

A SOUTHPORT DRAMATIC CLUB PRODUCTION

RELIVE THE EXTRAORDINARY ADVENTURES OF

DICK BARTON

SPECIAL AGENT

**BY PHIL WILLMOTT
DIRECTED BY RAY MANN**



29TH APRIL - 7TH MAY 2011

By arrangement with the BBC

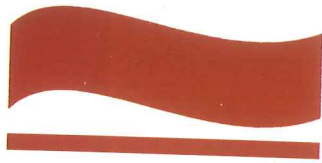
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PHIL WILLMOTT

Phil Willmott is a multi-award winning director, artistic director, playwright, composer, librettist, teacher, dramaturg, arts journalist and occasional actor.

He has worked in theatres across the world on everything from classical drama, musicals and family shows to cabaret and cutting edge new writing; he is one of the UK's foremost directors of Greek Tragedy and the country's most commissioned musical theatre writer, he is currently under contract to write new musicals for Bristol Old Vic and Liverpool Playhouse and a new play about the Tutankhamun legacy.

He is Artistic Director of his own multi award winning theatre company The Stean Industry (incorporating The Finborough Theatre and the West End's open-air "Scoop" amphitheatre on London's South Bank) and is the recipient of a TMA Award for outstanding direction of a Musical, a Peter Brook Award for his out-door classical productions and family shows, whatsonstage award nominations for best regional and Off West End productions.



Phil Willmott

He was an Associate Artist of London's acclaimed Battersea Arts Centre for ten years and has also been Associate Director of the Yvonne Arnaud Theatre in Guilford and co-director of the UK's leading degree course in Musical Theatre at London's Arts Educational School where he was also Head of Acting.

As a writer many of his plays, musicals and adaptations have been published and are regularly produced around the world.

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? BRAIN TEASER ?

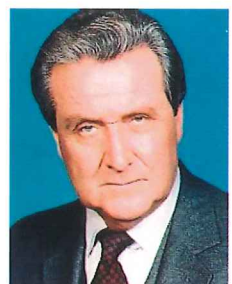
In 1948 – 1950 three Dick Barton films were made. Who played Dick Barton? Was it?



Leslie Philips



Don Stannard



Patrick Macnee

Answer on page 19



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DIRECTOR'S NOTES

Good Evening!

Over recent seasons we have had great fun in staging two popular TV shows "Allo Allo" and "Dad's Army". Now we have the opportunity to do the same with a wireless production, featuring the iconic Dick Barton.

Garberdine collar up, trilby at a rakish angle, the intrepid sleuth faces his arch enemies, Baron Scarheart and Marta Heartburn, in an action-packed adventure, aiming to rid the world of evil in the name of decency and patriotism. This nightly radio series was designed to lift the spirits in the late 1940s. What better tonic could there be for the present period of austerity in which we find ourselves.

The pace of the show is quite bewildering but all you need to



Ray Mann

know is that Scarheart's evil plot is to poison the entire British tea supply and thus bring our proud nation to its knees – a fate which all Hitler's might failed to achieve.

The cast and I have loved rehearsing this comedy; it's been

a privilege to be a part of such an hilarious adventure which treads such a delicate line between paying homage to the original show yet playing it with tongue firmly in cheek.

As our show is packed with musical numbers, my thanks are due to Margaret Mann for her major input into this aspect of the evening's entertainment. But thank you to everybody involved in this production for your wholehearted dedication and cooperation. Finally, may we thank you our patrons, for supporting us this evening and throughout the season.

Now... tune in for another nail-biting, cliff-hanging adventure of Dick Barton-Special Agent.

Ray Mann, Director

Don't make a song and dance out of printing



"AND WITH ONE BOUND, HE WAS FREE"

NICK HOBBS ON THE ORIGINAL RADIO SERIES

A SPECIAL SHOW

One of the most enduring consequences from the 20th century revolution in broadcasting is the way millions of people across the whole nation can share exactly the same experience at exactly the same time by watching a television programme or listening to the radio

Before broadcasting came along this could not happen; after all, the whole country doesn't ever simultaneously read a book, go to the cinema or the theatre. Yet, with television anyone watching a highly popular programme, such as a top soap, drama, sitcom or live football match, will know that they are one of many millions doing the same thing at the same time, and what's more, they'll all be able to talk about it at school or work the next day. Naturally, we assume that such great collective experiences are a product of television age, as we are so biased towards TV these days. And yet the first great collective broadcasting sensation was actually when radio was the principal form of broadcast entertainment. That programme was Dick Barton, Special Agent on the BBC Light Programme

WEEKDAYS, 6.45

The say that back in 1947, you could more or less guarantee that on any weekday evening at around 6.45, something peculiar would happen to just about everyone who had access to a wireless set. Kids would stop playing in the streets and rush indoors, boarding schoolboys would stop their prep or whatever high jinks they were

sure to getting up to, and make a similar beeline for the radio. Families at home would congregate in the living rooms; workmen would make sure their shifts ended in time, even refusing overtime; responsible community figures such as clergymen and teachers would turn on the BBC Light Programme with reluctance, if not a little trepidation, as they waited to hear what the ever-resourceful Dick Barton and his associates would be getting up to that night.

Whether such a set of scenarios are an exaggeration or not, there is little doubt that Dick Barton Special Agent was a show that gripped the nation. Listening figures would reach around 15 million – unheard of for radio broadcast today. It was a firm favourite with all ages, but was particularly attractive to boys who followed the special agent's dashing, "boys own" adventure yarns with relish, no doubt egged on by the fact that many of their teachers and also the clergy frowned upon the show as being a bad influence on the nation's youth. Perhaps ominously for the latter, the famous, trademark opening theme tune that began each 15 minutes episode was called The Devil's Gallop.

THE COMIC STRIP ON THE AIR

So what was all the fuss about?

What was this show that elicited such admiration and animosity?

Dick Barton Special Agent was the first serial broadcast by the BBC and was in the same vein as a host of similar hectic, fast-paced thrillers featuring crime

fighters, spies and secret agents that had been big hits in America for years, and which over there had spawned a thriving spin-off and merchandise industry. They had Superman, The Shadow, The Green Hornet, Dick Tracy and others; we had Dick Barton. Both the short, daily format and the frenetic mixture of dastardly villains and perilous scrapes led to the show being described as a comic strip on air, a notion backed up by the fact that, as with comics, fans followed it religiously, and were disconsolate if they ever missed an instalment.

Children grow more concerned from day to day about what Dick Barton may do next, than about their own future or the future of England.

The Times

The show was a big departure for the BBC, and many believe that just a few years earlier, in the 1930s, the idea of a daily serial featuring blood and thunder situations would never have been allowed by the corporation's executives. However, this was the late 40s, and the war had had plenty of its own blood and thunder situations to offer. The nation was in the grip of the austerity programme, and anything that provided entertainment and diversion from the problems at hand was welcome. Some quips also pointed out that the high energy excitement of the show would do plenty to keep bodies warm during the harsh winter and attendant fuel crises of 1946-47.

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SPIN-OFFS

Being such a popular radio series meant it was inevitable that Dick Barton would give rise to a variety of spin-offs. In fact the real shame, when you consider just how big the show was, is that the BBC had little notion of effective merchandising, in contrast to some American companies at the time. If the effort that now goes into merchandising successful programmes had been applied to Dick Barton, it could well have both raised its own profile and its place in the history of broadcasting, and made a mint for the Beeb. Sadly, not so much as an official Dick Barton mug, key ring or board game materialised in the years that the show was on air.

Looking back, it is clear that Dick Barton was a highly influential show. It was the first and most effective radio serial in the early

years of the craft. Of the other series that were transmitted around the time or since, very few could come close to match its success. The Paul Temple series, by the late Francis Durbridge, was one that did work, as did a certain daily look at the farming community known as *The Archers*. But hardly anyone now remembers the show that replaced Dick Barton (*Adventure Unlimited*) because it didn't have the necessary combination of character, story, high octane excitement and wonder that was generated every weekday evening, when the wireless was tuned in and *The Devil's Gallop* rolled out, enticing, promising, warning the entranced listeners that they were again about to enter the murky, yet spotlessly clean world of Dick Barton. Should have let the poor bloke have a drink once in a while, though!

John Good



Noel Johnson (left) played Barton, with Alex McCrindle and John Mann as his stalwart henchmen, Jock and Snowey

"Barton has been called everything – an entertainment, a stimulant, a relaxation, a drug, a safety valve, a social menace, a fascist plot and a pattern for parasites. The important thing is that he has never been called a bore"

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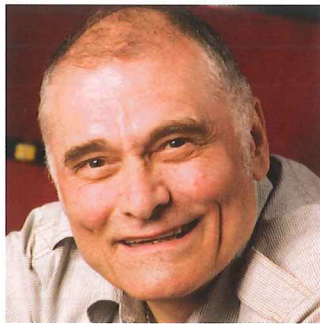
DICK BARTON

DIRECTED BY
MUSICAL DIRECTION

THE



Simon Armstrong



Les Gomersall



Kate Hargreaves



Tracey B



Barry Johnson



Helen Pickavance



Eric Chadwick



Marilyn F

Dick Barton/
Snowy WhiteSimon Armstrong
Baron ScarheartLes Gomersall
Marta Heartburn/
Daphne FrittersKate Hargreaves

Jock AndersonAdrian Roberts
Colonel GardenerBarry Johnson
Lady LaxingtonHelen Pickavance
Sir Stanley FrittersJim Longworth
BBC AnnouncerRay Mann

Additional parts of Secret Agents, Reporters, Convicts, Gangsters, Cabaret Girls and Chorus played by:
Tracey Batchelor, Corinna Davies, Marilyn Fletcher-Hill, Catherine Leight, Helen Pickavance, Eric
Chadwick, Barry Johnson, Jim Longworth and Gregory Russell.

ARTON SPECIAL AGENT

WRITTEN BY
PHIL WILLMOTT

RAY MANN

BY MARGARET MANN



PAST



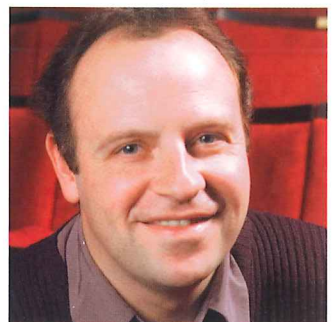
chelor



Corinna Davies



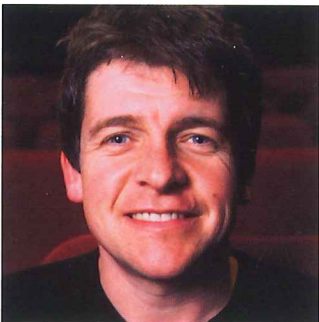
Catherine Leight



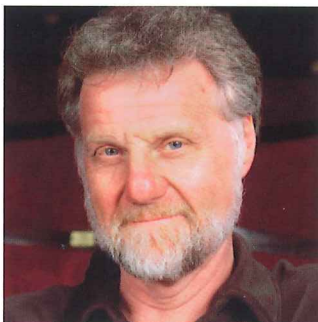
Adrian Roberts



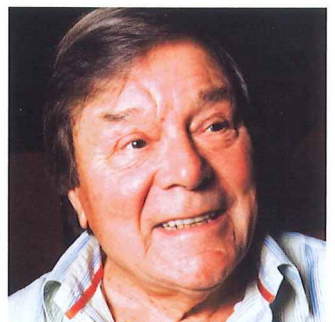
cher-Hill



Gregory Russell



Jim Longworth



Ray Mann

Act 1

- Scene 1 An abandoned London warehouse
- Scene 2 The Viper's Nest nightclub, Soho
- Scene 3 A chain gang on Dartmoor
- Scene 4 Marta's boudoir in Berlin
- Scene 5 The Viper's Nest nightclub
- Scene 6 Dick Barton's HQ, London
- Scene 7 Marta in old Berlin
- Scene 8 Lady Laxington's London drawing room

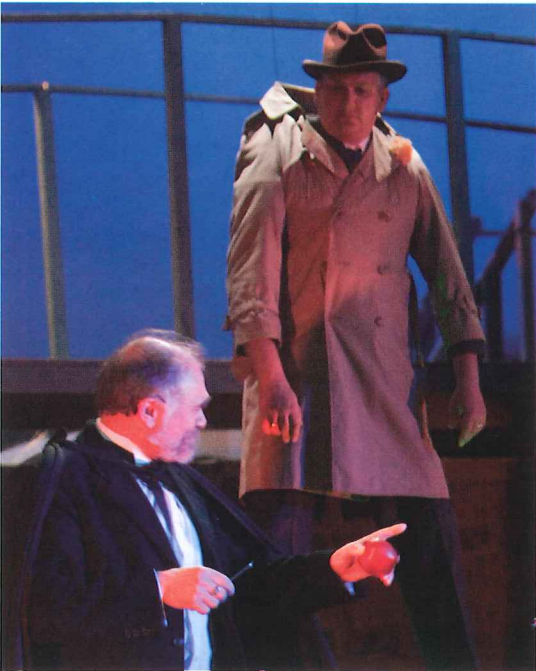
Act 2

- Scene 9 Marta's nightclub in Berlin
- Scene 10 Dick Barton's HQ
- Scene 11 The Viper's Nest nightclub
- Scene 12 Fishfinger Wharf, East London
- Scene 13 Col. Gardener's office, Whitehall
- Scene 14 The Viper's Nest, nightclub
- Scene 15 The parapet of Big Ben, London

Time: The late 1940s

There will be an interval of 20 minutes between the two acts.

We recommend that you beat the rush and pre-order your drinks in the bar prior to the performance.



MUSICAL NUMBERS IN DICK BARTON - SPECIAL AGENT

ACT 1

Femme Fatale Warning. Music from "The Gondoliers"
by Sullivan – *Marta and Girls*

The Motto of the Bartons. Music "Rule Britannia"
by Arne – *Dick Barton and Reporters*

The Chosen Ones. Music "Nessun Dorma"
by Puccini – *Scarheart and Gang*

The Plan. Music "The Hall of the Mountain King"
by Grieg – *Scarheart and Girls*

Marta's Heartburn. Music "Tit Willow" by Sullivan
"Everything Stops for Tea."

Music and lyrics by Sigler/Hoffman/Goodheart –
Scarheart, Lady Laxington, Snowy, Daphne and Maid.

AUDITORIUM MUSIC

The Devil's Gallop – Dick Barton's signature tune

The London Suite by Eric Coates

In London Town by Sir Edward Elgar

Pomp and Circumstance by Sir Edward Elgar

ACT 2

Marta's Nightclub. Music by Stephan

Bednarczyk – *Marta and Girls*

The Phenomenon. Music from "The Pirates of Penzance"
by Sullivan – *Dick Barton and Ensemble*

"A Nightingale sang in Berkley Square"

Music and lyrics by Manning/Sherwin –
Jock and Daphne

"Happy Feet". Music and lyrics by Ager/Yellen –
Dick Barton, Daphne, Jock, Sir Stanley Fritters and Girls.



Margaret Mann -
Musical Director

STAGING

Stage Manager..... Nick Evans

Prompt..... Sherel Coley

Set Design..... Syd Coley

Lighting Design/Operator..... Syd Coley

Sound Design/Operator..... Chris Ratcliffe

Props..... Lindsay Haywood, Kate Lockie

Wardrobe..... Sherel Coley, Margaret Horne,
Joan Pettitt

Set Construction..... SDC Construction Team

Scenic Artist..... Bob Jessamine

Photographs..... Fletcherhill Photography

Programme Editor..... Jørgen Petersen

Programme Layout & Design..... Mitchell & Wright Printers Ltd

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The director would like to thank:

Andrew Close (Bolton Little Theatre) and Frank Hulmes (Grove Park Theatre, Wrexham) for their advice, support and technical expertise. Thanks also to Jim Longworth for making the "meat grinder.", Tom Chester for backing tracks and Tracey Batchelor for tap-dancing choreography.

Cameras and recording equipment may not be operated during performances
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The Little Theatre -

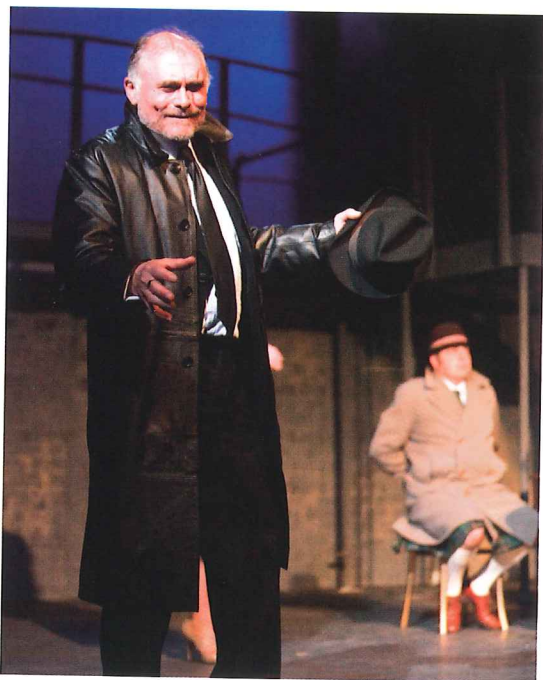
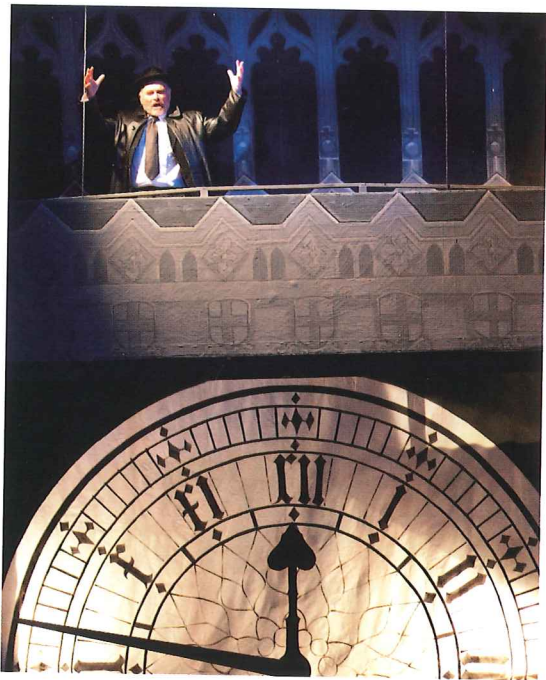
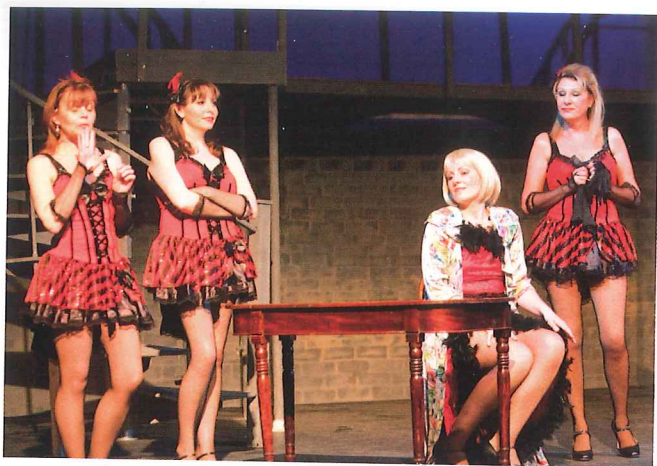
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DICK'S FAMOUS

DOS & DON'TS

As a result of the initial criticism of the show, the BBC took what would now be regarded as an extraordinary step to compile a memo outlining exactly what Dick Barton could or could not do. The intention, of course, was to produce a squeaky clean, whiter than white hero whom parents and teachers alike couldn't object to, although plenty still did. The memo, circulated to the production staff on 27 August 1947 had 12 points that had to be adhered to.

This extraordinary document, which was indeed adhered to, makes you wonder exactly what

anybody had to complain about. It is clear that BBC went out of their way to make the show inoffensive. Indeed, a quick look through the list these days is enough to make us wonder exactly how our Dick managed to cut the mustard as a secret agent. Whereas James Bond would spout a dry one-liner before nicking someone's car to chase the baddies, Barton had to ask nicely. He wasn't allowed to lie, could only hit someone fairly on the jaw, and couldn't swear; he couldn't even say "God" or "hell", which may explain why clergymen didn't see much in the

show. Worse still, the poor chap was not only barred from sex, but he couldn't even get married. And not only Barton himself, but also his circle of friends were all barred from drinking. As a final word, however, we must spare a mention for the person who wrote the memo and felt that no list of supernatural beings was complete without a gorilla.

- 1) Barton is intelligent as well as hard-hitting. He relies as much upon brains as upon brawn.
- 2) He only uses force when normal, peaceful means of reaching a legitimate goal have failed.
- 3) Barton never commits an offence in the criminal code, no matter how desirable the means may be argued to justify the end.
- 4) In reasonable circumstances he can deceive, but he never lies.
- 5) Barton's violence is restricted to clean socks on the jaw. When involved in a brawl that ends in victory for the Barton side, he must be equally matched or outnumbered.
- 6) Barton's enemies have more latitude in their behaviour, but they may not indulge in actually giving any injury or punishment that is basically sadistic.
- 7) Barton and his friends do not willingly involve innocent members of the public in situations which would cause them to be distressed. For example a motor car cannot be requisitioned for the purpose of chasing bandits, without the owner's permission.
- 8) Barton has now given up drink all together. No reference should be made to its existence in the Barton circle. The villains may drink, but never to excess. Drunken scenes are barred.
- 9) Sex, in the active sense, plays no part in the Barton adventures. This provision does not, of course, rule out the possibility of a decent marriage (not involving Dick personally) taking place.
- 10) Horrific effects in general must be closely watched. Supernatural or pseudo-supernatural sequences are to be avoided – ghosts, night-prowling, gorillas, vampires.
- 11) Swearing, and bad language generally, may not be used by any character. This ban ranges from "bloody" through "God", "Damn" and "hell" to ugly expressions currently heard in certain conversations.
- 12) Political themes are unpopular as well as being occasionally embarrassing.



Sandy Town
Director

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See back of the programme for details.

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SQUARE JAWED, ADORED AND ABHORRED

One of the more noteworthy things about the success of Dick Barton was the amount of animosity that it elicited. Letters were sent to The Times about the matter, with some correspondents claiming that the normally tranquil British family home was being sent asunder by nightly arguments as children insisted and pleaded that they must listen to Dick Barton (how else could they face their chums at school?) at exactly the same time that culturati parents wanted to settle back to a little night music on the Third Programme. Other allegations included concerns about unfinished homework and the bizarre claim that the show entertained a definite political bias towards the Conservative Party and its values – not helped by the fact that BBC stills of the actors showed pinstriped suits and ties as opposed to the more glamorous secret agent attire that the show's young fans may have imagined.

Of course a little bit of controversy never hurt the ratings of any programme, even back in the 1940s, and the different public complaints had listeners tuning-in in droves. There is even a suggestion that rumours may have been

deliberately fabricated to gain publicity. One story "leaked" to the press told of an on-set actress who consistently failed to produce a realistic scream until one occasion when she gave it her all and then fainted.

It transpired that a large rat had leapt onto her shoulder at just the right time to please the producer. Or so the story went. Another fabricated rumour was put about just before the show ended for good, which coincided with the Festival of Britain. Yong fans were assured that Dick had gone off the air to go and protect the Skylon, a huge cigar-shaped structure that had been assembled on the South Bank in London.

Keen-eared fans, meanwhile, did their bid to ensure publicity. It became well known that juvenile masterminds would listen to their favourite show with a critical as well as adoring ear. And any occasion when the script departed from the established principles of science resulted in a sack load of reproving mail. Notorious examples include the episodes featuring that traditional standby of the spy story, the suitcase full of fabulous amounts of cash. Patient little minds wrote epistles explaining to the dunderheads at the Beeb that the amount being spoken of could never fit into any suitcase that a human being could conceivably carry. Worse still was one unfortunate episode



in which Dick Barton was left chained to an immovable object on a Mediterranean shore to face death by drowning" as the tide came in". Plenty of eager fans wrote in outlining the physical characteristics of the Mediterranean and pointing out that such a fate could not occur as there were no tides there! On the plus side, the BBC must surely have taken some satisfaction from pointing out to the show's critics that such an intellectual postbag hardly hinted at a nation of children not doing their homework. On the contrary, the kids seemed to devour encyclopedias with the express intention of nit-picking the show. Indeed, it is only surprising that the BBC didn't try to gain a Brownie point or two by suggesting that such inaccuracies were deliberately left in scripts to exercise young minds!





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directed by Sandy Town

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Josef Weinburger Ltd

Box Office Opens:
27th June 2011
advanced booking
01704 228936



Box Office Tel: (01704) 530521/530460

www.littletheatresouthport.co.uk

Hoghton Street, Southport PR9 0PA

A Southport Dramatic Club Studio Production in the Bar

The Woman Who Cooked Her Husband

By Debbie Isitt
directed by Sandy Town



24th - 28th May 2011

7.45pm



WARNING: This play contains
Strong Language

Box Office Opens from: 17th May at 11.00am

Box Office Tel: (01704) 530521/530460 www.littletheatresouthport.co.uk Houghton Street, Southport PR9 0PA