

## **THE COMMUNITY OF HUNGERFORD THEATRE COMPANY – TOWN SHOW 2008 – BLITZ!**

### **BLITZ! – A musical by Lionel Bart**

This was his follow-up to Bart's 1960-hit *Oliver!* It Opened on May 8, 1962 at the Adelphi Theatre, London and ran for well over two years—a total of 568 performances. Bart not only wrote the book (with Joan Maitland), music, and lyrics, but directed the piece as well.

Compared to *Oliver!* This show is now virtually unknown but was originally described by one critic 'a breathtaking theatrical adventure which restores spectacle to British musicals on a huge imaginative scale'.

In 1940 the East End of London is taking a terrible pounding from Hitler's bombs. Life, however, goes on and the story centres on two families:

- Mrs. Blitztein and her large Jewish family, especially her petty-criminal son Harry and her beautiful daughter Carol. Mrs B has a pickled herring stall in Petticoat Lane's market.
- Alfred Locke and his non-Jewish family, particularly his son Georgie. Mr Locke has the adjacent market stall.

They all fight their own particular battles with neighbors and authorities alike, through many situations, many humorous, some tragic, and eventually find their own individual peace.

Above all, this is a chirpy story of the good old fashioned British 'stiff upper lipness' of Mrs Blitztein and her refusal to be beaten. The show is played mostly through her eyes and shows how her hopes, fears, despair, joy, and sadness got her through the Blitz!

### **Synopsis – ACT 1**

The time is September 1940, London. Families are sheltering on the platform of the Bank Underground Station which the East Enders use as their nightly air raid shelter. (Our Hotel).

Mrs Blitztein, the undisputed 'Queen of Petticoat Lane', and Alfie Locke a cockney 'fruit and veg' stallholder, welcome back their soldier sons Harry and Georgie, who are both home on embarkation leave. Their dislike of each other is such that messages have to be passed between them by their children Carol and Georgie. (Tell Him-Tell Her).

Georgie has fallen in love with Carol and tells her brother Harry about it (I Wanna Whisper Something).

Before settling down for the night the cast listen to the radio news featuring a speech from Churchill and then sing along to a song from Vera Lynne (The Day After Tomorrow). Mrs Blitztein sings the children to sleep. (Our Hotel Lullaby).

Next day the young children are evacuated (We're Going to the Country). {They reappear again at the start of act 2.}

The East Enders return to their street to find some of their homes bombed and uninhabitable (Another Morning).

Mrs Blitztein pours some of the scorn she normally reserves for Alfred onto Hitler (Who's This Geezer Hitler?).

Mrs Blitztein strongly disapproves of her son not coming home and her daughter marrying Georgie - not only because he is a gentile but also because he is the son of Alfred Locke. (Be What You Wanna Be).

Mrs Blitztein's Harry has decided to desert from the army and the tensions between the multi-racial population of the East end become clear (As Long as This Is England).

Having both fallen in love, Georgie & Carrie express their feelings for each other (Opposites) and how safe they feel together (Magic Doorway).

Mrs Blitztein goes looking for Harry before he is actually posted as a deserter. (Bake a Cake).

As ever, the course of true love is set not to run smoothly! The night that Georgie goes off, Carol loses her sight as the result of a bomb blast. The boys assemble at Victoria Station at the end of embarkation leave and Elsie and the girls promise to keep things going at home while they are away. (Leave it To the Ladies).

Mrs Blitztein arrives, still hoping Harry has changed his mind but he fails to turn up, and she says goodbye to Georgie, not telling him that Carol has been hurt.

**Synopsis – ACT 2**

Six months later act two opens with a haunting song from Carrie, who is now blind (Far Away).

The action starts at the Sunday morning market. Mrs Blitztein is wheeling her pickled herring stall into position and all is bustle and cheerfulness. (Petticoat Lane).

The children return from the country and everyone joins in an East End 'knees-up'. (Down The Lane).

Mrs Blitztein asks her departed husband for guidance: (So Tell Me Jack).

Georgie returns after being invalided out of the army. The children are playing games and singing in the area (Mums & Dads). He now knows of Carol's blindness, and tries to convince himself that he is not good enough for her. (Who Wants To Settle Down?)

To Mrs Blitztein's delight, Georgie still asks Carol to marry him. (Is This Gonna Be A Wedding!)

Carol and Georgie are married (Far Away – Waltz).

Much to the annoyance of Alfie, Harry returns to attend the wedding and is going to sign back up for the army (Duty Calls). He is marched off for his next posting.

Mrs Blitztein, left alone to relax and put her feet up as wedding guests leave and the reception winds down, only to be blown up, when a bomb is dropped very close to the hotel the reception was held at.

Alfie, an ARP Warden as well as green grocer, searches amongst the rubble of the collapsing hotel looking for survivors and finds pulls out his own arch enemy. When she comes round, Mrs Blitztein realizes who saved her and after years of bickering and name calling finally decides to bury the hatchet and start afresh with Alfie.

Paul Hyde  
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