



## What the Butler Saw

**Written by:** Joe Orton

**Directed by:** Richard Frampton & Giles Checkley

**Performed:** Wednesday 24th - Saturday 27th October 2007 at 7.30pm in St Anne's Hall

Cast		Crew	
<b>Dr Prentice</b> .....	Richard Brent Letitia Fussell Becca Stafford Paul Checkley John Laing Ian Pring	<b>Producers</b> .....	Lesley Tulley & Emma Stallard
<b>Mrs Prentice</b> .....		<b>Stage manager &amp; Props co-ordinator</b> .....	Judith Butler
<b>Geraldine Barclay</b> ...		<b>Lighting design</b> .....	Jenny Davies & Paula Fitzgerald
<b>Dr Rance</b> .....		<b>Lighting operator</b> .....	Sharron Stubbs
<b>Nicholas Beckett</b> ....		<b>Sound design</b> .....	Michael Ainsworth
<b>Sergeant Match</b> .....		<b>Costume co-ordinator</b> .....	Carly Jukes
		<b>Set construction</b> .....	Paul Checkley and Superfriends
		<b>Catering manager</b> .....	Rachel O'Reilly
		<b>Publicity</b> .....	Paul Johnson

## Synopsis

"Joe Orton's last play, **What The Butler Saw**, will live to be accepted as a comedy classic of English literature" Sunday Telegraph

The chase is on, and libidos run rampant, in this breakneck comedy of licensed insanity. From the moment when Dr Prentice - a psychoanalyst interviewing a prospective secretary - instructs her to undress, his world is destined to change forever. The plot of What the Butler Saw contains enough twists and turns, mishaps and changes of fortune, coincidences and lunatic logic to furnish three or four conventional comedies.

Dr Prentice's sometimes ingenious, increasingly desperate and ultimately doomed attempts to cover up his indiscretions can only lead him into trouble... and it is difficult to know who will get him first - the government inspector, his wife or a very confused policeman (in a dress).

Poor Geraldine and Nicholas are just caught in the middle - sometimes in each others clothes, and sometimes without many clothes at all. But at least there will be plenty of material for Dr Rance's book...

Oh, and just what has happened to 'certain parts' of Winston Churchill?!

Hailed as a modern comedy every bit as good as Wilde's The Importance of Being Earnest, Orton's play is regularly produced, read and studied. What the Butler Saw was Orton's final play before his tragic death in 1967, at the height of his career.

## NODA Review by Stephen Macvicar

As the Directors acknowledge in the programme, "farce is not easy to produce, especially when timing entrances, exits, fights and struggles". Despite the efforts of a hard working cast and production team, this show never really reached the desired levels of comedy or indeed farce to totally engage a small Saturday night audience. At times the situations the actors found themselves in looked dated and a trifle awkward. Several prompts also took the edge off the action.

I was happy to cover this production on behalf of John Huckle as I have been to quite a few of NSTC's offerings in the past few years and always enjoy your productions. This was no exception.

The relatively small stage of the St Anne's Church Hall was transformed into the psychiatrist surgery of Dr Prentice. The room was tastefully decorated with table and chairs, bed, hat-stand, certificate, three doors for entrances and exits and of course 60's music to give us a flavour of the period.

What the Butler Saw by the controversial Joe Orton strikes me as a potentially very funny play if performed exquisitely. Whilst this production entertained, it never really tickled as farces should. In reality, I don't blame your two fledgling directors at all, there are some situations in the play which wouldn't be funny even if they were performed at The National. I refer particularly to the roses and the praying etc which were at best awkward. Both of your directors Richard Frampton and Giles Checkley mentioned in the programme notes the scale of the task which they had undertaken and I think towards the end it showed. Apart from keeping up the pace and intensity for two hours, the cast of six only had 27 punters to perform to. Whilst this low numbers didn't look lost in the hall itself, it must have been extremely hard work for the cast to get any real feedback during the performance. The lack of numbers was such a shame as your group is worthy of so much better.

I have written a few notes on the cast members who were all hard working (in programme order);

Dr Prentice – Richard Brent – I thought Richard gave a sound performance as the agitated doctor who was getting pulled around from pillar to post. Perhaps a slight tendency to rush his dialogue but I can understand that given the absurdity of his situation.

Geraldine Barclay – Becca Stafford – Becca was sweet as the potential receptionist who rather obscurely is asked to undress behind a screen. It can't be easy spending most of the performance scantily clad but Becca survived the experience.

Mrs Prentice – Letitia Fussell – This was a nice role for Letitia to play if a little bit bitchy but it gave her a chance to display her elegant long legs.

Nicholas Beckett – John Laing – Self-respect goes right out of the window in comedies and in particular farces. John got the raw end of the stick by putting on a women's dress but it did go some hilarity.

Dr Rance – Paul Checkley – Paul has a nice stage manner and his bureaucratic character was confusing the matter more than we could cope with. A few prompts took the gloss off though.

Sergeant Match – Ian Pring – Ian impressed as the bumbling northern policeman. Ian has played a magnitude of characters and plays them all very well.

Congratulations to Richard and Giles for an entertaining evening despite what you were up against in terms of content and hopefully you will have been able to balance your books accordingly. The souvenir programme had a good layout. Short biogs are always very welcome as it shows the relevant experience and growth of performers.

Once again thank you for inviting me to the St Anne's Church Hall and best wishes for your next production.

**Production Photos** (Click to enlarge)

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