



Stoke on Trent Repertory Players

£1.50



**Mike Harding's
seasonal comedy**

Comfort & Joy

**8th to 12th December 2015 at 7.30pm
Matinee: Sat. 12th December at 2.30pm**

An amateur production by arrangement with Samuel French Ltd

Professional One Night Only

**CHRIS DEAN'S
SYD LAWRENCE ORCHESTRA**

*Mistletoe
and Miller*

FESTIVE BIG BAND SPECTACULAR

Friday, 18th December 2015 at 7.30pm

Tickets £20 available from:

Music Mania, 4 - 6, Piccadilly Arcade, Hanley, Staffs, tel: 01782 206000

on line www.musicmaniauk.com

Stoke Repertory Theatre Box Office, Leek Rd., Staffs, tel: 01782 209784

on line www.stokerep.info

www.syd-lawrence-orchestra.com

Christmas Market

by Mike Harding

Tall, white-haired in her widows black
My Nana took me, balaclavad from the cold,
To where stalls shimmered in a splash of gold,
Buttery light from wind-twitched lamps and all
The Christmas hoards, were heaped above my eyes,

A shrill cascade of tinsel set to fall

In a sea of shivering colours on the frosty
Foot packed earth. I smelt the roasted nuts,
Drank syrupy sarsaparilla in thick glasses far
Too hot to hold and chewed a liquorice root
That turned into a soggy yellow brush. The man

Who wound the barrel organ let me turn

The handle and I jangled out a tune -

And 'Lily of Laguna' spangled out into the still night air
And would go on spinning through the turning years.

Then we walked home, I clutching a bright tin car
With half men painted on the windows, chewed a sweet

And held her hand as she warmed mine,
One glove lost turning the chattering music.

And I looked up at the circus of the stars

That spread across the city and our street
Coated now with a Christmas cake layer of frost

And nobody under the stars I thought
Was half of a half of a half as happy as me.

THE CREW

Director: Alan Clarke
Set Design: Alan Clarke
Stage Director: Terry Wright
Stage Manager: Terry Wright
Set construction and crew: Mike Adams, Andy Baddeley,
John Beeston, Bob Flowers,
Ken Mills, Terry Wright
Lighting Design & Operation: Malcolm Rushton
Sound Design & Operation: Mike Adams
Flyman: Andy Baddeley
Props: Diana Bevan, Joy Rawlins, Janet Clarke
Set Dressing: Margo Bloor
Wardrobe: Sylvia Wright, Joy Rawlins
Programme design: Janet Smith
Company Photographer: Peter Croft

**We are indebted to the St John Ambulance Brigade
whose members attend all our performances.**

***Thanks also to
M-Way Vehicle Rental***

We hope you enjoy this play, and perhaps fancy “having a go” yourself. However, we welcome new members into all posts/jobs in the theatre. Perhaps you are not aware of all the things that are needed to support the play on the stage.

Apart from acting, members are working behind the scenes as stage manager, prompting, providing the lighting and sound effects, building the sets, providing furniture and props, organising costumes running the bar and coffee bar, running the booking office, selling programmes and being “front of the house” to welcome the audience.

If any of these appeal to you, you can chat to members and find out more. Each Wednesday of the Rep Players productions I will be in the bar, and can direct you to the knowledgeable, relevant person.

Judy Adams (Chair for the Players)

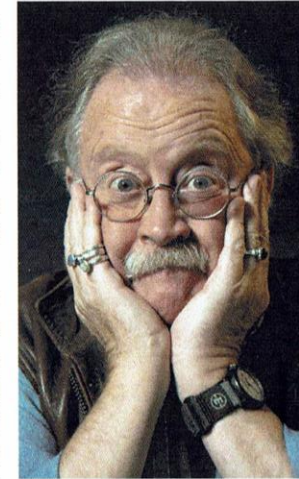
DIRECTOR'S NOTES

Mike Harding has had an extremely varied career including dustman, carpet fitter, author, playwright, musician, folk singer and radio broadcaster.

He first came into the general public's consciousness with his writing and performance of 'Rochdale Cowboy' in 1975. From there he undertook 20 years of touring his comedy and folk music interspersed with writing. His most successful play 'Fur Coat and No Knickers' was written in 1980 and as time moved on he moved away from entertaining to concentrating more on his writing which gave him time for fell walking and country pursuits, his real loves.

His writing has ranged from comedy to books on church architecture, including poetry, playwriting, short stories, novels, fell walking and a manual for fishermen on how to tie flies.

The majority of his comic writing was inspired by his childhood growing up in the Manchester area and the North Country comedies reflect this with 'Comfort and Joy' being his last play written in 1997, a perfect example.



Comfort & Joy is set twenty years ago at Christmas in the Duggan household. This should not have been very different from many Christmases for many families all over the country and yet....

Mike Harding's comedy takes place in the home of Margaret and Martin as they prepare for a special family Christmas, "helped" by their elderly relative Goff who lives in sheltered housing but has almost moved in with them.

There will be the usual over indulgences of eating and drinking but this Christmas will be extra special. Their daughters Helen and Kathy arrive, bringing along cats, dogs and stick insects, to make the annual visit. The difference this year and the previous years is the return from Australia of Fiona, Goff's daughter, who ran off with local boy Jimmy, her husband.

We have all had Christmases when relatives that you hardly ever see arrive at your house for the festivities but they are very different from you and there is little in common. No one receives a present that is at all appropriate or appreciated. Culinary disasters abound. Long buried resentments rear their ugly heads as the alcohol flows and tongues are loosened. And then the neighbours arrive.....

Alan Clarke