

British Theatre Guide

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Yours Unfaithfully

Miles Malleson

Jermyn Street Theatre London and Mint Theater Company New York

Jermyn Street Theatre

1 June–1 July 2023

When Miles Malleson wrote this play about an open marriage in the early 1930s, he could draw on personal experience, for he had shared his first wife with philosopher Bertrand Russell. It comes with a first-hand freshness.

On the one hand, it shows the clash of conventional morality, represented by C of E Canon Gordon, with the attitude of a more liberal postwar generation represented by his novelist son Stephen Meredith and his wife Anne, but more importantly, it looks at the way that an open marriage works (or doesn't).

Though it was written 90 years ago, *Yours Unfaithfully* remained unproduced until 2016, when it was staged by New York's Mint Theatre Company directed by Jonathan Bank, who also directs this European première.

It is a production very much in period with a country house setting and some lovely '30s dresses by designers Alex Marker and Anett Black, but it hasn't dated. It looks right and sounds right, delivered in clearly spoken RP that avoids the strangled upper class that you hear in some films of the period.

Anne encourages her husband into a liaison with their widowed friend, the glamorous Diana Streatfield, in the hope it will spark creativity in his work, that has got bogged down in potboilers to bolster their income. The results and the questions such arrangement raise are as relevant now as ever. While the intellect may be accepting (or in Anne's case even egging on), what is the effect on the emotions?

Laura Doddington's Anne is well-organised and practical; she runs a school as well as their home. She can handle this can't she? It turns out there's a precedent when Stephen kept his equilibrium whilst she had a fling with Alan Kirby (Dominic Marsh), now married and their best friend. What she feels now surprises her.

Stephen, usually so placid, has a temper that flares in confrontation with his father, but Guy Lewis makes him besottedly doe-eyed as he becomes wrapped in romance with Keisha Atwell's flirty Diana. These are delightful performances, with Tony Timberlake's conservative canon clearly the template for his son's temperament, though their ideas are in conflict.

Miles Malleson is affectionately remembered for his comic skills, but Two's Company's revival of his First World War plays a few years ago were a reminder of his writing (both plays and film scripts). This is another opportunity to sample work is well worth reviving. It feels like discovering a new writer—let's have more Malleson.

Reviewer: [Howard Loxton](#)