, lived The Good Life and was a bad guy in Dallas?
4. She never became a 'Lady' but George Bernard Shaw wanted her to be his 'Queen of Egypt' and she was! Who was she?
5. This 'Lord' originated the first three ring circus in 1860. Name him.
6. He played himself in High School Confidential and American Hot Wax. Name this singer, name the film in which someone else played him, and name the actor who played him.
7. In September 2000, impresario Raymond Gubbay presented a 19th century musical in the 1990s rebuilt theatre where the show originally played. Name the theatre, the show and the composers.
8. Name the only top-ten movie star of the year 2000 who was also top-ten in 1970.
9. Who are the girls nick-named "Classical Spice" and what is their group called?
10. Who is "the closest Britain has to a playwright laureate"?

Answers at bottom of page.

Your New Committee

JUST to see if you noticed (or cared) who the new committee was following the AGM, please be aware that we had a meeting of the Exec on 4 October when we sorted out who does what. The result of all of this is as follows:

Chairman.....	Don Gent
Treasurer.....	Noel Davenport
Secretary.....	Hugh Norris
Stage Director	Lee Tilson
Wardrobe Mistress.....	Hilary Jefferys
Publicity	Derek Hyder
Bar Manager/FOH Rotas	Marcia Caton
Members/Newsletter.....	Tony Orman

So now you know who to blame when anything goes wrong.

Life Members



Club Supporters

Nobody has given more to BLTC over the years than Eileen and Keith Rawlings. It has therefore been with the greatest of pleasure that one of the first acts of the new committee was to accord Honorary Life Membership to this wonderful husband and wife team.

After 39 years of marriage they are still a closely knit couple. Keith first saw Eileen when she was performing in a play at the Palace Court Theatre in 1958, and they have been together ever since. She played in over 20 shows at that venue and directed there more than 10 times. Keith's dedication to the Club has been nothing short of extraordinary, having fallen in love with Bournemouth on a trip here, when a visit to the Palace Court convinced him that any town which had a club as vibrant as ours was the place he wanted to live in. He acted, he directed and he has written plays, all of which activities he has undertaken with considerable style and success.



The Mayoress

Moreover, we owe it to the two of them that we now have a proper raked auditorium, which they both funded and which has been the springboard for a renewed vitality in the club.

And to top it all, they were last year's mayor and mayoress of Bournemouth — and they are still involved actively in the theatre.



The Mayor

Review

LINDA Kirkman reviewed our Pier Theatre production of Trap For a Lonely Man in the Daily Echo. She said:

"Programme notes for this play state that it is 'one of those rare theatre thrillers that employs all the tricks of the trade ... leaves the audience guessing until the last few seconds ... audiences gasp, say "no" or "watch out" quite involuntarily'. And the notes are right — well, almost.

There were twists and turns aplenty and the denouement came as a complete surprise — but the only audible sound from a totally mesmerised audience (apart from the ever-present sweet wrapper rustlers) was the loud whisper of someone a row or so behind, telling all within

Warning to directors

WE have received complaints from two of this season's directors, Don Cherrett and Jack Snell, that copies of plays which they have ordered through the Club Secretary have taken not days but often several weeks to arrive, thus placing auditions, casting and other arrangements to be adversely affected.

Obviously this is not the fault of the Secretary, who places the orders, but

earshot who would do what, and to whom, next. Thankfully he got it as wrong as the rest of us.

The play takes place in a French mountain chalet where Daniel is alone, waiting for a police inspector to arrive.

Director Keith Rawlings believes that any longer synopsis would spoil the audience's enjoyment, so my lips are sealed.

Suffice it to say that the combination of Mr Rawlings' expert direction and a vastly experienced cast (Mike Satchell, Derek Hyder, Andrew Whyatt, Jane Wright, Michael Ellison and Angela Whyatt) results in a production of nail-biting tension in which every action seems plausible and every character appears completely genuine.

If your nerves can stand it, this is one trap you shouldn't avoid."

the fault of the publishers, mainly French's, who can't seem to get their act together at the moment.

We are investigating to find out the cause of this problem. In the meantime, all play directors are asked to place their orders (whether for the full numbers of acting editions require, or just for one play which they may wish to study) considerably in advance of the time they need it.

Audition reminders

We are repeating information about two auditions, both being held at the Club and first advertised in our last issue. For production dates see the column on the right.

Pat Gray is holding an audition for the drama The Day After the Fair on Wednesday 24 January 2001 at 7.30 pm. There are 4 female and 2 male roles. Pat can be reached at home on 01202 737747 or at work on 01202 442755.

Tony Orman is holding an audition for the drama Separate Tables on Friday 26 January 2001 at 7.30 pm. The play can be performed with 11 actors of whom 3 are male and 8 are female. Rehearsals start Monday 9 April 2001. Tony can be reached on 01202 554291.

..... Farce continued from page 3

to write a two-hour stage comedy."

Sams believes the dearth of new farce could be related to shifting morality. "Farce is about people risking the loss of their status and respectability. Bill Clinton, the most powerful man in the world, was virtually caught with his trousers around his ankles, and he didn't topple."

One writer-director cited by both Cooney and Sams as a potential flag-bearer for the genre is Terry Johnson, whose Dead Funny and Cleo, Camping, Emmanuelle and Dick have gloriously farcical moments, without qualifying as out-and-out farces.

The prospect of no new farces emerging and audiences and audiences no longer turning out for revivals is unthinkable, Sams concludes. "Farce is the best thing you can do with a theatre — people running around a set, with a great deal to lose. If you've got a hamster,

Apology

We regret having had to cancel the October production of Donny Boy following a late casting problem that could not have been foreseen. We have constantly striven to earn the trust of our Members and our Playgoers and to improve our programmes over the last few years — we hope you feel that we are succeeding in our aim of providing a local intimate theatre, and we look forward to your continued support.

Reminders

Mon 4-Sat 9 December, 2000

Performances of How the Other Half Loves at 7.45 pm

Wed 24 January, 2001 Audition The Day After the Fair at 7.30 pm

Fri 26 January, 2001. Audition for Separate Tables at 7.30 pm.

Mon 12-Sat 17 February, 2001

Performances of I Have Been Here Before at 7.45 pm

Fri 23/Sat 24 February, 2001.

Performances of 2 one-act plays at 7.45 pm

Mon 2-Sat 7 April, 2001

Performances of The Day After the Fair at 7.45 pm

Mon 21-Sat 26 May 2001

Performances of Separate Tables at 7.45 pm

Answers to Quiz

1. A Chorus of Disapproval: Jeremy Irons, Anthony Hopkins.
2. Actor Billy Kane played leading roles in all three.
3. Larry Hagman.
4. Vivien Leigh, who missed being Lady Oliver, but starred in the film of Shaw's Caesar and Cleopatra.
5. Lord George Sanger.
6. Jerry Lee Lewis: in his biopic, Great Balls of Fire; Denis Quaid played the role of Jerry.
7. The Savoy Theatre; The Mikado; Gilbert and Sullivan.
8. Clint Eastwood.
9. The group is called "bond" [sic], they are Tanya Davis, Haylie Ecker, Eos Chater and Gay-Yee Westendorff.
10. Sir David Hare.