

TheatreMobile

present

PRIVATE LIVES

by

Noël Coward



Original Cast List

PRIVATE LIVES

Produced at the Phoenix Theatre, London, on 24th September, 1930, with the following cast of characters:

(In order of their appearance)

SYBIL CHASE *Adrienne Allen*
 ELYOT CHASE *Noël Coward*
 VICTOR PRYNNE *Laurence Olivier*
 AMANDA PRYNNE *Gertrude Lawrence*
 LOUISE *Everley Gregg*

The play produced by the Author.

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

- ACT I The terrace of a hotel in France.
A summer evening.
- ACT II Amanda's flat in Paris. A few days later.
Evening.
- ACT III The same. Next morning.

We wish to thank the following for their help, without which this production would not be possible :-

Moss Brothers, Manchester, for evening wear;
 Carreras Rothmans, Ltd., for cigarettes;
 Burton's Gold Medal Biscuits, Blackpool;
 Daniel Thwaites Brewery, Blackburn;
 Punch Magazine;
 Illustrated London News, London;
 Vogue Magazine, London;
 Towneley Nurseries, Burnley;
 Canada Dry (U.K.) Ltd.

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Directed by *CHRISTOPHER SANDFORD*

SYBIL CHASE *Kathryn Pogson*
 ELYOT CHASE *John Markham*
 VICTOR PRYNNE *Bert Lid*
 AMANDA PRYNNE *Nichola McAuliffe*
 LOUISE *Ginny Roncoroni*

Directed by *Christopher Sandford*
 Set design by *Jim Andrew*
 Costumes made and designed by *Sarah Carver*
 Set construction by *Paul Fieldhouse*
 Lighting design and operation *Pete Hussey*
 Sound *Geoff Yates*
 Props *Howard Bird*
 Stage Manager *Pete Hussey*
 Administrative Assistart *Kevin Jennings*
 Photography *Daniel Meadows*
 Additional sound equipment by *Sounds One, Manchester*
 Artistic Director of TheatreMobile *Gloria Parkinson*

Ratcliffe & Thornton, Nelson;
 Francis Akers for sculpture; Burnley Metalcraft;
 Old Time Antiques, Prestwich;
 Gilbraith Sales, Clayton-le-Moors;
 Skippers of Burnley for vehicles;
 Forest Hotel, Brierfield; Williamsons of Oldham;
 Colne Road Methodist Church for rehearsal rooms;
 R. White & Sons Ltd., London - soft drinks.

COWARD ON COWARD

"I was born in Teddington, Middlesex, an ordinary middle class boy. I was not gutter. I didn't know kipper heads in the gutter as Gertrude Lawrence quite untruthfully insisted that she did. Nor was my first memory the crunch of carriage wheels in the drive. Because we hadn't got a drive . . . I was a talented child, God knows, and when washed and smarmed down a bit, passably attractive. But I was, I believe, one of the worst boy actors ever inflicted on the general public . . . I cannot think off-hand of anyone who was more intimately and turbulently connected with our theatre in the twenties than myself . . . Throughout the thirties I was a highly publicised and irritatingly successful figure, much in demand . . . forced throughout to console myself with the bitter palliative of commercial success which I enjoyed very much indeed . . . The world treated me very well - but then I haven't treated it so badly either . . . I don't look back in anger nor indeed in anything even approaching mild rage; I rather look back in pleasure and amusement. As for death, it holds no fear for me . . . provided it is not going to be a painful lingering affair".

COWARD ON PRIVATE LIVES

PRIVATE LIVES was conceived in Tokyo ('a sad scrap heap of a city, rather like Wembley in the process of demolition'), written in Shanghai (in four days), and produced in London in September 1930, after a preliminary try-out in the provinces. It was described variously, as being 'tenuous', 'thin', 'brittle', 'gossamer', 'iridescent' and 'delightfully daring'. All of which connoted, to the public mind, 'cocktails', 'evening dress' 'repartee' and irreverent allusions to copulation, thereby causing a gratifying number of respectable people to queue up at the box office.

There is actually more to the play than this, however, but on the whole not much. It is a reasonable well constructed duologue for two experienced performers, with a couple of extra puppets thrown in to assist the plot and to provide contrast. There is a well written love scene in Act One and a certain amount of sound sex psychology underlying the quarrel scenes in Act Two.

As a complete play, it leaves a lot to be desired, principally owing to my dastardly and conscienceless behaviour towards Sybil and Victor, the secondary characters. These, poor things, are little better than ninepins, lightly wooden, and only there at all in order to be repeatedly knocked down and stood up again. Apart from this, PRIVATE LIVES, from the playwrights point of view, may or may not be considered interesting, but at any rate from the point of view of technical acting, it is very interesting indeed.

Sir Lawrence Olivier on Coward

"He told me I could ill afford to turn down the shop window of a London success at this point in my career; and he was, not arrogantly but in a matter of fact sort of way, quite certain that PRIVATE LIVES, would be a triumph. I went away, read the play, and returned to tell Noël in all seriousness that I'd rather play Elyot—he nearly died with laughter. Then he told me not to be a bloody fool, that he'd get me fifty pounds a week for playing Victor, and that we'd start rehearsing in a fortnight.

In rehearsals, in his own practical way, Noël was a great mind opener and very inspiring to work for . . . he was probably the first man who took hold of me and made me think . . . he taxed me with his sharpness and shrewdness and brilliance, and he used to point out when I was talking nonsense which nobody had ever done before. He gave me a sense of balance, of right and wrong. He would make me read; I never used to read at all . . . Noël also did a priceless thing; he taught me not to giggle on the stage. Once already I'd been fired for doing it, and I was very nearly sacked from the Birmingham Rep. for the same reason. Noël cured me; by trying to make me laugh outrageously, he taught me how not to give in to it. My great triumph came in New York when one night I managed to break Noël up on the stage without giggling myself".

SOME PLAYS, MUSICALS AND FILMS BY NOËL COWARD

THE VORTEX	...	...	...	...	1923
FALLEN ANGELS	...	...	...	...	1923
HAY FEVER	...	...	...	...	1925
EASY VIRTUE	...	...	...	...	1925
BITTER SWEET (Musical)	...	...	...	...	1929
PRIVATE LIVES	...	...	...	...	1930
CAVALCADE (Musical)	...	...	...	...	1931
DESIGN FOR LIVING	...	...	...	...	1932
TONIGHT AT EIGHT-THIRTY	...	...	...	...	1935
IN WHICH WE SERVE (Film)	...	...	...	...	1941
BLITHE SPIRIT	...	...	...	...	1941
BRIEF ENCOUNTER (Film)	...	...	...	...	1945
SOUTH SEA BUBBLE (Musical)	...	...	...	...	1949
RELATIVE VALUES	...	...	...	...	1950
SAIL AWAY (Musical)	...	...	...	...	1961
SUITE IN THREE KEYS	...	...	...	...	1965

SOME OF NOËL COWARD'S SONGS

Parisian Pierrot	...	...	...	...	1922
Poor Little Rich Girl	...	...	...	...	1925
A Room with a View	...	...	...	...	1927
Dance, Dance, Dance, Little Lady	...	...	...	...	1927
I'll See You Again	...	...	...	...	1929
If Love Were All	...	...	...	...	1929
Mad Dogs and Englishmen go out in the Noonday Sun	...	...	...	...	1930
Any Little Fish	...	...	...	...	1930
Half Caste Woman	...	...	...	...	1930
Some Day I'll Find You	...	...	...	...	1930
Twentieth Century Blues	...	...	...	...	1931
Mad About The Boy	...	...	...	...	1932
The Party's Over Now	...	...	...	...	1932
Don't Put Your Daughter on the Stage Mrs. Worthington	...	...	...	...	1933
I'll Follow My Secret Heart	...	...	...	...	1933
Has Anybody Seen Our Ship?	...	...	...	...	1935
Play Orchestra Play	...	...	...	...	1935
The Stately Homes of England	...	...	...	...	1937
I've Been to a Marvellous Party	...	...	...	...	1938
Could you please oblige us with a Bren gun?	...	...	...	...	1941
Don't Let's be Beastly to the Germans	...	...	...	...	1943
Go Slow Johnny	...	...	...	...	1961
Come the Wild, Wild Weather	...	...	...	...	1959
Later Than Spring	...	...	...	...	1961



NOËL COWARD IN THE NINETEEN THIRTIES