

# British Theatre Guide

News, reviews, features and podcast on theatre across the UK

## A Right Pair

Rosemary Branch Theatre  
20–23 September 2012

This is a celebration of and by the professional and personal partnership of gay actor and activist Bette Bourne and his long term collaborator Paul Shaw, put together with the help of the writer and director Neil Bartlett.

It is both a personal history of this self-described “right pair”—in both senses—from their first meeting and of their professional life, made up largely of what you might call moments from their “greatest hits” from early Bloodlips days.

It takes us from when Bette found himself with tour dates booked in Europe (which, for the first time he says, was going to produce a profit) but no actors and he rapidly set about teaching Pearl (Paul) to tap dance through extracts from such shows as *Sarasine* (Bartlett’s adaptation from Balzac) which they played for Gloria Theatre, a reprise of their pairing as Hadrian and Antinous in *Get Hur*, *Salomé*, the ‘handbag’ inquisition from *The Importance of Being Earnest*, a little Cavafy, the creation of a fantastic panniered dress to go with a piece about frocks, a dash of Dorothy Parker and even a bit of audience participation to interpret titty-bum-bum-bum in appropriate physical fashion and, of course, it couldn’t be complete without an extract from Bette’s performance as Quentin Crisp in Tim Fountains’ *Resident Alien*.

You couldn’t have a more heart-warmingly hilarious show. It is also a marvellous exhibition of their skill as performers. The night that I saw it, even the audience had a champagne sparkle for it was an extra-special occasion: Bette’s birthday.

The curtain call was interrupted by the Rosie’s Cecilia and Cleo, sheathed in gold sequins, bearing a candle covered birthday cake. I didn’t count how many but he blew them out with just one puff. I reckon there were quite a few missing, for, according to the reference books, Mr Peter Bourne came into the world just three weeks after Germany invaded Poland. There may be grey hairs now but twinkle toes still does a nifty tap number.

If you miss the show this time round there will be another opportunity to catch it at the Rosie on 2 December.

Reviewer: [Howard Loxton](#)