

# NOËL COWARD HAY FEVER



## WELCOME

The life blood of any drama society is the arrival of new members and we are delighted to welcome: Charlotte Alexander in her debut and starring role as Sorel Bliss; Jim Simpson as Richard Greatham and Nick Collett who doesn't have a part in Hay Fever but is a talented young actor whom we will see in BISISIPI, trailing his Edinburgh Festival production. We also welcome the support of other potential new members behind the scenes.

Our last production, The Potting Shed by Graham Greene proved several points: that an amateur society can mount a challenging play with a large cast and get the audience thinking seriously as they leave the auditorium; that an efficient production team covering everything from set design and construction, props and front of house is as essential as a good cast; and that we can make do without curtains or drapes!

We are no further forward with the "soft furnishings" of the stage as the Parish Church Council's lottery application which included an amount for curtains and drapes was withdrawn. The PCC is currently considering major alterations to the performance area which make our substantial investment in these items unwise at present. So, for the time being, we shall have to continue in the nude, as it were.

There are several events that should be entered into diaries: the St Michael's Church Garden Party on Saturday, 13<sup>th</sup> June at which The Players will be operating the Tombola stall; our Annual General Meeting on the following Monday, June 15<sup>th</sup>, which will be preceded by the business meeting for Hay Fever – to review how well we've done. All are welcome on that evening but, obviously, only paid up members may vote. On June 22 and 29 there will be play readings to consider for our autumn production and prospective members will be most welcome to participate. Then on Friday July 10<sup>th</sup> our annual free-for-all takes place in the form of BISISIPI which stands for BRING-IT-SING-IT-SAY-IT-PLAY-IT. History reveals that it is a riotous evening where Members and their many friends may, with minimal rehearsal, bring food and drink and, whether solo or not, perform a variety of entertainments.

Finally, the action of the play demands a small amount of smoking in what is a NO-SMOKING area. We would ask you not to smoke anywhere in the building and thank you for refraining from doing so.

We hope you have an entertaining evening.

Michael Robinson  
Chairman

## HAY FEVER

My first experience of *Hay Fever* was seeing Noël Coward's own production for the National Theatre at the Old Vic in 1964; as the cast included Edith Evans, Maggie Smith, Lynn Redgrave, Derek Jacobi and Robert Stephens my instant enchantment is perhaps not surprising. Since then I have seen many other productions and many Judiths, among them Celia Johnson (my favourite), Phyllis Calvert, Penelope Keith and Constance Cummings; having reluctantly conceded that I am the wrong shape to play the part I am delighted to be directing Jacquetta and a cast who seem to like the play as much as I.

Although Coward claimed to have written it in three days and not revised it, I am mindful that his first Judith, Marie Tempest, turned the part down when it was first offered to her, so perhaps he did go home and think again. Certainly there is nothing in the writing to suggest that the play was dashed off: it is tight, crisp, and – as we quickly discovered – the wonderful rhythms of the phrasing are soon lost when actors inadvertently substitute an odd word of their own for that selected by The Master.

*Hay Fever* is a comedy of manners – bad manners. The monstrous Bliss family, self-contained and supremely confident of their own artistic gifts, tramples upon anyone whose behaviour smacks of conventionality. Their game, as soon as they become bored with their guests, is to knock them off their perch and watch them flutter helplessly on the floor. The luckless weekend visitors themselves are not necessarily 'nice' but they do recognise that (as John Lahr observed in *Coward The Playwright*) "Manners are a kind of unspoken contract between the individual and the society which allows both to function efficiently. Harmony not honesty is required for society". The Blisses go in for neither, except among themselves.

Coward wrote: "*Hay Fever* has always proved a great joy to amateurs, owing I suppose to the smallness of the cast and the fact that it has only one set, which must lead them, poor dears, to imagine that it is easy to act." This particular poor dear has no illusions, but none of us involved with this production would have had much fun or satisfaction if we had thought the script, however wonderful, would do all the work for us. We are, however, grateful about the set.

My thanks to a gratifyingly enthusiastic cast and crew and the Players' thanks to Jan Piefkowski for designing our programme cover and posters.

Peter Woods  
Director

## THE CAST

In order of appearance

SOREL BLISS

CHARLOTTE ALEXANDER

SIMON BLISS

PETER HENSON

CLARA

RUTH REID

JUDITH BLISS

JACQUETTA PEASE

DAVID BLISS

MIKE ROBINSON

SANDY TYRELL

CHRIS HULATT

MYRA ARUNDEL

SUE DARRIEULAT

RICHARD GREATHAM

JIM SIMPSON

JACKIE CORYTON

DIANA ROBINETTE

Our scene is the Hall of the Bliss' house at Cookham one weekend in June 1925

### ACT 1

Saturday afternoon

INTERVAL – 15 minutes

### ACT 2

Saturday evening

INTERVAL – 5 minutes

### ACT 3

Sunday morning

## THE COMPANY

DIRECTOR	PETER WOODS
PRODUCER	JANE ATKINSON
ASSISTANT PRODUCER	ADAM RICHARDSON
STAGE/PROPS	MIRIAM O'DEA
FRONT OF HOUSE	KAY CABLE
LIGHTING	FRANCES PRICE & CHRIS HULATT
COSTUMES	EMMI SMITH
SET DESIGN	LIZ WHITE
SET CONSTRUCTION	MICHAEL & MARK O'DEA
BUSINESS MANAGER	MERVYN JUPE
PROMPT	LINDA WOODS / JANE ATKINSON
PRINTING	CHRIS HULATT
PUBLICITY	KAY CABLE
POSTER DESIGN	JAN PIEŃKOWSKI

*St Michael's Players*  
**Recent Productions**

1986	Spring Autumn	Habeas Corpus Separate Tables
1987	Spring Autumn	See How They Run Living Together
1988	Spring Autumn	Night Watch The Magistrate
1989	Spring Autumn	On Monday Next Quartermaine's Terms
1990	Spring Autumn	Man of Destiny/Face the Music Alphabetical Order
1991	Spring Autumn	Mixed Doubles Present Laughter
1992	Autumn	Rough Crossing
1993	Spring Autumn	Round and Round the Garden The Deep Blue Sea
1994	Spring Autumn	Steel Magnolias Love Affair
1995	Spring Summer Autumn	Still Life Before Dawn Pack of Lies
1996	Spring	Harlequinade
1997	Spring Autumn	Move Over Mrs Markham The Potting Shed

# MEMBERSHIP AND MAILING LIST APPLICATION FORM

If you would like to be involved in future productions, on-stage or off, or wish to be on the Mailing list, please fill in this form and post it to:

Ruth Reid  
Membership Secretary  
76 Wavendon Avenue, Chiswick, London W4 4NS.

Name .....

Address .....

.....

Post code .....

Telephone .....

I should like to join St Michael's Players and am interested in:

- |                  |                |                  |
|------------------|----------------|------------------|
| COSTUMES         | FRONT OF HOUSE | LIGHTING         |
| ACTING           | SET DESIGN     | PROPS            |
| STAGE MANAGEMENT |                | SET CONSTRUCTION |

Membership of St Michael's Players costs £15 p.a.

---

I should like to be on the MAILING LIST