

Corrie's Cilla makes rovers return for football comedy

a Northern Broadsides production

The Game

by Harold Brighouse (author of *Hobson's Choice*)

directed by Barrie Rutter

Mon 11- Sat 16 Oct

One of *Coronation Street's* most memorable residents is swapping the Rover's Return for Blackton Rovers FC ahead of a footballing comedy at the New Vic this month.

Best known for playing soap battleaxe, [Cilla Battersby-Brown](#), in *Coronation Street* and as 'Podger' Pam in ITV series, *Bad Girls*, actress Wendi Peters is making her New Vic debut in northern comedy *The Game* by *Hobson's Choice* author, Harold Brighouse.

Lancashire. 1913. Match Day! Blackton Rovers is in need of money. Owner, Austin Whitworth, sells his star centre forward – local football hero Jack Metherell – to a rival club on the eve of a crucial match that could see Rovers relegated. Will honest Jack throw the match? Or will he put his professional honour above loyalty to his old club?

Austin's daughter, Elsie, and Jack are in love – or so they think. But Jack still lives at home, firmly tied to his mother's apron strings. Will Elsie's modern ways and feisty temperament win over his domineering mam? Or is this tryst between the classes doomed from the start?

A regular face in the soap for four years, Wendi became known to millions when she joined the series as brassy, one-time 'exotic dancer', Cilla, in 2003. Wife of loser Les and mum-from-hell to Chesney, Fiz and Billy, the character left the soap in a storyline that saw her depart for a new life in South Africa in 2007, only to become known as South Africa's worst mother.

Last in Staffordshire for the recent tour of *Grumpy Old Women*, *The Game* sees the former *Coronation Street* star return to the area to play formidable mum Mrs Metherell. But according to Wendi, playing another northern mother is where the similarities between her stage and soap character ends:

"Cilla's a mother – but the character I'm playing in The Game loves her son dearly. Mrs Metherell adores her boy, she's mollycoddled him, looked after him on his own from being a young child, and she really wants what's best for him.

"Cilla did love Chesney but in a very superficial way – she never showed it. She was bright, but in a very conniving way – if there was a scheme going, she'd work it out. I loved playing Cilla. But I wouldn't want to live next door to her!"

A northern comedy about love, honour, class and football, *The Game* sees the much loved Northern Broadsides company return to North Staffordshire following *The Canterbury Tales*, the critically acclaimed co-production with the New Vic, and their record-breaking tour of *Othello*, featuring Lenny Henry.

Last performed almost 100 years ago, *The Game* was penned by playwright Harold Brighouse, who remains best known for his 1916 classic *Hobson's Choice* - the story of how a tyrannical Lancashire boot maker is brought down to earth by his daughter and her simple husband.

The Game runs from Mon 11 – Sat 16 October at the New Vic Theatre. Tickets which cost £8.50–£17.50 (concessions available), can be booked by calling the New Vic’s Box Office on 01782 717962 or online at www.newvictheatre.org.uk

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Please note, due to numerous commitments, Wendi’s availability is very limited. A syndicated interview with Wendi is available. For further press information, images or to arrange review tickets, please contact Clare Hargreaves on 01782 717954 ext 317 or e-mail chargreaves@newvictheatre.org.uk

Notes for Journalists

Useful links

[New Vic plays: The Game](#)

Wendi Peters

Wendi is best known for her role as *Cilla Battersby Brown* in **Coronation Street** and ‘Podger’ Pam Jolly in **Bad Girls**. Other television includes **Cardiac Arrest**, **Out of the Blue** and film credits include **Gyppo** and *Emily* in **In Love and War**.

Wendi has had been busy over the past 18 months, starting out as a finalist on **Celebrity Masterchef**. She then toured around Ireland with the one woman play **Mrs Whippy**, written by *Cecelia Ahern* – whose other work includes the novel *Ps. I Love You*, which became the hit 2007 film starring Gerard Butler and Hilary Swank. In the autumn she then performed in the successful sell out tour of **Grumpy Old Women: Live** alongside Jennie Eclair and Susie Blake – which has recently transferred to the west end.

Other theatre credits include tours of **Hello, Dolly!** and **Guys and Dolls**, *Cindy in Sugar*, *Miss Electra* in **Gypsy** (West Yorkshire Playhouse, Leeds). She was part of the cast of **Children Will Listen**, which celebrated Stephen Sondheim’s 75th birthday (Theatre Royal Drury Lane) and Sondheim’s **Follies in Concert** (London Palladium).

Harold Brighouse

Playwright Harold Brighouse remains best known for his 1916 classic *Hobson’s Choice*. Brighouse brought a new and groundbreaking style to British theatre, portraying the bleak and harsh lives of the working classes, but combining it with a unique Northern flavour and wit. He was a leading member of the ‘Manchester School’ of playwrights, along with well known Northern writers such as Stanley Houghton and Allan Monkhouse, a group of writers all largely based at Annie Horniman’s Gaiety Theatre, Manchester – where *The Game* was performed for the last time in 1914.

Cast & Creative Team

John Branwell – Edmund Whitworth; Liz Carney – Florence Whitworth; Jo Gerard – Mrs Wilmot; Catherine Kinsella – Elsie Whitworth; Roy North – Hugh Martin / Barnes; Wendi Peters – Mrs Metherell; Phil Rowson – Jack Metherell; Barrie Rutter – Austin Whitworth; Matt Sutton – Dr Wells; Jos Vantylar – Leo Whitworth

Director – Barrie Rutter; Designer – Laura Clarkson; Lighting Designer – Tim Skelly; Sound Design – James Earls Davis

Mon 11 – Sat 16 Oct: Monday to Saturday, 7.30pm

Matinee: Sat 16 Oct, 2.15pm

Talkback (meet the cast): Tues 12 Oct, 7.30pm