

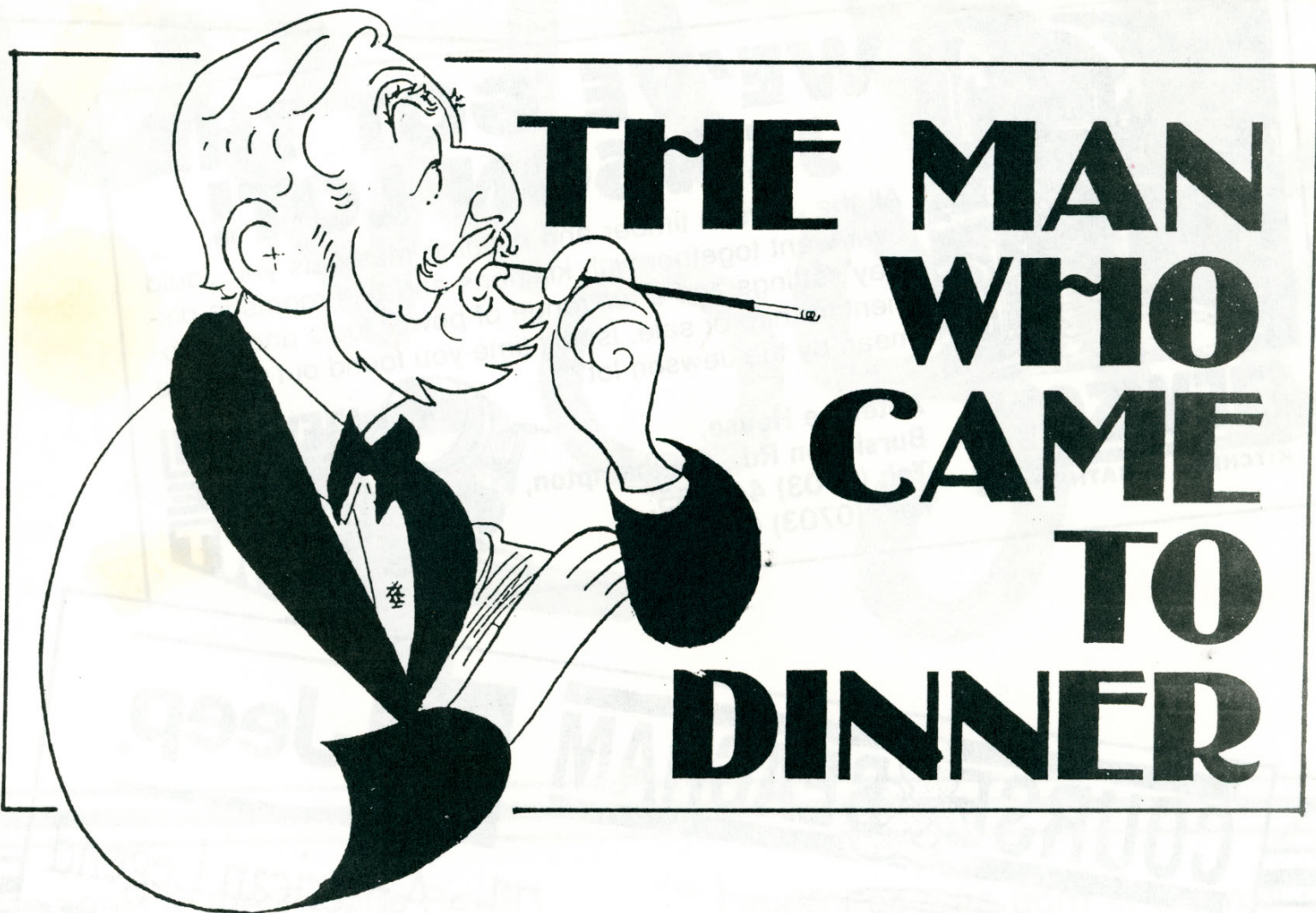
T H E A T R E
Royal
WINCHESTER

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**Moss Hart & George S. Kaufman's
Broadway Smash-Hit Comedy of 1939!**



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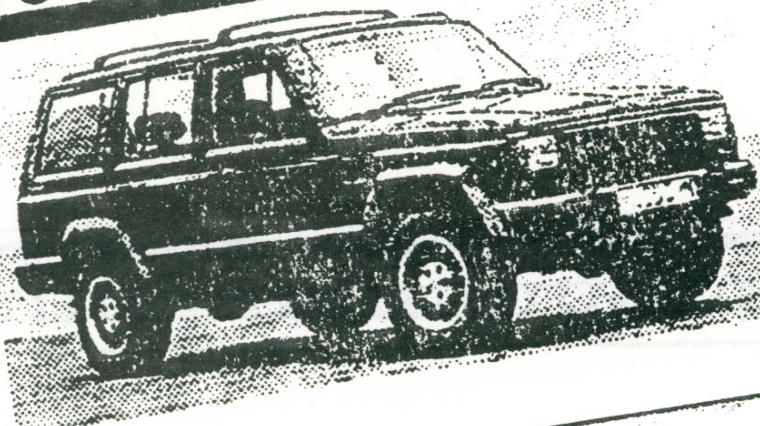
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CIDER WITH ROSIE

Welcome again to the Theatre Royal !
Between the giggles, smirks and belly laughs of "The Man Who Came To Dinner", you might like to spare a thought for those already working on our next offering which takes to the boards of the Nuffield Theatre, Southampton from 30th January to 3rd February - a new and exciting production of James Roose Evan's adaption of Laurie Lee's best selling novel.

Laurie Lee was born in a small Cotswold village during a time of change when the rural traditions of past centuries were being swept aside in the path of twentieth century progress.

As we head for the millenium The Maskers Theatre Company open a window on to a world which is now lost, where the fastest thing moving is the horse!.

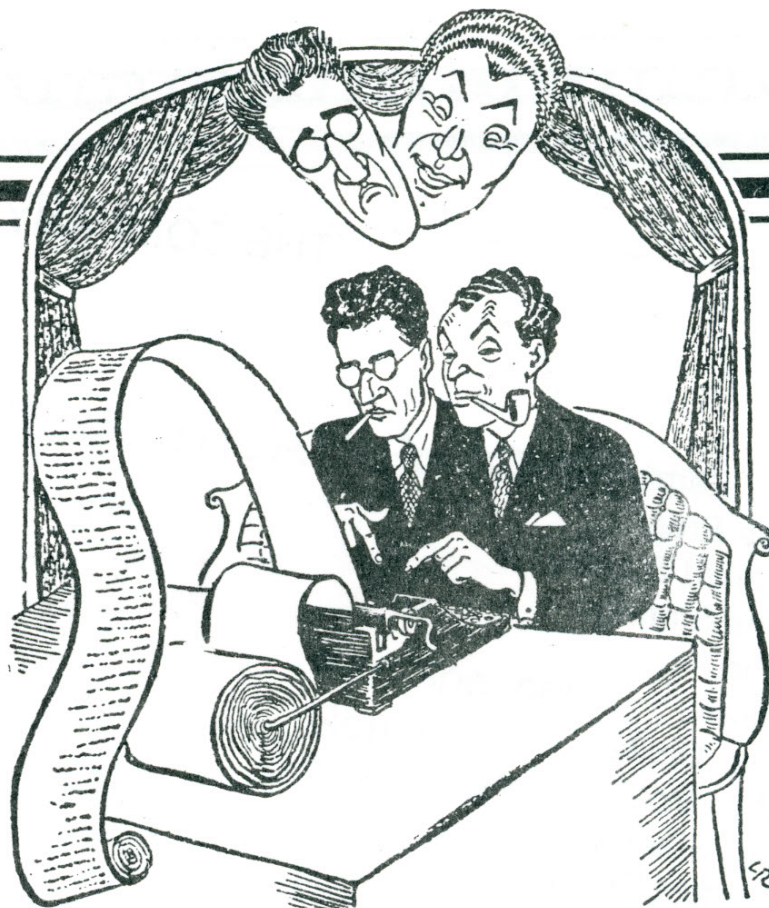
The play was first produced on October 16th 1939 on Broadway and ran for 739 performances. Like "You can't take it with you" it was one of the most successful of all the plays from the celebrated collaboration of Kaufman and Moss. It was later presented in the West End during the Second World War with Robert Morley in the lead role. A later film version was made starring Monty Wooley.

The central character in this play is one 'Sheridan Whiteside' who is based entirely on Alexander Woollcott, a well respected New York theatre critic, newspaper columnist, a most feared and relentless gossip and an accomplished raconteur. These qualities made Woolcott a radio personality and a leading member of the Algonquin Round Table. He became famous, wealthy and more ruthless and domineering than ever and was a frequent guest at the White House. Woolcott was also a regular visitor to Moss Hart's new Bucks County estate and apparently bullied the servants, condemned the food, invited guests of his own from Philadelphia to Sunday dinner and wrote in Hart's guest book "This is to certify that on my first visit to Moss Hart's house I had one of the most unpleasant times I ever spent".



He also suggested that Hart write a play in which he could star. Later when Hart was describing Woollcott's behaviour to Kaufman he commented "wouldn't it have been horrible if he had broken a leg or something and been on our hands the rest of the Summer?" The collaborators looked at each other with dawning light and took the cover off the typewriter.

The idea of setting up a group of disparate types in a confined setting and allowing them to react to each other was one which continually fascinated Kaufman. In the play 'Sheridan Whiteside' completely takes over the home of wealthy businessman 'Earnest W Stanley' following an enforced stay. We are introduced to such widely differing characters as 'Lorraine Sheldon' the movie star who is an amalgam of all the overpowering actresses of the day; 'Banjo' is recognisable as Harpo Marx and 'Beverley Carlton' a thinly disguised Noel Coward. Add to this a supporting cast that includes 'Professor Adolph Metz', the world's greatest authority on insect life, three convicts, their armed escort, several radio men, six choirboys, a crate of penguins and a colony of cockroaches.



Moss Hart (1904 - 1961) began his career as office boy to the impresario Augustus Pitou, to whom he sold his first play *The Beloved Bandit*. His second play, *Once in a Lifetime*, introduced him to George S Kaufman, with whom he was asked to collaborate on rewriting before the play was accepted and produced at the Music Box Theater in New York in 1930. With Kaufman, Hart went on to write over a dozen hit comedies, including *Merrily We Roll Along* (1934), The Pulitzer prize winning *You Can't Take It With You* (1936), *I'd Rather be Right* (1937), and *The Man Who Came To Dinner* (1939). Hart's solo works include *Face The Music* (1933), *Lady in The Dark* (1941), *Winged Victory* (1943), *Christopher Blake* (1946) and *Light Up The Sky* (1947).

Hart was a prodigious producer as well as a writer and in addition to some of his own plays he was responsible for *Dear Ruth* (1944), *Anniversary Waltz* (1954), *My Fair Lady* (both in New York, 1956, and London, 1958) and *Camelot* (1960). His autobiography *Act One*, covering his early life up to the opening of *Once in a Lifetime*, was published in 1959. He was married to the actress Kitty Carlisle and had two children.

George S Kaufman (1889 - 1961) moved swiftly from cub reporter on the New York Tribune to drama editor of the Times, contributing satirical pieces to other periodicals along the way. He had already written one play when he met Marc Connelly who became the first of his several collaborators: in a partnership lasting five years they had many hits including *Beggar on Horseback* (1942). Kaufman also worked with several of the writers who, like himself, were members of the famous Algonquin Round Table of wits: with Ring Lardner he wrote *June Moon* (1929), with Dorothy Parker *Business is Business* (1925), with Alexander Woollcott *The Channel Road*, and with Edna Ferber *The Royal Family* (1927), *Dinner at Eight* (1932), and *Stage Door* (1936). He also wrote for the Marx Brothers. His most fruitful collaboration, though, was that with Moss Hart, which lasted throughout the thirties and produced so many comedy successes.

Kaufman was an excellent Director and also an actor, appearing as Lawrence Vail, the playwright, in the original production of *Once in a Lifetime*. He was twice married, first to Beatrice Bacrow and then, after her death to Leueen MacGrath

THE COMPANY

Mrs. Earnest W. Stanley
Miss Preen
Richard Stanley
June Stanley
John
Sarah
Mrs. Dexter
Mrs. McCutcheon
Mr. Stanley
Maggie Cutler
Dr. Bradley
Sheridan Whiteside
Harriet Stanley
Bert Jefferson
Professor Metz
Mr. Baker
Luncheon Guests

Expressmen

Lorraine Sheldon
Sandy
Beverley Carlton
Westcott
Banjo
Radio Technicians

Choirboys

Hazel Burrows
Sarah Walker
Paul Riddell
Melanie McCoustra
Alan Watson
Christine Baker
Ann Frost
Sheana Carrington
Albie Minns
Belinda Drew
Harry Tuffill
Ken Spencer
Marion Westbury
Martin Humphrey
David Pike
James Portman
Peter Pitcher
Derek Burrows
Mohammad Ashraf
Peter Pitcher
David Allington
Jan Shrouder
Kevin Mitchell
Ben Odonhoe
James Portman
Graham Buchanan
Mohammad Ashraf
David Pike
William Carruthers
Richard Harrison
Richard Hutton
Sam Parker
Aelred Smuland
John Tew
Charles Wilson

Derek Burrows,
David Allington,
Philip Bell,
Thomas Gilbert,
Edward Horde,
Nicholas Martin,
Dominic Reynolds,
Geoffrey Stanning,
Alastair Tolley,

The Play is set in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Ernest W. Stanley, in the small town of Mesalia, Ohio during a December of the late nineteen thirties.

Act 1 Scene 1
 Scene 2

Act 2
Act 3

Mid - day: early December
Late afternoon: mid December
Christmas Eve: late afternoon
Christmas morning

There will be a 20 minute interval before Act 2

FOR THE MASKERS THEATRE COMPANY

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Stage Manager
Deputy Stage Manager
Set Construction

Lighting Design
Lighting Operation

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Andy Roberts
Ella Lockett
Polly Morris
Christine Baker
Ken Spencer, Harry Tuffill
Michael Pattison

The production directed by Tony Bull

The Maskers Theatre Company gratefully acknowledge the help and support they have received in the mounting of this production.

The Headmaster, Staff and Pupils of Pilgrim School, Winchester.
Kathy Elgin of the Royal Shakespeare Company.
Chichester Festival Theatre.
Mr. Sheridan Morley.
The Management and Staff, Theatre Royal, Winchester.
Highfield Antiques, Southampton.
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I am by trade a drama critic, and I happen to have been christened Sheridan: those who consider these things together, and precious few ever do, not unnaturally assume some vague link back to Richard Brinsley of that ilk. Not in fact. I was christened Sheridan purely and simply because I was born on 5 December 1941, which was the night my father opened at the Savoy Theatre in London as Sheridan Whiteside in *The Man Who Came to Dinner*. I flatter myself that precious few other drama critics have ever been named after a character in a Kaufman and Hart comedy, and I was I suppose fortunate that Robert hadn't just opened as Caliban instead.

But the Christian name I've lived with now, very happily, has also given me a near lifelong interest in the play. Kaufman and Hart have yet to acquire over here the classic status their work now enjoys, and rightly in America: together and apart they were the master craftsmen of Broadway from the 1930's well into the 1950's. Together they wrote nearly a dozen comedies (among them *Once In a Lifetime*, *You Can't Take it With You* and *The American Way*): separately, Moss Hart was the director responsible for getting *My Fair Lady* onto stage and the man who wrote the book for *Lady in The Dark*; George S Kaufman was the legendary play doctor and collaborator who scripted for the Marx Brothers (*A Night At The Opera*) and worked on more than 50 plays, half a dozen revues, a Pulitzer Prize winning musical (*Of Thee I Sing*) and some screenplays. Kaufman also wrote with Edna Ferber, Marc Connelly, John P. Marquand and others, and when he wasn't hovering around their typewriters he was rescuing other shows already in production: there's not much doubt, for instance that *The Front Page* owed it's initial Broadway success to his direction. Kaufman was the fixer, the plumber, the man you called in when you were on tour in Boston with an impossible last act: he was also an acidly funny man ('Watching your performance

from the back of the stalls', he once cabled the star of one of his own hit shows, 'wish you were here'). He couldn't bear to shake hands, was hypochondriacal to the point of lunacy, had an extremely active sex life (one which featured in Mary Astor's 'scandalous' diaries) and wasn't always worried about good taste: told of a Spanish restaurant fire in which many were killed trying to get out through a revolving door, it was Kaufman who said, 'You should never put all your Basques in one Exit'. He was also capable of the best one-liners in the business: 'This is Mr. Philips' said an ex-girlfriend once, introducing Kaufman to her new lover 'who is in Cotton'. 'And them that plants it' replied Kaufman 'is soon forgotten'.

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THE MAN WHO CAME TO DINNER

A New Comedy
By GEORGE S. KAUFMAN and MOSS HART

ROBERT MORLEY

CAMERON HALL RALPH ROBERTS

HUGH McDERMOTT

CONSTANCE LORNE VIOLA LYEL

MARY ALICE COLLINS

EDIE MARTIN LAURA SMITHSON

CORAL BROWNE

DAPHNE COURTNEY PETER de GREEFF

JERRY VERNG

SYDNEY BENSON ALEC FINLAYSON

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ADAH DICK DAVID LAING ISA BOWMAN

The Play Produced by **MARCEL VARNEL**

A founder (though inactive) editor of the New Yorker, Kaufman was a lifelong member of the Algonquin Round Table, and it was there that he and Hart found the man who was to be their inspiration for *The Man Who Came To Dinner*. In the year they wrote the comedy, 1939, Kaufman was fifty and Hart thirty-five; they'd already got six Broadway hits behind them as a team, and the success of this one got Kaufman onto the cover of Time, an honour then almost unheard of for a playwright. Hart always claimed that Kaufman was the teacher, he the pupil: but by the time of this script it seems fair to assume a more equal partnership and certainly both had known Alexander Woollcott, their model for Sheridan Whiteside, for a very long time. Another personal note here: because I was born on that London first night, and because Woollcott (who had already played himself on the stage in their West Coast production of *The Man Who Came To Dinner*) thoroughly approved of the casting, writing to a friend 'at long last I am being portrayed by a first class actor' which can't have much pleased the role's stage and screen originator, Monty Woolley, he agreed to Robert's suggestion that he might like to be my godfather.

Sadly, we never met: one day in January 1943, by which time I was all of 13 months, Woollcott went into a grocery store in New

York, ordered a large tin of biscuits to be posted to our home in Berkshire, went on to the CBS radio studios to do one of his celebrated coast to coast broadcasts, collapsed on the air and died a few hours later. I would much like to have known him: an irascible but by all accounts enthralling figure, he was himself a playwright, biographer, essayist, journalist, gossip and critic who at the time of his death was the most powerful literary huckster in America and within only three decades of it had become almost totally forgotten outside a small Broadway circle of friends and enemies.

A kind of pre-war amalgam of Kenneth Tynan and Cyril Connolly, Woollcott was a lifelong friend of (among many others) Harpo Marx and Dorothy Parker and Noel Coward, the latter of whom he christened 'Destiny's Tot'. Like Kaufman he was a member of the Algonquin Round Table; Woollcott was also an inveterate editor of anthologies, a publicist for a wide range of appallingly sentimental novels, and a compulsive letter - writer to the famous.



But he left little behind him except, indirectly of course, the posterity of this play and a large collection of the anthologies; Ross of the New Yorker, for whom he worked after starting as the youngest - ever drama critic on the New York Times back in the mid-1920's, always said he had 'the damnedest ability of making triple and even quadruple use of everything he wrote'. Woollcott was, in short, a hack of the very best kind; but Kaufman and Hart, Rebecca West, the Marx Brothers and the Lunts all acknowledged debts to him and that alone must suggest a certain catholicity of taste and talent. Chaplin dedicated *The Gold Rush* to Woollcott, who was also an early defender in print of Faulkner, Hemingway and Steinbeck: he was, in fact a man for all seasons, and for most people, at least some of the time. To suggest, as this play does, that he was little more than the American Gilbert Harding is in fact something of an insult, though one Woollcott bore with a reasonably good grace.

When Woollcott first heard over the Broadway grapevine that he was to be the

target and principal character of the new Kaufman and Hart comedy, and that such friends of his as Noel Coward and Harpo Marx were also to be caricatured in the show, he was less than delighted: 'It is quite untrue' he growled after the first triumphal performance 'that Sheridan Whiteside is patterned after me: the character is purely a composite of the better qualities of the play's two authors'. It needs also to be remembered, of course that in the format of a complex two hour farce Kaufman and Hart could scarcely do psychological justice to the strange, lonely, homosexual, multi-faceted nature of Woollcott's own existence. This is only a cartoon of him, and a brilliant one: it is only sad that the man himself left so little else for us to know or remember him by.

About the first production in this country: it ran for 709 performances at the Savoy with Robert in the title role and Coral Browne as Maggie Cutler (a role later played on film by Bette Davis). Though it was not, contrary to later belief, the role that made my father's name (he'd already played Oscar Wilde on stage and Louis XVI to the Mary Antoinette of Norma Shearer on screen) it was his first very long West End run and he later toured the production for ENSA. Agate wrote of 'an evening of brilliant fooling, the best entertainment that has come our way for a very long time' and the play, though rooted in an American small town, seems to have lived long in the English consciousness. For though the film was later turned into an even more disastrous Broadway musical called *Sherry* (with, if memory serves, George Sanders, though not for long) and though it had only in the interim had half a dozen minor rep revivals, when in 1961 George S Kaufman died a number of British papers headlined their obituary evocatively if misleadingly 'The Man Who Came To Dinner Is Dead'.

Sheridan Morley.

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