



Fallen Angels

by
Noël Coward

Know-the-Show Audience Guide

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In *This Guide*

– The Life of Noël Coward.....	2
– A Man with Style.....	4
– <i>Fallen Angels: An Introduction</i>	5
– Who’s Who in <i>Fallen Angels</i>	7
– Quotable: From the Letters and Diaries of Noël Coward.....	8
– Explore Online: Links.....	9
– <i>Fallen Angels: A Production History</i>	10
– Women at the Turn of the Century.....	12
– Commentary and Criticism.....	13
– Interview with the Director.....	14
– In This Production.....	16
– The Music of Noël Coward.....	17
– From the French.....	18
– Sources and Further Reading.....	19



The Life Of Noël Coward

Noël Peirce Coward was born on December 16, 1899, in Teddington, England. His parents, Arthur and Violet Veitch Coward, were not wealthy: his father was an unsuccessful piano salesman. His mother gave him his name because of the close proximity of his birthday to Christmas.

Violet took young Noël to the theatre as often as possible. After seeing a show he was frequently able to play the greater part of the musical score from memory on the family piano. As a child, Noël had a lisp which forced him to develop his trademark clipped, staccato speech to mask it. At the age of six, he started working as a child actor. Charles Hawtrey had seen Noël perform and instantly recognized his potential. Hawtrey recruited him for a production of *The Great Name* and used him again in 1911 in the premiere of *Where the Rainbow Ends*, which became such a popular show that it was revived every year at Christmas-time for 40 years. Noël returned for three of those years and learned stagecraft and playwriting from Hawtrey.

Coward did not receive a very traditional education. At one point, his mother became concerned about how much time he

was spending away from school because of the theatre, and at an auditorium-style psychic performance by fortune-teller Anna Eva Fay, Mrs. Coward asked for advice on the upbringing of her son. Miss Fay replied, "Mrs. Coward, Mrs. Coward. You asked me about your son. Keep him where he is. He has a great talent and will have a wonderful career." Violet never questioned his path again. While in Manchester with a young touring company, Noël and his co-stars were forced by law to attend school. Noël announced to the teacher that he had no intention of answering any questions and if he should be punished in any way he would go back to London. From that moment on he sat in the back of the classroom reading whatever book he chose. A lifetime of reading and keen observation made up for his lack of formal education.

In 1921, at the age of 22, Coward left England and went to New York City. He arrived with very little money and just before the theatres closed for the hot summer. His hope of selling his plays to American theatre companies fell



Noel Coward as a teenager, ca. 1914 (Source: Wikimedia Commons).



Noël Coward in 1972, in a picture taken for his last Christmas card. Photograph by Allan Warren (Source: Wikimedia Commons).

through immediately. He was broke, hungry, and lonely. After surviving the summer on meager means, he managed to sell two short stories, "I'll Leave It To You" and "The Young Idea," for \$500 each. He used this money to improve his situation and pay

back his debts to those who had helped him through the summer. It was at this time that he cemented long-lasting and life-changing friendships with Lynn Fontanne and Alfred Lunt. One evening over dinner, the three friends predicted they would all become international superstars of equal magnitude and they prophesied that Coward would write the perfect play in which all three of them would star. This self-prophecy, like the fortune-teller's pronouncement, would come true – though not for another twelve years, when Coward's play *Design for Living* provided the opportunity of which he and the Lunts had dreamed.

On his 25th birthday, Coward's first big hit, *The Vortex*, premiered in London's West End. Shortly after opening this show, two more – *Fallen Angels* and *On With the Dance* – were up and running in the West End. This was the beginning of the high degree of celebrity that Coward enjoyed for the rest of his life. Until his death on March 3, 1973, Noël Coward continued to work as a dramatist, actor, writer, composer, lyricist, and painter. He wrote over 140 plays and hundreds of songs. Three years before he died, he was knighted by Queen Elizabeth II.

DID YOU KNOW?

- 1) Noël Coward worked undercover for British Intelligence during WWII.
- 2) Coward was offered, and turned down, the role of Dr. No in Ian Fleming's *Dr. No*, a James Bond film starring Sean Connery.
- 3) Coward started the turtleneck fashion fad of the 1920s.

A Man with style



A 1932 portrait of Noël Coward by Edward Steichen (Source: Whitney Museum).

Noël Coward is known for a very distinct style in both his writing and his personality. His work explores many social issues but also epitomizes glamorous living through the structure, language, and content of his plays.

Similar to Oscar Wilde before him, Coward makes heavy use of paradox. He first draws the audience in with charm and humor, and then reveals the foibles or hypocrisies in the characters that have won our affection. Clever use of language is key to Coward's development of character. Always eloquent, his characters often use biting wit to mask their emotional states. Strategic use of song and music also helps dictate the tempo and mood of individual scenes, and Coward's precise writing guides the actors

through intense psychological and often comic minefields.

In the early to mid-20th century, when Coward began writing, English comedy was characterized by a stereotypical English repression. Coward, however, attacked taboo subjects. While Coward explored heterosexual relations overtly, he commented on homosexual orientation in more subtle ways – enough to spark the attention of the new generation without explicitly offending the older generation. The word “gay” had not yet become synonymous with “homosexual,” and, according to scholar Alan Sinfield, Coward used this to his advantage: “*stretching* [the word’s] connotations—almost playing on the fact that there [was] *not* a specific homosexual implication.” His songs also dealt with homosexuality via seemingly innocent lyrics, as Coward reveled in the misunderstanding of a large portion of his audience who did not read between the lines.

Coward's plays, with their unique and sophisticated veneer, are as much social commentary as they are entertainment. By ending his plays with a sense of life continuing after the curtain has descended, Coward leads the audience members to question societal norms in their own lives. By confronting social conventions in this way, Coward did not endear himself to everyone. But as he once wrote, “I write what I wish to write—later the world can decide [what to think about it] if it wishes to. There will always be a few people, anyway, in every generation, who will find my work entertaining and true.”

Fallen Angels: An Introduction

Fallen Angels was written early in Noël Coward's career, when he was only twenty-four years old. Charming, witty, and highly entertaining, the play explodes social codes without engaging in the disillusionment of Coward's later work.

Fallen Angels is the delightfully provocative and frank story of two close female friends and what happens when an old flame is rekindled in the midst of happy but complacent marriages.

On the morning that Julia Sterroll's husband, Fred, is leaving London for a two-day golf trip in the countryside with his best friend, Willy Banbury, Julia has a presentiment that "something damnable" is about to happen. Like a good husband, Fred tries to alleviate Julia of such a notion, only to find out that after five "divine" years of marriage, his wife feels that the passion has gone out of their relationship – although she is very happy and content in their now more mature stage of marriage. At the same time, we find that Julia's best friend and Willy's wife,

Jane, has had a similar foreboding that morning.

Shortly after Fred and Willy depart, Jane rushes down from her apartment two floors up in hysterics about a postcard she has just received. The postcard is from Maurice Duclos, a man both women had known intimately before they married. Maurice has planned a visit to London and is set to arrive that week. Just the thought of him sends Julia and Jane into a whirlwind of emotions. They desperately want to be faithful wives, but

remembering the passion they once felt for Maurice doesn't make that desire easy. Knowing that once they see him they will be helpless against his Parisian charm, they must decide whether to wait for him or to turn tail and run.



Julie Jesneck as Julia and Melissa Miller as Jane in the 2013 Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey production of *Fallen Angels*.

Ultimately, giving over to their wild side, Julia and Jane wait with great anticipation for the arrival of the alluring Frenchman. In an attempt to be "caught unaware" in "charming domestic surroundings," they set a table for two but refuse to eat until

they think he's arriving. This imminent appearance is uncertain at best, and the two friends end up at odds with each other when a drink to calm their nerves turns into numerous drinks. Inebriated, frustrated, and jealous, the ladies end up having a cat fight, with Jane storming out claiming she knows exactly



where Maurice is, and that she is leaving Julia to be with him.

The next morning, Julia, hung over and in a very bad mood, is surprised by Willy who, after having also had an argument with Fred the night before, has left him in the countryside and is now looking for his wife. She is not in their apartment. This news alarms Julia and she is now convinced that Jane was with Maurice last night. In anger, Julia decides to tell Willy about their premarital affairs. At first, Willy has trouble even believing that his wife is capable of such a thing, but, once convinced, he proceeds to blame Julia for Jane's "shameful" behavior. They soon leave to find Jane – Willy to rescue her and Julia to tell her *exactly* what she thinks of her.

In their absence, Saunders, the maid, answers the telephone. It's Maurice. She takes his message. Fred arrives home, thinking he has secretly escaped and left Willy behind. Jane, still in her clothes from the previous night, walks in on Fred playing the piano. Seeing that Julia is gone, and finding Maurice's name written on the pad next to the telephone, she deduces that Julia and Maurice have run off together. She decides to tell Fred all about their love affair with the Frenchman. As Fred is trying to force Jane to accompany him in search of his wife, Willy and Julia walk in to the apartment. Fred and Willy are just about to hear the truth from their wives when Maurice enters. Maurice saves the ladies by concocting a story that his appearance is part of a plot laid long ago to rekindle the passion that the two

marriages have been missing. Relieved, Willy and Fred are left believing that their wives are merely old friends of Maurice and are helping him decorate his new apartment: located fortuitously on the floor in between each of the two couples' apartments.



Fay Bainter and Estelle Winwood in the 1927 New York premiere of *Fallen Angels* (Source: New York Public Library).



Fallen Angels: Who's Who

JULIA STERROLL – Julia has been married to Fred for five years; seven years ago she had an affair with Maurice Duclos in Pisa.

JANE BANBURY – Jane has been married to Willy for five years and is best friends with Julia; seven years ago, she *also* had an affair with Maurice Duclos, in Venice.

FREDERICK STERROLL (FRED) – Julia's husband.

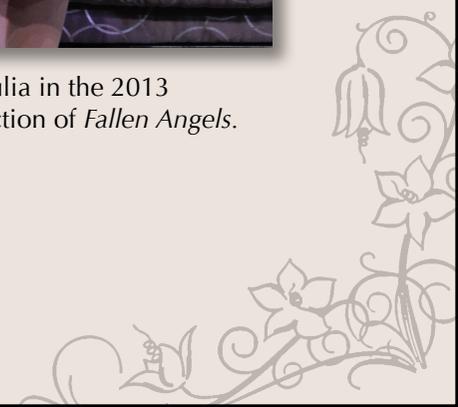
WILLIAM BANBURY (WILLY) – Jane's husband.

MAURICE DUCLOS – a Frenchman who had separate affairs with both Jane and Julia seven years ago and is coming to visit them in London.

SAUNDERS – servant of the Sterrolls; her first name is Jasmin, but they address her as Saunders.



Ned Noyes as Willy and Julie Jesneck as Julia in the 2013 Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey production of *Fallen Angels*.



Quotable:

THE LETTERS & DIARIES OF NOËL COWARD

25 November 1926 (letter)

...I find on close reflection that I am as unmoved by failure as I am by success which is a *great* comfort. Perhaps *Fallen Angels* will go better and if it doesn't I don't really mind. I like *writing* the plays anyhow and if people don't like them that's their loss. I hope you won't be depressed about it because I'm really as bright as a button. I always get bored anyhow if everything isn't a smashing success immediately!

23 November 1949 (diary)

Caught the twelve o'clock train for Plymouth with Graham. Met by Charles and Ham. Drinks and dinner at the Grand Hotel. They all assured me that I would be pleasantly surprised at the show and that, although Baddeley and Gingold overplayed a little here and there, they were really good. We went to the theatre, and I have never yet in my long experience seen a more vulgar, silly, unfunny, disgraceful performance. *Fumed Oak* was indescribable. *Fallen Angels* almost worse. Gingold at moments showed signs that she could be funny. Baddeley was disgusting. Afterwards I told them exactly what I thought, flew at Peter Daubeny and finally insisted on *Fumed Oak* being cut out entirely. Charles utterly wretched, and serve him right.

After this fragrant little evening, I returned to London.

19 December 1949 (diary)

Lovely day. Shopping in Port Maria. Letters from home. *Fallen Angels* a terrific success. Livid.

22 January 1956 (diary)

...In the evening Marlene, Graham and I dined at Sardi's and went to see *Fallen Angels* which, strange to say, is a hit. Nancy Walker, who has had rave notices, is, I must admit, hilariously funny. She is frequently outrageous but never vulgar as Hermione Baddeley was. The play got considerably lost in the process but I recognized a few of my lines here and there. The audience rolled in the aisles, and everyone was delighted.

ABOUT THESE PASSAGES

Noël Coward's wit and personality shine through his many letters and diary entries. The passages given here are ones in which Coward discusses various productions of *Fallen Angels*. The letter is addressed to his mother, Violet.



Explore Online

Investigate the New York Public Library's extensive collection of Coward papers, photographs, videos, and more through their web exhibit: <http://exhibitions.nypl.org/NoelCoward/index.html>



Watch an interview with Ronald Neame, who brought several Noël Coward plays to the silver screen:

http://www.oscars.org/video/watch/ev_coward_neame_01.html



Browse the Noël Coward Society website, which features information, a gallery, blog, and list of additional resources:

<http://www.noelcoward.net/>



Fallen Angels: A Production History

Fallen Angels was first performed in 1925 at the Gielgud Theatre in London. The play horrified some critics, who considered it an immoral attack on the virtue of British women. They found the sight of two women drinking themselves into a stupor particularly offensive. In spite of, or perhaps in part because of, the reviews, the play proved popular with audiences.

Fallen Angels had its U.S. premiere at the 49th Street Theatre on Broadway in 1927. Directed by Guthrie McClintic, it was not considered a success and ran for only a month.

In 1949, Hermione Baddeley and Hermione Gingold co-starred in a production of *Fallen Angels* in London that Coward considered “vulgar.” He later described Baddeley’s style as “cheap, exterior acting.” Despite Coward’s disdain for the performances of both Hermiones, critics praised them while dismissing the play itself. In his diary, Coward commented: “How idiotic critics can be.”

In 1956, Charles Bowden, an American theatre manager, approached Coward about a revival of *Fallen Angels*. Coward

agreed to the production, and wrote in his diary: “It’s an old play and if it’s a flop it doesn’t matter much and if it’s a success, which it might be, so much the better.” For this production Coward re-visited the script and made extensive changes, primarily expanding the part of Saunders. The production was quite successful, and Coward described Nancy Walker’s Julia as “hilariously funny,” praising her as being “outrageous” but not “vulgar.”

In more recent years, there have been several well-received revivals, but most productions have only succeeded in conveying the frivolous humor of the play and failed to bring out its deeper musings. Because of this, theatre critics have often felt that this is one of Coward’s lesser works, and only the best productions have managed to affect audiences on more than a superficial level.



Fay Bainter as Julia and Estelle Winwood as Jane in the 1927 production of *Fallen Angels* (Source: New York Public Library).



In 1980, Stephen Hollis directed *Fallen Angels* at the Roundabout Theatre Company, a production that *The New York Times* described as “a jolly curiosity” and “so light that it almost seems to float right out of the theatre.” Despite praising the “agile direction,” reviewer Frank Rich still felt that it was “one of Coward’s worst plays,” due to what he perceived as superficial writing.

In contrast, Michael Rudman’s 2000 production at the Apollo Theater led one critic to comment that he was “baffled by the play’s low reputation in Coward’s canon.” Reviews of the production commented on Rudman’s ability to bring out every



Loren Lester, Katie MacNicol, Elijah Alexander, Pamela J. Gray, and Mike Ryan in Pasadena Playhouse’s 2013 production of *Fallen Angels* (Source: Pasadena Playhouse).

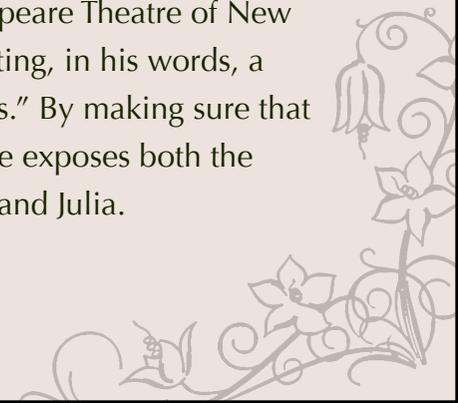
ounce of humor in *Fallen Angels* by playing Jane and Julia as completely unaware of their own ridiculous behavior.

Two more recent productions have both received many positive reviews, in part because both were able to bring out the depth in the play without sacrificing its humor.

In one of these two recent productions, Brian Bedford’s *Fallen Angels* at the Stratford Shakespeare Festival in 2005, the representation of Saunders as much more worldly and intelligent than her two “superiors” helped focus on the play’s portrayal of class differences and the shallow self-absorption of the upper class.

Art Manke’s production at the Pasadena Playhouse earlier this year focused much more on the dynamics of marriage and relationships. Manke stated that in his approach, “The play really looks at the evolution of love in a marriage, and how it matures and grows in different ways over the course of time, and how important trust is to maintaining a good relationship.”

In this current production at The Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey, Matthew Arbour focuses on creating, in his words, a “genuine crisis, even if it’s a comic crisis.” By making sure that every moment is emotionally truthful, he exposes both the humor and the very real stakes for Jane and Julia.



Women

At the Turn of the Century

The 1925 premiere of *Fallen Angels* shocked the more prim and proper elements of society, outraged as much by the spectacle of two ladies getting drunk on stage as by the focus on sexual matters. Although in some circles the 1920s were a time of looser or more liberated standards for women (think flappers and suffragettes), many still held to a value system known as the Cult of Domesticity.

Before the Industrial Revolution, women's roles were largely well-defined. Women were in charge of the domestic chores: making bread, butter, cloth, and other essentials for the family. When mass production made household goods readily available at affordable prices, women could now purchase them with money earned by their working husbands. No longer did the majority of their time consist of domestic labor.

With this increased free time, women's roles began to change. In such an industrious culture, women were expected to beautify the home, volunteer in the community, and act in accordance with the values espoused by the Bible. This was the beginning

of the Cult of Domesticity, a loosely-defined movement that was guided and sustained by women's magazines and books, as well as by religious figures and even "scientific" studies. This "cult" required women to embody the following virtues:

Piety – piety was encouraged because religious studies didn't pull the woman away from the home and family in the way intellectual studies did.

Sexual purity – a woman's virginity was her most valuable treasure and she was expected to maintain it until her wedding night.

Submissiveness – women were supposed to be as "obedient as children" due to their supposed inferiority to men.

Domesticity – an umbrella term used to describe a variety of things related to housework, child care, and home arts.



An 1871 illustration, "Family Devotion," shows a husband at his studies and his wife caring for the children (Source: Library of Congress).

The women's suffrage movement challenged the Cult of Domesticity, and feminists

were routinely disparaged as "unnatural" and "unfeminine." When women finally won the right to vote in 1920, the Cult of Domesticity was in decline, but it rose again in the 1950's as television resurrected its values by portraying the "ideal" family as a working father, stay-at-home mother, and several kids. Nowadays we celebrate many different kinds of families, though certain conservative ideas about the place and role of women persist.

Commentary & Criticism

CHILDLIKE ADULTS: “Coward writes characters who are tremendously needy. They are children dressed up as adults. Their behavior is appalling. And that’s the hook. They behave the way we wish we could. Beautifully dressed, knowing perfectly well how they should behave, they stride into a room blissfully unaware of the seismic danger ahead.”

– William Brown, Indiana Repertory Theatre director’s notes (2012)

A SLIGHT PLAY: “...Mr. Coward has a pretty talent, but a slight one. “Fallen Angels” is no exception to the rule that if the prettiness does not win the slightness will. For two acts of facile dialogue, well oiled with cocktails, champagne and liqueurs, the prettiness almost prevails. But in the last act of explanations all round the slightness conquers even the sly, ingratiating acting of Fay Bainter and Estelle Winwood in the leading parts.”

– J. Brooks Atkinson, *New York Times* (1923)

SEX AND DRAMA: “Rocks are infinitely more dangerous when they are submerged, and the sluggish waves of false sentiment and

hypocrisy have been washing over reality far too long already in the art of this country. Sex being the most important factor of human nature is naturally, and always will be, the fundamental root of good drama, and the well-meaning but slightly muddled zealots who are trying to banish sex from the stage will find on calmer reflection that they are bumptiously attempting a *volte-face* which could only successfully be achieved by the Almighty...”

– Noël Coward, upon the publication of *Fallen Angels*

WOMEN IN A MAN’S WORLD: “The play is a celebration of women. Julia and Jane are attractive, witty, and clever enough to reconcile their wild oats with their duty. If social convention would not allow women to play the men’s games aboveboard, they simply invent their own rules along with a justification... Even Saunders, the housemaid, seems to have discovered that the way to make the best of a man’s world is to become exasperatingly self-contained.”

– Felicia Hardison Londré, in *Words at Play*

CO-HABITATION: “[Many Coward plays are] about a group of people who find it impossible to live apart but equally impossible to live together...”.

– Sheridan Morley, in *Noël Coward*

Interview

with the Director

Matthew Arbour, director of the current production of Fallen Angels at The Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey, spoke with our dramaturgy intern about the appeal of the show, the rehearsal process, and more. Read below for this exclusive inside look.

Q: What about *Fallen Angels* initially appealed to you?

A: The thing that appealed to me immediately about it was that in reading it the first time I was struck by how young it felt. There's this really exuberant kind of youthfulness in it and there's a real kind of delight. I feel that I can imagine him smiling and laughing as he wrote it. I feel like "this is a guy who is really enjoying writing this." And the two women he's created in Jane and Julia are super charming and delightful as gals, but there's also a certain kind of innocence about them that I also find really, really appealing.

Q: What, to you, is this play about? What is the most important thing to know about it?

A: I guess the literal thing it's about is adultery, but it's also about yearning... it's about how to keep an intimate relationship fresh. It's also about how, if you're a proper English girl and you're properly married and you're a little bored, how can you figure out a way to have a little bit of the French in your life? That's

really what it's about. Coward almost seems to say, "Wouldn't it be cool if you could have a great marriage and have a fabulous French lover too?" And he almost seems to answer the question in the play with some kind of cheeky version of "Well, sure."

Q: So what was your concept behind the design elements of the show?

A: This play was written in 1923, first produced in 1925, kind of in the aftermath of the first World War, in the early moments of the Jazz Era. We were talking about this fresh, exciting, social change that was happening, that women had gone to work during the war, that so few men came home from the war, that the war had really traumatized Europe and particularly England and that the social changes were irreversible. There was going to be this burst of exuberance and sexuality and music and food and drink, and it was going to be right on the cusp of this exciting time – it's about kicking off your shoes and letting loose. And the play seems to lean right into that. So we decided that was also something we should do with the set, costumes, and music. There are signs of early Art Deco influences in both the scenery and the costumes. And the idea is that these are women who are yearning to bloom, and that's kind of what awaits them. A certain kind of liberty that they don't quite

**ART
DECO**

Art Deco is a style of design characterized by precise and strongly delineated geometric shapes and bold color contrasts. It first appeared in France in the 1920s, and only became popular internationally in the '30s and '40s. Today it is easiest to see Art Deco style in the architecture of buildings built during the 1920s-40s.



have access to. So it's kind of teasing and tempting them in their surroundings. And that ideally gets satisfied and fulfilled in the conclusion of the play.

Q: What in this play was most difficult for you as a director?

A: It's a really charming and really witty play, but what's on the page is kind of a basic skeletal score for the actors to then actually fill in what the relationships are and how the scenes move. And so we paid a lot of attention early, early on to the language and making sure that we had an intimate understanding of what they meant and what they were talking about. But from that, it was then a really fun challenge to go in and say, well, "Situationally, and inside of the circumstances of these conversations and these scenes, what's amusing?" And how do you sort of pull that out from underneath what they're saying and enhance it or magnify it so that the humor becomes visible and it isn't just word play? So that was the challenge with the comedy, and what's buried in that, or the heart of that, I should say, is to make sure that what's at stake for Jane and Julia is something that's emotionally true, that's truthful. So they are actually in a place where they can have a genuine crisis, even if it's a comic crisis, about straying from, or even just being tempted to stray from, their marriage.

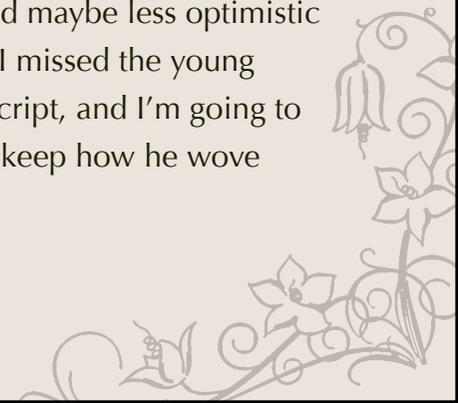
Q: How do you think this play fits into the arc of Coward's development as a playwright?

A: It's one of his really early plays and I think it feels like a really early play. I think it feels to me like a very sweet play. I find it

very optimistic, I find it really hopeful, I find it really humane, that the characters are loveable in all of their flaws, and I'm not sure that his feelings about the theatre or about humanity remained that hopeful over the course of his career. I mean, he has a much more sophisticated, adult take on things in later plays. I also think this play, if you had never seen a play of his and you saw this as a new play, you'd be like, "Wow, here's a fresh voice. This kid's got something." And he is a kid – at this point he's all of twenty-four.

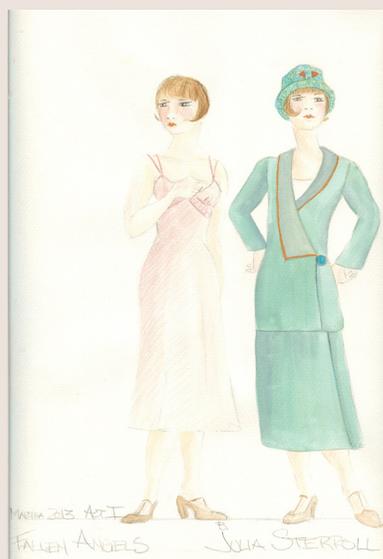
Q: There are two different scripts of *Fallen Angels*. How did you deal with that?

A: I read the 1923 script first, then I read the 1956 script. And while there are differences in 75% of the lines – a word change here, different punctuation – the major difference is that in the 1923 script, the character of Saunders pretty much doesn't speak at all. The maid pretty much facilitates the action by bringing things on and opening the door. In the 1956 script he actually fully developed the character into kind of a lovely comic turn that moves through the play. And so I immediately knew that that was something I wanted to retain. Having said that, in all of those changes, it felt like an older, and maybe less optimistic person had revisited his own story, and I missed the young guy's voice. So I started with the 1923 script, and I'm going to take what he wrote first and see if I can keep how he wove this expanded maid into that story.





In This Production



Above: costume designs for Julia (left) and Willy (right) by Martha Bromelmeier.

Top right: scene design for Act III by Charles Corcoran.

Right: Ned Noyes as Willy, Julie Jesneck as Julia, Melissa Miller as Jane, and Jeffrey Bender as Fred.



The music of Noël Coward

While Noël Coward was primarily known as a successful playwright, he also made a huge artistic impact with his music. Often referred to by contemporaries as the English Cole Porter, Coward continually thought of new tunes to entertain all types of audiences. The classic image of Coward holding a cigarette and a cocktail on a chaise lounge can make us forget that he spent hours and hours at his typewriter and piano, fixated on his newest work.

Beginning with a musical revue titled *London Calling!* in which he appeared with Gertrude Lawrence, Coward's musical career flourished. And while Coward composed over 140 tunes, such as "I'll See You Again," "Mad About the Boy," "I'll Follow My Secret Heart," and "Someday I'll Find You," he did it all without learning to read or write music.

Characteristic Coward lyrics are especially witty, his words

never lacking the flair found in his plays and productions. One representative example is the song "Don't Let's Be Beastly to the Germans," a clever melody dripping with satire and sarcasm, written during World War II. Coward explained that the lyrics were written "as a satire directed against a small minority of excessive humanitarians, who, in my opinion, were taking a rather too tolerant view of our enemies." While the song was a favorite of Winston Churchill's, it was banned from the airwaves.



Gertrude Lawrence and Noël Coward at the piano in a 1931 production of *Private Lives* (Source: Bettmann/CORBIS).

*Don't let's be beastly to the Germans.
You can't deprive a gangster of his gun!
Though they've been a little naughty
To the Czechs and Poles and Dutch,
I can't believe those countries
Really minded very much.*

*Let's be free with them
And share the BBC with them.
We mustn't prevent them basking in the sun!
Let's soften their defeat again,
And build their bloody fleet again,
But don't let's be beastly to the Hun!*

In his later years, Coward turned further towards music as his newer plays fell out of favor with audiences. He was inducted into the Songwriters Hall of Fame in 1988.



From the French

The song “Même les Anges” features heavily in *Fallen Angels*.
Read this line-by-line translation of the French:

Même les Anges succombent à l’amour,

Even the angels succumb to love,

C’est pourquoi donc je vous en prie –

So this is why I beg you –

Dieu qui arrange les jours et les séjours,

God who arranges comings and goings,

Laisse moi encore une heure de paradis.

Grant me just an hour of paradise.

Tous mes amours me semblent comme les fleurs,

All my loves seem to me like flowers,

Leurs parfums restent douces quand même –

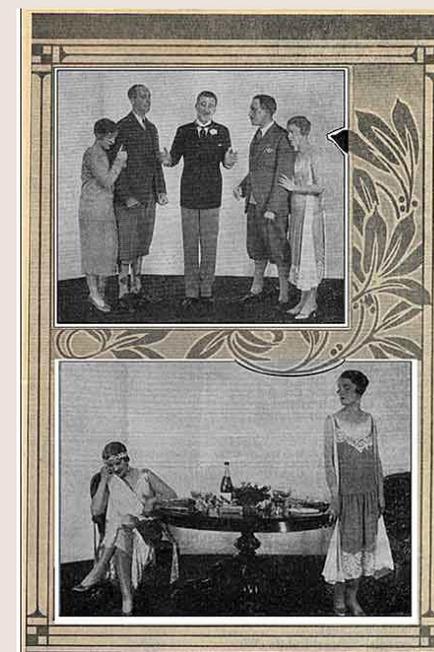
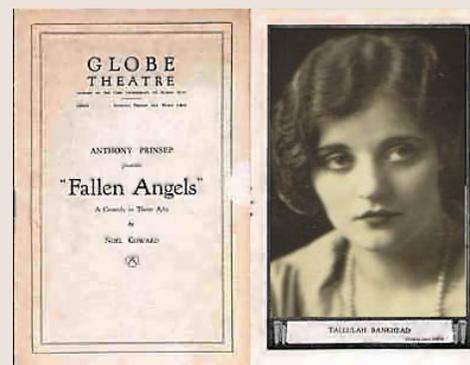
Their perfume still remains sweet –

Donne moi tes lèvres, ton âme, et ton coeur,

Give me your lips, your soul, and your heart,

Parce que follement je t’aime – je t’aime – je t’aime!

Because it’s madly that I love you – I love you – I love you!



Playbills from the 1925 premiere in London (top left and above) and the 1956 New York revival (left). (Sources: Tony Grillo at earthlink.net; Playbill Vault.)



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