



OFF CENTRE THEATRE  
PRESENTS

# A SPORTING SHOWCASE OR "A LOAD OF OLD BALLS"

*An evening of music and  
laughter with a sporting theme*

DINGESTOW VILLAGE HALL Wednesday, 2nd July at 7.30pm

THE NARTH VILLAGE HALL Thursday, 3rd July at 7.30pm

MITCHEL TROY VILLAGE HALL Friday, 4th July at 7.30pm

REDBROOK VILLAGE HALL Saturday, 5th July at 7.30pm

CROSS ASH VILLAGE HALL Wednesday, 9th July at 7.30pm

LLANDOGO VILLAGE HALL Thursday, 10th July at 7.30pm

THE SAVOY THEATRE MONMOUTH Saturday, 12th July at 7.30pm

**SUPPORTING CHARITIES  
& LOCAL FUNDS**

TELEPHONE 01600 713036 & 01600 715699  
For more information.



OFF CENTRE THEATRE presents

# THE HAPPIEST DAYS OF YOUR LIFE

by John Dighton

THURSDAY MAY 29th

FRIDAY MAY 30th

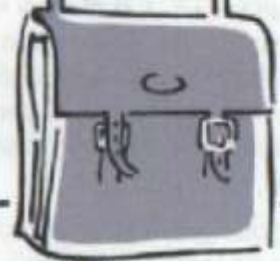
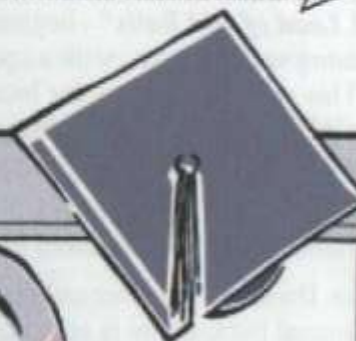
SATURDAY MAY 31st

*Programme*

**£1**

Curtain up at 7.30pm

at Haberdashers' Monmouth School for Girls



Off Centre Theatre  
is a member of  
NODA 2005

CRONFA LOTERI  
LOTTERY FUND

CYNGOR  
CELYDDWYD  
CYMRU

THE ARTS  
COUNCIL  
OF WALES

### Message from the Chairman

On behalf of Off Centre Theatre it is my great pleasure to welcome you to The Haberdashers' Monmouth School for Girls for our production of *The Happiest Days of Your Life* by John Dighton.

The production you see tonight is the result of many months of hard work. The actors on stage will receive their recognition and applause from you the audience. But spare a thought for the many others you don't see – the backstage team. They have been working away unseen making costumes, constructing sets, providing technical support etc. etc. This, like any OCT production, is a real team effort. So congratulations to everyone involved. I hope you enjoy this performance and that you will support our forthcoming productions:

**Sporting Showcase or "A Load of Old Balls"** - beginning on 2<sup>nd</sup> July we will be taking a fundraising variety show, with a sporting theme, on tour around local venues. This will raise money for local village halls and charities. The finale will be at the Savoy Theatre on 12<sup>th</sup> July where the proceeds are for Monmouth Lads.

**The Importance of Being Earnest** - 30<sup>th</sup> October – 1<sup>st</sup> November will be performed here at The Haberdashers' Monmouth School for Girls.

**Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs** – late December – early January, also at this venue. OCT's annual pantomime is an absolute must.

OCT has a great reputation, built up over many years, but without the enthusiasm of you, our audience, it would be of no avail. Thank you for your support. OCT is always looking for new members and whether that means you have an interest in treading the boards, working backstage, front of house, helping with design, construction, painting or sewing you would be welcome. If you are interested in joining please contact our membership secretary (the Producer of this production), Cedric Gibbons, tel. 01600 716162.

Thank you again. Now sit back and enjoy the show.  
Barbara Spence Chairman

### The Cast

**Therese Casemore** is treading the boards with OCT for the first time. She was Wardrobe Mistress for the Junior's 'Humpty Dumpty' last year and worked on costumes for 'Robin Hood.'

**Gordon Casson** has been with OCT since 1988. He is Assistant Director and also takes on the role of Billings. A man of many talents, he was frightening as Abanazar in Aladdin in 2000.

**Marcia Cooke** joined OCT from the Trojan Players in 1993 and has been active as both performer and director ever since. She directed Blithe Spirit in 2002.

**Lara Craig** is 14 years old and already an OCT veteran. She started out in 'Beauty and the Beast' in 1998 and hasn't stopped. She played Princess Shellana in 'Humpty Dumpty' and the Spirit of the Greenwood in 'Robin Hood.' She is also active in School Productions.

**Jenny Hickey** is a newcomer to OCT having been spotted in 'The North' Panto.

**Louise Kerr** is also a newcomer to OCT and a graduate of The North Panto.

**Duncan Myatt** joined OCT in 2000 and has appeared in Panto and Variety. This is his first straight role.

**Wyn Parry** moved to Monmouth recently and joined the chorus for 'Robinson Crusoe' straight away. This is his first straight role for OCT.

**Caroline Pearce** has been very active in OCT for 10 years both as Costume Designer and performer. She has appeared in every panto and Summer Show since 1996. She played Ruth in Blithe Spirit last Autumn.

**Danny Risk** is 13 years old and has already played the principal role of 'Olive Omelette' in Humpty Dumpty last year. He began in the chorus of 'Sinbad the Sailor' in 2000.

**Cliff Smith** has appeared in panto and Variety since 1994 but this is his first straight play with OCT. He appears regularly with Monmouth Operatic Society.

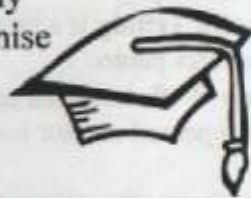
**Martin Telling** is a recent acquisition by OCT. He played Will Scarlet in this year's panto.

**Tony Wells** has been part of OCT's backstage team for many years. Having appeared on tour last summer, this is his first straight play.



## Notes on the Set Design

I have always felt that a good theatre set is one that doesn't fight for the attention of the audience over what the actors are doing. That doesn't mean it should be insignificant or uninteresting; simply that it should be sympathetic to the action and create a comfortable space in which the cast can work. Many productions benefit from a minimal set design, allowing the viewer's interpretation to be guided by the actor's performance. This would have been the wrong option for 'The Happiest Days of your Life' which, by its structure and theme, is a nostalgic and affectionate portrait of middle-class school life at the end of the Second World War. The author's notes on the set are very precise, but I had the further advantage of recalling the surroundings of my own school days. For the sake of a clearer picture, I imagined that before it became a school - let's say during the 1920s - Hilary Hall had been a rich gentleman's residence, built in the mid-Victorian era. This gave me a style of architecture, and the opportunity to throw in a few Gothic features - like the fireplace and the bricked up window in the hall. The furniture and decor is deliberately in need of some TLC since the school has been empty for about five years. Hopefully, the look and feel will be suitably convincing. By the way, you might recognise the playing fields and the landscape beyond!



David Evans

## Diana Falkiner's Notes on Fashion in 1946



### BLUE COUPONS

BLUE COUPONS

*Keep quarter coupons for purchases which need them*



The Second World War, and the deprivations and shortages of the years that followed, largely dictated the fashion of the mid-1940's. In 1941 the Board of Trade brought out regulations for 'Utility' clothes. Every civilian was issued with 20 coupons biannually, and every garment was valued at a set number of coupons. The government instructed clothes designers to use only a minimum of material and buttons, which lead to the common wartime look of shorter skirts to just below the knee, flared for ease of walking; short sleeved garments, button-through dresses, and belted waists. Many men were in

uniform during the war, or by 1946 in de-mob suits which then had to last a long time. Hats were not rationed: head-scarves and turbans became common wear for many women.

For men, the post war years were lacking in design and rather colourless. It was not until the mid-1950's that men's fashion changed, with the advent of Teddy Boys in winkle-picker shoes, and coloured velvet dinner jackets for the wealthier gentleman. For women, the New Look was to bring big changes, but that was not until 1947. In 1946, when this particular play is set, it was likely that people were still wearing clothes they had purchased years earlier, with little alternative but to 'make do and mend'



# The Happiest Days of Your Life

By John Dighton

## Cast

### Staff of Hilary Hall School for Boys

Headmaster, Godfrey Pond : *Cliff Smith*

Senior Assistant Master, Rupert (Daisy) Billings : *Gordon Casson*

Assistant Master, Dick Tassell : *Martin Telling*

School Porter & Groundsman, Rainbow : *Wyn Parry*



### Staff of St. Swithin's School for Girls, St. Leonards

Principal, Miss Evelyn Whitchurch : *Therese Casemore*

Senior Assistant Mistress, Miss (Sausage) Gossage : *Jenny Hickey*

Assistant Mistress, Joyce Harper : *Louise Kerr*

## Pupils



Hopcroft Minor : *Danny Risk*

Barbara Cahoun : *Lara Craig*

## Parents

The Reverend Edward Peck : *Duncan Myatt*

Mrs Peck : *Marcia Cooke*

Edgar Sowter : *Tony Wells*

Mrs Hilda Sowter : *Caroline Pearce*

Produced by Cedric Gibbons

Directed by Gordon Casson and Cedric Gibbons

Designed by David Evans

The action of the play takes place in the Masters' Common Room at Hilary Hall School for Boys, in Hampshire. The year is 1946.

It is the first day of the Summer term.

Act 1 4 o'clock in the afternoon

Act 2 Saturday afternoon, three weeks later

Act 3 Two hours later

There will be an interval of 15 minutes after Act 1.



Stage Manager

Terry Cane

Asst Stage Manager

Adam Wells

Wardrobe Mistress

Diana Falkiner

Lighting

Hannah Glasson

Properties

Barbara Ellis, Heather Elliot

Prompts

Sally Hayter, Jill Rogers

Construction

Terry Cane, Andrew Lightly,

David Evans, Cedric Gibbons

Poster Design

David Evans

Landscape scene by

David Evans,

Banner

John Rogers

Period music compiled by Percy Childs

Period Golf Equipment loaned by Mike Waldron,

Monmouth Golf Club

Period Cricket bag donated by Tom & Anne Baxter-Wright

Publicity & Programme Cedric Gibbons

Period Dress

Marigold Theatrical Costumiers

Huckaback, Caroline Pearce

Front of House Mistresses & Masters

Sandee Craig, Trudy Risk & Friends



Period furniture loaned by Blestium Antiques, The Malt House, St. Mary's Street, Monmouth.

With the kind permission of Brent Watkins.

## 1946. Some historical events provided by Keith Kissack

The British Atomic Bomb is tested; the Arts Council is founded; London Airport is opened; Australia wins the Ashes; Winston Churchill gives his 'Iron Curtain' speech; Goering and eleven other Nazis are sentenced to death at Nuremberg. Goering kills himself before execution

### Thanks to

The Headmistress and Bursar of H.M.S.G; Monmouthshire Beacon; Andy Sherwill of the Free Press; Chris Jones, St John Ambulance; Brian Phillips and Pastorprint; St Mary's Parish Church in Wales, Monmouth Library; DBG Jones; Chris Munslow; Tony Lambert; Doris Tomlinson; Roger Withers; Ann Newsome; Lyn Hounsome; Ann Hartland; Shirley Smith; Colin Poulson; Catherine Sherrington; Tri-Wall Europe; Pauline Sanders; Pat Pinnell; David McGleddery; Mrs Beat Jones; Nigel Morris; Chris Smith; Sue Evans; The Late Rhoda Colville; Jeanne Dauncey; Chris Moore; Walter Phillips; Ken Lindon; Mrs P Sanders; Margaret Cooling; Monmouth Scout Association; the many local shops, Companies and individuals too numerous to mention who have helped and advised in many ways.

### Pre-performance/interval contemporary music

Compiled by Percy Childs

- |     |  |                         |
|-----|--|-------------------------|
| 1.  | When you wish upon a star                                  | Victor Silvester        |
| 2.  | Small Hotel  | Hildegard               |
| 3.  | Kalamazoo  | Glen Miller             |
| 4.  | And the Angels Sing  | Ann Lenner              |
| 5.  | Black Eyes   | Troise & his Mandoliers |
| 6.  | Paper Moon   | Cliff Edwards           |
| 7.  | She shall have Music/Alone at a Table for 2/Pink Elephants | Charlie Kunz            |
| 8.  | Umbrella Man   | Flanagan & Allen        |
| 9.  | Don't say Goodbye  | Ray Noble               |
| 10. | Rum and Coca-Cola  | The Andrews Sisters     |
| 11. | La Mer   | Charles Trenet          |
| 12. | Tea for Two  | The Comedy Harmonists   |
| 13. | Amapola  | Connie Boswell          |
| 14. | Ma Pomme   | Maurice Chevalier       |



### Good Wishes from Patrick Stewart

One of the country's leading actors, Patrick Stewart, appeared recently at Malvern playing Halvern Solness in Henrik Ibsen's *The Master Builder*. In conversation after the opening night, he mentioned that *'The Happiest Days of Your Life'* was one of his favourite plays. He appeared in the Bristol Old Vic production in 1965, as Edgar Sowter, his last play for that Company before joining the RSC. At school in 1952, aged 12, he played Hopcroft Minor, directed by his English Teacher. Pat' was kind enough to pen his good wishes to OCT's Hopcroft as follows -

*"To Danny Risk,  
One Hopcroft  
to another,  
Break a leg.  
Patrick Stewart."*

For those who, like the Producer, are Star Trek fans, he is better known as Captain Jean-Luc Picard in Star Trek TNG. Younger folk will have seen him as Professor Xavier in *'X-Men'* and the recent *X<sup>2</sup>*.

*Risk.*  
*To Danny Risk*  
*One Hopcroft to another*  
*Break a leg*  
*Patrick Stewart*



OFF CENTRE  
THEATRE

New Year 2004

## SNOW WHITE AND THE SEVEN DWARFS

**"ROLL ON WINTER!!  
I CAN'T WAIT FOR ANOTHER PANTO!!!"**



OFF CENTRE  
THEATRE

Present Harold Pinter's

## Betrayal

There will be three performances of this fine play in **November**. Venue and dates to be announced in the Press later. This is a play written in 1977 and first performed in 1978 and is very much of its time. It is a three-handed play about an affair between Emma and Jerry. Emma is married to Robert who is one of Jerry's oldest friends. It is unusual in that the nine scenes run backwards chronologically from 1977 to 1968. It is a play with wit, surprise, emotion and pathos and is a sharp analysis of the beginning, middle and end of an affair and the impact it makes on the three characters.

MONMOUTH OPERATIC SOCIETY present

### An Autumn Concert

Haberdashers' Monmouth School for Girls

October 18th & 19th

Full details to be announced in the local press later



OFF CENTRE  
THEATRE

*presents*

## The Importance of being Earnest

By Oscar Wilde

At The Haberdashers' Monmouth  
School for Girls

**October 30th to November 1st**

"The amount of women in London who flirt with their own husbands is perfectly scandalous. It looks so bad. It is simply washing one's clean linen in public." --*Algernon*

"London society is full of women of the very highest birth who have, of their own free choice, remained thirty-five for years." -- *Lady Bracknell*

"Gwendolen, it is a terrible thing for a man to find out suddenly that all his life he has been speaking nothing but the truth. Can you forgive me?" --*Jack*

"To lose one parent, Mr Worthing, may be construed as a misfortune; to lose both looks like carelessness." -- *Lady Bracknell*