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presents

ROPE

By

PATRICK HAMILTON

26th October to 3rd November 1979

Nightly at 7.45



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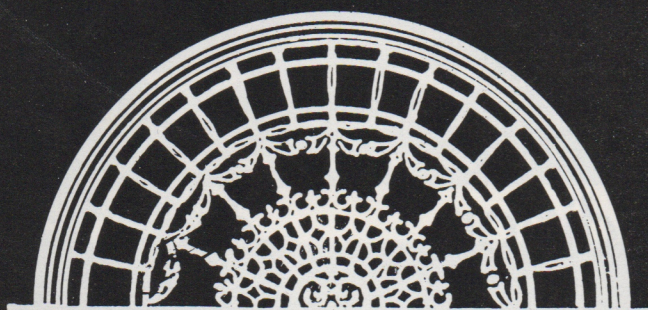
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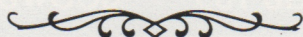
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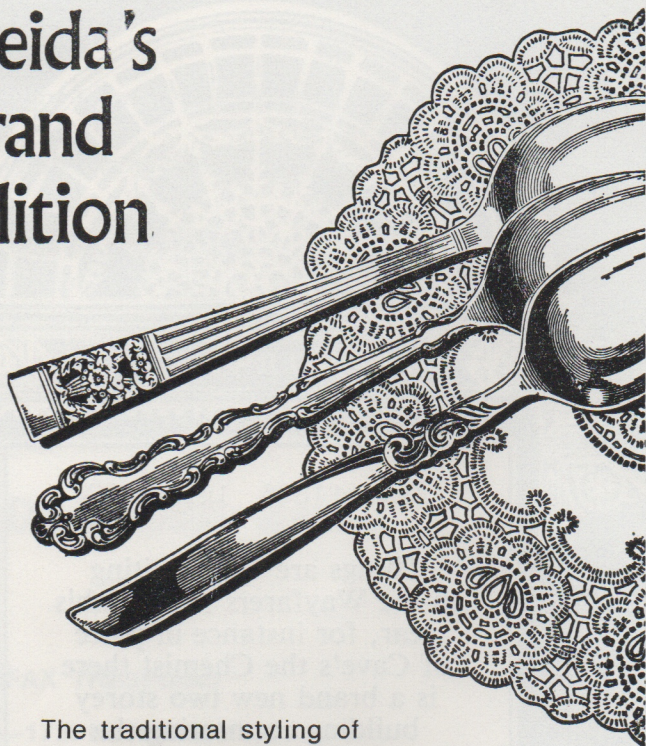
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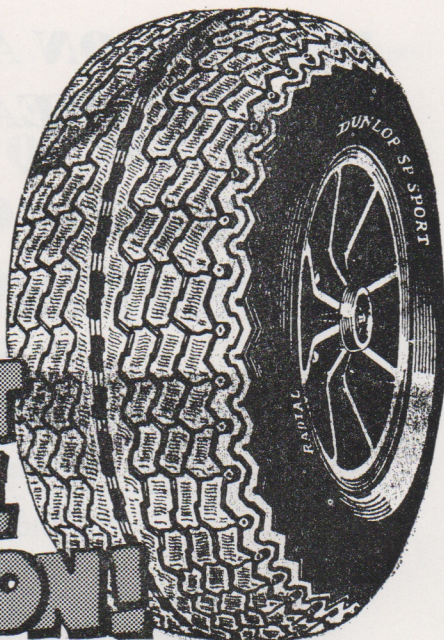
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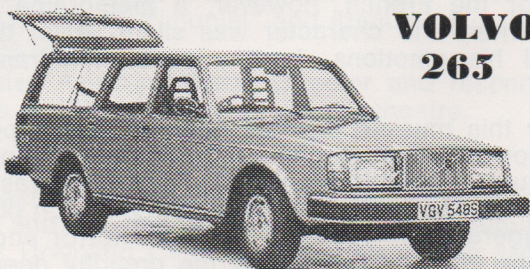
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ORIGINS – SENSATION

PATRICK ANTHONY WALTER HAMILTON, the playwright and novelist, was born in 1904. He began acting in 1921 and became fascinated by melodrama. It was not, however, as an actor that he first made his name, nor, in fact, as a dramatist, but as a novelist. It was the novel, "Craven House", that brought his name to public attention in 1926.

He wrote several books, mostly on the theme of the unpleasantness of modernity, for instance, "The Midnight Bell" (1929) and "The Plains of Cement" (1934). His work in this genre has been considered to be reminiscent of Charles Dickens in the way it captures the atmosphere and cockney dialect of East End London.

But it is on three plays that his reputation rests today. They are all thrillers which show a strong taste for the macabre: "Rope" (1929), "Gaslight" (1938) and "The Governors" (1945). All three were immensely successful and there are film versions of "Rope" and "Gaslight". Hamilton's interest in psychological drama received its fullest expression in "The Duke of Darkness" and he also wrote several thrillers for the radio.

He died in 1962.

MELODRAMA

In considering the subject of sensationalism in the theatre (and I think there is a strong element of sensationalism in the plays of Patrick Hamilton), one can scarcely avoid the subject of **melodrama**. This term, which now has such derogatory and even comic connotations has passed through several different meanings.

In the 18th century **melodrama** meant two different things, depending on where you lived. In Germany it meant a passage in opera which was spoken to musical accompaniment and even as late as the early part of the 20th century the term was used to describe a monologue spoken to music. For the French, however, a **melodrama** meant a passage where the character was silent whilst the music described his emotions. In any case, **melodrama** meant music.

Gradually this musical element became less important as the emotional element became more important, until by the 19th century, a **melodrama** was a play which was characterized by its excessively dramatic content. Such plays dealt with exaggerated episodes of violence, horror and double-dealing, the action instigated by the dreadful deeds of the villain. He was resisted by the hero and heroine who, as the representatives of virtue, were ultimately triumphant. There was, too, generally a comic character to provide temporary relief from the tension.

ALISM IN THE THEATRE

Melodrama held a great appeal for the Victorians (even the novels of such reputable writers as Charles Dickens and the Brontes have a strong melodramatic bias), appealing to commoners and gentry alike. Some of the plays were based on real events; for instance "Maria Marten." Tonight's play, "Rope", is also loosely based on an actual crime. Others, such as Mrs. Henry Wood's "East Lynne" and Miss Braddon's "Lady Audley's Secret", were adaptations of novels. That famous actor, Henry Irving, had one of his biggest successes in "The Bells" at the Lyceum in 1871.

However, by the end of the 19th century **melodrama** was falling out of fashion. The taste for strong drama had not, and still has not, abated, but a play in which all interest in the characters was entirely subordinate to the excitement of events gave way to a play in which the psychological element was of greater importance.

GRAND GUIGNOL

Like melodrama, **grand guignol** is now a far from complementary term and it, too, has passed through several meanings. Originally, Guignol was a French puppet who first appeared in the late 18th century. He was based on the Italian Pulcinella, but given the characteristics of a peasant from the Dauphine.

Like our Punch (who also developed from Pulcinella), Guignol indulged in cruel and heartless activities, and it is perhaps for this reason that the name gradually attached itself to cabaret entertainments in Paris that catered for what has been called 'an over-sophisticated and decadent taste.' Such entertainments were eventually centralized in the Theatre du Grand Guignol, which specialized in short plays of rape, murder, violence, ghostly apparitions and suicide—all intended, with the liberal use of realistic detail, to chill and delight the spectator. Many of the plays were written by the master of horror, Edgar Allan Poe, who was held in great esteem by the French. (Debussy once planned to use one of Poe's stories as the basis of an opera.)

Although **grand guignol** reached England in the early years of the twentieth century and Sybil Thorndike starred in a series of such plays in 1920-2, it never achieved the popularity it enjoyed in France. It may have influenced English playwrights—there are, for instance, traces of **grand guignol** in "Gaslight"—but its true home was in the small theatres of Montmartre.

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26th October to 3rd November, 1979

Rope

by Patrick Hamilton

Directed by Stanley Ellis

CAST IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE

Wyndam Brandon **Arnold Gorse**
Charles Granillo **Mark Braithwaite**
Sabot **Godfrey Hand**
Kenneth Raglan **Jonathan R. Elliott**
Leila Arden **Sandra Threlfall**
Sir Johnson Kentley **John Evans**
Mrs. Debenham **Vera Burns**
Rupert Cadell **Mike Yates**

Scene

A room on the first floor of the house in Mayfair shared by Brandon and Granillo.

Time — September, 1929

The action of the play is continuous



There will be two intervals of approximately
15 minutes each

STAGE STAFF

Stage Manager	Ken Burns
Asst. Stage Manager (Book)	Peggy Ince
Asst. Stage Managers (Cast)	Elizabeth Finn Gregory Braithwaite
Properties	Judith Chalmers, Sherel Coley
Wardrobe	Jayne Barty, Rosemary Morris
Lights	Kay McCallen
Sound	Fran Percival
Stage Assistant	The Production Team

The set constructed and painted by **Roy Blatchford** and built by the **Production Team**.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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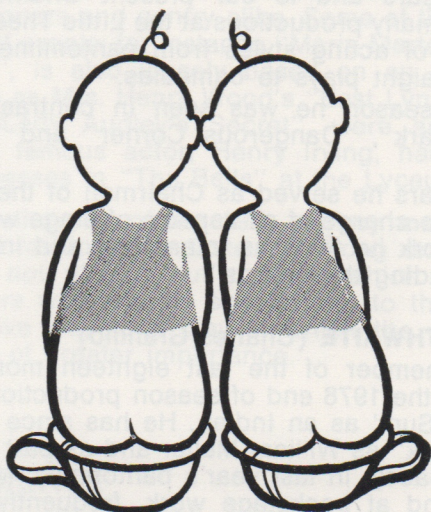
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YOUR PLAYERS

ARNOLD GORSE (Wyndam Brandon)

Has been a member of the Southport Dramatic Club for seventeen years and is our present Chairman. He has appeared in many productions at the Little Theatre, covering a full range of acting styles from pantomime to musicals and from straight plays to comedies.

During last season he was seen in contrasting roles in "Dame of Sark", "Dangerous Corner" and "Something's Afoot."

For many years he served as Chairman of the Productions Committee, in charge of all aspects of stage work; this side of theatre work he finds as interesting and invigorating as actually 'treading the boards.'

MARK BRAITHWAITE (Charles Granillo)

An S.D.C. member of the last eighteen months, he first appeared in the 1978 end of season production "The Royal Hunt of the Sun" as an Indian. He has since been cast in "Dame of Sark" as William Muller and as part of Ali Baba's pet camel, Baccy, in last year's pantomime. Mark has also tried his hand at backstage work, frequently helping out behind the scenes when not actually involved in the production.

He attended Southport Art College for three years and is now a qualified Graphic Designer.

GODFREY HAND (Sabot)

A member for twelve years, has appeared in many productions in minor parts and has put in many hours backstage on over 30 productions.

JONATHAN R. ELLIOTT (Kenneth Raglan)

Formerly of mule fame in "Mother Goose" and Young Martin in "The Royal Hunt of the Sun", is a third year sixth-former at K.G.V.

He started drama seriously four years ago with the Southport Youth Theatre. He has stage managed and acted in six out of their eight productions, most unusual of which was the Caterpillar in "Alice in Wonderful."

He was also the first Youth Theatre member to be accepted by the distinguished Manchester Youth Theatre, where he has written music and acted at the Royal Exchange Theatre in Shakespeare's "Hamlet" and "Richard III."

SANDRA THRELFALL (Leila Arden)

Prior to joining the Southport Dramatic Club, Sandra appeared in many musicals with the Southport Operatic Society, first as a dancer, then played major roles in "Robert and Elizabeth", "The Girl Friend" and "The Boy Friend." Her first play for the S.D.C. was "Not Now Darling" in 1971. Later came "All in Good Time", "Spring and Port Wine" and "Doctor in the House." Then goodbye Southport and off to West and East Africa with her husband and family, where, back on the boards again she appeared in the

AND DIRECTOR

National Theatre, Kenya in "Habeas Corpus" and "Jesus Christ Superstar."

Returning to this stage again in 1978 to appear in "There Goes the Bride," also directed by Stanley Ellis and in February this year, another farce, "Correspondence Course." It is quite a challenge for her to take part in a thriller after so many appearances in comedy plays.

JOHN EVANS (Sir Johnson Kentley)

Veteran of the S.D.C. whose first appearance was in "Macbeth" in 1938 wearing the biggest cow horns with which he inadvertently dragged on the curtain. Since then he has preferred comedy and has played many roles over the years.

Last seen as the dithering Dean in "Dandy Dick" last season and previously was responsible for writing and producing the last three pantomimes. Given enough 'rope' hopes to play in many more productions.

VERA BURNS (Mrs. Debenham)

Joined the S.D.C. in the last 1940's and has appeared in many productions, the first of which was "My Lady's Chess" and the last, "Darling I'm Home" during the 1977/78 season.

Last year had great fun producing an Alan Ayckbourn playlet. A few years ago spent a very engrossing time as secretary of the Play Selection and Casting Committee. Back-stage work on properties and wardrobe has also proved highly enjoyable. Is at present the Chocolates Manageress.

MIKE YATES (Rupert Cadell)

He first appeared on the 'Little' stage in "Picnic" some six years ago, that being his first stage role since "Higgins the Highwayman" at the age of ten.

During the time he has been an S.D.C. member he has spanned the whole age range, from a child in "The Golden Pathway Annual" to a toothless old actor (a glimpse of the future?) in "The Fantasticks." Other roles include, Bertie in "Crown Matrimonial" and Atahualpa in "The Royal Hunt of the Sun."

Mike is also Assistant Stage Director and responsible for backstage staffing of the shows at the theatre.

STANLEY ELLIS (Director)

Has appeared in repertory companies at Birmingham, Hereford and Peterborough. He made his debut for the Southport Dramatic Club in "Ring Round the Moon." His other parts include roles in "Hotel Paradiso", "Salad Days", "Not Now Darling", "Man For All Seasons" and "Voyage Round my Father." The plays he has produced for the club include: "Good-Night Mrs. Puffin", "Farewell, Farewell Eugene", "Saturday, Sunday, Monday", "There Goes the Bride", his last production being "Dangerous Corner" in March of this year.



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'Little' Bits and Pieces

This page is the first of what we hope will be a regular feature — bits and pieces of information and general interest for our patrons, which hopefully will make them feel a little more involved in what goes on. Its format is not fixed, but we hope to maintain the two objectives of making it informative and interesting.

If you have any comments to make of any sort, do let us have them. There will not be space to print letters in full, but we can indicate sentiments held by some of our supporters. Drop your comments in at the Box Office, hand them over the bar, or give them to any of our Front of House staff.

The season is now well launched and our first production "Dear Octopus", played to virtually capacity audiences. Where that was what may be termed a 'family' play, the current production, "Rope", is a thriller in the best spine-chilling traditions. This will be followed by "The Mating Game", an hilarious comedy which brings us up to the pantomime—"Aladdin." By 'ringing the changes' in this way we hope to ensure variety and 'something for everyone.' Incidentally, have you noticed the new mural above the Box Office. Instead of the blank expanse of glass, this is now covered by a splendid selection of theatrical cartoons by our subscriber, Bill Tidy. Our thanks to him for a splendid piece of work!

Have you ever thought of joining the S.D.C. as a member? There must be many who, as well as coming to see the plays would like to find out more about the theatre and even take part. Virtually everything in this theatre is done by amateurs in their spare time—from acting, shifting scenery, building sets, making and maintaining costumes to running the bar, box office, selling programmes, serving coffee and making sure people get to their correct seats. Whatever your talents we could use them. Again, have a word with any existing member, ask the bar staff, or anyone who is on duty in any capacity. This applies to men and women alike and you will find the club has a good social scene as well.

What about future events:

11th November — Visit by Bingley Little Theatre who are presenting, for one night only, Alan Ayckbourn's "Confusions."

7th December — 8.00 pm. S.D.C.'s Christmas Bazaar.
Contributions for this may be left at the theatre.

9th December — Ken Dodd and friends (including Bill Tidy) return for a concert in aid of the North West Cancer Relief Fund.

16th December — Carol Concert.

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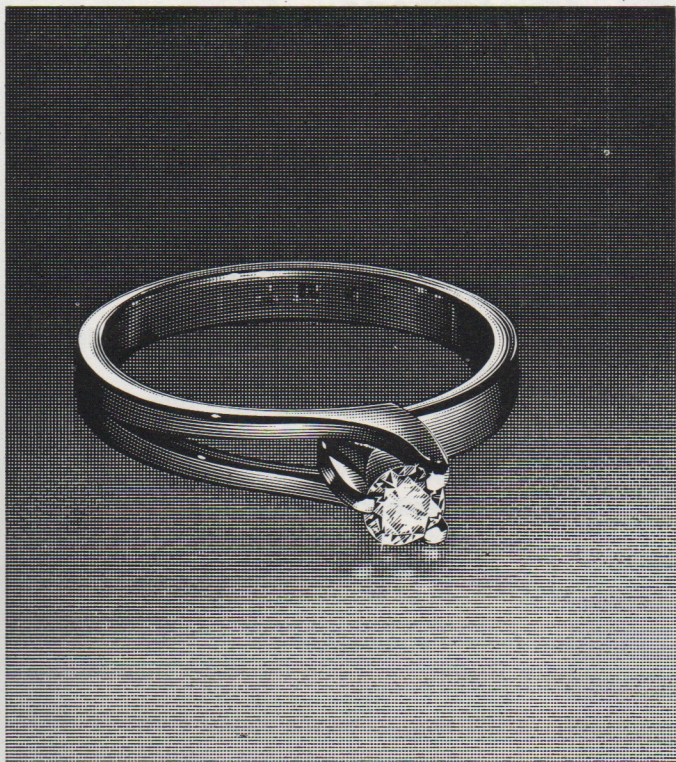
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Confusions

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BOLTON LITTLE THEATRE

5th—10th November

On Monday Next

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HALIFAX THESPIANS

10th—17th November

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Charlotte Bronte

STOCKPORT GARRICK THEATRE

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