



Bequest to the Nation

By Terence Rattigan

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Production



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WHAT'S ON

at the LITTLE THEATRE

20th — 23rd MAY, 1981

LOCK UP YOUR DAUGHTERS

Adapted by **Bernard Miles** from
Henry Fielding's comedy "Rape Upon Rape."
Directed by **Thelma Falls-Hand**

A GARRICK PLAYERS PRODUCTION

27th — 30th MAY, 1981

MAYTIME SERENADE

An extravaganza of comedy and song
Music by **Sylvia Taylor** and **Joyce Moore**
Directed by **Sheila Clarkson** and **Jo McCarthy**

AN S.D.C./BIRKDALE ORPHEUS JOINT PRODUCTION

20th JULY — 1st AUGUST, 1981

SUMMER SHOW

A BEDFULL OF FOREIGNERS

An uproarious comedy
by **Dave Freeman**
Directed by **Mike Rogerson**

AN S.D.C. PRODUCTION

WHAT'S ON ELSEWHERE

WIGAN LITTLE THEATRE

10th — 20th JUNE

BEDROOM FARCE

by **Alan Ayckbourn**

BOLTON LITTLE THEATRE

6th — 14th JUNE

YOU NEVER CAN TELL

by **Bernard Shaw**

BINGLEY LITTLE THEATRE

15th — 20th JUNE

YOU'RE A GOOD MAN CHARLIE BROWN

by **Gesner/Schultz**

STOCKPORT GARRICK THEATRE

30th MAY — 6th JUNE

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by **Sondheim and Wheeler**

HALIFAX THESPIANS

30th MAY — 6th JUNE

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by **Gow and Greenwood**

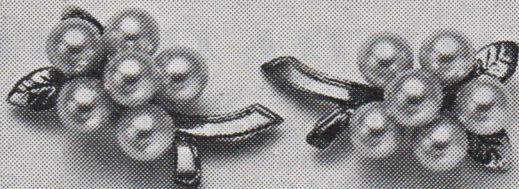
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Bequest To The Nation

Terence Rattigan

Terence Rattigan was born in London in 1911. He was educated at Harrow and at Trinity College, Oxford, where he read for a degree in Modern History. His parents' plans for him to make a career in diplomacy were thwarted by his own determination to make a career as a writer—preferably a writer of plays—and he left Oxford without sitting his finals.

From boyhood Rattigan had been an avid playgoer and an incorrigible playwright. One of his earliest efforts, a one-page playlet in French, met with this criticism: "French execrable: theatre sense first-class." — and a mark of 2/10! Rattigan himself regarded this comment as significant, feeling that, however different his adult plays might be, they shared a sense of theatre, which he regarded as a prime virtue.

His first play to meet with success in the commercial theatre — and it met with considerable success — was 'French Without Tears', first performed in 1936. It was not until the later years of the Second World War (during which he served as an air-gunner in the R.A.F.) that he wrote another play of similar importance. 'Flare Path' (1942) was his first serious play, but it was followed by 'While the Sun Shines' (1943), another farce along the lines of 'French Without Tears', which like its predecessor ran for over 1,000 performances. 'Love in Idleness' (1944) was another comedy put together with great care and craftsmanship and deliberately avoiding the verbal sophistication of, say, Oscar Wilde.

In his next play, 'The Winslow Boy' (1946), produced by the S.D.C. last season, Rattigan temporarily abandoned comedy, turning his craftsmanship to the service of a serious theme and meeting with his usual success. This play won the Ellen Terry Award for the best play produced on the London stage in 1946, and in 1947 won the New York Critics' Award for the best play produced in New York that year. Thereafter, although he did write further comedies, it was the serious plays that were then and are still considered to be more important. Such pieces as 'The Browning Version,' 'The Deep Blue Sea,' 'Separate Tables,' 'Ross,' 'Bequest to the Nation,' 'Man and Boy,' and 'In Praise of Love' are carefully considered studies of character and social situation' acknowledging Rattigan's allegiance to the well-made play.

To the end of his life he believed that a play must, above all, entertain, that it should be concerned with character and narrative rather than ideas. He was antagonistic to the 'kitchen sink' dramas of Osborne and Wesker, which were in critical favour during the latter part of his career, whilst he himself seemed to be out of fashion. During the last decade the tide seems to have turned slightly; 'The Winslow Boy' and 'French Without Tears' are frequently revived, the National Theatre recently staged 'The Browning Version' together with 'Harlequinade,' and the BBC radio are currently offering a season of Rattigan plays, including 'Bequest to the Nation.'

Terence Rattigan received a C.B.E. in 1958 and a knighthood in 1971. He died in 1977.

V. P.

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Bequest To The Nation

Director's Notes

In his last letter to Lady Hamilton, Nelson wrote —

My Dearest Beloved Emma, the dear friend of my bosom, The signal has been made that the Enemy's combined fleet are coming out of port. We have very little wind, so that I have no hopes of seeing them before tomorrow. May the God of Battles crown my endeavours with success, at all events I will take care that my name shall ever be most dear to you and Horatia, both of whom I love as much as my own life, and as my last writing before the Battle will be to you, so I hope in God that I shall live to finish my letter after the Battle. May Heaven bless you.

In 'Bequest to the Nation' Terence Rattigan depicts the deep and passionate love between a much-respected public figure and a seemingly unworthy woman. He suggests that it is not for the outsider to make judgements about that which attracts and holds two people together, but asks us to recognise that a love such as this, one which can inspire the kind of thoughts and feelings expressed in this last letter, can be a source of great strength and comfort.

DON ANDERSON

The illustration on the frontispiece of Emma Hamilton is based on Heinrich Schmidt's pastel portrait

Commissioned in 1800 when Nelson and Emma stayed in Dresden en route to London overland across Europe.

It was Nelson's favourite portrait and was always hung in his cabin when he was at sea. He referred to it as his 'Guardian Angel'

Portraits featured in the play:—

The two portraits of Lady Hamilton are based on paintings by George Romney. C. 1785.

She was in her early twenties when she sat as his model.

The Nelson portrait is after John Francis Rigaud, R.A. The eighteen year old Nelson is wearing the uniform of a post-captain. Sittings began in 1777 before he sailed for the West Indies and the painting was finished in 1787.

Tetley Bittermen.

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Bequest To The Nation

Before Trafalgar, the codicil to Nelson's Will

"Whereas the eminent services of Emma Hamilton, widow of the Right Honourable Sir William Hamilton, have been at the very greatest service to our King and Country, to my knowledge without her receiving any reward from either our King or Country, first, that she obtained the King of Spain's letters, in 1796, to his brother, the King of Naples, acquainting him of his intention to declare war against England, from which letters the Ministry sent out orders to the then Sir John Jervis, to strike a stroke, if opportunity offered, against either the Armies of Spain, or her Fleets. That neither of these was done was not the fault of Lady Hamilton. The opportunity might have been offered. Secondly, the British Fleet under my command, could never have returned the second time to Egypt, had not Lady Hamilton's influence with the Queen of Naples caused letters to be wrote to the Governor of Syracuse, that he was to encourage the Fleet being supplied with everything, should they put into any port in Sicily. We put into Syracuse and received every supply, went to Egypt, and destroyed the French Fleet.

Could I have rewarded these services, I would not now call upon my Country; but as that has not been in my power, I leave Emma, Lady Hamilton, therefore, a legacy to my King and Country, that they will give her an ample provision to maintain her rank in life. I also leave to the beneficence of my Country my adopted daughter, Horatia Nelson Thompson; and I desire she will use in future the name of Nelson only.

These are the only favours I ask of my King and Country at this moment when I am going to fight their Battle. May God bless my King and Country, and all those who I hold dear. My relations it is needless to mention — they will, of course, be amply provided for."

This document was witnessed by Blackwood and Hardy on —

"October the twenty first, one thousand eight hundred and five, then in sight of the combined fleets of France and Spain, distant about ten miles."

8th May to 16th May, 1981

Bequest To The Nation

by **Terence Rattigan**

Directed by **Don Anderson**

THE CAST

In order of appearance

George Matcham **Michael Hards**
Katherine Matcham **Margaret Mann**
Betsy **Fay Whelan**
George Matcham, Jnr. **Chris Wren**
Emily **Cathy Finn**
Frances, Lady Nelson **Pat Sutcliffe**
Nelson **Richard Woodward**
Lord Barham **Robert Singleton**
Emma Hamilton **Janine Grime**
Francesca **Joyce Goldsworth**
Lord Minto **Ray Mann**
Captain Hardy **Arnold Gorse**
Rev. William Nelson **Robert Burnett-Hughes**
Sarah Nelson **Sheila Burnett-Hughes**
Captain Blackwood **Roger Thwaites**
Footmen **Greg Braithwaite, Mark Huxtable**
Maids **Fay Whelan, Cathy Finn**

ACT ONE

Scene 1 The Matcham's house in Bath
Scene 2 The Admiralty
Scene 3 Emma Hamilton's house in Clarges Street
Scene 4 Lady Nelson's house in Somerset Street

INTERVAL

ACT TWO

Nelson's house at Merton

STAGE STAFF

Stage Manager **Peter Beswick**
Deputy Stage Manager **Katie Thwaites**
Asst. Stage Manager (Book) **Betty Mook**
Asst. Stage Managers (Cast) **Judith Chalmers**
Trudi Hirsch
Properties ... **Celia Pope, Jackie Iddon, David Charters**
Lighting ... **Sid Coley, Graham Hodgson, Kay McCallum**
Sound **Fran Percival**
Wardrobe **Olive Blue, Vera Darrah,**
Margaret Horne, Maggie Lancaster

The set designed and portraits painted by **David Charters**
Lighting design **Sid Coley**

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

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Gents' costumes by Homburg
Harpichord by courtesy of Southport Arts Centre
Regency Table by Paraphernalia
Antique furniture and objects d'art from Celia Pope,
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Chandelier and triple mirror from McCabes
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Sailing ship from Victoria Park Cafe

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

The main action of the play covers the twenty-five days between Nelson's return to England on August 20th and his departure for Cadiz on September 13th, 1805. The 'Naval Action fought off Cape Trafalgar' was on October 21st of that year, and the final scene of the play would have taken place some days after the news reached London on November 5th.

First-aid facilities are provided at this theatre by St. John
Ambulance Brigade, whose members give their
services voluntarily.

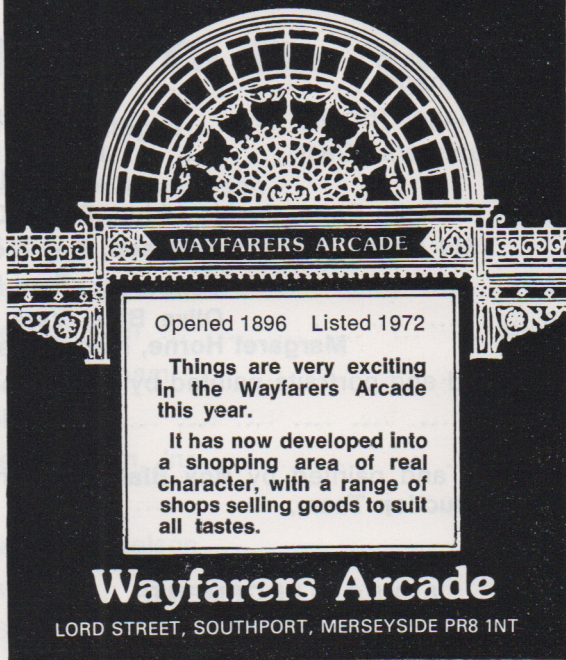
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Bequest to the Nation

Nelson and Lady Hamilton

When Nelson died in 1803 he was mourned by a nation who saw him not only as a glorious hero, which indeed he was, but as a man to love. Today he is remembered as England's greatest sailor, the victor of Trafalgar, a commander who resisted the commands of his superiors whilst insisting on absolute obedience from his inferiors and the reformer of the appalling conditions in which the ordinary sailor was expected to serve his country.

Emma Hamilton died in 1815 in obscurity abroad. Always extravagant, she had been imprisoned for debt, but had fled to Calais. Few can have mourned her passing. Today she is remembered as Nelson's mistress.

Horatio Nelson was an extraordinary man who led an extraordinary private life to match an extraordinary career. The circumstances of his birth were, however, ordinary enough. He was born in 1758, the fifth surviving child of the Rev. Edmund and Catherine Nelson. Several members of the Nelson family had been and were to be drawn to the church; the seafaring connection came through Catherine's family. After an education at the Royal Grammar School, Norwich and Paston School in North Walsham, the twelve-year-old Horatio was taken on board as a midshipman by his uncle, Captain Suckling.

In the next few years the boy learnt the sailor's craft travelling to the West Indies in a merchant ship, serving on a guardship in the Thames and joining an expedition to the Arctic. Between 1773 and 1776, now an Able Seaman, he travelled in the East Indies, where he contracted the fever that nearly killed him and was to affect his health for the rest of his life. In 1777 he passed the necessary examination and was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant although he was under-age. Promotion came quickly, for the following year he was in command of his own vessel.

It was in 1779 that Nelson became involved in his first love affair whilst ashore at Quebec. After a month's acquaintance he was intent on marrying Mary Simpson, but friends dissuaded him. Four years later during a brief peace-time visit to France, he was again on the verge of matrimony, but was side tracked by professional concerns. However, he did finally commit himself in 1787 when he took as his wife Fanny Nisbet, a widow with a young son whom he met in the West Indies. Two letters written during their courtship contain words that hindsight clothes with irony. To his brother William he wrote: "I have not the least doubt that we shall be a happy pair: the fault will be mine if we are not." To Fanny he wrote: "Duty is the great business of a sea officer. All private consideration must give way to it, no matter how painful."

Nelson and his new wife returned to England in November 1787 and went to live with his father in the vicarage at Burnham Thorpe. For the next few years he fretted at life ashore and bombarded the Admiralty with requests for a command. Fortunately for him France declared war in 1793 and Nelson was dispatched to take part in Hood's blockade of Toulon. It was during this campaign that he was

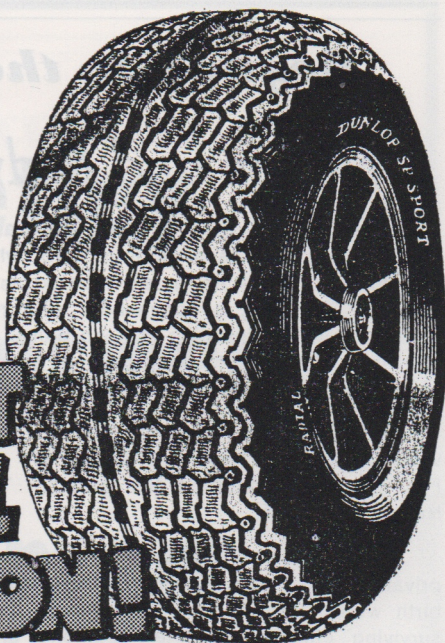
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Bequest to the Nation

NELSON and LADY HAMILTON continued

sent to Naples where he first met the British Representative, Sir William Hamilton and his wife, Emma. In the years that followed, as the English and French fought in the Mediterranean, Nelson forged his reputation as a fearless and inspired leader. He received injuries that lost him an arm and the sight of one eye, but won victories at Cape St. Vincent and Aboukir Bay that brought him gifts, honours and a peerage.

After the Battle of the Nile in 1798 Nelson returned to Naples for the first time in five years. Emma Hamilton greeted him as a hero; she freely offered him the admiration and worship he loved. The victor was vanquished. Thus started a love affair that was to last the rest of his life.

Emma was an unusual person to find in diplomatic circles. Born in 1762, the daughter of a Cheshire blacksmith, she had moved to London in her teens and eventually had become the mistress of Sir Harry Featherstonehaugh. Whilst still under his protection she had become pregnant by another man and had been sent home. However, she had returned to London becoming, this time, the mistress of Sir Charles Greville. He had introduced her to his uncle, Sir William Hamilton, who had married her. She is said to have been beautiful, though rather large and somewhat coarse of character and conduct. Her passionate affair with Lord Nelson soon became the talk of Naples as it was to become the talk of London.

When the Hamiltons were recalled to England, Nelson went too. Part of the journey was taken overland with Emma showing him off in the capitals of Europe. His welcome in England was rapturous, but his wife, when they finally met again in London, must have been less warm in her greeting. Emma recorded that she immediately felt for Lady Nelson "an antipathy not to be described." Nelson himself took little trouble to hide his detachment from his wife or his partiality for Emma, beyond maintaining—to the end—that their relationship was entirely innocent.

At the end of 1800 Nelson finally broke with his wife and almost immediately escaped back to sea where an elaborate falsehood allowed him to receive messages regarding the welfare of his illegitimate baby daughter, Horatia. After his inconclusive victory in the Battle of Copenhagen he returned home and bought the estate at Merton where he installed the Hamilton's and his ageing father. In 1802 his father died and the following year Sir William, too, died in his wife's arms, holding Nelson's hand.

After a campaign against Villeneuve in the Mediterranean, Nelson returned home, for the last time in the autumn of 1805. When he left, it was to fight the decisive Battle of Trafalgar—and to lose his life. Before the fighting started he added the famous codicil to his will bequeathing Emma Hamilton to the nation. He died, secure in the knowledge of a British victory, with the words: "Thank God I have done my duty."

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Bequest To The Nation

"1805"

At Viscount Nelson's lavish funeral,
While the mob milled and yelled about St. Paul's,
A General chatted with an Admiral:

'One of your Colleagues, Sir, remarked to-day
'That Nelson's **exit**, though to be lamented,
Falls not inopportune, in its way.'

'He was a thorn in our flesh,' came the reply—
'The most bird-witted, unaccountable,
Odd little runt that ever I did spy.

'One arm, one peeper, vain as Pretty Poll,
A meddler, too, in foreign politics
And gave his heart in pawn to a plain moll.

'He would dare lecture us Sea Lords, and then
Would treat his ratings as though men of honour
And play at leap-frog with his midshipmen:

'We tried to box him down, but up he popped,
And when he'd banged Napoleon at the Nile
Became too much the hero to be dropped.

'You've heard that Copenhagen "blind eye" story?
We'd tied him to Nurse Parker's apron-strings—
By G-d, he snipped them through and snatched the glory!

'Yet,' cried the General, 'six-and twenty-sail
Captured or sunk by him off Trafalgar—
That writes a handsome **finis** to the tale.'

'Handsome enough. The seas are England's now.
That fellow's foibles need no longer plague us.
He died most creditably, I'll allow.'

'And, Sir, the secret of his victories?'
'By his unServicelike, familiar ways, Sir,
He made the whole Fleet love him, damn his eyes!'

Robert Graves

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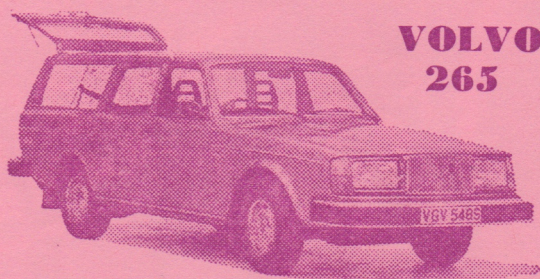
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