



Quorum Theatre Company

Learning English Through Theatre

'Playing Mathilde'

by

Philip Ayckbourn

Director

Judi Armstrong Christie

TEACHING PACK 2012

GENERAL OVERVIEW OF THE PLAY

- From *"house telephone rings"* (P.5a) to *"Go! Hurry Tommy! Tommy.(P.7b)*

1. Who is calling Nina? What for?
2. How does Tommy behave while Nina is on the phone? Explain why he behaves in such a way. What sort of boy is he?
3. How does Nina react?
4. How long have Tommy and Nina been going out?
5. Who is arriving sooner than expected?
6. What does Nina ask Tommy to do?

- From *"Harold takes the bottle and sniffs it"* (P.8a) to *" Oh God" (P.9b)*

1. Why does Nina tell her father Madame Lapierre has arrived?
2. Who does Nina ask Tommy to pretend to be?
3. Explain Nina's plan.

- From *"She's not come down yet"* (P.9b) to *" Je suis tres bien aussi" (P.10b)*

1. Draw a portrait of Madame Lapierre based on what Nina says to her father,.
2. Why is Harold nervous?
3. What is Harold's opinion about French women?
4. What does Harold keep doing throughout his conversation with Nina?
5. Does Madame Lapierre speak English?
6. Describe what is happening upstairs.
7. Is Harold very good at French?

- From ***"Enter Tommy..."*** (P.10b) to ***"Tommy retrieves his bag"*** (P.14b)

1. What is Tommy like?
2. Describe Harold's reaction.
3. What is rather uncommon for a lady, which indeed surprises Harold? (quote two things)
4. What does Harold notice about Mathilde's perfume and dress?
5. What do you notice in the conversation between Nina and Tommy/Mathilde? Is Tommy at ease with the French language?
6. Why does Tommy/Mathilde fetch his bag and want to go home?

- From ***"Yes, but not just any woman Mathilde, I'm quite particular"*** (P.16b) to ***"I'm a MAN"*** (P.18a)

1. What does Harold expect of a woman?
2. What does Mathilde/Tommy suggest that Harold does?
3. Who does Mathilde remind Harold of?
4. Sum up Tommy and Nina's conversation.
5. What does Harold want from Mathilde? Does he manage to get it? What does he actually notice?

- From ***"Tommy pulls the knife from his bag"*** (P.18b) to ***"Dad, are you alright?"*** (P.19b)

1. Who does Tommy pretend to be?
2. What does he ask Harold?
3. What is Nina's reaction when she sees the situation?
4. What do Tommy and Nina blame Harold for?
5. Harold finds the situation rather strange. Why?
6. What does Tommy do before running away?

TRUE OR FALSE

[Circle the correct answer. If false, justify by quoting from the play]

1 Tommy has come to spend an evening with Nina.

True/False

2 Tommy and Nina have an argument.

True/False

3 Mandy is Nina's sister.

True/False

4 Tommy has brought a knife to go hunting.

True/False

5 The knife cost him twenty pounds.

True/False

VERBS - *In the context of the play.*

write the French equivalent beside these English verbs.

- | | | | | | |
|----|--------------|-------|----|-----------------|-------|
| 1 | to tidy | _____ | 11 | to postpone | _____ |
| 2 | to interfere | _____ | 12 | to pretend | _____ |
| 3 | to involve | _____ | 13 | to manage | _____ |
| 4 | to reward | _____ | 14 | to grieve | _____ |
| 5 | to run away | _____ | 15 | to remind | _____ |
| 6 | to dress up | _____ | 16 | to benefit from | _____ |
| 7 | to rob | _____ | 17 | to chase | _____ |
| 8 | to breathe | _____ | 18 | to break into | _____ |
| 9 | to step into | _____ | 19 | to argue | _____ |
| 10 | to pass away | _____ | 20 | to cheat | _____ |

NOUNS & ADVERBS

Find the French equivalent

- | | | | | | |
|----|----------------|-------|----|---------------|-------|
| 1 | excruciatingly | _____ | 11 | weightlifting | _____ |
| 2 | a mess | _____ | 12 | a scent | _____ |
| 3 | a tie | _____ | 13 | jewellery | _____ |
| 4 | hunting | _____ | 14 | a brain | _____ |
| 5 | a joint | _____ | 15 | an emergency | _____ |
| 6 | a drop | _____ | 16 | a witness | _____ |
| 7 | actually | _____ | 17 | a wallet | _____ |
| 8 | a label | _____ | 18 | bravery | _____ |
| 9 | stuff | _____ | 19 | balance | _____ |
| 10 | height | _____ | 20 | a tie | _____ |
| | | | 21 | rubbish | _____ |

PHONETIC CROSSWORD

The following crossword contains the diphthong [ei] as in / play /
 The answers to the clues can be found in the play text.
 There are two levels of difficulty.
 Try level A before level B and let's see how good you are!

LEVEL A

Clues Across

- 1 Alexander was known as this and the Wall of China too.
- 2 If you need to catch a train, then don't be or you'll miss it!
- 3 A blood vessel.
- 4 When you toss a coin in the air it either lands as 'heads' or '.....'.
- 5 A feeling of contempt.

Clues Down

- 6 To provide a substitute.
- 7 To make something understandable.
- 8 She was frightened. When I met here she was in a terrible
- 9 It is what you do when you are in a queue.
- 10 A piece of material often found inside a garment with washing instructions.

						2						3
			1	6								
						7			10			
	4											
							9					
						5						
8												

LEVEL B

Clues Across

- 1 Wonderful or fantastic.
- 2 Opposite of early.
- 3 It carries the blood through your body.
- 4 The prolonged extremity found at the back of most animals.
- 5 Opposite of love.

Clues Down

- 6 To take the place of.
- 7 To provide information on a particular subject.
- 8 There are 52 if these in America and Hawaii is one of them
- 9 If people are not on time, you sometimes have tofor them.
- 10 You write your address on this and then you attach it to your suitcase.

And now, even more difficult!

4 words in the crossword are homophonic with 4 others. Can you find them? Give their meaning?

**One is to do with cheese; another with fairies;
another with kilos: and finally another with someone's character.**

FINISH THESE SENTENCES BY FINDING ITS PARTNER.

1. Harold puts his tie on ... because the situation would be embarrassing
2. Mathilde Lapierre comes ... because the meeting has been cancelled.
3. Tommy has bought a knife ... because he wants to look younger.
4. Harold comes back ... because he's going out for the evening.
5. Nina does not wish to call the police... because he wants to hunt rabbits.
6. Harold takes his glasses off... because Nina's French needs improving.

MODAL VERBS

Find the value of these following modal verbs and translate them:

- | | |
|---|--------------------|
| a) If you CAN have a young woman (...) I CAN have a young man | INTERDICTION |
| b) I WILL meet Mme Lapierre on the four-thirty train | PERMISSION |
| c) You HAVE TO drink the whole glass | OBLIGATION |
| d) Dad MIGHT call again | POSSIBILITY |
| e) You SHOULDN'T drink, especially spirits | FUTURE |
| f) You MUST have a drink with me | ADVICE |
| g) You CAN'T do that | LITTLE PROBABILITY |
| h) Your wife WOULDN'T be happy | STRONG OBLIGATION |

WORD GRID

The following words can all be found in a theatre. Find them and circle them. They may appear horizontally, vertically or diagonally, forwards or backwards!

Cloakroom, Orchestra, Pit, Stage, Exit, Entrance, Bar, Booking Office, Stage Door, Curtain, Props, Wings, Dressing Rooms, Lights

C	L	O	A	A	B	F	B	A	R	E	D
U	L	I	G	H	T	S	O	A	C	C	R
R	D	O	R	C	H	E	O	E	F	N	E
T	S	T	A	G	E	G	K	H	I	A	S
A	T	J	A	K	L	L	I	G	H	R	S
I	A	M	R	N	R	O	N	P	Q	T	I
N	G	U	T	T	S	O	G	R	U	N	N
V	E	W	N	X	D	E	O	I	A	E	G
Y	D	R	E	S	S	I	F	M	O	T	R
Z	O	F	A	X	W	V	F	U	T	S	O
Q	O	U	E	S	G	N	I	W	T	R	O
P	R	X	O	P	I	T	C	N	R	M	M
I	I	G	H	O	I	J	E	K	U	L	S
T	I	P	A	R	T	S	E	H	C	R	O
F	E	O	R	P	D	C	B	W	I	N	A

GLOSSARY OF EXPRESSIONS AND PHRASES

My French is a bit rusty -
Make yourself at home -
My late wife -
999 -

GLOSSARY OF VERBS AND VERB CONSTRUCTIONS

To fire someone up about something -
To be responsible for something/someone -
To be nervous about something -
To (dis)approve of something -
To take after someone -
To be forward with someone -
To get away with -
To break into a house -
To call on someone -
To sort something out -

NOTES ON THE AUTHOR - Philip Ayckbourn

Philip Ayckbourn was born in 1961 in Burnham, Buckinghamshire. He comes from an artistic family and now lives in the north of London. His grandfather was a professional violinist and his grandmother a successful short story writer and journalist, his mother was a professional actress and his father is Sir Alan Ayckbourn, Britain's foremost present day playwright. Sir Alan Ayckbourn has written more plays than Shakespeare and in 1974 he had five plays running simultaneously in London's West End.

Philip as well as being a writer, spent 3 years training to become an actor at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art [RADA] in London, learning the art of acting and also increasing his skills in the writing and directing fields. He has directed and acted in a variety of plays but now focuses on writing and directing only. Philip met Judi Armstrong at RADA and after leaving the academy they decided to start their own company, performing Shakespearean plays in the parks of London. Quorum Theatre Company was established in 1998 and is now beginning its 14th season in France, performing mainly in Lycées and Collèges between Nice and Bordeaux.

AND ON A LIGHTER NOTE ...



Tongue Twisters!

Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled pepper. A peck of pickled pepper Peter Piper picked. If Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled pepper, where's the peck of pickled pepper Peter Piper picked.

She sells sea shells on the sea shore. The shells that she sells are sea shells I'm sure.

FAMOUS TRANSVESTITES IN FILM AND THEATRE

Travesti (literally "disguised") is a theatrical term referring to the portrayal of a character in an opera, play, ballet or film by a performer or actor of the opposite sex. For social reasons, female roles were played by boys or men in many early forms of theatre, and *travesti* roles continued to be used in several types of context even after actresses became accepted on the stage. The popular British theatrical form of the pantomime traditionally contains a role for a "principal boy", a breeches role played by a young woman, and also one or more pantomime dames, female comic roles played by men. Similarly, in the formerly popular genre of Victorian burlesque, there were usually one or more breeches roles.

Men in female roles

Until the late 17th century in Europe, women were conventionally portrayed by male actors (usually adolescents) in drag because the presence of actual women on stage was considered immoral. As a boy player, Alexander Cooke, is thought to have created many of Shakespeare's principal female roles. With the Restoration of the monarchy in 1660, women began to appear on the English stage, although some female roles continued to be played by boys and young men, including romantic leads. London's Shakespeare's Globe theatre, a modern reconstruction of the original Globe Theatre, continued the practice of casting men in female Shakespearean roles.

Castrati, adult males with a female singing voice (usually produced by castration before puberty), appeared in the earliest operas -initially in female roles. In the first performance of Monteverdi's *Orfeo* in 1607, the roles of Eurydice and Proserpina were both sung by castrati. However, by 1680 the castrati had become the predominant singers for leading male roles as well. The use of castrati for both male and female roles was particularly strong in the Papal states, where women were forbidden from public stage performances until the 19th century. An exception to this practice was in the 17th and 18th century French opera where it was traditional to use uncastrated male voices both for the hero and for malevolent female divinities and spirits, i.e. some of Lully or Rameau's operas.

Women in male roles

With the Restoration of Charles II in 1660 women started appearing on the English stage, both in the female roles that in Shakespeare's day had been portrayed by men and boys, and in male roles. It has been estimated that of the 375 plays produced in London between 1660 and 1700, nearly a quarter contained one or more roles for actresses dressed as men! Later, the famous actress Sarah Bernhardt created the role of Napoleon II of France in Edmond Rostand's *l'Aiglon* as well as playing *Lorenzino de Medici* in Musset's *Lorenzaccio*, *Pelléas* in Maeterlinck's *Pelléas et Mélisande* and perhaps most famously the title role in *Hamlet*.

The practice of women performing *en travesti* became increasingly common in the early 19th century as castrato singers went out of fashion and were replaced by mezzo-sopranos or contraltos in the young masculine roles. From 1830 to 1850, female ballet dancers were increasingly seen in the corps de ballet portraying matadors, hussars and cavaliers and even as the prima ballerina's 'leading man', a practice which was to last well into the 20th century in France.

Cross-dressing in plays or in films

Cross-dressing in motion pictures began in the early days of the silent films. Charlie Chaplin and Stan Laurel brought the tradition of female impersonation in the English music halls when they came to America with Fred Karno's comedy troupe in 1910. Both Chaplin and Laurel dressed as women in their films. The tradition has continued for many years, usually played for laughs. Only in recent years have there been dramatic films in which cross-dressing was included, possibly because of strict censorship of American films until the mid 1960s. One early exception was the murderer, a transvestite who wears frilly dresses and petticoats, in Alfred Hitchcock's British thriller *Murder!*

Examples of plays or movies that feature cross-dressing as a Central Plot element:

- ***As you like it***, the Shakespeare's play (from 1599 or 1600) but also the films based from the play (1936 and 2006)
- ***Sylvia Scarlett (1935)*** – Katherine Hepburn dresses as a boy for most of the movie; this is her first movie with Cary Grant.
- ***Some like it Hot (1959)*** – Tony Curtis and Jack Lemmon dress as women and join an all- girl band (with Marilyn Monroe) in order to hide from the mob.
- ***Psycho (1960)*** – Anthony Perkins is a killer who wears his dead mother's clothes.
- ***The Rocky Horror Picture Show (1975)*** – Tim Curry plays a self-proclaimed "sweet transvestite from transsexual, Transylvania.
- ***La Cage aux Folles (1978)*** – Features female impersonators.
- ***Tootsie (1982)*** – Dustin Hoffman becomes the female star of a television soap opera.
- ***Mrs Doubtfire (1993)*** – Robin Williams's character Daniel Hillard disguises himself as a woman so he can see his children.
- ***The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert (1994)*** – An offbeat comedy of three men traveling cross country, to perform a drag show in the

outback of Australia. Two of them are drag queens, while Bernadette is a post-operation male to female transsexual.

- ***Twelfth Night: Or What You Will (1996)*** – Based on the 1623 play *Twelfth Night* by William Shakespeare.
- ***Shakespeare in Love (1998)*** – Includes Shakespeare's use of female impersonators in his plays.

Examples of plays or movies that feature cross-dressing as a Minor Plot element:

- ***Kind Hearts and Coronets (1949)*** – Alec Guinness plays Lady Agatha D'Ascoyne.
- ***Robin Hood (1973)*** – Robin Hood and Little John dress as two elderly female fortune-tellers to rob Prince John's wagon.
- ***Monty Python's Life of Brian (1979)*** – Several "women" (actually portrayed by the all-male Python ensemble) disguise themselves as men in order to attend a stoning.
- ***Pee-Wee's Big Adventure (1985)*** – To disguise themselves from the police, Pee-Wee Herman and an escaped convict dress husband and wife, with Pee-Wee as the wife.
- ***Hair Spray (1988)*** – While not exactly a plot element, the role of Edna Turnblad has always been played by a man in drag, and was indeed written with that intention, most recently portrayed by John Travolta in the 2007 remake.

- ***Wild Wild West (1999)***- U.S. Marshal Artemus Gordon (Kevin Kline) disguises himself as a prostitute. Jim West (Will Smith) also appears as a belly dancer to rescue Artemus from antagonist Arliss Loveless (Kenneth Branagh)

- ***The Lord of The Ring: The Return of the King (2003)*** – Eowyn dresses as a soldier to be allowed to fight with the men.

- ***Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest 2006)*** – Elisabeth Swann dresses as a man so she can go to sea in pursuit of Will Turner.