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FRIDAY 20th MAY - SATURDAY 28th MAY 2016

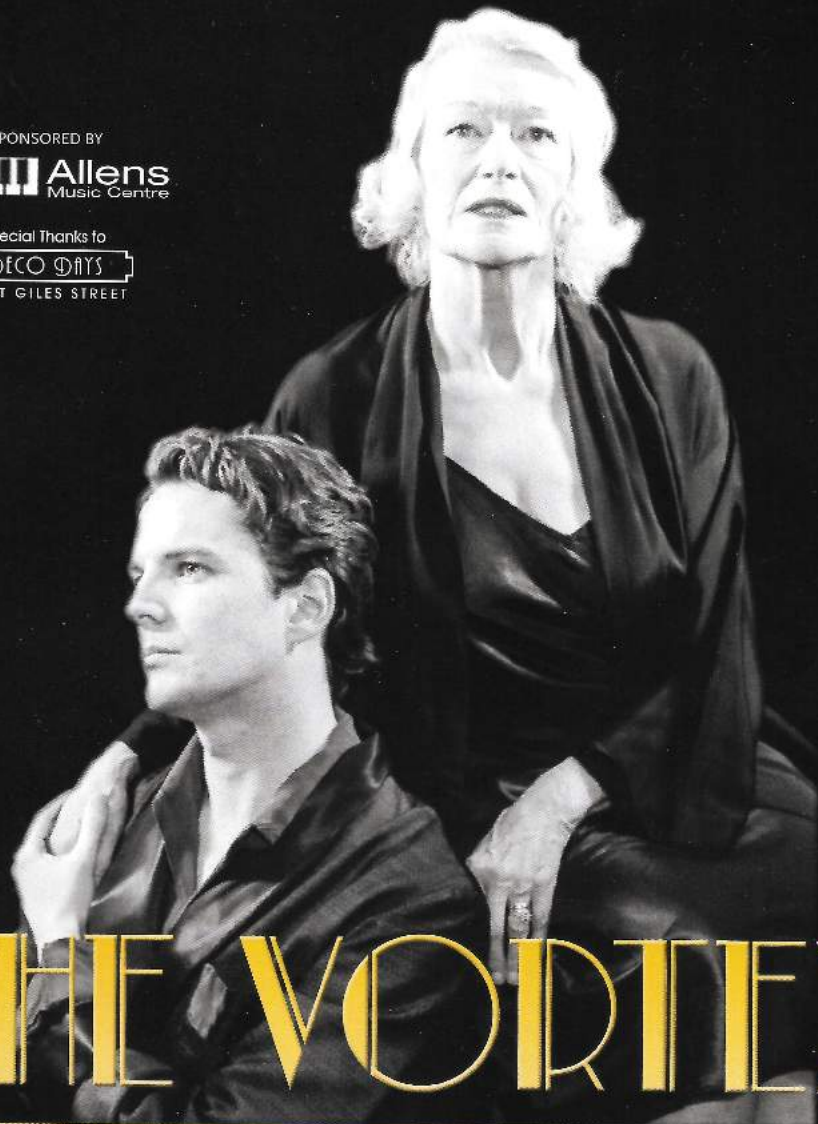
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37 ST GILES STREET



THE VORTEX

BY NOËL COWARD

DIRECTED BY STASH KIRKBRIDE



CAST

Florence Lancaster
Nicky Lancaster
David Lancaster
Helen Saville
Pauncefort Quentin
Tom Veryan
Bunty Mainwaring
Clara Hibbert
Bruce Fairlight
Preston

SUSAN SEDDON
ADAM EDWARDS
TIM SEELY
LUCY MONAGHAN
MATTHEW PINKERTON
ALEXANDER BANKS
ELIZABETH STOTHERS
VICTORIA PENN
MARK KITTO
PETER BARROW

PRODUCTION TEAM

Director:
Assistant Director:
Music Researcher/ Dramaturg:
Stage Manager:
Set Design:
Scenic Painters:

STASH KIRKBRIDE
ELEANOR HICKS
HAMILTON WILSON
KAREN DAVIES
PAUL STIMPSON

WILLIAM MIDDLETON, BOB READ, LINDA GRAY,
ANN NICHOLAS, FIONA FLETCHER, ROSANNA LE ROSSIGNOL,
LISA ARTON-CLARK, REBECCA LILES, JUSTINA GERVYTE
DANIEL CRUTTWELL
SIMON MOSS, WILLIAM MIDDLETON, FIONA FLETCHER
TOM PORTEOUS
SIMON MOSS

Assistant Stage Manager:
Crew:
Lighting Design:
Assistant Lighting Designer:
Lighting Operators:

JAKE HARRISON, DANIEL MARTIN, CHRIS PURDY,
DANIEL CRUTTWELL, DAVE MYERS, SAMUEL CLEVELAND,
RALPH BUTCHER, FIONA FLETCHER

Sound Designer / Operator:
Lighting Riggers:

KAREN DAVIES
SARAH FARMER, HOWARD BUTCHER, JAKE HARRISON,
SPENCER VAN DER VELDE, ROSIE HEAVENS, TOM PORTEOUS,
MICHELE NEAVE

Choreographer:
Wardrobe Mistress:
Wardrobe assistance:

AMANDA GREENWAY
AIMEE MURPHY, EILEEN COLLISON, HELEN GODDARD,
TRACEY JAFFE, JUDITH SYMONDS, GILL FRANCIS

Dressers:

CHRISSIE BLACKBURN, REBECCA ALDRED, SUZANNE BELL,
GEMMA CUSHION, CHARLEY COOK, EMILY MORLEY, REBECCA SWEET
MARK IVAN BENFIELD & BARRY PARSONS (Group Photo & Pre-Rehearsals)
DECO DAYS, 37 ST GILES ST, NORWICH

Photographers:
Majority of main stage props:
Steward Rota & Volunteers:
Programme Design & Print:

SARAH YOUNG
ANGLIA PRINT LTD

Warning: smoking takes place in performance.

THE PLAY IS SET IN THE 1920'S

ACT 1, An apartment
ACT 2, A country house
20-minute interval.
ACT 3, the bedroom

*The Maddermarket Theatre acknowledges the work and commitment of all members of
The Maddermarket Theatre Company in every area of theatre production*



DIRECTOR'S NOTE

The Vortex is surely the best example of Noël Coward's work. It was the play that launched his career as a writer/actor, and remains one of the outstanding 'relationship based stories' in recent history. In the first two acts Coward delivers all you'd expect from him; style, wit, wisdom and humour, with memorable characters throughout. The 1920s music and dance sequences all help the audience to relax and enjoy the opulence of the period. But then, just before the interval, we are shown a hint of what is about to take place in the third act. Coward returns his audience to a totally different atmosphere, where we see a mother and son enter into a bittersweet domestic scene that ranks amongst the most perfectly written and most touching scenes in theatre.

A truly superb line-up of actors have been cast for this production at the Maddermarket Theatre, including Susan Seddon (celebrating her 40th anniversary at the Maddermarket Theatre) and Adam Edwards amongst others. The set is designed by Paul Stimpson, art deco, circa 1925 with lighting design by Tom Porteous, and costume by Amanda Greenway.

This is a thoroughly entertaining and thought-provoking play, all set to a wonderful soundtrack of the period. I am enormously proud of the whole team, who have worked so well together, creating a perfectly balanced portrayal of this timeless classic. My thanks too, to Eleanor Hicks whose assistant direction has been so appreciated by me and the cast.

STASH KIRKBRIDE

Director

NOËL COWARD

In 1924 *The Vortex* stepped boldly through the doors of the Everyman Theatre, a converted Drill Hall and Assembly Rooms in Hampstead. It was a humble entry for a play that was to consequently set West End audiences alight and ignite the career of its young actor/author, Noël Coward.

The idea for the play came to Coward following an incident at a nightclub. Grace Forster, the elegant mother of his friend Stewart Forster, was talking to a young admirer, when a young woman said, in earshot of Coward and Forster: "Will you look at that old hag over there with the young man in tow; she's old enough to be his mother." Forster paid no attention, but Coward went quietly across and embraced Grace, a strong but silent rebuke to the young woman who had uttered the remark. The incident led him to consider how a 'mother-young son-young lover triangle' might form the basis of a play.

For the first time in the theatre this play tackled the impact of this kind of relationship on the lives of those involved, and others surrounding the protagonists. This and the addition of drug-taking, a barely disguised





analogy for homosexuality, challenges the often misguided view of Coward's work as lightweight drawing-room comedy.

In the 1920s Coward returned from New York with a commitment to the transactional dialogue and natural style of acting he watched with excitement on Broadway. He set out to turn the arch, stylised, posing of British thespians into the intensified version of real life he had observed in New York - 'real' emotion, feeling, movement and action to meet the demands of the plot, not the sightlines of the audience. In *The Vortex*, Coward produced tight prose and timing, controversial subject matter and - never one for hiding his light under a bushel - a substantial acting role for himself!

Getting it staged was another matter.

Difficulties in getting a cast, lack of finance, toe-to-toe battles with the Lord Chamberlain, Lord Cromer - who refused to even consider granting a licence - and his leading lady unexpectedly walking out half way through rehearsals, left the play floundering. With tact, diplomacy, native wit, charm and grace, Coward convinced the Lord Chamberlain that the play was little more than a "moral tract," got his licence, and talked Lilian Braithwaite into stepping into the breach.

Coward said: "It was an immediate success and established me both as a playwright and an actor, which was very fortunate, because until then I had not proved myself to be so hot in either capacity."

The play went on to be staged in the West End to the end of 1925. It has often been revived in the professional theatre. What was shocking in 1924 has endured because the social challenge of relationships against the sexual norm, and the tempting enhancement of life through the use of drugs, both literal and metaphorical, are ever with us.

JOHN KNOWLES

Trustee of the Noël Coward Foundation
Consultant to the Noël Coward Estate