



# LITTLE THEATRE

A  
SOUTHPORT DRAMATIC CLUB  
PRESENTATION

*A wonderfully affectionate and compassionate play  
about the theatre.*



# THE DRESSER

**By Ronald Harwood**

Directed by Ray Mann

**25th February -  
5th March 2005**

**7.45pm**

  
**LITTLE THEATRE**  
SOUTHPORT  
HOME OF  
THE SOUTHPORT DRAMATIC CLUB

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# Director's Notes



It's perfectly obvious why *The Dresser* is a play that fascinates those of us who spend our lives, as amateurs or professionals, enthralled by the Stage.

The Guardian's theatre critic, Michael Billington said of it: "*The Dresser* is a wonderfully affectionate play about the theatre. It captures not only the equivocal relationship between Sir and the dresser but also the feeling that the back-stage world is itself a little kingdom, a tatty Camelot worshipping a prop Holy Grail".

Therein lies its fascination! It explains why the cast and I have felt the challenge, so keenly, of bringing the text to life. Again, our colleagues in the various aspects of the production team - costume, sound, properties, lighting, set design and construction - have all been inspired by the challenge of creating 'the backstage world' of this provincial theatre in wartime Britain.

Of course, having said all that, none of it matters a jot if our efforts fail to create a fascinating experience for you, our audience.

So may we invite you through the Stage Door to our "tatty Camelot", and back in time to those highly charged days of the Blitz - to see for yourselves.

Ray Mann  
Director.



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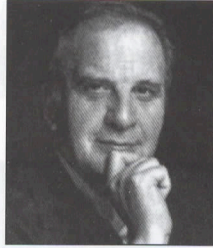
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Project part funded by  
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# Ronald Harwood



Born in South Africa in 1934, Ronald Harwood moved to London in 1951 to pursue a career in the Theatre. After attending the Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts, he joined the Shakespeare Company of Sir Donald Wolfit, one of the last "actor-managers" of Great Britain.

From 1953 to 1958, Harwood became the personal dresser of Sir Donald. he would later draw from this experience to write this evening's play. He also wrote a biography of the great man (published in 1971) entitled "Sir Donald Wolfit CBE: His life and work in the Unfashionable Theatre."

In 1960 he was to take up writing as his main career and proved prolific in penning plays, novels and non-fiction books. One of the recurring themes of his work was a fascination for the stage, its artists and artisans as displayed in *The Dresser*, *After the Lions* (about Sarah Bernhardt), *Another Time* (about a gifted piano player) and *Quartet* (about retired opera singers) - all productions which the Southport Dramatic Club have had pleasure in performing over the years. Harwood also has a strong interest in the World War II period as highlighted by the films *Operation Daybreak*, *Taking Sides* and *The Pianist* (for which he received an Oscar for "Best Adapted Screenplay" in 2003).

Made fellow of the Royal Society of Literature in 1974 and Commander of the British Empire in 1999, Harwood was president of the International PEN Club from 1993 to 1997 after presiding over the British section during the four previous years.

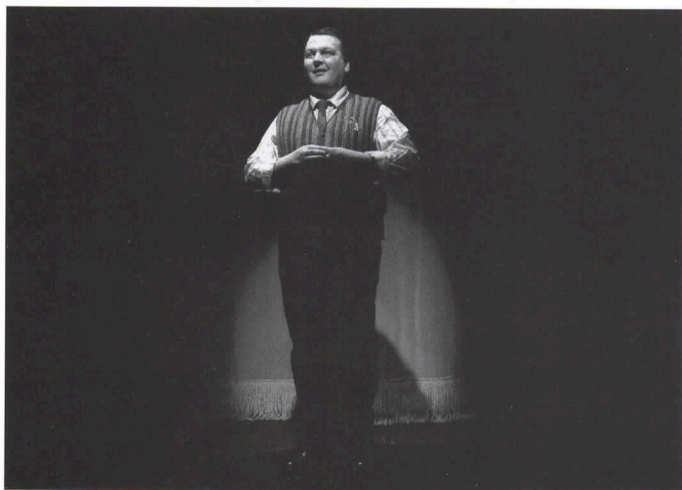
His comedy, *Quartet* performed at the Albery Theatre in 1999, was nominated for a Laurence Olivier Theatre Award in 2000 for "Best New Comedy".

*It may be of interest to know, that after a successful pre-West End run at the Richmond Theatre, actors, Nicholas Lyndhurst (of Only Fools and Horses) and Julian Glover (who recently played King Lear at the Globe Theatre) are opening in The Dresser at the Duke of York's Theatre on 22nd February, 2005.*

# THE DRESSER



# THE DRESSER



# THE DRESSER





# THE DRESSER



# THE DRESSER

by **Ronald Harwood**

Directed by **Ray Mann**

## Cast

Norman ..... Stephen Hughes-Alty  
Her Ladyship ..... Margaret Mann  
Madge ..... Sue Harrop  
Sir ..... David Davies  
Irene ..... Ceri Watkins  
Geoffrey Thornton ..... David Charters  
Mr. Oxenby ..... Charles Preston  
Kent ..... David Harrop  
Gloucester ..... Bill Bright

*Other parts are spoken by members of the cast.*

The action takes place in a provincial theatre: January 1942

### **Act 1**

Before Curtain-up

### **Act 2**

After Curtain-up

There will be an interval of 20 minutes between Acts 1 and 2.

# Staging

Stage Manager .....	Andrew Connard
Assistant Stage Manager (Book) .....	June Hunter
Wardrobe .....	SDC and Cast
Props .....	Sabrina Regazzoni
	Fran Percival
	Barbara Beardsell
Lighting .....	Tony Berry
	Colin Wood
Sound .....	Matthew Woodhams
Crew .....	Colin Haynes
Set Design .....	Syd Coley
Set Constructed by .....	SDC Production Team
Scenic Artist .....	Bob Jessamine
Photography by .....	Neil Hickson

## Acknowledgements

The Director would like to thank:  
Timpani - Wigan L.E.A. and Chris Dickinson.

The management reserves the right to refuse admission to the auditorium after curtain up until a suitable opportunity occurs. First aid facilities are provided at this theatre by St John Ambulance Brigade, whose members give their services voluntarily.

•  
*Why not beat the rush and pre-order your interval drinks in the bar?*  
•

An induction loop is installed in this theatre for the benefit of hearing impaired patrons.  
Please turn your hearing aid to 'T'.

•  
*Please ensure that all mobile telephones are switched off*  
•

At the end of tonight's performance you may leave by any of the exits, all of which will be open.  
In an emergency, this theatre can be emptied in three minutes or less if everyone leaves in an orderly manner.

•  
Smoking is prohibited in the auditorium.

THEATRE LICENSEE, BRIAN FORSHAW

# THE LITTLE THEATRE DURING THE WAR YEARS

September 1939 – October 1946

As the current production *The Dresser* depicts the evocative and difficult years of keeping the world of theatre going, against great odds, during war-time – it may be of interest to our audiences to know something of the history of our own Little Theatre during these difficult times.

At the outbreak of the Second World War, a great many professional theatres in certain areas were closed, where danger of air attacks was considered by the Government to be too great. Thus, a popular and successful Repertory Company in Sheffield found themselves without a venue to perform in. Their enterprising Producer/Director, Mr. Geoffrey Ost then approached the Executive Committee of the Southport Dramatic Club to see if it might be possible to hire the Little Theatre. After detailed negotiations this was agreed and the Sheffield Repertory Company rented the Little Theatre “for eight weeks, in the first instance, with an option to renew at the end of the period for four weeks at a time, at a rent of 20 pounds per week.” They were to stay for seven years!

The Company reached Southport on Saturday, 16th September and after a week's rehearsal, opened with “Laburnam Grove” on the 25th September, 1939. Although praised by the critics, attendance was poor. Apparently Southport, used to monthly productions by the dramatic club, was not yet ready for weekly rep! In the first two months the company lost £800 and were seriously considering withdrawing from the project. Fortunately, the tide turned – a large influx of war-time government departments were moved to Southport bringing with them a new potential audience – and thus began seven years of continuous and highly successful repertory theatre at “The Little”. After 240 different plays were performed – the final production *You Can't Take It with You* took place on 12th October, 1946.

Many famous people played for the Sheffield Repertory Company including Lally Bowers, Jessica Dunning, Joan Knowles, Cyril Luckham and Lester Barrett. They became well-known to Southport audiences and later more widely known following their appearances on the London stage, and in film and television.

Much later when renovations were completed, nine months after the tragic New Year's Day fire of 1988, we were delighted to invite Cyril Luckham and his wife, Lally Bowers, to a Grand Gala Evening to officially re-open the theatre for us. It was a night to remember, made particularly special by the wonderful reminiscences and stories told by Mr. Luckham of his experiences and happy times spent in Southport, with amusing references to food rationing, lack of transport, clothes coupons and the wonderful camaraderie during the war years, when playing with the Sheffield Repertory Company.

Grateful acknowledgement goes to Mr. Benny Darrah for information given in his book “A History of the Southport Dramatic Club, and its Little Theatre, 1913-1997”.

## SDC PRODUCTIONS IN THE WAR YEARS

From the opening of the Theatre, on 30th September 1937, until the Sheffield Rep. left, in October 1946, the Southport Dramatic Club presented 20 plays. During the war years, in addition to *Ladies in Retirement* (see photograph below), other presentations were *Suspect*, *Gaslight*, and several one-act plays.



*Ladies in Retirement.*

Back row (left to right): Joan Duncan, Mamie Cobb, Marion Widdows.  
Seated, middle row: Barbara Hill, Dorothy Todd, Mabel Hall.  
Front: A very young Benny Darrah.

# LARGE PRINT PHOTOCOPIES

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# THE DRESSER

## Cast

### **Stephen Hughes-Alty** *Norman*

Although primarily a director and actor, Stephen has tried his hand at virtually every other stage craft from lighting design to stage management. Oddly enough, he has never been a dresser but is extremely grateful he has been given the opportunity to become one for the run of the play. Trudi, Pam and James, this one is for you!



### **Margaret Mann** *Her Ladyship*

In her last three appearances on stage, Margaret was beheaded in the first, appeared from the grave as Jane Austen in the second, and played a stone-deaf French woman in the third! This time, as Her Ladyship, she obeys Sir's every whim i.e. "Sir", the actor-manager and stage husband; "Sir", the play's director and actual husband and "Sir", the current SDC Chairman, who is playing Geoffrey. Having previously directed everyone in the cast, plus the director, she regards it as a very talented group!



### **Sue Harrop** *Madge*

Last season Sue played the dresser to the leading lady in the play *Star Quality*. Now she is taking on the role of Madge, the stage manager, in *The Dresser*, another play about a theatrical company but quite different from the former. Sue says it is a pleasure to work with such a good script and an excellent team.



# THE DRESSER

## Cast



### **David Davies** *Sir*

David's career in theatre began at the age of six as a dwarf (he declines to say which one) in a local Sunday school production of Snow White. Appropriately for tonight's play, he remembers, at that tender age, hearing Hitler's doodlebugs flying over his Yorkshire home. In recent years he has both directed, or appeared in, many comedies, dramas and whodunnits for the SDC and now spends much time with his other hobbies – fishing, reading, some writing, walking in Snowdonia and dabbling in water-colours. Nothing would have induced him to have to have been a 'Sir' in real life!



### **Ceri Watkins** *Irene*

Ceri has recently returned to Southport after nearly five years, part of which was spent on a memorable trip to Australia where she neither flashed her underwear at every opportunity nor seduced older men! She did however have a fantastic time and is just as delighted to be treading the Little Theatre's boards again. She would like to dedicate her performance to the memory of Gorman the Gnome (In *Babes in the Wood* Panto 1997) Ed.



### **David Charters** *Geoffrey Thornton*

When a previously cast actor withdrew, David Charters took over the role of Geoffrey Thornton, who, in the play, *The Dresser* takes over the role of 'Fool' when a previously cast actor withdraws.

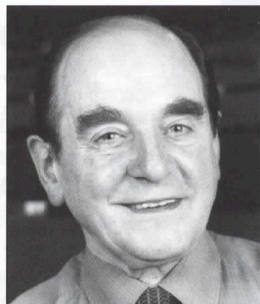


# THE DRESSER

## Cast

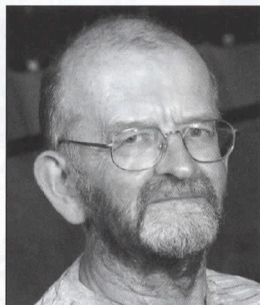
### **Charles Preston** *Mr. Oxenby*

Another vignette from Charles - unlike his familiar portrayals of likeable servants or amusing eccentrics, Oxenby is not genial, he is bitter, calculating, self seeking and generally unlikeable, *an actor* who probably, should not be in The Business.....



### **David Harrop** *Kent*

Having been an SDC member for ten years this is only David's second acting role. The first, last season, being on-stage in a non-speaking part. In *The Dresser* David is heard but not seen (next time it could be a combination of these two roles, David) Ed.



### **Bill Bright** *Gloucester*

Bill's last appearance on The Little Stage was playing the Judge in *Witness For The Prosecution*, but he has played many roles, over the years in Southport Amateur Operatic Society's productions, in addition to being chairman, of SAOS. His only appearances, these days are as a front of house steward here for SDC, after being editor of our in house members' bulletin. Unfortunately Bill will only be heard, and not seen in this production of *The Dresser* (Good to "see" you again, Bill)Ed.





# LITTLE THEATRE

## SOUTHPORT

### DRAMATIC CLUB

## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY



16th - 19th March 2005

### DRACULA

An SDC Youth Theatre Production  
By John Godber and Jane Thornton,  
directed by James Hughes-Alty  
An SDC Youth Production

14th May - 21st May 2005

### ANNIE

A Birkdale Orpheus Production



1st - 9th April 2005

### INSIDE JOB

Murder, Diamonds, Plot and Counter Plots  
By Brian Clemens,  
directed by Celia Pope  
An SDC Production  
sponsored by Master Lock & Safe



24th May - 28th May 2005  
**THE BETRAYAL**

by Harold Pinter, directed by Alistair Hewitt  
An SDC Bar Production

8th June - 11th June 2005

### OLDE TYME MUSIC HALL

A Waterloo & Crosby Operatic Society  
Production



29th April - 7th May 2005

### 'ALLO 'ALLO

Based on the hugely popular TV comedy series.  
By Jeremy Lloyd and David Croft,  
directed by Margaret Mann  
An SDC Production  
sponsored by Davies Maintenance

15th June - 18th June 2005

### GUYS & DOLLS

A Maghull Musical Theatre Company Production

29th June - 2nd July 2005

### HIGH SOCIETY

A Southport Amateur  
Operatic Society Production



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# LITTLE THEATRE

A  
SOUTHPORT DRAMATIC CLUB  
PRESENTATION

*An SDC Youth Theatre Production*



# DRACULA

BY JOHN GODBER AND JANE THORNTON

DIRECTED BY JAMES HUGHES-ALTY

**16th - 19th March 2005**

**7.30pm**

Tickets: £6.50 and £5.00

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Mon 14th - Tues 15th March 11am - 5pm

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# LITTLE THEATRE

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PRESENTATION

*Murder, Diamonds, Plot and Counter Plots.*



# *Inside Job*

*By Brian Clemens*

*Directed by Celia Pope*

**1st - 9th April 2005**

**7.45pm**

Tickets: £8.00 and £6.75

Box Office:

Sat 26th March 11am - 1pm

Tues 29th - Thurs 31st March 11am - 5pm

Fri 1st - Sat 9th April 11am - 7.45pm



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