

THE LITTLE THEATRE

THE HOME OF THE SOUTHPORT DRAMATIC CLUB

1-9 February 1985

BEYOND A JOKE

by

DEREK BENFIELD

Directed by

JANINE GRIME

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Directed by **Joyce Goldsworth**

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Directed by **PAT SUTCLIFFE**

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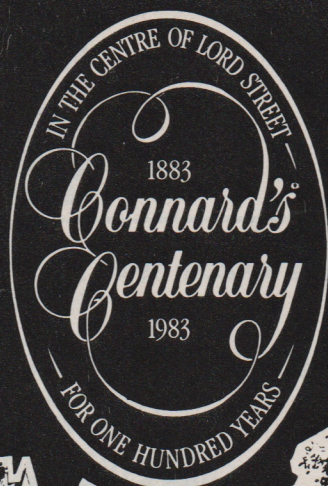
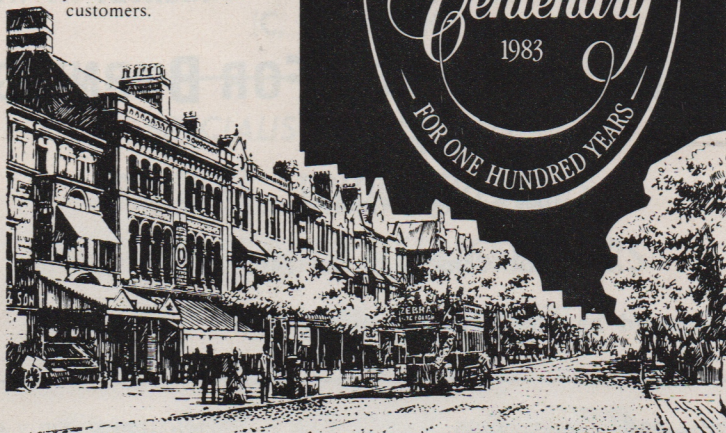
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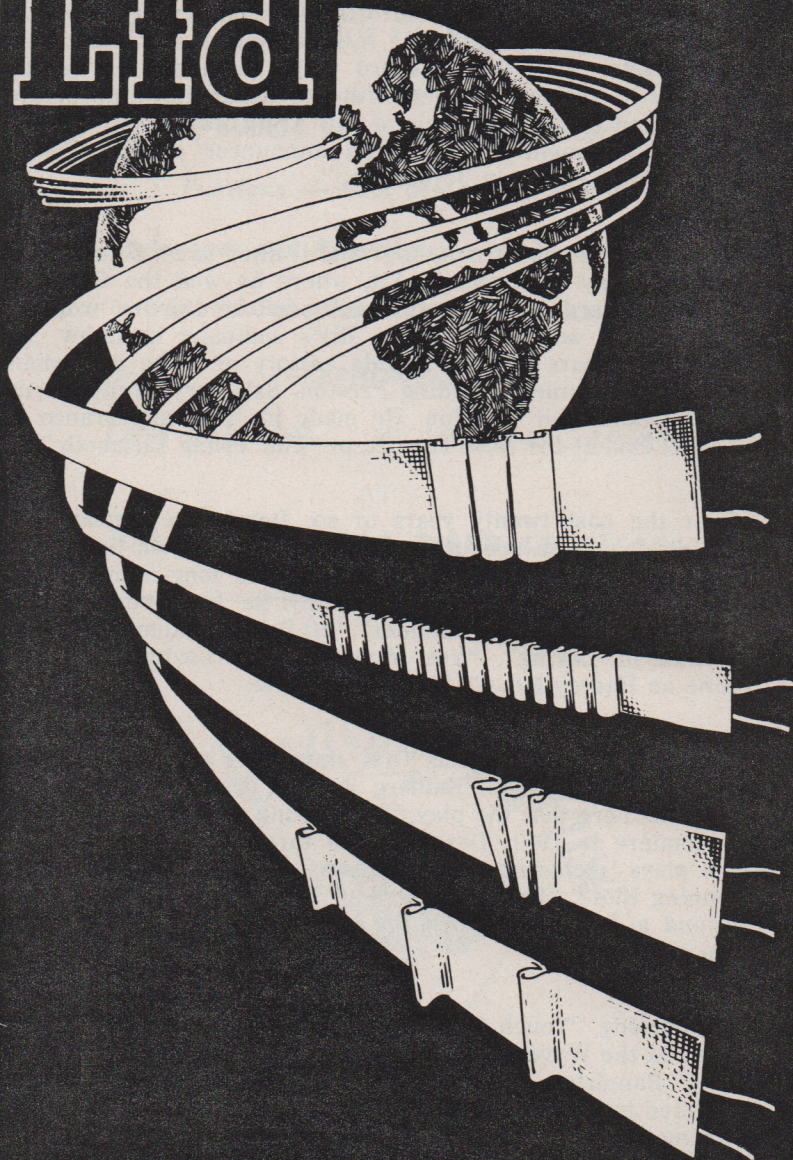


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DEREK BENFIELD

Derek Benfield was born in Bradford, Yorkshire, the son of a journalist. He was educated at Bingley Grammar School where, in addition to his academic efforts, he soon acquired a taste for the theatre when appearing in school plays and later as an amateur actor with the Bradford Civic Playhouse. He joined the Army in 1944 and served with the Green Howards before being posted to the play unit of the Army Bureau of Current Affairs. Subsequently he was an announcer on the Forces Broadcasting Service in Jerusalem.

Derek was demobilised in 1947 and trained as an actor at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, where he won the Gertrude Lawrence Award for character acting before starting work as a professional actor with Brian Rix's company in Ilkley. He spent many years playing a wide variety of parts in various repertory companies including Preston, Salisbury, Hull, Worthing, Richmond and Croydon. He made his first appearance in the West End at the New Theatre in "The Young Elizabeth."

Over the past twenty years or so, Derek has appeared in countless television productions and was well-known to viewers for his performance as 'Bill Riley' in the long-running BBC series, "The Brothers." More recently he has been seen in "Rumpole of the Bailey", "Minder", "Hi-De-Hi", "Remembrance", "A Kind of Loving", "Yes Minister", "In Loving Memory", "Shine on Harvey Moon", "Hallelujah", etc.

Derek Benfield wrote his first stage play while working in repertory for Reginald Salberg at the Preston Hippodrome, and it was here that the play, "The Young in Heart", was given its première in 1951. Derek has so far written 18 full-length stage plays, including such successes as "Wild Goose Chase", "Running Riot", "Post Horn Gallop", "Caught on the Hop" and "Beyond a Joke" (in which the late Arthur Lowe starred for three years.)

His comedy, "Touch and Go", which had its first performance in 1982 at the Wyvern Theatre, Swindon, starring Henry McGee, Trevor Bannister and Margaret Ashcroft, has already been translated into four languages. The German version is currently enjoying a successful run in Hanover, and other productions are booked for Berlin, Bonn, Dusseldorf, Hamburg and Stuttgart; a Flemish version is on tour in Belgium; the French adaptation is due to open in Paris later this year; and an Italian production is now under negotiation. Derek's latest comedy, "Look Who's Talking", opens at Swindon on April 26th, starring Hilary Tindall, Donald Hewlett and Christopher Strauli.

Derek is married and has two children and one grandchild.



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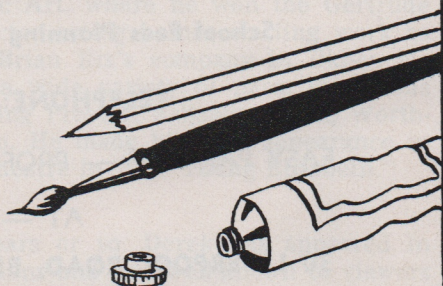
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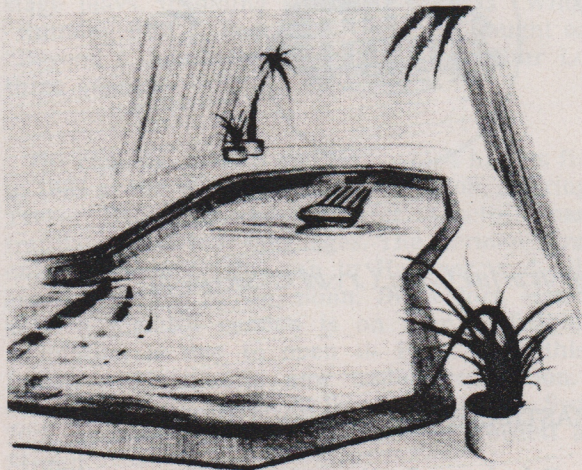
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PUBLICITY COMMITTEE

The work of the Play Selection and Casting Committee and the Production Committee has been given in previous programmes.

'On the first night of each production an apprehensive group of five sit . . . ' This is part of a quote from the Play Selection article — it is thanks to our patrons that there are more than five in the first night audience. It would not only be the nightmare of the Publicity Committee if it were otherwise.

Publicity is described as the technique or process of attracting public attention to people and products by the use of the appropriate media or the public interest resulting from information supplied by such a process.

Southport is more fortunate than many other towns of similar size in having a wide choice of live entertainment in music and the arts. Two professional theatres and a number of amateur dramatic and operatic societies present shows throughout the year and the latter use this Theatre for many productions.

With all this competition the Southport Dramatic Club choose their annual parcel of plays with the hope that they will be pleasing to most of our audiences for most of the time.

How are the plays publicised? Firstly, August sees the preparation of leaflets announcing the four productions, including the pantomime for the first half of the season. A new innovation for the first time last year was the distribution of 20,000 leaflets in Southport and Formby using the facilities of the Midweek Visiter. This leaflet also gives the possible presentations for the second half of the season together with the special subscriber ticket prices—8 shows for the price of 6. Nearly 1500 patrons including first nighters avail themselves of these special prices thus obtaining seats at what is possibly the cheapest cost in town for shows of this nature.

The seating capacity for the eight nights of each play is just over 3,000 and a little simple arithmetic shows that another 1,500 seats remain to be sold for each show. Advertisements are placed in both the Visiter Group of papers and the Star which cover the areas in which the majority of our patrons live. In addition to normal advertisements space has been taken for special occasions, such as a half page in a recent edition of the Visiter covering Jack and the Beanstalk.

Programmes are produced for each show with articles of interest. An outstanding feature of each programme is the front cover—a product of the pen of one of our talented members. Photographs are taken for each show and displayed in the local press and at the Theatre. Previous shows have been recalled with photographs displayed in the bar and foyer.

Articles appear in the Friday editions of the Southport Visiter giving current news and details of future activities of the Dramatic Club with the initials 'F.O.H.'—not just one person but five—the members of the Publicity Committee in turn. Whilst this is being written 400 posters and a number of smaller leaflets are being printed for display in shops, hotels and offices in the area giving details of the next four shows.

The best form of advertising is a recommendation from a satisfied customer. It is well known to the Publicity Committee that despite all their efforts throughout the year that you, our friends and patrons, do a first class advertising job for the Club. So, our very sincere thanks to you all and may you enjoy many, many, more shows at the 'Little.'

F. O. H.

1st — 9th February, 1985



BEYOND A JOKE

by DEREK BENFIELD

Directed by Janine Grime

First presented at the Shanklin Theatre, July 1979

CAST

JANE	...	SHEILA FURLONG
ANDREW	...	ALEC ROBSON
GEOFF	...	DAVID PARRY
SALLY	...	VAL WHITESIDE
SARAH	...	DIANA SMITHER
VICAR	...	COLIN McCLUSKEY
AUDREY	...	ALISON CHISHOLM
EDGAR	...	RICHARD DAWSON

~~~~~

Action takes place in the drawing room and part of the garden of Andrew and Jane's detached house in the country. It is summertime.

## ACT I

Scene 1 Friday evening.

Scene 2 Saturday morning.

## ACT II

Scene 1 A few seconds later.

Scene 2 After lunch, the same day.

TIME — THE PRESENT



## STAGE STAFF

|                               |                |                  |                  |     |     |     |                                                 |
|-------------------------------|----------------|------------------|------------------|-----|-----|-----|-------------------------------------------------|
| Stage Manager                 | ...            | ...              | ...              | ... | ... | ... | John Gosling                                    |
| Asst. Stage Manager (Book)    | ...            | ...              | ...              | ... | ... | ... | Cathie Finn                                     |
| Asst. Stage Manager (Cast)    | ...            | ...              | ...              | ... | ... | ... | Carol Pym                                       |
| Properties and Stage Dressing | by             | ...              | ...              | ... | ... | ... | Sherel Coley,<br>Fran Percival, Debra Sawbridge |
| Lighting                      | ...            | ...              | ...              | ... | ... | ... | Tracy Wilkinson                                 |
| Sound                         | ...            | ...              | ...              | ... | ... | ... | Peter Beswick                                   |
| Wardrobe Supervision          | ...            | ...              | ...              | ... | ... | ... | Barbara Preston                                 |
| Programme Cover               | ...            | ...              | ...              | ... | ... | ... | David Charters                                  |
| Set designed and painted by   | Roy Blatchford | and built by the | production team. |     |     |     |                                                 |

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## DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Comedy being my 'first love' I am delighted to be instrumental in bringing 'Beyond a Joke' to the stage. A 'bee-buzzing' summer setting with humour and some surprises is, I feel, a good way to rid us all of the winter blues and chills. Not a few of the latter have beset the hard working cast with whom it has been a pleasure to share paper tissues.

JANINE GRIME

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- Lounge furniture — Waring & Gillow (Southport) Ltd.  
Garden shrubs — Recreation & Amenities Dept., Sefton B.C.  
Foliage — Broadbents.  
Patio tubs — Tony Aindow Garden Centre.  
Flowers — Scanda Plants, Kew.  
Bits and pieces — S.D.C. members.

# DRAMATIS PERSONAE

or some little known facts about the cast of "Beyond a Joke"

As may be expected the present cast are no strangers to each other. **Sheila Furlong** is probably the best known to audiences at the Little Theatre, having acted and directed for both the S.D.C. and The Garrick Players for many years. Her most recent part was in "Death Trap" and the last play she directed for the club was "French Without Tears."

Another long standing member, **Diana Smither**, began her involvement with amateur theatre in the West Midlands, and has appeared in several of our productions, including "Whose Life is it Anyway" and "A Life";—two lives in 10 years, can't be bad! A member of the Play Selection and Casting Committee, Diana must share some of the blame for the choice of this play!

**Alec Robson** had done the rounds of several amateur groups in Hampstead, Reading, Liverpool and Malvern, before joining the S.D.C. in Southport. His first part here was in "Ghost Train." He says he prefers comedy, and, if a trifle low—well so much the jollier.

**Richard Dawson** tells us he joined the S.D.C. as a relief from labouring over a hot surgery all day! He modestly claims to be limited in the parts he plays, but has acquitted himself well in many roles.

A member for seven years, **Alison Chisholm** says she learned to act by watching "Crossroads." She wishes it to be known that all but five of the grey hairs are not her own. She also appeared in "Whose Life is it Anyway" and "Big Bad Mouse."

**Val Whiteside** became associated with the club in 1976 and has appeared in "Children's Day," "The Corn is Green," "Sextet," "Murder at the Vicarage," "A Life" and "Whose Life is it Anyway." Next stop — Hollywood!

You'll recognise **David Parry** from many productions, including more recently, "Ten Times Table," "Journey's End" and "Murder on the Nile." He says he's trying to move out of "angry young men" roles, and could be succeeding—on stage if not off!

Dramatic talent runs high in the **McCluskey** family. Colin's son Mark has just finished in our Panto, and **Colin** himself has appeared in many plays, since joining the S.D.C. in 1977. He prefers small character parts as he doesn't like to have too many lines to learn.

All these interesting characters have come together very happily over the past few weeks to present "Beyond a Joke" under Jannie Grime's able direction. Perhaps they'll all meet up again in a future S.D.C. production.

A. S.

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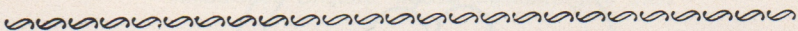
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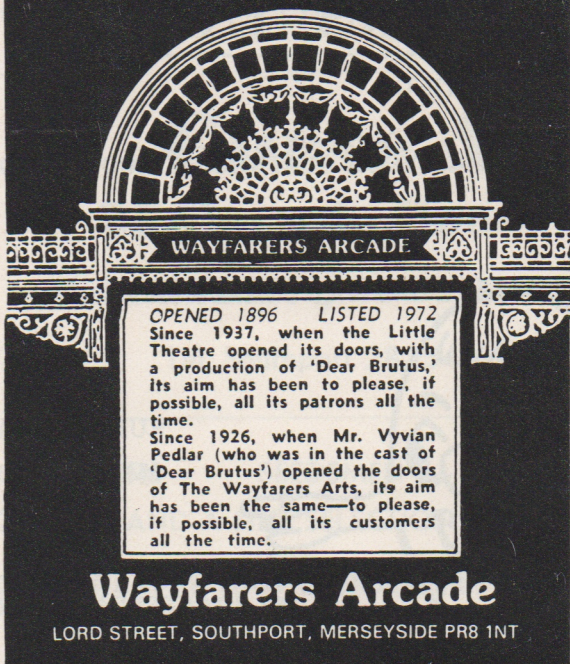
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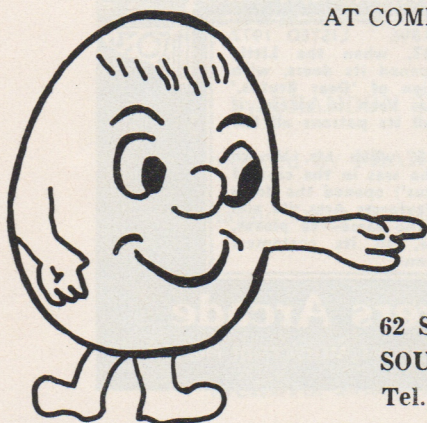
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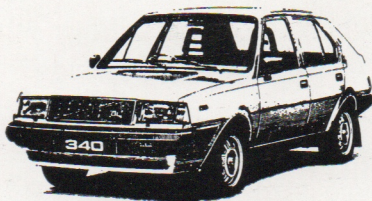
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