



And a Nightingale Sang...

by C.P. Taylor

Directed by
Bonnie J. Monte

Know-the-Show
Audience Guide
researched and written by
the Education Department of

The
SHAKESPEARE
Theatre of
New Jersey



Art pictured:
"Our loving waltz" by Lorraine Christie



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This production of *And A Nightingale Sang...*
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Director's Notes

- Bonnie J. Monte

MY THOUGHTS ABOUT THE PLAY:

Most of the plays that have resided for many years on my long “want to direct” list are epic classics that I have not yet attempted for a variety of practical reasons. C.P. Taylor's *And A Nightingale Sang...* has remained on my list for many years simply because I did not feel the time was right for it. I have never seen a production of it — it's not produced very often — and yet, when I read it years ago, it really stuck with me. I found it delightfully funny and quite moving. When I was trying to decide which shows I would direct in this, my last season as Artistic Director, I felt the time was finally right for this play, especially given what is happening in other parts of the world. The play kept coming to mind as I read about what the Ukrainians are dealing with on a daily basis, and I have always been fascinated by how the big events of the world that are thrust upon us by larger powers affect our smaller, personal worlds; and in turn, how “the common folk” respond and are able to change the course of history. Huge areas of the world are in turmoil now, wreaking havoc on millions of lives, and how people survive that havoc is of great interest to me. It seems the humble weapons of humor, music, art, faith, family, and love provide comfort, inspiration, and courage that often defy the most dire of situations and the most cruel machinations of those who wield power over our lives. This is not a new revelation by any means, but it is one that we need to be reminded of and which we need to celebrate.

One of our company members recently sent me an email in which he told me about something that one of his professors had said to him long

ago. Roughly paraphrased, he said that one of the wonderful things about theatre is that it can take a

simple and obscure story about people of no fame or great import, and make their story important and relevant to everyone in the room. The characters in *And A Nightingale Sang...* have no importance in the great affairs of the world. They are a working class family living in Newcastle upon Tyne, in the northeast of England, fairly close to the border of Scotland. None of them are remarkable in any way, other than in the ways that all humans are remarkable and important. And yet, this little tale of their “little lives” is uplifting, important, and inspiring. It is a dose of something we all need right now in this troubled world of ours. In the midst of the horrors of WWII, we see common folk cope, laugh, love, and sing their way to the “end of the tunnel” and the promise of new hope. As Helen, the narrator of the story, tells us, “Hitler changed my life.” Bad people in power have been upending people's lives throughout the history of civilization, and that in itself is a maddening fact; it is also the greatest argument for democracy, for when a democracy is working at its best, those people are held in check. WWII was a war about many things but it was ultimately about destroying a fascist regime that was imposing unspeakable horrors on the world. The story of this play does



A devastated Guildford Place in Heaton, Newcastle, following a deadly World War II air raid on April 25, 1941 (Image: Newcastle Chronicle)



not deal with those larger issues, it deals with one small family's daily task of surviving a war, and how the chaos imposed by that war results in new paths and new-found hopes and liberations. It is, obviously, one of the luckier and lighter stories of a war-torn land, but its worth is no less than the more harrowing tales of violent conflicts. Its beauty lies in its humble simplicity and its celebration of those who just want to live good, peaceful loving lives with a sprinkling of romance and a recognition of their place in the great, wide world where nightingales can sing free from the sound of bombs.

THE "GEORDIE" DIALECT

In this play, the characters, with the exception of Norman, are all from Newcastle upon Tyne, a city in the Northeast of England, located on the river Tyne. Known for its vital importance at one time to the coal and shipping industries, as well as its strategic location, it is also renowned for the peculiar dialect of its citizens, known as the Geordie accent. It's a dialect rife with peculiar pronunciations and words that aren't really

used anywhere else, the most famous being the word, "canny" which can mean anything from "good" to "nice" to "pretty" to "friendly" to "good old soul."

Geordie is an intriguing accent. It is unique and difficult for outsiders to mimic. It's retained both words and pronunciations that date back to the Anglo-Saxons, and so it gives one a bit of a taste of how English would have sounded centuries ago. Geordie is, some say, a bridge between the earliest forms of English and the way the language is generally spoken today. There are numerous "Geordie words" and slang terms that can only be heard in this small corner of England, including "Howay!" (Come on!); "blather skite" (someone who talks nonsense); "moogie" (cat); "gan doon" (to go to a place); "beclarted" (very dirty) and many, many more.

Our dialect coach, Julie Foh, worked with the actors on the production not only helping them learn the Geordie dialect, but to do so in a way that our audience could understand it – a daunting task. We have cheated a bit on the accent when we felt that certain words or plot points would be lost if we pronounced everything in full-out Geordie. The character of Norman is from Birmingham, and so Ben Eakeley, the actor playing Norman, had a whole different set of sounds that he had to work on assimilating into his speech.

Many actors groan when they hear that a Geordie dialect is required for a show, for it is truly one of the more difficult English dialects to master!



Map of Great Britain featuring Newcastle upon Tyne, from which the Geordie dialect derives.

C.P. Taylor

About the Playwright

A prolific Scottish writer of more than 70 plays, Cecil Phillip (C.P.) Taylor was born in Glasgow in 1929 to Orthodox Jewish parents who had immigrated from Russia. His father, Max George Taylor, was a proud member of the Zionist party and spent much of his time writing stories. C.P. grew up holding a fierce identification with his working-class Jewish roots and eventually formed a strong socialist ideology through which he wrote his plays. He claimed in an interview that “all my life was spent around politics...I was reading Marx and Engels when Brenton and Co. were in nappies...”

Taylor left school at the age of fourteen to start working and got a job as a radio and television repairman, finding free time to write short stories and poems whenever he could. Upon realizing that “the stories were nearly all dialogue anyway,” he switched to writing plays. His first full-length play, *Mr. David*, won second prize in the 1954 Playwriting Competition organized by the World Jewish Congress. It was

“[My] main themes are the conflicts between man’s ideals and his limitations. Every play is about particular people, particular periods, particular incidents. The universal comes from a close and accurate study of the particular.”

C.P. Taylor

not produced, however, until it was performed by Warsaw’s Jewish State Theater in 1962.

C.P. met his first wife, Irene Diamond, at a drama group for young people. He quit his job to move to Newcastle with her, where he worked as a record salesman. The time he spent selling records gave him inspiration for many of his plays, including *Nightingale*. Having more free time with his new job, C.P. further explored his artistic side, writing plays, singing, and playing guitar and piano. Finally, he decided to make writing his full-time job and began working as a “community playwright” in the 1960s and 70s. He married his second wife, Elizabeth Screen, in 1967, and they settled in Northumberland where he lived the remainder of his life. Taylor spent much of his time during this period working with and interviewing students and community members. He used the transcripts he had collected to write plays about working-class people. He also wrote plays for radio and television, which influenced his intimate style of writing for the stage.

In 1962, Taylor’s first professional production, *Aa Went tae Blaydon Races*, based on a 1862 miner’s strike, opened the Flora Robson Theatre in Newcastle. His partnership with Edinburgh’s Traverse

Portrait of
C.P. Taylor



SELECTED PLAYS OF C.P. TAYLOR

Taylor wrote almost 80 plays in his 16 years as a professional playwright. Here are a few of his most notable works:

- *Mr David* (1954)
- *Aa Went Tae Blaydon Races* (1962)

With the Traverse Theatre, Edinburgh:

- *Happy Days Are Here Again* (1965)
- *Bread and Butter* (1966)
- *Lies about Vietnam* (1969)
- *The Black and White Minstrels* (1972)
- *Next Year in Tel Aviv* (1973)
- *Schippel* (1974)
- *Gynt* (1975)
- *Walter* (1975)
- *Withdrawal Symptoms* (1978)

With the Live Theatre Company, New Castle:

- *Some Enchanted Evening* (1977)
- *Bandits* (1977)
- *Operation Elvis* (1978)
- *And a Nightingale Sang...* (1978)
- *The Saints Go Marching In* (1980)
- *The Peter Pan Man* (1978)
- *Good* (1981)

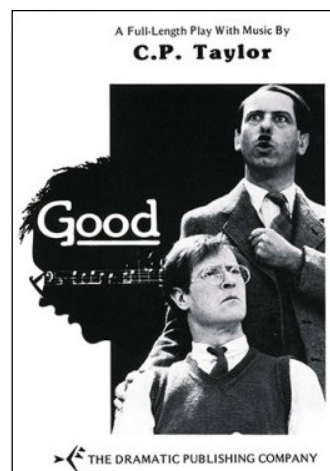
Theatre later provided him with enough financial security that he was able to focus solely on his work as a playwright through the mid-1970s. In the late 1970s, he joined the Live Theatre Company in Newcastle where many of his plays were produced, including *And a Nightingale Sang*.

His most well-known play, *Good*, was first performed by the Royal Shakespeare Company in 1981, and has been described as the definitive piece written about the Holocaust in the English-speaking theatre canon.

Taylor lived his last years out in Longhorsely in Northumberland, writing in a shed in his back garden, often in the nude. He died suddenly of pneumonia in 1981 at the age of 52. His illness was believed to be, in part, brought on by his unusual working habits. According to his son Avram, he left behind “two wives, four children, two houses, over 70 plays, a guitar, a piano, and his personal library.”



Members of the Live Theatre Company, 1970s.
Taylor is in the back with his arm raised.



Taylor's most popular play, *Good*, follows the moral decline of a liberal German Professor, John Halder, who becomes involved with the Third Reich war machine. Though he continues to see himself as a 'good man', Halder's moral cowardice and the Reich's subtle corruption draw him further and further into Hitler's "Final Solution."

First staged by the Royal Shakespeare Company in 1981, the play is frequently revived. David Tennant performed in the 2023 production at London's Harold Pinter Theatre.

And a Nightingale Sang...

A Synopsis

SPOILER ALERT: The following includes spoilers about the play.

The events of *And a Nightingale Sang...* span six years (1939-1945) in the home of the Stott Family living in Newcastle upon Tyne. Structured as a memory play, Taylor's writing sometimes leaps forward and backwards as Helen recounts events during the war.

ACT I: SCENE 1: September, 1939

Helen, the eldest daughter and narrator, introduces her family to the audience. George, Helen's father loves to play the piano loudly and without pause, which annoys Peggy, Helen's devoutly Catholic mother. Joyce, Helen's younger sister, is perpetually unable to make a decision; and staying for six months out of the year, is Andie, Helen's grandfather.

As the play begins, the house is in chaos. Andie is asking everyone to accompany him to the burial of his recently deceased dog. Peggy is preparing dinner but must leave soon to check in on the local priest who may be having nervous breakdown and a crisis of faith. Joyce is preparing for the arrival of her suitor, Eric, who is leaving to join the war effort the following day. Eric wants to marry Joyce before he is deployed, but Joyce does not know if she should say yes or no. George is playing the piano loudly. Everyone asks Helen to help them.

Before anyone can leave, Eric arrives and is ushered into the front room while Joyce frantically decides what to do. Helen and Peggy offer Eric tea, but refuse to look at the engagement ring he has brought. The ladies rush in and out in an attempt to stall for time as Joyce waffles between saying yes and writing a rejection letter. When the air raid sirens go off, Eric quickly takes charge and ushers the family into the kitchen. He uses blankets and pillows to block openings in case of a gas attack. The family hears a loud whistle and, thinking it is a bomb, drops to the floor. In the excitement, Joyce accepts Eric's proposal.

ACT I: SCENE 2: June, 1940 – several months later

We see Helen waiting for a man named Norman on a park bench in Eldon Square. They talk and flirt, and Helen describes meeting Norman when he first came to her house with Eric. In a flashback, Helen recalls the chaotic day they met. The family were all distressed about Eric, who hadn't been heard from for some time, Andie had arrived to stay with the family two weeks ahead of schedule with his new cat, and George

WHO'S WHO?

Everyone has a nickname in the Stott household. Here's a quick guide:

THE COALMAN: George, the father

THE SAINT: Peggy aka Mam, the mother

THE CRIPPLE: Helen, the eldest daughter

THE BABE IN THE WOODS: Joyce, the younger daughter

THE OLD SOLDIER: Andie, the grandfather, father to Peggy

THE LOST BOY: Eric, a local soldier courting Joyce

THE TAILOR'S DUMMY: Norman, a soldier friend of Eric's



was playing the piano incessantly. When Eric arrived at the doorstep unexpectedly, they were so overjoyed to see him they almost didn't even notice Norman, the friend Eric had brought along. Helen ran to get Joyce from work. When Joyce arrived home, she was nervous and hesitant, refusing to even give Eric a kiss. Their first meeting since the rushed wedding and Eric's deployment was painfully awkward. Helen remembers how Norman asked her out that day.

ACT I: SCENE 3: August, 1940 – two months later

Two months have passed, and Eric has just arrived home again on leave. He dances with Joyce in the living room, and Helen comments that her limp has prevented her from learning to dance. Eric receives a telegram ordering him to return to duty immediately. Furious, he laments that he has only just arrived and won't be able to spend the night with his wife. When Eric says he will ignore the order, Joyce protests and says that he will be imprisoned for disobeying orders. The air raid sirens sound and George urges everyone to get to their new bomb shelter.

After the all-clear is sounded, Helen rushes to meet Norman at Eldon Square. Norman insists, despite Helen's initial protests, that they go dancing. Helen has a terrific time, and after they close the dance hall, she and Norman spend their first night together in a hotel.

ACT II: SCENE 1: November, 1942 – two years later

Helen and Norman find a flat in town to move in together. Joyce tells Helen she may be pregnant, but is uncertain who the father is. Andie decides to rent a room from a local widower. Peggy comes back from her aunt's funeral. George announces he's a communist. When Helen and Norman tell Peggy that they are moving in together without getting

married, they also admit that Norman is already married to someone else. He had married young. Divorces are not possible during the War.

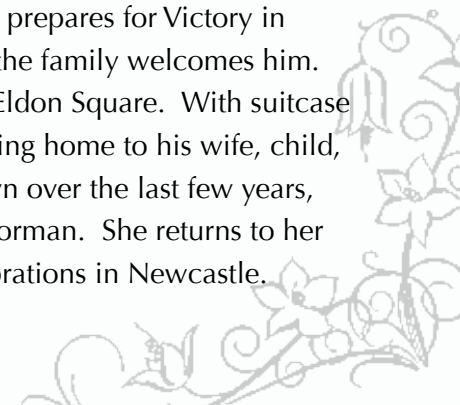
ACT II: SCENE 2: June, 1944 – nearly two years later

Peggy and Helen receive word that George has been hit by a bomb. They rush to the hospital to find him. When they do not find him at the hospital, they return home in a panic. Upon their arrival, they find Joyce and Eric arguing over Eric's recent demotion. Into the chaos enters George with a bandage on his head. He recounts the events of his day. During an air attack, a bullet bounced off of a wall and grazed his head. The family goes to the local pub to celebrate George's survival, but leave early when Eric fails to get drinks for anyone but himself and Joyce. Eric and Peggy get into a heated argument and Eric storms out. Joyce refuses to go with him, choosing her family over her husband.

Later, Helen discovers that since they have been seeing each other, Norman has had a child with his wife. When Helen confronts him about the boy, Norman admits that he had seen his wife and was intimate with her because "he felt sorry for her." Despite the tension, Helen and Norman make up and continue their relationship.

ACT II: SCENE 3: May, 1945 - Victory in Europe (VE) Day

The end of the war has arrived, and everyone prepares for Victory in Europe Day. Eric returns home to Joyce, and the family welcomes him. Norman meets Helen in their usual place in Eldon Square. With suitcase in hand, Norman tells Helen that he is returning home to his wife, child, and parents. Helen realizes that she has grown over the last few years, and that she deserves someone better than Norman. She returns to her family, and watch the victory lights and celebrations in Newcastle.





Who's Who in the Play

Mam - Peggy Stott - "The Saint"

The matriarch of the family, Peggy Stott is extremely devoted to the Catholic Church and to the Virgin Mary, whom she speaks to on a regular basis. She is often annoyed with her husband's enthusiastic piano playing. Peggy often takes an active role in solving the problems at the local church while leaning on Helen to take care of the problems at home.

Da - George Stott - "The Coalman"

George Stott is most often seen playing songs on his beloved piano. He later takes on a leadership role in the neighborhood with effort as Block Warden and then later as a local Secretary for the Communist party.

Andie - Granda - "The Old Soldier"

Peggy's father is shuffled between the houses of his two daughters, but states that he prefers Peggy's and places much of his caretaking on her. Andie loves animals, and devotes himself first to his racing dog, Jackie, and then to his cat, Tibbie. When problems arise within his family, Andie often shares his nihilistic perspective, while at the same time caring lovingly for the safety and comfort of his animal companions.

Helen - "The Cripple"

Helen is the eldest daughter of George and Peggy. She tells us that one leg is shorter than the other, leaving her with a slight limp and frequent pain. Helen begins the play with a pessimistic outlook on her own potential for happiness. The narrator of the story, Helen sets herself up as the "problem-solver" of the family until she moves out to the great distress of her mother and father.

Joyce - "The Babe in the Wood"

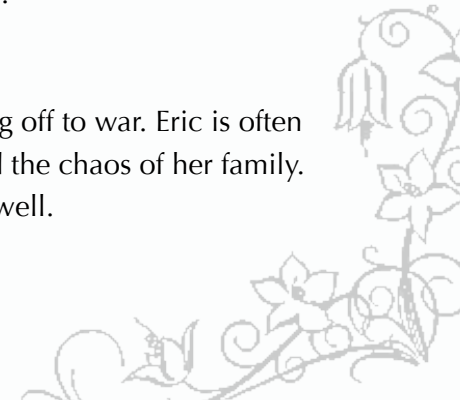
Joyce is the younger daughter of George and Peggy. Joyce is more frivolous than her sister and often seeks Helen and Mam's advice on her relationship. Joyce hesitantly marries Eric; her interest for him waxes and wanes.

Norman - "The Tailor's Dummy"

A soldier in the same outfit as Eric, Norman accompanies Eric on a visit to the Stott's home. There, Norman meets Helen and to her surprise, begins pursuing her romantically.

Eric - "The Lost Boy"

Eric proposes to Joyce Stott before heading off to war. Eric is often annoyed with Joyce's flippant attitude and the chaos of her family. Eric has his own set of maturity issues as well.





World War II and the Blitz



• In early 1939, the Military Training Act reinstated a limited conscription that required all eligible men ages 20 - 22 to register for six months of military training.

• On September 3, 1939, England declared war on Germany in response to the Nazi invasion of Poland.

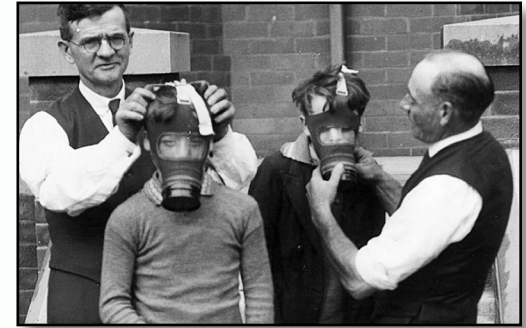
After declaring war on Germany, the National Services (Armed Forces) Act was quickly enacted by Parliament to require that all eligible men between the ages of 18 and 41 register for training.

• The British army was under strict orders to not injure civilians, but the Germans were not as restricted in their war strategy.

The British government decided that every man, woman, and child must have their own gas mask for protection against such a gas attack. 38 million respirators were produced for the public. With 1939 and the outbreak of war, these masks were issued to the public in cardboard boxes with strict instructions that they be carried at all times, without exception. Fines would be imposed if you were caught without your respirator.

Throughout the play, the Stott family experiences the trauma of the Newcastle Blitz, a series of bombing raids led by the German Nazis. From around 1940 to 1942, these attacks killed over 100 people and injured hundreds more. The damage to infrastructure was also devastating, with enough houses destroyed that thousands of people were left homeless.

- June 6, 1944 the Allied forces defeated the German army on the beaches of Normandy, France, in a battle known as D-Day.
- On May 8, 1945, British soldiers returned from deployment after German General Alfred Jodl signed an unconditional surrender on May 7, 1945, effectively ending the war in Europe. This is known as VE Day, or Victory in Europe Day.
- World War 2 would continue in the Pacific Theater until Japan surrendered on September 2, 1945, after the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.
- Gas was never used against British civilians.



PHOTOS:
TOP LEFT: Local regiment from Newcastle.
RIGHT, FROM TOP: Two North East lads try on their gas masks. • Devastation from the Blitz, 1941. • Visit to Elswick Works by King George VI and Queen Elizabeth, 18 June 1941; Newcastle's vast industry was a strategic target of German bombers. Photo: Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums • A crowd celebrates VE day marking the German surrender in the second world war, May 1945. Photograph: Universal Images Group



Quotes and Context

And a Nightingale Sang... was commissioned by Newcastle on Tyne's Live Theatre Company and focuses on the Newcastle area.

Writing *And A Nightingale Sang...* was largely a community process for Taylor. He spent time interviewing local people about their experiences during World War II and continually had conversations with the director and cast of the production. This process created a play that was 90-120 minutes too long, so he workshopped it with the actors and managed to cut it down from there.

Taylor hoped with his plays, this one in particular, to focus on the roles working-class people played in World War II and how the war



The original 1978 cast of *And A Nightingale Sang* for the Live Theatre Company in Newcastle upon Tyne.

affected their lives. Rather than following an intense, melodramatic plotline, *Nightingale* covers the everyday activities that a family during wartime would engage in. Taylor gives an ironic take on their daily lives through witty dialogue that flows casually and creates intimacy with the audience,

who is in on the family drama the whole time through Helen's direct address speeches to them.

With *Nightingale*, Taylor says he wanted to

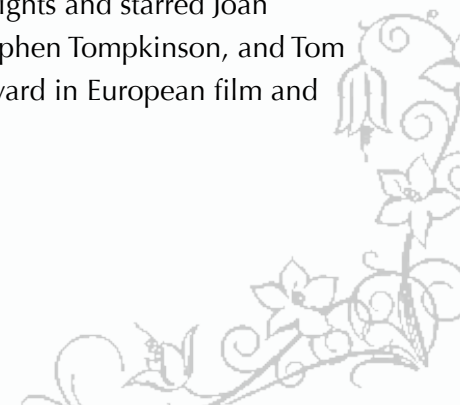
communicate "my narrow, odd vision

of the world as I see it at the time of writing ... always in the hope that my audience might feel a bit less on their own in this big world, as I do when I read a real book or see a real play".

Playwright Jack Rosenthal adapted *Nightingale* into a television program in 1989. The program was directed by Rob Nights and starred Joan Plowright, Phyllis Logan, John Woodvine, Stephen Tompkinson, and Tom Watt. It won the Prix Europa, a prestigious award in European film and television, in 1990.

"At the first read-through I had warned the company that the text was not obviously profound. It looked at history from the point of view of mundane, day-to-day activities of ordinary people, who played as important a part in modern warfare as the armed forces. There were no heroes, nor heroic gestures. The dominant theme was enduring and surviving bad times"

C.P. Taylor



C.P. Taylor's

Record Collection

The Songs of *And a Nightingale Sang*

Oh, Johnny

“Oh, Johnny” is the first song to appear in the show. Being quite repetitive, it serves the purpose of illustrating George’s obsession – almost to an irritating extent for the rest of the family – with music. The piece was published in 1917, composed by Abe Olman with lyrics by Ed Rose. A recording of the song was released in 1939. Allegedly, Ed Rose wrote the song for two of his friends in college who were very publicly dating. Rose presented them with the original manuscript.

We’ll Meet Again (Now known as I’ll be Seeing You)

“We’ll Meet Again” accompanies Andie’s early arrival to the home and Helen and Norman’s meeting. It was written by Ross Parker and Hughie Charles in 1939. Popular during World War II, it resonated for many people wishing to be reunited with their families. The most famous rendition of the song was recorded by Vera Lynn in 1942, who intentionally created a connection between the song’s lyrics and people’s struggles during the war.

Yours

George sings “Yours” for a dancing Eric and Joyce, while Helen watches and reflects on her desire to dance. The song was originally in Spanish and titled “Quiéreme Mucho”. It was composed in 1911 by Gonzola Roig with lyrics by Ramón Gullury and Agustín Rodríguez. It rose to popularity in 1917 when it was included in a sainete – a one-act Spanish operetta – about World War I. An English version with lyrics by Albert Gamse and Jack Sherr was published in 1931.

A Nightingale Sang in Berkeley Square

“A Nightingale Sang in Berkeley Square” is the song from which the play gets its title. It was written in 1939 with lyrics by Eric Maschwitz and music by Manning Sherwin. After its publication in 1940, it was performed by Judy Campbell in the London revue *New Faces*. Later that year, Vera Lynn released her rendition of the song as well. The piece describes two lovers meeting for the first time in Berkeley Square in London. The singer describes a series of unlikely circumstances and events, including a nightingale singing in Berkeley Square. While nightingales are known for their songs and often referenced by artists, they are unlikely to be singing in an urban environment. The song questions whether anything that occurred between the lovers was real.

The Lovely Weekend

The song was written by Ted and Moira Heath, and was published in 1941. Vera Lynn popularized it during World War II, as soldiers could resonate with its romantic themes with undertones of missing one’s love.

You’d Be So Nice to Come Home To

George performs *You’d Be So Nice to Come Home To* after Helen and Norman have a difficult discussion about their relationship. The song was written by Cole Porter in 1942 for the film *Something to Shout About*, and was first recorded by Dick Jurgens and His Orchestra. It was nominated for the Academy Award for Best Song in 1943. It reflects emotions many soldiers had about going home to their love but not knowing if their wish would come true. According to Charles Schwartz, “[The song] ...evoked enough of a feeling of togetherness in its wistful melody and lyrics to have almost instant appeal for the millions who were then separated from their loved ones because of the war.”

(There’ll Be Bluebirds Over) The White Cliffs of Dover

This song plays when Mam is convinced that George has been hit by a bomb. It was composed in 1941 by Walter Kent, with lyrics by Nat Burton. Written about a year after British and German troops had been fighting over southern England, the song asserts a wish to see peace over the Cliffs of Dover, rather than bombs. Vera Lynn made the song famous in 1942 when she sang it for troops during World War II.



In This Production

Scenic model by Brittany Vasta, Scenic Designer, and selected costume renderings by Brian Russman, Costume Designer, for the 2023 Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey production of *And a Nightingale Sang...* directed by Bonnie J. Monte.



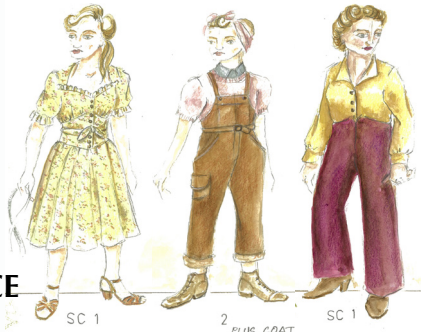
PEGGY



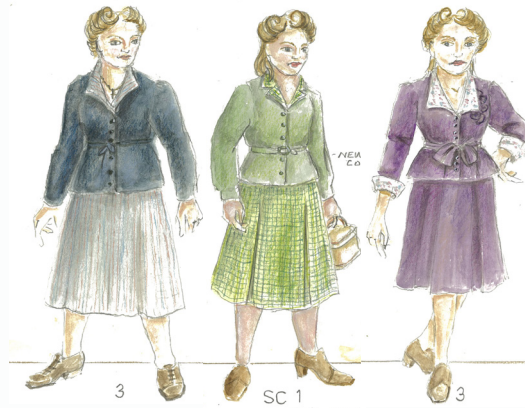
GEORGE



ANDIE



JOYCE



HELEN



ERIC

NORMAN





Commentary & Criticism

"[Taylor's] dialogue always felt as if it had come directly from the back of a Byker bus rather than from a typewriter...the scenes he created had a freshness which sprang from their subjects, a naturalism which had been warmed out of them by the actuality Cecil devised."

John Mapplebeck, Producer

"*Nightingale* is about endurance, not nostalgia"

Susan Friesner, Author

"Travails of a Naked Typist: The Plays of C.P. Taylor"

"Taylor...was a committed socialist who wrote sophisticated working-class plays for working-class people – and this not only made much of what he wrote unacceptable in the West End, but also, for different reasons..., unsympathetic to such venues as the Royal Court. Thus, while the range of his work reflected certain trends in British post-war theatre – the drive for regional and community theatre, dissatisfaction with bourgeois naturalistic styles, and the growth of the fringe – in other respects Taylor was untypical as a left-wing writer."

from the abstract of

Travails of a Naked Typist: The Plays of C.P. Taylor

published in the Cambridge University Press, 2009

"Whatever the subject matter, all the plays he wrote contained a basic 'truth' or something he unearthed that was 'real,' however small or seemingly inconsequential. Add to this an enormous 'worry' about the human race, a gifted instinct to make sense of the absurdities, cruelty and humor of its people, a total inability to write anything shallow or transparent, and you have a very special playwright ... he left behind him not only a fantastically diverse canon of work but a constant reminder of what was possible in the past and a stimulus for achievement in the future."

Max Roberts, Artistic Director

Live Theatre Company: Newcastle

