

# The Mollusc

by Hubert Henry Davies. Directed by Tom Littler. Designed by Pip Swindall. Produced by Primavera in association with Neil McPherson for the Finborough Theatre.

Cast includes: Sally Leonard. Moir Leslie. Simon Poland. Andrew P. Stephen.

## The centenary production of the classic Edwardian comedy

*"The lazy flow with the tide. The mollusc uses force to resist pressure. It's amazing the amount of force a mollusc will use, to do nothing, when it would be much easier to do something. It's no fool, you know, it's the most artful creature, it wriggles and squirms, and even fights, from the instinct not to advance. There are wonderful things about molluscry, but it's sad enough, too – it can ruin a life so, not only the life of the mollusc but all the lives in the house where it dwells."*

Paired with the Finborough Theatre's revival of T.W.Robertson's *Ours*, *The Mollusc* is a classic comedy of social and sexual manners. This production marks the centenary of the 1907 premiere and is the first time the play has been seen in London for over 50 years. Primavera's fully costumed production-without-décor opens on 15 July as part of the multi-award-winning Finborough Theatre's [ **rediscoveries** season 2007 ] for five Sunday and Monday performances.

*The Mollusc* is the story of a woman who will do anything to do nothing. With mesmerising skill, Mrs Dulcie Baxter enslaves the members of her household – her husband, her children, and their attractive governess, Miss Roberts. When her brother Tom arrives from Colorado, he tries to break the cycle of entrapment which binds everyone to his sister's will, but he uncovers a world of sexual hypocrisy and jealousy which nobody expected to find...

On one level a delightfully frothy comedy, and on another a subversive and vicious assault on the double standards of the English middle classes, *The Mollusc* is a classic of Edwardian theatre with all the polish and sophistication of an Oscar Wilde comedy combined with the urgent passion expected of the drama of Harvey Granville Barker or Bernard Shaw.

Playwright **Hubert Henry Davies** (1867-1917) was a leading playwright of the early twentieth century, following in the tradition of Arthur Wing Pinero and Henry Arthur Jones, but influenced profoundly by T.W.Robertson, whose play *Ours* is presented by the Finborough Theatre this July. He began his career in New York with *The Weldons* (1899) and on his return to Britain collaborated successfully with the actor-manager Charles Wyndham to produce four West End productions. This production is the first time the play has been seen in London since it was presented at the Arts Theatre in 1949, and marks the centenary of the original 1907 production, starring Charles Wyndham himself, at the Criterion Theatre.

The cast includes Sally Leonard in her first stage appearance since being nominated for the Ian Charleson Award 2007 for *A Family Affair* (Arcola Theatre); Moir Leslie, who is best known for her long-running roles as Sophie Barlow and the Reverend Janet Fisher in *The Archers*, as well as playing Anne de Bourgh in *Pride and Prejudice* (BBC), and Eva in *For Services Rendered* (Old Vic); Andrew P. Stephen, who most recently appeared as Younger Kipps in *The Woman in Black* (UK tour); and Simon Poland, whose credits include *Children of Men*, *United 93* and roles for Salisbury Playhouse and the Royal Shakespeare Company.

Director **Tom Littler** is directing three rediscoveries at the Finborough Theatre this Summer including Ethel Smyth's opera *The Boatswain's Mate* and T.S. Eliot's *The Confidential Clerk*. He has directed over twenty productions including Stephen Sondheim's *Passion* (Edinburgh Festival 2006 – *The Scotsman* Critics' Choice), *A Streetcar Named Desire* and *Into the Woods* (Oxford Playhouse), and Frank McGuinness' version of *A Doll's House* (Tour). He is currently Assistant Director to Alan Strachan on *The Letter* (Wyndham's) and to Laurence Boswell on *Treats* (Garrick). He is also Peter Hall's Assistant Director on *Little Nell* (Theatre Royal Bath) and later this year will staff direct the international tour of the Chichester Festival Theatre production of *Nicholas Nickleby*. Tom is Artistic Director of Primavera and is currently directing Primavera's *Forgotten Classics* series at the King's Head. Primavera was founded in 2003 and focuses on producing revivals, particularly of plays that are unacknowledged and underperformed masterpieces. [www.primaveraproductions.com](http://www.primaveraproductions.com).

**PRESS NIGHT: MONDAY, 16 JULY 2007 AT 8.00PM**

**PHOTOCALL: By arrangement. Please email [admin@finboroughtheatre.co.uk](mailto:admin@finboroughtheatre.co.uk)**

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**Sunday, 15 July and Monday, 16 July; Sunday, 22 July and Monday, 23 July; and Sunday, 29 July 2007.**

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## pressinformation

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All performances at 8.00pm.

Tickets £11, £9 concessions

Performance Length: Approximately 2 hours 30 minutes.

For more information, interviews and images, please contact

**Neil McPherson** on e-mail [admin@finboroughtheatre.co.uk](mailto:admin@finboroughtheatre.co.uk) or **07977 173135**

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*e-mail* [admin@finboroughtheatre.co.uk](mailto:admin@finboroughtheatre.co.uk) [www.finboroughtheatre.co.uk](http://www.finboroughtheatre.co.uk) *Artistic Director* Neil McPherson

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