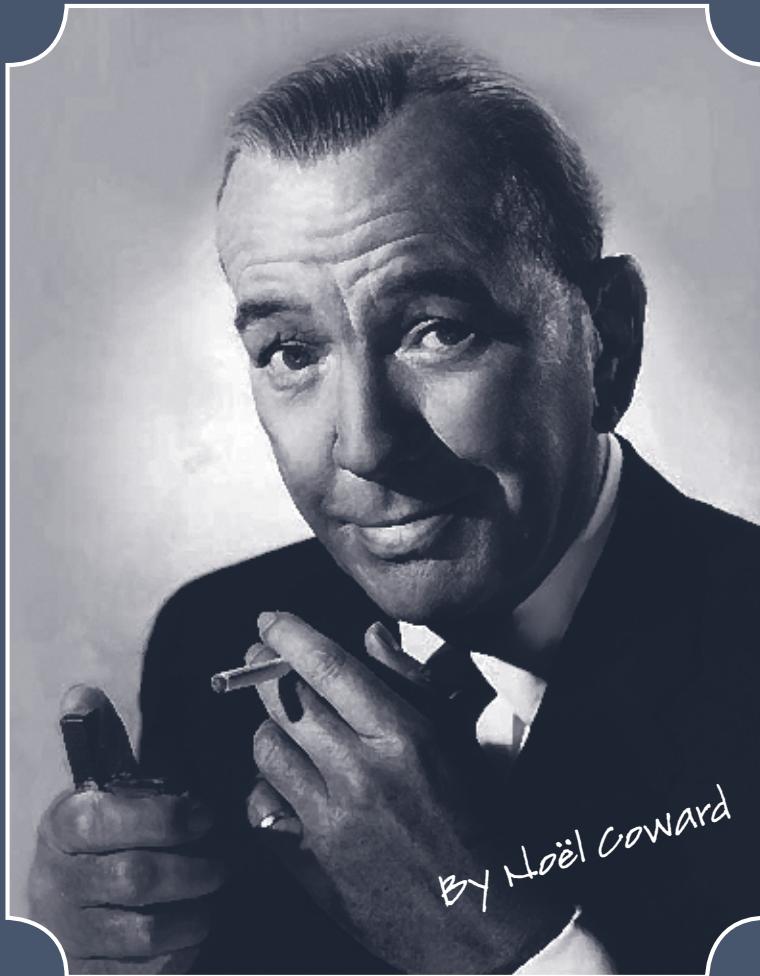


Bart Players present

Present Laughter

By Kind Permission of Samuel French

This is a performance by amateurs



By Noël Coward

Directed by Gillian Porter



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PRODUCTIONS

Sir Noël Peirce Coward

(16 December 1899 – 26 March 1973) was an English playwright, composer, director, actor and singer, known for his wit, flamboyance, and what Time magazine called "a sense of personal style, a combination of cheek and chic, pose and poise".

Born in a suburb of London, Coward attended a dance academy in London as a child, making his professional stage début at the age of eleven. As a teenager he was introduced into the high society in



which most of his plays would be set. Coward achieved enduring success as a playwright, publishing more than 50 plays from his teens onwards. Many of his works, such as *Hay Fever*, *Private Lives*, *Design for Living*, *Present Laughter* and *Blithe Spirit*, have remained in the regular theatre repertoire. He composed hundreds of songs, in addition to well over a dozen musical theatre works (including the operetta *Bitter Sweet* and comic revues), poetry, several volumes of short stories, the novel *Pomp and Circumstance*, and a three-volume autobiography. Coward's stage and film acting and directing career spanned six decades, during which he starred in many of his own works.

At the outbreak of World War II, Coward volunteered for war work, running the British propaganda office in Paris. He also worked with the Secret Service, seeking to use his influence to persuade the American public and government to help Britain. Coward won an Academy Honorary Award in 1943 for his naval film drama, *In Which We Serve*, and was knighted in 1969. In the 1950s he achieved fresh success as a cabaret performer, performing his own songs, such as "Mad Dogs and Englishmen", "London Pride" and "I Went to a Marvellous Party".

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His plays and songs achieved new popularity in the 1960s and 1970s, and his work and style continue to influence popular culture. Coward did not publicly acknowledge his homosexuality, but it was discussed candidly after his death by biographers including Graham Payn, his long-time partner, and in Coward's diaries and letters, published posthumously. The former Albery Theatre (originally the New Theatre) in London was renamed the Noël Coward Theatre in his honour in 2006.



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Coward was first recruited into the secret intelligence service in 1938 by Sir Robert Vansittart, a Foreign office mandarin, who despatched Coward to various European capitals.

On November 12 1938 Vansittart also instructed Coward on a mission to the US: "Try to get them on to the topic (of Nazi threat) as much as possible and let them rip."

Coward later wrote that: "Russia was filthy and smelly. Exactly like a whole world composed of the Whitechapel Road on August Bank Holiday. I was spied upon and followed because it was known I had something to do with the

Embassy....The Russians turned out all of my clothes onto the platform. What they hoped to find I don't know. I had any papers of importance in my hip pocket!"

In 1940 , after the outbreak of war, Coward was recruited by Sir William Stephenson, the head of British Security Coordination in New York, who asked him to target key American opinion formers.

Coward's handler was Cary Grant, the British born Hollywood star, known to have close links to intelligence services on both sides of the Atlantic.

The 43 year old playwright, who worked in the strictest secrecy, was vilified by a furious British press who assumed he was staying in America as a ruse to avoid the war.

Ironically, he was also being monitored by the FBI which disapproved of British agents operating in a still neutral country.



Gillian Porter – Director

Gillian, a past Chairman of Bart Players and has produced many plays, pantomimes and farces for us and many of these have won at Festivals over the years. Her last play was 'Drama at Inish' by Lennox Robinson which was runner-up in last year's AUDF finals but may best be remembered for a set made up of collection different sized patterned wool rugs hung on ten foot flats which wonderfully gave the feel and ambience of a comfortable but down at heel family country hotel. So does this years rug-less set suggest the art nouveau style and glamour of a vain matinee idol?



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Bart Players Present

‘PRESENT LAUGHTER’

by
Noël Coward

Directed by Gillian Porter

Present Laughter, set in the early 1940’s, follows a few days in the life of the self-obsessed matinee idol, Garry Essendine, as he prepares to travel to Africa on tour. His line in harmless infatuated debutantes is tolerated, but playing closer to home is not. Just before he leaves for Africa the full extent of his misdemeanours is discovered and merry havoc ensues.

Act I The morning after . . .

Act II Scene 1: Evening three days later
Scene II: The next morning

*There will be a short interval between Act II,
Scene 1 and Act II. Scene 2 and light refreshments will be
on sale in the foyer.*

Act III - A week later.

Written in 1939, *Present Laughter* was delayed by the WWII and was first presented at The Grand Theatre, Blackpool on 20 September 1942 with *This Happy Breed* and *Blithe Spirit*. Under the title of *Play Parade*, the three plays were played alternatively.

Cast

Daphne Stillington	Wendy Pyper
Miss Eriksons	Barbara Jeffers
Fred	Garvan Tohill
Monica Reed	Emma Townsend
Garry Essendine	Con McAlister
Liz Essendine	Letitia Fitzpatrick
Roland Maule	Billy Miskimmin
Morris Dixon	James Burns
Joanna Lyppiatt	Sandra Ardill
Henry Lyppiatt	Barney Gadd
Lady Saltburn	Pat Rennix

Director	Gillian	Porter
Set Design	Alan	Marshall
Stage Manager	Caroline	Mercer
Set Build	Ian	Hastings
Costumes	Carmen	O'Hagan
Photography	Terry	McDermott
Lighting	Ivor Agnew	John Stannard
Sound	Mike Patterson	Chris Dawson
Tickets	June	Silcock
Publicity & Art	James Burns	Mike Fee
Tech support	John	Little
Furniture Design	Eric	Porter
& Build		
Stage Team	Andrew	Devonshire
	Lorna-Jayne	Fletcher



Con Mc Alister (Garry Essendine) first performed with Barts three years ago as St. Ledger Alcock in the highly successful 'The Big House'. He joined us for 'Heil Belfast' for several memorable cameos, including singing 'Wee Willie's Lost his Lunchbox' and also that of 'Fireman Pat' and enjoyed last year's festival role as the melodramatic Hector De La Mare in the delightful 'Drama at Inish'

Letitia Fitzpatrick (Liz) Letitia Fitzpatrick has played serious roles on the amateur drama circuit in Chekhov's '*Uncle Vanya*', Tennessee Williams' *'27 Wagons Full of Cotton'* and Edward Albee's *'Three Tall Women'*. Letitia has also performed comic parts, in Neil Simon's *"Plaza Suite"* and summer theatre. This is her first outing with Barts. She is a well-known face and voice on local TV and radio, having worked as a presenter and reporter on UTV and BBC for many years. Now a freelance, Letitia can be heard occasionally on Belfast Citybeat.



Sandra Ardill (Joanna) – first acted with Barts in their 2000 festival play 'Summer'. She has acted with Theatre Three and won several Best Actress awards. Sandra re-joined Barts for 'Heil Belfast' and impressed as the self centered Constance Constantia in 'Drama at Inish' and is now enjoying the role of the 'very alluring' Joanna

Barbara Jeffers (Miss Eriksons) needs little or no introduction to Barts regulars and her many roles include Cass in *The Loves of Cass Maguire*, the revolting Miss Shepherd in *The Lady in The Van*, Maud in 'Born in The Gardens' and Lizzie Twohig in last year's Drama at Inish collecting many Best Actress Awards along the way



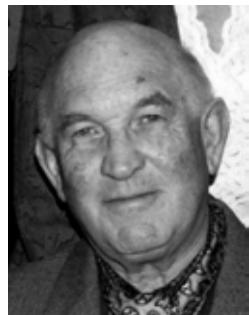
Garvan Tohill (Fred) has performed many times with Barts since first appearing as a sailor in *Treasure Island* in 2003 including playing the young George Gibbs in *Our Town*. Recently he has been actor/ director with One Act plays at Belvoir Players for which he has won several awards. Last year he played Eddie Twohig in *Drama at Inish*



Wendy Pyper (Daphne)-

Wendy gained her degree in Drama & Theatre Studies at London's University of Surrey and she performed in "off West-End" theatre including musicals. Wendy has played a variety of roles including Lady Macbeth and made her debut with Barts as the young Beannie Swann in 'Heil Belfast' and followed up as Christine Lambert in *Drama at Inish* and most recently as Cinderella in our latest winter production.

Billy Miskimmin (Roland Maule) – a very senior citizen of Bart Players, having appeared in many previous productions was lured back for roles in *Heil Belfast* and then John Twohig in *Drama at Inish*. He says: 'Being on stage is a release from the norm, and although hugely time-consuming, I would recommend it to anyone!'



Carmen O'Hagan –

Costumes Carmen's valuable expertise at getting the right period look, craftwork ability, and attention to detail won her several awards and high praise particularly in last year's show *Drama At Inish*. Her skill is again utilised in this production set in a stylish 1940 London. She has done the costumes for festival shows such as *The Big House* and *Born in The Gardens*, summer shows *Busybody*, *Running Riot* and *Strike Happy* as well as our recent hit pantomime *Cinderella*



Ian Hastings (Set Construction) has been making festival sets for many years. Perhaps his most ambitious was the ingenious van for Lady in The Van which involved cutting the off ends (including back doors) of two vans and then re-mounting them on a specially designed carcass which was assembled before each show and then dissembled immediately after. Following that, this set, designed by Alan Marshall is a bit of doddle.



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Emma Townsend (Monica) Emma joined Barts five years ago and played the slightly hysterical Shirley Hornet in both 'Sailor Beware' and its sequel 'Watch it Sailor' in 2007, followed by the gaoler's daughter in 'The Wind in The Willows'. She directed 'Busybody' for Barts in 2008, played the lovelorn Nicolette in 'Running Riot' and a slightly hysterical Elsie in Strike Happy.. For balance she played the streetwise Annie Twohig in *Drama At Inish* last year

James Burns (Morris) James first role with Bart's was in *Separate Beds* back in the days when we did Sam Cree plays. He has played leading roles such as Narrator in *Our Town* and Alan Bennet's Alter Ego in *Lady In The Van* as well as directing *The Wind in The Willows* in 2006. In addition to being Vice Chairman of Bart's he is editor of the magazine **Stage Whispers** and is always grateful for contributions



Barney Gadd (Henry) joined Bart's seven years ago as Blind Pugh in *Treasure Island* and played several parts incl. Howie Newsome in *Our Town*, Badger in *The Wind in The Willows*, the Russian spy Bruschik in *Running Riot*, Rev. Brown in *The Big House* and the narrator Will Thompson in *Heil Belfast*. He played Baron Hardup in *Cinderella* recently and is currently Chairman of Bart Players.

Pat Rennix (Lady Saltburn) Pat has been with Bart Players for three years now and has made an impact playing formidable women in *Busybody*, *Running Riot* and *Strike Happy* as well as several roles in last winter's very successful *Heil Belfast* and a very convincing witch (borrowed from *Macbeth*) for *Cinderella*. All this and still an active key player with Hillsborough Drama Group.



St. Bartholomew's Church

Welcome to St. Bartholomew's Church Hall this evening! I do hope you enjoy this production of 'Present Laughter'.

At St. Bart's we gladly embrace the arts, reckoning they are all part of the incredibly rich tapestry of human life and experience that come to us as gifts from God. Alongside drama comes music, and one of my joys is singing with the choir on Sunday mornings as our Musical Director John McDonald teaches us new music, including wonderful offerings from the pens of composers as widely separated in time and style as John Rutter, William Harris, Anton Bruckner, Johannes Eccart and Giuseppe Pitoni.

And if what I have said above prompts you to want to know more about St. Bartholomew's and what makes us tick, then there's more information at:

<http://www.stbartholomew.connor.anglican.org>

or come along and join us one Sunday! During Lent this year our worship and teaching focus on how we can more effectively care for all our neighbours, as a time when economic cutbacks mean that statutory services can no longer be taken for granted.

Next week, on Shrove Tuesday 8th March, we're also holding our annual Table Quiz and Pancake Party here in the Hall beginning at 1930. Consider this as *your* invitation to take part (but be warned: we might just relieve you of a small sum of money in aid of our Roof Fund ...).

So: enjoy yourselves this evening!
Yours (with a slight grin)

Ron Elsdon (Rector)

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In particular we mention:

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St Bartholomew's Mothers Union

Ivan Martin – U105

Gerry Anderson, BBC

Arts Council of N. Ireland

. . . . and others too numerous to mention, including many friends in other Am-Dram Societies

oOo

Bart Players Summer Play *(to be confirmed)*

Brendan Fegan will direct 'Off The Hook by Derek Benfield. The play will be performed at:

The Courtyard Theatre, Newtownabbey, 5th-6th Aug

Portrush Town hall 17th – 20th Aug

Barts 2nd-3rd September

all performances at 8.00 pm (please check)

Readings for this play: *(to be arranged)*.

Those interested in reading for a part or to simply enjoy the craic at a reading are warmly invited to come along on either or both of these dates.

Anyone interested in being involved in one of Belfast's liveliest Drama Groups contact: ***barneygadd@yahoo.com or mob: 07801 389 859***

Finally: 'It is discouraging how many people are shocked by honesty and how few by deceit. '

Noel Coward