

A Wimborne Drama Production

HAY FEVER

By Noël Coward

18th - 20th October 2012

TIVOLI THEATRE
WIMBORNE



WELCOME

WELCOME to the Tivoli Theatre for this performance of possibly one of the finest comedies in the English language, written by unquestionably the best all-rounder of the theatrical, literary and musical worlds of the last century.

Noël Peirce Coward, who was born on December 16, 1899, to a domineering mother and a lacklustre piano salesman father, was motivated by success and celebrity, and worked phenomenally hard. By his thirties he was already known as 'The Master' because of his talents and achievements.

In a life of 73 years, Coward wrote nearly 50 plays, over 400 songs and lyrics, books of verse, sketches, satire and short stories, and a single novel. He was also involved, as actor, producer or screenwriter, in more than a dozen films.

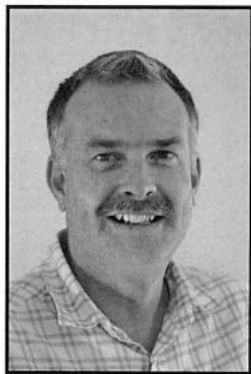
Nearly 40 years since his death, he has never been more popular with productions of *Hay Fever* and *Volcano* in the West End this year and a new book about his life just published.

Hay Fever, this sublime comedy of appalling manners, has wonderful style and wit, although it can be quite cutting, with words often used as physical weapons that can wound deeply. However, wherever possible, we have tried to play it for real and to explore why the characters feel they have to behave in the way they do, which, in the case of the *Blisses*, is pretty abominably.

This is my sixth time directing for Wimborne Drama at the wonderful Tivoli Theatre, and *Hay Fever* has probably been the most fun and most rewarding of all my productions, for which I have to thank a company of very talented actors and a superb creative team, all of whom have worked so hard, but also with great humour, to bring this play to stage. There are too many people to name individually here, and they are rightly credited elsewhere in the programme. However, if I may, I would just like to say one special 'thank you' to my wife for her terrific support while I have lived and breathed *Hay Fever* for the past few months.

Enjoy the play!

Richard Neal - Director



HARDLY ANY MANNERS

HAY FEVER was written in 1924, but conceived by Noël Coward some years earlier. During the First World War, the teenage Coward had been befriended by Mrs Astley Cooper who liked the company of "theatricals".

Coward became a frequent guest at her country estate, Hambleton Hall in Rutland. It was an eye-opening experience for the young man: butlers and maids, formal meals, riding and hunting. Coward thrived in this sophisticated environment, his first taste of the elegant world he would later immortalise in many of his comedies.

Mrs Astley Cooper was a large woman who had lost her looks and consequently demanded that all the mirrors in the house be covered in scarves. She and her teenage children were all addicted to after-dinner games and, like it or not, guests were made to join in.

"Mrs Cooper was gay company," wrote Coward. "Her principle pleasure was to lie flat on her back upon a mattress in front of the fire and shoot off witticisms in a sort of petulant wail."



Mrs Astley Cooper, centre,
with Noël Coward, front right



Noël Coward in his twenties

In the summer of 1921 Coward took a trip to Broadway where he hoped to sell some of his play scripts to theatre producers.

This plan did not work out too well, not least because nobody had bothered to inform Coward that, in those days before air

conditioning, Broadway theatres were virtually all closed for the summer. But luck did not entirely desert Coward, for he was introduced to the Manhattan equivalent of the Astley Cooper household.

The Hartley Manners, or "Hardly-any-Manners" as they were dubbed, were the very theatrical family of eccentric actress

Laurette Taylor, her husband, the playwright John Hartley Manners, and their children Dwight and Marguerite.



Laurette Taylor and John Hartley Manners

Guests at their gothic pile were subjected to "rather acrimonious games" during which fierce internecine arguments would break out, leaving the unfortunate visitors forgotten in the commotion.

"It was inevitable that someone should eventually utilise portions of this eccentricity in a play," wrote Coward, "and I am only grateful to Fate that no guest of the Hartley Manners thought of writing *Hay Fever* before I did."

Coward completed the play in three days and it opened in the West End on June 8, 1925, running for more than 300 performances.

When the National Theatre invited Coward to direct a revival of *Hay Fever* in 1964, he wrote: "I am thrilled and flattered and frankly a little flabbergasted that the National Theatre should have had the curious perceptiveness to choose a very early play of mine and to give it a cast that could play the Albanian telephone directory." The cast included Edith Evans, Maggie Smith, Lynn Redgrave, Derek Jacobi and Robert Stephens.

HAY FEVER

Cast in order of appearance

Sorel Bliss	JENN SINGLETON
Simon Bliss	ROB CORDING
Clara	CAROLYN HEWITT
Judith Bliss	PENNY PEARSON
David Bliss	JEREMY MILLS
Sandy Tyrell	SAM MOULTON
Myra Arundel	JILL RICHMOND
Richard Greatham	TONY PARKINSON
Jackie Coryton	LAUREN HOMER

The action of the play takes place at the Bliss family home
in Cookham over a weekend in June

ACT I Saturday afternoon

INTERVAL

ACT II Saturday evening

ACT III Sunday morning

CREATIVE TEAM

Director	RICHARD NEAL
Stage Manager	PHYLLIS SPENCER
Set Design and Construction	COLIN PILE MARK ELLEN
Assistant Stage Managers	JUDY GARRETT MOIRA HAWEY CHRISSIE NEAL
Costume Supervisor	JAN STEVENSON
Hair and Make-up	CHARLEE HULBERT
Piano Arrangement	SAM MOULTON
Tivoli Production Manager	KYLE BEST

Production Acknowledgements

Costumes provided by Hirearchy
Wigs provided by RB Wig Creations
Properties loaned by Re-Loved and Age Concern Wimborne
Transport provided by Steve Symonds

Also we acknowledge the help and support of:

Daisy Graphic
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Eddie Tyson-Brown
Wimborne Tourist Information Centre

Produced by Wimborne Drama at the Tivoli Theatre 18th - 20th October 2012

MEET THE CAST

ROB CORDING (Simon Bliss)

I joined Wimborne Drama in 2007. My last role was Sebastian in this summer's open air production of *Twelfth Night*. My favourite role is probably this one as it's good fun playing a spoilt brat. My occupation: I am a customer service representative for an insurance company. If I was living in the 1920s, I would have been similar to Lord Grantham in *Downton Abbey*! Ruling the roost over a nice big house! I wish this item from the 1920s was still around today: Not so much an item but I wish we could still dress like in the 1920s. It would be so much fun. I would love to be invited to a weekend party hosted by Kate, Duchess of Cambridge. I think she is really interesting and I would like to know what it's like for her to all of a sudden be thrust in the limelight and join a family like the Royals. Not many people will know that when I was six years old, I wrote a letter to Carol Vorderman, and she replied!

CAROLYN HEWITT (Clara)

I joined Wimborne Drama in 1977. My last role was Truvy in *Steel Magnolias*. My favourite role was probably Truvy because it was the most challenging, but I've had fun with lots of others. My occupation: director of a careers guidance company. If I was living in the 1920s, I certainly wouldn't have been a housekeeper, but I might have been a dresser in the theatre, given the amount of times I've done costumes for Wimborne Drama plays! I don't wish any item from the 1920s was still around today - we've moved on! I would love to have been invited to a Glam Rock weekend party hosted by Marc Bolan - lots of glitter and feather boas. Not many people will know that I'm a lifelong Liverpool supporter and love going to games home or away.

LAUREN HOMER (Jackie Coryton)

I joined Wimborne Drama in July this year. My last role was Lucy, from the play *Mother Figure* by Alan Ayckbourn. This was with The Broadstone Players. My favourite role: Fiona, in the play *Physic*. My occupation: I am a self-employed dress maker and also work as a waitress. If I was living in the 1920s, I would most probably still have been a dress maker! I wish the cars of the 1920s were still around today. Our roads would look so much prettier. I would love to have been invited to a weekend party hosted by Audrey Hepburn! I would love to pick up some acting tips from such an icon! Not many people will know that I do ballet! I have danced since I was five, and still keep up my ballet dancing now!

JEREMY MILLS (David Bliss)

I joined Wimborne Drama in July 2012. My last role was Professor Higgins in *Pygmalion* for Arena Theatre. My favourite role: Too many to name a favourite - I loved them all (although I enjoyed Higgins in *Pygmalion* as Eliza was a delight to act opposite and I have played Higgins previously in *My Fair Lady*). My occupation: notary public. If I was living in the 1920s, I would have been a notary public. I wish this item from the 1920s was still around today: Fedora - as a frequently worn hat! I would love to have been invited to a weekend party hosted by Sun Tzu, the ancient Chinese military general, because I have just finished reading *The Art of War* and I'd like to see his reaction to the fact that his work is now referred to primarily in a business context. Not many people will know that I can fence.

SAM MOULTON (Sandy Tyrell)

I joined Wimborne Drama in October 2011. My last role was Fabian in *Twelfth Night*. My favourite role: Billy Flynn in *Chicago*. My occupation: teacher. If I was living in the 1920s, I would have been a schoolmaster. I wish this item from the 1920s was still around today: The Somerset and Dorset railway running through Blandford and Wimborne. I would love to have been invited to a weekend party hosted by David Niven, because he knew so many people and would create huge fun, but still be charming enough to put you at your ease (unlike the Blisses!) Not many people will know that I lived in Kenya for seven years.

TONY PARKINSON (Richard Greatham)

I joined Wimborne Drama in 2009. My last role and also my favourite role was Mellersh Wilton in *Enchanted April*. My occupation: I work in financial services. If I was living in the 1920s, I would have been a getaway driver. I wish this item from the 1920s was still around today: spats shoes. I would love to be invited to a weekend party hosted by David Bowie – because of the guest list! Not many people will know that Rik Waller, who was a *Pop Idol* finalist in 2001, is my second cousin.

PENNY PEARSON (Judith Bliss)

I joined Wimborne Drama in 2004 when Barry Baynton asked me to audition for *Loot* and I've been a member ever since. My last role was Barbara in *Pack of Lies*. My favourite role was definitely Romaine in *Witness for the Prosecution*. A dream of a part! My occupation: I'm a graphic designer. If I was living in the 1920s, I'd love to think I'd have been a leading light in the Bloomsbury Group or something equally outrageous, but much more likely I'd have been some sort of domestic or perhaps an office worker. I wish this item from the 1920s was still around today: As an ex-smoker, I'd love to see cigarette holders still in use. It's a filthy habit, I know, but impossible not to look elegant using a holder. I would love to have been invited to a weekend party hosted by Charles Dickens. Not only would he be likely to be very entertaining but I imagine he'd be a very attentive host. Not many people will know that I used to be a crack shot with a .22 rifle.

JILL RICHMOND (Myra Arundel)

I joined Wimborne Drama in May 2011. My last role was Elaine in *Calendar Girls* (Arena Theatre). My favourite role was Eliza Doolittle in *Pysmalion* (Arena Theatre). She was a great character to play and it was particularly fun trying to throw what must be the world's heaviest pair of slippers at Higgins. My occupation: I work for a waste treatment and renewable energy company. If I was living in the 1920s, I would have been an artist. I wish this item from the 1920s was still around today: Chrysler Imperial E80 - travelling in style! I would love to have been invited to a weekend party hosted by Antoni Gaudi because his architecture fascinates me and I'd like to see what he thinks to how the Sagrada Familia in Barcelona is coming along. Not many people will know that I'm trying to learn Welsh - Dw i'n trio dysgu Cymraeg.

JENN SINGLETON (Sorel Bliss)

I joined Wimborne Drama in April 2011. My last role and also my favourite role was Viola in Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* at Deans Court. It had been a bit of a dream of mine to play this! My occupation: self-employed teacher, music facilitator and massage therapist. If I was living in the 1920s, I would have been a teacher, probably. Or journalist/feminine psychologist (I'm sure I could have learnt a lot from David Bliss). I wish this item from the 1920s was still around today: Cigarette holder. I would love to be invited to a weekend party hosted by Alan Davies because he's funny, not boastful, very entertaining, and I can imagine he would not only put on a jolly old shin dig but would invite the cast of *Q!* to join. A comedic feast not to be missed. Not many people will know that I like to snowboard a lot, especially in 80s get up.



Sam Moulton and Lauren Homer



Jeremy Mills and Jill Richmond



Rob Cording, Penny Pearson and Jenn Singleton



Penny Pearson and Tony Parkinson



Jeremy Mills, Rob Cording, Penny Pearson and Jenn Singleton



Carolyn Hewitt

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