**Incognito News**

**LOVE, MONEY & MORALS**

**The Miser**
*a play about the confusion between love and money*

By Molière
Adapted by Miles Malleson.
Directed by Gary Jones
Performances:

The cast (well into rehearsals) of Molière’s famous morality play includes new, old and returning faces. We have some newcomers in the cast: Darren Gurney last seen in Under Milk Wood, Ashley Elvin soon to be seen in the youth production and David McKee in his first production for Incog’s. We also welcome back Liz Rimmer and Stephen Russell.

The Miser – written in 1668 is one of Molière’s great “character” plays. Molière has a talent for taking a single trait and placing it at the centre of the action. Making the entire play revolve around that characteristic. Every time we come back to see the trait play itself in a new context it seems more and more outrageous. The Miser. Harpagon (Graham Boon), confuses love and money through the course of the play, which provides a fun platform for twisting the language of one into the language of the other.

Harpagon wants to marry Elise to wealthy older man Anselme (David Mc Kee). As for son Cleante (Stephen Russell), Harpagon approves of his Marianne (Liz Rimmer), so much so that he has decided to marry her himself. Frosoine (Jennie Mende), the Molière equivalent of Thornton Wilder’s The Matchmaker, is in on everybody’s secrets and Master Jacques (Chris Goldie). Harpagon’s all-purpose servant, slaps on the hats of chef and chauffeur to respond to demands for each. La Fleche (Darren Gurney), in a derby that conjures up visions of an underworld character, is the clever character who finds the Miser’s treasure and makes it work in ways never intended.

**MOLIERE**

Molière, whose real name was Jean Baptiste Poquelin, composed 12 of the most durable and penetrating satirical full-length comedies of all time, some in rhyming verse, some in prose, as well as six shorter farces and comedies. As a comic dramatist he ranks with such other distinctive masters of the genre as Aristophanes, Plautus, and George Bernard Shaw.

He was also the leading French comic stage director, and theoretician of the 18th century. In a theatrical period, the early baroque dominated by the formal neoclassical tragedies of Mairét, Rotrou, du Ryer. Pierre and Thomas Cornéille, and Racine. Molière affirmed the potency of comedy as a serious, flexible art form. He also wrote a number of pastorals and other indoor and outdoor divertissements. Such as his popular comedy-ballets, that depended on a formidable array of stage machinery (mostly imported from Italy) capable of providing swift and startling changes of sumptuous scenic effects.

He was born on Jan. 15, 1622, to Marie and Jean Poquelin: his father was a Parisian furniture merchant and upholsterer to the king. Jean Baptiste received his early education at the College de Clermont, a Jesuit school, becoming a promising scholar of Latin and Greek. Although he proceeded to study law and was awarded his law degree in 1642, he turned away from both the legal profession and his father’s business. Instead, he incorporated (1643) an acting troupe, the Illustré Theatre, in collaboration with the Bejart family, probably because he had fallen in love with their oldest daughter. Madeleine Bejart, who became his mistress. At roughly the same time he also acquired the pseudonym Molière. With this company. Moliere played an unsuccessful season in Paris and went bankrupt. then left to tour the provinces, primarily in southern and southwestern France. from about 1646 to 1658. During these 12 years he polished his skills as actor, director, administrator, and playwright. In 1658 the troupe returned to Paris and played before Louis XIV. The king’s brother became Molière’s patron: later Moliere and his colleagues were appointed official providers of entertainment to the Sun King himself.

In the following 24 years, starting with The Precious Maidens Ridiculed (1659), which established him as the most popular comic playwright of the day. and ending with The Imaginary Invalid (1673). Moliere advanced from being a gifted adapter of Italian-derived sketches and a showman who put on extravaganzas to a writer whose best plays had the lasting impact of tragedies. Unwittingly, he made many enemies. The clergy mistakenly believed that certain of his plays were attacks on the church. Other playwrights resented his continual experiments with comic forms (as in The School for Wives) and with verse (as in Amphitryon). Famous tragedians such as Montfleury and Hauteroche envied his success with the public and the royal protection he enjoyed. Moliere responded by incorporating some of his detractors into his comedies as buffoons and ineffectuals.

In 1662 he married Armande Bejart. a 19-year-old actress who was either Madeleine’s sister or (as some of the playwright’s rivals claimed) her daughter by Moliere. They had one child Esprit-Madeleine. born in 1665. the marriage led to more than one separation and reconciliation between the playwright and his wife. who was 21 years his junior.

In the late 1660s. Moliere developed a lung ailment from which he never recovered. although he continued to write. act. direct. and manage his troupe as energetically as before. He finally collapsed on Feb. 17. 1673, after the fourth performance of The Imaginary Invalid, and died at home that evening. Four days later. on the night of February 21. he was interred in Saint Joseph’s Cemetery. Church leaders refused to officiate or to grant his body a formal burial until the King interceded. Seven years later the King...
**FORTHCOMING SHOWS**

**7th-13th November**

*The Miser*

by Molière

Directed by Gary Jones

6th-11th December

Alarms & Excursions

by Michael Frayn

Directed by Andy Mills

24th-29th January 2005

*Sons & Mothers*

a new play written & directed by Gillian Griffiths

1st-5th March 2005

Youth show

Directed by Vicky York

**ROUND AND ROUND AND ROUND WE RAN!**

A beautifully hot sunny September Saturday afternoon and an excellent turn out for the rounders challenge at Bethune Park. The forty-five minute warm-up as the players arrived came as a major shock to the system for most people. Sporting talents varied and everyone found muscles they didn’t know they had!

**SOME (SMUG) WINNERS!!**

We persevered and put all the participants names into a hat and picked captains. Cheryl, from the youth group, was the first captain drawn and Simon Darvell was selected as captain of the second team. Teams were then drawn from the hat and battle lines drawn. Sonja “Don’t drop the bat” Taylor kindly agreed to referee the proceedings - and boy did we need her - applying strict rules of play - those who caused trouble were threatened with detention afterwards! Twenty four players with limited knowledge of the game was a tough match to referee.

It was a good clean game and played with plenty of spirit. Cheryl’s team containing Sarah, Gillian, Damian, Ruth, Robin, Allan, Huw, Moira, Ann, John and Hazel winning the afternoon by about 14 points to 11 or thereabouts. It’s not the winning that counts, it’s the fouling in between. There were some great shots and catches, disputed points and a wonderful gesture by Cheryl’s team (arm twisted by the ref!) to let Simon’s lot have an extra round of batting as things weren’t going too well.

The oldies shone through showing that stamina and the will to win still succeeds - that or the pills were working! Demon hitter Brian Davies at one point raced, gazelle like, round the field for a full rounder - putting people a year or two younger to shame. Running Robin (Dunn) scored well for his side. “I feel like I’ve just got off a horse” he said afterwards. He looked like it too!

Everyone entered into the spirit, charging round knocking over the posts and obstructing fielders, staggering back to the finish.

Ace bowling - in parts - and questionable fielding all made for a fun afternoon.

We then retired to the theatre grounds (the coal hole or "that grosty piece of concrete") for the BBQ and to eat and drink until the sun went down. Fine weather made for long, restful post-match socialising.

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**THE (GALLANT) LOSERS**

Many thanks to Jill Lomas for organising the day, assisted by Ruth Nixon and to Sonja Taylor who supplied the Rounders equipment and kept the game and players in (some sort of) order.

A great inclusive social event - more please!
ITG HEALTH & SAFETY
By Simon Darvill - Incog’s Safety expert
Why does ITG need to have a formalized H&S system?
One of the consequences of the ITG becoming a Company Limited by Guarantee is that we are now obliged to take our responsibilities concerning health and safety much more seriously. We have in effect become no different from any employer in that we are now liable to abide by the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 (hereafter known as “the legislation”).

at the theatre that ‘plug in’. We will in future have to start doing a Portable Appliance Testing (PAT). Without going into too much detail, what this means is that all electrical appliances with a plug used in the theatre must be tested for electrical safety. Anybody who uses anything that plugs in (including drill battery chargers) will have to have them tested and a sticker stuck on them to say that they have undergone a PAT. This will only need to be done once every five years.

DOING NOTHING?
What if we don’t do any of the above? We could carry on the way we have in the past and as such it is perhaps that we have never had to do before but as designed for radio does not always transfer carried out. I realize that this is something

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At the theatre that ‘plug in’.

All electrical appliances with a plug used in safety. Anybody who uses anything that

Banning

If we don’t do any of the above? We may also be

Sorry

If anybody wants to read the play before things get moving, give Tony a ring on 020 8263 4626.

Under Milk Wood

Dylan Thomas’ classic work represented the first post-Concorde merge production directed by Colleen Moran and comprising many Concorde stalwarts along with established and new Incognito members.

Regrettably – perhaps due to it being early in the season – the performances were not as well attended as many ITG shows. Many of the performances demonstrated a good understanding of welsh humour + accent! Being a ‘voice’ play originally, designed for radio does not always transfer well to the stage and as such it is perhaps advisable to keep set and stage effect to a minimum in order to maintain the flow of this poetic and rhythmic piece.

The opening, with the early morning mist, was effective – except that the smoke gun operator went out a bit mad and filled the auditorium with smoke such that the audience could see nothing for about five minutes! Imaginative use of gauzes and minimal scenery would have greatly enhanced the whole effect. Pools of light bring the various characters – alive and dead might give a cohesive feel to the picture of this town with all its weird and wonderful characters – past and present.
Aiming for a mix of ‘realism’ in what is essentially a sublime, surreal work can detract from the quality of the overall effect. Is this production, the offstage voices of ?? W?? W a mistake such that we lost the sound and expressiveness of two very good and powerful voices – not quite powerful enough however to be always fully audible. Even if they were reading the text, it would have had more impact with them being ‘on stage’. Theatre is an illusion and it does no harm to acknowledge the artifice – particularly in a play like Under Milk Wood.

Notable performances were given by ????? and we hope to see ex-Concorde actors in various Incognito shows in the future.

AGM & NEW COMMITTEE

A well attended AGM – technically three meetings as the last AGM of the ‘old’ charity, an EGM closing the old charity and the first AGM of the new – which confused everyone but resulted in a new management committee (looking much like the one) at ITG as a Company Limited by Guarantee as follows:-

Chair – David Longstaff
Secretary – Jose Cronin
Business Director – Graham Boon
Treasurer – Peter Kenyon
Artistic Director – Brian Davies
Technical Director – Jose Cronin
Membership – Ruth Nixon
Social Manager – Jill Lomas
Marketing & Comm. – Andy Mills

All the above will be Trustees of ITG along with Robin Dunn who will remain a Trustee. Graham Sawtell will be co-opted as Box Office Manager. The Auditor is again Chris Goldie.

OF SELTZGENE AND SYPHONS AND INCOGNITO THEATRE

Nick McKie, an occasional box-slayer at Incogs, has presented your Editor with a screed establishing the origins of our theatre building.

Everyone seems to have heard that Incognito Theatre Club occupies a building that was once a lemonade factory. The story rests on the 1941 discovery of an oddly shaped bottle by our earliest Incogs pioneers including Mike Stillwell, proud custodian of the bottle). They had been excavating the compacted earth floor for eventual use as the auditorium.

THE HAMILTON BOTTLE

The bottle is a so-called ‘Hamilton bottle’ designed to lie on its side so that the cork is kept wet by the contents and does not dry out so releasing the ‘fizz’. The bottle has moulded into it ‘E Geraut and Co’ and thereby hangs a tale. Our building is said to be built 1900ish; it doesn’t appear on the 1898 OS map but is there in 1913. Surrounding houses in Holly Park Road already existed in 1898. You may not have it by your bedside for casual reading but may recommend The Mineral Water Trade Review and Guardian? Its issue of January 1905 carried this advertisement:

ENGLISH MADE SYPHONS

Write for Samples and Price List.
NIGGIE’S PATENT BOLD-LINED SYPHONS.
MINERAL WATER & MONITOR SYPHONS.
SYPHON REPAIRS, ANY MAKE, 6s. PER 100.
HOLLY PARK, NEW SOUTHGATE, LONDON, N.

Syphons and Holly Park are tantalising but hardly specific. The handwritten minutes of the Friern Barnet Urban District Council dated 13 December 1898 and 10 January 1899 are more helpful. They record conditional approval for ‘workshop and stores for Mr Nicoli (sic) Holly Park Road’. Thence to the 1901 Census: but first remind yourselves where Incogs is situated in the space in Holly Park Road between number 100 to the left as you face the Clinic and 14 to the right.

THE NICOLE FAMILY

Occupants of number 104 are Henry and Blanche Nicole and their two children. He is described as a ‘Mineral Water Manufacturer’ and ‘Employer’. It seems reasonable to suppose that 104 and the present Incogs and Clinic sites and the present car park were occupied by the Nicholes and that they manufactured mineral water there.

A question remains about water supply to the factory. Mike Stillwell recalls a gas supply in 1941 but no water. Options are that either the supply was tapped from 1941 or that water was drawn from the Gin Mill house (supplied by the Barnet District Gas and Water Company) or that water was brought to the site in containers.

Kelly’s Post Office Directory of 1902 confirms and develops the story. It shows Blanche Nicole as ‘proprietress’ of the Barnet Aerated Water Company Ltd of 104 Holly Park Road.

INDENTURE

The Public Record Office at Kew holds records of dissolved companies: there you can see the handwritten Indenture dated 20 April 1899 which creates the limited company with Blanche and Henry as directors. You will note dear reader the closeness of the building approval (10 January) and the company formation on 20 April 1899.

The best we leave till last. The indenture lists in detail all the paraphernalia of a mineral water manufacturer of 1899.

“Machinery and Plant as erected in factory at Holly Park Road elsewhere, consisting of 3 and half HP Crossley Gas Engine, 40 Gallon Cylinder with pump, gold lined, two 2 and a half inch pumps, Rother cylinder gold lined, two syphon filling machines, gold lined, three syphon filling machines, one of which with syrup pump, one volcanic machine, complete with pump and the above together with three Horses, one pony, one canoe, one trap, two sets of harness, five carbonic gas tubes, three hundred syphons, three dozen seltzgones, one gross screw bottles, thirtyfour one dozen cases for syphons and thirtytwo two dozen cases for bottles”.

So as we sit in the auditorium suffering the occasional longueur we can imagine three horses and a pony dozing somewhere near. And above us three syphon filling machines (one with syrup pump) waiting tomorrow’s labours.

Henry died in 1904 aged 51. The advertisement of 1905 still speaks of Nicole and patent syphons so we can suppose business carried on in some form. The company solicitor wrote on 26 May 1905: (Henry) “died some two years ago and since then what business remained was...”
carried on or managed in some way by a Mr Bull who now carries on a business on the premises. 

BLANCHE NICOLE

It seems from the cessation of business at his death that although, as we shall see, Blanche had powerful family background in mineral water. Henry ran the show at Holly Park. The story ends here. Do we still care? Who knows? We might as well have forgotten the bottle?

Blanche was born Blanche Julj Geraut: she had two sisters Eugenie and Elise, aged 6 and 5 years older. Their father was Eugene Geraut. His company had been "50 years" in the syphon business when a company advertisement appeared February 18 1900. An early will shows that he handed the business on to Eugenie and Elise in about 1888 and they carried on until at least 1901 when the Census shows Eugenie as a Glass Sliph Syphon Manufacturer and Employer. In the same will he describes himself as a 'manufacturer of soda syphon apparatus' He died in 1889. Eugene married Herbert Hewitt who I think became involved in the business. Blanche opted out of her share of the business when her sisters took it on in 1888. What she did from then on I don't know, but it is known that she and Henry set up as the Barnet Aerated Water Company Ltd in early 1899.

THAT BOTTLE AGAIN

We at last come to the bottle. The three sisters were all in the world of mineral water and syphons. Perhaps Blanche filled bottles for Eugene and Co: she may have bought them in for filling and resale: it's fanciful to suppose our bottle was discarded by someone working in the factory: surely there was enough mineral water there in any case, and what about the deposit on the bottle? We only know that 'E Geraut and Co' were her sisters' company and that the bottle came to one of theirs. Eugene bequeathed the family vault in Finchley cemetery to Henry Butler. Unsurprisingly it is now largely overgrown but inscriptions can be read and the cemetery record is clear: Now for the Henry James Nicole story: we know it from 1899 on that is the Incogs and Barnet Aerated Water Company Ltd. story. Henry has a forgotten place in mineral water history. His father was a watchmaker: when he married in 1887 he described himself as a watchmaker: his death certificate describes him as a watchmaker and jeweller. It's likely that he could repair, probably make and design intricate pieces. It's clear that he used his talents in the commercial battlefield not wholly in manufacturing aerated mineral water (a fairly simple procedure of passing gas through water) but in the tricky area of designing the device to hold the aerated water in the bottle (or so-called vase): then to allow the water to be used at will. Patents speak of Taps for Seltzogenes and Syphons, and variations on a theme: improved valves. Improved methods of fixing the head to the vase, ways of treating the internal metalwork with e.g. gold or silver to prevent the water being contaminated, sleeving the metal parts with celluloid with the same object. (Seltzogene was an earlier name, as was Gazogene, for what was later known as the soda syphon)

Blanche's patent number 5379 of 1899 was submitted in her name from "Holly Lodge. Frien Barnett" is typical of the three Blanche Nicole patents and 2 Eugene Geraut patents I have copied, and because I think it likely to have been Henry's work, knowing his background, I speculate that his particular contribution to history was his work on syphon taps or heads. Somehow Henry had secured 5 patents in the two years £300 (were they his work or did he buy the rights to the patents?) in the UK, Austria, France, Hungary and Belgium.

THE IDRIS CONNECTION

A limited company was created in 1899 - the Glass Lined Syphon Company Ltd - with Henry as a shareholder committing his patents to the company and three other shareholders who together made up Idris and Company (remember 'Istn Idris when I'm dry?') They committed 2 patents of their own to the venture. The legalase and complexities of the indenture are too much for me: but the certain fact is that the new company was to supply Idris and company with syphons of a specified standard: this supply was somehow linked to the life of the patents. My