

**SOUTHPORT DRAMATIC CLUB PRODUCTION**

**THE RISE AND FALL OF**

**LITTLE  
VOICE**

*Winner of Evening Standard & Olivier Best Comedy Award 1992/3*

**By Jim Cartwright**  
directed by Robin Hirsch

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**18th - 26th February 2011**  
**7.45pm**

  
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# Jim Cartwright

Jim Cartwright was born in Farnworth, Lancashire, in 1958 and educated at Harper Green Secondary Modern School, Farnworth. His plays are consistently performed around the world, where they have won numerous awards, and been translated into 30 languages. His first play, *Road* (1986), opened at the Royal Court in 1986, and was subsequently revived that same year and again in 1987, before being taken on a nationwide tour.

*Road* won the Samuel Beckett Award, *Drama* Magazine's Best New Play Award, and was joint winner of the Plays And Players Award and The George Devine Award. In 1988, *Road* was produced by The Lincoln Centre, New York, and is now considered a modern classic. Other works include: *Bed*, at the Royal National Theatre in 1989, *Two* at the Octagon Theatre, Bolton in 1989, and transferring to The Young Vic, London in 1990, winning the *Manchester Evening News* Best New Play Award; *Eight Miles High* (Octagon Theatre, Bolton in 1991 and again in 2005). This play was nominated for the TMA best musical award, and in 1997, a production of the play at the Reykjavik City Theatre, Iceland, ran for a year, breaking box office records.



Jim Cartwright

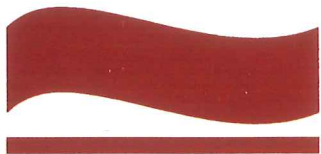
**In 1992 Jim Cartwright wrote his multi award-winning play *The Rise and Fall of Little Voice*, which was first performed at the Royal National Theatre before transferring to the Aldwych Theatre in London's West End. The cast included Jane Horrocks, Alison Steadman and the late Pete Postlethwaite. It gained both the Laurence Olivier and London Evening Standard Awards as best comedy of the year. The film, including Brenda Blethyn, Michael Cain and Ewan McGregor followed in 1998 also to great acclaim. In 1995 it opened on Broadway.**

Jim made his directorial debut with *Road* at The Royal Exchange Theatre in 1995. He also wrote and directed *I Licked a Slag's Deodorant* (1996), for the Royal Court at The Ambassador's Theatre in

London's West End; *Prize Night* for the Royal Exchange Theatre (1999), and *Hard Fruit* (2000) for the Royal Court Theatre. Jim's radio work includes: *Baths* (BBC 1987). His television work includes: *Road* (BBC, 1987, winner of The Golden Nymph Award for best film); *Vroom* (Channel 4), 1988, selected as centrepiece at The London Film Festival; *Wedded* (BBC, 1990), and *June* (BBC, 1990). Jim produced and wrote *Village* (Channel 4), 1996; two films, *Strumpet* and *Vacuuming Completely Nude in Paradise* (BBC, 2001); and wrote and directed *Johnny Shakespeare* (BBC, 2007).







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# Director's Notes

*The Rise and Fall of Little Voice* was written by English dramatist Jim Cartwright in 1992 and tells the story of an oppressed young woman, mercilessly bullied by her mother. She takes refuge in mimicking the voices of famous singers to whom she listens on gramophone records left to her by her late, beloved father. This has made exceptional and considerable demands on the actress playing the title role.

I feel particularly grateful to have had the opportunity to direct a talented cast, who have, unstintingly, given



**Robin Hirsch**  
Director

their time, talent and enthusiasm to provide our audiences with a "special" theatrical experience. I also wish to extend my thanks to

the backstage crew who, I am sure you will agree, throughout the action of the play are more than usually challenged.

Set in the 1980s in a small Northern seaside resort, this cleverly constructed play about the intricate relationship between a mother, her daughter and the men in their lives, involves a mixture of humour, tragedy, music and drama, hopefully something to entertain everybody.

*Robin,*  
Director







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# DIVAS



## WHAT MAKES A TRUE DIVA?

Such a question is certainly easier to pose than to answer - at least in words. Fans will tell you that genuine divas are unmistakable when you actually see them in action; according to Collins English Dictionary, a diva is "a highly distinguished female singer or a prima donna". But to fans they have to be much more than that. A true diva has to be a singer of first-rate talent, with a superb voice and an unforgettable stage presence. But on top of that she also has to exhibit glamour, mystery, a liberal sprinkling of tragedy and, most important of all, a spirit of endurance and

resistance against whatever life, love, fame and success can throw at her.

Divas are survivors: strong, resourceful women who have made themselves stars by following their dreams against all odds. Divas need to be something extra; something more than just stars who have gained fame and fortune. Divas are fabulous, larger-than-life women who can inspire, allure, captivate audiences and listeners with their voices, but who also share their headache and pain through their music, and do it all while wearing a plunging sparkly gown.

Although all divas are individuals with their own unique, appealing characteristics, there are certain features that many of them seem to have in common. Many share the experience of having dragged themselves out of challenging circumstances such as abusive or traumatic home lives, poverty and educational deprivation to reach the highest levels of success, fame and fortune.

**Shirley Bassey's** upbringing as one of seven children brought up in Cardiff's former dock area, Tiger Bay, hardly seems conducive to forming a







future international superstar, and yet the one-time enamel factory worker went from earning £3 a week to becoming one of Britain's best-loved singers.

Similarly **Grace Fields**, the star of the inter-war stage, was brought up in a Lancashire fish n' chip shop, and was the victim of an attempted rape before she was 12.

**Billie Holiday's** experience was far worse: she was raped by a neighbour when only 10. Instead of seeing her attacker punished, the traumatised young girl found herself being bundled off to a Catholic institution and into a lifetime of turbulence and tragedy. (Although her 1956 autobiography *Lady Sings the Blues*, which describes many of her personal problems, has been shown to be factually inaccurate.) She was still under age when she started working in a New York brothel, an experience that was followed by a spell in a syphilis hospital and the four months in prison after being accused of pushing a warder down the stairs.

Even all-American sweetheart and blonde bombshell **Marilyn Monroe** began life in less than salubrious conditions. Brought up by her neighbours until she was seven, her single parent mother worked hard to earn enough money to keep her; the eight year old Norma Jean could only stand by and watch as her mother was diagnosed as a paranoid schizophrenic and committed to an asylum. Norma was left to live out the rest of her childhood in orphanages and foster homes,

forever haunted by the fear that she too would suffer from the same mental illness that had affected her mother, grandmother, grandfather and uncle.

**Edith Piaf**, who famously trilled the song "Non, Je Regrette Rien" actually had a lot to be sorry for when she died young in 1963 aged just 47. Years of alcohol indulgence, combined with an increasing use of drugs - first painkillers to combat creeping arthritis and later morphine after she suffered a series of car crashes in the 1950s - made her last years far from comfortable. And in true diva style she also had to endure the deaths of two of her dearest friends in plane crashes and the heartache of a divorce, all at the same time.

**Judy Garland's** drug problems are well known. The death of her beloved father when she was just 13, the discovery that his bisexuality had soured her parents' marriage and her subsequent estrangement from her mother certainly had their effect. But in Garland's case it was MGM's insistence that she take a concoction of slimming tablets, cigarettes and black coffee to improve her looks and weight that started a lifetime pattern of drug dependence. The studio even insisted that she took sleeping tablets and stimulants to suit filming schedules - and all this while she was still a child star. She also had a problematic love life; she was married four times and had three children. In 1950 she was sacked by MGM and suffered a serious liver condition and major

financial headaches including problems over unpaid taxes. When she died in 1968, aged 46, she weighed only five stone.

Sadly the challenges faced by the mother seem to have been visited on her daughter as well. A combination of insecurity, ego and work pressure led Garland's multi-talented daughter **Liza Minnelli**, a screen and music diva in her own right, towards her own battles with drink and drugs, something she admitted publicly in 1999 after an extended period when she was out of the public eye. The award winning star of *Cabaret* has also been plagued with weight problems and ill health including hip replacement surgeries, knee surgery and a serious case of viral encephalitis that nearly killed her in 2000.

Sadly, overcoming a traumatic background and going on to enjoy a life of peace and prosperity has rarely been the fate of our divas. Most went on to live their adult lives in the same way as they did their childhood - enduring further traumas such as tempestuous relationships, addiction, grievous losses and ultimately, tragically premature demises. Forming and maintaining relationships of all kinds seem to be difficult for many of our most loved divas, usually as a result of fragile, single-minded temperaments. Some critics have described true divas as being like delicate flowers, or frail exquisite porcelain: to be handled with the utmost care.

*By kind permission of John Good Holbrook*

## Cast in order of appearance

Mari Hoff .....	Kathy Felton Aksoy
Little Voice .....	Deborah Bloom
Phone Man .....	Philip Hutchinson
Billy .....	Gregory Russell
Sadie.....	Sue Palmer
Ray Say .....	Ronnie Orr
Mr. Boo .....	Steve Pritchard

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The action of the play takes place in a Northern sea-side resort in the 1980s.

### Act 1

Scene 1	Evening - Mari's house
Scene 2	Morning - Mari's house
Scene 3	Evening - Mari's house
Scene 4	Morning - Interior & exterior of Mari's house

### Act 2

Scene 1	Evening - the Club
Scene 2	Same evening - exterior/interior Mari's house
Scene 3	Evening - Mari's house
Scene 4	Same evening - the Club
Scene 5	Same evening - Mari's house
Scene 6	Some days later - Mari's house/exterior
Scene 7	Immediately following - Mari's house/interior
Scene 8	Later same night - Mari's house/exterior
Scene 9	Same night - the Club

There will be an interval of 20 minutes between the two acts.  
May we suggest that you pre-order your drinks in the bar for the interval.



# Cast



**Kathy Felton Aksoy**



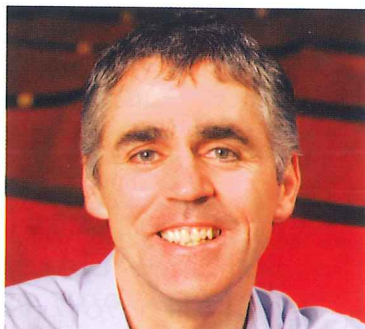
**Deborah Bloom**



**Gregory Russell**



**Sue Palmer**



**Ronnie Orr**



**Steve Pritchard**



**Philip Hutchinson**

# Cathy Milner

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# Staging

Stage Manager .....	Philip Hutchinson
Assistant Stage Managers (Book)	Fran Percival, Sabrina Regazzoni, Lindsay Haywood
Set Design .....	Syd Coley
Lighting Design .....	Syd Coley
Lighting Operator .....	Roy Carr
Sound Design .....	Brian Hodge, Peter Scholes
Sound Operators .....	Brian Hodge, Bernie Howat
Props .....	Trudi Hirsch, Diane Hutchinson, Barbara Beardsell
Wardrobe .....	Sherel Coley, Margaret Horne
Stage Crew .....	Alan Morris, Alex McKillop, Ceri Powell
Set Construction .....	The SDC Construction Team
Scenic Artist .....	Bob Jessamine
Photographs .....	Fletcherhill Photography
Programme Editor .....	Jørgen Petersen
Programme Layout & Design .....	Mitchell & Wright Printers Ltd

## Music used during the production

There is so much of it, so please sit back and enjoy it!

## Acknowledgement

The director would like to thank:

Peter Scholes for the musical arrangements of Miss Bloom's solos. The Salvation Army for the loan of a settee.

Clive Lord for uniforms.

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- At the end of the performance, exits will be open at both the front and back of the auditorium.
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- Patrons with hearing impairments should note that the auditorium has an Induction Loop System for your assistance. Hearing wands are also available from our stewards.

Designated premises Supervisor,  
Alan Newport

# Famous Songs by Famous Singers



There are two songs which spring to my mind when **Shirley Bassey's** name is mentioned: *Gold Finger* from the James Bond film and *Big Spender*. The latter was written by Cy Coleman and Dorothy Fields for the musical *Sweet Charity*. It was sung, in the musical, by the dance hostess "girls", and was choreographed by Bob Fosse for the Broadway musical and film. It is set to the beat of a striptease as the girls "taunt" the customers. A hit version of the song by Shirley Bassey reached one of the top positions in the UK Singles Chart in December 1967.

This version featured in the 2004 film *The Life and Death of Peter Sellers*, and in the 2005 film *Nynne*. The song has become one of

Bassey's signature songs. She performed the song numerous times, most notably for the 80th birthday of *Prince Philip*. She also sang it at the 2007 Glastonbury Festival.

## **Marilyn Monroe**

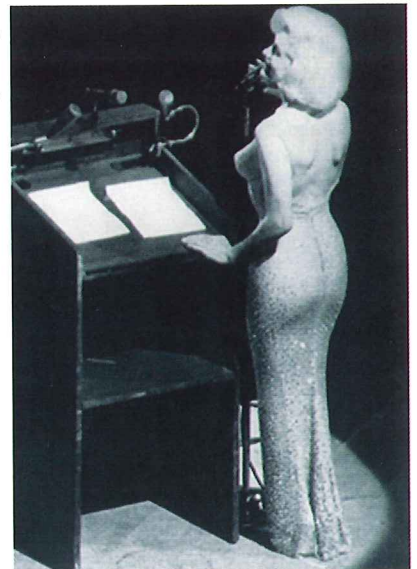
When thinking of the singing of Marilyn Monroe the first song that immediately springs to my mind is her birthday song to President Kennedy.

She sang the song *Happy Birthday to you Mr. President* on Saturday May 19th, 1962 at a celebration of Kennedy's 45th birthday, ten days before his actual birthday. Monroe continued the song with a snippet from the classic song *Thanks for the Memories*, for

which she had written new lyrics specifically aimed at Kennedy.

Afterwards, President Kennedy came on stage and joked about the song, saying "I can now retire from politics after having had *Happy Birthday* sung to me in such a sweet, wholesome way", alluding to Monroe's delivery, her racy dress, and her general image as a sex symbol.

The song and Monroe's performance have been remembered for numerous reasons. First, it was one of her last major public appearances (Monroe died August 5, 1962). In addition, there are persistent rumours that President Kennedy and Marilyn Monroe had had an affair, giving Monroe's performance another layer of meaning.





## Judy Garland.

*Somewhere over the Rainbow* is a classic Academy Award-winning song with music by Harold Arlen and lyrics by E.Y. Harburg. It was written for the movie *The Wizard of Oz*, and was sung by Judy Garland in the movie. Over time it would become Garland's signature song. The song was originally deleted from the film after a preview in San Luis Obispo, because MGM chief executive Louis B. Mayer and producer Mervyn LeRoy thought the song "slowed down the picture and that the song sounds like something for Jeanette McDonald, not for a little girl singing in a barn yard." The persistence of associate

producer Arthur Freed and Garland's vocal coach/mentor Roger Edens to keep it in the picture paid off.

Judy Garland first pre-recorded the song on the MGM soundstages on October 7th, 1938. A studio recording of the song, not from the actual film soundtrack, was recorded and released as a single by Decca Records in September, 1939.

It was not until 1956 that the film version was made available to the public. Garland always performed the song without altering it, singing exactly as she did for the movie. She explained her fidelity by saying that she was staying

true to the character of Dorothy and to the message of really being somewhere over the rainbow.



*Interesting information on some of the songs that you **may** hear throughout the play ... But has Little Voice something else in store?*



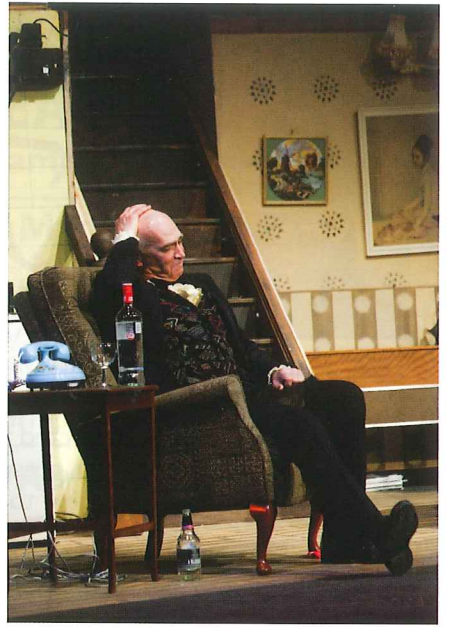
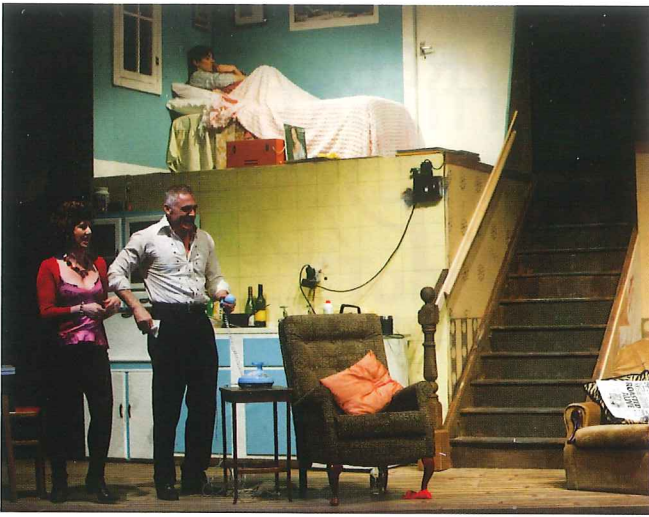
## BRAIN TEASER

Two of the divas pictured on page 7 are not otherwise mentioned in this programme.  
WHO ARE THEY?

Answer on page 19











**Pat Ball**

**NOW IN REHEARSAL**

# *The Price*

*by Arthur Miller*

I am very pleased to be involved, once again in the presentation of an Arthur Miller play. I directed the SDC's recent production of *A View from the Bridge*, and appeared in the earlier presentation of *All My Sons*, both of which were thought provoking and most rewarding to work on.

*The Price* was written in 1968 and is one of Miller's most autobiographical plays. His own father Isidore had escaped from Poland to the USA to make a fortune and then lose it in the depression. The play is about love - love of a brother, a father and a son - a universal theme.

I am lucky to have a fabulous cast. "Small but perfectly formed".

**Pat Ball, Director**





# FUTURE ATTRACTIONS AT THE LITTLE THEATRE

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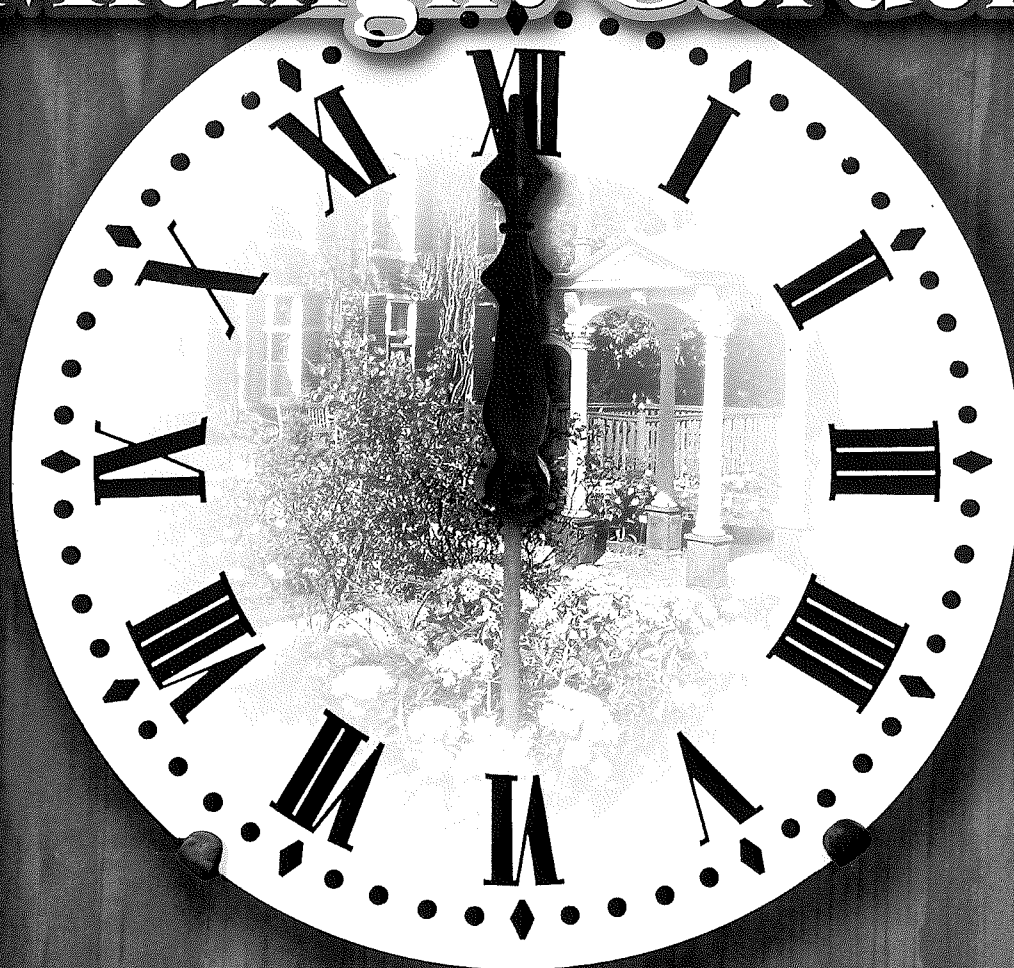
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**SOUTHPORT DRAMATIC CLUB YOUTH THEATRE PRESENTS**

# Tom's Midnight Garden



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