



# **The Country Wife**

**by William Wycherley**



**Directed by Malcolm Brown**

**Wednesday 11th to Saturday 14th May 2011**





Leeds Arts Centre is a prestigious amateur theatre group founded in 1945. We are a friendly society, working together to maintain the high standards for which our productions are known. We produce four plays each year at the Carriageworks, as well as organising workshops to help members to develop their acting, directing and production skills.

We offer opportunities to all who are interested in becoming involved with any aspect of drama, including acting, directing, stage management, props, designing, costumes, lighting, sound, publicity and front of house.

### **New members are always welcome**

If you are interested in acting, directing, designing or making scenery or costumes, helping backstage with stage management or props, or lending a hand with publicity, then why not speak to one of our members front of house this evening, or in the theatre bar after the show?

You can also write, with contact telephone number, for further information to:

The Secretary, Leeds Arts Centre  
c/o The Carriageworks  
Millennium Square, Leeds LS2 3AD  
or e-mail us at: [publicity@leedsartscentre.org.uk](mailto:publicity@leedsartscentre.org.uk)

To find out more about the activities and forthcoming productions of the Leeds Arts Centre visit our website at:

[www.leedsartscentre.org.uk](http://www.leedsartscentre.org.uk)



## The Play

This bawdy comedy, written in 1675, was controversial even in its own time for its sexual explicitness, and was considered too outrageous to be performed at all between 1753 and 1924. Since then it has been regularly revived, and is now considered to be one of the wittiest and best of the Restoration comedies.

"So long as men are false and women vain  
While gold continues to be virtue's bane  
In pointed satire Wycherley shall reign."

John Evelyn, 1688

"*The Country Wife* and *The Plain Dealer* are stores of Delight, which you have laid up by a Noble Charity, to supply the Poor in Spirit thro' all Posterity."

John Dennis to Wycherley, 1693

"The character of Horner in *The Country Wife*, and the design of it, is a good representation of the age in which that Comedy was written: at which time love and wenching were the business of life."

Sir Richard Steele, 1709

"Wycherley's indecency is protected against the critics as a skunk is protected against the hunters. It is safe because it is too filthy to handle and too noisome even to approach."

Thomas Macaulay, 1840

## The Plot

The notorious rake, Horner, spreads a rumour around London that he has been made impotent so that husbands will trust him alone with their wives, thus affording him the opportunity to seduce them. Meanwhile, the insanely jealous Pinchwife marries an innocent country wife, Margery, in the hope that she will not have the wit to deceive him, but her curiosity about town life soon leads her to the lascivious Horner. Contrasting with these two stories of deception, Pinchwife's virtuous sister, Alithea, falls in love with Horner's friend, Harcourt, but is determined to remain true to her previous engagement to the foolishly complacent Sparkish, until a misunderstanding reveals his true nature.



# Production Team

Production Coordinator  
Set Construction  
Screen  
Stage Manager  
Assistant Stage Managers

Fly Floor  
Costumes  
Properties

Wigs and Hair  
Lighting  
Sound Operation  
Prompter  
Front of House Manager

Steve Fryatt  
Pete Sandles  
Gerry Armytage  
Chris Coates  
Steve Fryatt  
Dena Marsh  
John Kendell  
Pauline Ratcliffe  
Monica Brown,  
Denise Davies  
Jean Blundell  
Peter Waddicor  
David Wheatley  
Joyce King  
Robin Thornton

Designed and Directed  
by Malcolm Brown

Sword stick, ear trumpet and desk supplied by  
David Thirlwall

**Houlgate Village**

Murton Park, Murton, York, YO1 3UF

Telephone: 01904 489966



## Dramatis Personae

Mr. Horner	Rich Francis
Mr. Harcourt	Oliver Brierley
Mr. Dorilant	Leo Charlton
Mr. Pinchwife	Simon Twine
Mr. Sparkish	Ed Baxter
Sir Jasper Fidget	Martin Key
A Quack	Edwin Barraclough
Mrs. Margery Pinchwife	Ann Schutte
Mrs. Alithea, Pinchwife's sister	Amy Dutton
My Lady Fidget	Margaret Savage
Mrs. Dainty Fidget	Kathryn Francis
Mrs. Squeamish	Zoe Freedman
Old Lady Squeamish	Pauline Ashworth
Lucy, Alithea's maid	Joan Potter

**The Running time of this production is approximately  
two hours; there will be one interval of fifteen minutes during  
which the bar will be open**



## The Author

William Wycherley was born in 1640, the eldest son of a wealthy Shropshire family and was educated in France, at Oxford and in fashionable Restoration London where he became a friend of the Duke of Buckingham and a favourite of King Charles II. His first play, *Love in a Wood*, appeared in 1671, and was a great success. Shortly afterwards he began an affair with Lady Castlemaine, one of the king's mistresses.

"As King Charles was extremely fond of him upon account of his wit, some of the Royal Mistresses set no less value upon Those Parts in him, of which they were more proper judges."

Major Pack, 1728

Wycherley wrote three more plays: *The Gentleman Dancing Master* (1672), *The Country Wife* (1675) and *The Plain Dealer* (1676). In 1679 he was employed by the king as tutor to his illegitimate son, the Earl of Richmond, but a poorly concealed secret marriage in 1680 caused Charles to withdraw his favour, and when the lady died a year later, Wycherley was imprisoned for debt.

"As the catastrophe of all comedies is marriage, marriage was likewise the catastrophe of poor Wycherley's own comick scenes; for he married, and the rest of his life was a deep tragedy."

Mrs. Inchbald, 1806

He was released from prison in 1685, when King James II was impressed by a performance of *The Plain Dealer*, and retired to Shropshire until 1700, when he inherited his family estate and returned to London. In 1716, at the age of seventy-six, he married again to deprive a nephew of his inheritance, and eleven days later he died. He is buried in St. Paul's, Covent Garden.

**Malcolm Brown**



## Advertising & Sponsorship

Leeds Arts Centre is a member of the Leeds Civic Arts Guild, and is a registered charity and non-profit making organisation. We are currently looking for companies and organisations that would benefit from advertising in our programmes or sponsoring our productions.

To find out more, contact:

The Publicity Officer, Leeds Arts Centre  
c/o The Carriageworks  
Millennium Square, Leeds LS2 3AD  
or e-mail us at: [publicity@leedsartscentre.org.uk](mailto:publicity@leedsartscentre.org.uk)

The programme for this production was produced with the kind assistance of

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directed by Zoe Freedman