

# British Theatre Guide

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

## Charlie and Henry

Peter Maddock  
New End Theatre  
(2007)

Charlie and Henrietta Morningstar are twins. Charlie (Gregory Finnegan), the male in the duo, experienced 'flogging' as a child and inherited the title Marquis, once the flogger died. Henrietta (Sophia Dawnay), known to all as Henry, is his young and attractive sister.

In their home at Eaton Square they have a couple visiting, Annette (Alice Henley) and her fiancé Mervyn (Tim Downie) who came for one night and stayed for days.

Life isn't easy for the young Marquis and his sister. The desperate need to keep up appearances is immense, particularly where they both are addicted to 'Charlie and Henry', a nickname they have given the white powder they sniff to boost their daily life. Unfortunately for the two, the castle they had inherited loses its roof to a fire and, as one might expect, the insurance had lapsed before it could cover the cost of the repairs. Their investment in the purchase of a hotel proved costly. In desperation, Charlie travels to Bogota from where he manages to smuggle cocaine inside the head sculptures of four Roman Emperors.

While the Marquis is busy contemplating ways of earning money, his sister is busy spending it. Her social charitable work is indiscriminate sex with males serving her, from Tesco delivery boys to her builder and now Darrell Day (Wesley Theobald), a limousine chauffeur, who also happens to know a great deal about her brother's sexual habits. Darrell is black and is a quick learner when it comes to preparing cocktails and sexual services.

The unexpected arrival of Cara Coleman (Jacqueline Wood) is initially met with delight tinged with awe, particularly from star struck Annette. Cara is a drug addict, whose greatest achievement is to abstain from drugs for 43 days. She is manipulative and well versed in muddying water and masquerading as innocent vulnerable 'recently widowed' woman.

The dialogue is, overall, convincing and in parts are funny. In a play where drugs and sex are the bedrock of the society, clichés are inevitable.

The performances range from mediocre to excellent. Jason Lawson's casting of Henry and Cara is inspired. Wood's and Dawnay's performances are the fulcrums of this production. They highlight the grotesque in our celebrity obsessed society.

The theatre programme provides a detailed background to the playwright, Peter Maddock. He was a lawyer who later trafficked drugs. In 1982 he was caught and many other celebrities, including the Queen's cousin the Marquis of Bristol, were exposed. He paid for his crime with 40 months in jail where he spawned the first draft of this play.

Evidently, his personal experience provides a convincing insight, in this debut comedy-drama, into the ugly existence of an exploitive, self-centred and greedy society whose attachments to cocaine

and sex are all-consuming.

**Reviewer:** [Rivka Jacobson](#)