

THE GRAND THEATRE, BLACKPOOL  
Stars and Shows of the 1940s

1940

January 1: Arnold Ridley in *Geneva*, Bernard Shaw's satire on Fascist dictators.  
 January 8: Yvonne Arnaud in *What They Say*, a comedy by James Bridie.  
 January 15: World Premiere - Roland Culver, Basil Langton, Griffith Jones, Coral Browne in *Believe It Or Not*, a comedy by Alec Coppel.  
 January 22: Yvonne Andre, John le Mesurier in Terence Rattigan's light comedy *French Without Tears*.  
 January 29: Zena Dare, Phyllis Dare in *Full House*, a comedy by Ivor Novello.  
 February 5: *The Women*, an all-female drama by Claire Boothe.  
 February 12: Les Ballets Trois Arts.  
 February 19: Ellen Pollock in *The Bare Idea*, a nudist camp comedy by Gordon Sherry.  
 February 26: South Shore Amateurs in the musical *Chu Chin Chow*.  
 March 4: A professional company in the comic opera *The Chocolate Soldier*.  
 March 11: Prior to London - Ernest Thesiger, Irene Vanbrugh in a Bernard Shaw comedy *In Good King Charles's Golden Days*.  
 March 18: Prior to London - Hugh Wakefield, Olga Lindo in *Good Men Sleep At Home*, a comedy by Walter Ellis.  
 March 25: Prior to London - James Mason, J. H. Roberts, Austin Trevor, Catherine Lacey in A.J.Cronin's medical drama *Jupiter Laughs*.  
 April 1: Prior to London - Mary Glynn, John Langdon in a play, *Faithfully Yours*.  
 April 8: Prior to London - Jean Forbes-Robertson in *The Long Mirror*, by J. B. Priestley.  
 April 15: Norman Griffin in the musical comedy *No No Nanette*.  
 April 22: The Blackpool Drama Festival of One Act Plays.  
 April 29: The Carl Rosa Opera Company in repertoire: *La Traviata*, *Die Fledermaus*, *Cavaleria Rusticana*, *I Pagliacci*, *The Barber of Seville*, *Serenade to Music*, *Rigoletto* and *Faust*.  
 May 6: A professional company in the musical *The Student Prince*.  
 May 13: Premiere - Arthur Sinclair in *Find The Lady*, a comedy by Michael Egan.  
 May 20: Enid Stamp-Taylor in *Of Mice and Men*, by John Steinbeck.  
 May 27: Beatrix Lehmann, Griffith Jones in *Desire Under The Elms*, a sex drama by Eugene O'Neill.  
 June 3: Tom Walls, Eileen Peel in a farce titled *Springtime For Henry*.  
 June 10: Jessie Matthews, Sonnie Hale in a musical show, *Come Out To Play*.  
 Friday, June 14, for the summer season: Comedian Harry Korris and Company and Tessie O'Shea in *It's A Funny Thing*.  
 September 23: Cecil Parker, Mary Merrall in *French For Love*, a new play by Marguerite Steen and Derek Patmore.  
 September 30: World Premiere -

Frances Day, James Mason, Ernest Thesiger, Naunton Wayne in a comedy *Divorce For Chrystabel*, by George and Mary Matthews.  
 October 7: Robert Donat, Milton Rosmer, Roger Livesey, Joyce Redman in Bernard Shaw's *The Devil's Disciple*.  
 October 14: Beatrice Lillie, Vic Oliver, Joyce Carey in *Plays And Music* a Noel Coward compilation show.  
 October 21: Alec Guinness, Bernard Miles in *Thunder Rock*, an American drama by Robert Ardrey.  
 October 28: Griffith Jones, Mary Clare in *Ladies In Retirement*, a thriller by Edward Percy.  
 November 4: Emlyn Williams, Godfrey Tearle, Angela Baddeley in *The Light Of Heart*, by Emlyn Williams.  
 November 11: Harry Welchman, Tessa Deane in the musical *The Maid Of The Mountains*.  
 November 18: Jack Buchanan, Elsie Randolph in *The Body Was Well Nourished*, a comedy thriller by Frank Launder and Sydney Gilliat.  
 November 25: Leslie Banks, Alastair Sim, Thorley Walters, George Cole in *Cottage To Let*, a spy thriller by Geoffrey Kerr.  
 December 2: Betty Ann Davies, Charles Hawtrey, Bill Fraser, Judy Campbell in *New Faces*, a revue by Eric Maschwitz.  
 December 9: Sadlers Wells Ballet in repertoire, including *Les Sylphides*.  
 December 16: Return visit of the revue *New Faces*.  
 December 23: Prior to London - Rex Harrison, Diana Wynyard in *No Time For Comedy*, by S. N. Behrman.  
 December 30 and week: The Blackpool Children's Pantomime, *Aladdin*.

Evening Gazette reviews

May 27 and week, 1940

Presented by Barry O'Brien & Roy Limbert

Curiosity and admiration for a banned play

STARK drama holds the stage at the Grand Theatre. *Desire Under the Elms*, by American playwright Eugene O'Neill, deals with the primitive passions of simple folk.

Many of last night's large audience were there out of curiosity, anxious to see how daring a play could be to cause it to be stopped by the police in several big American cities, and be banned in England for 15 years. But they, like the rest of us were gripped by its strength and by the sincerity of the brilliant cast who played it.

Ninety years ago to a bleak farm house in New England an old farmer brought his third wife, an attractive woman less than half his age. The old man is hard and bitter against the two sons who have left him, and to spite the son who remains he prays for another son.

His prayer is answered - but it is the handsome son of the second marriage who is the father of the child. Events move rapidly to the tragic ending, with the wife and her lover facing a charge of murder.

Blackpool playgoers have seen some fine acting recently, but nothing finer than the truly great characterisation of the wife by Beatrix Lehmann, a role worthy of her gifts; the brilliant portrayal of the weak-willed lover by

Griffith Jones; and the powerful study of the mean, grim old farmer by Mark Dignam.

The bulk of the play falls on the shoulders of this trio but there are delightful performances by Robert Christie and Robert Wilton as the older sons, and the minor roles are admirably played.

The setting, as unusual as it is effective, matches the perfection of playwright and players. H.W.

October 7 and week, 1940

Presented by H. M. Tennent

Robert Donat in *The Devil's Disciple*

WHEN, 43 years ago, George Bernard Shaw wrote the melodrama *The Devil's Disciple*, he asserted that, sensational though its immediate effect might be, it would "assuredly lose its gloss with the lapse of time."

Well, judging by the rapturous welcome it received from Grand Theatre last night, that time is not yet. On the contrary, of the three Shavian plays seen in Blackpool this year, this will be by far the most popular.

Last night we realised its full virtue in a production that could not have been bettered, with acting that was as brilliant as its material.

*The Devil's Disciple* is set in New Hampshire in 1777, when America was parting company from Britain. The soldiers of George 111 were vainly attempting to put the rebels in their places, hanging the local ringleaders as an example.

The choice in this particular instance was the local Presbyterian minister, but he was not at home when the soldiers called and, in mistake, they took his guest, one Richard Dudgeon, the bad boy of the village, fearing neither God nor man, and without hope of reward either here or hereafter.

Although the play was written years before he was born, the role of Dick Dudgeon might have been devised to display the diversified talents of Robert Donat. This deservedly famous figure of stage and screen gives a fascinating, unforgettable performance, one that takes its place with Ann Harding's *Candida* among the most notable characterisations of our greatest playwright this generation has seen or is likely to see.

It is a finely staged, perfectly balanced play. There are many other superb character studies - Roger Livesey as the minister turned soldier, Rosamund John as his young, pretty and bewildered wife, Janet Barrow as Dick's hard-hearted mother, Joyce Redman as the pathetic waif, Jonathan Field as the brother, Henry Caine as the traditional British major and, perhaps best of all, Milton Rosmer as General (Gentlemanly Johnny) Burgoyne.

Both play and players received a tremendous ovation at the close of a supremely satisfying evening. H.W.

October 21 and week, 1940

Presented by H. M. Tennent

Alec Guinness in an inspiring play

WHATEVER the present theatrical season has in store for Blackpool, it is unlikely to produce a more remarkable or impressive play than that seen at the Grand Theatre this week.

*Thunder Rock*, because of its theme, could be described as a modern morality play, designed as its leading character suggested in

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# Stars and Shows of the 1940s

an after-curtain speech, to give courage and hope in these difficult days.

To summarise its plot is to do it an injustice. A bitterly disillusioned ex-war correspondent seeks escape from a world which he thinks is doomed to destruction by taking the job of lighthouse keeper on a rock in the middle of one of the Great Lakes.

On its wall is a tablet to the memory of the crew and passengers of an emigrant ship wrecked 90 years earlier.

He reads their names and descriptions, conjures them up in his mind, makes them his companions in solitude, sets out to show them that they should have had faith in the future and, in the end, through them finds his own faith restored.

*Thunder Rock* proves once again that the American Theatre has ideas and ideals. Its author, Robert Ardrey, takes his place among the dramatists who have a message which they can present in a form that will grip the hearts of men.

Such a fine play demands the fine acting it receives from the hands of the clever company who are introducing it to English audiences.

At its head is Alec Guinness, who plays the role of the lighthouse keeper with a skill that makes his character wholly convincing. We believe in him.

He is surrounded by a band of artists who carry that conviction further and make us believe in them - in the exiled Viennese doctor of Frederick Valk, his wife, presented with dignity by Selma Vaz Dias, his daughter, beautifully played by Fredda Brilliant, the captain of the wrecked boat of Percy Parsons, the consumptive English labourer of Bernard Miles, and the early disciple of woman's of Rosalind Atkinson.

Robert Sansom and Townsend Whiting also do good work and the whole production is faultlessly directed by Herbert Marshall.

But for the air attack on London, *Thunder Rock* would still be running in the West End. Once again London's loss in Blackpool's gain.  
H.W.

November 25 and week, 1940

Presented by Linnit and Dunfee

### Master George Cole makes an impression

THE chief difficulty in writing about such a play as Geoffrey Kerr's *Cottage to Let*, at the Grand Theatre this week, is in satisfying two classes of readers.

The first want to know what the plot is about; the second beg you not to tell them the story because knowing it beforehand would spoil their pleasure.

Well, it is giving nothing away to say that *Cottage to Let* concerns an easy-going scientist who invents a pain-killing serum. Britain is practically at war with Germany and Hitler wants the formula. Only the scientist himself knows the secret, and a plan is formed to take him on a long ride, ending in Berlin.

The mastermind behind the plan is as pleasant a spy as you could wish to meet. And as cunning. For the scientist will be the victim whether the scheme succeeds or fails.

But, thanks to evacuation of the cities, the scientist's household is increased by a 14-year-old schoolboy evacuee who proves himself a true disciple of Sherlock Holmes and saves the situation.

*Cottage to Let*, the first spy thriller of the war, was one of London's big successes when the theatres closed in September. It comes to

Blackpool with the original Wyndham's Theatre cast. At the head are a couple of sound actors who have also achieved fame on the screen - Leslie Banks as the trusting scientist and Alastair Sim as the ingratiating Charles Dimble. They are both splendid.

George Cole, as the evacuee, gives a remarkably clever and convincing performance.

Gillian Lind as the dithery wife, Thorley Walters, Pamela Nell, George Butler, Peter Rosser, Fred Groves and Charles Mortimer all contribute excellent character studies.

*Cottage to Let* has plenty of fun, its drama is strong, its dialogue bright, and its last act particularly brilliant. Last night's full house enjoyed every moment.  
H.W.

## 1941

January 13: Barry K. Barnes, Diana Churchill, Cathleen Nesbitt, Roland Culver in *On Approval*, a comedy by Frederick Lonsdale.

January 20 for two weeks: D'Oyly Carte Opera Company with their repertoire of Gilbert and Sullivan shows.

February 3: Peggy Ashcroft, Owen Nares, Margaret Rutherford, Raymond Huntley in *Rebecca*, by Daphne du Maurier.

February 10: Return visit of the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company.

February 17: Cicely Courtneidge, Jack Hulbert, Claude Hulbert in a revue titled *The Hulbert Follies*.

February 24: Binnie Hale, Leslie Henson, Stanley Holloway, Cyril Ritchard, the Carroll Gibbons Band in a revue *Up And Doing*.

March 3: Ralph Lynn in *Nap Hand*, a farce by Vernon Sylvaire and Guy Bolton.

March 10: Richard Tauber, Josie Fearon in Franz Lehar's musical *The Land Of Smiles*.

March 17 for two weeks: Bobby Howes, Arthur Riscoe, Vera Pearce, Richard Hearn in Firth Shephard's revue, *Shephard's Pie*.

March 31: Lupino Lane in his West End musical success *Me And My Girl*.

April 7: Gordon Harker in a thriller titled *Once A Crook*

April 14: Marie Tempest, Robert Eddison, A. E. Matthews in *The First Mrs Fraser*, a light comedy by St John Ervine.

April 21: Jean Forbes-Robertson, Rosalinde Fuller in *Berkeley Square*.

April 28: The Anglo Polish Ballet.

May 4: Tom Walls in *Canaries Sometimes Sing*, a comedy by Frederick Lonsdale.

May 11: Elizabeth Allan, Henry Edwards, Martin Walker in *The Naughty Wife*, a comedy by Fred Jackson.

May 18: Iris Hoey in a farce titled *He Didn't Want To Do It*.

May 25: Return of *The Hulbert Follies*.

June 2: Yvonne Arnaud, Carla Lehmann, Frederick Leister in *The Nutmeg Tree*, by Margery Sharp.

June 9: Barry K. Barnes, Diana Churchill in a return visit of *On Approval*.

June 16: The Royal Covent Garden Opera Company in *Hansel And Gretel*, by Engelbert Humperdinck.

June 23: Agatha Christie's *Peril At End House* with Francis L. Sullivan as Poirot.

June 30: Return of the Anglo Polish Ballet.

July 7: Return visit of Gordon Harker in *Once A Crook*.

July 14: Pat Kirkwood, Stanley Lupino, Sally Gray in a musical comedy titled *Lady Behave*.

July 21: John Gielgud, Zena Dare, Roger Livesey, Ursula Jeans in *Dear Brutus*, an absurd comedy by J.M. Barrie.

July 28 for the summer season:

Harry Korris and Company in a stage version of radio's *Happidrome* with guest stars changing fortnightly - Hutch, Evelyn Laye, Tessie O'Shea, Rawicz and Landauer and Gwen Catley.

October 6: Vivien Leigh, Cyril Cusack in *The Doctor's Dilemma*, a drama by Bernard Shaw.

October 13: Tom Walls in a comedy titled *Why Not Tonight?*

October 20: The Sadlers Wells Opera Company in a repertoire of famous operas.

October 27: Teddie St Dennis, Richard Dolman, Shaun Glenville in the Gershwin musical comedy *Lady Be Good*.

November 3: Owen Nares, Mary Merrall, Edith Sharp, Raymond Huntley, in *Rebecca*, by Daphne du Maurier.

November 10: Prior to London - Vernon Sylvaire, Catherine Lacey in *Deep Is The River*, by Vernon Sylvaire.

November 17: Athene Seyler, Nicholas Hannen in an Old Vic production of Chekov's *The Cherry Orchard*.

November 24: A professional company in a revue, *More 1066 And All That*.

December 1: Leslie Banks, Gillian Lind in *Good Night Children*, a comedy on broadcasting by J.B. Priestley.

December 8 for two weeks: The D'Oyly Carte Opera Company in their repertoire of Gilbert and Sullivan shows.

December 22: Prior to London - Constance Collier, John Clements, Hugh Sinclair, Valerie Taylor in *Skylark*, an American comedy by Samuel Raphaelson.

Evening Gazette reviews

July 21 and week, 1941

Presented by H. M. Tennent

### John Gielgud's amazing cast in Barrie fantasy

IN the nearly two years of war which, among other things, has brought all the bright lights of the London stage to the provincial audience, there have been many memorable evenings at the Grand Theatre.

Last night was added another, John Gielgud's production of the famous J. M. Barrie fantasy *Dear Brutus*, which was one of the big successes of the last war. In selecting it for this 1941 revival, Mr Gielgud chose well. Also, he selected a cast of fellow stars such as are rarely seen together, each contributing a perfect characterisation to this superb presentation.

Mr Gielgud, in the role of Mr Dearth, the disappointed artist, gives a finely phrased and admirably restrained performance, and his brilliant band capture with almost uncanny skill the spirit of the Barrie creations.

Martita Hunt is the artist's wife, Ronald Ward the philandering Mr Purdie, Nora

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Swinburne his wife, Ursula Jeans her rival, Leon Quartermaine and Mary Jerrold the delightful Coades, Zena Dare the amusing Lady Caroline, Roger Livesey the easy-fingered butler, and George Howe the mischievous Lob.

And last, but not least, Muriel Pavlow as the dream child, Margaret, who with Mr Gielgud makes "the wood of second chances" one of the most beautiful scenes that even Barrie has given us.

What a play! What a cast! And, as Mrs Coades remarks: "What a wood,"

*Dear Brutus* is unforgettable. H.W.

October 6 and week, 1941

Presented by H. M. Tennent

### Vivien Leigh as a Shaw heroine

IT isn't necessary these days to associate a famous film star with a Bernard Shaw play to draw the crowds - but it helps.

Last night's packed audience at the Grand Theatre was doubly satisfied. For over three hours they listened to typical Shavian wit and impudence, and saw Vivien Leigh, the screen heroine of *Gone With the Wind*, wearing with ease the charming feminine fashions of 1906.

*The Doctor's Dilemma* is one of Shaw's many plays with a serious purpose. Few of the audience went to the theatre after studying the 30,000-word preface which the author considered necessary to explain his work, but that did not matter. Within the first five minutes the purpose was plain - the debunking of medical and surgical science of 30 to 40 years ago.

It is a finely constructed play, staged by Irene Hentschel with fidelity to both text and period, and presented by a cast which does full justice to every line and movement.

Miss Leigh gives a graceful and convincing performance as Jennifer Dubedat, the beautiful wife of the unmoral and gifted artist who provides the problem of the play. The latter role is engaging played by Cyril Cusack.

The medical types, also, could not be bettered - Frank Allenby as the newly-knighted Ridgeon, Morland Graham as the wise old Paddy, John Turnbull as the confident surgeon, George Relph as the pathetic Blenkinsop, Charles Goldner as the retired practitioner, and Austin Trevor as the pompous B.B. Each is a joy.

Blackpool's autumn theatrical season has made another brilliant beginning. H.W.

November 17 and week, 1941

### The Old Vic Company in Chekov classic

VOICING the thanks of actors to the audience at the Grand Theatre last night, Athene Seyler described *The Cherry Orchard* as "a strange and lovely play."

Some of those to whom Chekov had been merely a name may have found it a little too strange at times but to the majority the fine performance by the Old Vic Theatre company, of this masterpiece of Russian dramatic art, was a rich and rare experience that will be long remembered.

Tyrone Guthrie's production is excellent. The acting reaches a high level throughout, with characterisations that are clear and convincing and action that preserves the balance of the story's wit and beauty, laughter and pathos.

As the generous-hearted Madame

Ranevska, who has to sell her cherry orchard to pay her debts, Athene Seyler gives a delightful study, and Nicholas Hannan as her more pompous but equally thriftless brother, is admirable.

James Dale, as the nobody who becomes a wealthy merchant; Walter Hudd as a pathetic and lovable "eternal student"; Rosalind Atkinson and Olive Layton as the daughters; Stanford Holme as the borrowing neighbour, and James Donald as the perky manservant, are others who contribute their full share to a perfect presentation.

Not forgetting, of course, that veteran actor, O. B. Clarence, as the faithful family retainer left alone and forgotten in the end.

*The Cherry Orchard* is a play that no intelligent playgoer can afford to miss. H.W.

## 1942

January 26: The Old Vic Company with Jean Forbes-Robertson, Frederick Valk, Noel Willman, Renee Ascherson in *The Merchant Of Venice* and *The Witch*.

February 2: Vivien Leigh, Cyril Cusack in a return visit of *The Doctor's Dilemma*, by Bernard Shaw.

February 9: Ann Todd in *Love In a Mist*, a comedy by Kenneth Horne.

February 16: World Premiere - Cicely Courtneidge, Jack Hulbert, Nora Swinburne in *Full Swing*, a musical comedy.

February 23: Ronald Squire, Ursula Jeans, Irene Browne, Agnes Laughlan in Noel Coward's *Blithe Spirit*.

March 30: Eileen Peel, Charles Quartermaine in *Hay Fever*, by Noel Coward.

April 6: Cicely Courtneidge and Jack Hulbert in a return visit, immediately prior to London opening, of *Full Swing*.

April 13: Henry Edwards, Chrissie White, in *Dangerous Alibi*, a comedy-thriller by Philip Ryan.

April 20: Iris Hoey, Renee Reel in *Other People's Houses*, by Lynne Dexter.

April 27: A comedy-thriller of broadcasting, *Inspector Silence Takes the Air*, by Val Gielgud and John Dickson-Carr.

May 4: Hermoine Gingold, Hermoine Baddeley, Walter Crisham, Nauntom Wayne, Elizabeth Welch, Dickie Henderson in the revue *Sky High*.

May 11: Martin Walker, Helen Shingler in *The Dominant Sex*, a comedy by Michael Egan.

May 11 for two weeks: Derek Oldham, Frank Titterton, Irene Eisinger, George Graves in the musical *Lilac Time*.

Thursday, June 4 for seven weeks, Robert Newton, Hartley Power, Linden Travers in *No Orchids for Miss Blandish*, adapted from James Hadley Chase's crime novel by the author and Robert Nesbitt.

July 27 for three weeks, Bobby Howes, Pat Kirkwood, Joyce Barbour, Charmian Innes in Cole Porter's musical *Let's Face It*.

Thursday, August 19 for four weeks, Harry Korris and Company with Hutch and guest stars in *Happidrome*.

September 21: Edith Evans, Ronald Ward, Marian Spencer, Muriel Pavlow in *Old Acquaintance*, by John Van Druten.

September 28: Noel Coward, Joyce Carey, Judy Campbell, James Donald, Dennis Price in the premieres of Coward's plays *Present Laughter* and *This Happy Breed* plus his West End success *Blithe Spirit*.

October 5: Barry K. Barnes, Diana Churchill in *Stranger's Road*, a smuggling drama by Warren Chetham Strode.

October 12: Eva Moore, Gordon McLeod Anne Firth in *It Happened In September*, by Beverley Baxter.

October 19: Nita Croft, Leo Franklyn, Victor Standing, Leslie Hatton in the musical *A Waltz Dream*.

October 26: Cathleen Nesbitt, Victoria Hopper, Milton Rosmer in *We Are the People*, an inspirational play by Able Seaman A. Burton-Cooper.

November 2: Prior to London - *More New Faces*, a revue by Eric Maschwitz.

November 9: Italia Conti in a patriotic play titled *Where the Rainbow Ends*.

November 16: Ellen Pollock, Charles Quartermaine, Michael Golden in a festival of plays by Bernard Shaw - *Pygmalion*, *Candida* and *Major Barbara*.

November 23: Return visit of Hermoine Gingold and Hermoine Baddeley in the revue *Sky High*.

November 30 for two weeks: The D'Oyly Carte Opera Company with their repertoire of shows by Gilbert and Sullivan.

December 14: Gene Gerrard in *Sleeping Out*, a comedy by Walter Ellis.

December 21 for two weeks: Zena Dare, Ursula Jeans, Roger Livesey in *Watch on the Rhine* by Lillian Hellman.

### Evening Gazette reviews

Thursday, June 4, 1942, for seven weeks

Presented by George Black

### Robert Newton in a gangster drama

THOSE who think that in these days of dictator thugs, American gangsters of a decade ago are dead meat should have been at the Grand Theatre last night. The activities of these lesser rats and pigmy killers can still make strong and arresting drama.

The stage adaptation of the James Hadley Chase best-seller *No Orchids for Miss Blandish*, by the author and Robert Nesbitt with additional dialogue by Val Guest, has been excellently done, with every alteration an improvement.

The first straight play production of George Black concerns some crooked characters but his original and effective presentation, and the enthusiastic efforts of a first rate cast, make it jolly good entertainment, with a succession of thrills, plenty of wisecracks, and much acceptable humour.

Incidentally, if most of the folk are far from wholesome, and their deeds absolutely despicable, their language is remarkable clean.

Robert Newton gives a clever psychological study as Slim "Killer" Grisson, but the pity we felt for the dangerous imbecile was nothing to our satisfaction when his avenger, Dave Fenner, riddled him with bullets.

Hartley Power, as Fenner, was splendid all through, with the unfortunate Miss Blandish charmingly and convincingly presented by

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Linden Travers, and Ma Grisson, a formidable character capably played by Mary Clare.

Tucker Maguire as the hard-boiled Anna and Jack Lester as the flamboyant Eddie, lead the strong support.

Blackpool had another notable first night and Mr Black had another big success.  
H.W.

September 21 and week, 1942

Presented by H. M. Tennent

### Edith Evans launches the autumn season

THE autumn season at the Grand Theatre has a flying start this week with a visit by Edith Evans in John Van Druten's latest play *Old Acquaintance*, following its long London success.

It is a bright, witty - and at times dramatic - story based on the lifelong friendship of two women writers of widely different character.

Miss Evans has a delightful role, playing with her usual brilliance, as the serious authoress who has remained unmarried and who, just as the idea of settling down appeals to her, finds an unexpected rival.

Marian Spencer as her friend, a writer of best-sellers, gives another excellent performance.

Last seen here as the dream child in *Dear Brutus*, Muriel Pavlow plays her first grown-up role with charm and conviction.

Ronald Ward is splendidly natural and Deering Wells makes an effective brief appearance.  
H.W.

## 1943

January 4: Matinees - Blackpool Children's Panto, *Babes in the Wood*; evenings - second week of *Watch on the Rhine*.

January 11 for two weeks: Richard Tauber, Nancy Brown in a musical, *Old Chelsea*.

January 25: Nancy Price, Charles Heslop in *Vintage Wine*, a farce by Seymour Hicks.

February 1: John Clements, Googie Withers, A. E. Matthews, Raymond Huntley in *They Came To A City*, by J. B. Priestley.

February 8: *Roll Away Clouds*, a musical comedy compilation.

Tuesday, February 16 and week: World Premiere - Hermoine Baddeley, Richard Attenborough, Dulcie Gray, in *Brighton Rock*, a crime drama by Graham Greene.

February 22: Eric Portman, Beatrix Lehmann, Eileen Peel in *Uncle Harry*, an American thriller by Thomas Job.

Tuesday, March 2: Ann Todd, Alastair Sim, Joyce Redman, Iris Hoey, Mark Daly in *Peter Pan*, by J. M. Barrie.

March 8: Robertson Hare, Alfred Drayton in *Aren't Men Beasts?* by Vernon Sylvaine.

March 15 for two weeks: Premiere - Lupino Lane in *La-Di-Da-Di-Da*, a farcical musical by Stanley Lupino and Noel Gay.

March 29: Nita Croft, Leslie Hatton in a musical romance titled *Rio Rita*.

Tuesday, April 6 and week: European Premiere of *The Moon Is Down*, a war drama by John Steinbeck's, starring Lewis Casson, Carla Lehmann, Karel Stepanek, Lloyd Pearson.

April 12 for two weeks: Emyln Williams in his own plays - first week *The Morning Star*, second week *Night Must Fall*. Cast included Gladys Henson, Elliot Mason, Betty Ann Davies.

April 26: Jack Melford, Freddie Forbes, Joy Hayden, Len Clifford, Elsie Percival in *Tonight's The Night*, a musical comedy.

May 3: Derek Oldham, Billie Baker, Lisa Perli in a musical comedy, *Monsieur Beaucaire*.

May 10: Sonnie Hale, Francis L. Sullivan Adele Dixon in *Kiss The Girls*, a musical.

May 17: Gordon Harker, Basil Radford, Judy Kelly in *Warn That Man*, a comedy-thriller by Vernon Sylvaine.

May 24: Prior to London - Will Fyffe, Diana Hamilton in *The Racketeers*, a crime play by Monckton Roffe.

June 7 for four weeks: A huge cast and many sets in *War and Peace*, adapted by Robert Lucas from Tolstoy's novel.

July 5: Robertson Hare, Catherine Lacey, Basil Radford in *She Follows Me About*, a farce by Ben Travers.

July 12: Binnie Hale, Douglas Byng, Hal Bryan in *Flying Colours*, a revue by Ronald Jeans and Eric Maschwitz.

Tuesday, July 20 for the summer season: Harry Korris and Co., in *New Happidrome Of 1943* with Pat Kirkwood and Hutch.

September 20: Robert Morley in *The Man Who Came To Dinner*, a comedy by George S. Kaufman and Moss Hart.

September 27: Gordon Harker, Hubert Gregg, Megs Jenkins in *Acacia Avenue*, a comedy by Mabel and Denis Constanduros.

October 4: Barry K. Barnes, Diana Churchill in *The Admirable Crichton*, by J. M. Barrie.

October 11: Terence de Marney, Linden Travers, Alan Jayes in *Ten Little Niggers*, a thriller by Agatha Christie.

October 18: Prior to London - Basil Sidney, Jean Forbes-Robertson, Helen Haye in *Man From Heaven*, an inspirational play by Noel Scott.

October 25: Ernest Thesiger, Ellen Pollock, in *This Time It's Love*, by Louis Verneuil.

November 1: Olive Sloane in *Rain*, a drama by Somerset Maugham.

November 8: Mary Newcombe in *When You Come Home*, by May Edginton.

November 15: Michael Wilding, Ronald Squire, Brenda Bruce in *While The Sun Shines*, a comedy by Terence Rattigan.

November 22: Sonia Dresdel, Barry Morse, Keneth Kent in *Parisienne*, a play by Henry Becque.

November 29: Hylton Allen, in *Damaged Goods*, a drama by Eugene Bricux.

December 6: Mackenzie Ward, Mercia Swinburne, Merton Hodge in *The Wind and the Rain*, by Merton Hodge.

December 13: Oriel Ross in *While Parents Sleep*, a comedy by Anthony Kimmins.

December 20 for two weeks: Premiere - Emyln Williams, Mervyn Johns in *Pen Don*, a Welsh fantasy play by Emyln Williams.

Evening Gazette reviews

Tuesday, February 16 and week, 1943

Presented by Linnit and Dunfee

Prior to London

### Richard Attenborough as the razor boy

HAD the title of last night's premiere at the Grand Theatre been Blackpool Rock, there would have been a special meeting of the Corporation Publicity Committee called for this morning to protest against the idea that the town was, or ever had been, the centre of racecourse gangs which blackmailed bookmakers, terrorised the public, and carved each other up with the aid of razor blades.

*Brighton Rock*, however, the Graham Greene novel which has been adapted for the stage by Frank Harvey, has probably some little justification in fact, though its events belong to a pre-war era that is already forgotten.

The central figure, that of 17-year-old Pinkie, strains one's credibility, however, though Richard Attenborough plays the part with skill.

Dulcie Gray, as the blindly adoring little waitress, gives a sensitive performance, but it is Hermoine Baddeley, as the generous-hearted Ida, who tracks down the murderer of her friend, who established complete conviction. It is an excellent performance.

There are capital character roles by Norman Pierce, Bill Hartnell and Beckett Bould as Pinkie's accomplices, Charlie Lamb as the unfortunate Fred, Lyn Evans as the rival gangster, Ernest Borrow as Ida's admirer and Harcourt Williams as the gangster's lawyer.

Richard Bird's direction is full of life and local colour, and the play, which has plenty of humour to vary the thrills, had a hearty reception from a full house.

But, candidly, it is a rather sordid version of the old Miss Blandish theme.  
H.W.

April 19 and week, 1943

Presented by H. M. Tennent

### Emlyn Williams in his classic thriller

BLACKPOOL audiences have waited eight years to see Emyln Williams in his own play, *Night Must Fall*.

At the Grand Theatre, last night, the packed house was rewarded with a performance that will live in the memory. It was a masterly interpretation of the central figure in this most effective murder thriller.

It was a big jump from the doctor of *The Morning Star* (performed by Emyln Williams the previous week) to the hotel bell boy of *Night Must Fall* but the author's versatility was matched by the rest of his excellent cast.

Special mention must be made of Betty-Anne Davies as the companion neice, Elliot Mason as the hard-to-get-on-with Mrs Bramson, and Gladys Henson, splendid as the cook. Dorothy Baird as the maid, and Roddy Hughes and Edward Petley contribute other good studies.

The play held the tense interest of the audience the whole way, with an ovation for the artists at the end.

After the success of this fortnight, why not an Emyln Williams repertoire season?  
H.W.

# THE GRAND THEATRE, BLACKPOOL

## Stars and Shows of the 1940s

June 7 for four weeks, 1943

Presented by Tom Arnold

### War and Peace: A four-hour campaign

IT was a gigantic task to attempt to bring Tolstoy's classic story *War And Peace* to the stage. Probably few in last night's full house at the Grand Theatre realised just how gigantic.

They did not know that behind the first night lay months of hard work by the adaptor, Robert Lucas, and producer, Julius Gellner, and all sorts of last minute problems.

But after four hours - the show began before seven and finished about 11 - they must have talked over these things as they walked home to bed.

Everyone has heard of *War And Peace* but not everyone has read it. For the benefit of those who have, it may be explained that Mr Lucas has selected the part of the story telling of Napoleon's invasion of Russia and his retreat from Moscow.

For the benefit of those who have not read the book, it can be said that the treatment is such that all can follow it clearly.

Apart from the clever links with the present day - when Russia is again fighting for her life - which form the prologue and epilogue, every word is Tolstoy's own.

And how magnificently they were spoken last night. Frederick Valk, as the Russian commander, added to the fine reputation he established on previous visits, and Peter Illing's Napoleon ranks among the best.

Out of a huge cast, mention must be made of Henry Oscar as the Narrator, who contributed a beautiful piece of work.

The staging is highly novel, very ingenious, and generally effective, though at times one felt the half dozen staircases in the striking structure seemed more a hindrance than help.

Those who were able to stay to the end of the four hours paid tribute to a memorable performance. When the piece is shortened it will be even more so. H.W.

## 1944

January 3: Matinees - Blackpool Children's Pantomime *Sleeping Beauty*; Evenings - US Eighth Air Force presented a musical show titled *Skirts*.

January 10 for two weeks: The D'Oyly Carte Opera Company.

January 24: A dramatic play titled *Madam X*, billed "for adults only."

January 31: Flora Robson, Michael Golden in *Guilty*, a psychological thriller adapted from Emile Zola's novel *Therese Raquin*.

February 7 for two weeks: Arthur Riscoe, Barbara Blair in the musical *Jill Darling*.

February 21 and week: Robert Morley, Beatrice Lillie in Morley's play *Staff Dance*.

February 28: Rosalinde Fuller, Henry Edwards in *Jane Eyre*, by Charlotte Bronte.

March 6: Cathleen Nesbitt, Malcolm Keen in thriller titled *A Murder For Valentine*.

March 13 and week: Frederick Valk, Roger Livesey, Margaret Johnstone, Peter Cushing in *The Fifth Column*, a Spanish Civil War play by Ernest Hemingway.

March 20: Jack Buchanan, Elsie Randolph in a musical show, *It's Time To Dance*.

March 27: Premiere - Barry K. Barnes,

Diana Churchill in *Tomorrow's Eden*, a visionary comedy by Moie Charles and Donald Sutherland.

April 3 for two weeks: Mary Merrall, Nellie Bowman in *Arsenic And Old Lace*, a black comedy by Joseph Kesselring.

April 17: Adele Dixon, Ernest Thesiger, Esmond Knight, Dorothy Dickson, Herbert Lomas, Bary Morse in *Crisis In Heaven*, a fantasy play by Eric Linklater.

April 24: Prior to London - Jane Carr in *How Are They At Home*, by J. B. Priestley.

May 1: Fay Compton in *The Last Of Summer*, by Kate O'Brien and John Perry.

May 8: Leslie Henson, Hermoine Baddeley in an ENSA revue *Africa Stars*.

May 15: Prior to London - Tessa Deane, Jimmy Godden in a modern version of the musical *The Gipsy Princess*.

May 22: Phyllis Dare, Renee Ray in *Claudia*, a comedy by Rose Franken.

May 29 for two weeks: The only date prior to London - Jack Buchanan, Coral Browne, Athene Seyler, Austin Trevor in a revival of *The Last Of Mrs Cheyney*, by Frederick Lonsdale.

June 12: Anna Neagle in *Emma*, by Jane Austen.

June 27 for the summer season: Revnell and West, Afrique, and Wilson, Kepple and Betty in a Tom Arnold revue, *We're Coming Over*.

September 25: Joan White, Ronald Ward, Frank Leighton, Peggy Cummins in a comedy titled *Junior Miss*.

October 2 for two weeks: Mary Merrall, Nellie Bowman in the black comedy *Arsenic and Old Lace*, by Joseph Kesselring.

October 16: John Clements, Kay Hammond in Noel Coward's *Private Lives*.

October 23: Ada Reeve, Martin Walker in *Residents Only*, a comedy by Alexander Gordon and James Platt.

October 30: Alfred Lunt, Lynn Fontanne in *There Shall Be No Night*, a war drama by Robert Sherwood.

November 6: George Clarke in *Ring Time*, a musical comedy with songs by Noel Gay.

November 13: Evelyn Laye, Charles Goldner, Esmond Knight in a new musical play, *Three Waltzes*.

November 20: Geoffrey Toone, Kathleen Harrison, Emrys Jones, Phyllis Monkman in *Flare Path* by Terence Rattigan. Bryan Forbes had a small role.

November 27: Bernard Miles in his own play *They Also Serve*, a comedy of the Home Guard.

December 4: Prior to London - Derek Oldham, Lorely Dyer in *I Call It Love*, a musical romance by Ernest Staffan.

December 11: Hugh Sinclair, Valerie Taylor, Glynis Johns, Gladys Henson in *I'll See You Again*, a comedy by Romily Cavan.

December 18: Mervyn Johns, Betty Warren, Patricia Jessel, Peter Jones in *The Golden Fleece*, a comedy by J. B. Priestley.

December 25: Clive Brook, Nora Swinburne, Ronald Ward in *The Years Between*, by Daphne Du Maurier.

Evening Gazette reviews

April 3 and week, 1944

Presented by Firth Shephard

### Laughter with a drop of arsenic

NOW in its second year in London and its fourth in New York, Joseph Kesselring's quaint comedy *Arsenic and Old Lace* was introduced to a provincial audience for the first time last night.

The introduction, of course, was at Blackpool, and a crowded audience at the Grand Theatre decided this time, at any rate, Broadway and the Strand were both right. *Arsenic and Old Lace* would be a winner everywhere.

It is one of the funniest and cleverest farces ever written on the theme of sudden and wholesome death. There are one or two tense moments but the tension breaks in a roar of laughter and the curtain descends at the close to the biggest roar of all.

Firth Shephard, who presents the play, last night voiced the thanks of the audience to the splendid cast, who present mirth and murder mixed as cunningly as the elderberry wine and arsenic of those kindly old Brooklyn sisters, played with rare skill by Mary Merrall and Nellie Bowman, who take in lonely gentlemen and poison them off.

Sydney King is sparking as the only sane member of the Brewster family, with Morris Harvey as "President" Teddy, and Franklin Davies, Meinhard Maur, Patricia Hicks and Billy Leonard all excellent in varying roles.

This is the sort of play to see with pleasure and chuckle over for a long time. H.W.

May 29 and week, 1944

Presented by Firth Shephard

Prior to London

### Jack Buchanan takes a step into comedy

WHEN, a score of years ago, Frederick Lonsdale wrote *The Last Of Mrs Cheyney*, theatregoers accepted it as a superb example of English comedy. Picturegoers still remember the film of a dozen years ago, with Norma Shearer as the attractive alleged Australian who enters London society with a definite and very crooked objective.

Firth Shephard's new presentation has a fortnight at Blackpool as the immediate preliminary to what one may safely predict will be another lengthy London run.

What a fine play it is, and what opportunities it gives to such a talented cast as that which delighted a crowded Grand Theatre last night.

That favourite artist, Jack Buchanan, deserting the musical comedy field, proves his all round excellence by a natural, easy and convincing portrayal of the role of Lord Dilling. Coral Browne, as Mrs Cheyney, gives a wholly delightful performance that carries equal conviction.

One could say a lot more about them and the work of such splendid artists as Athene Seyler, Margaret Scudmore, Anne Firth, Austin Trevor, Anthony Shaw and James Dale.

Wisely, there has been no attempt to modernise the setting but if the costumes of "the day before yesterday" were so charming as they seem, why did women change them? H.W.

## THE GRAND THEATRE, BLACKPOOL

# Stars and Shows of the 1940s

November 27 and week, 1944  
Presented by Arena Productions

### Bernard Miles in his Home Guard yarn

AS Home Guards are having stand-down parades on Sunday, the visit of Bernard Miles' comedy to the Grand Theatre this week has a particular appeal.

Having served in Britain's citizen army, the author has invested *Those Who Serve* with a sincerity that all ranks will appreciate.

And as Abel, the 84-year-old veteran of the Zulu and Boer wars, who "housekeeps" in the Local Defence Volunteer guardroom, Mr Miles gives a delightful village rustic portrayal.

There are other good characterisations from Claude Bailey as Col. Barrow, and Vera Hurst as his wife.

Of course there is a love story between the colonel's daughter (charmingly enthusiastic Daphne Courtney) and Johnnie Martin (Rowland Bartrop). And there is reliable support from the ranks. -Phyllis

## 1945

January 8 for three weeks: Gordon Harker, Cathleen Nesbitt, Franklin Dyall, Reginald Tate in four Edgar Wallace thrillers in repertory - *The Ringer, The Frog, The Case Of The Frightened Lady* and *The Calendar*.

January 29: Ronald Squire in *While The Sun Shines*, a comedy by Terence Rattigan.

February 5 for two weeks: D'Oyly Carte Opera Company in their repertoire of Gilbert and Sullivan shows.

February 19: Nova Pilbeam, Walter Fitzgerald in *Peter Pan* by J. M. Barrie.

February 26: Prior to London - Mary Clare, Carla Lehmann, Harold Berens in *Appointment With Death*, a thriller by Agatha Christie.

March 5: Prior to London - Patricia Hilliard, Michael Golden in *Wuthering Heights*, by Emily Bronte.

March 12: World Premiere - John Mills, Mary Morris, Elspeth March in a psychological thriller *Duet For Two Hands*, by Mary Hayley Bell.

March 19: Prior to London - Flora Robson, Milton Rosmer, Joan Harben, Eric Messiter, in *Ethel Fry*, a thriller by Patrick Hamilton.

March 26: Prior to London - Emyln Williams, Diana Wynyard, Megs Jenkins, Herbert Lomas in *The Wind Of Heaven*, by Emyln Williams.

April 2: Jack Buchanan, Coral Browne in *The Last Of Mrs Cheyney*, a comedy by Frederick Lonsdale.

April 9: Ronald Frankau in a musical play titled *Merry-Go-Round*.

April 16: Prior to London - Richard Greene in *The Desert Rats*, a war drama by Colin Morris.

April 23: Iris Hoey, Malcolm Keen in a comedy thriller *Pink String And Sealing Wax*, by Roland Pertwee.

April 30: Prior to London - Margot Graham, Raymond Huntley,

Margeretta Scott, Hugh Burden in *Josephine*, by Margery Corvin.

May 7: Vivien Leigh, Cecil Parker in *The Skin Of Our Teeth*, a fantasy comedy by Thornton Wilder.

May 14: Freddie Forbes, Bertram Wallis, Reginald Palmer, Betty Leslie-Smith in musical play *Betty*, by Frederick Lonsdale.

May 21 for four weeks: Olga Gwynne in *The Lisbon Story*, a West End musical success with a wartime theme.

Friday, June 22, for the summer season: Robb Wilton, Max Wall, Suzette Tarri, Polly Ward, Harold Berens, Harry Lester and His Hayseeds, the John Tiller Girls in a Tom Arnold revue titled *Hoopla*.

September 24: Robert Harris, Elizabeth Allan, Helen Haye, in a drama titled *Tomorrow The World*, by James Gow and Arnaud D'Ussea.

October 1: Prior to London - Cicely Courtneidge, Arthur Macrae, Hartley Power, Thorley Walters, Irene Handl in *Under The Counter*, a comedy with music by Arthur Macrae.

October 8 and week: Betty Warren, Jimmy Godden in *Three's A Family*, a comedy by Phoebe and Henry Ephron.

October 15: Freda Jackson, Ruth Dunning in *No Room At The Inn*, a social drama by Joan Temple.

October 22: Phyllis Monkman, George Lacy in a revue, *Sweeter And Lower*.

October 29: Prior to London - Walter Fitzgerald, Patricia Hilliard, Henry Mollinson in *Under The Gooseberry Bush*, a comedy by Archie Menzies.

November 5: Prior to London - Flora Robson, Basil Sidney in *Man About The House*, a drama by John Perry from a novel by Francis Brett Young.

November 12: Douglass Montgomery in *Now The Day Is Over*, by Charles K. Freeman and Gerald Savory.

November 19: Claire Luce in *It Happened In New York*, by Julie Mars, with Paul Dupuis, Joan Greenwood.

November 26: Sydney Howard, Nuna Davey, Gus McNaughton, A. E. Matthews, Richard Wattis in *Dandy Dick*, a farce by Arthur W. Pinero.

December 3: World Premiere - Robert Fleming, Edith Sharpe, Cecil Trouncer, Rachel Gurney, Denholm Elliott, Joan Hickson in *The Guinea Pig*, a public school drama by Warren Chetham Strode.

December 10: Evelyn B. Roberts, Barbara Leake in *Quiet Weekend*, a comedy by Esther McCracken.

December 17: Prior to London - Robert Newton, Barbara Mullen in *So Brief The Spring*, a romantic play by Walter Greenwood.

December 24 for two weeks: Prior to London - Leslie Banks, Hermoine Baddeley in *Grand National Night*, thriller by Dorothy and Campbell Christie.

Evening Gazette reviews

October 15 and week, 1945  
Presented by Jack Hylton and Barry O'Brien

### A "deplorable" play to set Blackpool talking

HERE is a strange, dynamic, startling, and in some respects deplorable play. It will set London talking and it will set Blackpool talking also, in astonishment and controversy *No Room at the Inn*, at the Grand Theatre, takes its title from the New Testament, but there is little Biblical about it. The play shows what could have happened to certain evacuees in a "safe area."

A wanton woman bamboozles the billeting officer, the town clerk, the town council, and the local vicar, while pursuing a career of squalid sadism which ends in her murder.

Five unfortunate youngsters are delivered into the clutches of this slut with results that electrify the audience in a Hogarthian progress of highly coloured and often over-coloured episodes of melodrama.

Blackpool, the greatest evacuation centre in the country, will note that the scene is at a seaside resort and that the accent of the villainess is northern, if not Lancastrian. And Blackpool women, who have lavished so much honest affection and hard labour on 30,000 evacuees, will not like it.

On the other hand, so brilliant is the acting that what would otherwise be mere melodramatic sensation will command sincere, if unwilling, admiration. This talented company really makes one feel that such things could happen. No greater compliment could be paid to them.

Freda Jackson, as the depraved "lady" of the house puts up a convincing and at times terrific performance, and Mary Kimber and Joan Dowling, as the two leading evacuees, have set their feet firmly on the ladder of dramatic success.

Altogether a most unusual, startling, and - I must repeat - in some respects a deplorable play. It will certainly give you something to talk about. H.R.G.

November 5 and week, 1944

Presented by H. M. Tennent

Prior to London

### Great performance by Flora Robson

THERE are seven weeks to go, and prophecy is especially dangerous in matters connected with the stage, but Blackpool is not likely to see again this year acting of the high, all-round quality displayed at the Grand Theatre last night.

The play, now in its fourth week of touring, is *A Man About the House*, John Perry's clever adaptation of the novel by Francis Brett Young. It is a story, set in the year 1908, of two English spinster sisters, left in semi-poverty by their father, who unexpectedly inherit a charming villa in sunny Italy, and take possession.

The establishment is run by an Italian butler, very handsome and very efficient, and within a few days the English women are glad there is a man about the house. Salvatore has such a way with him.

Afterwards, however, they are lucky to escape with either life or property.

Not a thriller in the accepted sense, the play has a fine air of growing tension, with

## THE GRAND THEATRE, BLACKPOOL

# Stars and Shows of the 1940s

admirable characterisation and a wealth of unforced humour.

Flora Robson, who, as the elder sister, pays dearly for her romantic hour, gives a great performance, but no less successful is Betty Sinclair as the younger.

Basil Sydney's portrayal of Salvatore is at once impressive and convincing. He is a thorough villain, yet one can see his point of view.

Ernest Thesiger is delightful as the bachelor with an eye for life and an ear for scandal, and Wyndham Goldie is outstanding as the distinguished doctor who saves the situation.

Add to these good works the lesser parts by Patricia Hastings, Nancy Roberts and Frank Tickle, and the expert direction of William Armstrong, and you have an evening to remember. H.W.

## 1946

January 7: Return of Flora Robson, Basil Sydney, Wyndham Goldie in *Man About The House*, by John Perry.

January 14: Emlyn Williams, Andrew Cruickshank, Jessica Spencer, in *Spring 1600*, a comedy by Emlyn Williams.

January 21: Wilfred Pickles, Joan White, Renee Ray, Marjorie Rhodes, Charles Victor in *The Cure For Love*, a northern comedy by Walter Greenwood.

January 28: Dorothy Dickson, Max Adrian in Somerset Maugham's comedy *Our Betters*.

February 4: Second visit of *The Guinea Pig* (as December, 1945).

February 11: Adrienne Allen, Anthony Ireland, Betty Ann Davies in *Dear Evelyn*.

February 18: Premiere - Frances Day in *Evangeline*, musical play based on *Nymph Errant*, with Gerald's Orchestra.

February 25: A. E. Matthews, Marjorie Fielding, Ronald Ward in *A Play For Ronnie*, by Warren Chetham Strode.

March 4: Robert Douglas, Elizabeth Allan in *Lighten Our Darkness*, by Janet Green.

March 11: Valerie White, Ursula Howells, Jack Allen in *Frieda*, a comedy by Ronald Millar.

March 18 for two weeks: The D'Oyly Carte Opera Company.

April 1: Prior to London - Diana Wynyard, Ronald Squire, Hugh Williams, Patrick Barr in *Portrait In Black*, a drama by Ivan Goff and Ben Roberts.

April 8: Prior to London - John Clements, Kay Hammond, Irene Vanbrugh in *The Kingmaker*, an historical drama by Margaret Luce.

April 15: Prior to London - Gordon Harker, Olga Lindo, Austin Trevor in *The Poltergeist*, by Frank Harvey.

April 22: Evelyn Laye, Frank Lawton, Wilfred Hyde-White in *Evasive Lady*, a comedy by Thomas Browne.

April 29: Prior to London - Emlyn Williams, Angela Baddeley, Frank Cellier, Clive Morton, Kathleen Harrison, Jack Watling in *The Winslow Boy*, a drama by Terence Rattigan.

May 6: Prior to London - Terence de Marney, Linden Travers

in *Dear Murderer*, by St. John L. Clowes.

May 13: American actress Ruth Draper in her famous character sketches.

May 20: Frederick Piper, Jean Cadell, Michael Gough in *Craven House*, by Diana Hamilton.

May 27: Julia Bretton, Billy Milton, Hal Bryan in the musical comedy *The Quaker Girl*.

June 3: Raymond Lovell, Roy Royston, Nancy Burns, Doris Hare in *Up The Garden Path*, a farce by Archie Menzies.

June 10: World Premiere - Derek Farr, Dulcie Gray, Joyce Barbour, Bernard Lee in *Fools Rush In*, a comedy by Kenneth Horne.

June 18 for six weeks: Barry Sinclair, Jessica James, Angela Braemar in Ivor Novello's musical *The Dancing Years*.

August 1 for a season: Billy Reid and Dorothy Squires, Duggie Wakefield and Co., Derek Roy in the revue *Fine Feathers*.

September 30: Controversial play about delinquency, *Pick-Up Girl*, by Elsa Shelley.

October 7: Clive Brook, Irene Worth, Harry Welchman in *The Play's The Thing*, by Ferenc Molnar and P.G. Wodehouse.

October 14: Elizabeth Allan, Harold Warrender in *And No Birds Sing*, a comedy by Jenny Laird and John Fernald.

October 21: Leslie Henson, Gladys Henson, Wally Patch in *The Sport Of Kings*, a comedy by Ian Hay.

October 28: Beryl Mason, Fred McNaughton in *See How They Run*, a comedy by John Deverell.

November 4: Prior to London - Hubert Gregg, George Thorpe, Donald Gray in *Strange As It Seems*, a comedy by Alec Coppel.

November 11: Prior to London - Coral Browne, Edwina Mountbatten in Somerset Maugham's *Lady Frederick*.

November 18: Kenneth Kent in *The Shop At Sly Corner*, a thriller by Edward Percy.

November 25: Alan Webb, Hazel Terry in *The Years Between*, by Daphne Du Maurier.

December 2: John Witty, H. F. Maltby in *Bless 'Em All*, a comedy by H. F. Maltby.

December 9: Prior to London - Robertson Hare, Peter Haddon, Ian Carmichael in *All She Wanted Was A Cream Front Door*, a farce by A. R. Whatmore.

December 16: Prior to London - Yolande Donlan, Hartley Power, Bessie Love in *Born Yesterday*, a comedy by Garson Kanin.

December 23: Eileen Herlie, James Donald in *The Eagle Has Two Heads*, by Jean Cocteau.

Tuesday, December 31 for two weeks: World Premiere - Yvonne Arnaud, Ronald Squire, Charles Victor in *Jane*, by S. N. Behrman from a Somerset Maugham story.

Evening Gazette reviews

January 21 and week, 1946

Presented by H. K. Ayliff

### 'The Cure For Love' a potent potion

"The Cure For Love" is marriage, as prescribed by "Doctor" Walter Greenwood at the Grand Theatre in a two-and-a-half hour dose of the most genuine comedy that Blackpool has enjoyed for many months.

Coughing in the theatre and freezing pipes at home were immediately forgotten last night in the merry romp with Sgt Jack Hardacre.

Coming home on leave after three years in the Eighth Army, he finds the local "vamp" with whom he has been inveigled into an engagement, a pain in the neck. His mother's lodger is the soothing remedy.

Here, in Salford, Lancashire, author Walter Greenwood is thoroughly at home, and his potent, scintillating lines are delivered by a company who might have stepped right out of the Flying Shuttle, the public house which divides with Mrs Hardacre's kitchen the setting for the play.

Wilfred Pickles has the native shyness which makes him the ideal Jack Hardacre, victimised by overbearing women right from the cradle. In Renee Ray he has the sparkling antidote to the vamp poison so cleverly administered by Joan White, as Janie.

For a brilliant character study, laurels go to Charles Victor as the publican, closely followed by Marjorie Rhodes as Jack's typical hard working Lancashire mother. These are two magnificent performances. And there's a grand cameo of an old crone by Iris Vandeleur.

Dorothy Dewhurst, Jack Rodney, William Heilbronn, Alec Faversham and Jessie Moor help to make this comedy of sharp tongues and warm hearts just what the doctor ordered. - Phyllis.

April 8 and week, 1946

Presented by John Clements Productions

Prior to London

### John Clements in history with the gloves off

AUTHOR Miss Margaret Luce would have been highly gratified with the reception which the Grand Theatre audience last night accorded her new play *The Kingmaker*, a 25-scened, 30-charactered historical study of warrior Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick.

London audiences should be similarly receptive when the production opens there later this month. I hope, for Miss Luce's sake that they are, if only to reward her for months of immense work.

It takes courage to present history at the box office, yet when it is history with John Clements, Dame Irene Vanbrugh, Kay Hammond and Robert Eddison, it stands more than the average chance of success.

These four grand people of the theatre, with a supporting company of 30, who work magnificently from curtain rise to fall, invest the piece with all the blood-thirsty drama of the 15th century and achieve acting of the very highest order.

John Clements has a real triumph in the Olivier fashion. As the noble yet ruthless Earl of Warwick, he gives a restrained, dignified but ever-forceful portrayal.

For him the play is a personal achievement. And I record that without in any way detract-

## THE GRAND THEATRE, BLACKPOOL

# Stars and Shows of the 1940s

November 22: Return visit of *Worm's Eye View*, by R. F. Delderfield.

November 29: Prior to London - Dermot Walsh, Hazel Court in *Random Harvest*, by James Hilton.

December 6: The Blackpool Drama Festival of Full Length Plays.

December 13: Prior to London - Douglass Montgomery, Judy Campbell in *This Is Where We Came In*, a comedy by William Templeton.

December 20: Greta Gynt, Roderick Lovell, Rachel Gurney in *Twice And Forever*, a comedy by Harold Goodman.

December 27: Prior to London - Flora Robson, Hector McGregor in *Captain Brassbound's Conversion*, a comedy by Bernard Shaw.

Evening Gazette reviews

February 2 and week, 1948

### Undiminished grace of Jessie Matthews

SENTIMENT was in the air at the Grand Theatre last night. A Blackpool audience welcomed back to the stage a star who had scintillated as brightly as any in revue.

Leigh Stafford's *Maid to Measure*, tunefully scored, elegantly dressed, was a fitting frame for the vibrant personality and undiminished grace of Jessie Matthews.

Her bridal number, with its haunting melody, *Time May Change*, had a delicacy and charm little present in revue these days.

Dancing was an outstanding feature of the show. Christopher Spencer, Terence Delaney and Robert Dorning were brilliant.

Versatility had a blithe exponent in the long-limbed personality of Tommy Fields, who skipped from romance to the wildest farce.

From the land of the hot tamales came Porto Rican Lolita Cordoba to give a Carmen Miranda dressing to the theatrical salad. For good measure there were the talents of Eric Palmer, Johnny Brandon and Miriam Karlin.

The sketches were varied in quality, inevitable among so many. But it would be churlish to cavil at so generous, varied and multi-coloured a dish. *Maid to Measure* has a little of everything, and as return fare for its leading lady, it is made to measure. *B.B.*

February 9 and week, 1948

Presented by H. M. Tennent

Prior to London

### Margaret Rutherford's masterclass in farce

LET it be said at once that *The Happiest Days Of Your Life*, John Dighton's new farce at the Grand Theatre last night, was one of the happiest evenings of the playgoing season to date.

Farce, to be effective, must keep one foot in the camp of credibility. The reason in this case is a ministerial slip, which dumps the homeless scholars of St Swithin's on to the scholastic acres of St Hilary's. A detail overlooked by the Ministry is that St Swithin's are girls, St Hilary's are boys.

This is a theme that could easily degenerate into vulgarity and become meaningless. It does neither, because the author is a craftsman, his dialogue is consistently amusing, and he is served by a first rate company.

Margaret Rutherford gives an authoritative

performance as dignity finally succumbing to impudence, and Viola Lyel makes a worthy second-in-command as the obstreperously girlish Miss Gossage. Patricia Hastings pleasantly represents the charm school.

George Howe, Miles Eason, Colin Gordon and Douglas Ives give a grand account for besieged masculinity, and Peter Davies and Molly Weir speak for tactless youth.

Stringer Davies, Betty Wolfe, Douglas Stewart and Irene Relph ably represent the horrors of visitors' day at its worst. *B.B.*

March 8 and week, 1948

Presented by Henry Sherek

### The chilling artistry of Peter Ustinov

AS unvarnished a tale as local playgoers have seen for some time, *Frenzy*, Peter Ustinov's adaptation from the Swedish of Ingmar Bergman, arrived at the Grand Theatre last night.

A student falls in love with a girl of easy virtue. The boy's adoration transforms her briefly into the girl she might have been. There is an Indian summer of romance, until a psychopathic schoolmaster, whose professional facade conceals the murkiest of interiors, smashed it up.

It is not a pretty story and as a play is not helped by the episodic form. Told with fank and at times squalid realism, its strength lies in its central character, the sadistic Caligula, played with psychological accuracy and chilling artistry by Peter Ustinov. This was a horrifying portrait, brilliantly observed.

Joan Greenwood vividly portrays the little drab, with intimations of something better. By an ironic chance, the touch of laryngitis from which she was suffering imparted a startlingly realistic edge to the character. During the brief idyll, her own radiant personality came into its ethereal own. She is worthy of something better than this sultry sexiness.

Denholm Elliott, as the youth caught in a mill race beyond its comprehension, gave a warmly sympathetic performance.

Harold Scott as Birdie and Kynaston Reeves as the headmaster spoke eloquently for the simple and censorial side of education, and the students had the authentic ring of college life.

*B.B.*

March 29 and week, 1948

Presented by Emile Littler

### Alec Clunes, West End man of the moment

A LONDON reputation came north last night when West End star Alec Clunes gave a superb performance as Browning in Rudolf Besier's latter-day classic *The Barretts of Wimpole Street*, at the Grand Theatre.

"The Barretts" is not only a rare love story. Beneath its superficially quiet surface it is a profoundly dramatic conflict of character, fought out behind the respectable facade of Victorianism.

Alec Clunes, in stature, movement and diction might well have been the author of *Sordello* and *Last Duchess*; a living poet, a most winning lover.

Margaret Johnston, who sensitively conveys the struggle for life and sanity in a tyrannical household, makes an appealing figure as the invalid of genius.

The sternest task faced Tom Walls, who had to combat his own long established reputation in a totally different field. It was a most gallant

effort, even if it did not wholly take the measure of Barrett and his peculiarly vicious, yet tortured type of repression.

Sarah Churchill, who has considerably improved since her last visit here in 1938, makes a radiantly rebellious figure of Henrietta, and in her ringlets and crinolines looks like a picture by Winterhalter.

In a smoothly efficient company three family traditions were maintained. Tom Walls jnr was Henrietta's beau, Christopher Calthrop was Octavius, and Patricia Raine (Binnie Hale's daughter) was the effervescent Bella. *B.B.*

November 15 and week, 1948

Presented by H. M. Tennent

Prior to London

### Personality-plus of Gertrude Lawrence

ACTING ability is one thing. Personality is another. To combine them in equal measure is the rare endowment of Gertrude Lawrence, whose return to the English stage in Daphne du Maurier's *September Tide*, presented to an appreciative house at the Grand Theatre last night, was a happy homecoming.

A widow falls in love with her daughter's artist husband. Miss Du Maurier not only voices the clash of generations but speaks for the fundamental decencies. Life is responsibility as well as romance. They go their separate ways.

Miss Lawrence makes a living, understandable and wholly attractive woman of the widow and Michael Gough, an actor to watch, gives a passionate vitality to Evan.

Anne Leon and Bryan Forbes speak valiantly for youth and Cyril Raymond for faithful convention. Dandy Nichols has her moments as the voluble Mrs Tuckett.

*September Tide* has all the earmarks of a great popular success. *B.B.*

December 27 and week, 1948

Presented by H. M. Tennent

### Flora Robson as Shaw's woman triumphant

IT is a strange commentary on the contemporary theatre that one of the most stimulating plays of the current season could have been written in 1899.

The revival of Bernard Shaw's *Captain Brassbound's Conversion* at the Grand Theatre last night, is G.B.S. in high spirits. An English titled lady and a legal light are captured by cut-throats off the West Coast of Africa, involved in a clash with arab chieftains and eventually recued by the US Navy.

This is as good an excuse as any for a favourite Shavian theme, the battle of the sexes. Lady Cicely Wainfleet is woman triumphant, to whom lawyers, captors, bandits, sheiks and admirals are difficulties no whit different from any that might be encountered in an English drawing room.

Flora Robson gives a wholly delightful performance as Lady Cicely and her scenes with Hector McGregor's forceful, virile Brassbound are first class.

Alan Jeayes speaks authoritatively for law, John Rae for religion, and Malcolm Russell's genial alcoholic for anything at all.

Alastair Bannerman, Martin Boddey, Michael O'Halloran, Marne Maitland, Michael Nightingale and a goodly company, savour the dialogue and see that nothing is lost in the Shavian thrust and parry. *B.B.*



# THE GRAND THEATRE, BLACKPOOL

## Stars and Shows of the 1940s

1949

January 3: Blackpool Children's Pantomime, *Red Riding Hood*.

January 10: Jean Forbes-Robertson in *The Long Mirror*, by J. B. Priestley.

January 17: Ronald Ward, Marion Spencer, Henry Mollison, in *Set To Partners*, by Diana Morgan.

January 24: Prior to London - Paul Scofield, Robert Flemyng, Noel Willman in *Adventure Story*, a historical drama by Terence Rattigan.

January 31: Victoria Hopper in *My Mother Said*, by A. P. Dearsley.

February 7: A professional company in a stage version of *Snow White And The Seven Dwarfs*.

February 14: Diana Allen, Diana Lincoln in *Fallen Angels*, by Noel Coward.

February 21: Michael Howard in the comedy-thriller *The Cat And The Canary*, by John Willard.

February 28: Barry Morse, Nova Pilbeam in *The Voice Of The Turtle*, by John Van Druten, directed by Barry Morse.

March 7: Prior to London - Stewart Granger, Jean Simmons, Sonia Dresdel, Mary Clare, Frederick Valk, Herbert Lomas in *The Power Of Darkness*, by Leo Tolstoy.

March 14: The Blackpool Drama Festival Of One Act Plays.

March 22: Joan Hopkins, George Curzon in *Peter Pan*, by J. M. Barrie.

March 28: Prior to London - Kenneth Kent, Sarah Churchill in *The House On The Sand*, a thriller by Roland Pertwee.

April 4: Hilton Bowden, Pax Walker in *Rebecca*, by Daphne Du Maurier.

April 11: Hugh Wakefield in *Off The Record*, a comedy by Ian Hay and Stephen King-Hall.

April 18: Prior to London - Kay Hammond, John Clements in *The Beaux Stratagem*, by George Farquhar.

April 25: Terence Rattigan's *Playbill* - Mary Ellis, Barry Jones, Marie Lohr, Anthony Oliver in *The Browning Version*, plus the one-act *Harlequinade*.

May 2: Professional tour of *No Room At The Inn*, a drama by Joan Temple.

May 9: Prior to London - Googie Withers, Nigel Patrick, Irene Worth, Ralph Michael in *Champagne For Delilah*, a comedy by Ronald Millar.

May 16: Margaret Lockwood, Peter Graves, Josephine Stuart, Jack Allen in Noel Coward's comedy *Private Lives*.

May 23: Leslie Henson, John Buckley in a return visit of *Bob's Your Uncle*, a musical farce by Austin Melford.

Tuesday May 31 and week: Eye Lister, Betty Paul, Charles Dorning in Noel Coward's Viennese musical *Bitter Sweet*.

June 20 for the summer season: Donald Peers, Robert Lamouret, Billy Russell, Norman Wisdom, Henry Hall and his Orchestra in *Buttons and Bows*.

October 10: Prior to London - Michael Denison, Dulcie Gray, Kenneth Connor in *Queen Elizabeth Slept Here*, a farce by Talbot Rothwell.

October 17: Prior to London - Jack Buchanan, Coral Browne, William Kendall in *Castle In The Air*, a comedy by Alan Melville.

October 24: Sonny Hale, Charles Heslop in *The Ex Mrs Y*, a farce by Frank Eyton and Austin Melford.

October 31: Prior to London - Barbara Mullen, Reginald Tate in *Murder At The Vicarage*, by Agatha Christie.

November 7: Prior to London - Fay Compton, Irene Vanbrugh in *Mary Bonaventure*, a drama by Charlotte Hastings.

November 14: Prior to London - Gordon Harker, Francis Lister in *The Non Resident*, a thriller by Frank Harvey.

November 21: J. H. Roberts in *Fly Away Peter*, a light comedy by A. P. Dearsley.

November 28: Barry Morse, Nova Pilbeam in *Flowers For The Living*, by Toni Block.

December 5: The Blackpool Festival of Full Length Plays.

December 12: Joyce Barbour, Colin Gordon in a return visit of *The Happiest Days Of Your Life*, by John Dighton.

December 19: Terence de Marney, Phyllis Monkman in *On Monday Next*, a new comedy by Philip King.

26th for two weeks: Roland Culver, Ursula Howells in *Master Of Arts*, a comedy by William Douglas Home.

### Evening Gazette reviews

*March 7 and week, 1949*  
Presented by Stephen Mitchell  
Prior to London

### Stewart Granger's bold step into Tolstoy

A CLASSIC came to violent and vigorous life when Tolstoy's *Power Of Darkness*, with a distinguished cast, was presented to a packed house at the Grand Theatre last night.

An earthy, savage story of peasant life in 19th century Russia, its profound moral sense makes it curiously akin to *Macbeth* and gives dramatic force to decline and fall.

It was a bold step for Stewart Granger to return to the stage in so uncompromising a play. Let it be said at once that he acquits himself nobly. There are no easy concessions here to the film public, and he plays the arrogant, lustful and penitent Nikita with conviction and, finally, moving power.

Jean Simmons made a vivid figure as the little viper Akulina, though some of the raw dialogue sounded startling on this young lips.

Superbly at home in this jungle of warring passions were Sonia Dresdel as the embittered Anisya, and Mary Clare, malevolence incarnate as Matrena. Miss Dresdel can tear a passion to tatters better than most, and Miss Clare brews mischief with the relish of one of the three witches.

Strong performances came from Herbert Lomas as the hapless Peter, Harold Scott thundering the Tolstoy credo, and Frederick Valk as the philosophical Mitrich. Mary Horn and 15-year-old Perlita Neilson shone like good deeds in a naughty world.

*Power Of Darkness* makes no bones about vice but it is equally forthright about virtue.  
B.B.

*May 9 and week, 1949*

Presented by Henry Sherek

### Bubbling comedy gets the lightest of touches

RONALD Millar's comedy of love in the deluxe brackets, *Champagne for Delilah*, bubbled over at the Grand Theatre last night.

A fashionable playwright falls for a milk-drinking Hollywood star. The wife counter-moves with an adoring doctor. Crisis comes with the arrival of a hot-blooded American colonel and the film star taking to something a good deal stronger than milk.

In this sort of thing, treatment is of paramount importance and here it is faultless, as immaculately cut as the Hartnell gowns, as sleek as the elegant settings.

Googie Withers makes a piquant figure of the wife, playing with a sure sense of comedy and feeling for a line. The one serious criticism is that no man in his right mind would dream of leaving her.

Nigel Patrick plays the footloose dramatist with a dextrously light touch, and Irene Worth is Hollywood at its most entrancingly dumb. In her cups and out she is wickedly in key.

Ralph Michael does his best with the somewhat stuffy doctor, and Christopher Kane as the dynamic American is excellent. The rest of the company never let down the ritzy atmosphere.

If *Champagne For Delilah* is not set for popular success, this critic will revert to lemonade.  
B.B.

*May 16 and week, 1949*

Presented by Henry Sherek

### More than glamour from Margaret Lockwood

A PUBLIC service was performed by Margaret Lockwood at the Grand Theatre last night. She helped dispel the silly notion that film stars or beautiful women whose names have been made on the screen, cannot act.

Granted that she has had previous stage experience. It was as one of the first ladies of the screen that she came back to the stage. Could anyone look so glamorous and act, too? Miss Lockwood could and did.

Noel Coward's *Private Lives* was the ideal choice. It is witty, impudent, outrageous. Mr Coward takes a hand of husbands and wives, shuffles, reshuffles and cuts. The piece is as fine as spun glass and if it is not to break the acting must be light and expert.

Miss Lockwood's Amanda Prynne is both a compact of mischief and charm. She played with gusto that famous tussle in Act 2. The record was smashed and the furniture spun in grand style. It delighted the packed house.

She had a worthy sparring partner in Peter Graves, who deserves high marks for his love-making on the settee. Full marks, too, for his scene at the breakfast table.

The rather thankless parts of Sybil and Victor, who are little more than stooges for Amanda and Elyot, were played with conviction by Josephine Stuart and Jack Allen, and Pamela Stirling had her moment as Louise.

"We've had lots of fun tonight," said Miss Lockwood at curtainfall, "and we hope you have too." We had.  
B.B.

End of 1940s

