

The Mitre Players present
Alan Bennett's

SINGLE SPIES



1st to 3rd November 2018
The Mitre Theatre, Trinity School

Chairman's Letter

Welcome to the Mitre Players' production of *Single Spies*. The two plays are quite a contrast to our last production, the large-scale musical *Me and My Girl* performed at the Minack Theatre in Cornwall, and will hopefully demonstrate our versatility.

Although we now live in a post-Soviet era, our current strained relationship with Russia arising from the words of Putin and the deeds very likely to have been carried out under his orders, including the poisonings on our soil, make the plays topical today.

The focus is on Guy Burgess's exile (*An Englishman Abroad*) and Anthony Blunt (The Surveyor of the Queen's Pictures) after his discovery as a spy but before his public exposure (*A Question of Attribution*). Both refuse easy condemnation, using the insider/outsider spy as metaphor to explore the nature of 'Englishness' and the ways in which a person, seen in different lights, might have either hidden depths or no depths at all.

Our grateful thanks go to Di Jones, whose focused direction of the actors, some of whom have had to learn a lot of words, has served us very well.

I thank you for supporting us and hope you enjoy a pleasant evening.

Alex Greenslade

Chairman, The Mitre Players

Our Christmas production

A festive mixture of sketches, drama & music



Wednesday 12th to Friday 14th December

TSSSC Clubhouse, CR2 9AS

Background to Single Spies

‘When sorrows come, they come not single spies but in battalions’:

HAMLET, William Shakespeare

First produced as a double bill in 1988, *Single Spies* began life at London’s National Theatre, before transferring successfully to the West End. It won considerable public and critical acclaim and was presented with the Best Comedy of the Year at the 1990 Comedy Awards.

For some, the background to both plays will be familiar, but to others it will seem like ancient history but there can be little doubt that the stories involved in the plays and the roles of the main characters are fascinating.

The Cambridge Spy Ring began to form in the 1930s; a group of highly intelligent undergraduates with strongly Marxist sympathies. Having made contacts in Moscow, as their careers progressed they contributed to the Communist cause by transmitting classified information from the Foreign Office and MI5.

Guy Burgess was well connected and before working for the Foreign Office he had worked at the BBC.

When one of the other members of the spy ring, Donald Maclean, was under suspicion for his spying activities, Burgess was called to help escort him from the UK – he never returned.

So it was that Maclean became the First Man in the spy ring and Burgess the Second Man. Close on their heels was

the Third Man, Kim Philby, regarded as the most successful Russian agent of them all. The Fourth Man was revealed years later as the Surveyor of the Queen’s Pictures, Sir Anthony Blunt. The Fifth Man has never been formally ‘uncovered’ but is believed to be John Cairncross.

MI5 discovered Blunt’s spying career in the early 1960s and Blunt confessed all, revealing to them others who had been involved. In return he received immunity from exposure and prosecution for 15 years. In 1979 Margaret Thatcher revealed the secret to the House of Commons.

Queen Elizabeth II stripped Blunt of his knighthood. He died of a heart attack in 1983, aged 75.

Alan Bennett was told the story of *An Englishman Abroad* by Coral Browne herself and this led to the film of the story being made in 1983 starring Coral Browne as herself and Alan Bates as Guy Burgess. The film was directed by John Schlesinger.

A Question of Attribution started life as the second play in the double bill before being made into a film with James Fox as Blunt and Prunella Scales as HMQ. The original stage production saw Simon Callow as Burgess and Chubb, Alan Bennett as Blunt and Prunella Scales as Coral Browne and HMQ.

The title of the double bill was suggested to Bennett by Simon Callow.



Director's Notes



Coral Browne told Alan Bennett about her visit to Burgess in Moscow and he wrote the play based on her account. During rehearsals we have explored the relationship between the actress and the defector. Bennett paints a picture of a pathetic character in contrast to the strong actress and we are left with a sense of sadness and regret.

During rehearsals for *A Question of Attribution*, we have wrestled with the connection of the painting of Titian and Blunt's betrayal. Bennett uses the investigation of the painting and Blunt's obsession with it to lead us to the Cambridge Spy Ring. Five men in the painting, three clearly seen and two in the shadows and the same for the spies. Burgess, Maclean and Philby, known to the world, but in the shadows, Blunt and a fifth man. Blunt was arrogant and thought himself a great actor, believing he was fooling the Royal Family. The Queen stripped him of his knighthood in the end. Bennett writes a wonderful

scene in which we are not sure if HMQ knows the truth and for a moment we see Blunt's mask slip.

While rehearsing these plays, two interesting articles have appeared in the press. The first, that the Prime Minister at the time of Blunt's deal of immunity, Sir Alec Douglas Home, was not told of Blunt's betrayal or the deal to keep his anonymity. The second was a comment by Simon Callow, who had been in the original production, celebrating 30 years this month. He had a conversation with Princess Margaret at the time of the production and asked her if the Royal Family knew about Blunt. She said she didn't think so, but the Queen Mother had always had her suspicions and didn't trust him.

I would just like to thank my brilliant cast and the hard-working backstage team for helping me bring these wonderful plays to the stage.

Di Jones, Director





Name Dropping

In both plays name dropping is commonplace. The following is a short reference guide to some of them.

Ernest Bevin: Union Leader and Labour Foreign Secretary. Died in 1951.

Sir Harold Nicholson: A diplomat, writer, diarist and Labour Politician. He married the writer Vita Sackville-West.

Cyril Connelly: Academic and writer and literary critic.

W.H. Auden: Highly regarded poet of the 20th Century – English but became a US citizen.

John Pope-Hennessy: Art historian and Museum Director (Director of the V&A) – shared a flat at some point with Burgess.

Christopher Isherwood: Writer (author of the semi-autobiographical novel on which *Cabaret* is based), professional collaborator and sometime lover of W.H. Auden.

Michael Redgrave: Head of acting dynasty, father of Vanessa, Lynn and Corin.

Kenneth Tynan: Influential and controversial English theatre critic and writer. An opponent of theatre censorship.

Arthur Marshall: Writer, raconteur and broadcaster – known for his appearances on *Call my Bluff*.

E.M. Forster: Novelist and author of *A Room with a View*, *Howard's End* and *Maurice*.

Paul Robeson: African American singer and actor – Supporter of communism.

Queen Mary: Wife of George V. Grandmother to Queen Elizabeth II. Prone to 'accumulating' objects.

Titian, Tiziano Vecelli or Tiziano Vecellio: (c. 1488/1490-1576) An Italian painter known in England as Titian, the most important member of the 16th century Venetian school.

Nicolas Poussin: (1594-1665) A leading painter of the French Baroque style, although he spent most of his working life in Rome.



SINGLE SPIES

Directed by Di Jones



An Englishman Abroad

Coral Browne Julia Gibbs
Guy Burgess Charles Marriott
Tolya Simon Long
Tailor Robert Critchett
Shop Assistant Andy Holton

The action of the play takes place in Burgess's flat in Moscow

Time - 1958

There will be an interval of 20 minutes. Drinks are available in the foyer

A Question of Attribution

Anthony Blunt Warwick Jones
Chubb Ian Brown
HMQ Julia Ascott
Phillips Chris Backway
The Restorer Fraser Macdonald
Colin Alfie Bird

The action of the play takes place in Anthony Blunt's room at the Courtauld Institute and in a corridor at Buckingham Palace.

Time - the late 1960s

The Mitre Players would like to thank: Lesley Bates, David Burn, Mario Sammutt, Gordon Ferguson, The Headmaster & Governors and staff of Trinity School.

The following classical images are copyright of The National Gallery, London.

Giovanni Bellini - The Agony in the Garden

Workshop of Titian - Venus and Adonis

Antonio del Pollaiuolo, Piero del Pollaiuolo - The Martyrdom of St Sebastian

Giannioula di Paolo - The Annunciation

Canaletto - Eton College

An amateur production, by arrangement with Samuel French Ltd.



BEHIND THE SCENES



Stage Manager and Construction

Alan Collins

Deputy Stage Manager

Derek Lee

Lighting Designer

Alan Bishop

Sound

James Mcleod

Costumes

Anna Warnock

Assisted by

Liz Dolman

Props

Sue Long

Projection Coordinator

Simon Long

Director's Assistant

Chris Backway

Backstage Assistance

Liz Dolman

Charles Marriott

Andy Thompson

Denver Watkins

Vicky Watkins

Scenic Artist

Jill Wilson

Prompter

Julie Cumbo

Programme

Alan Bishop

Anna Warnock

Box Office

Mike Lilley

Front of House and Refreshments

Alex Greenslade and
Friends of The Mitre Players

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Chrissy Amer, Lesley Bates, John Benstead, Katherine Bottomley, Chrissy Bright
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If you would like to become a Patron of The Mitre Players please log on to:

www.mitreplayers.org.uk

An Englishman Abroad - Meet the Cast

Robert Critchett: *Tailor*

Robert is about to mark 25 years since his first Mitre show, but he has only made occasional forays onto the stage. This is very different from *Dick Barton, Special Agent*, his last effort. He is very knowledgeable about suits, buying many on ebay, and enjoys dressing up in them and so is pleased to be appearing here as a tailor.

Julia Gibbs: *Coral Browne*

Julia is celebrating being in the Mitre fold for 40 years this year and has enjoyed every year! Four decades of rehearsing, writing newsletters, costumes, prompting, propping, painting, singing, dancing and making tea. Not all at the same time! The best thing though has been making lifelong friends and having a jolly good laugh, usually at our own expense! In fact Warwick Jones and Julia Ascott in tonight's cast were also in Julia's first show, *Idol Days*. 'We love it, We love it all!' is the Mitre motto or should that be 'amant enim et nos amamus illud'?

Andy Holton: *Shop Assistant*

Andy has always been a great fan of Tony Bennett's work. The words are always the most important thing to follow. Originally Andy was confused(!) that this play was called *Simple Spies*, but everything became clear in his mind when the Director told him to get 'smart'. Andy then realised that *An Englishman Abroad* must be a sequel to the spy series *Get Smart*, with Maxwell Smart resuming his battle with KAOS. However, the play reflects some very British aspects of spying in the Cold War. So Maxwell must be appearing in *A Question of Attribution*.
Gordon Bennett!

Simon Long: *Tolya*

Simon has been a member of the Mitre Players for over eight years, first appearing in *Catherine Howard* as Thomas Culpepper. There followed numerous musicals and plays, including most recently *Me & My Girl* at the gorgeous Minack Theatre, and he was The Ghost of Christmas Present in *Sherlock Holmes and the Case of the Christmas Carol* - possibly his favourite part. Now he is taking on his first (mostly) backstage role as the resident slide show arranger in *A Question of Attribution*, while also playing a small but meaningful role on stage as the delightful Tolya in *An Englishman Abroad*. Simon took a brief hiatus from acting to focus on his studies, but is now back with a passion!

Charles Marriott: *Guy Burgess*

Back in the 60s, Charles attended the renowned Arts Educational theatrical college and trained to be a professional actor. Despite his desire to become a successful actor, circumstances led him to follow in his father's footsteps and have a career behind the camera as a director/cameraman. Work was thin on the ground for young 'thesps' back then and the pressing need to pay the rent of £8.06d a week (pre-decimalisation) for his tiny flat in Bromley took priority. Skip forward some 48 years to the Mitre Theatre and he is treading the boards again, this time as Guy Burgess.

Our Summer tour: Apollo Theatre, Newport, Isle of Wight

BUGSY MALONE

To be performed by "Grown Ups"

Presentation Evening: Sunday 11th November at 8pm

Principal Auditions: Sunday 18th November at 8pm

Ensemble auditions are "to be arranged"

Croydon Performances: 16th to 19th July 2019

Isle of Wight Performances: 31st July to 3rd August 2019

Please join us on the 11th November to hear about this really exciting new venture (as a replacement to our tours to Dawlish). We have booked the fantastic Apollo Theatre, which meets our needs to a tee. We have also booked accommodation for the entire touring party - and possibly some extras - in a purpose built, modern luxury complex, complete with restaurant. Further details will be on our Facebook page and Website very soon.

A Question of Attribution - Meet the Cast

Julia Ascott: *HMQ*

Julia has been a Mitre Player for over 40 years starting in the children's chorus, aged 11. She has climbed several social classes since her last appearance on stage as Cockney landlady, Mrs Brown, in *Me and My Girl*. She thinks this is the first time she has ever played a real person who is still alive and has found the experience very challenging. She is not sure how much she has in common with Her Majesty the Queen – although she enjoys giving the orders and being in charge as her family will no doubt confirm! Like the Queen she claims to know very little about art and certainly has no talent in that department, although she has been let loose with a paintbrush in the past on Mitre Player sets – but only the bits that don't really show!

Chris Backway: *Phillips*

Chris has been a Mitre Player for as long as he can remember, and has loved being a part of their shows. From his first role as one of Davy Jones' pirates in *Peter Pan* to a tambourine-waving, skipping solicitor in *Me and My Girl* this year, *Single Spies* has proved to be one of his favourite productions in recent years. Filled with brilliant actors, you are in for a real treat tonight. Enjoy the play!!

Ian Brown: *Chubb*

As the autumn is always a busy time for Ian, he learned all his lines for Chubb whilst on holiday in the summer. What he hadn't anticipated, was being asked to play the role of Willie Mossop in *Hobson's Choice* for the Oxted Players in a production that took place two weeks before this one. So he has had a very busy autumn indeed, having more lines to learn and alternating between being a Salford bootmaker and an MI5 interrogator. Ian joined the Mitre Players in 1982 and loves it all. He is very pleased to be playing opposite Warwick Jones again having played Thomas Cromwell against Warwick's Thomas Moore in *A Man for all Seasons* last year.



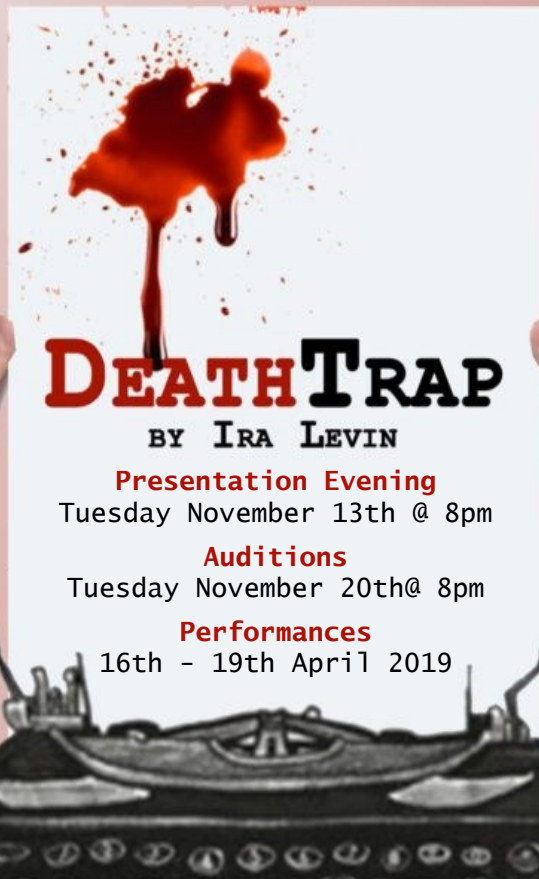
Warwick Jones: *Sir Anthony Blunt*

Urbane, sophisticated and cultured, the part of Blunt has presented an obvious challenge to Warwick. Old enough to remember the search for the third man, let alone the fourth or fifth, he has been politely described as 'seasoned'; he first appeared with the Mitres in 1974.

Fraser Macdonald: *The Restorer*

A Mitre Player for almost 40 years, Fraser returns to the stage in a minor role as The Restorer in *A Question of Attribution*. Having spent his life teaching Spanish amongst the 'Old Masters' at Trinity School, he finds himself on familiar ground. If he can get the clicking right, you might even see the pictures in the right order at the right time.

Our Spring 2019 Production



DEATH TRAP
BY IRA LEVIN

Presentation Evening
Tuesday November 13th @ 8pm

Auditions
Tuesday November 20th @ 8pm

Performances
16th - 19th April 2019



Officials

President	Al Kennedy
Past Presidents	Mark Bishop, Chris Tarrant, Robin Wilson
Vice-Presidents	Julia Ascott, Gillian Bartle, John Bartle, Alan Bishop, Ian Brown, Alan Collins, Julia Gibbs, Di Jones, Warwick Jones, Peter Stockwell, Andy Thompson, Martin Tyrrell, Anna Warnock, Colin Warnock

Current Committee

Chairman	Alex Greenslade
Secretary	Di Jones
Treasurer	Alan Bishop
Additional Members	Julia Ascott, Chris Backway, Megan Brown, Mike Lilley, Charles Marriott, Jo Morrison

Additional Contacts

Theatre Club Organiser	Colin Warnock
Membership Secretary	Julia Ascott
Box Office Number	07914 763422

The Mitre Players is the dramatic society for former pupils of Trinity School (The Trinity Mid-Whitgiftian Association). We are a very friendly and sociable society, presenting three or four productions a year in a wide variety of venues. Putting on a show not only requires people on stage, but also involves a great deal of hard work behind the scenes. We design, build and paint our own sets, find and make our own props, make many of our own costumes and use "in house" musicians whenever possible.

We would welcome any new members, so if you have any aspirations to act, sing, dance or play a musical instrument, we would like to hear from you. If you prefer to

remain out of the spotlight, building scenery, lighting, painting, making costumes, making props, doing 'Front of House' or simply would like to make tea for the team, we would still like to hear from you.

Most of our rehearsals take place at the TSSSC Clubhouse in Sanderstead. The bar facilities at the clubhouse lend a social and convivial atmosphere to our rehearsals and all members are encouraged to use the facilities at Sanderstead as often as possible.

If you would like more information, please contact our Membership Secretary, Julia Ascott on: 020 8239 1010 or visit our website at www.mitreplayers.org.uk