OLD VIC
NEW VOICES

THE WINSLOW BOY

TERENCE RATTIGAN



TEACHING RESOURCES

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THE WINSLOW BOY
CAST



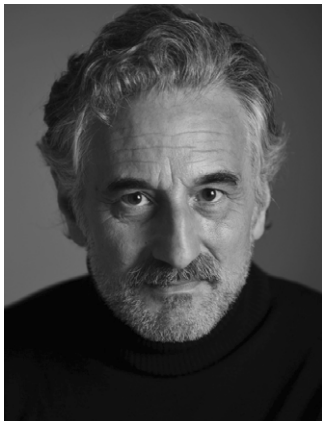
Sia Berkeley
Miss Barnes



Deborah Findlay
Grace Winslow



Naomi Frederick
Catherine Winslow



Henry Goodman
Arthur Winslow



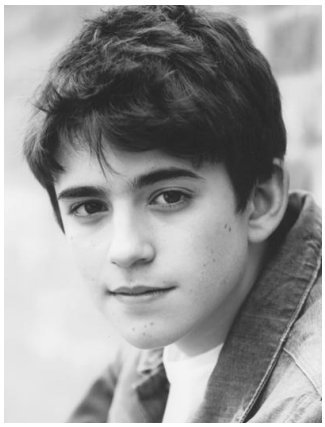
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Dickie Winslow



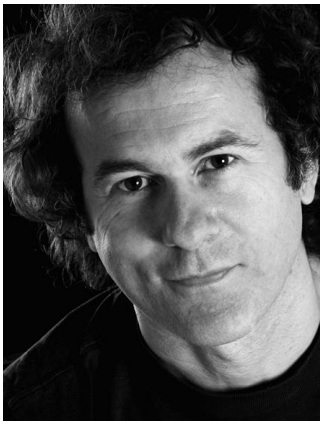
Stephen Joseph
Fred



Wendy Nottingham
Violet



Charlie Rowe
Ronnie Winslow



Peter Sullivan
Sir Robert Morton



Richard Teverson
John Watherstone



Jay Villiers
Desmond Curry

TERENCE RATTIGAN
HIS STORY

Born 10 June 1911 in Kensington, Terence Rattigan is considered to be one of Britain's most well-respected dramatists.

Rattigan was born to a distinguished family just before the coronation of King George V (a ceremony that his father had a small role in). Initially he lived with his parents, travelling with them as they were posted overseas. However, when he was two years old, his paternal grandmother, Lady Rattigan, took over his care and he remained based in London. It was during this period that he became interested in the theatre, as he saw his first show aged six years old – *Cinderella* – which enthralled him.

From boarding school, Rattigan moved to Harrow when he was 14. He attended Harrow on a scholarship and took the opportunity to read all the plays he could find, as well as writing his own. He was an academically-gifted student, winning prizes in History and English Literature. After leaving, Rattigan began studying History at Trinity College, Oxford (again, on a scholarship). He was active in the Oxford University Drama Society and it was at this time that he came into contact with John Gielgud, a renowned actor; this friendship would continue for many years.

During 1933, Rattigan co-wrote a play, *First Episode* (originally titled *Embryo*), which was initially performed in a small theatre near Kew Bridge. It was well-received, though its controversial depiction of student life shocked many, and transferred to the West End the following year. Although Rattigan made almost no money from the play, he decided to leave Oxford before completing his degree, in order to pursue a career as a playwright. His father offered to support him for two years, with the condition being that if Rattigan didn't succeed in that time, he would take whatever job his father could find for him.

Despite writing six plays during those two years, and assisting John Gielgud with the dialogue for a new stage production of *A Tale of Two Cities*, Rattigan was not able to make a living from being a playwright so began working for a film company (a job found for him by his father) where he wrote additional dialogue for films. This was excellent training, it turned out, for his own writing as it taught him how to be succinct and focused; traits that are valued in his later plays.

Unexpectedly, in 1936, one of his unproduced plays was chosen to fill a gap in a schedule at the Criterion Theatre, Piccadilly. *French Without Tears* opened on 6 November 1936 without much confidence; it was raining heavily and two other much bigger productions were also opening that night. However, it was a great success and ran for over 1,000 performances in London, transferred to New York and was made into a film.

In the following years, Rattigan met with limited success due to the onset of World War II, as several of his plays closed after just a short run, including the now acclaimed *After the Dance*. In 1942 though, his new play *Flare Path* opened on the West End after completing a short tour, and was well received by both the critics and the audiences. His next play, *While the Sun Shines*, opened the following year whilst *Flare Path* was still being performed in the theatre next door.

Over the next 20 years, Rattigan's plays had mixed responses. *Love in Idleness*, *Adventure Story* and *Who is Sylvia?* (amongst others) were all panned by the critics. But *The Winslow Boy*, *The Browning Version*, *The Deep Blue Sea* and *Separate Tables* received rave reviews in London and garnered Rattigan a number of awards.

From 1960 onwards, Rattigan battled with ill health until he was diagnosed with leukaemia in 1963. Due to this, Rattigan left England for the warmer climates of France, Hollywood and Bermuda, where he discovered that he did not in fact have leukaemia but was suffering from a series of viral illnesses. Reinvigorated, Rattigan continued to write plays, films and television dramas.

In June 1971, aged 60, Rattigan was knighted; only the second playwright to be honoured in this way since the First World War (Noël Coward was the first). At this time, there were a number of revivals of his plays in the West End. However, he was diagnosed with leukaemia again, this time for certain. Rattigan continued to write, though his health deteriorated and, in 1977, he left his hospital bed to attend the opening night of his final play, *Cause Célèbre*.

Rattigan died at his home in Bermuda on 30 November 1977. At that time, two of his plays, *Cause Célèbre* and *Separate Tables*, were playing successfully on the West End.

TERENCE RATTIGAN
LIFE & WORKS

1911 – Terence Rattigan is born 10 June in Kensington, London.

1917 – Rattigan sees his first stage production, *Cinderella*.

1925 – Rattigan enrols at Harrow.

1930 – Rattigan begins his studies at Trinity College, Oxford.

1933 – Rattigan co-writes his first play (with Phillip Heimann) entitled *First Episode* which opens in a theatre near Kew Bridge, causing controversy.

1934 – *First Episode* opens on 26 January and runs for two months.

1936 – *French Without Tears* opens on 6 November to critical and commercial success.

1938 – Rattigan co-writes *Follow My Leader*, a farce satirising Hitler, but the Lord Chamberlain bans it from being produced until 1940; it is not a success.

1939 – *After the Dance* premieres to a standing ovation but the start of World War II causes audiences to fall off and the play closes after six weeks.

1940 – Rattigan enlists in the RAF.

1941 – Rattigan writes *Flare Path* whilst fighting the war.

1942 – *Flare Path* opens.

1943 – *While the Sun Shines* opens (next door to the Apollo Theatre where *Flare Path* still runs).

1944 – *Love in Idleness* opens.

1946 – *The Winslow Boy* opens. The play wins the Ellen Terry Award for Best New Play and the New York Critics Award for Best Foreign Play.

1948 – *Playbill* opens; a double bill of *The Browning Version* and *Harlequinade*, winning Rattigan the Ellen Terry Award again.

1949 – *Adventure Story* opens.

1950 – *Who is Sylvia?* opens.

1952 – *The Deep Blue Sea* opens.

1953 – *The Sleeping Prince* opens in the West End starring Laurence Olivier and Vivien Leigh. It is later made into a film starring Olivier and Marilyn Monroe, under the title *The Prince and the Showgirl*.

1954 – *Separate Tables* opens to critical and commercial success. It transfers to Broadway and is later made into a film starring Rita Hayworth, Deborah Kerr, Burt Lancaster and David Niven.

1958 – *Variation on a Theme* opens. Panned by critics, it also led a disappointed young shop assistant, Shelagh Delaney, to write her own play to address social issues. *A Taste of Honey* was the result which the critics hailed.

1960 – *Ross* opens.

1960 – *Joie de Vivre*, a musical version of *French Without Tears*, opens.

1963 – *Man and Boy* opens for a short run before transferring to New York. Rattigan is diagnosed with leukaemia; later discovered to be a misdiagnosis.

1966 – Rattigan leaves England permanently and sets up homes in France, Hollywood and Bermuda.

1970 – *A Bequest to a Nation* opens.

1971 – Rattigan receives a Knighthood in the Queen's Birthday Honours list.

1972 – Rattigan is correctly diagnosed with leukaemia.

1973 – A double bill of *In Praise of Love* and *Before Dawn* opens. *In Praise of Love* transfers to Broadway the following year.

1976 – *Duologue* opens.

1977 – *Cause Célèbre* opens. Rattigan attends the opening night despite being seriously ill.

1977 – Terence Rattigan dies on 30 November at his home in Bermuda.

THE WINSLOW BOY
SYNOPSIS

The story follows the case of Ronnie Winslow, a 14-year-old boy accused of stealing, who is expelled from the Naval College he attends. His father, Arthur Winslow, believes that Ronnie is innocent and begins the long process of clearing his name. This is made more complicated by the fact that his guilt has been decided by the Admiralty and therefore cannot be overturned without the consent of the government, and permission from the King.

To fight this battle, Arthur, with the support of his Suffragette daughter Catherine, secures the services of a highly respected barrister, Sir Robert Morton, who Catherine considers to be cold and unsympathetic. However, they all work together tirelessly to gather public support and eventually the case is heard in court. During the trial, the case against Ronnie Winslow is taken to pieces and the government have no choice but to drop all charges and declare him innocent.

Although the outcome is a victory, the long drawn out campaign takes its toll. Arthur Winslow's health has seriously deteriorated, leaving him in a wheelchair, and Catherine's engagement to John Watherstone has been broken off by him. They have very little money and relationships in the house are strained. However, Arthur and Catherine agree that their ultimate success in clearing Ronnie's name and standing up to the establishment means that it was worth doing.





Far left: Wendy Nottingham as Violet, the Winslow family's maid.

Left: Sia Berkeley as newspaper journalist Miss Barnes is greeted by Arthur Winslow (played by Henry Goodman).

Photos: Nobby Clark

THE WINSLOW BOY ACT BREAKDOWN

All of the action takes places in the drawing room of Arthur Winslow's house and is set in the years leading up to World War I (1914–1918).

Act I A Sunday morning in July

Ronnie Winslow, a boy of about 14 years old, stands alone. It becomes clear that he has returned home unexpectedly from Osborne, his Naval College, and he is nervously awaiting his parents. However, he hides in the garden when they arrive, clutching what is obviously an important letter.

Arthur and Grace (Ronnie's father and mother) and Dickie and Kate (Ronnie's older brother and sister) enter. The conversation soon turns to Dickie not taking his studies seriously, with both his parents berating him. After Dickie exits, Grace quizzes Catherine (Kate) about her soon-to-be fiancé, John Watherstone, as Grace is concerned that he doesn't know about Kate being a Suffragette, but Kate reassures her.

John arrives for lunch and discusses his marriage proposal with Arthur, focusing on the financial arrangements. It is agreed that there will be enough money for John to support Kate and the marriage is approved. Grace and Kate enter the room and Grace welcomes John into the family.

John and Kate are left alone, where they talk about their marriage. Ronnie appears at the door to the garden, soaked through, obviously wanting to speak to Kate alone, so John exits. Ronnie gives Kate a letter and repeatedly denies whatever he is accused of. Dickie enters and Kate leaves to find their mother. Ronnie reveals to Dickie that he has been sent home from school because he has been accused of stealing, which Dickie makes light of. Kate and Grace enter, and Ronnie immediately goes to his mother, crying. She comforts him and takes him from the room. Dickie also exits and leaves Kate alone with John, who has re-entered. She reveals to him that Ronnie has been accused of stealing some money. Their conversation is cut short by the arrival of Desmond Curry, a family friend and lawyer, who has loved Kate for many years.

Desmond makes uncomfortable conversation with Kate and John. He congratulates them on their engagement, before Grace enters followed closely by Arthur. They all talk about Desmond's previous cricketing career and raise a glass to the happy couple. Violet, their maid, accidentally reveals that Ronnie is home, surprising Arthur. He demands to know what is going on so Grace reads aloud the letter from the college, which states that Ronnie has been expelled from the college for stealing a five-shilling postal order. Arthur instructs Violet to get Ronnie and sends everyone else through to the dining room.

Ronnie enters. Arthur asks him face-to-face if he stole the postal order and Ronnie denies it. Arthur sends Ronnie back to bed and calls Osborne College.

Act II An evening in April (nine months later)

Dickie is alone listening to his gramophone. Kate enters and they talk about their plans for the evening. Violet comes in with a newspaper which carries letters from the public regarding the Winslows' attempts to secure a trial for Ronnie. They discuss the case briefly before talking about Kate's postponed wedding to John. Arthur then enters and explains that he has asked Sir Robert Morton, an esteemed barrister, to meet with him. Kate exits to get ready for dinner.

Arthur talks to Dickie about his studies and whether he will graduate from Oxford. Dickie admits it's unlikely which leads Arthur to tell him that he needs him to give up his studying so the money can be used for the case. Dickie reluctantly agrees and Arthur promises to get him a job in the bank. Dickie exits.

Violet enters, bringing in Miss Barnes, a journalist. She interviews Arthur regarding the case but is not interested in the details; she cares more about their curtains. Grace and Ronnie enter and Arthur and Ronnie are photographed together. Miss Barnes leaves, discussing the soft furnishings with Grace. Ronnie talks with Arthur about his new school and is obviously a much happier boy. He exits to get ready for Sir Robert Morton's arrival and Grace re-enters. She asks Arthur about his visit to the doctor and it is clear that Arthur's health is suffering. Grace exits to prepare some treatment for Arthur.

Kate enters, and she and her father discuss the case. It becomes apparent that the family are struggling financially which means Kate has lost her dowry and Arthur is concerned that this will affect her relationship with John. She reassures him and they move on to talk about Sir Robert Morton. It is clear that Kate doesn't think much of him but Arthur is convinced of his abilities.

Sir Robert arrives and is left alone with Kate. Their conversation makes clear her disdain for him and his cold reserve. Grace and Arthur enter, accompanied by Desmond, and Sir Robert explains what the next stage for the case is. As they are wishing to try the Admiralty and take the case to court, they must petition the King to allow them to do this (a Petition of Right) which, if granted, means the King will state 'Let right be done' and the case can go to trial.

Ronnie enters and Sir Robert questions him about the case in the manner of a cross-examination. Ronnie (and his family) finds this upsetting but it convinces Sir Robert of Ronnie's innocence and he agrees to take the case.

Act III An evening in January (nine months later)

Arthur sits reading aloud an article in the paper about the case. Ronnie and Grace are both present too but not really interested; Ronnie is struggling to stay awake and Grace is darning socks. The case is being debated in House of Commons, though it is not going well as there is concern about the precedent it will set.

Violet enters to inform them that there are reporters calling but she is asked to send them away. Her entrance leads Grace and Arthur to discuss her role in the house as they no longer have the money to pay her salary. The conversation moves on to the case, causing Grace to become upset as she talks about how their life has changed. Arthur is determined to see it through but Grace is not convinced he's doing it for the right reasons. She leaves the room almost in tears.

After a brief conversation with Violet, Kate enters and updates her father on the debate. It is agreed that, in the future, no cadet can be the subject of an inquiry without his parents being notified. However, they do not plan to take the Winslow case any further. They are both disheartened but Kate tries to keep up her father's morale. The conversation turns to Sir Robert who showed his displeasure with the decision through dramatically leaving the House. Kate still does not trust him and is telling her father what she thinks of him, when he enters.

Sir Robert talks with Arthur and Kate about why he believes that Ronnie isn't guilty and how the case is going. During this exchange, Arthur starts reading a letter that arrived earlier and, after finishing it, tells Sir Robert that he intends to drop the case. The letter is revealed to be from Colonel Watherstone (John's father; Kate's fiancé). In it, he issues an ultimatum for the Winslows to drop the case or he will stop the marriage. Kate is determined to continue regardless but Arthur refuses. Sir Robert is initially upset but then seems unbothered and changes the subject to apparently mock Kate and her Suffragette beliefs. At this point, John arrives to speak with Kate. Sir Robert and Arthur leave the room.

John and Kate discuss the letter and it becomes clear that John would prefer the Winslows to give up the case, particularly as it's over such a small thing. Kate surprises him by saying that she doesn't care if Ronnie is guilty or not – it's about his human rights. Eventually, though, Kate agrees that she wants to marry him which John takes as acquiescence. However, at that moment, Sir Robert receives a phone call telling him that his Petition of Right will be endorsed and the case can go to court. Sir Robert seeks permission to continue with the case and Arthur hands the decision over to Kate. After a pause, she tells him to carry on. John storms from the room.

Act IV An afternoon in June (five months later)

Dickie enters, calling out for his family; he has obviously been away. He answers the telephone and we glean from his side of the conversation that the trial is nearly over and they expect a verdict the next day. Grace enters and, when the telephone rings again, she simply states 'Everyone out' and hangs up. It is clear they are being constantly bothered by the press. Grace is thrilled to see Dickie and invites him to go to court with her later. Arthur enters and it is obvious his health has deteriorated significantly. He and Dickie catch up, and Dickie reveals he's joined the Territorial Army in preparation for the suspected war coming. Arthur goes through to lunch, leaving Grace and Dickie. Dickie expresses concern about his father but Grace is resigned to the way he is.

Kate arrives home and updates the family on what happened in court. She feels that it has not gone well. Kate, Dickie and Grace get ready to head back to court. Grace and Dickie leave, and Arthur asks Kate directly if she thinks they will lose; she is non-committal but again is critical of Sir Robert. As she is about to leave, Desmond arrives asking to speak to her alone. Arthur exits.

It is obvious that Desmond intends to propose. Without Desmond having to ask directly, Kate makes it clear she knows why he's there and asks for a few days to think about it. Desmond then surprises Kate, and himself, by talking in depth about why she should marry him. She thanks him and says she will give an answer soon. Desmond seems satisfied and begins to talk about Sir Robert. He reveals that Sir Robert had been offered the position of Lord Chief Justice but turned it down to continue with their case. Desmond leaves and Kate is left alone to think about this.

Arthur enters and, after hearing that Desmond had proposed, encourages Kate to decline but she is almost resigned to the marriage. They talk about the case and how they have been determined to see it through, no matter what. They then hear a newsboy shouting in the street about the case. Violet bursts in and explains that they have won the case; she talks of the scenes of jubilation at the court and that Sir Robert cried at the verdict. Arthur and Kate are shocked with the suddenness of it all. Violet leaves and Kate begins to cry, comforted by Arthur. Sir Robert arrives to give them the full details of what happened; that Ronnie has been completely acquitted. Arthur thanks him. Violet enters; there are reporters at the door. Arthur goes to give a statement.

Kate and Sir Robert are left alone. She apologises for misjudging him and questions him on why he hides his emotions. Sir Robert explains that logic is needed in court, not emotions, but today's events moved him because 'right had been done'. They talk more about people's rights in general and Kate stands up for her feminist beliefs. Ronnie enters and apologises for missing the verdict; he'd been at the cinema. Sir Robert bids them farewell and Kate says she'll see him again in the House of Commons, but as an equal.

Curtain.

THE WINSLOW BOY
CHARACTER BREAKDOWN

(in order of appearance)

Ronnie Winslow

The title character, though not included in most of the action of the play. Ronnie is a bright boy of 13 years old at the start of the play and the youngest in the family, which seems to make him the favourite. Ronnie is still young in many ways; often looking to his mother for comfort. Although the case is focused on him, once he has started at a new school, he seems unbothered by what his father and sister are doing on his behalf; he falls asleep as his father talks about the case, he is more excited about the train he has travelled on to meet Sir Robert than the meeting itself, and he misses the verdict because he is at the cinema. Despite being the centre of the story, Ronnie's true purpose is as the focal point for how the individual can stand up to the State.

Violet

An orphan maid who has worked for the Winslows for nearly 24 years. She has never trained as parlour maid and, because of this, doesn't have the refinement that she should have; the Winslows are 'always having to explain her to people'. Violet is very much a part of the family and will happily give her opinion, whether asked for or not. Despite the Winslows having financial problems, she retains her job and it is Violet who tells Arthur and Catherine of the final verdict, in an enthusiastic, though not always coherent, manner.

Arthur Winslow

The head of the family, Arthur is nearly 60 years old and works for a bank. He is a proud man and, at the start, it is clear that his family hold him in fearful reverence; they all wish to be absent when he hears about Ronnie's expulsion. Nonetheless, from the beginning, he believes in his son and has no hesitation in fighting to clear Ronnie's name. However, his need to do this supersedes all else; he pushes his wife to her limits, his eldest son is forced to leave university and Arthur's health deteriorates to the extent that he needs full-time care. The only time he questions what he is doing is when his daughter's engagement is broken off; he is particularly close to Catherine and trusts her judgement so is unwilling to continue without her support. Although he is successful in the end, it costs him a great deal.

Grace Winslow

Wife of Arthur and mother to Dickie, Catherine and Ronnie, Grace is less interested in fighting the case and tries to maintain a sense of normality in the home. She obviously loves her children and has particular fondness for Ronnie; she is fiercely protective over him and, at one point, doesn't believe that the case is worth pursuing as he is happy in his new school and, therefore, the notoriety of the case is unnecessary. Additionally, she feels that the cost is too great, not just financially but also the effect on her, their children and how they are viewed by society. She does eventually come round; by the time the case is being heard in court, due to the public support, she seems to enjoy the drama and attention.

Dickie Winslow

The eldest son, Dickie is studying at Oxford with the aim of becoming a civil servant (working for the government) but is more interested in dancing, music and ladies. Dickie is close to Catherine; they enjoy frank conversations and are obviously comfortable with one another. Dickie feels that Ronnie is the favoured son as Dickie also applied to Osborne Naval College but failed the entrance exam; this is one of many points of contention between Dickie and Arthur. However, as the case progresses, Dickie demonstrates maturity; firstly by agreeing to give up his studies to help the family's finances and secondly, by working hard at the bank (a job his father found for him) and receiving a good report.

Catherine Winslow

The eldest of the Winslow children, Catherine (Kate) is nearing 30 years old and is a staunch believer in women's rights. From the start, it is clear that Catherine is somewhat separate from her family. They look to her for advice and how to behave; even Arthur continually asks her whether he should continue with the case. Catherine is unafraid to speak her mind to her family, John and even Sir Robert, and this strength of character carries her through the difficult times. Catherine's reasons for pursuing the case are different from those around her; Ronnie's guilt or innocence are irrelevant to her, what she is concerned with is his (and everybody's) human rights, and it is this that she is willing to fight for. Catherine perhaps makes the biggest sacrifice as she gives up her future marriage to John for this cause. However, it is the only choice she can make in order to be true to her beliefs. Catherine's intelligence, articulacy and political knowledge represent the changing role of women.

John Watherstone

John is an army officer of about 30 years old, who is engaged to Catherine but, because of the case, their wedding is continually postponed. John's father disapproves of the match and gives him an ultimatum; ask Catherine to call off the case or call off the marriage. John seems unwilling to fight for Catherine and support her in what she is doing. He eventually calls off the engagement and is later reported to be engaged to someone else.

Desmond Curry

Desmond is a lawyer in his mid-forties who used to be a star cricket player but is now out of condition. He has been in love with Catherine for many years and is a figure of fun within the Winslow family because of this. He somehow gathers the courage to propose to Catherine, which is done in an indirect way, though he makes a surprisingly impassioned speech for the match. Desmond is obviously enamoured by Catherine's vivacity, however, although he is essentially a decent man, he is quite dull.

Miss Barnes

A newspaper reporter, Miss Barnes is meant to interview Arthur regarding the case but is more interested in the furnishings of his home. She is representative of the traditional view of women and presents a contrast to Catherine, the more modern, liberated woman.

Sir Robert Morton

Sir Robert is a celebrated barrister brought in by Arthur to represent Ronnie. In his early forties, Sir Robert is quite an intimidating figure who has a strong, unemotional presence. From his first meeting with the Winslows, it is clear that he is unbothered whether people are comfortable in his company. He reveals very little of what he is thinking as is shown by his cross-examination of Ronnie; it appears from his manner that he believes the boy to be guilty but that isn't actually the case. Throughout, Catherine remains suspicious of him and his techniques, though they prove to be successful and demonstrate that he is the best at what he does (as his reputation suggests). It is only as the case nears completion that his more human side is shown, as we discover that he turned down an excellent promotion to continue with the case and he is reduced to tears by the final verdict.

THE REAL WINSLOW BOY

The events that inspired Rattigan's play turned an ordinary boy into the subject of the most celebrated legal struggle of the early 20th century.

January 1908
13-year-old George Archer-Shee enters the Royal Naval College, Osborne, on the Isle of Wight. Part of the late Queen Victoria's estate, the college educates and trains young cadets for two years with further studies then continuing at Dartmouth.

October 1908
George is given permission to visit the local post office to purchase a postal order. His intention is to buy a model train costing fifteen shillings and sixpence. On his return to college, it is reported that a postal order for five shillings, which had been received earlier in the day by fellow cadet Terence Back, has been stolen. The college carries out a perfunctory investigation, relying in the main on the word of the Osborne post office clerk. She produces Back's cashed postal order and states that only two cadets have visited her. Crucially she goes on to claim that the cadet who purchased the 15/6 postal order is one and the same as the cadet who cashed the five-shilling order. George protests his innocence but is expelled on the grounds of theft nevertheless. The Admiralty writes to his father, Martin Archer-Shee, an official at the Bank of England, who responds to the decision by insisting 'nothing will make me believe the boy guilty of this charge.'

Winter 1908–early 1909
George's father contacts his elder son, Major Martin Archer-Shee. The family decide they will not accept the Admiralty's ruling without a fight and seek a way to establish the truth and preserve their good reputation. Major Martin, who becomes an MP in early 1910, uses his political connections to bring his younger brother's situation to the attention of eminent Irish barrister and politician, Edward Carson. The voice of Ulster Unionism and an inspired orator, his reputation as a formidable courtroom presence springs not least from the Wilde versus Queensberry trial in 1895 during which he launched a blistering attack on Oscar Wilde.
Carson agrees to take on George's case for a nominal fee. Since the Royal Navy is protected by Crown immunity, the Archer-Shee family are excluded from the jurisdiction of a civil court. Similarly George is not entitled to a court martial because, as a cadet, he has not yet enlisted. Carson suggests adopting a legal device called the petition of right to bring the matter before the open courts. If the Admiralty can be shown to have entered into a contract with the Archer-Shee family to train their son, it is possible to claim on a petition that the contract has been broken and therefore the case be heard.

May 1909
King Edward VII grants Carson's petition with his signature alongside the words 'Let right be done'. Admiralty challenges the petition and has it overturned; Carson appeals in return and finally wins the right to come to court.

July 1910
As the Solicitor-General, Sir Rufus Isaacs represents the Admiralty, taking his place alongside familiar opponent Sir Edward Carson in London's High Court. Now a *cause célèbre*, the case is billed as the clash of the titans. Carson makes his opening remarks: 'A boy 13 years old has been labelled and ticketed for all his future life as a thief and a forger. Gentlemen, I protest against the injustice to a child…' Under subsequent cross-examination, the Crown's most important witness, the post office clerk, crumbles, admitting that one young lad in uniform looks much the same as the next. With records showing that two cadets had permission to leave the college grounds on that fateful afternoon, a more likely suspect comes to the fore, and the case against George collapses after four days.
His innocence is accepted by the Crown. The jury clambers out of the box to congratulate Carson and Martin Archer-Shee. George misses the sudden end of his own case having overslept after a night at the theatre.

Taken from *The Winslow Boy* programme, The Old Vic, 2013

1911
The story remains in the newspapers and is a subject of political debate, with public sympathy behind the Archer-Shees who have exhausted their small fortune on extensive legal costs. Father Martin Archer-Shee seeks damages and a formal expression of regret from the Admiralty. In July compensation is paid. Martin, whose health has suffered from the ordeal, dies soon after.

1912
George finishes his education at Stonyhurst College and leaves for the USA, securing a job on Wall Street.

1914
George, now 19, returns home and enlists in the army at the outbreak of the First World War. He is reported missing in action after the First Battle of Ypres and never returns home.

1944–45
Playwright Terence Rattigan, who has spent much of the Second World War working in the RAF film unit, is approached by his producer Anatole de Grunwald about a project focusing on British justice. Rattigan suggests the Archer-Shees, who have not strayed far from his thoughts since he read about them in a 1939 essay by Alexander Woollcott. De Grunwald dismisses the details as dull but Rattigan latches onto the idea; he has a penchant for gathering information on actual legal battles and is known to stage mock trials around fictional crimes as party entertainment. Spurred on by the scepticism, Rattigan realises the dramatic possibilities of the events surrounding the Archer-Shees and they form the basis of a new play. Still he is quick to distance his story from reality: 'I wanted to create, not just to recreate. The plot was borrowed from life, but if the characters too had been borrowed from life then I felt the whole play might easily have been dead.' Major changes are made to the characters, with several fictional people introduced, and the timing is moved forward by a few years to a period just before the outbreak of the First World War. In doing so, the playwright sets his Winslow Boy case in the context of what is brewing in Europe. 'Rattigan's subtext is the significance of individual liberty versus global problems that threaten the stability of society itself,' as Christopher Innes suggests in *Modern British Drama*.

1946–47
The Winslow Boy is a hit in the West End and on Broadway, picking up major awards for Best New Play in London and New York.

Taken from *The Winslow Boy* programme, The Old Vic, 2013

THE PETITION OF RIGHT

The petition of right was used in exceptional circumstances and allowed for a citizen to request special permission to proceed with a civil trial against the Admiralty (the authority in charge of the Navy). As the Navy is part of the Crown's domain, it was not possible to take them to civil court without the Crown's express permission.

The petition of right had to first be agreed by the Government and it would then be passed to the Home Secretary. At this point, the petition would be signed by the King/Queen and done so with the phrase 'Let right be done'. Only then could the Admiralty be taken to trial in open court.

Key Terms

Civil Trial Usually, prosecutions were brought against an individual (or individuals) by the Crown. However, a civil trial could be started by the individual though not against the Crown, at the time the play is set, without the Petition.

Admiralty The authority in command of the Royal Navy. Originally, it was one person (the Lord High Admiral) but then it became the Board of Admiralty. This Board was presided over by the First Lord of the Admiralty and was a member of the cabinet.

Home Secretary The Minister in charge of the Home Office; primarily internal affairs, immigration, citizenship and (at the time of the play) prisons and probation.

READ ALL ABOUT IT!



Father and son pose for a newspaper photograph.

Photo: Nobby Clark

Press innovations during the Edwardian era set the scene for a new form of reporting that placed an emphasis on the lives of others, at times with far-reaching consequences.

'The Archer-Shee case made justice available even to servants of the Crown, but only after a long campaign principally sponsored by the populist national press, which found here the kind of lone man-versus establishment struggle that has been popular ever since.' The 'populist national press' to which author and critic Sheridan Morley once referred was, in the early 1900s, a brave new world.

Driven by greater literacy rates and increasing politicisation, this society in transition discovered a thirst for knowledge rooted in the comings and goings of other people. Crime, scandal and gossip were nothing new but the genius of a new form of newspaper would be to present and promote these ingredients in an easy-to-read, affordable package.

As audiences and circulation widened prior to the outbreak of the First World War, newspapers ushered in a form of journalism that focused on social issues. This proved an ideal climate for stories such as the Archer-Shee case to hit the headlines, according to Dr Nicholas Hiley of the University of Kent. 'The family aspect of the Archer-Shee case is very pertinent to the times,' he says. 'Named after a chemical process that involved the dissolving down of tablets in water, the term tabloid was used to indicate a style of essential, "boiled down" writing. Its introduction placed a greater emphasis on people and personalities, which went hand-in-hand with the inclusion of visual elements such as personal photographs or snapshots.'

Accompanying developments in reporting styles led to the tabloids moving away from the formal presentation of public lives to a conversational format that readily embraced details of inner private lives. 'The story about a boy – who could have been anyone's son – and his parents' struggle to defend him would have been ideal subject matter,' comments Hiley. 'Since the Archer-Shee family were also open to being photographed, this would have suited this new pattern of reporting.'

Photographs spread rapidly through illustrated newspapers and magazines, aided by handy small format cameras that had been introduced to reporters in the 1880s. Edwardian editors, though, were no longer

Edited version of article from *The Winslow Boy* programme, The Old Vic, 2013

satisfied with formal studio portraits; instead they pushed reporters to photograph people doing things. For many journalists, the law courts remained a valuable source of both stories and pictures, since it was permissible for the press to publish court photos provided they weren't caught in the act. Hats hiding compact cameras disguised many a reporter's true intention while loud coughing served to mask the sound of shutters going off in the gallery.

Matters of justice moved increasingly into the public domain, thanks to the growing intervention of the media. And this could be critical in creating emotive campaigns calling for the restoral of truth or the protection of an individual. Referring to the real 'Winslow Boy', Royal Navy expert Robert L Davison, points out: 'In the Archer-Shee case, the print media acted to restrain the Admiralty in a situation where its undoubted legal right to act was clear. The papers made the Admiralty appear arbitrary and biased, resulting in the reversal of its ruling. The influence of the media has continued to force Parliament and the Admiralty to consider issues that the Navy would prefer to ignore, for instance, the reduction of sentences imposed by court martial, because of public controversy.'

Yet while Edwardian cases like the Archer-Shees can highlight the growing significance of the press as a positive force for change, particularly in defence of the individual, they also reveal a shadier side of reporting that remains of public concern today. As an upper middle class family with social and political connections, the Archer-Shees were able to secure the support of senior editorial staff to further their cause and keep their story in the public spotlight. But while they may have made formal moves in writing letters to the papers and agreeing to pose for candid publicity shots, the pressure of intrusion into their private lives would have proven a genuine challenge. Indeed it is thought that George Archer-Shee finished his education in England, only to leave promptly for the United States in order to escape public attention.

According to Hiley, there was a class element to the growing concerns about tabloid journalism: 'The established political classes felt that mass circulation papers were now beyond their control. In such a commercial market, with personal photos and gossip at a premium, freelance journalists in particular were prepared to go to greater lengths in pursuit of a story that could bump up circulation.' Although free of specific class connotations in the 21st century, press intrusion, whether through stolen pictures, the practice of 'doorstepping', or the interception of private phone messages, remains a hotly contended subject of modern debate with questions over the sanctity of private life never far from the national headlines.





Far left: Director Lindsay Posner in rehearsals.

Left: Charlie Rowe (Ronnie Winslow) in rehearsals at The Old Vic.

Photos: Johan Persson

HISTORICAL CONTEXT
THE THREAT OF WAR

Although the Archer-Shee case that the play is based on occurred during 1908–1911, Rattigan, in dramatising the story, moved the setting closer to the start of the First World War in order to backdrop the domestic action with the tension of what was happening in the wider world. This was particularly poignant for the audience when it was first performed, as World War II had only just ended and many present would still remember, and indeed have fought, in World War I; 'the war to end war'.

The possibility of war is barely mentioned in the play but there are several references that would be enough to highlight what was to come. The initial meeting with John Watherstone, Catherine's fiancé, is underpinned by his being an army man from an army family (his father is a Colonel). Dickie, in the final act, reveals that he has joined the Territorials as 'there's a fair chance of a bit of a scrap quite soon' (p.77) and he doesn't want to miss out. We also discover in Act IV that John is planning to marry within a month as he is expecting to go to war at any time. All these mentions are sufficient to remind an audience of what is happening outside of the drawing room of the Winslows' house.

However, it is when John himself talks of a 'European war blowing up' (p.71) in conversation with Catherine, Rattigan's purpose in not letting the audience forget about the upcoming war becomes clear, as Catherine states, 'if ever the time comes when the House of Commons has so much on its mind that it can't find time to discuss a Ronnie Winslow and his bally postal order, this country will be in a far poorer place than it is now.' (p.72)

The subtext throughout for an audience in the 1940s, and nowadays, is that the rights of the individual must be fought for and protected, regardless of how minor the case may be, otherwise what sort of society are we fighting for?





Far left: Nick Hendrix (Dickie Winslow) in rehearsals.

Left: Naomi Frederick (Catherine Winslow) in rehearsals.

Photos: Johan Persson

The Suffragettes

The Winslow Boy is set in the early 20th century and, at that time, women were still not allowed to vote. However, there were a number of organisations that had formed during the 1800s in order to campaign for women's right to vote. These groups combined in 1897 to become the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (Suffragists) under Millicent Fawcett. They believed in peaceful protest and working within the legal system; their campaign tactics included letter writing, petitions, non-violent demonstrations and talking with their MPs. Fawcett stated that they were 'like a glacier; slow moving but unstoppable'.

This glacial campaigning was frustrating for many women and so a splinter group was formed in 1903 – the Women's Social and Political Union (Suffragettes) – which felt that a more active approach was needed. Led by Emmeline Pankhurst, a former Suffragist, the Suffragettes motto was 'deeds not words' and their campaign consisted of law-breaking, violence and hunger strikes. By the start of the First World War, over 1,000 Suffragettes had been imprisoned and one woman had died for the cause (Emily Davison was trampled by the King's Horse at the Epsom Derby). Although their tactics were eye-catching, many felt that the movement was hindered, rather than helped, by their actions.

In 1914, the start of World War I brought a declaration from Pankhurst to cease all campaigning and focus on supporting the war effort. As so many men were away fighting, women took on traditional male roles in the workplace and excelled, which led to increased public support for their cause. The Suffragists also continued to use their more constitutional methods and so, by 1918, they achieved their first success. The Representation of the People Act was passed which secured suffrage for women of property aged 30 or over for the first time; this meant the 8.4m women could now vote. Women achieved full equality regarding the vote in 1928.

Catherine Winslow: Suffragette

At the time the play is set (pre-World War I) the Suffragettes were renowned for the more extreme measures they would take to get attention for their cause. Therefore, the fact that Catherine identifies herself as a Suffragette speaks volumes about her political viewpoint and the lengths that she would go to in order to achieve a goal. Although she states that she's 'not a militant … breaking shop windows with a hammer or pouring acid down pillar boxes' (p.68), she does volunteer for the Woman's Suffrage Association and is passionate about the cause. She is questioned on her beliefs throughout the play – by her family and Sir Robert – but both the audiences in the 1940s, when the play was first performed, and audiences nowadays know that the Suffragettes' campaign was ultimately successful. In fact, the closing exchange between Catherine and Sir Robert has a certain resonance:

Sir Robert: … Goodbye, Miss Winslow. Shall I see you in the House then, one day?
Catherine: (With a smile.) Yes, Sir Robert. One day. But not in the gallery. Across the floor.
Sir Robert: (With a faint smile.) Perhaps.

The dramatic irony of this parting line from Sir Robert is a fitting end to the play as it highlights the changes to come, of which the audience are aware.

The Pursuit of Right

Although the family believe Ronnie Winslow didn't steal the postal order, Rattigan's focus isn't on Ronnie's guilt or innocence; his focus is on the right of the individual to have a fair trial and the fight against the establishment who wish to close ranks and silence him.

Throughout the play, Arthur Winslow remains single-minded in his approach; he is willing to sacrifice his health, his relationship with members of the family, and their financial stability, for the sake of his pursuit of justice, 'An injustice has been done. I am going to set it right, and there is no sacrifice in the world I am not prepared to make in order to do so.' (p.59). This resolve almost estranges him from his wife, who is representative of many people's feelings as she believes the case is a fuss about nothing, 'He's [Ronnie] perfectly happy… No one need ever have known.' (p.59). Both Grace and many others believe that the time and effort being put into the case are disproportionate to what Ronnie is accused of. Grace, in particular, is very much focused on the personal effect of the case on her and her family, whereas Arthur is concerned with the wider impact and won't be swayed from this.

Arthur's main support in the case is his daughter Catherine. She is a fierce believer in what is right and, despite the cost to her personal life, she also will not be diverted from the cause, 'All I care about is that people should know that a Government Department has ignored a fundamental human right and that it should be forced to acknowledge it. That's all that's important to me.' (p.71). Again, like her father, Catherine is focused on the bigger picture and what Ronnie's case represents, rather the personal consequences.

It is unclear for most of the play what Sir Robert's motivations are in taking the case. Catherine believes them to be 'publicity – you know – look at me, the staunch defender of the little man – and then second – a nice popular stick to beat the Government with. Both very useful to an ambitious man.' (p.63). She doesn't believe that his heart is in it. Yet, as the case progresses, it becomes clear that Sir Robert is fully invested in succeeding and we discover that he has in fact sacrificed an impressive promotion for the sake of the case.



Father and son pose for a newspaper photograph. Photo: Nobby Clark

This, coupled with his weeping when hearing the verdict, causes Catherine to question him directly on his reasons, to which he states, 'I wept today because right had been done … Not justice. Right. It is easy to do justice – very hard to do right.' (p.95).

Inequality of Passion

A consistent theme within Rattigan's work is inequality in love affairs; in *The Winslow Boy*, Catherine is the focal point for this. From the start, Catherine's engagement to John is under scrutiny due to financial restrictions and also his father's disapproval. Although she is not a traditional female figure of the time, by being outspoken and concertedly feminist, Catherine is obviously very much in love with John and keen to be married. He believes that she is fearless but she states that her fears are 'nearly all concerned with' John, suggesting how invested she is in their relationship. However, when she is made to choose between him and her principles, she cannot deny her ethical convictions and ultimately sacrifices him.

Whereas Catherine's love is focused on a man she eventually gives up, she is also the focus of love from a man who will never capture her heart. Desmond Curry is considered a 'family joke' as he has always been in love with Catherine, though his feelings have never been returned. Desmond does eventually find the courage to propose to Catherine and it is in his painfully self-aware speech to her that Rattigan makes clear that though they may achieve justice in the case against Ronnie, there is 'none in matters of the heart.' (Billington, 2009)

IN CONVERSATION WITH... HENRY GOODMAN (Arthur Winslow)

What attracted you to the role of Arthur Winslow?
I liked the play. I wanted to be in a play that matters, that really deals with an important issue – the small man fighting against huge privilege. Politically and as an actor, it's wonderful to do stuff that really is dealing with an important issue. And it's a smashing role. It's got a lovely development of somebody who's quite strong and patriarchal but he's very affectionate towards his family. I was well aware from the beginning that one shouldn't try to sweeten the pill, you've got to show him as being demanding and bossy, but those very qualities are what makes him absolutely a dogged fighter for justice, for decency and for integrity. There's selfishness mixed in with selflessness and I found that combination very attractive. Plus, I suppose I can say with immodesty in my sixties now, I'm a versatile actor so for me one of things that was particularly attractive is to hone down to this type of very beautifully crafted language, something simple and not use all the bells and whistles I get asked to display in other roles.

What were the key aspects of his character that you really wanted to convey to the audience?
I don't set out with this tick box of five things I want the audience to know. In rehearsal, the job was just to get inside the skin of him and the relationships are the key to it. He's a different man with his wife than he is with his daughter, than he is with his son, than he is with his other son. There are slightly different things that he allows himself to be with each of them and I think that's really important. The daughter is just 30, and is a feminist so he's very proud of her but really thinks it might be a bit foolish. And yet he admires her hugely. So it's this tension in the relationships – he learns to be compassionate and supportive of her but desperately wants her strength. He needs everybody's strength because he's set himself up as 'I'm the man!' and he suffers because of that.

What do you think is the central message of the play?
This whole debate in the play between logic and instinct. I say to my daughter, 'which will win – my instinct or your logic?' I leave the stage and the audience hear her say, 'I fear my logic as a feminist, as a thinker, as an intelligent woman, I think I'm going to win.' The tension between logic and reason and emotion, really is what Rattigan's interested in. It's in all of his plays. It's interesting that QC [Sir Robert] says perhaps I don't know who I am. I think that's what Rattigan's interested in. All these very impressive people who can talk the talk and walk the walk, inside they might be lost actually. Rattigan was a very urbane, debonair man yet he had to hide his homosexual relationships, he had to hide much of what he was and that veiled sense of letting out who you really are, in this era, is at the spine of the play and I think it effects all of us.

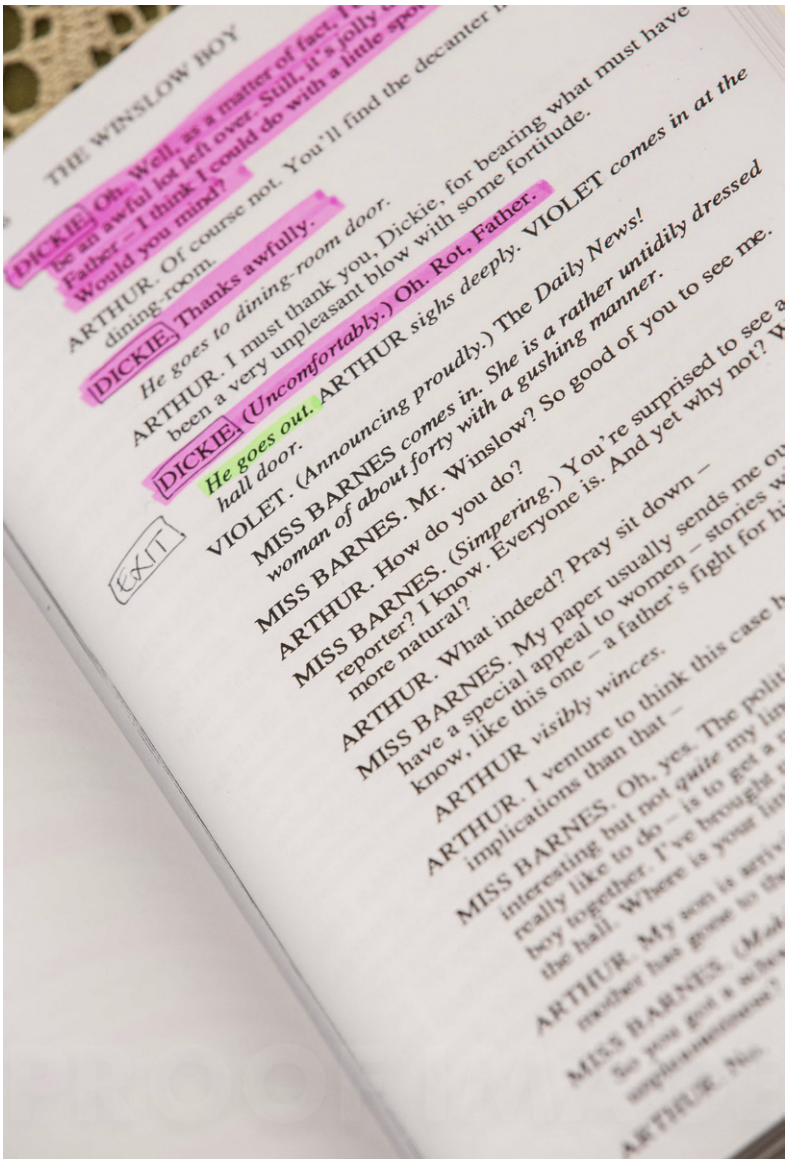


Henry Goodman as Arthur Winslow and Charlie Rowe as Ronnie.

Photo: Nobby Clark

It's a play written in the 1940s and set pre-First World War. Is it still relevant today?
Oh yes. It is genuinely remarkable. Quite often there are gasps in the audience; not only at the wonderful funny lines 'you can say what you like to the press, it won't make any difference to what they write'. How prescient is that? There are many other things that are absolutely on the money. I mean this guy [Arthur] is a banker! But he's an old-fashioned sort of banker who was very prudent with money, careful with savings; he did not gamble his clients' money. But I say to my son, 'I'm sure one day you will turn the whole Reading branch of the Westminster bank into a bookmaking establishment'. In other words, you will turn banking into an investment game. It was 1946 he wrote this and here we are in 2013. But there's another layer in which it's completely up to date which is the emotional truth about people. Rather than just banking, money, politics. His deep insight into the way that people behave. It's timeless. The families, the pressures. It might have a different face in that culture than this one but it speaks to different generations.

What would be your advice to any aspiring actors out there?
Don't do it if you just want to be famous. Just don't do it. I was once a young kid in the rough East End and here I am in the swanky Old Vic. But it's not about fame. What can you bring to the craft of acting? What is it you want to explore? Are you willing to submit yourself to issues bigger than yourself? Don't come into the theatre unless you want to serve ideas, writing, sensitivities, and seek to grow as a person yourself. Everybody's an actor. We wouldn't survive in life if we didn't act. But not everybody should earn a living from it.



'I must thank you, Dickie, for bearing what must have been a very unpleasant blow with some fortitude'

Photo: Johan Persson

IN CONVERSATION WITH... NAOMI FREDERICK (Catherine Winslow)

What attracted you to the role of Catherine?
Well, it's not a very difficult question. It has to be one of the loveliest roles set in that period. She is in that pleasurable position of interacting with everyone in the play; she is one of the family and she has moments in the play with Violet the maid. She is very struck by Sir Robert Morten and who knows quite how far that fascination goes. She has a relationship with Desmond Curry, the family solicitor who loves her but she isn't in love with. She has a relationship with John, her fiancé. It's a really lovely position to be in because you don't always get to be on stage with everyone. When I reached the end of drama school and was looking for material for the showcase (for possible agents and casting directors) I looked at *The Winslow Boy* because I loved the part of Catherine and I'd seen the David Mamet film. Unfortunately, I couldn't find a good bit but isn't it my good fortune that 13 years later, I get to play her. She gets the best bite of the cake. Almost by Act IV, Rattigan wants it to be her story. Catherine is the one who keeps the case alive with Sir Robert and she is the final character on stage with Sir Robert and Ronnie when the case is won.

Would you consider Catherine to be a modern woman?
She is a new woman. Her mother introduces that in Act I when she says 'You never show your feelings much, do you?' It's a new woman attitude. And Catherine thinks, how dare you say we don't show our feelings? Because that's the whole point – we've got lots of feelings and we're putting them to very good purpose. We're not just going to play pretty wives. That's not what women are.

How did you approach the role?
This play is extremely strong and clear on the page. You can approach *The Winslow Boy* with absolute confidence; Rattigan knew exactly what he was doing and did it very well. It's one of the most perfectly structured plays that's ever been written, certainly in English. It's got a very tight plot and Lindsay [Director] just followed the text to the letter including the stage directions. He would say, 'Rattigan here says "dismissively" so let's just try that and see what happens'. My approach to Catherine was to look at the history of women at that time and those that were following the Suffragette movement, but then just to get on with saying the words and making clear what those are. She is what she says she is. She's not sentimental and she doesn't gush but it doesn't mean she doesn't feel. It's such a nice part to play because you don't have to give everything away. It gives the impression of being rather bright. Which is always nice to play!



Naomi Frederick as Catherine Winslow.

Photo: Nobby Clark

What have you enjoyed most about working on this production?
I've loved the company. One of the most touching things that Lindsay said in the last week of rehearsals was that the family is very convincing. And we felt it! As real people we found a good bond and so that makes rehearsals really fun. And we've got a very strong bunch of actors. These days, because theatre needs to sell tickets, a very good way is to get names in. Henry Goodman is the name on the poster and Henry is a well-known actor but more to people who know about going to the theatre. We haven't got a big star vehicle and it's rather wonderful to be in a rehearsal room with a bunch of brilliant actors; everybody just doing their thing and getting on with it.

Any advice for aspiring actors?
See as much theatre as you possibly can; even if you don't think it's the best thing that you've ever seen, there's always something to learn. It keeps you aware of all the kinds of work that are possible. Go and see a wide range of stuff – Complicite, see stuff at The Old Vic, at the Tricycle, new writing at the Royal Court or Bush. Just see as much as you can. And don't hurry into it. I did a degree in English before I did three years at drama school and I was really glad for that because as much life experience as you have is useful. You're never too old to join acting. But think about the opportunity to train because I loved it. It stood me in great stead.

Do you have any top tips for creating a role?
Do the homework of going through the text with a toothcomb and finding out what everybody says about you and what you say about yourself; then decide how much of that is true or not. I think it's very important that you like your character but you don't have to be likeable. It doesn't mean that you're not going to be attractive to the audience because the audience can be fascinated and mesmerised by you, even if you're playing somebody that they don't particularly like.



Naomi Frederick in rehearsals at The Old Vic.

Photo: Johan Persson

IN CONVERSATION WITH... CHARLIE ROWE (Ronnie Winslow)

What was it that made you want to be a part of this production?
I'd only ever done film and I want to be a really good actor, I want to be seen as one of the greats, and this was a chance to be involved with something so wonderfully British. It's such a wonderful play with so many wonderful people involved. It's a chance for me to learn about the craft because I didn't do GCSE Drama. For most of the jobs I've done, I haven't really thought about it, I've just done it. So this was a chance to really explore my ability. I'd been craving for something like this for a while. So when it came to the audition, I thought, I want to get this.

How are you finding being at The Old Vic?
Amazing! It's the best thing that's ever happened to me. Ever. I feel at home. I like the buzz when you're on stage and after the curtain call. I stay up until 2am every night as you can tell; I look shattered! I'm learning too much! I found out from Ned [revered Stage Door keeper] that my great-great-uncle was Governor of The Old Vic and he helped found Sadler's Wells with Lilian Baylis. So I feel like I'm keeping the family tradition going.

How did the rehearsal process help you prepare for the show?
I was a bit worried at first because it was kind of boring. Sitting round the table for a week going through the play, line by line. I thought, I've just come out of English class and I've gone straight into another one! But then you start performing and realise how much that helps; how much really studying your words, the background, Rattigan's background, the social context and the political context of when he was writing it, it all helps so much with your performance. It was a really enlightening experience. It showed me what I had to do to really understand my character. And it's going to be something that I do for all my other parts. It felt so professional as a rehearsal process.



Charlie Rowe; *The Winslow Boy*.

Photo: Jay Brooks

How is it juggling your studies and performing in the play? *[Charlie is studying Music, English and Theatre Studies/Drama for A Level]*
Last week I had a bit of a wobble because it was press night and I wanted to focus on that but at the same time I had coursework due for yesterday. So it was all go go go! When it gets pressured, I think should I just drop out of school? But I don't want to. English and Theatre Studies are really useful to this business which I want to compete in. Very relevant. I'm enjoying school. I'm enjoying it a lot. This rehearsal process has actually really helped with the subjects that I'm doing. It's really helped me contribute in the classes.

What have you found to be the biggest challenge of this role?
I have to say 'top hole' in it which I wouldn't say! Actually, because of the rehearsal process, I feel I know my character so it hasn't felt like a tough challenge. It's felt relatively straightforward which shows the wonderful importance of that rehearsal period. It's been fantastic.

Are there any dream roles that you would like to play?
I don't know about dream roles. I know exactly the journey that I want to take. Everyone always wants to play James Bond, don't they? I just want to play roles that have a bit of grit to them and challenge. I want to get to a certain point where in 50 years, the kids watching movies and going to theatre, really want to follow in the footsteps of Charlie Rowe. I just want to be good.

Do you have an acting idol?
I'm obsessed with James Dean. He didn't have that many roles, unfortunately, but his acting was so raw and so real. There was such a truth to his acting. You could tell that he wasn't trying, he was feeling every single word he said. It's a shame that he died but that's why he's such an icon. I'd like to live a bit longer than him though!

What advice would you give to any aspiring actors?
Although I'm obsessed with James Dean, my advice would be don't try and act the way that you've seen someone else act. Know your character so well and understand the situation that he's in; just do what feels natural, however unnatural it looks and however strange it feels to be doing it. I'm so in love with acting and if someone else is in love with acting, you don't need to listen to anyone else's advice. Simple but true.



Charlie Rowe and Henry Goodman in rehearsals at The Old Vic.

Photo: Johan Persson

IN CONVERSATION WITH... PETER SULLIVAN (Sir Robert Morten)

What was it that first attracted you to this role?
It's one of those parts that you can't say no to. I've had a number of friends and also heroes who've played it so I thought I'd have a go and see if I could pull it off. He's much, much posher than I am and so that was part of the challenge as well.

How was the rehearsal process and working with Lindsay Posner [Director]?
I've never worked with Lindsay before and I found him absolutely charming, very intelligent, very open, very supportive; he creates a good, fun family environment though intellectual and serious as well. When you see the show, you'll see that in this production we've concentrated much more on the family, so I didn't have that much rehearsal time. But it was fine because I knew what I was going to do with it anyway.

You've worked at The Old Vic before, haven't you?
Thirty years ago I was in The Old Vic youth theatre so it's been amazing to come back. Absolutely incredible. We weren't allowed on the stage last time – they kept us away. So it's amazing to finally get on there.

What characteristics do you think you share with Sir Robert?
Single-mindedness, a sense of direction, a sense of loneliness – a man on a mission. He's a particular, peculiar guy – he doesn't fit in anywhere. He's incredibly posh without being aristocratic. He doesn't fit in at all with the Winslows. He finds them odd in the extreme. I think he views human beings like specimens.

Do you also view human beings as specimens?
I try not to! There's a line in *My Dinner with Andre* [a play by Wallace Shawn] when he talks about when he was a kid on the Upper East Side – he was staring out of the window one day and his mother walked up behind him and smacked him round the back of the head. He asked 'what was that for?' and she said 'people are not there for you to play with'. I have to be watchful of that.

Do you think the play is still relevant today?
A hundred years on from when it's set? Absolutely, it couldn't have more resonance in a post-Leveson world; the idea that the personal becomes political, that this family get taken over by forces outside of their control. I think that's exactly the same as it is today.

Do you have any advice for aspiring actors?
Never quit. Never give up. Don't listen to anybody who says you should stop unless somebody really sits you down and says you should really think about doing something else. I've been a professional actor for thirty years; it's taken me a long time to get anywhere. Being successful as an actor is partly to do with genetics, so unless you have a particular look early on, it's going to take a while. You've got to be single-minded and ruthless (with yourself not with the rest of the world). Also grateful and humble – have something to say but be willing to learn from people that are older than you. Older actors love helping younger actors, if the younger actor has the right attitude.



The cast on stage at The Old Vic.

Photo: Nobby Clark

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