

Southport Dramatic Club

A Heart-Warming Finale

GLORIOUS

A Hilarious True Story by Peter Quilter
Directed by Stephen Hughes-Alty

8th - 16th May 2015
7.45pm



LITTLE THEATRE
Home of the
Southport Dramatic Club

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Director's notes

*"People may say I can't sing,
but no-one can ever say I
didn't sing"*

Welcome to the Southport Dramatic Club and the final production of the season: 'Glorious'. Peter Quilter's funny yet moving play tells the real life story of the indomitable Florence Foster Jenkins, the legendary New York heiress and socialite who wanted to be a great operatic diva despite having one of the worst singing voices in history. Florence used all her money, charm and unstoppable willpower to make it happen. The soprano voice she hears in her head is beautiful and it never occurs to her that this is not the sound issuing from her mouth.

The play opens in 1940s New York in the apartment that Madam Jenkins shares with the washed-up English actor, St.



Stephen Hughes-Alty
Director

Clair, and finds her auditioning her new pianist Cosmé McMoon. Add in a Mexican maid who speaks no English, her ditzy companion Dorothy, a decrepit poodle and a spiteful music lover with no love for Florence and you have all the ingredients for a hilarious and heart-warming comedy.

I have been blessed to work with a dedicated and talented group of actors who have persevered to bring these eccentric and colourful characters to the stage. Similarly, the support we have received from all areas of the club has made the transition from page to stage a smooth one. Enjoy the contemporary set design and the detailed period costumes; experience the soaring sound and the sublime lighting and delight at the myriad of bizarre props including a dead chicken and a comatose poodle! I would like to thank everyone who has helped to make this performance possible.

Finally, I would like to thank you, our audience, for choosing live theatre. I hope you find our production as 'Glorious'! as we have.

Stephen Hughes-Alty





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on behalf of MUSIC THEATRE INTERNATIONAL of New York

The Author

The playwright Peter Quilter was born in Colchester and went to Leeds University. At the start of his career, he presented the children's BBC programme *'Playdays'* and he also appeared in the TV series *'London's Burning'*.

'Respecting Your Piers', an all-female comedy, was Quilter's first play. His next work was a musical adaptation of Oscar Wilde's *'The Canterville Ghost'*, which starred Ron Moody and was a hit when it toured the UK. In 1999 Quilter's comedy on the pop industry, *'BoyBand the Musical'*, had its premiere at the Gielgud Theatre in London's West End. It has also been presented across the world and was performed in the Netherlands at 60 venues.

Peter Quilter wrote *'Curtain Up'* in 2004 and it had its premiere that year on tour in the UK. It was based on his work



Peter Quilter

'Respecting Your Piers'. Quilter's first international hit *'End of the Rainbow'*, about Judy Garland's final months, premiered at Australia's Sydney Opera House in 2005.

Former Coronation Street actor Tracie Bennett starred in the 2010 production of the show at

Northampton's Royal Theatre, which transferred to the Trafalgar Studios in London's West End. The critics praised the show and it was covered by *The Times*, on the paper's front page. It was also presented on Broadway. In 2009 Quilter's play *'Duets'*, which is a comedy about relationships, premiered in Sydney, Australia, at the Ensemble Theatre. The playwright's work, *'Celebrity'*, was filmed for Polish TV and it was shown in January of this year at TeamTeatret in Denmark.

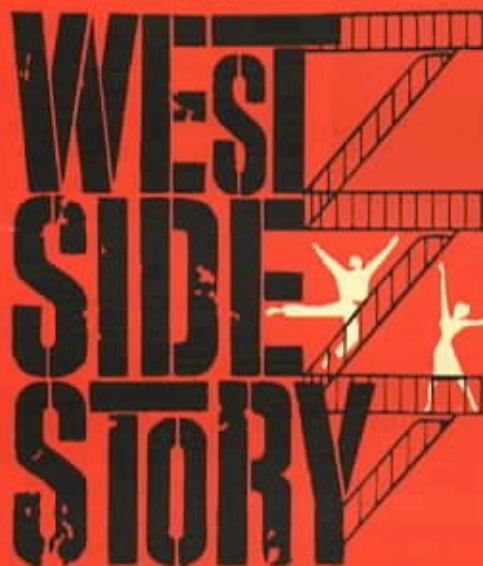
In 2011, Quilter wrote *'Just the Ticket'*, a romantic comedy about a 60-year-old who repeats a journey she made to Australia 40 years previously. *'The Morning After'*, where all the action takes place in a bedroom, is still showing at the Divadlo Arena in Bratislava three years after its world premiere. Last year Quilter wrote the plays: *'The Actress'* and *'4,000 Days'*.



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Glorious

Glorious, which tells the story of Florence Foster Jenkins, was premiered at the Birmingham Rep Theatre in 2005 and starred Maureen Lipman. At the end of that year, the production, directed by Alan Strachan and produced by Michael Codron, transferred to the Duchess Theatre in the West End and remained there for six months.

Quilter was full of praise for Lipman's portrayal of Jenkins and stated on the Official London Theatre website on November 17, 2005: "People can think whatever they like about the play, but the one

indisputable thing is how good she is. There's a small list of comedy actresses who can sing badly – three big arias a night – and not ruin their voices, and be really funny doing it." A review in the Sunday Times said: "Maureen Lipman gives a virtuoso performance, glittering, hilarious and technically breathtaking."

At the 2006 Laurence Olivier awards, which is an event that recognises the best of British theatre, *Glorious* was nominated for Best New Comedy, but the prize went to *Heroes* by Gerald Sibley and Tom Stoppard.

According to Quilter's official site, *Glorious* has been seen by over a million people in six continents. In the same month the show is being presented at the Southport Little Theatre, it is being performed at the Paris Fairgrounds in Ontario, Canada.

Florence Foster Jenkins lived from 1868 to 1944 and has been labelled the worst singer in the world. She gave performances in New York and appeared at the famous Carnegie Hall.



Florence Foster Jenkins

A brief biography

Florence Foster Jenkins (July 19, 1868 – November 26, 1944) was an American amateur operatic soprano who was known – and ridiculed – for her lack of rhythm, pitch, and tone and her generally poor singing ability.

Jenkins received piano lessons as a child and performed all over the state of Pennsylvania, even appearing at the White House. Upon graduating, she expressed a desire to go abroad to study piano. Her wealthy father refused to pay the bill, so she retaliated and eloped to Philadelphia with Dr. Frank Thornton Jenkins, a physician. Shortly after their marriage, Jenkins contracted syphilis from her husband and they separated shortly afterwards. Jenkins then set herself up as a teacher and a pianist. After suffering an arm injury, she had no means to make a living and was reduced to near poverty. Her mother came to her rescue and the two moved to New York City around 1900. It is then that she decided to become a singer. In 1908 she began living with the stage actor St. Clair Bayfield (later her manager), a relationship that would last the rest of her life.

When her father died in 1909 Jenkins inherited sufficient funds to begin her long-delayed singing career. She took voice lessons and became involved in the musical social circles of Philadelphia and, later, New York City. She became a member of the many women's clubs – and became Director of Music for many of these. She began giving recitals in 1912. Her mother's death in 1928 gave her additional resources to pursue her singing career.

From her recordings it is apparent that Jenkins had little sense of pitch and rhythm, and was barely capable of sustaining a note. Her dubious diction, especially in foreign language songs, is also noteworthy. In actuality, the ravages of syphilis had slowly made its way to her brain and auditory nerve system making her partially deaf. Then, to make it even worse, the treatment of the era (not cure) was the equally poisonous mercury. Nonetheless, she became popular for the amusement she provided. Critics sometimes described her performances in an "intentionally ambiguous" way that may have served to pique public curiosity, e.g., "Her singing at its finest suggests the untrammelled swoop of some great bird".

Because of her inability to hear combined with her life-long need to perform, Jenkins apparently was firmly convinced of her greatness. She compared herself favourably to the renowned sopranos of the time, and dismissed the abundant audience laughter during her performances as "professional jealousy". She was aware of her critics, but never let them stand in her way. "People may say I can't sing", she said, "but no-one can ever say I didn't sing".

Her recitals featured a mixture of the standard operatic repertoire by Mozart, Verdi and Johann Strauss (all well beyond her technical ability); and songs composed by herself or accompanist Cosmé McMoon, who reportedly made faces at Jenkins behind her back to get laughs.

Jenkins often wore elaborate costumes that she designed herself, sometimes appearing in wings and tinsel, and throwing flowers into the audience from a basket (apparently on one occasion, she hurled the basket too).

Once, while riding in a taxi, it collided with another car and Jenkins let out a scream. She then discovered that she could sing "a higher C than ever before", and sent the cab driver a box of expensive cigars.

In spite of public demand, Jenkins restricted her rare performances to clubs and the Grand Ballroom of the Ritz-Carlton Hotel where she would give a recital annually in October. Attendance was limited to her loyal clubwomen and a select few others; she handled distribution of the coveted tickets herself. At the age of 76 she finally yielded to public demand and performed at Carnegie Hall on Wednesday October 25, 1944. Tickets for the event sold out weeks in advance and numerous celebrities attended, such as song writer Cole Porter. Since this was her first "public" appearance, the newspaper critics were allowed to attend and she received horrible and sarcastic reviews. This totally devastated her and the next Monday she was shopping in a Music Store and suffered a heart attack. Jenkins died a month later at her residence, the Hotel Seymour in Manhattan. Her music lives on.

Stephen Hughes-Ally
Director

Synopsis of Scenes

The action takes place in New York City in 1944

Act 1

- | | |
|---------|--|
| Scene 1 | Florence's apartment at the Hotel Seymour |
| Scene 2 | The Melotone Recording Studio on 54th Street |

Act 2

- | | |
|---------|--|
| Scene 1 | The Grand Ballroom of the Ritz Carlton Hotel |
| Scene 2 | A Churchyard |
| Scene 3 | On Stage at Carnegie Hall |
| Scene 4 | The Performance on Stage at Carnegie Hall immediately afterwards |



The Little Theatre - Home of the Southport Dramatic Club.

The SDC wishes to ensure that all our patrons enjoy a comfortable, enjoyable and safe visit to our theatre. We should be grateful for your co-operation in helping us to achieve this. Please note the following:

- Should you arrive after the performance has started, you will be guided to your seats when a suitable opportunity occurs.
- At the end of the performance, exits will be open at both the front and back of the auditorium.
- First Aid assistance is regularly provided by volunteers from the St. John Ambulance Brigade. Should you require help, please advise our stewards on duty in the Foyer.
- Patrons with hearing impairments should note that the auditorium has an Induction Loop System for your assistance.
- Please ensure that all mobile phones and electronic devices are switched off during the performance.
- Photography and video recording are not allowed during the performance.

Designated Premises Supervisor, Alan Newport



GLOBE

Ca



Kathy Felton-Aksoy
Florence Foster Jenkins



Rob MacGregor
Cosmé McMoon



John Sharp
St. Clair

IOUS

st



Jacquie Wade
Dorothy



Ann Richards
Maria



Elaine Cox
Mrs. Verrinder-Gedge

Glorious? Sometimes! Brilliant? Of Course!



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Staging

Stage Manager	Lindsay Haywood
Assistant Stage Manager (Prompt)	Sue Palmer
Properties	Mo Leefe, Celia Timmington & Sarah Viali
Wardrobe	Kate Hargreaves
Lighting	Mike Clarke
Flyman	Adrian Roberts & Team
Sound Design	Brian Hodge
Sound Operator	Brian Hodge
Scenic Artist	Bob Jessamine
Set Design	Stephen Hughes-Alty
Set Construction	The SDC Construction Team
Photographs	Fletcherhill Photography
Programme Editor	Jacque Bolshaw
Programme Content & Research	Henry James
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Florence's Performances:

Adele's Laughing Song – Strauss (*Die Fledermaus*)

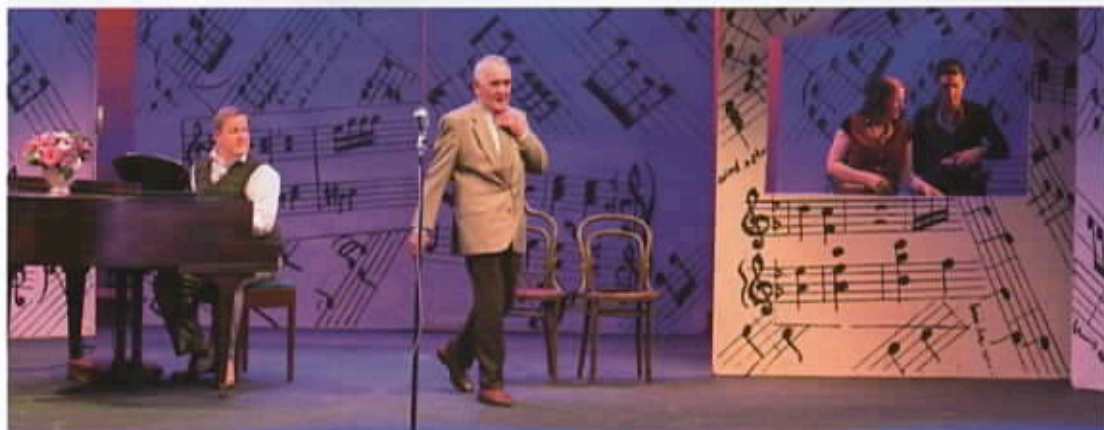
Habanera – Bizet (*Carmen*)

Queen of the Night – Mozart (*The Magic Flute*)

Piano Accompaniments - Tom Kimmance

Acknowledgements

Thank you to Sue Palmer for looking after everyone during rehearsals. Thanks go to Barbara Galvin for the wigs. My deepest gratitude to James Hughes-Alty for providing Maria's chicken and Little Ricky! No poodles were harmed during tonight's production.



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Tracey Batchelor

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Jan Hale

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By Rebecca Russell and Jenny Wafer

Directed by Tracey Batchelor.

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'The Lion In Winter'

By James Goldman

Directed by Jan Hale.

It is Christmas, Queen Eleanor of Aquitaine is released from her keep to join the family and as with all families, especially at Christmas, sparks fly! We have chosen scenes featuring the King and the two most important women in his life..... The Queen and the Princess Alais Capet who is promised to the heir to the throne "Richard the Lionheart"!!! She has been raised by Eleanor as a daughter, but has become the King's Mistress.

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**BOS Musical
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Hairspray The Broadway Musical

Book by Marc O'Donnell, Thomas Meehan

Music by Marc Shaiman, Lyrics by Scott Wittman, Marc Shaiman

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Box Office Opens:
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**SDC Bar
Production**



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2nd - 6th June 2015

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(Matinee on 13th June)

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Box Office Opens:
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Southport Dramatic Club

An SDC Bar Production

Kings & Queens

Featuring Excerpts From

The Regina Monologues

By Rebecca Russell & Jenny Wafer

(Directed By Tracey Batchelor)

And The Lion In Winter

By James Goldman (Directed By Jan Hale).

2nd - 6th June, 2015

at 7.45pm



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