



The Rattigan

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The Terence Rattigan Society

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Version

I reckon that, of all the initiatives the society has founded, the French Award supporting student productions is the most worthwhile. Not just in encouraging productions of Terry's plays but also in offering opportunities for lesser known work to have an outing.

I hope I'm not doing the LAMDA students a disservice when I say that, although they might have heard of Terence Rattigan and, say, *Browning* or *Winslow* before this February, I bet it's a certainty that *French Without Tears* would be unknown to them. My own sole exposure to a performance is the, for me underwhelming, BBC Box Set version so I went along as much out of a sense of duty as anything else.

I came away dazzled by this farcical romp as much as theatre goes in the thirties must have done - even more buoyed-up perhaps by the contrast with the iron grey chilly day outside. I needed cheering up and I was cheered, indeed energised, both by the play and the joie de vivre of the cast.

Truth is, of course, that young people knowing no fear and untainted by preconceptions simply take the script at face value - as new and fresh to them as it was to Roland Culver in 1936. Another simple reinforcement of the truth of Eric Morecambe's memorable quote that 'we [the performers] get older but the audience stays the same age. (That's a remark that should be taken to heart by more than a few artistic directors who think that new work, simply because it is new, will win them new audiences.)

Even more heartening is that once again during a Q&A it was clear that the students had been immediately impressed with the sterling qualities of the well made play, the superbly playable language, and the moral and ethical questions that Rattigan deals with even in this bit of frippery. The question 'surely things have changed for your generation?' gained the response 'only up to a point'. Terry's treatment of late adolescent fear and confusion speaks down the years apparently. Rattigan himself saw it as a more serious play than it might be viewed, all the characters he stressed had a point of view about the times in which it was written.

I do hope as the years pass, and the award continues, that recipients will take notice of what other awardees have mounted together with the two or three plays performed regularly by amateurs and professionals, and look for lesser-known work. Michael Darlow reckons, rightly, that *Heart to Heart* is Terry's best work from his later period and it would work excellently as a stage play.

Adventure Story, too, has the kind of large cast and meaty roles that make it an ideal student piece. I was thinking - though - what fun such casts could have with *Follow my Leader* and whether the best way to give that another run out would be to pay a group of students to take it on with the simple instruction - do your worst!

All three of the productions so far have made me reassess things in quite a profound way - yes even *Flare Path* - because they have the shock of the new for the players who pass it on to us in the way only the young can. Delight in a new discovery.

Long may that continue.

Naturally at the moment all Society events are in limbo. We hope to run the postponed Birthday Dinner in the autumn. Meanwhile we will be circulating ideas of online and broadcast sources which we hope will help members while away the time in as entertaining a fashion as possible.



The Terence Rattigan Society

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Diana Scotney

Barbara Longford Recalls Nine Years Voluntary Service to the Society

The Terence Rattigan Society was founded on Friday 15th July 2011 (the centenary year) at a small meeting of interested people. Diana, or 'Di' as she prefers to be called, attended that first meeting and had already agreed to take on the role of Membership Secretary. At the time Di was living in Hertfordshire so it was relatively easy for her to travel to London for Committee meetings and events. However, she and John moved to a village in Devon several years ago, which entailed much travelling up to London. Nevertheless, she has continued to be our Membership Secretary for almost nine years. Di is my closest friend, so always stays with me when she is in London and we have turned each of her visits into fun social occasions taking in so many of the joys of the capital.

Di quickly set up a membership database, designed forms for enrolment and the provision of banking details and was the vital link between bank and Treasurer. She also helped to promote the society and encourage new members. Twice yearly she has contacted all the members asking them to renew for a further year and processing their cheques or other forms of payment. Her total efficiency in this regard was probably down to the fact that for many years she worked for the BBC, where pre-planning and production paperwork had to be immaculate. She has carried out this vital administrative



role with great success and being such a people person, she has been popular and well-liked by the members throughout the time.

But as with everyone else on the Committee, Di has performed many other roles over and above the one she has had in accordance with our Constitution. For example, we were fortunate to be allowed to hold two parties at Rattigan's former chambers in Albany. This was courtesy of the kind owner of the "set" known as K5 – the late Antony Fletcher. The first party was the occasion when we formally presented Geoffrey Wansell with his scroll marking his Vice Presidency, the second was a Christmas party in 2014. On both occasions, in order to keep the price members had to pay down to a minimum, Di and I arranged with Antony that we would provide the food in his kitchen. We bought in bubbly from a supermarket and hired glasses and Antony paid for Albany porters to help us serve the drinks. Di and I worked together to make the open sandwiches. Di helped also at three parties which we gave at Rattigan's birthplace in Cornwall Gardens, courtesy of the owner, Junko Tarrant. We had a terrific launch there on 11th September, 2011, when Giles Cole presented the late Princess George Galitzine MBE (Jean) with her scroll marking her Presidency of the Society. We also gave a party there to mark Jean's 90th birthday in 2015 and a third party for all the members who had read scripts for The Terence Rattigan Society Award for a best play for the theatre. At all three events Di worked tirelessly on the catering aspects so that the attendance price to the members was at a minimum. Of course the volunteer readers were treated to their party from our hard saved Society funds.



In 2013, when Di was still living in Hertfordshire, she arranged a wonderful lunch at Little Italy in Soho, to honour our member, the late Elena Salvoni MBE. This restaurant was formerly Bianchi's, where Elena has presided for 30 years. Terence Rattigan had his favourite table in the restaurant and Elena, then aged 92, regaled us with stories of his visits there.

One of the highlights of the past nine years was the conference 'In the Footsteps of Rattigan' which the society arranged at Trinity College, Oxford. Both in the planning stage and also during the conference weekend Di's contribution proved invaluable. Di acted as a 'Host' at the event and greeted people on arrival and made sure everyone was guided to the right areas. She also designed and arranged the place cards for the formal dinner on the Saturday evening. At each of the Annual Birthday Dinners, Di has arrived at the club (Garick, RAF or Oxford & Cambridge) early to ensure that the placings

were accurate and that everyone was greeted and cared for.

Di's role in the success of the society had been immense. She gave me moral and practical support from the outset and I should never have had the courage to try to get the TRS up and running without Di's help.

After nine years and living so far away, Di has now decided to step down from her role on the Committee. But she will continue to attend events and take a keen interest in all our activities. After its meeting on Wednesday 5th February this year, the Committee gave Di a farewell lunch at a family run Italian restaurant near Smithfield. It was a splendid occasion. Giles Cole presented her with some gardening tokens and an orchid plant from us all.

I feel sure that members will wish to join me in saying thank you to Di for this invaluable and remarkable service to The Terence Rattigan Society.

Winslow Restored

Roger Mills on a new release of the classic 1948 film

I wonder - does the sun ever set on *The Winslow Boy*? What's the betting at this very minute in some far flung amateur production Ronnie is being discovered wet through in the garden and the dread letter is produced and off we go. Why should such a period piece still speak down the years?

Well I think one explanation comes in the *Doomwatch* box set I had for Christmas. If the name doesn't ring a bell I'll bet TV memories of all the plastic melting in an aeroplane while the pilot tried to make an emergency landing will - for viewers of a certain age anyway.

Well one of the plots centres on a boy expelled from school on the say so of a psychiatrist with no explanation at all - and his father's fight for both an explanation and reinstatement. (Here we are shown the boy is 'plainly innocent'.) Incidentally this series was incredibly percipient at pointing up environmental issues that are now headline news - which makes it maybe astonishing

that pretty well all the characters smoke like chimneys throughout! Anybody who has been to school will be

familiar with this kind of instant rough justice. As Churchill once said Headmasters have powers at their disposal with which Prime Ministers have never yet been invested.

And that programme was made all of nine years before Lord Denning's quite disgraceful summing up in the appeals of the Birmingham Six's civil claim against the police. You may recall that,



dismissing the case, he said: "If the six men failed it would mean that much time and money and worry would have been expended by many people to no good purpose. If they won, it would mean that the police were guilty of perjury; that they were guilty of violence and threats; that the confessions were involuntary and improperly admitted in evidence; and that the convictions were

erroneous... That was such an appalling vista that every sensible person would say, 'It cannot be right that these actions should go any further'." You could imagine similar views in the Winslow case.

As I write this there is new coverage of attempts to lock away for years files on the Guildford Pub Bombings.

Plus ça change plus c'est la même chose. And just try to get any gen at all out of the NHS if there is an issue.

So for this writer while Winslow might not be Terry's greatest play it is arguably in political terms his most important. As good a reason as any why it should be on GCSE English syllabi. Ahead of? Well, *An*



Inspector Calls to give one on a present syllabus. (When they say Specification that's what they really mean!)

What's brought all this on I hear you cry. Actually a newly remastered DVD of the Robert Donat film version of *Winslow*, with a number of interesting extras, released in February by Studio Canal and available at around £12 from the usual on-line suppliers.

I suspect for many of us this film is where we came in as far as Rattigan is concerned - it certainly was for me. I seem to remember a pretty dreary Sunday afternoon circa 1967 when it spoke directly to me from the 15 inch black and white GEC set in the corner of the living room.

First off, is this a worthwhile purchase? Yes I think it is. The transfer is stunningly good - the only criticism is a bit of fairly tatty reverberation seemingly



applied to the first music hall scene maybe to give the impression of being in a large theatre. It is a brilliant restoration. Also as you'd expect with a DVD there are bonus features. Sadly no bloopers reel has survived but what is here is a valuable addition. We have an interview with the senior archivist at the Postal Museum on the Archer-Shee case and the Post Office's own file on that case. Matthew Sweet gives a cultural insight into the work

and the period while our own vice president Geoffrey Wansell sets Winslow in the context of Terry's own work - while also mounting a convincing argument for the film to be seen both as, in essence, a different work from the play and also one of which Rattigan was rightly proud.

On that subject what's striking in seeing the film again is just how much we are shown the establishment and how it strove-strives?-to maintain the status quo.

Surely it's no accident we see the Winslows at church singing the now swept under the table verse of *All things Bright and Beautiful*. You know, or maybe you don't, verse number three about the rich man in his

castle the poor man at his gate. The 'let right be done' of Morton comes face to face with the 'it simply won't do old boy' embodied in Francis L Sullivan's corpulent Attorney General.

Mind you, one is left wondering if Arthur Winslow could live in quite that style on a bank manager's pay - around £500 a year in 1912. With Dicky cut from very much the same cloth as Lupin Pooter maybe The Laurels Brickfield Terrace might be more the mark. The brief interview with his successor at the bank and removing

Dicky from varsity are the limits and maybe he might have had the capital to fight this case, using up all of Catherine's marriage settlement - but surely no one in his position could quite

so airily ignore the question of costs.

Seventy two years on though I think the film still stands up very well. Although it's well into the story that he makes his entrance, Donat's Morton dominates the film and remains with one for a long time afterwards, Cedric Hardwicke's Arthur is dignified and tenacious, Margaret Leighton's Catherine a little quiet triumph.

(Continued on page 7)

French Without Tears

Alison du Cane reviews the latest French Award production at LAMDA.

This was a brilliant show, beautifully acted by fresh young talent, and wonderfully directed in a traditional yet inventive manner by Penny Cherns.

French Without Tears is deceptively light-weight and frothy, hiding how well-written and well-crafted it is. Although it was a happy accident that the play was first put on in the West End in 1936, it was no accident that the play ran for so long. So the cast and crew had a head start in presenting such an entertaining play – but even a good play does not guarantee success if it is not performed well, and LAMDA did not disappoint.

Of course, *French Without Tears* is also an ideal play for young students to perform, since most of the characters are in their 20s, bursting with ardour,

ideas and feelings. And here, captured beautifully, were the highly strung passions and intense yet often ephemeral emotions of such young people, along with a delight in having fun. The sexually alluring Diana (charmingly played



by Naomi Asaturyan as the almost irresistible vamp) moves among the young men like a High School prom queen, drawing boys into her honey trap. One by one they succumb to her charms, watched from the side-lines by the less flashy Jaqueline (acted with a feisty grace by the delightful Eugenie Bouda), as she nurses a crush on the oblivious Kit (an enthusiastic if slightly raw performance by Oliver Maynard).



Surprisingly the splendidly carefree Brian seems almost alone in preferring the distractions of the local ladies of the night. But maybe he has already enjoyed a skirmish with Diana before the play begins, or he is too indiscriminating to attract her.

The more enigmatic and intelligent Alan appears to be the only man who can see through Diana's wiles, while he agonises over choosing between a career as a writer or a diplomat. Yet it is not long before the audience is led to suspect that Alan "doth protest too much", and that Diana regards him as her most exciting challenge. Although Ben Church gave a sparkling performance as Alan, he did not absolutely convince me that his character was really hiding feelings for Diana. But maybe the reason for that lies within the script. There is an element of artificiality and artifice that is hard to overcome when aiming for a romantic conclusion. Perhaps in the end all that Rattigan wants is a farcical climax with the arrival of the schoolboy Lord Heybrook propelling Diana to rush off to London in pursuit of Alan.

I was impressed with how well the young actors captured the whole relaxed but slightly superior manner of upper middle-class English, especially Ben Church as Alan and Adam Walker-Kavanagh as Brian; while Jonas Moore as Kenneth (Babe) conveyed very convincingly the slightly more gauche version of a young uptight Englishman.

This was also a production of great vivacity and movement. The skirmishes between the actors, especially Kit and the commander, were well

orchestrated and Diana flew around the stage like a butterfly – or possibly a cat would be more accurate as she plunged her claws into her prey and the men were pinned down!

The open stage production style was very impressive the neat set was deceptively simple but effective with its elegant series of bluey-grey doors plus one window. Technically the whole was very accomplished and showed just how classy and effective lighting can be achieved with very basic resources.

Following the performance Michael Gaunt chaired a fascinating Question and Answer session with the cast and crew of the production. The Director Penny Cherns spoke about her artistic vision for the play and the practicalities she had tackled, such as the shape of the stage, and how she had tried to keep close to Rattigan's original concepts. The cast gave a variety of intriguing insights into how they had approached their characters, the language and style of the times, and the interactions between the actors. It was interesting to hear that Naomi thought Diana was a vulnerable victim as well as a sexual predator, highlighting her speech to Jaqueline about people being in love with her but not liking her. This is perhaps an early example of Rattigan's skill at observing how human beings wear a shell that conceals their insecurities, and exploring the emotional webs in which people can find themselves caught.

*Photographs by Alex Brenner
courtesy of LAMDA.*

(From page 4) The only jarring notes come in the cockney servant of Kathleen Harrison (it's just too big for the screen) and Ernest Thesiger's senile handwriting expert. Still, as Geoffrey Wansell points out, the court scenes are completely unrealistic - but they do a job. As always one wishes that Ronnie could be played by somebody who actually looked thirteen. On re-viewing the film though I was particularly struck by Basil Radford's dignified Desmond Curry showing that maybe this personable actor shouldn't have been so often 'typed.'

Geoffrey in his analysis points out the usual Rattigan themes and particular the relationship between father and son. True I suppose but on reflection I was left wondering if in Catherine and Arthur the playwright pictures the kind

of relationship he might have desired with his own father. Then Geoffrey points out also the clear development of the relationship between Morton and Catherine that is only hinted at in the stage play. He's surely right in this - the film gives a real sense that Morton is starting to become part of the family - the casual eating of the plate of sandwiches and the fiddling with nick-nacks on the mantelpiece. But in cinematic symbolism terms the mutual smoking is the give away.

Sadly just as we have not, at least yet, been given Vivian and Edward Lewis Corporate Raiders we haven't had the pleasure of Winslow and Morton Dispatch Box Duo. No matter; we'll just have to see it in our mind's eye.

Winslow on the Beeb

A survey of what seems to have been a regular favourite - with some surprising casting.

The first mention of *Winslow* in the Radio Times comes in a 1947 magazine series *Theatre Programme* which presented scenes from the original Lyric Theatre production. Interestingly it was preceded by *Round the Halls* from the New Cross Empire introduced by Brian Johnston - just the sort of programme he did regularly before his cricket days. By November of that year we get the first full Saturday Night Theatre production under the direction of Peter Watts who also did the adaptation. In this Arthur is played by Frank Cellier from the London production and Violet by Kathleen Harrison but the rest of the cast are new - Morton is played by Dennis Arundell.

The first TV interpretation - live of course - came in the next year via an Outside Broadcast from the Intimate Theatre, Palmers Green. If you've never heard of this playhouse join the club. It was in fact a church hall, St. Monica's, built in 1931 and turned by John Clements into a little theatre in 1935. It had a professional repertory company from 1937. This Winslow was one of a set of 14 plays televised from the place by the beeb in the late 1940s. The cast included Ernest Haines as Arthur, Marjorie Zeidler as Grace, Monica Stitland as Catherine and David Raven as Morton. The latter appears, I find, in the Guinness Book of Records for playing Major Metcalf in 4,575 London performances of *The Mousetrap* between 1957 and 1968.

In December 1948 the Home Service (now called Radio 4 which is sadly a mere shadow of what the 'Home' used to be) broadcast an excerpt from the Donat film. And in the following January in a series titled *From A Seat In the Circle* David Southwood described "an excerpt from the London Films production, *The Winslow Boy* starring Robert Donat, with Cedric Hardwicke, Kathleen Harrison, Francis L Sullivan, Marie Lohr, and Stanley Holloway. From Deansgate Cinema, Manchester." Quite what this programme might have been like to listen to I imagine you'd have to be 90 odd to recall but it seems a very strange sort of enterprise. In

June 1949 a Midland Region only listing *From the Midland Repts* indicates a production going on there with excerpts or reviews isn't clear.*

On December 8th 1949 comes the first BBC TV production produced by that pioneer of all sorts of TV Royston Morley who produced the Festival of Britain play *The Final Test*. And it's here we begin to think of performances we would like to be able to go back to - especially when you read that Morton was played by the wonderful Roger Livesey who is well worth watching in anything he did. Jack Watling is here as Dickie and Walter Fitzgerald as Arthur. Catherine is played by Valerie White. The whole production was re-mounted on the following Thursday, normal practice for the time. For the way in which live drama was produced and the pitfalls awaiting every origination I recommend John Swift's *Adventures in Vision* (1950) and the Denis Norden edited *Coming to you Live!* (1985).

In 1951 on 16th January scenes from the play are broadcast for schools for *Senior English II* but in May that year we have another Saturday Night Theatre performance again directed by Peter Watts but with some intriguing casting. Arthur was Ronald Simpson and Grace Elena Palmer. But Catherine was played by Angela Baddeley, Desmond by Clive Morton and Sir Robert by Emlyn Williams.

Two years later Clive Morton and Elena Palmer returned in another production with Cecil Trouncer as Arthur and Dennis Arundell once again as Morton. Arundell is an interesting bloke who, besides acting, composed for wireless, theatre, and film, setting many of A P Herbert's lyrics to music. He staged many productions for Sadler's Wells and also directed operas in Australia and Finland, before taking charge of opera at the Royal College of Music from 1959-73. Cecil Trouncer is best known to this writer as Lloyd Hartley the about to retire very traditional housemaster in the Bolting Brothers film of *The Guinea Pig* and one can

visualise him as a very determined Arthur Winslow. This had two outings one on the Home the other on the Light again on the Peter Watts adaptation directed by him.

In 1955 there was a BBC Terence Rattigan Festival including a Winslow with the cream of radio actors Carleton Hobbs giving Arthur and Betty Hardy Grace. Perhaps the most intriguing though was Michael Hordern - a supreme radio actor if ever there was one - as Morton. About Elizabeth London (Catherine) I can find little though Peter Halliday (Dickie) did have a lengthy television career as a supporting player. The director was Wilfred Grantham. Terry introduced the play himself.

Rudolph Cartier is something a legend in television direction if for nothing else but his collaborations with Nigel Kneale on the *Quatermass* serials and the groundbreaking version of *1984*. This offered scenes of horror which, Denis Norden reckoned, caused a cross section of a certain generation to sleep with the landing light on thereafter. My own mother was so spooked by *Quatermass*, which she watched on a neighbour's set, she wouldn't walk home alone - a distance of approximately 30 yards. In 1958 he produced a Winslow with Peter Cushing as Morton and Gwen Watford as Catherine a pairing that one suspects must have worked extraordinarily well. Showing that there is indeed nothing new under the sun 62 years ago this was preceded by *Get Ahead* which offered a prize of £5,000 (sponsored by The News Chronicle) competed for by three contestants with entrepreneurial projects for a profitable business. One of the judges on this occasion was Mrs Gerald Legge, better known later as the stepmother of Princess Diana. Direct from the Carlton Rooms.

1961 saw another TV production in the Sunday Night Play spot, this time under the direction of Hal Burton with Emlyn Williams as Morton. For this writer though the choice of Edward Chapman as Arthur and Gillian Lind as Grace is a combination one would have liked to have seen. Chapman's range was much wider than some of his film roles, particularly Mr Grimsdale, might indicate. Though what Terry made of Chapman's petition to get John Gielgud kicked out of Equity after his 1953 arrest I don't know.

It was back to radio in 1965 in what from the casting I think might well have been a Midland Region production given that Lockwood West, father of Timothy, was Arthur against Mary Wimbush's Catherine with Marius Goring as Morton. One imagines Wimbush as a quite strident suffragette and Harry Lockwood West a fairly solid Arthur. Ronnie is Brian Hewlett, then I think in the Drama Rep Company, now Neil Carter in the Archers! This is the Peter Watts adaptation again also repeated in 1969. Sadly there is an error on one of the listings and it's impossible to find out whether Grace was played by Molly Rankin (RT 1965) or Dorothy Holmes-Gore (RT 1969).

Now here we come to my personal surprise. I know I first saw the Donat Winslow on TV and I know it was before 1972 indeed before 1970. Donat had impressed

me both in *The Thirty Nine Steps* and *Goodbye Mr Chips* and I chose the film out of the paper for the actor not the title. But it didn't make an appearance on the Beeb until a British Film Night strand in August 1973 so I must have caught it on ITV. But back then both channels showed a lot of movies all the time. It reappeared on BBC 2 in 1977.

Also in 1977, repeated 1978, came a television *Play of the Month* produced by Cedric Messina and directed by David Giles with Eric Porter as Arthur, Michele Dotrice as Catherine, Diana Fairfax as Grace Winslow and Alan Badel as Sir Robert Morton. This is the version in the BBC Box set and while enjoyable I didn't find Badel entirely convincing as Morton.

Back on Radio in 1981 Ian Cotterell directed his own adaptation again as part of a Rattigan season with Michael Aldridge as Arthur, Pauline Letts as Grace, Sarah Badel as Catherine and Aubrey Woods as Morton. As the adaptation also features Nicholas Courtney as the Attorney General and Patrick Barr as the First Sea Lord this must be a sort of version of the Donat film script. It was repeated in 1986.

The final BBC television original I can find is the Michael Darlow-directed 1989 version with a perhaps surprising choice of Gordon Jackson as Arthur. However, the combination of a young Emma Thompson as Catherine and Ian Richardson as Morton must have been stunning though as far as I can see it is not available anywhere.

I asked Michael about this and he told me: "To be honest I can't remember if there were ever any repeats of our production of *The Winslow Boy*. It was certainly transmitted on PBS in America in a slot called Great Performances on 10th February 1990 and seems to have been well received. I have an old press cutting sent to me by American friends from the Seattle Times which carries a full page headline "PBS 'Winslow Boy': They don't make 'em like this anymore" - which is full of praise for the play, the performances and the production. I am not aware of any DVD version of our production."

From then until 2002 I can find no listings for the play and in the year the Beeb screened the David Mamet film, something they repeated four times over the next five years.

**A note on BBC Radio. For most of the post war period up to 1969 there were three BBC radio channels. The Light Programme - a mixture of easy listening music and speech. The Home Service, a mixture of music and speech, was a national service with regional opt outs for locally originated programming. The Third Programme was an unashamedly highbrow mixture of speech and serious music leavened maybe with a bit of jazz from time to time. Following the report Broadcasting in the Seventies the present Radios 1,2,3&4 emerged. From that time on radio drama was pretty well confined to R4 with a little on R3. Like so many things this shows the mischief that can be wrought by people with tidy minds.*