

03 to 06 March 2010

Doors open at 7pm

Network Theatre, 246A Lower Road, London, SE1 8SF

Tickets £10 available on

www.networktheatre.org

Network
Theatre
Company

Message from the Chairman

Good evening ladies and gentlemen and thank you for coming tonight.

Welcome to the Network Theatre Company's production of Fred and Madge by Joe Orton. Nicci Marsh, previously seen on our stage, makes her début as director of this production.

Due to work commitments Nicci has handed over the directorial reins to Jess Farley, also making this her first with Network Theatre.

We thank them and wish them both every success with the show.

We also welcome new members to the Company - actors Moira Cane and Alastair Calcutt and Sue Walker as Stage Manager.

No doubt you will also recognise some of our more regular members on and off stage. We wish them all a great run.

With our 70th anniversary celebrations now behind us, we are embarking on an interesting and varied choice of plays for 2010.

Please pick up a leaflet about our forthcoming productions and make a note of the dates in you diary.

You can of course find us on our website - www.networktheatre.org

Back to tonight: thank you all for continuing to support the Network Theatre Company.

Do enjoy the evening, and don't forget our Green Room bar which will be open before curtain up, at interval time, and after the show

Kay Murray

Chairman

Network Theatre Company

March 2010

Fred & Madge

*Fred pushes boulders uphill. Madge sieves water into a bathtub.
Fred and Madge are ordinary.
A middle-aged couple with monotonous lives and Sisyphean jobs.
Bored of each other, they would love a little more excitement...
That is exactly what they will get.*

Fred and Madge presents the beginning of the themes that would come to define Joe Orton's later work - rude jokes, lots of innuendo and a keen eye for the fine fabric that divides reality and fantasy.

The play flits and jumps from subject to subject and you are urged to buckle up and let the absurdity of the text take you with it.

Working with the folks at Network Theatre for the first time has been an absolute pleasure and one would be hard pressed to find a more game, enthusiastic and talented bunch of players.

Thanks so much for the opportunity and I hope you enjoy the show!

Jessica Farley
Director

Production credits

| | |
|------------------------------|----------------|
| Director | Jessica Farley |
| Stage Manager | Sue Walker |
| Sound Manager | Darren Beukes |
| Lighting Designer & operator | Dan Young |
| Costumes | Kay Murray |
| Front Of House Manager | Hannah Few |

Special thanks

A show like this could never succeed without the support of family and friends, so thank you all for lending us your loved ones over the last couple of months.

The cast and crew of Fred and Madge would also like to thank **Nicola Marsh** for her help with casting and initial preparation, **Gary Cross** for his help with the set and **Flint Hire & Supply** for the use of their workshop space.

FRED AND MADGE - a personal view by Terry Wynne

With acknowledgement to F Coppa's "Introduction to Fred & Madge" published by Nick Hern Books London 1998

The Background

Joe Orton wrote this, his first full length play, in 1959 at the age of 26. However it was not performed in his life time and was only published for the first time 12 years ago. Orton's first play performed: 'Entertaining Mr Sloane' was produced in 1964 and Orton, in order to cultivate the image of being an overnight success, suppressed his previous less successful works. He left Leicester and his working class family for London in 1951 to attend RADA. This is where he met Kenneth Halliwell, 7 years his senior and of private means, who was to become his mentor, lover, and tragically in 1967, his murderer.

The late fifties were an exciting time for British theatre, the revolution having been started in 1956 with John Osborne's play : 'Look Back in Anger' which portrayed perhaps for the first time more gritty realistic heroes than had been the norm in the earlier part of the 20th century. The term 'kitchen-sink' drama is applied to these types of plays - reflecting the fact that the dramatist left nothing out and that everyday predominantly working class scenes were depicted. The protagonists of this 'social realism' quickly attracted the description: 'angry young men' for their outspoken critique of the status quo.

The Plot

In this play Orton mixes the anger of the kitchen sink anti-heroes with the theatre of the absurd.

Fred and Madge are a middle-aged couple who are trying to break out of the dehumanising routines of working class life. Fred's job is to push boulders up-hill and Madge's is to sieve water all day long. Despite the obvious absurdity of their tasks, both Fred and Madge seem proud of their good honest work and the dialogue is littered with self satisfied phrases: 'work is recognised as a virtue' the need for 'security' and being 'a useful member of society' - sentiments that would not be out of place in a respectable bourgeois household today.

Orton is suggesting that the exploitation (as he sees it) of the working class is greatly aided by this kind of thinking in proverbs and clichés - the limitations of the characters lives are reflected in their limited speech. Madge's colleague Gladys' concern for being put on shorter hours reflects the perceived insecurity of working class life - before trade unions took quite such a hold! The near adoration for the Queen and royal family shown early in Act 1 'she works hard, poor thing, I'm sure she over does it' would have been perhaps more real in the fifties than today.

The absurd theme of the story is enhanced by the evidence that the characters seem to know they are on stage: one of Fred's menial tasks is to move the play's scenery. Soon Fred becomes increasingly dissatisfied with his lot and at the end of the first act decides to leave both Madge and his job. This release shifts the action from the kitchen sink to the fantastical with the second and third scenes

Madge's sister Queenie marries an Indian and encourages all the women to enter his harem. Fred and Madge meet at hospital after both having had accidents during their second weddings. Madge reschedules hers and invites two professional insulters to attack the guests. Wedding presents including an Oedipus complex and an old wife's tail are received. Fred organises an expedition to destroy British architecture by laughing at it and is surprisingly successful. As England disintegrates the group emigrates to India - or at least a fantasy exotic land of throne rooms and golden platters.

In the final lines Orton explains the philosophy of the play by having one of the insulters assert the importance of: 'the improbable the incredible and the contrary to reason'

This journey from domestic routine to fantasy mirrors Orton's own escape from Leicester to literature and had the play been performed when written (it remained unpublished until 1998), would have made a significant impact on contemporary audiences who were just getting to grips with the plays of Harold Pinter. No doubt today's audience, well schooled, for example, in the eccentricities of Gavin and Stacey will take it in their stride.

Company biographies



Fred - Michael Mayne

Michael has been at Network for four years playing a variety of parts, from a boy in "Blue Remembered Hills" to Shylock in "The Merchant Of Venice".

He directed "Cold Comfort Farm", "The Kitchen" and "You're a Good Man Charlie Brown", as well as "Not about Heroes" and "Lysistrata" which he took to Edinburgh and Prague respectively.



Madge - Christina Houghton

This will be Christina's third production working with Network, since starring as Lady Chiltern in "An Ideal Husband" and Miss Cassini in "Happy Chuffing Christmas". Christina is delighted to have this opportunity to broaden her acting experience in the complex role of Madge.

**Queenie - Jennie Rich**

This is Jennie's 10th production with Network. Previous roles include Moretta in "The Rover", and Starveling in "A Midsummer Night's Dream". Jennie was also Stratylus in Network Theatre's production of "Lysistrata" which was taken to the Prague Theatre Festival.

**Gladys - Moira Cane**

Moira last came in contact with the stage (or touched the stage) when directing primary school children in East London over 25 years ago. Now that the last of her own 3 children have left home she is delighted to have time to explore the theatre again (this time with adults.)

This is her début performance so do please be gentle with her!

**Webber - Barry Clarke**

Barry became a member of NTC in 2005. "Fred & Madge" is his 10th production here. Elsewhere he has appeared on stage in "Facades" (Lion's Mane/ Stage Theatre Co.), "Dick Lothario Goes Tits Up!" (Class Theatre Co.), "Julius Caesar" (Deborah Warner/BITE) and "Breaking the Code" (Village Players, Chicago IL) amongst others. He has also appeared in TV and film.

**Dr Petrie - Nigel Williams**

Nigel has appeared in many Network productions as well as directing "A Family Affair", "The Deep Blue Sea", "Two Planks and a Passion" amongst others. Other work includes the revues "Funny Money" (Lyric and Savoy), "The Beggars Opera" (Poor Man Productions) and "A Karaoke Wedding" (Union Theatre).

**Miss Oldbourne - Sharan Hunjan**

Sharan began treading the boards for the first time in 2003 purely by chance and since then has played a range of characters. She was a supporting artiste in a couple of big budget Bollywood films.

She was involved in the Network Theatre's 70th Gala celebrations, and recently appeared in "A Christmas Carol" at Southwark Playhouse.

**Old Man - Paul D'Orley**

Paul has been a member of Network Theatre since 1996 and in that time has been involved in all aspects of amateur theatre. Previous roles include: being a ghost in "Humble Boy", a prisoner in "Three Musketeers" and a Hamster in a EuroStar Pantomime. He has also gained some experience in tea making and sound effects over the past 14 years!

**Sykes - Alastair Callcutt**

This is Alastair's first appearance with the Network Theatre Company. Roles for other societies have included Moon "The Real Inspector Hound", Sonders "On the Razzle", Colonel Pickering "Pygmalion", Dr Gortler "I have Been Here Before" and Bowers in "Terra Nova". He has directed productions of "Hay Fever", "The Importance of Being Earnest" and "Blithe Spirit".

**Small Part Player - Lesley Winterflood**

This is Lesley's second outing on the Network stage. She made her début in December playing Athena in "Happy Chuffing Christmas". She has previously appeared in a number of pantomimes and musicals including "Grease and Cabaret". She's delighted to be treading the boards once again in the Winterflood's spiritual home of Waterloo!



Jessica Farley currently runs the Thisisit! Theatre Company with her co-partner Nicola Marsh where she writes and directs new works. "Fred and Madge" is Jessica's first play directing for Network Theatre.

The Arch 200 Club

Over 70 years ago, Southern Railways founded a theatre group at Waterloo.

The spirit of amateur theatre has survived through changes of name and nationalisation and is now struggling with the costs that came with privatisation. Please help us to continue to entertain you by becoming a member of the Arch 200 Club.

The Club exists to help the continued existence of the Network Theatre as a building in the face of ever increasing overheads. Membership subscriptions fund projects that are for the general good of the theatre, not productions themselves. Membership costs a minimum of £5 a month. Every month three membership numbers are drawn and half that month's subscriptions paid out in prizes.

There is so much more that needs to be done. The staging needs replacing and some parts of the theatre that the audience do not see are in desperate need of refurbishment. If there is a large enough membership it might even be possible to shorten the wait for the gentlemen's toilet.

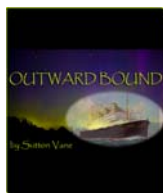
More details are available from Nigel Williams at arch200@networktheatre.org

Coming up



Time For Love by Rosie de Vekey

Right time, wrong man? Right man, wrong time?
Dating gets a lot more complicated when you have a time machine!
New writing - a light-hearted comedy making its début at Network Theatre. Directed by Rosie de Vekey
Performances: 21 to 24 April



Outward Bound by Sutton Vane

An ocean liner, a foggy twilight and passengers unaware of their "final" destinations...
This surrealist drama is full of tension and hidden truths.
Directed by Robin Lansman.
Reading: 22 June | **Auditions:** 6 & 8 July | **Performances:** 22 to 25 Sept

For more information about Network Theatre Company, upcoming readings, auditions and performances visit www.networktheatre.org



More than 70 years of drama

Network Theatre
246A Lower Road, London SE1 8SF
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