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## STARS IN THE CHICAGO AFTERNOON

by Eric Shorter

They call it a culture shock. What I had spent forty years enjoying as fiction became suddenly fact. Everywhere I went I looked about for hoodlums in limousines with sawn-off shot guns poking out of the windows.

On the ride in from the airport the taxi driver declared: "Yeah, sure, there's plenty of gun-play in this town".

And as I took my place in the Biograph cinema it proved to be the only seat without its plush. Why? Because it was where Dillinger supposedly sat before he left through a side-door to be betrayed by a girl friend's signal to an assassin who promptly shot him dead on the pavement.

So, can you wonder if I felt a little nervous on my first visit to Chicago? It's no good blaming Hollywood. Dillinger really lived. It's no good dismissing such fears as a filmgoer's fancy. People still get shot in Chicago; or, if not shot, then worked over.

For example, there was a film festival on. And film-makers are specially keen to see that their films are shown with the reels in the right order and the correct lens-setting and the sound-track regulated for our eardrums. Which implies a visit to the projection room.

This is not recommended by the festival officials in Chicago. In fact it is positively discouraged. Film projectionists in Chicago do not welcome hints from film-makers on how to show films. One such attempt by a director who was worried about the focus ended in the director's being flung downstairs and being unable to focus on anything for some time afterwards.

"Do not", everyone advised, "walk back to your hotel alone late at night. You must insist on a taxi!". Having reached the hotel bedroom unmolested I turn on television. The news is that another headless body has been found in the boot of a car after a pursuit by the police.

Even to enter a shop which sells gramophone records brings a reminder of Chicago's reputation for crime. For there at the entrance of the shop was a guard with a revolver in his holster—ready to shoot presumably if I left without paying.

No wonder therefore if a degree of apprehension clouded the first day or two in a city as graceful architecturally as its manners. Even the motorists seemed not to be in a hurry.

And though I never found the nerve to though I never found the nerve to

*continued overleaf*

STARS IN THE CHICAGO AFTERNOON — continued

register directly a complaint about the quality of a film's projection it was clear that as long as you did not try to teach a Chicagoan his job you could expect civility and kindness. Was it therefore an instinctive politeness which caused two matinees I attended—one for Peter O'Toole in Noel Coward's *Present Laughter*, the other for Lana Turner in a trifle called *Divorce Me Darling*—to be so warmly received?

The star system was at work, of course. Mr O'Toole was making his first appearance on the American stage. Miss Turner was hardly making her first appearance but she can still draw the crowds who are traditionally charmed by the idea of a film star in the flesh and in Chicago they had two film stars in the flesh.

So, in a way, I counted myself lucky at seeing a poster on State Street advertising Mr O'Toole in *Present Laughter* and *Uncle Vanya*. His *Vanya* had been very fine some years ago at Bristol and his Garry Essendine was new. And as for Lana Turner, who could resist the fleshly temptation, even if it was twenty years' too late?

In the event, though, the Chekhov was not played. Mr O'Toole was officially said to have considered the company (mostly Canadians) as not good enough. So the Coward comedy became the attraction; or, rather, what Mr O'Toole would make of it.

For Garry Essendine's conceit and narcissistic smugness can be tedious if the actor himself wears an air of Essendine-ishness off-stage as well as on, though of course the part is actor-proof in the sense that, like Hamlet, it is bound to make an effect of one sort or another.

And so it proved in Mr O'Toole's rather heavy hands. Indifference was his cue. A sort of world-weary, heavy-lidded, heartless mood of *ennui* engulfed the actor to a point at which

the character verged sometimes on self-parody, erecting an invisible yet palpable barrier between himself and the rest of the company.

It was a device often used by actor-managers of old for fear of losing the limelight but it seemed superfluous that afternoon at the Studebaker, Chicago, given the role and the actor's fame from films.

Lana Turner played up more brazenly still to her star billing. As soon as she came on in a flimsy marital comedy about a middle-aged wife who finds herself as a professional lawyer arranging the divorce of one of her husband's floozies, she took the precaution of bowing to the audience on each side of the arena stage to lap up applause as soon as possible.

And one soon saw why. For the vehicular play turned out so dull and artless, in shuffling its domestic situation around, that Miss Turner was not likely to win more applause when we had seen her act. There was in fact little acting for her to do once we knew that her marriage didn't matter to her or to her boorish husband except as a business partnership.

But the play successfully displayed Miss Turner in a succession of ravishing gowns. If the actress is not as slim and lovely as she was in all those Hollywood films we can still admire her poise, her way with clothes. Unlike Mr O'Toole she doesn't know an actor-proof role from the other kind.

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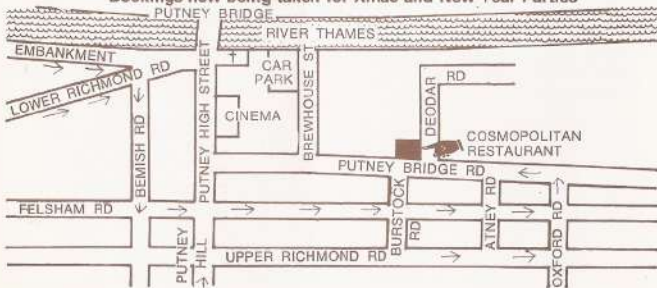
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Vol. 3 No. 12

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#### FIONA RICHMOND

Miss Fiona Richmond was born in Norfolk and attended various schools including the Alfred Colefax in Bridport, Dorset. She started her career by swimming in a tank at the Whitehall Theatre in 1970 in the play "PAJAMA TOPS" and went on to become the star of the show. She re-opened the Windmill Theatre for live theatre in "LET'S GET LAID" and during this time had her own radio phone-in programme on LBC.

She completed a documentary, "WHAT THE ACTRESS SAID" for Westward TV which has since won the Gold Award

for documentaries at Atlanta, Georgia. "COME INTO MY BED" had a very successful run at the Whitehall Theatre and she followed this with an American play "WOMEN BEHIND BARS" at the same theatre.

Her films include "EXPOSE", "HARD CORE" and "LET'S GET LAID". Miss Richmond has had three books published and is a regular contributor to "Men Only" magazine; she is also a free lance journalist and a member of the NUJ.

Miss Richmond can currently be seen in ATV's "CELEBRITY SQUARES" and Granada's new comedy series "TAKE MY WIFE".

#### JACKIE CARLTON

Jackie Carlton the well known Northern Comic, has appeared in numerous Revues and Pantomimes (as the Dame), and played all the 'Big Rooms' in Clubs throughout the country with his special brand of Cabaret. Jackie was the only comic winner from the TV series "NEW FACES" to go to the Palladium—and the New Faces panel of judges were moved to say 'My favourite comic'—Mary Whitehouse, 'My kind of comic'—Clement Freud and Bill Ward of the Palladium said 'a beautiful comic'. This is Jackie Carlton's first appearance with Miss Fiona Richmond.

#### KEVAN SHEEHAN

Kevan Sheehan a well known face on both television and in the theatre can also claim the distinction of being the first male nude at the Windmill Theatre (Guinness Book of Records). He goes on to say if you'd like further information—don't be afraid to ask!

#### DEBORAH BRAYSHAW

Deborah Brayshaw's first professional engagement was a season with the Sheffield Repertory Company where she played a variety of roles. This was followed by a part in the musical "OH KAY" in Torquay, and then appeared at the Mermaid Theatre, London in "PROMETHEUS UNBOUND". Deborah appeared in Geneva with the Neil Tuson Productions and returned to this country for a season at the Kenton Theatre, Henley. She played Dorothy in a national tour of "TO DOROTHY A SON", and has also appeared in Cabaret in Palma, Mallorca and Spain. Deborah has played many parts on television in such series as "Z CARS", "SOFTLY, SOFTLY", "SPECIAL BRANCH", "DR WHO" and the "DICK EMERY SHOW". Her films also include "CONFESSIONS FROM A HOLIDAY CAMP" and several of the "CARRY ON" films. Deborah is married and lives in Hertfordshire. Her favourite hobbies are horse riding, tennis, skating and sailing.

#### FIONA DOUGLAS-STEWART

Fiona hates having to write about herself, as she can never think of anything interesting to say, and would much rather be telling you about silver hall-marks or the dangers of extinction faced by whales. She was in "CARTE BLANCHE" in the West End, has just finished playing "Mama Rabbit" in "TOAD OF TOAD HALL", has recently done a tour of "JOSEPH AND THE AMAZING TECHNICOLOR DREAMCOAT" in Scotland, and will soon be appearing in the B.B.C. production of "MEASURE FOR MEASURE". Now, about those whales . . .

#### PETRINA DERRINGTON

Petrina trained at the Guildford School of Acting. She has appeared in various musicals including "SALAD DAYS" and "JOSEPH AND THE AMAZING TECHNICOLOR DREAMCOAT", and has done several tours of plays such as "THE LATE EDWINA BLACK" and "LET'S DO IT YOUR WAY", and she played the girl in "EQUUS" at Chelmsford. Petrina has just finished a season in "GOLDILOCKS AND THE THREE BEARS".

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Directed by Victor Spinetti

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STANLEY OLDROYD	JACK CARLTON
MARLON	KEVAN SHEEHAN
ROSANNA	DEBORAH BRAYSHAW
TRIXIE	FIONA DOUGLAS-STEWART
CLICK	PETRINA DERRINGTON
MASTER OF CEREMONIES	GEORGIE PHILLIPS

The play is set now, in the present, in an apartment on the second floor of a large house in Mayfair, Central London.

### ACT ONE

Scene 1  
Scene 2

### INTERVAL

### ACT TWO

Scene 1  
Scene 2

For 'Yes, We Have No Pyjamas' Company

Stage Management

ARNOLD FRY  
GEORGIE PHILLIPS  
JENNY CHARLES

## GEORGIE PHILLIPS

Georgie was born in London and educated at grammar school where he first caught the theatre bug, as the school annually presented a high quota of plays in which he appeared regularly. However a career in design after gaining a diploma at Art College seemed on the cards, when he joined a local pop group for fun. This, however, developed into the whole group/cabaret circuit business bringing reasonable success. Two years ago though he returned to his original love of acting. Last autumn he played the "villain of the piece" in an hour-and-a-half film for Thames TV all about professional football, and Christmas 1978, saw him in JACK AND THE BEANSTALK at Rickmansworth.

## VICTOR SPINETTI (The Director)

With the wealth of experience he has garnered, and the things Victor has done in Theatre, Films and Television, it is difficult to imagine that he began his working life in such prosaic occupations as a factory hand and as a waiter.

In theatre his acting activities have embraced the World and it is not possible to elaborate fully on the plays and musicals he has appeared in but to list just a few will demonstrate his popularity and ability. "EXPRESSO BONGO", "SOUTH PACIFIC", "OH WHAT A LOVELY WAR", "FINGS AINT WOT THEY USED TO BE", "THE ODD COUPLE" etc. In films he appeared in "BECKET", "A HARD DAY'S NIGHT", "HELP", Zeffirelli's "TAMING OF THE SHREW", "THE RETURN OF THE PINK PANTHER" and the TV special "THE MAGICAL MYSTERY TOUR". He has been seen in Television in several dramatic roles and, in addition was seen in the USA on the Merv Griffin Show and Jack Paar Show. Victor Spinetti can currently be seen in Granda's new comedy series "TAKE MY WIFE". As a Director Victor was responsible for "HAIR" in Rome and Amsterdam, "JESUS CHRIST SUPERSTAR" in Paris and under the Paul Raymond banner "THE BED", "LET'S GET LAID" and "COME INTO MY BED".

## ANDRE LAUNAY (The Author)

Andre Launay wrote his first sex comedy at the age of fourteen for his school's dramatic society and was asked to leave after its first reading. Though the author of successful plays and novels he has never taken his undoubted professionalism seriously enough to become boring. "If people around you are determined to be dull and narrow minded, there is always the theatre to escape to where life should be a romp, a farce, a laugh". He wrote both this play and the West End hit "COME INTO MY BED" specially for Miss Fiona Richmond. He is married to Spanish authoress Maria Isabel Rodriguez.

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# THEY WANTED TO BE HAPPY— AND WERE

by Patrick Ludlow

If you wanted to give a party in the middle twenties you couldn't do better than to take them first to the Palace Theatre, to see *No, No, Nanette*, and then on to the Café de Paris for supper. The cost, compared with today, would be trifling.

With *Nanette*, it didn't matter whether your guests were 'bright young things' or 'stuffshirts'. The signature tune was 'I Want to be Happy'—and that's the way everyone left the theatre. The principal reason for this high spot in the theatrical twenties was—casting. Certainly, the music and lyrics were good—'Tea for Two' swept the country—but it was Joseph Coyne and George Grossmith, in the two main parts, that made the piece such an enormous success.

The silly plot, as with many musicals, didn't matter. It was about a man, married to an economical wife, who had made a packet selling bibles—and wished to give his money away to other women. But it was the choosing of the ladies—always lovelies—that placed his benevolence in doubt.

When Charles Hawtrey played the part in the original farcical version: *His Lady Friends*, the famous Hawtrey blink—which amounted to a winking aside—made the story deliberately unbelievable.

Joe Coyne, who had also appeared in *His Lady Friends* in Australia, used a similar technique in *Nanette*. He didn't have the Hawtrey blink—no one else has ever been able to do that. But, when criticised, by his lawyer friend, for discriminating against 'ugly ducklings', Joe's innocent smile, caused roars of laughter. In all other respects, Coyne, wore the mantle of a sophisticated charmer, and dressed the part as a gay Lothario. He wasn't as good as Hawtrey but he could sing, after a fashion, and dance. And this is what the story required. Joe was a first class musical comedy performer who, as Danilo, in *The Merry Widow* had made such an outstanding success.

To "feed", and play second (as they used to say), the eccentric George Grossmith was engaged. G. G., as he was known to all, besides being an actor, was an impresario of repute. He was descended from and surrounded by a talented theatrical family. His father styled himself: Entertainer. Why has this become a dirty word? The son, G. G., didn't style himself as such—but he was vastly entertaining in his illegal portrayal of the lawyer friend. And with his capers, and high spirits, placed the part on a level with the lead.

continued overleaf

THE WANTED TO BE HAPPY—AND WERE — continued

What stopped the show, was not the good singing and dancing of the juveniles in the 'crash hit 'Tea for Two', but the way the two elegant maniacs—for no sane reason—came on, and gayed the number. These two, put across the message: 'This is all tommy-rot but, oh boy, isn't it fun?' They were aided and abetted by Binnie Hale and a magnificent company who seemed to delight in the team spirit.

Naturally, the director, William Mollison, took a share of the credit for creating this happy atmosphere which came across to the audience in delicious waves. Mark you, it's not always possible to inject and sustain amicability. It has been said that a man who can control a theatrical company can rule all Ireland. And in the recent revival of *No, No, Nanette*, at Drury Lane, all the ludicrous nonsense was lacking, and everyone seemed to be playing for themselves. As a result, the absurdity of the plot stood out like a sore thumb.

But let us go on from the jolly crowd at the Palace in the twenties to the fabulous Café de Paris where restaurateur Poulson greeted everyone like royalty. (A great many of his habitués were). I can think of no more exciting moment in London's night life than when the lights went down and the spots came up, the cymbals clashed and the drum beat—and down the finest cabaret staircase in Europe, came the two blackest negroes, in the whitest shirtfronts, to sing: 'My Blue Heaven'.

At 9.50 p.m. on the 8th of March 1941, a bomb came clean through the glass dome, above the Café, killing most of the dancers; and Snake Hips Johnson who, on the front of the stand, was leading his orchestra in 'Oh Johnnie, Oh Johnnie—how you can love'. During the blitz, the Café, being so low down, was thought to be a safe place to dance. Most people had the impression that it was underneath the Rialto Cinema which is next door. Actually, the only protection was the glass dome. The dance floor is circular—the tables around it. And I remember being irritated by Poulson who would take short cuts across the floor disturbing one's dancing. Alas, he was right in the centre when the bomb fell. Perhaps he would have preferred it that way. As a captain goes down with his ship so a restaurateur dies in his nightery. Those seated round the sides were hardly injured; but eighty-four people perished.

However, they rebuilt the Café; and, in the fifties, it enjoyed another boom period with Noel Coward and Marlene Dietrich. But only super-stars could sustain this establishment in all its glory.

Although, it's surprising how many worth while plays were produced during the twenties, they couldn't be beaten for fun and frolic and top of the lot I place Messrs Grossmith & Coyne for their idiotic renderings of 'Tea for Two' and 'I Want to be Happy'.

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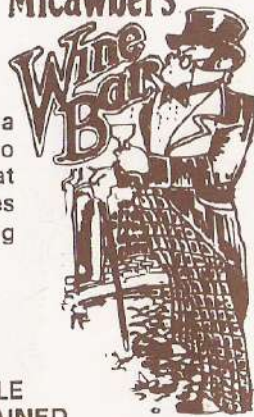
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or wait for "something  
better to turn-up!"

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