



STAGE TWO
DOWNHAM

NODA
for every stage

Brief Encounter

Noël Coward's classic romance, adapted for the stage by Emma Rice

Wednesday 24th - Saturday 27th June, 2026

Programme by donation

Director's notes

Many people know the famous David Lean 1945 film production of *Brief Encounter*. It doesn't matter if you don't. This adaptation for stage distils the essence of what the film captured so brilliantly.

Laura and Alec are not looking to be deceitful. They love. Against reason and, you might think, their better judgement. It's not called *falling* in love for nothing.

It's not all misery and agonising. This adaptation gives voice to the love lives of four far less constrained characters. Thank heavens someone is having a good time!

It's a powerful exposition of human beings being, well, human. Imagine being gay in

the 1930's and you begin to understand *Brief Encounter*.

I saw a professional production of this version, then I read it and I thought, with the right cast, I would like to direct it. I found the right cast and crew, at Stage Two Downham.

They have all collaborated with me to bring this story of a painful liaison, which, added together, only lasts a few hours, to this stage.

Thank you to them and to you for coming to see it. We all hope you enjoy it.



About Helen Christie

I'm delighted to direct a play for Stage Two Downham. I'm originally from Clitheroe and acted in and directed plays over this side of the hill in the 70s, including for Stage Two's spiritual predecessor, Waddington Drama Group.

I have since directed several plays for Nelson Civic Players, Pendle Borderline, & more recently for Burnley Garrick, where I was director for *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (a sell out run), and assistant director on *The Laramie Project*.



Brief Encounter

*adapted for the stage by Emma Rice
from the play Still Life and the screenplay Brief Encounter
both by Noël Coward*

The action takes place over the course of a few weeks
in the early autumn of 1938

There will be an interval of 20 minutes,
during which refreshments will be available

Directed by	Helen Christie
Production Manager	Fran Osborne
Music co-ordinator	Richard Hubbard
Set design and build	Warren Seddon, Alex McFall & Roger Astin
Props	Fran Osborne, Helen Christie
Front of House	Trevor Robins
Stage Management	Mel Crook & Darren Moss
Lighting & Sound	Paddy Keane & Adam Fielding
Continuity	Maureen Roberts
Costume Assistant	Nico Gatulescu
Poster and programme design	Richard Hubbard

Our thanks also go to the following;
Lord and Lady Clitheroe for their continued support
Pendle Hippodrome Theatre for props, costumes, and furniture
Burnley Garrick Theatre Group for props and furniture
Our team of dedicated front of house volunteers

All song lyrics are by Noël Coward

Any Little Fish, Mad About The Boy music by Noël Coward
Go Slow Johnny, A Room With A View

No Good At Love, The Wide Lagoon music by Stu Barker
So Good At Love

Musical arrangements are by Stu Barker, adapted for solo piano by Trevor Lord



Erica Martin
Laura Jesson

Having been away from the stage for five years and now with two little boys, Erica is excited to return to Stage Two.

Her previous productions have included *Arsenic and Old Lace* and *Under Milk Wood*. Erica met her husband, Tim, at Clitheroe amateur operatic society and the pair have since enjoyed many shows together, a favourite being 2019's *Wait Until Dark* where she got to slap him!



Freddie Fullalove
Stanley

I've been involved in the arts from a young age, performing in productions at Bowland High School before

studying Drama and Theatre at Nelson and Colne College, Film Production at the University of Salford, and wrapping up pantomime season with Slaidburn Players.

This is my debut for Stage Two Downham.



Niall Crosbie
Johnny, Waiter, Usher

I've always loved theatre, from watching to actually acting on stage. My experience in drama mainly comes from

secondary school at St Augustine's. I have been in a wide variety of musicals, ranging from *Little Shop Of Horrors* to *Addams Family*. I'm also in *We Will Rock You*, with the Basics Theatre Group in Burnley, where I hope to further expand my skills in musical theatre.

This is my first production with Stage Two Downham but I hope it won't be my last, as they are clearly as passionate as me.



Richard Hubbard
Alec Harvey

Richard's first show with Stage Two was 2014's *Confusions*, and he has appeared in several since then, including *Educating Rita*, *The Odd Couple* & *Dial M For Murder*.

Richard also appears on stage for Blackburn Musical Theatre Company, and Blackburn Drama Club, where he has had the privilege of bringing to life some iconic roles, such as Tevye in *Fiddler On The Roof*, and Perks in *The Railway Children*, as well as nonsense like *The Black Knight* in *Spamalot*.



Julie Laing
Beryl Waters

Julie only recently came back to am dram after a 30 year break. Her first performance with Stage Two was playing Lydia Robinson in *We Are Three Sisters*.

Julie also performs in Blackburn, where she has played Jean in *Sunshine on Leith* with Blackburn Musical Theatre Company alongside Richard Hubbard, and the lead role of Barbara in Blackburn Drama Club's production of *Pack Of Lies*, and Annie in their *Calendar Girls*.



Evan Preston
Bill, Waiter, Usher

I have had a passion for acting for a while and have finally got the opportunity to partake in a performance. I was

recently in *The Kings Speech* in Clitheroe with a non-speaking role. I am passionate about musical theatre and am hoping to join a musical theatre group in September. I am honoured to be able to join in with the other talented actors of this group and can't wait for future productions.



Jacqui Shepherd
Myrtle Bagot

Jacqui joined us 8 years ago and has been involved with every production. She has appeared in productions

such as *The Admirable Crichton*, *Pygmalion* and particularly enjoyed the role of Tabby in *We Are Three Sisters*.

In 2021 Jacqui made her directing debut with *The Winslow Boy*, and has since directed *The Dresser* and co-directed last year's *Dial M for Murder*.



Maisie Leaver
Mary Norton

I am thrilled to be making my debut with Stage Two Downham. I have worked with our director Helen in Burnley Garrick Theatre

Group, on both *The Laramie Project* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

I started with Oswaldtwistle Players as a teenager, then went on to complete a Bachelor of Arts degree in Drama. I love keeping my passion alive through participating in local theatre.



Kate Herron
Dolly Messiter

Kate always wanted to try acting, following in her late mother's amdram footsteps. She finally started with three

lines in *A Bunch Of Amateurs*. Her first real role came in 2022 as Grace in *The Winslow Boy*. This was followed by 2023's *Pygmalion*, and *The Dresser*. *Dial M For Murder* was an exciting challenge, which she enjoyed thoroughly.

Kate has always loved the film *Brief Encounter* and is thrilled to be playing the part of Dolly. Quite a character!



Alan Herron
Albert Godby, Fred Jesson, Stephen Lynn

Alan is delighted to be back performing with Stage Two Downham. If you like the film of this

play you're about to be surprised as there are a few things in here that the Noël Coward intended, and which don't appear on-screen.

He is also superexcited (apparently it's what young people say) to be acting with his wife who "is a much better actor than what I am", some old mates, and with some really talented young people.



Charis Deighton
Hermione Rolandson

Charis started her amateur career with Pendle Hippodrome Theatre Company and Colne Dramatic Society.

Most recently she has appeared with Burnley Garrick Theatre Company, including *Go Back for Murder* and as Titania in *A Midsummer Nights Dream*.

Charis' favourite play is *Be My Baby* which she has appeared in twice as Norma.



Trevor Lord
Piano

Trevor has performed with us several times, but usually in an acting role, most recently in 2018's *The Admirable Crichton*. He also

performs with CPCAODS in Clitheroe, where he has just finished *The Kings Speech*.

For *Brief Encounter* he is treating us to his other passion, playing the piano. Trevor will soon be playing with CPCAODS Show Choir in their Summer Concert.



About Brief Encounter

Brief Encounter was originally a one act play called *Still Life*, part of Noël Coward's series *Tonight At 8:30*, which he wrote to perform with Gertrude Lawrence.

Coward wrote about an affair. Not a sordid affair, a true love affair. Unfortunately, both the people involved are married to someone else, and they have children.

In 1930's England (it is a very English play) middle class respectability and, some would argue responsibility and, even notions of morality, held powerful sway. Social attitudes and consequently what was considered acceptable behaviour were firmly entrenched.

This extended to all aspects of people's personal lives.

Noël Coward

Sir Noël Coward (1899–1973) was a celebrated English playwright, composer, actor and singer. He began performing as a child and rose to fame with *The Vortex* in 1924. Known for his wit and sophisticated style, he wrote many successful plays, including *Private Lives*, *Hay Fever*, *Present Laughter* and *Blithe Spirit*. Coward also composed hundreds of songs, such as "Mad Dogs and Englishmen" and "Mad About the Boy". During the Second World War he supported the British war effort and later received an Academy Honorary Award. Knighted in 1970, he remains an influential figure in British theatre.



Emma Rice

Emma Rice is a British theatre director, playwright and former artistic director of Shakespeare's Globe. Known for her imaginative and visually striking productions, she previously led Kneehigh Theatre. Rice is recognised for blending music, movement and storytelling to create innovative and accessible theatre experiences.

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This amateur production of BRIEF ENCOUNTER is presented by arrangement with Concord Theatricals Ltd. on behalf of Samuel French, Ltd. www.concordtheatricals.co.uk

Stu Barker

Stu Barker is a British composer known for his long association with Kneehigh. Originally trained in fine art at Goldsmiths College, London, he has spent more than two decades creating music for acclaimed stage productions. Barker's work blends music, storytelling and theatrical innovation, making him a distinctive voice in contemporary British theatre.

About Stage Two Downham

Stage Two Downham is based right here in the beautiful village of Downham in the Ribble Valley. We stage an autumn and a spring production and, as we have with this production, we sometimes stage a further event in early summer.

Since formation in 1989, we have produced over 60 plays, including our COVID production of Dylan Thomas's *Under Milk Wood*, which you can watch for free on our website. Other recent highlights have included *The Odd Couple*, *Dial M For Murder*, *Educating Rita*, *God Of Carnage*, which we presented "in the round", and *The Winslow Boy*, which brought the society back to live performances after lockdown.



We are members of Noda, a national society for amateur theatre groups, from whom we are proud to have received ten regional awards so far.

Like any drama group, Stage Two Downham relies on its members, without whom no production would be possible. Backstage and onstage, we will always welcome new members. If you are interested, get in touch with us! We will be really pleased to meet you!

Whether you are staging a musical, an opera, a play, a concert or a pantomime, as the UK's leading amateur theatre membership organisation, NODA is here for every show, every rehearsal, every curtain call – here for our members every step of the way.

From just starting out to centre stage; village halls to professional venues; NODA exists to celebrate, connect, support and amplify amateur theatre and theatre groups across the UK.

We provide invaluable services, expertise and resources – that help thousands of our member groups create and produce theatre, that enhances lives and benefits communities everywhere.

Whatever your passion, level of experience or stage of life, we are here to help everyone enjoy the unique benefits, opportunities and sense of community that live performance can bring.

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Tickets £10

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or on 07845 926295

Dates for your diary

2026 — November 25th - 28th - *Witness For The Prosecution*

2027 — March 17th - 20th
November 24th - 27th

Keep an eye on our website for more details as they are announced, or ask to join our email list to be the first to know.

www.stagetwodownham.co.uk

