

## **SHOW INFO**

**Noises Off** is a farce - a British sex farce to be precise. (Webster's defines farce as: a light dramatic composition marked by broadly satirical comedy and improbable plot... to improve or expand something as if by stuffing.)

**Noises Off** is also a play within a play. It is about a group of actors in a farce called '*Nothing On*'. The first act of Noises Off is a final dress rehearsal of *Nothing On* during which the actors are feverishly trying to get through their lines, cues and prop assignments the night before opening while exhausted, making endless mistakes and planting seeds for being at each others' throats.

The second act takes us backstage during a matinee performance of *Nothing On* after the company has been on the road for a month. (The set rotates to reveal the backstage area). The confusion and exhaustion from the first act have morphed into a display of severed relationships, retaliation and revenge due to romantic entanglements within the company.

Finally, in the third act we are back to watching the closing performance of *Nothing On* during which 'sabotage' is the operative word among the company members.

## **NOISES OFF CAST OF CHARACTERS**

**DOTTY OTLEY**- (40s-60s) A late-middle aged actress... very good natured. Plays Mrs. Clackett, the housekeeper for the Brents' home in England in *Nothing's On*. Is having a thing with Garry.

**LLOYD DALLAS**- The director of the play-within-the-play, called *Nothing's On*. Harried, hassled and horny.

**GARRY LEJEUNE**- A stuttering actor, easily fired up. Plays Roger, the estate agent looking to let the Brents' house in *Nothing's On*.

**BROOKE ASHTON**- A young inexperienced actress from London. Plays Vicki, who works for the tax authorities and is trying to woo Roger in *Nothing's On*.

**POPPY NORTON-TAYLOR**- Assistant Stage Manager who is romantically involved with the director, Lloyd Dallas.

**FREDERICK FELLOWES**- Has a serious fear of violence and blood. Plays Phillip Brent, who lives out of the country with his wife Flavia to avoid paying taxes and is on a secret visit in *Nothing's On*.

**BELINDA BLAIR**- Cheerful and sensible, a reliable actress. Plays FLavia, Phillip Brent's wife, who is dependable, though no one for household duties in *Nothing's On*.

**TIM ALLGOOD**- An over-worked Stage Manager who also understudies two roles in *Nothing's On*. Very capable but exhausted throughout.

**SELSDON MOWBRAY**- Elderly and with actorly mannerisms. Plays Selsdon, a burglar and old man in his seventies in *Nothing's On*, breaking into the Brents' house.

### **AUDITION SIDES**

**Dotty**: Hello... Yes, but there's no one here, love... No, Mr. Brent's not here... He lives here, yes, but he don't live here now because he lives in Spain... Mr. Philip Brent, that's right... The one who writes the plays, that's him, only now he writes them in Spain... No, she's in Spain, too, they're all in Spain, there's no one here.. Am I in Spain? No, I'm not in Spain, dear. I look after the house for them, but I go home at one o'clock on Wednesday, only I've got a nice plate of sardines to put my feet up with, because it's the royal what's it called on the telly - the royal - you know – where's the paper then...?

...And if it's to do with letting the house then you'll have to ring the house agents, because they're the agents for the house... Squire, Squire, Hackham and who's the other one...? No, they're not in Spain, they're next to the phone in the study. Squire, Squire, Hackham, and hold on, I'll go and look. Always the same, isn't it. Soon as you take the weight off your feet, down it all comes on your head.

**Lloyd**: (with extreme politeness) 'What's that, Dad?' Right. That's the line, Brooke, love. We all know you've worked in very classy places up in London where they let you make the play up as you go along, but we don't want that kind of thing here, do we. Not when the author has provided us

with such a considered and polished line of his own. Not at one o'clock in the morning. Not two lines away from the end of Act One. Not when we're just about to get a tea break before we all drop dead of exhaustion. We merely want to hear the line (shouts) 'What's that Dad? That's all. Nothing else. I'm not being unreasonable, am I?

**Lloyd:** Tim, let me tell you something about my life. I have the Duke of Buckingham on the phone to me for an hour after rehearsal every evening complaining that the Duke of Gloucester is sucking boiled sweets through his speeches. The Duke of Clarence is off the entire week doing a commercial for Madeira. Richard himself – would you believe – Richard III? (He demonstrates.) – has now gone down with a back problem. I keep getting messages from Brook about how unhappy she is here and now she's got herself a doctor's certificate for nervous exhaustion – she's going to walk! I have no time to find or rehearse another Vicki. I have just one afternoon, while Richard is fitted for a surgical corset, to cure Brooke of nervous exhaustion, with no medical aids except a little whisky – you've got the whisky? – a few flowers – you've got the money for the flowers? – and a certain faded charm. So I haven't come to the theatre to hear about other people's problems. I've come to be taken out of myself and preferably not put back again.

**Garry:** Well, we're all thinking of it as the technical. Aren't we love? Don't worry about the words, Dotty, my pet. Listen, Dotty, your words are fine, your words are better than the, do you know what I mean? Isn't that right? I mean, OK, so he's the, you know. Fine. But Dotty, love, you've been playing this kind of part for, well, you know what I mean. But here we are, we're all thinking, my God, we open tomorrow, we've only had a fortnight to rehearse, we don't know where we are, but my God, here we are! These sardines! They're driving us all mad! There's four plates of sardines coming in Act One alone! They go here, they go there. She takes the- I take them. I mean, don't you feel, you know? I'm just saying,

Words. Doors. Bags. Boxes. Sardines. Us. OK? I've made my point? Sorry, Lloyd. But sometimes you just have to come right out with it. You know? Let me say just one thing. Since we've stopped. I've worked with a lot of directors, Lloyd. Some of them were geniuses. Some of them were bastards. But I've never met one who was so totally and absolutely... I don't know...

**Brooke:** (as Vicki) Now what!? Well I didn't put the hot water bottle there! You don't think there is something creepy going on... I can feel goose-pimples all over! Let's get the covers over our heads! You hear all sorts of funny things about these old houses. I'm going to get into bed and..... (freezes) Your bag! Suddenly! Here! Now-Gone! No! Don't go in there! Oh no! I'm never going to see Basingstoke again!

**Poppy:** (over intercom) Act one beginners, please. You calls, Miss Otley, Miss Ashton, Mr Lejeune, Mr Fellows, Miss Blair. Act one beginners, please!

Dotty will pull herself together now we've called beginners. Now she knows she's got to be on stage in five minutes!....If only she'd speak! If she won't go on...I would only have five minutes to change! Four Minutes! I'll have another go. Takes your mind off your own problems anyways...

**Belinda:** Oh, I love technicals! Everyone's always so nice to everyone. But Freddie, my precious, don't you like a nice all-night technical? Oh, Freddie, my precious! It's lovely to see you cheering up and making jokes. This is such a lovely company to work with. It's such a happy company. (*after an incident*) Oh, look at Freddie, the poor love! He's just got a little nosebleed, my sweet. He's got a thing about violence. It always makes his nose bleed. Freddie? He's feeling a little faint, my love. He's got this thing about... (*she tries to demonstrate bleeding*). Well, I won't say the word. We all understand, my dear.

**Frederick:** Lloyd, you know how stupid I am about moves. Sorry Garry...

Sorry Brooke... It's just my usual dimness. But why do I take the things off into the study. Wouldn't it be more natural if I left them on? I thought it might be somehow more logical. Lloyd, I know it's a bit late in the day to go into all this... as long as we're not too pushed. I've never understood why he carries an overnight bag and a box of groceries into the study to look at his mail. I just don't know why I take them. If you could just give me a reason I could keep in mind. I mean you know how stupid I am about plot. May I ask another silly question?

**Burglar:** No bars, no burglar alarm. They ought to be prosecuted for incitement. No, but sometimes it makes me want to sit down and weep. When I think I used to do banks! When I remember I used to do bullion vaults! What am I doing now? I'm breaking into paper bags! Right, what are they offering...? One microwave oven. What? Fifty quid? Hardly worth lifting it. Junk, junk, junk... if you insist (*He pockets some small items*) Where's the desk? No, they all say the same thing... They all say the same thing... It's hard to adjust to retirement. No, I miss the violence. I miss having other human beings around me to terrify. It's nice to hear a bit of shouting and screaming around you. All this silence gets you down... I'm going to end up talking to myself.

**Tim:** (TIM is walking anxiously up and down in his dinner jacket)

And maybe Act One beginners is what we'll get. Dotty'll pull herself together. Won't she? We've only been on the road for a month! We've only got to Ashton-under-Lyne! What's it going to be like by the time we've got to Stockton-on-Tees? If only she'd unlock her dressing room door! Look, if Dotty won't go on... IF she won't...Of course she will! I'm sure she will. But if she doesn't ...She will, she will. But if she didn't ... If only she'd say something!