

DON'T DRESS FOR DINNER

by Marc Camoletti, translated by Robin Hawdon

The Judi Dench Playhouse

13 - 21 May 2016

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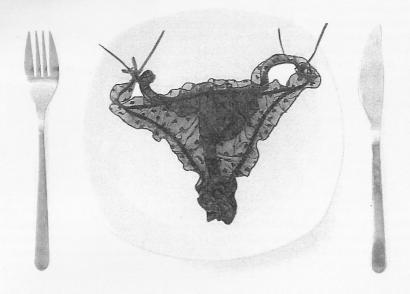


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Don't Dress for Dinner

Marc Camoletti was a French playwright of Italian ancestry, who over a long career wrote 40 comedies and farces. Born in 1923, he trained initially as a painter, but became involved in the Paris theatre scene in the 1950s as a translator and director. He turned to writing in 1958, when his first play, La Bonne Anna, opened and ran for 1,300 performances. Before that closed he had two more running simultaneously, including his most famous, Boeing-Boeing which opened in 1960 and ran for 19 years. It came to London in 1962, and ran for seven years in the West End. It has since been regularly performed all over the world, though it surprisingly flopped on Broadway, lasting only 23 performances in 1965. Nevertheless the Guinness Book of Records tells us that it is the most performed French play worldwide.



In the ensuing years Camoletti continued to write prolifically, staging hit after hit in Paris, and taking over the management of a theatre in which to present them. Surprisingly few of his subsequent plays are well known in England, but 25 years after *Boeing-Boeing* (in 1987) came *Pyjamas Pour Six* (literally, *Pyjamas for Six*): this is the play you are seeing tonight, adapted in English as *Don't Dress for Dinner*. It ran only two years in Paris, but opening in the West End in 1991 it ran for six. The credit for this may well have to go to the adapter Robin Hawdon, whose version is a fairly radical rewrite of the original.

Another of Camoletti's successes, not so much performed in this country, is one of his last plays, Sexe et Jalousie (literally Sex and Jealousy, but translated by Tudor Gates as Just Desserts or Ding Dong). An interesting "trademark" emerges when you read this play along with Boeing-Boeing and Don't Dress for Dinner. the central character is always called Bernard, his best friend is always Robert and his wife (or mistress) is always called Jacqueline (at least, in the original French: the women's names are changed in the standard English translation of Boeing-Boeing).

Marc Camoletti was an Associate of the Société Nationale des Beaux Arts and was honoured as a Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur. He died in 2003.

Comedy or Farce?

Don't Dress for Dinner is described in the published text as a comedy. But most people would probably call it a farce. Is there a difference?

Of course, both comedies and farces have the intention of making audiences laugh, and arguably a farce is just a type of comedy. But some comedies can be quite serious comedies. A farce is rarely serious. It is a form of theatre in its own right, and it's a very old one.

The defining characteristic of farce is that it is driven less by truthful characters or even credible plots, but rather by a series of events of astonishing improbability, leading the characters to behave in increasingly outrageous ways as they seek to extricate themselves from a situation of their own making, usually managing only to dig themselves deeper into a hole, before eventually achieving a miraculous resolution. On the realistic level we, the audience, cannot believe in it at all; but we willingly suspend our disbelief and share in the agonies of the characters, the ridiculous machinations of a plot we can hardly follow and the emotional chaos that flows from the distorted logic employed by the author. And laughing all the while. You will see that *Don't Dress for Dinner* fits that bill precisely. And so it is surely a farce.

Farce began with the satyr plays of the ancient Greeks and the Roman comedies of authors such as Plautus and Terence. It was hugely popular in the late middle ages until the Renaissance created an artistic environment in which tastes became more sophisticated. Nevertheless it is arguable that Shakespeare's *Comedy of Errors* could rightly be described as a farce, though the ending takes it plainly beyond that; and authors such as Molière in France and Carlo Goldoni in Italy kept the tradition going a little longer. The style was really revived in the 19th century in France, with authors such as Eugène Labiche who wrote over 100 farces. The genre was taken up around the turn of the 20th century by Georges Feydeau in France and Arthur Wing Pinero in England, Feydeau in particular giving us what we often now understand as "French Farce", which has all the qualities described in the previous paragraph, but almost invariably centres on the theme of marital infidelity and illicit sex. As does *Don't Dress for Dinner*, so that makes it a true French farce.

An English version of the tradition continued in the 20th century, when authors such as Ben Travers gave us a series of "Aldwych farces" (named after the theatre where they were produced), followed by Brian Rix who presented and acted in a series of farces at the Whitehall Theatre by authors such as John Chapman, Philip King and Ray Cooney, though with subject matter sometimes less overtly sexual.

Here are some farces that have been seen at The Questors over the years:

The Servant to Two Masters by Carlo Goldoni

An Italian Straw Hat and The Happiest of the Three by Eugène Labiche

A Flea in Her Ear, A Little Hotel on the Side and

Ding Dong (Le Dindon) by Georges Feydeau

The Magistrate and Dandy Dick by Arthur Wing Pinero London Assurance by Dion Boucicault Accidental Death of an Anarchist by Dario Fo What the Butler Saw and Loot by Joe Orton See How They Run by Philip King Run for Your Wife by Ray Cooney

DON'T DRESS FOR DINNER

by Marc Camoletti, adapted by Robin Hawdon

This amateur production of *Don't Dress for Dinner* is preserted by special arrangement with SAMUEL FRENCH, LTD.

First performance of this production at The Questors Theatre: 13 May 2016

CAST

in order of appearance

Bernard

Richard Graylin

Jacqueline

Nina Flitman

Robert

Joe Foster

Suzette

Holly Gillanders

Suzanne

Tamara Laryea

George

CJ

Setting:

Bernard & Jacqueline's weekend home,

some distance from Paris, 1990.

The performance lasts approximately two hours including a 15-minute interval.

Please turn off all mobile phones and similar electronic devices.

The use of cameras, video cameras and recording equipment is strictly prohibited.

Thank you.

PRODUCTION

Director Set Designer

Costume Designer

Lighting Designer Assoc. Lighting Designer

Sound Designer

Stage Manager

Deputy Stage Managers Assistant Stage Managers

Properties

Prompter

Fight Arranger
Dance Tutor

Lighting Operator

Sound Operators

Lighting Riggers/Focusers

Head Constructor
Construction

Scenic Artist

Modern Artwork

Get-In Crew

Photographer

Marketing Assistant
Thanks to

Carla Evans

David Emmet

Jenny Richardson

Chris Newall

Carole Swan

CJ

Steve Cowan

Jane Dwyer, Penny Seyfert

Evelina Plonyte,

Charlie Sloboda-Bolton, Fengfan Zhou

Grace Lindley, Roisin Tierney

Bridgett Strevens

Nicholas Jonne Wilson

Stephanie Pemberton

Carole Swan

CJ, Grace Lindley, Roisin Tierney

John Green, Alan N Smith,

Martin Stoner, Robert Walker

Steve Souchon

Alex Marker, Rob Willin

Dennis Dracup Sol Anwar

Klara Beckers, Julian Casey,

Biagina Cherubini, Shaan Latif-Shaikh

Robert Vass

Nina Flitman

Sue Collins, Paul Wilson

Biographies

Nina Flitman - Jacqueline

Nina has been a member of The Questors since summer 2011, when she appeared as Lavinia in *Titus Andronicus*. Since then, she has played Vivie in *Mrs Warren's Profession*, Sylvia in *The Pride*, Lady Chiltern in *An Ideal Husband* and Lady Macbeth in the RSC Open Stages production of *Macbeth*. She has also appeared in *The Flint Street Nativity* and *ENRON*, and in summer 2015 was part of the cast that took *She Stoops to Conquer* to The Minack Theatre in Cornwall. Nina edits The Questors' members' magazine, *QLife*, and is also part of the team that runs the theatre's social media output. When she has a spare moment, she is a senior editor on a financial publication.

Joe Foster - Robert

Joe started acting whilst studying at the University of Bradford and joined the oncampus theatre group. He discovered he loved it, and was slightly annoyed that he didn't attend a drama school instead. Around the same time as his graduation, he also performed in an original production at the J.B. Priestley where he played a sci-fi fanboy geek. After University he performed in various stage productions in his home city of Nottingham, at the Lace Market Theatre and the Arts Theatre. Joe performed in various productions such as *Dangerous Corner*, *Ladies' Day*, *Bouncers* and *Rebecca*. He enjoys acting immensely, and when he moved to Ealing to work in the film/TV industry (his other passion), he promptly joined The Questors as an actor. His first appearance was last year in *The Wonderful World of Dissocia*. Joe is also a videographer. Starting with the 2015 Panto and the 2016 production of *The Cripple of Inishmaan*, he produces video trailers/featurettes to promote Questors productions.

Holly Gillanders - Suzette

Holly joined The Questors in 2011 when she appeared as Gabriel in *The Flint Street Nativity*. Other productions at The Questors are *London Assurance* (Grace), *Calendar Girls* (Brenda/Elaine), *Engaged* (Minnie) *The Duchess of Malfi* (Cariola), *The Ruffian on the Stair* (Joyce) and most recently Becky in *The Village Bike*. She has also performed at The Questors in Crucial Image's productions of *Macbeth* (Witch/Lady MacDuff) and *Martin Chuzzlewit* (Mercy Pecknsiff). She participated in the 24-Hour Plays in 2012, 2013, 2014 and 2015, and performed with the Errors of Comedy. Roles at other venues include Rosalind in *As You Like It*, Irina in *Three Sisters*, Renee & Girl in Magazine in *M. Butterfly*, Ang in *Abigail's Party*, Jenny in *The Shape of Things*, Florinda in *The Rover*, Debbie in *The Good and Faithful Servant*, Amy in *Charley's Aunt* and Emily in *Whenever* at the Lace Market Theatre, in her home town of Nottingham.

Richard Graylin - Bernard

This is Richard's sixth appearance on a Questors stage after playing Frank Gardner in *Mrs Warren's Profession*, Philip in *The Pride*, Lord Goring in *An Ideal Husband*, Macbeth in *Macbeth* and Reverend Hale in *The Crucible*. As an undergraduate at Oxford, Richard appeared in numerous productions at the Oxford Playhouse (*The Miser, Henry V*), the Burton Taylor Studio (*The Lion in Winter*) and the Old Fire

Station Theatres (*Roberto Zucco*, *Edward II*, *The Blue Room*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Antigone*), as well as Shakespeare tours of the USA (*Twelfth Night*) and Japan (*The Taming of the Shrew*). After graduating from the Arts Educational Schools in Chiswick, he went on to appear in touring productions of *Much Ado About Nothing* (Claudio) and *The Tempest* (Stephano/Antonio) for the Young Shakespeare Company and *Around the World in 80 Days* for Vienna's English Theatre. He has also appeared in three seasons of pantomime around the country. His professional voice-over work ranges from being the resident voice of Harrods (2009-2013) to once providing the voice of a talking aspidistra plant for a Channel 4 documentary.

CJ - George and Sound Designer

CJ wandered into The Questors in February 2015, and immediately got involved in productions backstage. He made all the hot dogs for *The Wonderful World of Dissocia*, supported the Student Group in *Hands Across the Sea* and *The Young Idea*, learned to be a DSM on *Arms and the Man*, and very recently on *Twelfth Night*. He became an acting member in the summer and gave his first performance at The Questors (or indeed anywhere) as Sarah the Cook in our Christmas pantomime *Dick Whittington & His Cat*. This is his second show as an actor, and he's particularly looking forward to playing George as there are no frocks, wigs or Welsh accents involved. *Don't Dress for Dinner* is also his first show as a sound designer.

Tamara Laryea - Suzanne

Tamara was a member of Questors Youth Theatre and the Introductory Group (now Young Studio). Returning to The Questors after University, where she also acted in several productions, she joined Student Group 65, graduating in 2012 with performances in *Teechers*, *Doña Rosita the Spinster* and *Yerma*. Elsewhere she has played Nurse Ratched in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*. From 2012 to 2015 she trained at the Michael Howard Studios in New York, where she appeared in *Table Manners* (Sarah), *Five Women Wearing The Same Dress* (Mindy), *Dying City* (Kelly) and *An Evening of Hollywood Icons* (Josephine Baker, which she also wrote for a solo show). Returning to England and re-joining The Questors, *Don't Dress for Dinner* is Tamara's first performance as an acting member and her first piece of acting on English soil for four years.

If you've enjoyed Don't Dress for Dinner, come back in September to see

Boeing-Boeing by Marc Camoletti

1960s Paris: Bernard is a happy man, he's in love with a beautiful American air hostess called Gloria... and a beautiful Italian air hostess called Gabriella... and a beautiful German air hostess called Gretchen! He and his long-suffering housekeeper Bertha keep track of the comings and goings using airline timetables, but there's no accounting for cancelled flights, schedule changes or new faster aircraft. When Bernard's old friend Robert from the country comes to stay, and with a nasty storm brewing over the North Atlantic, Bernard's life goes from controlled arrivals and departures via a series of near-misses to a full-on plane crash.

David Emmet - Director

David trained as an actor in Student Group 28, but has directed more often than he has acted at The Questors. *Don't Dress for Dinner* is his 55th production, not counting assistant directorships and fringe shows. Other recent outings as a director were *The Wonderful World of Dissocia*, *The Pride*, *Mary Stuart* (which he also translated), *Night of the Soul*, *Titus Andronicus*, *Contractions*, *Three Sisters* and *Further Than the Furthest Thing*. David is also Director of Studies for the Student Group and teaches acting in the Foundation Year. He is also the Casting Adviser and has recently stepped up to take over as head of the Stage Management department. He was for 36 years tutor to Questors Youth Theatre Group 12, and has in the past been Artistic Director and Chairman of The Questors.

Carla Evans - Set Designer

Carla joined The Questors in 2013 and has since worked on over 15 productions as a costume maker, photographer, prop maker and set designer. Her more eccentric contributions include: Daisy the Cow for *Jack and the Beanstalk*, animatronic geese for *The Wolves of Willoughby Chase* and an Elizabethan dress for a man in *Dick Whittington & His Cat*.

Chris Newall - Lighting Designer

Chris first joined The Questors in 1968 and since 1997 has designed the lighting for more than 40 Questors productions, several Musical Theatre Summer Schools and a couple of RSC Showcases. In the last couple of years he has lit *The Duchess of Malfi* and *An Ideal Husband* in the Playhouse, and *The Pride*, *Rope*, *The Wonderful World of Dissocia* and *The Village Bike* in the Studio.

Jenny Richardson - Costume Designer

Jenny's first task on joining The Questors in 1980 was to make a six-foot telescope with eyelashes. After many years working in stage management, props and set design, she enjoyed a change of direction in costume design, recently for *The Pride*, *Macbeth*, *Equus*, *All My Sons*, *The Lying Kind* and *The Cripple of Inishmaan*. Jenny can also be found working in Box Office, and is frequently in demand as an upholsterer.

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