

NOEL COWARD'S

HAY FEVER

ABOUT HAY FEVER

Hay Fever was first produced in 1925, a year that marked the playwright's first major success. During this season, The Vortex, Fallen Angels, and Hay Fever were all running simultaneously in the West End. Noel Coward was twenty-six.

Critics of the time and since have quibbled that though the play is amusing, it lacks "substance". Indeed, on the surface it is very nearly plotless: four guests, each invited independently by members of the Bohemian Bliss family, arrive on a Saturday afternoon to spend a peaceful weekend in the country. The Blisses proceed to form and rearrange romantic liaisons with their visitors, to woo, win, and abandon them. In what Sheridan Morley calls "a twenties version of Albee's memorable parlor game 'Get the Guests.'"

The superficiality of the piece is deceptive. Although Coward himself claimed that he "did the whole thing in three days . . . and didn't even rewrite," the structure of the play is extraordinarily tight and displays a symmetry as fine as that of Private Lives. The content as well as the structure commands a director's respect. But Coward himself called Hay Fever "far and away one of the most difficult plays to perform that I have ever encountered." Unlike most plays that "read well", one finds, in rehearsing Hay Fever, that the characters are infinitely more complex than they seem at first glance; that the comic moments are generated more by character interaction than by the clever lines; and that the acting must have a strong underlying realism if the play is to work at all. Perhaps this is due to the presence of a serious theme, which Albee may have picked up for Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf. But it is a theme that Coward never brings to the surface: he would prefer to tease rather than to confront the audience with seriousness. And in spite of our modern affinity for encounter group plays like Virginia Woolf, I'm not sure that at least technically Hay Fever isn't the better play.

CAST

Simon Bliss.....Tom Reilly
Sorel Bliss.....Diana Mann
Clara.....Nona Vaala
Judith Bliss.....Darlene Lorán
David Bliss.....Richard Irvin
Sandy Tyrell.....Michael Cadigan
Myra Arundel.....Jane Goodwin
Bhubaniswar Gupta.....Steve Thewlis
Jackie Coryton.....Carolyn Gove

Scene: The Blisses' country house,
Cookham, England, 1925

Act I: Saturday afternoon

Act II: Saturday evening

Act III: Sunday morning

Joan Flint's New Dance Workshop will present a dance interlude immediately following Act I. Dancers: Susan Baar, Kris Bell, Mary Karen Gleason, Patty Meagher, Kevin Lalley, and Liz O'Shea.

There will be two intermissions:
fifteen minutes after Act I (coffee
in the lobby); and ten minutes after
Act II.

Produced by special arrangement with Samuel French.

PRODUCTION STAFF

Director.....Tom Tolmasoff
Stage Manager.....Mary Karen Gleason
Costume Designer.....Wes Morgan

Assistant to the Director.....Cyd Nepon
Lights.....David Ryan
Photography.....Dennis Ciul
Props.....Len McAdams-Trice
Sound Technician.....Robert Minor
Set Design.....George Spelvin
Choreography.....Joan Flint
Poster Design.....Juda Tolmasoff
Printer.....Sam Tolmasoff
Publicity.....Ralph Miller
Technical Assistant.....Dorothy Kruse
Makeup.....Jeni Sall
Hairstyles.....Gary Walton
Tickets.....William Martinelli
House Manager.....Virginia Miller
Assisted by.....Pamela Denney, Jackie
Denney, Jeanne-Marie
Lee
Set Construction.....Michael Cadigan, Kim
Hayes, Ed Markman, Carolyn Gove,
John Faulkner, Ellen Rubenstein,
Cyd Nepon, Ralph Miller, Walter
Tolmasoff, Nona Vaale, Tom Reilly,
Steve Thewlis, Darlene Loran, Jane
Goodwin, Diana Mann

ABOUT THE PLAYERS

Michael Cadigan (Sandy) has worked with a number of local groups, including Oakland Ensemble Theater, Altarena, and the Renaissance Theatre. Michael has performed in a wide range of plays, from Richard III to Alice in Wonderland, from Three Penny Opera to Uncle Tom's Cabin; his most recent appearance was as Montague in the Renaissance Theatre's Romeo and Juliet. Michael holds a BA in drama from UC Santa Barbara.

Mary Karen Gleason (Stage Manager) is an all-arounding film and theatre buff who specializes in the styles of the 1930s. She is as accomplished as a tap dancer as she is as a stage manager, and members of the audience will see her tonight performing in the dance interlude following the first act. When not tapdancing or running the show, Mary passes her time as a biochemist at the UC Medical Center.

Jane Goodwin (Myra) is no doubt a familiar face for many local theatre-goers. In the last few years, Jane has performed for the Berkeley Shakespeare Festival, the Renaissance Theatre Company, the Berkeley Stage Company, and several other groups. She is, as you will no doubt notice tonight, a singer and musician as well as an actress. Recent plays Jane has appeared in include Twelfth Night, Love's Labor's Lost, Pericles, and Pontifex. Jane has a BA in theatre arts from San Francisco State.

Carolyn Gove (Jackie) also has a background in music as well as theatre. Tonight, though, she will appear in the rather demanding, nonmusical role of the scatterbrained flapper Jackie Coryton. Carolyn comes to Actor's Ensemble from Castro Valley, where she has performed in a number of plays, both realistic and stylized, including Member of the Wedding and Importance of Being Ernest. Carolyn is currently studying drama at Chabot College.

Richard Irvin (David) began his acting career in New York, where he studied for two years at the Actor's Workshop. Now a social worker, Richard continues to act with local theatre groups; he has had eighteen years of experience with Bay Area little theatres. Recent work include leading roles in The Crucible, The Golden Fleece, The Lion in Winter, and Dylan.

Darlene Loran (Judith) is a Bay Area native with a BA in drama from San Jose State University. Now a freelance publicist and businesswoman, Darlene has acted professionally on stage and television. She has also toured the country as a featured vocalist with "Youth of America on Stage," and has a long list of musical and light opera credits. Recent roles include Guinevere in Camelot, Eleanor of Aquitaine in Lion in Winter, and Katherine in Taming of the Shrew.

Diana Mann (Sorel) is a recent transplant from the Chicago area where she studied performing arts at Northeastern and where she played a wide variety of roles with local theatre groups. Her Chicago credits include appearances in Say Who You Are, Jumping Mouse, The Promise, American Beauty Rose, and The Skin of Our Teeth. Most recently, Diana appeared in the melodrama The Fatal Deed, which just closed at the Opry House of San Pablo.

Wes Morgan (Costume Designer) has been designing, directing, and acting in San Francisco and in the Peninsula for the past ten years. Among his designing credits are Orpheus in the Underworld at the Palace of Fine Arts, Feydeau's Hotel Paradiso, Man of La Mancha, Medea, and The Boy Friend. Wes holds an MA in theatre arts from San Jose State.

Cyd Nepon (Assistant to the Director) studied with ACT and the San Francisco Mime Troupe. She has been acting and directing in the area for six years. She has taught mime and children's theatre in Berkeley and Orinda. Her recent work includes an appearance in AE's Best Man and Sabina in Skin of Our Teeth.

Tom Reilly (Simon) studied theatre with Vaughn Deering at Fordham University in New York and at the University of Virginia. He worked for three years with the State Theatre of New Mexico and toured with it to twenty states. He has played leading roles in Indians, Comedy of Errors, Oklahoma, Little Foxes, Cry of Players, and My Fair Lady. Tom is the current president of Actor's Ensemble, and Hay Fever marks his fifth appearance for the group.

Steve Thewlis (Bhubi Gupta) has worked locally and abroad in a number of shows, both as actor and as musical director. By profession, Steve teaches English as a foreign language--which he has done in Afghanistan and Indonesia. His credits include A Man's a Man, Taming of the Shrew, Arms and the Man, Fiddler on the Roof. His last role for AE was Bill Walker in Major, Barbara, and his most recent production was musical director for Music Man in Surabaya on the Island of Java where the frangipanis grow.

Tom Tolmasoff (Director) has been acting and directing for ten years. Locally he has directed for the Old Chestnut Drama Guild, the Staircase Theatre in Santa Cruz, and Actor's Ensemble--for whom he directed Major Barbara. Tom holds an AB and an MA in dramatic art and is currently finishing his PhD at UC Berkeley.

Nona Vaala (Clara) is a teacher of drama, speech, and English from the South Bay area. She has had twenty years of experience in community theatre as director and performer. Her favorite roles include Mama in I Remember Mama, Eulalie McKeachie Shinn in Music Man, and Mae Peterson in Bye Bye Birdie. Nona cast Darlene Loran in her first role--when Darlene was a junior high school student in San Leandro fifteen years ago.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Our actors' and actresses' authentic 1920's hairstyles were very graciously provided by Gary Walton at his studio, Gary's Salon of Beauty, 11185 San Pablo, El Cerrito (234-5261).

ABOUT ACTOR'S ENSEMBLE

Actor's Ensemble, Berkeley's oldest nonprofit theatre organization, is celebrating its twentieth anniversary this season. Founded in 1956, AE has remained committed to the ideals of true community participation, open tryouts, and low admission prices. We produce three shows per season, which are chosen by the directors. Recent productions have included A Delicate Balance, Brigadoon, Yes is for a Very Young Man, Skin of our Teeth, and The Best Man. We welcome community support at every level; please sign our mailing list in the lobby if you wish to receive notices about auditions and productions.

OUR NEXT PRODUCTION

Actor's Ensemble's next show will be Cabaret, directed by Mary Rae Thewlis. Open tryouts will be held on February 5 at 1:00 in this theatre and on February 6 at 1:00 in the Craft Room of Live Oak Recreation Center. For information, call 524-9600 or 525-1620 (after 6 p.m.).