



[www.leedsartscentre.org.uk](http://www.leedsartscentre.org.uk)  
Registered Charity No. HS503872R

# The Dresser

by Ronald Harwood

Directed by Rich Francis

**Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> to Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> April 2010**





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)**



## **DIRECTORS NOTES**

I love the theatre. “The smell of the greasepaint...” what a boring old cliché - but when I open my old tin of Leichner face powder and take a sniff (I have been known to do it on spotting my make up box just sitting on the bookcase at home) I am transported backstage. I have flashbacks of the many plays and performances I have been involved in and with each one so many memories. The nervous tension, the mishaps, the stories that develop over time and that never fail to disappoint with reinterpretation and minor embellishment, the friendships. All of it comes flooding back.

I gained confidence through the theatre, I have laughed until I hurt in the theatre, the friendships I hold dearest were born in and around the theatre and I fell in love in the theatre.

That old tin of face powder was given to me by George Teale. Not a name that most of you will be familiar with. He was a wonderful character, an actor, a gentleman and a brilliant story-teller –sometimes the same story but always worth listening to. I suppose George could be referred to as ‘old school’.

The Dresser, set in 1942 features an actor–manager of that same old school. ‘Sir’ faces producing plays with a company made up of those not able to be called up to fight in WWII at a time when the theatre was in a state of flux. ‘Sir’ might be seen as the last of a dying breed whilst the rebellious Mr Oxenby illustrates where theatre was going as the profession came out of the war years.

On a more intimate and emotional level the play features each characters’ relationship with ‘Sir’. Tears, laughter, comedy, tragedy, pathos, humanity. All life is here. Each character and indeed everyone involved in the theatre, performers, backstage crew, audience, are all involved for their own possibly very personal reasons. ‘Sir’ bears the responsibility of giving everyone the part of him that they need whilst taking what he needs from them. Selfish maybe, at times even parasitic, or perhaps a symbiotic relationship, each living off each other but if the balance is wrong, something has to give.

I have thoroughly enjoyed introducing the period of the play through music and sounds of the time so listen out for Al Bowley, Billy Cotton, Anne Shelton, Spike Jones and his City Slickers and Arthur Askey.

We all hope you enjoy the show.

Rich Francis, Director



# Cast

Norman	Peter Sandles
Her Ladyship	Margaret Savage
Irene	Emily Feist
Madge	Kathryn Francis
Sir	Martin Key
Geoffrey Thornton	Edwin Barraclough
Oxenby	Nick Blackshaw
Kent	Will Rastall
Gloucester and other voices	Barry Green

**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.**



# Production Team

Director	Rich Francis
Production Manager	Emily Holloway
Prompt and assistant to the director	Debs Sandles
Stage Manager	Martyn Drake
Asst. Stage Manager	Pauline Ashworth
Set Construction	Steve Fryatt and LAC team
Properties Consultant	Pam Wilson and LAC team Doreen Parker
Costumes	Malcolm Brown, Joyce King, Hannah Boothman
Lighting	Carriageworks stage team
Sound recording	Rich Francis
Sound operation	Dominic Lehany
Front of House Mgr.	Zoe Freedman



## **SYNOPSIS**

Inspired by the memories of his years working as Donald Wolfit's dresser, Ronald Harwood's evocative, perceptive, funny and beautifully crafted portrait of backstage life is one of the most acclaimed dramas of modern theatre. In a war-torn, provincial theatre an ageing actor-manager, known to the loyal acting company as 'Sir', is struggling to keep a grip on his sanity and complete his two hundred and twenty seventh performance of King Lear. Thanks to the efforts of Hitler and the Nazi hoards, all the able-bodied actors are in uniform and bombs are destroying theatres across the country, but the show must go on. Ensuring that it does is Norman, Sir's devoted dresser, who for sixteen years has been there to fix his wig, massage his ego, remind him of his opening lines and provide the sound effects to the storm scene.

**“The most wonderful thing in life  
is to be remembered”**



## 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

Lewis Francis Blackburn Bray  
..... solicitors .....

14-16 Paradise Square Sheffield S1 2DE  
0114 272 9721

*Leeds Arts Centre would like to thank:-*

**THE ROBERT SALTER CHARITY** for their kind donation.  
*The Robert Salter Charity (No. 225866) provides the community in Pudsey with several Almshouses for use by elderly people.*

*and*

**RB Wig Creations of Nottingham**  
[www.rbwigcreations.com](http://www.rbwigcreations.com)

Our Director would like to thank Cheryl Francis for her assistance throughout this production.



## **Next Leeds Arts Centre Production**

Terence Rattigan's Twentieth Century Classic

# ***The Deep Blue Sea***

directed by David Lancaster

Wednesday 30 June to Saturday 3 July 2010

## **Forthcoming LAC Productions at the Carriageworks**

- |              |  |
|--------------|--|
| October 2010 | <b><i>Road</i></b><br>by Jim Cartwright<br>directed by Barry Green                     |
| January 2011 | <b><i>Kissing Sid James</i></b><br>by Robert Farquhar<br>directed by Pete Sandles      |
| April 2011   | <b><i>The Country Wife</i></b><br>by William Wycherley<br>directed by Malcolm Brown    |
| June 2011    | <b><i>The Girlfriend Experience</i></b><br>by Alecky Blyth<br>directed by Rob Sherwood |

The next Leeds Civic Arts Guild production at the Carriageworks

### **West Riding Opera**

### ***The Marriage of Figaro***

Wednesday 28 April – Saturday 1 May at 7pm

Sunday 2 May matinee at 3pm