



HOME CHAT

Free to members of the Society
Price £2 (\$4)

President: HRH The Duke of Kent, KG, GCMG, GCVO, ADC
Vice Presidents: Tammy Grimes • Penelope Keith CBE • Barry Day OBE • Stephen Fry

COWARD ON THE COAST

San Francisco Events: April 15th and 16th

A report from Kathy Williams

April 15th - Something to Do with Spring?

The evening before the Gala opening of *Star Quality: The World of Noël Coward* at the Museum of Performance and Design (MPD) and the world premiere of *Bitter Sweet in Concert* at the Herbst Theatre, local members of the Noël Coward Society gathered at the Laurel Court Bar in the Fairmont Hotel to toast many Coward milestones in San Francisco: welcoming Trustees from the Coward Foundation - Chairman **Alan Brodie**, plus **Geoffrey Johnson**, **Rosy Runciman**, and **Barry Day**; thanking fellow-member **Brad Rosenstein** for his extraordinary efforts as MPD curator and organizer and facilitator for a host of events from April through August in the San Francisco Bay Area; and celebrating two events with author/adaptor Barry Day - the new paperback publication of *The Letters of Noël Coward* and the Lamplighters' production



Craig Jessup

of his adaptation of *Bitter Sweet*.

While the co-curators of *Star Quality* (Rosy and Brad) had spent their day putting finishing touches on the Exhibition, Foundation trustees Alan, Geoffrey, and Barry had met with A.C.T. director Craig Slight and the Young Conservatory actors to go over the script and songs for A.C.T.'s upcoming

The Society's 10th Anniversary Celebration

'Don't Put Your Daughter on the Stage' at London's Hurlingham Club

Saturday 10th October, 2009 Dress code: Black Tie
(**Expression of interest form enclosed**)

Bordering the Thames in Fulham, West London, and set in 42 acres of magnificent grounds, the Hurlingham Club is a gem of international renown. Members are now invited to complete and return the 'Expression of Interest' form enclosed with this magazine. The second tranche of deposit is due to the Hurlingham Club on 10th July and before committing the Society's precious funds, we should like to know how many members are interested in attending.

This will be the Society's main event in the UK during this our 10th anniversary year, which will begin with a drinks and canapés reception in Hurlingham's elegant Palm Court, starting at 6.p.m. During the Reception, we shall be launching the newly published latest book by Barry Day, *The Essential Noël Coward* and Barry will be joining us and signing copies.

Sadly, for us, His Royal Highness the Duke of Kent will be unable to attend as he will be in Australia at that time. However, his Equerry, Mr Andrew Palmer GMC, CVO, accompanied by his wife, has kindly accepted our invitation to join us to receive The Duke's official scroll, marking his Presidency of the Society.

After the Reception, we shall repair to the Musgrave Theatre, adjacent to the Palm Court, for the evening's entertainment, which will begin with a film about Noël Coward edited by John Knowles with television footage previously unseen by members, provided by Ken Starrett. Members may take their drinks into the theatre, as befits a cabaret evening, to watch some of our talented members perform under the musical supervision of Celia Cologne and Dominic Vlasto. There will be at least one special professional Guest Appearance, during the cabaret; the identity of whom will remain a secret until the evening.

At the end of the cabaret, is the presentation of the scroll, which will be received Mr Andrew Palmer, on behalf of the Duke of Kent. The first part of the evening, which will cost approximately £60 per head, will end at 8.45 p.m. Members will have the option of staying on for dinner at the club, at an additional cost, to be advised in a later edition. There is ample free parking at the club and for more information about Hurlingham, please see

www.hurlinghamclub.org.uk. The cost of this event will be kept to a minimum and may be reduced, depending on numbers attending. Please return the enclosed form as soon as possible. Alas, if insufficient members respond, then we shall simply have say "let's call the whole thing off".

Overseas members may respond by e-mail to

barbaralongford@noelcoward.net

Barbara Longford

revue, *Bright Young People*. Coward fans in California have much for which we are grateful, recognizing that the wealth of performances and events coming our way are due in large measure to the energetic efforts of the Foundation and the Estate, especially the work of Alan Brodie.

Alan Farley greeted the group and mentioned that he was preparing to interview Barry the next day for *Book Talk* on NPR (National Public Radio). The April 26th podcast of that interview is available at www.kalw.org. **Jeanie Hackett**, Artistic Director of the The Antaeus Company of North Hollywood (who is also a Coward Society member), flew up from Los Angeles for the gathering, the gala events, and to thank the Foundation trustees in person for their recent grant that funds Antaeus's project, *The Young Idea*. Jeanie was delighted to receive a signed copy of Barry Day's *The Letters of Noël Coward* and to have time for a chat with each trustee.



Alan Farley

Some local members were meeting for the first time: **Louis Dorsey, Fred Lipschultz, Dan Putman, Kathy Williams, and Michael Owen** and his wife, **Libbie Hodas**, conversed with each other; with guests from Hollywood, London, and New York, including the charming artist **Lynne Day** (Barry's wife); and with special guests from Switzerland, **Alexandra** and **Christian Délétroz**, in town especially to see *Star Quality* and *Bitter Sweet*. Alexandra (who is Dany Dasto's niece) is currently working as an administrator at Chalet Coward.



NCS members and guests at the inaugural West Coast event.

Prefacing a toast to this gathering of "kindred spirits," Kathy mentioned that during Coward's first visit to California in 1926, he stayed at the Fairmont. Page 132 of *The Letters of Noël Coward* includes a letter written in the hotel - from 27-year-old Noël to his mother on Christmas Eve.

About the Laurel Court Bar. In a recent major renovation (coincidentally started in the Coward centenary year of 1999), the Laurel Court was meticulously restored to its original décor, so that the comfy chairs, the gorgeous bucolic murals, and elegant gilded columns are now all just as they were when Noël (one must assume) enjoyed a cocktail in the bar. With a nod to the assembled Coward "family", the bar's pianist played 'Mad About the Boy.'

April 16th Back-to Back: A Marvelous Party and Bitter Sweet in Concert

A Marvelous Party

About 175 guests attended the Gala reception and cabaret performance to celebrate the opening of *Star Quality: The World of Noël Coward* at the San Francisco Museum of

Performance & Design (MPD). While enjoying tempting h'ors d'oeuvres and sipping cocktails, people mingled in the exhibition's anteroom, which was decorated with posters and memorabilia for films and Broadway shows, ranging from *Cavalcade* and *In Which We Serve* to the 1996 Broadway revival of *Present Laughter*, starring Frank Langella, and of course, *Blithe Spirit*.

No food or drink is allowed in the main exhibition room — for good reason: priceless objects, including the dressing gown Coward wore in *Present Laughter*, are on open display. Described in large panels (with historical text by Barry Day) and in detailed notes accompanying many objects, Coward's life and work are well-documented. A beautifully produced full-color brochure describes the exhibition, which covers major themes of Coward's life, including *The Boy Actor*, *The Renaissance Man*, *The Blithe Celebrity*, *The Dear Friend*, and *The Master*.

Brad Rosenstein started the evening's program by outlining the history of *Star Quality* from its birth at Ten Chimneys (home of the Lunts in Wisconsin), through its incarnation at the National Theatre in London, to the current Anglo-American - and enthusiastically Californian - display. Alan Brodie spoke next; he acknowledged special guests (including **Edward Hastings**, past director of A.C.T. — the exhibit contains a photo of him from his 1973 production of *Tonight at 8:30*.) Alan also thanked many people who contributed to the development of *Star Quality* and many others who have furthered interest in and knowledge of Coward and his work. Geoffrey Johnson jollied up the evening with a hilarious story about Coward and Ethel Merman.

Local cabaret artists entertained with favorite

Coward songs: **Carly Ozard** opened with a heart-felt rendition of 'If Love Were All.' **Craig Jessup**, accompanied by noted pianist **Ken Muir**, performed two rousing numbers from his highly-praised show, *Craig Jessup Sings Noël Coward: Why Must the Show Go On? and 'Mad Dogs and Englishmen'* (complete with the Papalaka's). **Paula West** completed the program with a sultry jazz rendition of 'Mad About the Boy.' In the manner of Norman Hackforth, both Ken Muir and **Alan**



Tom and Polly Bredt, Dan Putman

Choy (accompanist for Ms. West and Ms. Ozard) provided an expressive and solid backing for the singers.

Bitter Sweet in Concert

OK, let's confess we're gluttons for Coward. When presented with the *Marvelous Party Gala*, like a box filled with chocolate-cream Cowardy treats, we consume them all and say, "Please, sir, I want some more." This brings us to the second half of the remarkable evening: *Bitter Sweet in Concert*, adapted by Barry Day, the one-night-only premiere performance by the Lamplighters Music Theatre at the Herbst Theatre.

Whether or not you've read earlier articles in Home Chat about *Bitter Sweet* (December 2008, Barry Day on "The Austrian Version"; February 2009, Dominic Vlasto reviewing the new CD by the Volkert Trio, including Volkert's Suite from *Bitter Sweet*; and April 2009, Rexton Bunnett's look at likely inspirations: *Die Fledermaus* vs. *Show Boat*), you probably have a general idea of the plot and characters of the original, and I expect you can at least hum if not sing 'I'll See You Again' and 'If Love Were All' (two of the Coward "top ten").

For a thorough treatment of all the music, see the NCMI on the Society website at www.noelcoward.net (the new home of the Index is under development). For details on the original operette, see the new website, The Music of Noël Coward: <http://www.noelcowardmusic.com/musicals/bittersweet.php>

Synopsis of Bitter Sweet in Concert, as presented by the Lamplighters

Act I. The Lamplighters Orchestra - a 13-piece formally-dressed ensemble, seated on the stage - plays the Overture. Adaptor Barry Day wisely starts the scene in 1875, omitting the opening and ending set in the 'Jazz Baby' 1920's, which these days seems about as old as the Victorian setting. This also cuts three expendable characters (Dolly, Henry, and Vincent) and places us firmly in the heart of the story.

Almost immediately, we are waltzing: 'What is Love?' is moved from the middle of the act to become the first big musical number, foreshadowing Sarah's rejection of her pompous fiancé and love's first kiss with Carl, her voice teacher. A Narrator (**John Rouse**) helps prune expository dialogue by filling us in on Sarah (**Jane Erwin Hammett**); Hugh, her pompous fiancé; their overbearing Mothers; and Carl Linden (**Baker Peeples**). Sarah continues her musing on love with 'The Call of Life,' and Carl woos her not-so-indirectly with 'If You Could Only Come with Me,' describing the beauty of his homeland. In 'I'll See You Again' (beautifully sung by Hammett and Peeples), they discover they are in love although they must part.

The scene shifts to a formal party in Belgrave Square. To put a stake through the heart of their engagement, fiancé Hugh is very cold and proper, saying good-bye to Sarah. The extremely able and impeccably dressed chorus (**Kathi Brotemarkle, Rebecca Brown, Katy Daniel, Kristen Jones, Cary Ann Rosko, and Arie Singer; John Brown, Ron Dritz, William Giammona, Anthony Rollins-Mullins, Ken Stegmüller, and Chris Uzelac**) lighten things up a bit with 'The Last Dance,' moving briskly into the Act I Finale, which includes the 'Footman's Quartette,' 'Blind Man's Buff' (Carl kisses the blind-folded Sarah), and a reprise of 'The Call of Life.' And ... Sarah runs away with Carl.

Entr'acte: 'The Bitter Sweet Waltz'

Act II. The Narrator transports us to Herr Schlick's café in

Vienna, 1880. Carl is rehearsing the "orchestra" while waiters, cleaners, and Ladies of the Town intersperse dialogue and song. A saucily-dressed Manon la Crevette (Jennifer Ashworth) brings the audience to its knees with 'If Love Were All.' Carl must truly love Sarah (now Sari, the singer and professional dance hostess) to be able to resist this Manon!

Listening next to 'Everymore' and a 'Day/Little Cafe' (true love's duet by Sari and Carl) — and having recently seen *High Spirits* with its sweet song, 'Forever and a Day' - I am taking more seriously the rumors that Coward wrote at least a couple of tunes for *High Spirits*.

Enter the villain. Prussian Captain Lutte (William Neely, who was so effectively evil that the audience booed him during the curtain call) presses his unwanted attentions on Sari, whose resistance to Lutte's advances gets both her and Carl fired. The versatile men's chorus transform into Officers and sing 'We Wish to Order Wine,' which Captain Lutte refines into 'Tokay!' After a bout of drinking, Lutte accosts Sari; Carl slaps him, Lutte skewers Carl, who dies, leaving Sari bereft. Manon has two more lovely songs: 'Bonne Nuit, Merci' and the beautiful 'Kiss Me (Before You Go Away).' Not a dry eye in the house.

Act III. Guiding us to fin-de-siècle London, the Narrator recounts Sari's sad wanderings: her successful musical career, staged "death", and miraculous return to London. Wisps of essential dialogue bind together five wonderful songs. The chorus, as aging Party Guests, sing a rousing 'Ta-ra-ra Boom-de-ay.' Sarah's girlhood chums have become matrons, who deliver a hauntingly humorous a cappella sextette about their lost youth: 'Alas, The Time is Past.' The matrons exit, and the men - who must all be quick-change artists - enter as the "Over-Exquisitely Dressed Young Men" to sing 'We All Wear a Green Carnation,' holding the fine line between acceptable archness and Too Much Camp. A gesture here, an attitude there, lots of laughs, and again - fine a cappella harmonies. Sari is encouraged to perform; she thrills the crowd with Zigeuner. When Jane Erwin Hammett and the orchestra take a dramatic pause mid-song, you can hear the audience holding its breath. The finale proclaims Sari's eternal love: Carl appears at the edge of the stage in an ethereal greenish light, Sari and Carl reprise 'I'll See You Again,' the Company assembles and chimes in and, as part of the curtain call, the performers encourage the audience to join them in song.

For a "one-night only" performance, The Lamplighters pulled out all the stops. The Lamplighters Orchestra, ably conducted by **Monroe Kanouse**, set an elegant tone. Costumer **Judy Jackson MacIlvaine** deserves extra applause for the highly detailed and gorgeous wardrobe: from Sarah/Sari's delightful gowns to the wealth of costumes for each incarnation of the chorus (around 50 complete outfits: for the women as girlish chums, party guests, Ladies of the Town, and Aging Party Guests; men as Party Guests, waiters and cleaners, Officers, Aging Party Guests, and Exquisites). Other than Ms. Hemmett's fine staging of 'Green Carnation,' no choreographer is credited; however, there was enough movement, and dance - especially expert waltzing - to push the production far beyond the modest description, "in Concert". Congratulations to **Barbara Heroux**, Artistic Director/Stage Director extraordinaire!

In an interview broadcast on April 26 by Alan Farley, Barry Day commented on the adaptation: "*There isn't the money around to put on a full production of any of these things [period operetta] the way it was originally done. And if it did go on, it would be probably out of date anyway.... What they*

also used to do in those days - 'After the Ball' being a good example - the big orchestra, the numbers of people, swamped the material to a great degree ... and if you whittle that away (because you have to), you are then left with the core of the piece, which is: the words and the music, some of the dialogue ... that's what it's about ... You can do it with a piano - or a small musical group -and people can hear the words... Keep the period, keep the people: that's the charm of it."

Barry continued in a recent email, "This gives the material a new possibility and I thought Lamplighters did a fantastic job. They could have done a lot less for a one-performance production and I would have felt well served. As it was, they served us a banquet."

More on Star Quality at the MPD

In follow-up emails about the Exhibition, Rosy Runciman and Brad Rosenstein commented on *Star Quality*. Rosy mentioned, "It was certainly encouraging that there were people waiting to come in the moment that it opened to the public at 12 noon the next day." Rosy sent along the news that Hugues Cuenod - whose signed score for *Bitter Sweet* is on display together with his green carnation will be 107 on 26th June this year! Rosy and Brad were pleased that Marcelle Turner's granddaughter, **Jennifer Brownlow** (now a Bay Area resident), visited the exhibition, bringing with her a photo of Marcelle. She told of happy times listening to her grandmother speak of Coward in general, and *Bitter Sweet* in particular. (Marcelle Turner was one of the original cast members of *Bitter Sweet*, playing a Party Guest and other supporting roles. She also played Olive Frost in the original stage version of *Cavalcade*).

From its first showing at Ten Chimneys to the National

Theatre to the MPD, *Star Quality* has undergone substantial changes. Brad provided a few behind-the-scenes stories about artifacts in the current exhibition, which now includes 356 items. Brad told about the most surprising source for an exceptional object: the item in question looks like a small book with the title *Bitter Sweet*; when you twist one corner, you discover it is



Alan Brodie, Melissa Levinton, Rosy Runciman and Brad Rosenstein

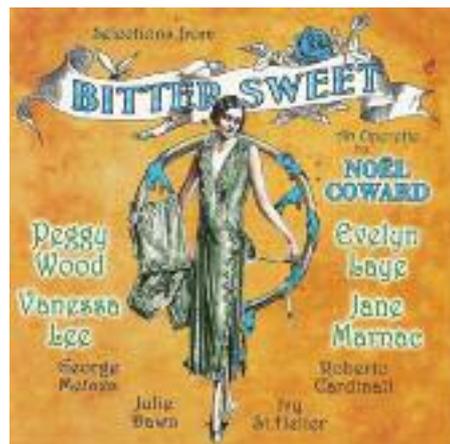
actually a flask — this was Coward's gift to the cast. Of the dozens that were presented in 1929, all but one have gone missing. Miraculously, Geoffrey Johnson recalled seeing just such a "book" in the Lunts' old townhouse in Manhattan, now the flat of the Artistic Director of Lincoln Center Theatre, André Bishop, who kindly loaned this treasure.

Several members of the Coward Society provided rarities for the Exhibition. In addition to numerous items on loan from the collection of Barry Day, *Star Quality* features the stunning Molyneux design for Gertrude Lawrence's gown for *Private Lives* (the Noël Coward Society); six test pressings made in Calcutta - including the first recordings of 'Uncle Harry' and 'Nina' (Alan Farley guided Norman Hackforth to donate these to the Performing Arts Library & Museum, now the MPD); and copies of rare photos of Coward from *Play Pictorial* (an English theatrical magazine published from 1902 - 1939) plus the original program from *The Vortex* (Ken Starrett).

Kathy Williams

STANDING UP FOR COWARD'S MUSIC?

It was good to read Rexton Bunnett's piece in the April Home Chat on *Bitter Sweet*. His point about the show's plot and timing links with Kern & Hammerstein's immediately preceding *Show Boat* was well made: it would have been inconceivable that both Coward and Cochran had not had that example well-rooted at least in their subconscious if not the very forefront of their minds, during the gestation of *Bitter Sweet*. I disagreed with Rexton on only one point, when he said that "most likely Coward would not have wanted to be compared with Hammerstein and Kern...". On the contrary, of all the great songwriters of the twentieth century Kern was the composer whose musical lyricism Coward most admired, and emulated. He said as much, in various well-documented sources, and implied it also in himself making three recordings of Kern songs (including his



own lyrically-reworked version of 'I'm Old Fashioned') between 1938 and 1943.

What Rexton modestly failed to tell us was that his piece had been written in the context of a splendid CD reissue on the Sepia label of selections from

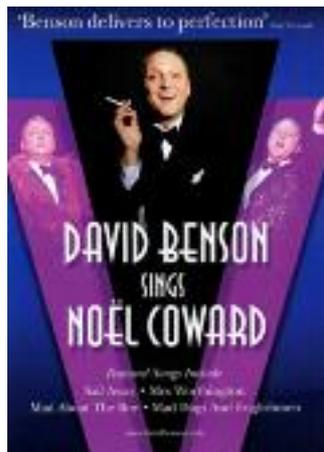
Bitter Sweet, for which he has written exemplary sleeve-notes and provided archives for an interesting cover design, of the libretto signed by Coward and all the cast of *Bitter Sweet*. [Sepia 1130]

The CD includes eleven numbers recorded in 1958 by the Rita Williams Singers and Michael Collins and his orchestra, with Vanessa Lee, Roberto Cardinali, Julie Dawn and John Hauxvell, and with orchestrations by Brian Fahey and Ray Terry. This was a "highlights from" recording and not the whole score, and it covers all the numbers you'd expect including beautiful lesser-known items such as 'The Call of Life' (Vanessa Lee, a very good operetta stylist), 'If You Could Only Come With Me' (Roberto Cardinali, frankly a much clearer and kinder voice than the original George Metaxa) and 'Tokay' (John Hauxvell). There is nothing over the top or which grates in any of the performances beyond a couple of over-fussy touches in the orchestrations, and overall this amounts to a very tasteful and stylish tribute to the lyricism of the music, without trying to reach great theatrical heights. Indeed, I did find their 'Ladies of the Town' rather too refined and relaxed to be very convincing.

But things get even more interesting: we then get seven tracks of 'Original Cast' recordings from 1929 and 1939, including Peggy Wood's incomparable 'Zigeuner', Evelyn Laye's almost as incomparable 'Zigeuner' and a fine orchestral selection conducted by Clifford Greenwood. Still not satisfied? Then how about four tracks from the French production of *Au Temps des Valses*? The sheer romanticism of Coward's music shines undimmed through the French lyrics by

Saint-Granier, particularly in the passionate ‘Ne Serait-Ce Pas L’Amour?’ (‘What Is Love?’). As far as it is known, these four tracks were the only ones issued, on French Columbia, of the original French cast, and this is certainly their first reissue since. The CD ends with Noël Coward singing ‘I’ll See You Again’ in the recording made in 1954 with Wally Stott and his orchestra, accompanied by Norman Hackforth, where the whole verse section of the song – the “duet” between teacher and pupil – becomes a vocal/piano duet. As it was Coward’s ‘theme song’, there could be no better tribute to the Coward/Hackforth partnership than this recording.

I often find myself comparing the intensity and impact of live versus recorded performance. Some things, and some people, work better in one medium or the other, and as you often get an “unsatisfactory” recording from a live performance, just as often one can hear “satisfactory” recorded performances whose live performance may have left something to be desired. That is the difference between a purely musical objectivity and a theatrical one. Getting both elements “satisfactory” at the same time is something few achieve. Sadly (I think), David Benson and Stewart Nicholls’ travelling Noël Coward show has not been recorded, because it’s likely they come closer than most to achieving this satisfactory balance.



I caught Benson & Nicholls at the King’s Lynn Arts Centre, where they played to a highly appreciative audience of less than 50 in an auditorium designed for 300. We knew we were in for a musical treat before they even started, with an unusual selection of rare Coward recordings playing before curtain, and what followed disappointed neither well-versed enthusiast nor neophyte. Benson “played” the audience brilliantly, perking us up to just the right level of comic comfort, but always placing the exploration of Coward’s specifically musical talent firmly at the centre of everything he did. There were some truly rare and neglected numbers from the scores of *Sail Away* and *The Girl Who Came To Supper* which few, even today, would even consider placing in a general Coward programme. I think it was Kenneth Tynan who described Coward in cabaret as “romping fastidiously”, and Benson’s performance was similarly enjoyable. Various pieces of headgear, and even three multicoloured feather boas, were pressed into action, but they became real character props rather than mere affectations, and never did his performance tip over into either the camp or the imitative. With “our own” Stewart Nicholls providing a very funny (and extremely knowledgeable) Donald-Swann-type accompaniment, this was the best evening of Coward Songs I think I’ve ever heard/seen. Implicitly and explicitly, they have done a pretty good plug for Coward the musician, and also the Society, in this show, and all I can say is, “roll on the recording, please, boys”.

Some 40 Members enjoyed a recent evening at Pizza-on-the-Park to see John Standing performing *Coward in Cabaret*. Remembering Coward as “a shiny man – everything about him shone”, Standing (who comes across rather like a smallish Donald Sinden) certainly did justice to the more parlando comedy numbers, particularly ‘There Are Bad Times Just Around the Corner’ which was delivered with delicious relish

of its miserable sentiments. Standing himself admits that he has no melodic voice, and it was brave of him to try to get away with ‘Someday I’ll Find You’. The CD that was privately produced to accompany this performance contains all thirteen numbers Standing performed, and is yet another example of being a rather better-balanced production, from a purely musical perspective, than was the live performance. Members interested in obtaining a copy of this rare CD should contact Standing’s agent Tom Wjeland on 0207 636 6565.

Dominic Vlasto

EVELYN LAYE

QUEEN OF MUSICAL COMEDY CD

A new double CD is devoted to the long career of one of Britain’s greatest Musical leading ladies. It contains 55 tracks, spanning 71 years, taking ‘Boo’ Laye from her first major hit as a 19-year-old Gaiety Girl to the last studio recordings she ever made, in 1991, at the age of 91.

It offers some significant additions to the Coward discography. Besides her commercial recordings from 1929 Broadway production of *Bitter Sweet*, ‘I’ll See You Again’ and ‘Zigeuner,’ it adds rare 1939 radio recordings of two numbers from *Bitter Sweet* that she never recorded, ‘The Call of Life’ and ‘Dear Little Café,’ as well as previously unreleased 1976 performances of, ‘Where Are The Songs We Sung’ and ‘Mrs. Worthington,’ closing with a moving chorale finale, also from 1976, of ‘I’ll See You Again.’ The liner notes are written by NCS member Michael Thornton, who knew Laye well for many years. *Evelyn Laye: Queen of Musical Comedy*, Avid Easy AMSC977, £6.99, including UK postage from:

01923 281 281 or www.avidgroup.co.uk *John Knowles*

A TALENT TO AMUSE

Members will recall that I compiled a CD of extracts from the 70th Birthday Celebration for Noël held at The Phoenix Theatre in 1969. The CD had 76 minutes from the 4-hour show where Noël’s works were performed as follows: The Boy Actor John Gielgud • Richard Attenborough introduces the show • Early Mourning - Irene Worth • Introduction - Robert Morley • I’ve Been To A Marvellous Party - Danny La Rue • A Room With a View - Cheryl Kennedy and David Kernan • Private Lives - Susannah York and Richard Briers • If Love Were All - Joyce Grenfell • I’ve Just Come Out From England - Celia Johnson • Matelot - Mark Wynter (with Harvey Hope on guitar) • London Pride - Stanley Holloway • You Were There - Susan Hampshire and Denis Quilley • Chase Me Charlie - Pat Kirkwood • Twentieth Century Blues - Elisabeth Welch • Why Do The Wrong People Travel - Maggie Fitzgibbon • Mary Make-Believe - Jessie Matthews • That is the End of the News - Avril Angers, Hy Hazell, Stella Moray, and June Whitfield • I’ll Follow My Secret Heart - Patricia Routledge • Nina - Cyril Ritchard • Time and Again - Anne Rogers and Jeremy Brett • Melanie’s Aria - June Bronhill • Mad About the Boy - Cleo Laine and John Dankworth • Thanks from Richard Attenborough and Sir Noël Coward. The Society hoped to be able to subsidise this CD (the artists/estates gave their permission for inclusion free of charge on this basis) but this has not proved to be possible so I am looking for sponsors to contribute towards a total of £1,200 to allow this recording to be released. A 1,000 copies of the recording would then be available for sale at a reasonable price to cover the balance of funds needed to produce and issue the CD. Contact John (see Page 12 for contact details) if you are able to help, discuss how to help or want further details.

John Knowles

LUCKY ORPHAN

Part 7 Farm to New York to Home?

Photographs of the Canby Farm

In the last episode of the story of the young Granville he was about to be dropped off by Colonel Breckenridge at the farm of Mr. & Mrs. Thomas Yellott Canby. The story continues. . . Mr. & Mrs. Thomas Yellott Canby and their son and daughter made me feel most welcome. I was shown to my room where I quickly changed into jeans and a multicoloured shirt. Tom, the son, was a little younger than I and he spent some time showing me around. It was a large mixed farm with animal and crops of all kinds; corn, apples, tomatoes, and wild grapes near the river. A special Jersey cow was kept to provide the family with milk, butter and very rich cream. I remember the farmhouse was substantially built, featuring a huge kitchen where the family spent a lot of their time.

Never before had I eaten so well; everything from the farm was served to the table. There was corn on the cob with fresh Jersey butter, chicken, bacon, eggs as well as fried simlin (a squash with a scalloped edge) which I relished. Mrs. Canby was delightful, making me cups of tea throughout the day believing that the English would not survive without gallons of it. The weather was always hot and whenever the family took a break they guzzled ice-cold Coke whilst I sipped hot tea. After a while, I convinced Mrs. Canby that I really did like Coke and that I could survive perfectly well without tea. During the day the heavy horse, Jack, earned his keep but in the evenings Tom and I would ride on his huge back. It was great fun.

I would help each day with the jobs in hand, either pulling corn or haymaking, or gathering tomatoes or other vegetables. The tomatoes grew along the ground and were the size of grapefruit. Tortoises were a menace to this crop and they had to be rounded up from time to time. Tom and I would collect wild grapes from vines near the river, taking them to the Washington market whenever Mr. Canby set up a stall. This too was fun and I really enjoyed selling the produce, especially to a regular customer who bought all our grapes, giving us some extra pocket money. In addition to providing my keep, Mr. Canby gave me a small allowance which was most generous considering how much I ate.

I was hoping the holiday would never end. Letters from my mother were forwarded from the Foundation but in none of them did she mention her campaign to get me home; it would have spoiled everything then, as it did when the news broke a few weeks later. The Canby's had relatives running the neighbouring farm where there were also young people. There was one great get-together - a barn dance and barbecue on a farm nearby. A pig was roasted and served with home-made bread, huge melons and popcorn. My 'date' was a friend of Toms. She spoke with a broad southern accent and was so much fun, I really enjoyed listening to her talk. She, too, was taken with my accent and she insisted that I read to her, pausing every now and then for a little kissing. It was all part of the party atmosphere. August 1942 was almost over, however and so was the holiday. I would have liked to stay on the farm forever as they were such a pleasant family, and Vertrees, the daughter, was so charming that I was sure I would miss chatting with her after each evening meal. I was to see her in England many years later.

The time came to leave the farm and return to New York, but first there was an overnight stay at the Vances, Mr Canby driving me to their home in Washington. Mr and Mrs. Vance were as hospitable as ever and so were the two sons whose names I cannot remember. They invited me to join them that evening at a party on a Potomac river boat, telling me that they had fixed me up with a date. They were in their twenties and I was just sixteen and a half, so I guess I was a little embarrassed. As the boat glided along the jazz band played; it was crowded and hot but most enjoyable. I had no idea about dancing and neither did my date, preferring to talk instead. She had just graduated from college and was hungry for more information about England and our education system, particularly the public schools. She had difficulty understanding the concept of the Actors' Orphanage being so isolated from the rest of the system. I could not answer many of her questions for she was so bright and I felt just like a cabbage. However,



the story continues with edited extracts from the memories of Granville Bantock who attended the Actor's Orphanage at Langley Hall and Silverlands and during its evacuation to America in World War II.



she was very polite, sticking with me all evening but when I could not answer her question about our parliamentary system she said, laughingly, that I had a great deal of learning to do. She was damn right - I knew more about her country than I did about my own. She even gave me a kiss as we parted.

The next day I was taken to the station and trust I thanked the Vances for the three times they had entertained me. It was early September by now, and upon returning to the Foundation I went straight to my dormitory to unpack. As I was doing so, a boy came in and told me Mr. Griffin wanted to see me immediately. Good God I thought he's found out about Jane and me in the back of his car, but the news was much worse. I reached his office in five minutes and he asked me to sit down. "Granville," he said, "your mother wants you back in England as soon as possible. I have received instructions from the Actors' Orphanage in London to book a passage for you immediately. Actually, I received the instruction a month ago - before you left for the farm, but I decided not to spoil your holiday." What a super guy, I thought.

I was awfully depressed at the prospect of another upheaval in my education and besides, what about Jane? It was the end, I realised, and Mr. Griffin, sensing my mood said that he could do nothing about the decision made in London but that it would probably be another month before a passage could be arranged. Meanwhile, I was to carry on at school. Jane was still on holiday, but it did not matter for the romance was doomed. Two weeks passed before I heard that passage had been booked with a Norwegian shipping line for the first week in October.

First I said goodbye to all my teachers at Christopher Columbus High, especially to my English teacher who was genuinely upset when she heard the news. I wrote to Dame May Witty and Margaret Webster thanking them for their sponsorship, and to the priests at Pelham Church, thanking them for their generosity. The older girls, now nearly eighteen, were all adult and had been given rooms of their own in another part of the Foundation. Maggie was upset; we had grown up together over the last ten years but I had taken her for granted a lot of the time. Why hadn't I loved her? She was such a nice girl. I said goodbye to Jenny and all the others whereupon Jane cried. I was so very unhappy and depressed and at the same time furious at having been evacuated in the first place. With my cases in the trunk of Mr. Griffin's car we set off for the docks.

It turned out my mother had, on the day of my brother's funeral approached Uncle Granville for help in getting me home from America. He persuaded her to let me stay, but a short while later she nevertheless wrote to Noël Coward requesting my return home. The Actors' Orphanage committee dealt with the letter and used all means possible to persuade her to let me stay in America, pointing out the considerable risk of an Atlantic crossing. She was adamant, however, insisting that I return at once, no matter what the risk. Mr. Griffin was cabled accordingly.

We drove straight to the Norwegian Line shipping office and booked in; there were just two other passengers. My cases unloaded, I made a fond farewell to Mr. Griffin. I had liked him enormously. He handed me two envelopes, one very large and marked 'Strictly Confidential' addressed to the secretary of the orphanage, and the other smaller one was addressed to me. It was from Maggie. Mr. Griffin drove away and I was alone except for the other two passengers. They were a middle-aged couple but I was not to see much of them, neither did I find out their reason for travelling. The baggage was taken away and we followed a ship's officer who started to walk up a gangway. I thought we were boarding the tug that was to take us out to the liner, but not so. This was the *MV Thorstrand*, 1700 tons, which was to take us to Liverpool. I was shaken; I would have thought twice before crossing from Portsmouth to the Isle of Wight on this boat. The *Empress of Australia*, on the other hand was 23,000 tons and even she rolled about a lot. What, then, would the ocean do to this tiny tot? I was soon to find out!

More in the next edition . . .

An Old Man's Vortex

A review of Nikolai Foster's *A Song at Twilight*,

(at the Theatre Royal, Windsor and on UK tour) - by Sam Brewer

Anyone looking for one last *Hay Fever* or *Private Lives* would have been disappointed. This is no comedy but a tragedy. It is, in fact, a return to the style of *The Vortex* – but where that play, first performed in 1924, was a tragedy about the young, this one, written over forty years later, is about the old (hardly surprising given that Coward was, in 1966, in the twilight of his career).

It is the story of the exposure of successful and famous author Sir Hugo Latymer's homosexuality, after a career built on an outward appearance of 'normality.' His secret is revealed by the Blanche DuBois-like figure of Carlotta Gray, a former lover, clearly damaged forever by his treatment of her, and returning for some sort of vengeance.

Sir Hugo – based (it is often suggested) at least partly on the life of Somerset Maugham, and also to some extent, on Coward himself – is played solidly by an angry Peter Egan. He is bullying at first and if he is broken at the last, we feel no sympathy. He is a man whose hypocrisy has been paid for by others. And the highest price has been paid by Belinda Lang's



Carlotta Gray, who injects the role with a powerful shot of pathos. Like Blanche DuBois, her motives for her actions aren't whiter than white – but, equally like her, she is a true victim.

The duo of Egan and Lang, whose mesmerising sparring during and after dinner in a Swiss hotel suite (recreated well by Matthew Wright) provides the bulk of the action, are supported by Daniel Bayle's possibly bisexual waiter and Kerry Peers' German wife of Sir Hugo. The former is fine; the latter suffers from a slightly suspect accent and a somewhat superfluous part. The drama is between Hugo and Carlotta – it's a shame that someone tries to steal the show. The fault is probably more Coward's than hers.

Nevertheless, this play remains an essential part of the Coward canon, and its revival is important. It is a work which shows that he could – still – do the sort of tragedy we now associate with Tennessee Williams. That he could also do comedy as well as could Wilde shows his brilliance. Not for nothing was he called 'The Master.'

Sam Brewer

Hay Chill

A review of Chichester Festival Theatre's *Hay Fever* by John Knowles

It always seems such a cheap shot to decry a well-loved play when so much work and energy - and hopefully thought has gone into a production - but to hail the recent revival of *Hay Fever* as having been graced with thought would be in a sense to insult the author. To be positive the parts of Sorel and Simon were accomplished and at times quite vibrant. The innocent visitors Myra, Sandy and Richard were well-played. But the image that refuses to leave the mind is of Natalie Walter as Jackie, clearly following a directorial decision, as a sort of 'stop/go' store mannequin that dominated the front of the stage. A strange 'mime play' that robbed all attention away from the text. At first the audience loved it, and then, like many 'bits of business' that seem such a good idea at the time, it palled and became an obstacle to enjoying and understanding the comedy. Annoyingly it's the single image I took away as there was so little else that impinged on the mind.

On occasion cast members worked strangely hard to get a laugh from a feedline and left the punchline to dribble to the floor - not so much thrown away as binned! Why is it that some actors and directors fear letting the author do the work - especially when he is Coward!

Like so many there, I was looking forward to seeing Diana Rigg in the leading part - surely here was someone who would understand the role as the theatrical dame of a household that fails to distinguish theatricality from reality - and doesn't want to! Where the theatrical games start to dominate and disturb the guests and end in the manic out-playing of past theatrical glories - a Blissful world where self-absorption excludes all else and places the visitors squarely in the auditorium that the outer edges of their entrance hall has become!

The reality here was a vision of Judith Bliss as an upper-class bag-lady with green wellingtons and a trug, bent over and struggling to make any presence felt anywhere - replace the trug with a supermarket trolley and the picture would have been complete!

The part of the maid Clara - usually a good example of Noël's penchant for comedy working-class figures in minor roles (Albert and Myrtle in *Still Life/Brief Encounter* and Saunders in *Fallen Angels*) but in this case she could not carry out much in the way of a curative comedy role. The part of David Bliss is always a thankless one and Simon Williams did his best in a sort of tired and resigned way which in a sense sums up my feelings about the whole production.

In the past I was not totally convinced by Dame Judi Dench's stab at the role of Judith in the 2006 Peter Hall / Haymarket revival of the play - but she shone compared to this attempt at it. The best thing about the show for me was the quality of the published programme with one of the best pieces on Noël that I have read in any theatre programme. Al Senter, a freelance theatre journalist and interviewer (who also has a piece in the programme for the touring Kneehigh production of *Brief Encounter*) is an amazing writer - I have stolen whole chunks of it for future talks on Coward!

Cast: Sorrel Bliss: Laura Rogers; Simon Bliss: Sam Alexander; Clara: Sue Wallace; Judith Bliss: Diana Rigg; David Bliss: Simon Williams; Sandy Tyrell: Edward Bennett; Myra Arundal: Caroline Langrishe; Richard Greatham: Guy Henry; Jackie Coryton: Natalie Walter. The Director was Nikolai Foster; Designer: Robert Jones.

John Knowles

"THE CONCERT VERSION"

Barry Day has adapted four of Noël's musicals - *After The Ball*, *Pacific 1860*, *Conversation Piece* and, most recently, *Bitter Sweet* as 'concert versions.'

Here he reflects on some of the considerations involved.

Very few musicals of the so-called 'golden age' - the 1920s to the 1950s - are ever likely to be revived as they were originally staged. Multiple scene changes, large orchestra, lavish costumes and props (let alone relevant subject matter) and huge casts add up to huge costs. This applies to ALL musicals - not just Noël's - and has had harmful effects on the history of the genre.

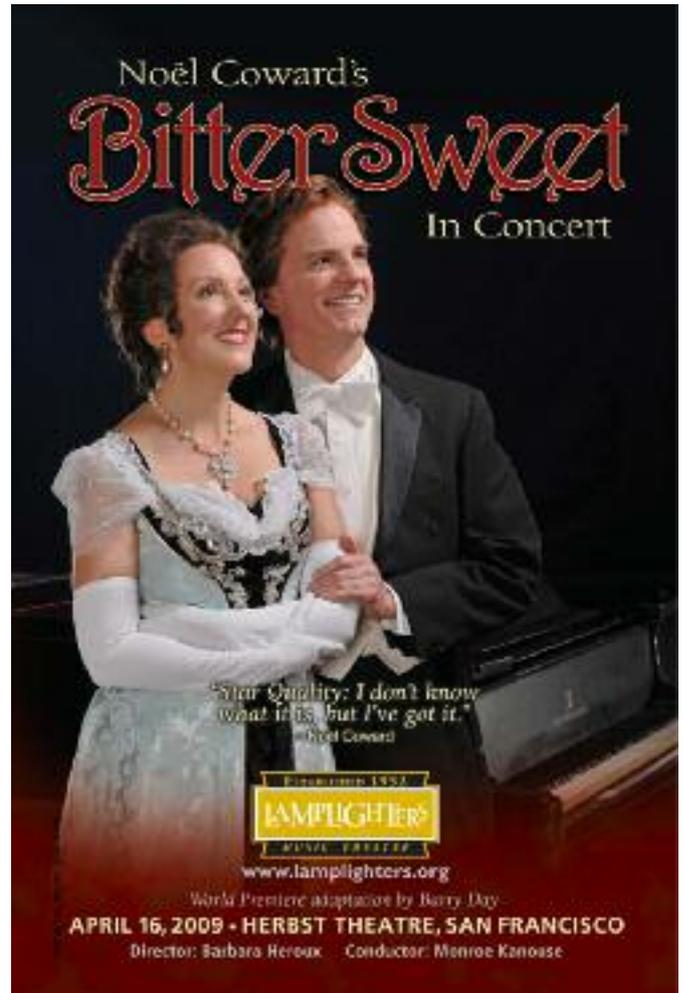
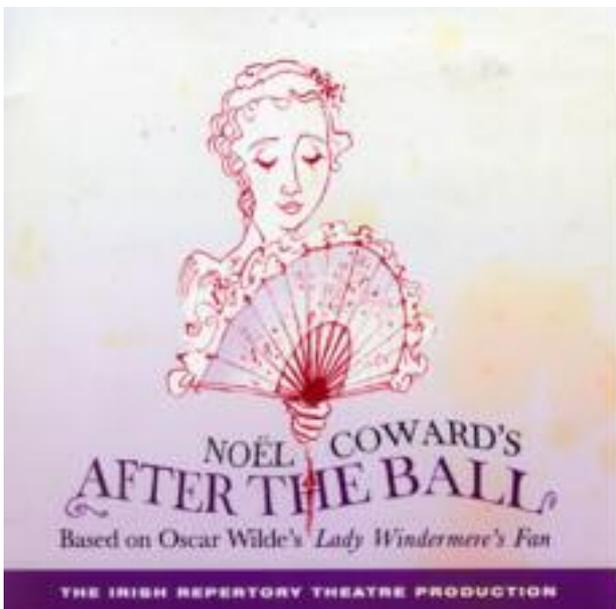
In one management take-over in the not-so-distant past a so-called archivist was sent in to evaluate the library of material that came with the acquisition. In his wisdom he decided that 70% of the scores and libretti would never be needed again and were taking up too much space - so he junked them, robbing even scholars, let alone possible future audiences, of the opportunity to visit that past.

So - presuming your own past is reasonably intact - as is the case with Noël - how do you proceed?

First you assume that the 'concert' version at its simplest level may be just that - a group of people in civilian dress with chairs on a bare stage, reading from 'book' and with simple musical accompaniment - often a single piano. Whatever else may be used to supplement that bare bones staging is up to the ingenuity and resources of the group.

Second - you look to see what secondary characters you can kill.

In the classical full-blown musical it was considered obligatory to fill the stage. A cast of fifty was not unknown and three acts were commonplace. Bolton & Wodehouse & Kern were regarded as theatrical revolutionaries when they staged their Princess Theatre musicals in the late teens and early twenties. Two acts. Two settings. Modern costumes. A small orchestra. If the show was good enough - and most of theirs were - the audience didn't miss the spectacle which, all too often, was a decoy to prevent you noticing that the show was a little thin on content!



There was another upside to the downsizing. You could actually HEAR the songs. Too often loud playing and complex over-orchestration had drowned them out.

Particularly vulnerable were the lyrics. It's not accidental that so much opera relies on relatively few words, often endlessly repeated. Opera singers sing the sound before the sense.

In *After The Ball* a piece with operatic overtones of its own - (Noël - coming from a 'song' background) had written lyrics which became submerged in the surrounding sound. It was only when that sound was simplified by an accompanying piano that the cleverness and complexity of the Coward words became apparent. And this turned out to be true of the other shows.

"Speak the speech," as Hamlet advised the Players. "Sing the words," might be equivalent advice.

Then - what makes an Ensemble an ensemble? Clearly, a cast of thousands - or even hundreds - is out of the question, so how few can you manage with and still create the effect?

The answer lies in 'doubling,' 'trebling' or even 'quadrupling.' Audiences will happily accept seeing the same performer appearing several times in different roles. So, when Mr. Stirling, the severe family head in *Pacific 1860*, turns up as Madame Salvador's manager, the audience has the comfortable feeling that it's in on the joke.

In *Bitter Sweet*, for instance, Noël indulged himself in matching male and female sextets. In adapting it, I found I could manage with FOUR of each. (To my great surprise and pleasure I found that the recent San Francisco production could actually manage the original six!) Having said that, you would see this particular four as (a) Sari's young girl friends in Act 1, Ladies of the Town in Act 2 and the same girl friends as middle-aged women in Act 3. The men were in turn dance escorts to the girls, footmen, waiters, soldiers and 'Green Carnations.'

Bitter Sweet was an exception in that it dictated three acts, when normally one finds a way to keep it to two. (Modern audiences are generally not comfortable with two intermissions). Even so, a structural change was indicated. The original opening scene has an aged Sari advising a young couple to follow her example and be guided by true love. The problem for a concert version is that in the very next scene we find her as the young Sarah.

The solution (I felt) was to eliminate that first scene altogether and start with the young girl wondering how you know what love is and when you're in love. By moving a song she sings later ('What is Love?') to the beginning, you state the show's theme up front and then the story progresses chronologically.

One other small - but I felt, important - touch.

At the end of Act 3 Sari - after singing 'Zigeuner' to the assembled guests - reprises the song that defines her and her

love for Carl, 'I'll See You Again.' It tells of love that continues beyond life itself, so, instead of simply singing it to a captive audience, why not at the climax have Carl re-appear - unseen by everyone but Sari - to end it as a duet? Judging by the furtive eye-wiping around me - nothing.

And then there's the Narrator.

No set. No costumes. Where are we? Much of the expository dialogue cut. Who are these people? What am I supposed to be feeling?

The Narrator takes away the burden and allows for that "willing suspension of disbelief" so essential to any theatre. He's your guide, pointing out where we are, telescoping time by telling you what's happened between scenes and who's who. He can either be the objective *deus ex machina* - as he is in *Bitter Sweet* - or a character who steps out of his or her role to perform the function and then slips back into character to continue the play.

In *After The Ball* I had the Duchess/Narrator deliver her narration in rhymed couplets, which seemed to add a dimension over and above simple prose narration. But that was a particular circumstance - not a rule to be followed slavishly.

In this field the rule is that there are no rules. "Horses," as they used to say, "for courses." To bring these neglected works back to life - and modern audiences - take a tip from Cole Porter and, as long as it works - "Anything goes!"

Barry Day

Charles Russell

Coward's Manager and West End Broadway Impresario, Dies at 93

Charles Russell, the West End impresario and theatrical costumier, who was the last surviving member of the intimate circle of Sir Noël Coward, died from emphysema on April 15 at the Westerleigh Nursing Home in Seaford, East Sussex. He was 93.

Russell who first met Coward in 1942 when he played a small role as one of the sailors in the film *In Which We Serve*, became Coward's wartime stage manager before embarking on a successful career as a West End impresario.

As Coward's New York business manager in the 1950s and 1960s, he played a significant role in the post-war revival of the playwright's fortunes, securing large financial contracts that transformed Coward's £19,000 overdraft into a substantial bank balance.

He is particularly well-remembered for his flamboyant and spectacular staging of the annual all-star galas at the London Palladium. *The Night of 100 Stars*, at which legendary international names like Judy Garland, Tyrone Power, Marlene Dietrich, Burt Lancaster, Gloria Swanson, Laurence Olivier and Merle Oberon took part.

Born Christopher Robert Rowsell on January 12, 1916, at St. Bartholomew's Hospital, London, he was the son of William James Rowsell, an impoverished army private and restaurant cook, and his wife, Emily Jane Boustead. The family lived in penurious circumstances in the Guinness Trust Building in Lever street, Clerkenwell, in London's East End.

Russell was a 25-year-old able seaman in the Royal Navy when he read that Noël Coward was writing and starring in a film inspired by the sinking of HMS Kelly in 1941. Sending



Coward a photograph of himself in uniform - "in case you would like to see what a real sailor looks like" - he found himself summoned to Denham Studios and given the role of Fisher, one of the sailors who ended up in the sea with Coward, John Mills and Richard Attenborough after their destroyer had been sunk, in *In Which We Serve*.

Changing his name to Charles Russell, he accepted the part, and immediately played another sailor in a second wartime propaganda film, *Ships with Wings*, starring John Clements, Jane Baxter and Ann Todd.

In 1942, Coward offered Russell work as an assistant stage manager and understudy in his national tour *Play Parade*, comprising *Present Laughter* and *This Happy Breed*. It was in this production that Russell met Lance Hamilton, a 31-year-old Yorkshireman from Harrogate, five years his senior, who was to become his partner in both a business and personal sense for the next 48 years.

Russell and Hamilton continued to stage manage for Coward in the West End, and also for Broadway's leading husband and wife acting team, Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne. Russell branched out as a theatrical costumier, opening a highly successful business, Charles Russell Ltd, at 17 Greek street, Soho, which provided the stage costumes for Coward's 1945 West End revue, *Sigh No More*.

In September 1948, Russell and Hamilton launched themselves into theatrical management, persuading Coward to allow them to revive his 1925 comedy, *Fallen Angels*, as a vehicle for the West End's two leading revue protagonists, Hermione Gingold and Hermione Baddeley. The two Hermiones camped up their performances outrageously in a furious battle for laughs, and Coward, on seeing it, wrote: "I have never yet in my experience seen a more vulgar, silly, unfunny, disgraceful performance."

The public disagreed with him. When the revival opened in the West End, it became a smash-hit, playing to capacity for nine months. Coward noted in his diary: " *Fallen Angels* a terrific success. Livid."

Charles and Ham, as Russell and Hamilton became known in "The Master's" circle, went on to present Coward and Mary Martin in cabaret at the Café de Paris in 1952, followed by their revival of Coward's comedy, *Blithe Spirit*, in 1954, starring Dennis Price, Kay Kendall and Irene Handl.

When Coward whose theatrical fortunes were in decline in the post-war years, discovered that he was overdrawn by £19,000, Russell became his New York business manager in 1955, negotiating with Bill Paley, the head of CBS, a contract for three television appearances worth \$450,000, transforming Coward's overdraft into a substantial bank balance. Coward's appearance on Ed Murrow's celebrated *Person to Person* TV show was filmed in Russell's and Hamilton's apartment on New York's East 54th Street, because it was considerably bigger than Coward's own apartment.

Starting in 1954, Russell staged, for over ten years, the annual *Night of 100 Stars* midnight matinée at the London palladium, in aid of the Actors' Orphanage, of which Coward was president. These spectacular occasions featured almost every major name in international show business, from the theatrical knights, Olivier, Gielgud and Redgrave, to Zsa Zsa Gabor and Cliff Richard, raising substantial sums of money in the process.

By 1961, however, Russell's close relationship with Coward had reached a high point of strain, with Coward noting in his diary that Russell: "has taken to having hysterical scenes . . . I think he has developed a sort of folie de grandeur and

sees himself as a great impresario." Russell, on his part, took exception to Coward's suggestions that he might be suffering from cancer or was going deaf.

Coward's secretary, Cole Lesley, wrote: "After twenty years of devotion, Charles and Ham's association with Noël, as part of the 'family' and as business associates, was terminated (in April 1962). Charles was ambitious and rightly so, for he seemed to possess every qualification for success. One can only assume that it was his relationship with Noël that was at the heart of the matter. A love-hate relationship on his side seemed to have developed . . . None of us could ever explain exactly what happened, and I certainly cannot explain it now. Nor do I wish to, it was too painful; they had for so long played such a large and happy part in our lives."

In 1963, Russell sued Coward for breach of contract. The case was eventually settled out of court. The last of the *Night of 100 Stars* galas was staged at the London Palladium in 1964 without Coward among those appearing. The feud was never entirely mended, although in 1970, Coward invited Russell and Hamilton to a screening of *In Which We Serve* at the National Film Theatre as part of his 70th birthday celebrations.

Russell went on to amass a considerable fortune in property development, with homes in West Eaton Place, Belgravia and in Marine Parade on Brighton seafront. Lance Hamilton died in a Newhaven hospital on January 26, 1990, at the age of 78, from arteriosclerosis and Parkinson's Disease.

In 1994, Charles Russell made his last appearance at a major show business occasion when he sat with other leading entertainment figures on-stage at the *This Is Your Life* television tribute to Pat Kirkwood, an actress of whom he was particularly fond, and who had starred in Coward's musical, *Ace of Clubs*.

Russell's last home was a large house, Los Monteros, overlooking the sea at Peacehaven, but two years ago, ill-health forced him to move into the Westerleigh Nursing Home in Seaford, where he was registered under his real name, Christopher Rowsell. His funeral took place at the Downs Crematorium, Brighton on April 21.

Michael Thornton

e-news from the West Coast

A welcome innovation, largely for the interest of US Coward fans, has been the introduction of a free webpage-style newsletter (see right) from Kathy Williams, on Coward events and productions on the West Coast of America. This e-news package contains a lot of detailed information and is sent out as an email by Kathy to any member - worldwide - who is interested in receiving it. If you would like to get a regular copy then please email Kathy at: kathywilliams@noelcoward.net

Meanwhile...

On the Internet front; the Society's website is in process of a total refurbishment with a new look designed to fit letterbox-sized desk and laptop computer screens with reduced scrolling - so that information and news can be seen on a single screen. The site now has a guestbook for member comment on Coward events, productions and the website itself and contains links to a developing archive of resources on Coward - and to other sites that are members of the 'Coward family.' There are links to podcasts and worldwide resources that may be of interest to members.

John Knowles

Coward on the Coast: eNewsletter May 30, 2009

The Noël Coward Society

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Produced in 1936, *Easy Virtue*, the New Production opening of *Easy Virtue*, directed by Stephen Elliott; accompanied from an interview with Stephen; and more on Steve Royle's terrific performance at the MFD.

Closing soon: THE IS THE LAST WEEKEND FOR *ANYONE LIVE! AT LA QUINCY PLAYHOUSE.*

Easy Virtue: (the film)
 Directed by Stephen Elliott

WHAT'S ON?

Details of some recent and future productions and events see www.noelcoward.net and www.noelcoward.com for more...

The Society's 10th Anniversary 'Relative Values'

Sunday 5th July, 2009

Champagne Gala Reception, at 4.30 p.m.

GUEST OF HONOUR: Miss Penelope Keith

6.p.m. Performance of 'Relative Values'

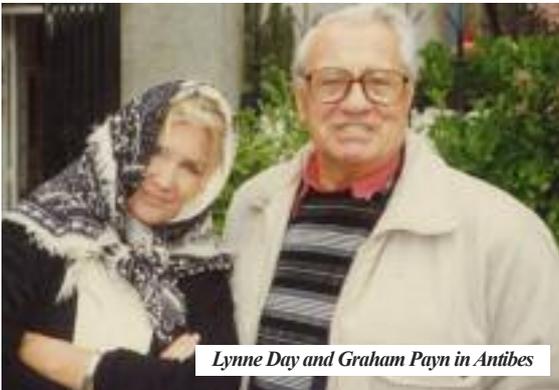
On Sunday 5th July the Society is joining forces with the Teddington Theatre Club (TTC) to mark their 10th anniversary at the Hampton Hill Playhouse and our own 10th anniversary, for a Champagne Reception in the Noël Coward Suite and a performance of 'Relative Values' in the main auditorium at the Hampton Hill Playhouse. During the Reception, we shall present Miss Keith with her official Scroll, marking her Vice Presidency of the Society.

At the time of going to press, forty-eight members have already booked and paid for their tickets for this event. There are a few places left for members of the Society to join us, so if you would like to be included, please contact me as quickly as possible.

Barbara Longford

Tel: 020 7603 7399 or e-mail barbaralongford@noelcoward.net

PHOTOGRAPHS FROM THE POSTBAG



Lynne Day and Graham Payn in Antibes

Photographs with a Coward connection are always welcomed from members and others who wish to send them in.

The first on the left was taken at Antibes and shows Noël Coward's late partner Graham Payn whose inspiration and support lay behind the formation of the Noël Coward Society. The photograph taken by Barry Day shows Graham with Barry's wife Lynne.

Members will recall the kind donation of the Molyneux sketch of Amanda's dress for *Private Lives*, worn of course by the inimitable Gertrude Lawrence. It is featured here on loan to the *Star Quality: The World of Noël Coward* exhibition in San Francisco at the Museum of Performance and Design. The sketch was generously donated to the Society by NCS member Douglas Gordon. The Society is pleased to be able to contribute to this celebration of Coward and his work. (Photo courtesy of Rosy Runciman).



Molyneux sketch from the NCS archive in Star Quality Exhibition

Lastly... taken at the National Arts Club in New York when NCS member Elizabeth Sharland presented her anthology *Love from Shakespeare to Coward* to guests including NCS Vice President, Tammy Grimes. Elizabeth Sharland with Arlene Sterne (mother of the singer Anna Bergman), Joseph Sirola, and Leslie Shreve who were also guests at the event. **Please send photographs by post to John Knowles or as 200 to 300 dpi scans to johnhunterknowles@mac.com**



The National Arts Club

THE NOËL COWARD SOCIETY WELCOMES NEW MEMBERS!

If you would like to join the Society please contact:

Stephen Duckham: stephenduckham50@btinternet.com Tel: 02476 229502

In North America contact Ken Starrett: cowardusa@nyc.rr.com Tel: 00 1 212 877 4259

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