

Soap talents on song for wartime comedy

A New Vic and Oldham Coliseum Theatre production

And A Nightingale Sang

By C P Taylor

Fri 29 Jan – Sat 20 Feb

A team of TV talents are swapping soaps for spam sandwiches this January as wartime comedy *And A Nightingale Sang* comes to the award-winning New Vic Theatre.

Best known for playing *Hollyoaks*' Sally Hunter, actor Katherine Dow Blyton is joining forces with *Eastenders* Director Sarah Punshon for the barnstorming production, filled with musical favourites from the forties.

In World War II Newcastle upon Tyne, the Stotts are an eccentric family waging their personal battles against the terrifying backdrop of war. Amidst the air raid sirens and fears of poison gas, Mam makes Spam sandwiches, Dad makes his own entertainment, Grandpa mourns his dead whippet, whilst daughters Joyce and Helen discover the joy and heartbreak of first love.

Dow Blyton has been a regular face on television since the 1990s in shows such as *Coronation Street*, *Cracker*, *Where the Heart Is*, not to mention alongside Ewan McGregor in hit Brit-flick, *Brassed Off*, as well as being known to millions as suffering mum Sally Hunter in Chester-based soap, *Hollyoaks*.

Says Katherine: "I had a great time in *Hollyoaks* – I really enjoyed playing Sally. She was a strong character, and really was the head of the family as husband Les was a bit of a loser! But they did stick together through all the bizarre soap problems that came up, before riding off in to the Cypriot sunset!"

"I am really looking forward to working at the New Vic; it will be a new experience for me as I haven't worked in the round. I've heard great things about the theatre so it's very exciting!"

The actor's debut will coincide with the New Vic return of BBC director Sarah Punshon – one of the UK's brightest directing talents. Selected as one of only eight participants for intensive training at the BBC Drama Directors' Academy, Sarah has since gone on to direct *Eastenders*, *Doctors*, ITV's *Emmerdale* as well as directing the theatre's 2008 hit production of *Be My Baby*.

Opening at the New Vic, *And A Nightingale Sang* has been produced as a partnership between the Staffordshire theatre in-the-round and Oldham Coliseum Theatre. After a three-week run at the New Vic, from Friday 29 January – Saturday 20 February, the production will continue to the Stephen Joseph Theatre in Scarborough, with final dates at Oldham Coliseum.

Tickets for New Vic performances, 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

-Ends-

For further press information, images or to arrange an interview, please contact Clare Hargreaves on 01782 717954 ext 317 or e-mail chargreaves@newvictheatre.org.uk

Notes for Editors:

Tour Schedule

New Vic Theatre

Fri 29 Jan – Sat 20 Feb

www.newvictheatre.org.uk

Stephen Joseph Theatre, Scarborough

Wed 24 Feb – Sat 6 Mar

www.sjt.uk.com

Oldham Coliseum Theatre

Thurs 11 Mar – Sat 3 Apr

www.coliseum.org.uk

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by C P Taylor

Fri 29 Jan - Sat 20 Feb

Filled with the music of the 1940s, this bittersweet comedy is an affectionate and moving picture of the survival of everyday life in turbulent times.

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C P Taylor's plays give a voice to the ordinary people of his North East home. He has a unique ability to present momentous historical events through the drama of daily life. The production is directed by Sarah Punshon.

"Taylor's eye and ear for detail and his depiction of the human heart make this simple romance into a story of wit and passion."

New York Post

Cast

Norman.....Jack Bennett
Joyce.....Anna Doolan
Peggy.....Katherine Dow Blyton
Eric.....Michael Imerson
Andie.....Ged McKenna
Helen.....Laura Norton
George.....Simeon Truby