The Finborough Theatre is now fully heated and air-conditioned

Rediscoveries 2012 Season
February to April 2012

Part of the Finborough Theatre's
Celebrating British Music Theatre series

Evergreen Theatrical Productions Ltd in association with Neil McPherson for the Finborough Theatre presents

Ivor Novello’s

GAY’S THE WORD
The Happiest Musical of the Year!

Music and Book by Ivor Novello
Lyrics by Alan Melville
An adapted version by special permission of Samuel French Ltd on behalf of the Ivor Novello Trustees
Book revised by Richard Stirling.

Starring Sheila White and Helena Blackman
and featuring Doreen Hermitage, Ryan Hurst, Eileen Page, Myra Sands, Elizabeth Seal and Paul Slack.

The Finborough Theatre’s acclaimed ‘Celebrating British Music Theatre’ series follows its sell-out success Perchance to Dream with Ivor Novello’s last and wittiest musical. Gay’s the Word opens a strictly limited run of six Sunday and Monday performances on Sunday, 5 February 2012 (Press Night: Monday, 6 February 2012 at 7.30pm). This is the first professional revival of the 1951 smash hit, in which Dame Cicely Courtneidge created a sensation.

Novello sends up his own Ruritanian extravagances in this backstage musical comedy. Former stage star Gay Daventry opens a drama school and finds that what is needed to get her back on top is, to name the show’s hit song, Vitality!

Other numbers include If Only He’d Looked My Way (subsequently recorded by Frank Sinatra), Bees Are Buzzin’ and the enchanting On Such A Night As This, all combining Novello’s melodic talent with Alan Melville’s sharp wit.

Welsh-born composer, author and actor Ivor Novello (1893-1951) was one of the most eminent British entertainers of the last century. His West End musicals include Glamorous Night, The Dancing Years and King’s Rhapsody; his most popular songs include Keep the Home Fires Burning, And Her Mother Came Too, My Dearest Dear and the perennial We’ll Gather Lilacs. As an actor, he was Britain’s first major male film star, appearing in over 20 silent features including Alfred Hitchcock’s classic The Lodger. As a West End matinee idol, he appeared in many of his own plays and musicals. The Ivor Novello Awards, honouring excellence in British music writing, were established in 1955 in his memory.

118 Finborough Road, London SW10 9ED Telephone 020 7244 7439
E-mail admin@finboroughtheatre.co.uk www.finboroughtheatre.co.uk Artistic Director Neil McPherson

The Finborough Theatre is managed by The Steam Industry. Registered in England and Wales as a company limited by guarantee, no. 3448268. Registered Charity no. 1071304. Registered address: 118 Finborough Road, London SW10 9ED. A member of the Independent Theatre Council.
Alan Melville (1910-1983) was one of the most popular playwrights and lyricists of the postwar years, and later a television personality. His sketches and lyrics featured in many West End revues, including *Sweet and Low*, *Sweeter and Lower* and *Sweetest and Lowest*, which together ran for almost 2,000 performances. His long-running plays include *Dear Charles*, *Castle in the Air* and *Simon and Laura* (later filmed with Peter Finch and Kay Kendall).

Helena Blackman trained at the Guildford School of Acting and is known best for her appearances on *How Do You Solve a Problem like Maria?* (BBC). Her credits include Gertrude Lawrence in *Noël and Gertie* (OffWestEnd.com Award nomination), Lily/Rose in *The Secret Garden* (West Yorkshire Playhouse), Helen in the West End premiere of Sondheim’s *Saturday Night* (Arts Theatre), Nellie Forbush in the UK No 1 tour of *South Pacific* (TMA Award nomination), the title role in *Gypsy* (Cardiff Millennium Centre) and Dorothy in *The Wizard of Oz* (Leicester Haymarket Theatre). In concert and on radio, Helena's solo performances include *Howard Goodall's 20th Century Musical Greats* (Channel 4), *Night of 1000 Voices* (Royal Albert Hall), *Friday Night Is Music Night* (BBC Radio 2), *The Alan Titchmarsh Show* (ITV), *Maria Meets Joseph* (BBC), *In Tune* and *The Elaine Paige Show*. Television appearances include *Any Dream Will Do*, *Strictly Come Dancing* and *It Takes Two* (BBC). Helena’s debut album *The Sound of Rodgers and Hammerstein* was released to critical acclaim in 2011. As well as co-starring in *Gay’s the Word*, she is also touring the UK with her debut show *Journey to The Past*, performing songs from animated movies. [www.helenablackman.com](http://www.helenablackman.com)

Doreen Hermitage appeared as Belle Watling in the original musical production of *Gone with the Wind* (Theatre Royal, Drury Lane) and in the award-winning revival of *On Your Toes* (Palace Theatre). She was a very popular performer at The Players’ Theatre and appeared often on *The Good Old Days* (BBC). Her film credits include *Little Shop of Horrors*.

Ryan Hurst is best known for his long-running television appearances as Karl in *Emmerdale* and dastardly James Dyer in the cult Anglo-Polish series *Londynzycy / Londoners*. His theatre credits include Waldo in *Paul Joey*, *Roy in A Small Family Business* and Ernest in *Confusions* (all at Chichester Festival Theatre), and he was Principal Dancer for three years in *Striking a Balance* for Derek Deane (English National Ballet).

Eileen Page has numerous stage, television and film credits, including Emilia in *The Winter’s Tale*, Lady Capulet in *Romeo and Juliet* and the Duchess of Gloucester in *Richard II* (Royal Shakespeare Company) and *A Long Day’s Journey into Night* (National Theatre). In the West End, Eileen has appeared as the Duchess in *Me and My Girl* (Adelphi Theatre), Heidi Schiller in *Follies* (Shaftsbury Theatre) and *They Shoot Horses, Don’t They?* and *Henry VII* (both at the Mermaid Theatre). On television, Eileen has appeared in numerous dramas, comedies and series. Her film credits include *The Secret Garden* and *The Killing of Sister George*, and she has just finished filming *John Carter of Mars*.

Myra Sands has many popular West End credits including *Oliver!* (Theatre Royal, Drury Lane), *Gigi* and *The Boy Friend* (Regents Park Open Air Theatre), Miss Willoughby in *Acorn Antiques* (Theatre Royal, Haymarket), *Summerfolk*, *Honk!* and *Candide* (all for the National Theatre), Madame Thenardier in *Les Misérables* and long-running appearances as Jenny Anydots in *Cats* (New London Theatre) and Miss Lynch in *Grease* (Dominion Theatre). Her television roles include Mrs Horowitz in *Love Hurts* (BBC).

Elizabeth Seal launched her career in the original cast of *Gay’s the Word* (Saville Theatre) before achieving stardom as Gladys in *The Pajama Game* and Lola in *Damn Yankees* (both at the London Coliseum) and in the title role of *Irma la Douce*, directed by Peter Brook. Recreating the role on Broadway, she won the 1961 Tony Award for Best Actress in a Musical, beating Julie Andrews, Carol Channing and Nancy Walker. She later took over the role of Roxie in the original West End production of *Chicago*. Other West End shows include *Tennessee Williams’ Camino Real* and Julian Slade’s *Salad Days*. Her film credits include *Radio Cab Murder*, *Town on Trial* and *Lara Croft: Tomb Raider*.

Paul Slack is currently touring his critically acclaimed solo play *Phoenix Rising* (about DH Lawrence) and has appeared with the Royal Shakespeare Company and at the Royal Court Theatre, Hampstead Theatre, in the West End including *Breaking the Code*, and Chichester Festival Theatre. His film credits include *Love Actually* and *Bright Young Things*.

Sheila White returns to the theatre with *Gay’s the Word*. She has appeared in numerous films, stage and television productions. On television, she is perhaps best known as Sharon's birth mother in *EastEnders* and the wicked Messalina in *I, Claudius*, which was an award-winning worldwide hit. Sheila has also appeared in *Casualty*, *Framed* and *Poldark*. She also had her own series *Dear Mother, Love Albert*. Sheila played Bet in the Oscar-winning film musical version of *Oliver!* and went on to appear opposite David Essex in *Silver Dream Racer*, as well as *Mrs Brown, You’ve Got a Lovely Daughter*, *Here We Go Round the Mulberry Bush*, *Villain*, *Alfie Darling*, *Confessions of a Window Cleaner* and *The Spaceman*.

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Press Information

King Arthur. In the West End, Sheila was Olivier Award nominated for her role in Little Me opposite Russ Abbott (Prince of Wales Theatre) and also starred in On the Level, Dames At Sea, They're Playing Our Song and as Mary Pickford in The Biograph Girl (Phoenix Theatre).

Stewart Nicholls has directed and choreographed numerous productions, including Robinson Crusoe, Sleeping Beauty and Jack and the Beanstalk (Hall for Cornwall), Hetty Feinstein’s Wedding Anniversary (New End Theatre), Lunch with Marlene and Noël (UK tour), I Love a Piano (world tour), Big Bruvva and Faith Brown and her Boys in the Buff (Edinburgh Festival), Over My Shoulder (Wyndhams Theatre and tour), Beatlemania (Gothenburg Opera House, Sweden), South Pacific (Birmingham Symphony Hall), Into Thin Air (New Players Theatre), Carousel (St David’s Hall, Cardiff) and Love Songs (Bridewell Theatre). Choreography includes Cowardy Custard (2011 UK tour), Noël and Gertie (Cockpit Theatre), Cinderella (Hall for Cornwall), Kelly Brook’s tap-routine for the film In the Mood and Tim Rice’s revival of Blondel (Pleasance Theatre). Stewart has directed and choreographed many shows for GSA Conservatoire. He is a leading archivist of British musical theatre, directing and choreographing ten Forgotten British Musicals at the Theatre Museum, including Noël Coward’s Sail Away (his restored version is published by Warner/Chappell Music) and The Amazons, for which he also co-produced the Grammy Award-nominated CD. He has also written sleeve notes for various CDs and the editorial for four volumes of music books entitled Legendary Ladies of Broadway. www.stewartnicholls.co.uk

Richard Stirling wrote the 2007 Sunday Times top ten bestseller Julie Andrews: An Intimate Biography as well as Love From Ivor (a tribute to Novello, which played to capacity at the Linbury Theatre ROH Covent Garden and the Lincoln Center New York) and Over My Shoulder, the musical tribute to 1930s film star Jessie Matthews. As an actor, he has appeared on film and television and the West End, regional and American stage. He trained at RADA.

The Celebrating British Music Theatre series at the Finborough Theatre

In 2006, the Finborough Theatre began the Celebrating British Music Theatre series with a sell-out production of Leslie Stuart’s Florodora. Productions since then have included sell-out rediscoveries of Lionel Monckton’s Our Miss Gibbs, Harold Fraser-Simson’s operetta The Maid of the Mountains, A “Gilbert and Sullivan” Double Bill featuring Gilbert’s play Sweethearts and Sullivan’s opera The Zoo, Dame Ethel Smyth’s opera The Boatswain’s Mate, Sandy Wilson’s The Buccaneer, Oscar Asche’s Chu Chin Chow, Leslie Bricusse and Anthony Newley’s The Roar of the Greasepaint – The Smell of the Crowd and Ivor Novello’s Perchance to Dream.

PRESS NIGHT: MONDAY, 6 FEBRUARY 2012 AT 7.30PM
PHOTOCALL: BY ARRANGEMENT. PLEASE EMAIL admin@finboroughtheatre.co.uk

Finborough Theatre, The Finborough, 118 Finborough Road, London SW10 9ED
Box Office 0844 847 1652. www.finboroughtheatre.co.uk
Sundays and Mondays, 5, 6, 12, 13, 19, 20 February 2012
Evenings at 7.30pm
Tickets £18, £15 concessions

For more information, interviews and images, please contact
Neil McPherson on e-mail admin@finboroughtheatre.co.uk or 07977 173135
Download press releases and images at http://www.finboroughtheatre.co.uk/press-resources.php

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