



Present Laughter (Modern Classics)

By Noël Coward



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At the centre of his own universe sits matinee idol Garry Essendine: suave, hedonistic and too old, says his wife, to be having numerous affairs. His line in harmless, infatuated debutantes is largely tolerated but playing closer to home is not. Just before he escapes on tour to Africa the full extent of his misdemeanours is discovered. And all hell breaks loose.

Noël Coward's *Present Laughter* premiered in the early years of the Second World War just as such privileged lives were threatened with fundamental social change. This edition of the play is published to coincide with the National Theatre's production running from September 2007. The text features an introduction that considers the directorial decisions and interpretation in the National's production.

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Editorial Review

Review

'Terrific treats. A top-notch cast headed by an actor at the peak of his comic powers. Splendid performances all round. A singularly successful evening.' Independent

About the Author

Noël Coward was born in 1899 in Teddington, Middlesex. He made his name as a playwright with *The Vortex* (1924), in which he also appeared. His numerous other successful plays included *Fallen Angels* (1925), *Hay Fever* (1925), *Private Lives* (1933), *Design for Living* (1933) and *Blithe Spirit* (1941). During the war he wrote screenplays such as *Brief Encounter* (1944) and *In Which We Serve* (1942). In the fifties he began a new career as a cabaret entertainer. He published volumes of verse and a novel (*Pomp and Circumstance*, 1960), two volumes of autobiography and four volumes of short stories: *To Step Aside* (1939), *Star Quality* (1951), *Pretty Polly Barlow* (1964) and *Bon Voyage* (1967). He was knighted in 1970 and died three years later in Jamaica.

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