



Richmond Shakespeare Society  
**AUDITION NOTICE**

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## **While the Sun Shines**

by Terence Rattigan

**Director: Stuart Watson**

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**Reading:** Monday, 4<sup>th</sup> November at 7.45p.m. at the Mary Wallace Theatre

**Auditions:** Monday, 11<sup>th</sup> November at the Theatre. Registration at 7pm.

**Playing dates:** Saturday, 15<sup>th</sup> March - Saturday, 22 March 2025

**Rehearsals:** Starting around Sunday, 15<sup>th</sup> December, there will be a few rehearsals before we take a Christmas break. Then, in the New Year, rehearsals will be held on Tuesday, Thursday, Friday evenings & Sunday afternoons thereafter and will take place in the vicinity of the theatre.

**AUDITIONS ARE OPEN TO ALL. The RSS actively encourages diversity in casting and casting decisions will *not* be constrained by the perceived gender or ethnicity of the roles being auditioned, unless specified by the author.**

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*“He didn’t tell me you’d be in uniform. It suits you though. That blue brings out the colour of your eyes.”*

London in the Blitz: Bobby, the young Earl of Harpenden, has begged for leave from the Royal Navy to marry his fiancée, Lady Elizabeth. But, on the eve of the wedding, a beefy American airman and an impulsive Free French lieutenant also fall head over heels for the bride-to-be. Add to the mix Bobby’s old flame, the vampy Mabel Crum, and Elizabeth’s feckless aristocratic father, and the stage is set for a night of mistaken identities and romantic entanglements as the protagonists grasp at fleeting happiness amid the uncertainties of wartime. *While the Sun Shines* offers a glimpse of how the thrill of love flourished even as the bombs fell.

A buoyant, giddy farce, the play ran in the West End for 1,154 performances after opening in 1943, which means that one of Rattigan’s most commercially successful plays is perhaps his least well known.

Gleefully unsentimental in its intertwining of love, sex and money, it plays out against the conduct of war and the threat of bombing while refusing to take these seriously - for example, anti-aircraft searchlights are treated as an atmospheric background for an amorous tryst. The tone is airy and mischievous, with the characters and audience invited to revel in the intoxicating freedom of a world where the conventions of romantic relationships are being shaken free. Rattigan also manages to slip in some delightfully sly jokes about gay life that are subtle enough to have escaped the notice of the wartime censor.

The play is a sparkling ensemble piece in which all seven roles offer great comic potential. The jokes arrive at dizzying speed as Rattigan cycles through a series of romantic and sexual permutations, occasionally accelerating to reach peaks of comic hysteria.

## Characters

(Note that all character ages below are approximate playing ages)

**HARPENDEN** (Male, 20s-30s) Bobby, the Earl of Harpenden is a terrible sailor who has never been able to rise above the rank of Ordinary Seaman despite the advantages conferred by his aristocratic background. Awfully nice, but not especially thoughtful or serious, he floats through life buoyed by enormous wealth, easy charm and privileged affability.

**HORTON** (Male 40+). The Jeeves to Harpenden's Wooster. His lordship's long-suffering, drily humorous butler has a colourful background and grasps a great deal more of what is going on than he is generally given credit for.

**MULVANEY** (Male 20s-30s, American accent). Scooped up and offered a bed by Harpenden after an epic night's drinking, the brawny Lieutenant Mulvaney is Bombardier on a US Air Force bomber. Generous and self-assured, he is amused and delighted by the manners of the English upper class, without ever being remotely overawed, except when unexpectedly falling like a ton of bricks for Elizabeth.

**ELIZABETH** (Female age 20s) Harpenden's fiancée, Lady Elizabeth Randall, has travelled to London to marry her childhood sweetheart. She is a corporal in the Women's Auxiliary Air Force, but like her intended, shows little aptitude for a military career. She has recently been demoted for leaving secret plans in the ladies' lavatory. Elizabeth has led a sheltered life and is innocent and gauche. But over the course of the play, she begins to discover who she really is.

**THE DUKE OF AYR AND STIRLING** (Male, 50+) Elizabeth's constantly hard-up, hard-partying father is counting on Elizabeth's marriage to put an end to his various financial embarrassments. However, he doesn't let that, or his rank as a Brigadier, prevent him from trying to screw money out of everyone present by selling them dodgy investments or playing dice.

**COLBERT** (Male 20s-30s, French accent) Volatile and passionate Free French lieutenant Colbert has fallen for Elizabeth while sharing a railway compartment on their train journey from Inverness and is determined to prevent her "voluptuous flame of life" from being quenched by marrying her himself.

**MABEL CRUM** (Female 20s-30s) Bobby's occasional lover Mabel works as a typist at the Air Ministry. She describes herself as a "trollop - but not for money, for men." Mabel is warm-hearted and funny while possessing a keenly developed sense of irony. She has a clear-eyed view of the world and what a young woman lacking a privileged background must do to get ahead in it.

**Please contact the director at [RSSwhilethesunshines@gmail.com](mailto:RSSwhilethesunshines@gmail.com) for audition pieces.**

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**You do not have to be an RSS member to audition but, if cast, you will be required to become a member before the first rehearsal.**

**Membership Application** forms are available in the theatre - or contact the Membership Secretary at - [membership@rss-mwt.org.uk](mailto:membership@rss-mwt.org.uk)

**Audition Application** forms are available in the theatre, or can be downloaded via the GET INVOLVED and ACTING pages at [www.richmondshakespeare.org.uk](http://www.richmondshakespeare.org.uk)

If you wish to audition, please return your completed form to the Hon. Secretary at the theatre, or by e-mail to - [secretary@rss-mwt.org.uk](mailto:secretary@rss-mwt.org.uk)

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