



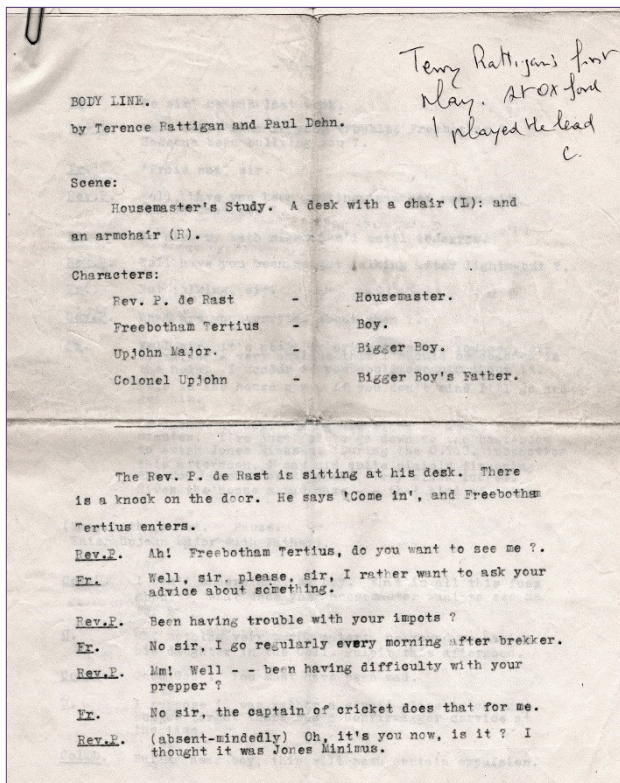
# The Rattigan

The Newsletter of  
The Terence Rattigan Society

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# Version

## A new Rattigan script discovered



**David Charles Manners**  
discovers an early Rattigan script

Colin McFadyean was a favourite amongst my mother's cousins. Erudite, cosmopolitan and naturally generous, his death in 2007, aged 92, was widely mourned. And yet it was not until April 2021 that his daughter Melanie discovered a folio of typed pages tucked into his desk, on the title sheet of which her father had written, 'Terry Rattigan's first play. At Oxford I played the lead.'

Colin had spent his professional life as a noted

international business lawyer; his father, Sir Andrew McFadyean, as a diplomat, Liberal politician and philosopher. In contrast, Colin's mother, Lady Dora, was one of the celebrated Chute theatre dynasty. Her great-grandmother had been the first woman theatre manager in Britain; her great-uncle none other than the Great Macready himself.

Colin inherited his forebears' theatrical faculties. He excelled on stage in his youth at Rugby School, and on going up to Brasenose College in 1933 joined the Oxford Union Dramatic Society (OUDS). It was there that his talents won him the lead in a piece written by two fellow Society members: Terence Rattigan and Paul Dehn.

The duo's debut work was a spicy farce entitled *Body Line*, in reference to a controversial cricketing tactic devised by the English team for their 1932–33 Ashes tour of Australia. The playlet opens in a headmaster's study and consists of three scenes for four characters:

Reverend P. de Rast	–	Housemaster
Freebotham Tertius	–	Boy
Upjohn Major	–	Bigger Boy
Colonel Upjohn	–	Bigger Boy's Father

The Reverend, played by Colin, was a mocking representation of the all-too-familiar eccentric, yet predatory, public schoolmaster: *'I've just got to go down to the boot-room to swish Jones Minimus. During the O.T.C. inspection this afternoon, I saw him quite plainly fingering the Coy. Commander's pouch. Very slack indeed. Gives the house a bad name – that kind of thing.'*

The Reverend's character is **Cont. on page 8...**



## The Terence Rattigan Society

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Editor's note: Any views expressed in this newsletter are those of the individual author and do not necessarily represent the views of The Terence Rattigan Society or its Committee.



Harold and have a few mementos from his life in my home. Hence the McBean photograph of Harold's production on my desk.

Even with this family connection my love of Rattigan's writing was late flowering. In my early forties I saw the National Theatre production of *After The Dance*. I was electrified. Of course the

## In Memory of Rattigan

### Lucy Briers

***outlines the project to restore the Rattigan Family Memorial at Kensal Green***

I have an odd connection to Terence Rattigan. I never met him, so why do I have an Angus McBean framed photograph of the original cast of *French Without Tears* on my desk? Well, that's down to the man I would describe as my 'third grandfather', the director Harold French, who championed Rattigan's work from early on in the playwright's career. Harold was a close friend of my late father, the actor Richard Briers, and had in fact championed his early career as well. I loved

talents of Nancy Carroll, Adrian Scarborough and Benedict Cumberbatch would send electricity through a shopping list, but the text was extraordinary. So raw, so heartfelt and so understanding of how betrayal destroys people's lives. A few years before I had gone through a terrible divorce and I felt as if Rattigan was holding my hand and saying, "I understand, it's dreadful isn't it?" From that night I was a Rattigan fan.

A few years later I stumbled across a humble cardboard box in my late father's study while helping his biographer dig out research material. It contained a box file and what looked like a leather bound script. The box file contained a treasure trove of letters to and from Rattigan. The correspondents range from Audrey Hepburn to Edward Heath, with Vivien Leigh and Rex



Harrison in between, to name but a few. The 'script' was a handwritten first draft of *In Praise of Love* with corrections and notes. I couldn't believe my eyes. My family agreed these documents were not for us to sell and must be given to the nation. We called in a manuscript expert who researched and beautifully archived the letters and, along with the draft of *In Praise of Love*, they are on their way to the British Library.

Reading the letters I feel I have got to know, just a little, the playwright who spoke so eloquently to me through *After The Dance*. My connection began to feel more personal so I am delighted that this part of his legacy will soon be reaching a safe harbour. And I suppose that's why I became involved in the fundraising project to restore his family memorial and give Rattigan's ashes a safe and marked harbour as well.

The photos of the family memorial are upsetting. Money that was set aside almost a century ago to maintain the memorial has long since run out. Any royalties from productions of Rattigan's plays go to two charities stipulated in his will and cannot be used for any other purpose.

To think of a man of Rattigan's talent and elegance laid to rest under such neglected stonework, with no name marking his resting place, is too much to contemplate. And so a wonderful group of people started to come together, including Susan Cooper, Norman Home, Loretta Monaco, Lee Penhaligan, Henry Vivian-Neal and Simon Williams; joined a little later by the warm hearted enthusiasm and support of Martin Amherst Lock, Alison Du Cane, Denis Moriarty and Giles Cole. Somehow, despite Covid restrictions, our passion for Rattigan has enabled us to get this fundraising project off the ground. With special acknowledgement to Norman Home for sorting out the quote from the stonemason.

At the moment the group are busy sending off letters to a list of possible donors and the response is very positive. It's obviously a very difficult time to be raising money for such a niche cause but, as



**If you feel you could support this project but would like further information, please email the Secretary of the Terence Rattigan Society at:**  
**mramherstock@gmail.com.**

**Should you be happy to become a project supporter straightaway you can BACS a donation to The Terence Rattigan Society bank account, 22820768, sort code 30-64-72, using the reference RMFP. Thank you.**

fellow Rattigan devotees, if you are interested in donating please look at the details above. We are aiming to raise £24,000. This sounds a lot but will ensure the structure of the memorial will be secured for generations to come, the memorial itself will be cleaned and repaired and Rattigan's name will finally be placed alongside other members of his family. It would be so wonderful to give Terry the resting place he deserves at the same time as his letters and first draft of *In Praise of Love* get theirs. ∞

# Rattigan and happy endings

by William Humble

*The Performer* is a full-length stage play, a monologue, that Stephen Fry recently performed brilliantly on Radio 4. At the time of writing, it's still available on BBC Sounds. Here, its author, acclaimed playwright William Humble (pictured below), writes about the two-part drama, which features Terence Rattigan and his contemporaries Laurence Olivier and Vivien Leigh as significant elements in the story.

I very much doubt if my father ever saw anything written by Terence Rattigan. He might possibly have seen the BBC TV play *Heart to Heart* because it was such a high-profile show, but as he spent most evenings on his own in our suburban front room listening to classical music on the Third Programme I doubt even that. And he certainly wouldn't have seen any of Rattigan's plays in the theatre. I can be sure of that for a simple reason - he never went to the theatre. Never ever.

My father had a frustrated, unfulfilled life, stuck in an unhappy marriage for sixty years and constantly thwarted in his career in the City because he was a Labour supporter in a very Tory world and, even worse, one who refused to keep his mouth shut about his beliefs. I've struggled to write about him repeatedly, but in my play *The Performer* I finally decided to give his life a happy ending. And the first thing I did in order to achieve this was to invent a meeting with Terence Rattigan - a man as unlike my father as could be imagined, but one whose sympathy for the lost and lonely and unfulfilled is abundantly clear in plays such as *Separate Tables* and *The Deep Blue Sea*.

*The Performer* starts in 1962, as over Sunday lunch Dad tells his wife and adoles-

cent son once again his well-worn funny story about the day he went to see Rattigan's play *The Sleeping Prince*, starring Laurence Olivier and Vivien Leigh. The fact of his going to the theatre at all is of course funny enough - and he only does because there's a train strike and he can't get home and has nothing better to do....

*The Sleeping Prince* was produced nine years earlier, in 1953. It's one of Rattigan's weaker works - written to coincide with the coronation - but I wanted non-theatre-going Dad to hate the play and, characteristically bolshie, to reveal this to the posh man sitting next to him, who is amused rather than offended. On his own while the man goes to buy a drink, Dad glances through the programme and sees a photo and is appalled to realize he's been talking disparagingly about the play to the great man himself, Terence Rattigan.

Dad's son has no time for his boring father (nor does Mum for that matter) but he loves the story because he's theatre-mad and obsessed with Laurence Olivier, then running the National Theatre at the Old Vic and performing some of his greatest roles.

Then Dad does something even more unexpected than going to the theatre. He suddenly disappears. And his son ends up trying to discover what has happened to him.

I shan't reveal the details of





what he discovers (partly because you can still listen to the play on BBC Sounds) but thanks to the chance meeting with Rattigan, straight-laced suburban Dad ends up having the happy final act in his life that I'd wanted for him, where figures such as Vivien Leigh, Brian Rix and Derek Nimmo feature prominently, and, again because of Rattigan, he finally meets someone who gives him the love and companionship and laughter that he never had before. And along the way his son discovers similarities with his Dad that he'd never dreamt of, and as a result becomes close to him in a way that, sadly, I never quite managed with my own father.

So Terence Rattigan, the writer with such empathy for waifs and strays, provided me with not one but two happy endings. I'm still trying to achieve the third one, which is for *The Performer* to be performed in the theatre, for which it was written, and which of course Rattigan loved more than anything, and for which he wrote his greatest works. [↪](#)

William Humble has at least two connections with our President, David Suchet: he has written a two-hour episode of *Poirot* (*Poirot: Death in the Clouds*) and David also starred as comedian Sid Field in William's stage play *What a Performance*.

William's television films include *Whatever Love Means*; *Too Good To Be True*; *The Vacillations of Poppy Carew* (from the novel by Mary Wesley and directed by former TRS member James Cellan Jones); *Royal Celebration*; *Ex*; *Hancock* (BAFTA nomination for Best Single Drama, starring Alfred Molina); *Virtuoso* (Alfred Molina as pianist John Ogdon), *Poppyland*, *Talk To Me*, *Rules of Justice*, *On Giant's Shoulders* (International Emmy award for Best Television Film, starring Judi Dench).

Other TV series include *Every Woman Knows A Secret* (from the novel by Rosie Thomas); *An Unsuitable Job For A Woman* and *The Black Tower* (both based on the PD James novels); *Maigret*; *Churchill: The Wilderness Years*; *Flambards* (based on the novels by KM Peyton); *All Creatures Great and Small* and *Juliet Bravo*.

Other stage plays include *Façades* (starring Frances de la Tour as Edith Sitwell) and *Fly Away Home*—both at the Lyric, Hammersmith. *Ed*.



**Vivien Leigh and Laurence Olivier in *The Sleeping Prince* at the Phoenix Theatre in 1953. The critic Kenneth Tynan wrote in the *Daily Sketch*: "Once upon a time there was an actor called gruff Laurence Olivier, whose wife was an actress called pert Vivien Leigh, and a playwright called clever Terence Rattigan wrote a play for them, called *The Sleeping Prince*, with a gruff part for him and a pert part for her, and to nobody's surprise it ran happily ever after, with twice-weekly matinées."**

**In fact it ran for 247 performances and was subsequently filmed as *The Prince and the Showgirl* with Olivier and Marilyn Monroe.**

**Also in the cast of the original production were Martita Hunt, Peter Barkworth, Paul Hardwick, Richard Wattis, Jeremy Spenser and Rosamund Greenwood.**

**The subsequent Broadway production opened at the Coronet Theatre in 1956 starring Michael Redgrave and Barbara Bel Geddes. It ran for only 60 performances.**

**Writer William Humble has at least two connections with our President and also happens to be a neighbour of our Chairman...**

# Rattigan's Seagull

by James Heyworth-Dunne

Chekhov in *The Seagull* and Rattigan in *The Deep Blue Sea* demonstrate their compassion and penetrating insight into the human condition.

Chekhov exposes a wide range of characters to detailed scrutiny. Chekhov was also delivering a searing message regarding the need for a new theatrical art form, to replace what he saw as trivial packages repeating the banalities of humdrum daily life. Rattigan subjected a less wide range to similar scrutiny and he may have been more concerned than Chekhov with portrayal in code of intimate details of his personal life.

Whatever the differences, they will both be remembered for compassion transcending the facts of their stories to reveal the sublime purpose of their humanist art.

Chekhov's seagull is a symbol of the unachievable. The seagull represents happiness and freedom. Each character aspires to become the seagull, each aspires to achieve happiness and freedom. Each aspiration is doomed to failure but, in the pursuit, the characters reveal their depths and complexities. Failure does not prevent "life from carrying on", as best it can, even richly.

Chekhov's seagull is also a symbol of the vulnerability and suffering of the human condition. The seagull is killed by a senseless and selfish act. There was not even the excuse of "hunting": seagulls are inedible. No character in the play is destroyed by a similar act. It is the vulnerability of his characters that provides the platform for Chekhov's analysis and sympathy.

Before considering the plight of one character, Nina, and its similarity to that of Hester in *The Deep Blue Sea*, we should highlight Masha, only apparently a minor character. Masha is the daughter of the manager of the lakeside estate where all the action of the play is based. Masha is courted by a local schoolteacher for whom she cares not at all. She loves passionately Konstantin,

the resident nephew of Sorin, the owner of the estate, and son of Arkadina, a well-known actress who is visiting the estate with Trigorin, her young lover and a celebrated writer of popular fiction. Konstantin loves Nina, a neighbour, and is irritated by Masha.

Chekhov opens each of the four acts with Masha, each time melancholic. This emphasises her role and the importance of key lines she

delivers. Masha declares that she drinks to excess but openly, unlike most women; she is different from other women. After Konstantin's first suicide attempt that only wounds him,

she announces that had he been killed, she would have responded by "tearing the love out of my heart" - how? By getting married. Finally, Masha seeks to rise above the agony of unrequited love, which has destroyed her: "What is it anyway? It is of no real importance".

Masha's defiance in the face of the total failure of her aspirations continues to resonate in *The Seagull* as will Hester's in Rattigan's play. Masha in her tragedy, as will Nina and Hester in theirs, depicts modern woman seeking to express individuality and surely deserving a better fate.

Nina's circumstances evoke the plight of Hester in spirit but not in detail. Nina soon abandons her relationship with Konstantin and aims to snare Trigorin, lured by his fame and to achieve her ambition to become an actress in Moscow: "if you ever want my life, take it", thus rendering herself reminiscent of the vulnerability of the dead seagull but, and principally, available. Trigorin, in turn, is determined to seize the young and beautiful girl that is on offer.

Two years pass. Nina's acting career in Moscow has failed disastrously. Abandoned by Trigorin, she survives as an itinerant and near destitute third-rate actress. Nina returns in distress one stormy night to the estate where Arkadina and Trigorin are visiting the now dying Sorin. Nina

*They will both be remembered for compassion transcending the facts of their stories to reveal the sublime purpose of their humanist art...*

covertly seeks out Konstantin, unintentionally raises his hopes for a resumed relationship and then unintentionally drives Konstantin to his eventual suicide by declaring her undiminished love for Trigorin – “I love him more than ever”.

As she departs and despite her frank admission of her artistic failure to Konstantin moments earlier, Nina defiantly and pitifully declares, echoing Masha’s attitude, that she has achieved her ambition— “I am an actress”—and that she will go on to become famous.

It is impossible not to feel sympathy for Nina, just as one felt earlier for Masha.

*The Deep Blue Sea* opens with Hester Collyer’s attempted suicide over a gas fire. Freddie has forgotten her birthday. Hester’s life with Freddie mirrors, in Maida Vale instead of in Moscow, and in otherwise altogether different circumstances, the daily tragedy as we imagine it of Nina’s life with Trigorin.

Freddie is the people’s idol as an RAF hero as Trigorin was, in those times, the people’s idol as a famous writer of popular fiction. Both are empty. Both cause their lovers enormous anguish. Trigorin, no longer infatuated, shows no sympathy when Nina’s baby that he fathered, dies. It is Rattigan’s skill and compassion that help us to understand the devastation caused by Hester’s forgotten birthday in its widest context, that of the hopelessness of the relationship upon which she has pinned all her aspirations and of Hester’s fundamental chagrin as a woman who has discovered but cannot fulfil her passionate self.

No doubt Hester enjoys far more support than Nina ever had in Moscow – the unctuous neighbours, the solicitous landlady, the uncomprehending but caring husband, the comprehending doctor. Yet Hester remains as alone as did Nina and in agony. Hester’s pleas to Freddie to remain with her echo the utter helplessness of Nina’s final declaration to Konstantin of her love for Trigorin.

Hester manages, in her last scene with Freddie, to show some poise in his company, just as Nina attempted to show some poise at the end of her final scene with Konstantin. Resigned but, like Masha and Nina, defiant, Hester, alone, this time sitting in front of a lit gas fire, faces her uncertain future, commanding our respect but evoking our most profound sympathy. ∞



Judi Dench as Arkadina in the 1994 National Theatre production of *The Seagull* and (below) the programme cover for the NT’s 2016 production of *The Deep Blue Sea*, which starred the late great Helen McCrory as Hester.





# A new Rattigan script

*Continued from front page*

contrasted with that of the stuffy, censorious parent: Col. Upjohn: *'It's you who are mad, sir. You're just another of those filthy sexual maniacs. I shall remove my son this very instant, and I shall inform the police.'*

The humour of the piece is unashamedly bawdy, founded in a clumsy confusion over cricketing terminology and the boys' sexual proclivities: Rev. P. de Rast: *'He's a quick learner, you know. I was playing with him myself the other day. I must say I found him much better on matting than on grass. Of course, on matting one's balls tends to get up very quickly. One of mine hit him in the eye before he could turn round.'*

Considering the subject matter, such a work could never have been intended for public presentation. The OUDS ran a private club called Smokers, where notoriously camp, risqué, in-house revues were staged once a year for the exclusive indulgence of members and their guests. It seems most likely, therefore, that *Body Line* was meant for none but this select assembly.

In the same year that Colin took the lead in *Body Line*, Rattigan defied his own censorious father, who intended him for the Diplomatic Service, by leaving Trinity College without sitting his final exams. A few months later, Rattigan's first full-length play, *First Episode* – another collaboration, this time with Philip Heimann – opened at Kew and was soon rewarded with a transfer to the West End. The trajectory of Rattigan's career was set.

Rattigan maintained his friendship with Paul Dehn after Oxford. By the outbreak of war, both were noted members of another discreet society that gathered in the bar beneath the Ritz Hotel. This place of safety and assignation was known as The Pink Sink and ruled by a remarkable woman known affectionately as Sodomy Johnson, 'the Buggers' Vera Lynn'.

As it happens, Colin also found himself returned to the company of Paul Dehn during the war, when both were recruited by Ian Fleming

## Dates for your diary

At long last we have some events to look forward to!

### Sunday 22 August 2021

**'The Browning Version'** at the new Riverside Studios, starring Sir Kenneth Branagh, a fundraising venture for RADA. 2.15pm performance. Full details are enclosed. Personal booking only.

### Thursday 23 September 2021

**Annual Birthday Dinner** at the Oxford & Cambridge Club, Pall Mall, 7 for 7.30pm. Full details and booking form are on the enclosed flyer.

### Thursday 2 December 2021

**'While The Sun Shines'** - a visit to the Orange Tree Theatre, Richmond, for the 2.30pm performance has been arranged. Details and a booking form have been sent. A few places remain, so if you would like to attend please contact: [phillward@me.com](mailto:phillward@me.com)

### STOP PRESS!

### Saturday 4 December 2021

**'Flare Path'** - a visit to the Palace Theatre Westcliff is proposed for a matinee performance of 'Flare Path'. More details to follow.

into Naval Intelligence. Colin had lived in Berlin as a child and spoke fluent German. He was therefore appointed chief interrogator of captured U-boat captains. Dehn, the quiet, witty poet, became not only a trainer of spies, but, according to John le Carré, a professional assassin. He subsequently found fame as an Oscar-winning screenwriter and is today referred to as 'the gay godfather of James Bond'.

Not until 1960 would Dehn and Rattigan again combine their literary art for the writing of a musical, *Joie de Vivre*. As this is widely regarded as their first and only collaboration, the discovery 61 years later amongst Colin's effects of what is likely to be the only surviving copy of *Body Line* – their true earliest collaboration – is made all the more remarkable. ∞

*David Charles Manners is a writer, charity co-founder, and a representative of the anti-bullying charity Diversity Role Models. He preserves private letters written by both Rattigan and Dehn during their Pink Sink years. His own play, Here at Last is Love, based on these and other inherited letters, opens next year. [www.davidcharlesmanners.com](http://www.davidcharlesmanners.com)*