

***Present Laughter* by Noël Coward**

Synopsis

Written in 1939 and first staged in 1942 *Present Laughter* is the most autobiographical of Noël Coward's plays.

The leading role is Garry Essendine, a successful romantic actor who is clearly based on Coward himself. The play concerns itself with his entanglements with two women, Daphne and Joanna, who think they are in love with him, punctuated by the efforts of his friends, staff and long-suffering but separated wife, to disentangle him and get his life and himself on course for a visit to Africa. Things become even more complicated when a young playwright tries to interest him in his work. Eventually, matters resolve themselves and Garry and his wife apparently get back together.

Garry is the archetypical "Luvvie", a vain and self-centred man to whom "all the world's a stage" – and that includes his private life. He soaks up adulation like a sponge and is only concerned when events threaten his comfort or security. Like Coward was, he is surrounded by a cynical but faithful, close knit circle of servants and friends who are determined to save himself, and incidentally themselves, from destruction. They are aware that whatever goes on amongst themselves, the success of their careers and that of Garry depends on the status quo of "the firm" being preserved against outsiders and the play really sets out to show how they achieve this.

The Cast

Daphne Stillington	early 20s - gently-bred debutante, has a crush on Garry Essendine. She is the niece of Lady Saltburn.
Miss Erisson	40+ – vague-looking Swedish housekeeper and cook
Fred	30+ - valet to Garry Essendine – an affable working class butler
Monica Reed	40+ - a pleasant, rather austere woman. She is Garry's faithful, abused secretary of many years standing who cynically accepts whatever occurs
Garry Essendine	a self-obsessed leading actor who basically doesn't know when he's left the stage. Approaching 40 (or perhaps already older!) he's in the throws of his 'mid life crisis'
Liz Essendine	40+ - the voice of sanity and Garry's faithful and long-suffering wife. Liz handles the outrageous rantings of her husband and his infidelities through cold but effective putdowns
Roland Maule	20+ - an earnest young man and aspiring playwright who becomes creepily fascinated with Garry Essendine
Henry Lyppiatt	40+ - friend and business associate of Garry
Morris Dixon	30+ - friend and business associate of Garry who becomes entangled and obsessed with Joanna Lyppiatt
Joanna Lyppiatt	30 + - the man-eating, destructive wife of Henry, Garry's business associate, who sets out to seduce Garry and succeeds
Lady Saltburn	50+ - a majestic but rather effusive society woman

Please note that the ages shown are merely an indication.

Help Night	Monday 8 th February, Memorial Institute, 8:00 – 10:00pm
Auditions	Friday 12 th February, Rotherfield Village Hall, 7:30 – 10:00pm
Performance	Thursday 13 th May, Friday 14 th May and Saturday 15 th May 2010