

The Rattigan

The Newsletter of
The Terence Rattigan Society

ISSUE NO. 11 MAY/JUNE 2014

Version

Refreshing candour at the birthday dinner

A silver-framed photograph of Sir Terence Rattigan looking very serious and very handsome in flight lieutenant's uniform greeted those who gathered in the Ballroom of the RAF Club for the TRS Birthday Dinner on Friday 6th June. The choice of venue, as Group Captain Clive Montellier pointed out in his welcome speech, was singularly apt: an aspect of Rattigan's life which tends to be forgotten is that he had a distinguished service record as a Coastal Command Air Gunnery Leader during the early years of the war; and as our Chairman Barbara Longford reminded us in her toast to Sir Terence, it was Rattigan's decision to join the RAF that cured him of the writer's block which had afflicted him for several years, enabling him to create a succession of highly acclaimed films and plays inspired by his wartime experience.


Martin Amherst Lock reports on a glittering occasion at the RAF Club



After an excellent dinner the Society's President, Princess George Galitzine, introduced our Guest of Honour, Baron Fellowes of West Stafford, who told us that although he never knew Rattigan, the playwright was a strong influence on his work, not least in his brilliance at conveying unhappiness when it is reined in by the constraints of a privileged upbringing, in creating characters who break your heart without ever bending: in the economy of his writing Rattigan for him is the master of unsaid drama,



of silent grief. In an extremely engaging question-and-answer session Lord Fellowes went on to speak with refreshing candour and infectious enthusiasm about the irons which (*Downton Abbey* apart) he currently has in the fire—a rock musical with Andrew Lloyd Webber and a new version of *Gypsy* for Barbra Streisand amongst others; the marked difference between writing for film and television audiences; and his amazement at the extent to which viewers become involved in the lives of his fictional characters. “Just let Edith be happy!” a tearful woman in New York recently pleaded.

He assured us that Violet, Countess of Grantham, “will never die” and attributed his hugely successful career in part to luck: “But you have to *recognise* your luck and go with it.” It is a sentiment with which Rattigan, looking back on his decision to join the RAF and thereby allowing both his life and his writing to take off, would doubtless have wholeheartedly concurred. 

TRS member Martin Amherst Lock is a former Head of English at both Repton and Harrow and is currently teaching at Queen's College, London.

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The Terence Rattigan Society

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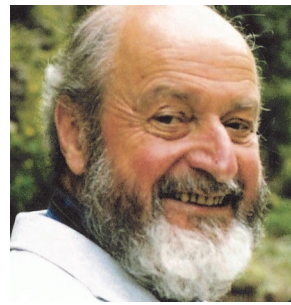
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INTRODUCING Michael Imison

Following James Cellan Jones in the last issue, the subject of our profile this time is another esteemed member of the Society whose career embraced a professional association with Rattigan. During his National Service, Michael Imison joined the Regimental Drama Society and acted in a production of *While The Sun Shines*. As members may know, that particular play – often seen as a follow-up to *French Without Tears* – is set in Albany, Piccadilly, and Michael never dreamed at the time that one day he would be having lunch in Albany with the great man himself.

That happened much later, of course, when Michael had become an established literary agent, working with Jan van Loewen (and subsequently taking over the agency as Michael Imison Playwrights). Rattigan was a client of van Loewen's and thus the connection. Michael reveals that TR took other people's comments about his plays very seriously and could often be persuaded to make changes as a result – such as the ending of *The Deep Blue Sea*. He remembers that when TR had sent the script of *In Praise of Love* to van Loewen, he followed it up with "What does Imison think?" He always needed a reaction.

Michael has a nice story about Rattigan, when both attended the first night of Frank Dunlop's production of *French Without Tears* at the Young Vic in 1973. Being his agent, Michael bounced up to him in the interval and asked him if he was enjoying it. Rattigan engaged in conversation for a few minutes, then looked curiously at Michael and asked, "And what exactly is your involvement with this production?"



Another memorable lunch with Rattigan was when Michael and his brother Richard (Script Editor of Radio Drama at the BBC) tried to persuade him to write a play for radio under a Euro Radio Drama commission. TR had never

written for radio and was at first reluctant, but was swayed by the argument that in radio you can do anything, be anywhere, go anywhere. He thought for a moment and then said that he did have an idea for a play for Margaret Leighton based on the Rattenbury murder case. Leighton had of course famously appeared in several Rattigan plays and was a long-standing friend, but was by this time crippled with arthritis and unable to appear on stage. Radio could be the answer!

The project went ahead and *Cause Célèbre* was born. However, the young director assigned to the play thought Margaret Leighton's voice far too posh for the role. He wanted someone much more down to earth. He wanted Diana Dors. One might have expected TR to raise objections – and perhaps it was his illness that played a part – but he very sweetly said, "Of course. Whatever you think."

Michael vividly recalls the occasion when Rattigan was confined to hospital, not long before he died, and he went with Michael Darlow to show him the film that Michael D had made about Rattigan's life and works. It was effectively his obituary, a point not lost on Rattigan who watched it from his hospital bed, and heard various friends referring to him in the past tense. Nevertheless he was deeply moved by the film and, as we know, agreed that Michael D should write his biography.

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The Winslow Boy on Broadway: an actor's perspective

by Roger Rees

Last January I ended a four-month run playing Arthur Winslow in *The Winslow Boy* on Broadway. First seen at the Old Vic, it was produced by the shrewd Artistic Director of the Roundabout Theater, Todd Haimes. Very taken with Lindsay Posner's London production, Todd decided to bring it to Roundabout's home – the 'American Airlines Theater' – on 42nd Street. *The Winslow Boy* had been seen only once before on Broadway, in October 1947.

Like Todd, we fall in love with great plays – I was no exception. Fledgling theatre geek in the nineteen fifties and sixties, I was moved by many "Rep" productions of this play; later, I became familiar with the Anthony Asquith film, starring Robert Donat, (with my favourite, in anything – Kathleen Harrison as 'Violet' the parlour maid); best of all, firm chums with Nigel Hawthorne, playing opposite him in Tom Stoppard's *Hapgood* at the Aldwych, we debated unendingly his preparations to play Arthur Winslow in the David Mamet movie adaptation of the Rattigan play, made in 1999.

The Winslow Boy was written in 1946, but Rattigan set his story in 1913, in "*the drawing room of a house in Courtfield Gardens, South Kensington, London, a morning in July not long before the war of 1914 – 1918*". Agreeably enough – 100 years later – the play was being enjoyed again in New York.

Roundabout is subscription-based; trusting patrons buy tickets throughout the year and, at times, can prove ill-prepared for the plays they meet—though I've been told many prefer to be 'surprised'. Fear not, '*Rattigan-ites*! New York was more than *pleasantly* surprised by this (brand-new play to some) *Winslow Boy*.

From the Broadway publicity, an American audience might well have expected the *Downton Abbey* experience, but *no*; every night Rattigan's masterful hand led them beneath the Edwardian

veneer to something lasting and bravely human—the caring, perceptive heart of his writing. Immodestly enough, I report the play couldn't have gone better; we had a wonderful cast, and Mr. Rattigan's play was found to be a revelation. Standing up for what you believe in, no matter what the cost, as Arthur Winslow does, seems to be a story worth noting, particularly today.

As the story takes place in *one* room – I took particular delight in the pains our playwright employs to keep it there. There are two occasions in his script where I know I could hear Rattigan chucking behind the scenery at the whole 'keeping the action on stage' conundrum.

At the beginning of the second scene, Catherine asks her father:

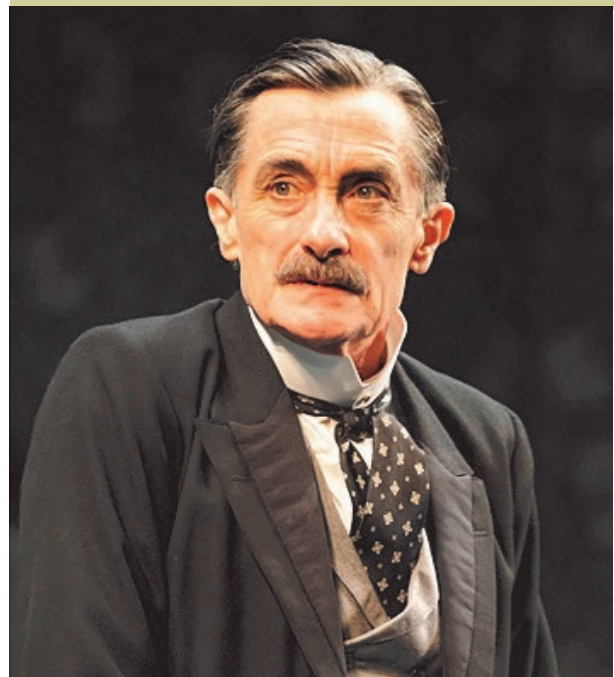
CATHERINE: Is Sir Robert Morton coming to see you here?

ARTHUR: (Reading the newspaper) I could hardly go and see him, could I?

Well, where else would Sir Robert and Arthur Winslow meet – *in the wings*? Rattigan's at it again, in the third scene. Catherine is told by Violet, that her fiancé John is urgently waiting to speak to her in the hall: ***Continued on p 7...***

Roger Rees as Arthur Winslow

Photo: Roundabout Theatre



Views on 'Variation on a Theme'

I rather think I might have had a rare distinction amongst the audience at the Finborough Theatre on the 5th March of having seen both revivals of *Variation on a Theme*.

For those, probably most, unfamiliar with the play it revolves around Rose Fish, (superbly played in both presentations by Rachael Stirling) a much-married social climbing ex-working class Birmingham typist, now consumptive (in the tubercular sense), who lives a dissipated life on a limited income amongst the gaming tables of the South of France. She is slated to marry a wealthy German ex-black-marketer, but becomes infatuated with a *faux* French male ballet dancer, one Ron Vale (Martin McCreadie), also ex-Birmingham's mean streets. Rose's 'conscience' takes the form of a titled gentlewoman (Susan Tracy - outstanding) fallen on hard times she employs as a paid companion and a daughter of 16 who is enthralled by notions of melodramatic romance. Now read on...

A Palpable Feeling of Goodwill: TRS member Roger Mills offers his view on the recent production of *Variation on a Theme* at the Finborough Theatre

My first sighting was a rehearsed reading, on a broiling Sunday afternoon, in Chichester's Stephen Pimlott building when I think I would have summarised the piece as interesting but really another look at the themes so masterfully explored in *The Deep Blue Sea*. Looking back I was impressed by Rachael Stirling – she had the right combination of sexiness and fragility - but the rest of my judgement was affected by the heat and the fact that a rehearsed reading isn't a production by a long chalk.

Seeing the Michael Oakley-directed version, trimmed down we're told, which sold out this charming little theatre above a pub in Kensington, I realised I was completely wrong. Now don't get me wrong - I don't think *Variation* is a great play by any stretch of the imagination, but neither does it deserve the neglect suffered following the John Gielgud-directed disaster of a first outing sunk,

apparently, by lavish sets, costumes and Tynan.

Lavishness is not what is required if we are to believe Rose's house has been on the market for five years without so much as a sniff. Indeed the Finborough and its minimal but evocative settings, which hinted at 'showiness on a budget', probably suited it down to the ground. With a capacity of fifty on benches forming the fourth wall one could not help feeling like observers on the real life relationships of this set of highly flawed yet rather appealing characters.

No one knows what goes on behind closed doors the saying goes – but here we felt we got more than a glimpse. With no need to project, the cast used little more than conversational tones and the effect was one of heightened realism that was very involving. Perhaps most in the pivotal scene where Rose and Martin Shelly, playing Ron Vale's artistic patron I suppose you'd call it, put their cards on the table. 'Nought foot theatre' at its best.

The one national critic I've read noted that Rattigan's usual inequality of passion was missing in this piece – as if that was a weakness. To the contrary, mate – it was the real strength for me. OK, it was passion for different, and really not very uplifting, things amongst a pretty amoral crew and in many ways an object lesson in selfishness *ad absurdum*. But passion it was. One found oneself puzzled by, sorry for and exasperated with, pretty well everyone in equal measure by the end. At the same time, though, willing Rose and Ron – there was a palpable feeling of goodwill towards them in the audience - to make the 'right' choices, no matter what they might be.


Of Rattigan's other work I was most reminded of *Cause Célèbre*, but if I say the song that crept into my head as I walked back to West Brompton tube was Noel Coward's "Twentieth Century Blues" you might get some idea of the territory Rattigan was trying, maybe imperfectly but actually pretty bravely, to explore. This play and the ensemble cast who brought it so fetchingly alive deserve a wider showing – but please somewhere no bigger than the Minerva. I'd agree to make it a hat trick and go and see it again... 



Photo by Roger-Viollet/Rex Features

Let us suppose that Terence Rattigan's Muse, a brisk, tweedy travelling representative of Thalia-Melpomène Co-Productions Ltd, has just returned home after four years' absence. We find her reading the reviews of Mr Rattigan's *Variation on a Theme* (Globe). After a while she flings them impatiently down. Her tone, as she addresses us, is querulous:—

MUSE: This would never have happened if I'd been here. We get *Separate Tables* launched, I go off on a world cruise, and as soon as my back's turned, what happens? He tries to write a play on his own. Oh, he's threatened to do that before now, but I've always scared him out of it. "Look what happened to Noël Coward," I'd say. *That* usually did the trick. "Just you wait till I'm ready," I'd say. "Inspiration doesn't grow on trees, you know." But Master Terence Slyboots knows better. Thinks you can write plays just like that, haha. The minute I heard what he was up to I came beetling back, but they were already in rehearsal.

"What's the meaning of this?" I said, and I can tell you, I was blazing. "Well, darling," he said, "four years is a long time and—" "Don't you darling me," I said. "I'm a busy muse. I've got my other clients to consider. You're not the only pebble on the Non-Controversial Western Playwrights' beach, you know. Now let's get down to cases. What's this play about?" "Well," he said. "The central character, who's rich and bored and lives in a villa near Cannes, gets desperately fond of a cocky young boy from the local ballet company, and—" "Hold your horses," I said. "We've never had a play banned yet, and by George we're not starting now. Make it a cocky young *girl*." "The central character," he said, very hoity-toity, "is a *woman*."

Black mark to me, I must admit. But once I'd grabbed hold of the script and taken a good dekko at it, my worst fears were confirmed. About the best you could say about it was that it wouldn't be banned. This heroine (he calls her Rose Fish and then, if you please, makes jokes about whether or not she has gills) started out as a typist in Birmingham. She's married four men for money before she meets this ballet-boy. He's been keeping company with a male choreographer, but give

Musing Out Loud:

An extract from Kenneth Tynan's original review of *Variation on a Theme*, published in May 1958 in *The Observer*

the devil his due, Master Terence knows his Lord Chamberlain well enough to keep *that* relationship platonic.

Egged on by the choreographer, Rose gives the lad up for the good of his career. He reforms overnight but returns to her just as she's in the last throes of succumbing to a wonky lung. And in case you haven't cottoned on to the fact that it's Marguerite Gautier all over again, Rose has a daughter whose pet author is Dumas *filis*. Master Terence makes no bones about his sources. Trouble is he makes no flesh either. That's where I should have come in. Honestly, I could slap the scamp.

"Interesting subject, don't you think?" he said when I gave the script back to him. "No," I said, "but you've made a real Camille of it, haven't you?" He ignored my barbed word-play. Ruthlessly, I pressed on. "Whatever became," I asked, "of that subtle theatrical technique of yours we hear so much about? TB, indeed, in this day and age! And making the boy symbolically sprain his ankle. And having Rose leave her farewell message to him on a tape-recorder. And giving her a *confidante* I'd have been ashamed to wish on Pinero. And what about that Sherman lover of hers who is talking the so comic English? If you'd written the play well, it would have been bad enough. As it is — " "I thought the theme would carry it," he said, "a young boy living off an older woman." That made me plain ratty.

"You're not Colette," I said, "and don't you think it." I lectured him a bit about the need for honesty and true, fresh feeling, which is my province as a Muse. I told him how sloppy, second-hand ideas invariably expressed themselves in sloppy, second-hand technique. Then I saw the production, by Sir John Gielgud, in which Michael Goodliffe, George Pravda and Jeremy Brett gave the sort of vague, general, superficially convincing performances that are provoked by plays like this. Even the Birmingham accents were phoney. As far as I could see the star of the show was Norman Hartnell, from whose contributions — a white diamanté sack, a shocking-pink cocktail dress in pleated chiffon, a casual ensemble of blouse and pedal-pushing slacks, and a two-tiered ball-gown in navy-

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In Rattigan's Footsteps

The Oxford Conference 2015

Update by Barbara Longford

There's been a most positive response from members to the suggestion of having a conference next year at Rattigan's former college – Trinity College, Oxford. Over 50 members have returned the 'Expression of Interest' form and we shall be joined by some American members too.

For a description of the conference, please see Issue no. 10 of *The Rattigan Version*, available on our website www.theterencerattigansociety.co.uk in the Society Newsletters section. All our speakers are confirmed, including **Dr Holly Hill**, **Professor Dan Rebellato**, **Michael Darlow**, **Michael Imison**, **Geoffrey Wansell** and **Alan Brodie**. All other details from the last newsletter are also still correct.

In addition, on the Sunday, when the formal sessions have ended, there will be a choice for those who can stay longer either for a walking tour of the inner city, led by member **Denis Moriarty**, or a visit inside the Oxford Union, led by a former President of the Oxford Union and TRS member **Stuart Griffiths**.

There is a Trinity College requirement that in order to secure the booking, the Society must pay a deposit of 50% of the total cost. We cannot give an exact cost until we know how many members will be attending, but we estimate that each delegate will be charged no more than £120, to include their share of the hire of the conference rooms, teas and coffees on Saturday and Sunday mornings, lunch on Saturday, full dinner with wine in the Dining Hall on Saturday and a production on the lawn by the Trinity players, with sparkling wine at the interval. The Sunday walking tour or visit to the Oxford Union are also included. As our conference will be taking place during term time, there is no accommodation available in college, but a list of hotels and bed and breakfast recommendations will be supplied nearer the time. ☞

DEPOSITS NOW SOUGHT—to secure your place at the above conference, please send your deposit of £40 to Barbara Longford, as per the enclosed flyer.

Kenneth Tynan 'Musing Out Loud'

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blue pebble-crêpe – the lean extremities of Margaret Leighton nervously protruded. Miss Leighton traipsing about looking wry and motherly, knocking back brandies and making rueful little *moues* of despair, modelled the clothes splendidly. I didn't spot much real acting going on, but then there wasn't much reality to begin with.

Anyway, I've told Master Terence that from now on he can whistle for his Muse. I'm not going to come crawling back to him. He thinks the play will succeed in spite of me, in spite of its lack of inspiration. He thinks it's what the public wants. But that reminds me of Groucho Marx's comment when 3,000 people turned up at the funeral of a commercially successful but universally detested Hollywood mogul. "You see what I mean?" he said. "Give the public what they want, and they'll come to see it."

I hope Master Terence heeds the warning. I can get along without him, thank you very much. But he can't get along without me. ☞

The Rattigan Archives at the V&A

by Barbara Longford



Photo of TR and Liz Taylor © Victoria & Albert Museum, London

DO JOIN US for a unique event on **Monday 8 September 2014**, when Society members will have exclusive access to the Rattigan Collection at the Dept. of Modern and Contemporary Performance of the V&A Archives Centre. **Continued on p 8...**

Minority Opinion

The Artistic Director of the Old Vic replies to Adrian Brown's letter (published in the last issue) about the Old Vic's 2013 production of *The Winslow Boy*

Dear Mr Brown,

I do apologize for this rather tardy reply to your letter from last March. It has been a very busy year and I've only just sat down to a pile of mail.

It was with some delight that I read your extensive, wrathful review of our production of Sir Terence Rattigan's *The Winslow Boy*. Your displeasure extended to the scenery, the lighting, the furniture, the performances (almost across the board), and poor little Ronnie; your disagreements did not spare the curtains or even the bloody wallpaper for that matter.

Given the remarkably positive reviews received, sold-out audiences for its 12 weeks run at the Old Vic and subsequent successful run at the Roundabout Theatre in New York (same director, same set), I wonder if perhaps you came too early in the run to so determinedly bash every aspect of our efforts. Theatre certainly isn't an exact science, but your comments almost seem to accuse us of having deliberately brought disrespect to your beloved Rattigan. Clearly thousands of people did not share your view and nor do I.

I am fully prepared to accept your criticism in the spirit it was given – although what spirit you intended I'm not sure – but you write as if you were a critic who came into the theatre with so many expectations, other productions and performances in your memory – that perhaps no matter what we did – we wouldn't have met with your personal bar of excellence. I am deeply proud of having presented the play; delighted at its success and only hope your next trip to the Old Vic will balance out your great misgivings and horrified reaction to our production of *The Winslow Boy*.

What is certain is that audiences in both London and New York (where it has not been presented since its original premiere), were able to discover one of the finest playwrights this country has ever produced. Your opinion that this production misrepresented the author is of course your right to hold. However it is fairly clear that your opinion is largely in the minority.

Sincerely,

Kevin Spacey, CBE

An Actor's Perspective

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CATHERINE: *Oh. I'll come out to him –*
ARTHUR: *No. See him in here.*

I love that Rattigan's very evident love of his craft is practised with such a twin-
kle in his eye: it speaks of a remarkable understanding of the human condition. Night after night, my character wheel-chair-bound, I'd sit on stage and listen to clever Henny Russell, our American Violet, recount the climactic goings-on in the courtroom. Like a Messenger in a Greek Play, a lowly character, an illiterate servant girl in this case, supplies a key to unlock our collective heart.

Read Violet's speech, won't you? It's Dickens, Henry Mayhew, Hogarth and *every* maid in *every* play you've ever seen. It's magnificent. Rambling breathlessly, Violet chatters excitedly on for a page or so, and then abruptly leaves. Arthur Winslow turns to his daughter and says, simply, "It would appear then that we've won." That's theatre magic. That's Terence Rattigan.

A secret. I employed a hidden mantra to play Arthur Winslow. Robert Baden-Powell, founder of the Boy Scout movement, made up a word to describe indomitable and marvellously stubborn people like Arthur Winslow: these people, he said, have "stickability"! Arthur Winslow has it, and, the theatre gods be praised, so does Terence Rattigan.

Roger Rees

March 2014

*Welsh-born actor and director Roger Rees is now a citizen of the US and lives in New York. He came to fame in 1980 in the RSC's *Nicholas Nickleby* and was last seen on stage in London in 2010, with Sir Ian McKellen, in *Waiting For Godot*. On TV he has starred in *The West Wing* and *Cheers*.*

The Rattigan Archives at the V&A

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The V&A theatrical archives are housed in Blythe House, West Kensington, in a remarkably grand and imposing building, which also holds the archives and some of the collections of the Science Museum and the British Museum. This remarkable edifice was built between 1899 and 1903 as the Headquarters of the Post Office Savings Bank. Originally thousands of staff members worked in the building and some 1,000 of them were female; to avoid the risk of improper mixing of the sexes, females were segregated in the south block of the building with its own entrance. Today, the security guards take three hours to patrol the building. Blythe House has great attractions for film producers (e.g. *Dancing on the Edge*; *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy*).

Kate Dorney is the Curator of the Department, which now houses the contents of the former Theatre Museum in Covent Garden. From 10.30 a.m. Kate will give a talk and tour of the Theatre and Performance Collection and we shall be able to view the Rattigan material from the Collection. **Michael Darlow** will host the event from our side and will try to answer members' (and staff) questions arising from the items we see.

The collection of letters is rather moving. Some of the correspondence deals with the traumatic time TR had when he was asked, when at Harrow, to stand down from the cricket team who were to play against Eton at Lord's. The letters reveal the enormity of the blow for the young man. In one, written to his father, Terry says *"I'm far more sorry for your sake than mine... I'm so sorry that I've let you down"*. And there's a letter from the school to Frank Rattigan, saying *"I didn't believe that any boy in that position could possibly have conducted himself in such a gentlemanly way as Terry did. My task was made infinitely easier and I shall never forget his behaviour."*

There's a letter Terry wrote to his parents with its original envelope—to Frank Rattigan Esq, 19 Stanhope Gardens—postmarked Harrow 11th January, 1929. One can imagine the boy posting it in the Harrow postbox. It reveals how mature and stylish and witty the young man was.

A letter written from Terry's prep school, Sandroyd, is written to *"Dear Gran"* and signed *"With love and kisses from Terry xxxxxxxxxxxx"*. There are two remarkable letters written to Terry's brother Brian on his 21st and then 22nd birthdays and much more.

There are also production files, play scripts, photographs, posters, designs, tinsel prints and objects—for example, the production file for *After the Dance* (1939).

Dates for your diary

Monday 8 September:

The Rattigan Archives and *Cause Célèbre*. The Society is being given special access to the V&A Archives Centre in Blythe Road, London W14. There will also be a screening of the film of the Old Vic production of *Cause Célèbre* which took place during the centenary year. See the article (left) and the booking form which accompanies this newsletter.

Tuesday 28 October:

First Episode opens at the Jermyn Street Theatre and runs until 22 November. *First Episode* is the first play Rattigan wrote, with Oxford friend Philip Heimann, and which transferred to the West End for a short run, giving TR his first taste of theatrical success—before *French Without Tears* established his name. This is another 'forgotten' play now receiving a revival in the wake of the Rattigan centenary year. Bookings should be made direct with the theatre box office: 020 7287 2875.

Saturday 6 December:

Christmas Party at K5 Albany, TR's former 'set'. 12 noon – 2.30 pm. We hope that TR's Rolls-Royce will be on the Albany forecourt, as one of our members owns it. The total number allowed is 40 so this event will have to be restricted, in the first instance, to members only. The booking form will follow in a later edition.

This part of our day will end at 12.30 and after a pub lunch nearby, we return to Blythe House for a private screening at 2.00 from the National Video Archive of Performance of the centenary year production of *Cause Célèbre* at the Old Vic, with Anne-Marie Duff as Alma Rattenbury and directed by Thea Sharrock. The day will end at 4.45 p.m.

For further details please see the enclosed booking form. ☞

Introducing Michael Imison

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Michael Imison started life at the BBC as a director of classic drama, but had fallen out with the Head of Serials and – as a punishment (in Michael's eyes) – was relegated to *Dr Who*. He thought it would never last beyond the first series, which shows just how wrong even the best people can be. It also gave him a taste for science fiction, which persists to this day, so much so that he is currently writing a science fiction novel. One can imagine TR inquiring from beyond the grave: "And what exactly is your involvement with such a project?" ☞