

Wild Goose Chase

by Derek Benfield

23rd January – 1st February 2020

I first started acting at school which is something of a family trait as I am the descendant of a vaudeville performer, a well-known pantomime dame who was a founder member of the Grand Order of Water Rats and knew Charlie Chaplin.

I joined the Geoffrey Whitworth theatre and even acted in the Duncan Rand One-Act Play Festival. However, most of my experience came with a drama group founded by my mother where I acted, playing such roles as Beverly in *Abigail's Party*, Ruth in *Blithe Spirit*, and Patricia in *Wild Goose Chase*! I also got my opportunity to direct whilst there but then life got in the way and it wasn't until I joined MLT just a few years ago that I found out how much I still enjoyed acting although most of my time is spent in the very important role of dispensing tea, coffee and ice cream in intervals!

I will be honest: I was really surprised, and thrilled, to have been asked to direct a play this season and it has been really good fun. The large cast and I have squeezed into tiny, cold rehearsal rooms to perfect, hopefully, the timing that will bring this funny, fast-paced farce to life for you.

Farce in the winter takes me back to sitting with the family on Boxing Day, watching the Whitehall Farce with Brian Rix. I recall there was always mistaken identity, underpants, doors and a good chase to make me laugh so I hope this offering brings the same smile to you!

I am indebted to my hardworking cast and also the unsung heroes of every production, our talented backstage team of set builders, painters, technicians and indeed the entire crew who help bring our plays to life.

Cazz Wrate, Director

He wrote his first play in his early twenties, the family comedy *Young at Heart* which opened at the Preston Hippodrome and toured to many of the UK's repertory theatres. He wrote around 25 full-length plays including *Caught on the Hop*, *Bedside Manners*, a box office hit which starred John Inman and ran in the West End for over a year, and *Beyond a Joke*, a similar success starring Arthur Lowe. His plays were very popular in many parts of Europe including 1982's *Touch and Go* which, in a translation, enjoyed an 18-month run in Paris. The play is often revived in Europe and a new Greek translation proved a hit in Athens in 2011.

Wild Goose Chase opened at the New Theatre, Hull, on 28 June 1954 and in October that year transferred to the Embassy Theatre in Swiss Cottage, now part of the Central School of Speech & Drama campus, where it enjoyed a long, successful run. The play, along with its sequel, *Post Horn Gallop*, continues to prove extremely popular especially amongst amateur companies. Our youth company presented *Wild Goose Chase* in the spring of 2003 as part of our 45th season in a production directed by Hazel Charlesworth.

Derek Benfield once said, 'My family are delighted with my success as a playwright, as it helps to prop up my tottering career as an actor!' He died on 10 March 2009 in Esher, Surrey, on the eve of his 83rd birthday, following a long illness.

Paul Tomkies, January 2020

Coming Next

YOUTH COMPANY PRODUCTION

13th – 15th February 2020

CHILDREN'S WORKSHOP PRODUCTION

6th – 7th March 2020

WHEN THE WIND BLOWS

by Raymond Briggs

2nd – 11th April 2020

Tragicomic play about love and nuclear war, based on the film by the writer of *The Snowman*. Set in the 80s under the shadow of the bomb, Jim and Hilda Bloggs do their best to follow official government advice to protect themselves and survive the coming tribulation. This two-hander is set entirely in the Bloggs' country cottage over the bucolic days before and in the aftermath of the nuclear apocalypse.

Medway Little Theatre Needs You!

Our theatre produces several shows a year and we always welcome new members, whether they are interested in acting, stage managing, set building, working lights and sound, or any of the dozens of other jobs needed to produce live theatre. If you are interested in moving from seat to stage, please ask our front of house team or bar staff for information on how to join, or just turn up at one of our social nights, held every Tuesday evening in between show runs. The next one is Tuesday 4th February.

This amateur production of *Wild Goose Chase* is presented by special arrangement with Samuel French, Ltd. a Concord Theatricals company

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23rd January - 1st February
Doors 7pm
Show 7.30pm

256 High Street, Rochester

01634 400322

www.mlt.org.uk

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