

ADEL PLAYERS PRESENT

RUTHERFORD & SON

**BY GITHA
SOWERBY**



WEDNESDAY 22nd to SATURDAY 25th OCTOBER 2014



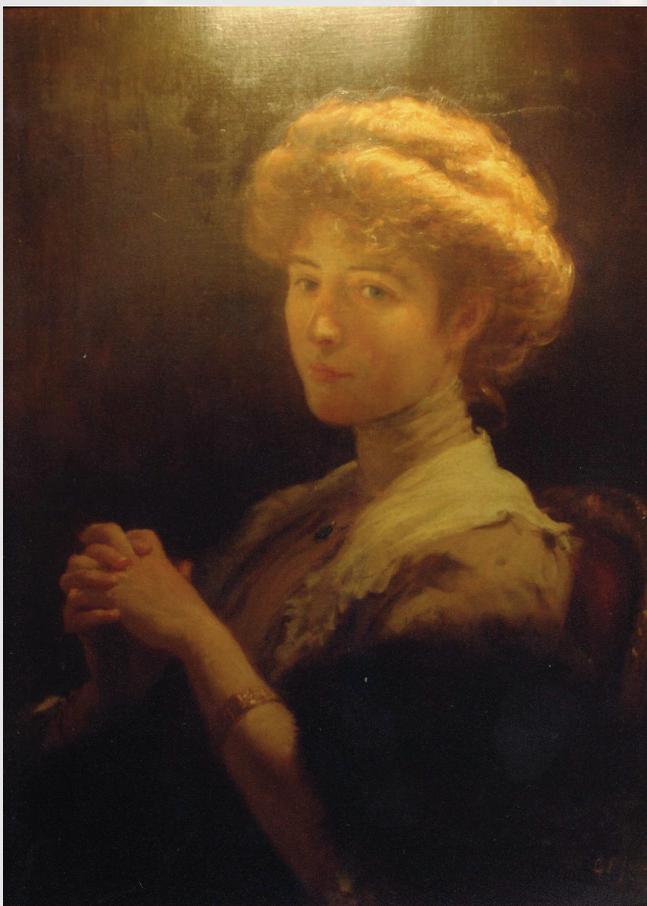
MANNING STANTON ADVERT
WITH PRINTER



GITHA SOWERBY FROM CHILDREN'S AUTHOR TO DRAMATIST

Very early on the morning of 1 February 1912 Githa Sowerby, an established children's author but a fledgling playwright, crept out of the London flat she shared with two of her sisters and headed for the nearest news vendor's stall. Was it really true that yesterday afternoon, after the premiere of her first play *Rutherford & Son*, the Royal Court Theatre had resounded to cheers, prolonged applause, and cries of "Author! Author!?" Any lingering doubts Githa may have had about the reality of the previous day's events were quickly dispelled. The success of *Rutherford & Son* was headline news and the billboards were screeching COURT THEATRE - NEW AUTHOR'S REMARKABLE TRIUMPH. *Rutherford & Son* was a smash hit. Indeed, it was being hailed as the best play to be staged in the West End for a decade, and the writing was being compared to that of Ibsen.

In our more enlightened twenty-first century Githa's success as a female playwright may not seem particularly remarkable, but in 1912 such critical acclaim for a play written by a woman was unprecedented. English Victorian and Edwardian middle-class family life had been founded on the premise that women, to be considered pure and womanly, must not aspire to a role outside the home. It was then widely accepted (in accordance with Charles Darwin's theory put forward in his 1871 book *The Descent of Man: Selection in Relation to Sex*) that females of all species, including humans, represented a stunted and inferior example of evolution. Women were considered to have been created by God solely for the procreation of children and the sexual satisfaction of men. In that climate it is no coincidence that *Rutherford & Son* was billed as having been written by "KG Sowerby", not by "Githa Sowerby". The manager of the Royal Court knew that Githa's play would be automatically panned by the critics if it was known to have been written by a woman.



These patronising attitudes can clearly be seen in the astonished reactions of the journalists who subsequently interviewed Githa once the secret was out. Keble Howard of London's *Daily Mail* wrote: "This new dramatist, about whom half the play-going world is talking, is just the sort of young Englishwoman you may meet by the score on tennis lawns or up the river. Tall, fair, with a pretty face and a very pleasant voice, you might suspect her of eating chocolates or talking nonsense in the shade, but you would never dream that she could be the author of a play with the grim force of a *Pinero* in the story or the sureness of a *Galsworthy* in the characterisation." Nor was there less critical incredulity when the play crossed the Atlantic later that year. In a piece entitled "When Lovely English Miss Turns to Playwriting -

Being A Discussion of One Notable Achievement With A Hint Of What Tea Table Ambition Sometimes Leads To", the *New York Times* critic Adolph Klauber scoffed: "Even with Miss Sowerby as a shining example, we do not feel that the playwrighting instinct in young ladies calls for immediate or emphatic encouragement."

Where did Githa get the ideas that inspired her to take on the male-dominated British theatre establishment of 1912 with her play *Rutherford & Son*? Githa's sympathies, like those of her father, lay with the beliefs of the Arts and Crafts Movement. Like fellow members of the Fabian Society she valued craftsmanship, and viewed the mechanised glassmaking processes on which her family's business success had been built as having destroyed the integrity of labour. *Rutherford & Son*, based on the life of her grandfather, is an indictment of those who allow the worship of profit to destroy the lives of both their families and the people who work for them. In 2000 the National Theatre named it as one of the top 100 plays of the twentieth century.

Githa's considerable success as a children's author continued after her marriage in 1912 to fellow poet and dramatist John Kaye Kendall but her later plays – *A Man And Some Women* (1913), *Sheila* (1917), and *The Stepmother* (1924) - made little impact at the time. Before Githa died in 1970 she destroyed all the letters and family photographs that were not in her daughter's possession and all her unpublished poetry, believing her work was not valued by anyone and had been forgotten. I wish she could have known how highly it is regarded now.

Pat Riley
Director

MOLOCH

FACT MEETS FICTION

In Rutherford & Son Githa Sowerby has young John Rutherford speak of the resemblance between ritual child sacrifice to the pagan god Moloch (referred to in the Bible as Ba'al) and the legacy for the Rutherford family of industrialisation. The furnaces in which pressed glass was sealed for firing look very similar to those in the belly of this Canaanite fire god.

This is one of the many places in Rutherford & Son where fact meets fiction. The lives of several generations of Githa's family were dedicated before they were born to minister to the needs of the fiery furnaces of Sowerby's Ellison Glassworks.



SENIOR AND RHODES WITH PRINTER

CAST & PRODUCTION TEAM



CAST

John Rutherford (owner of a West Riding glassworks)
Aunt Ann (his sister)
Janet (his daughter)
Mary (his daughter-in-law)
John (his eldest son, married to Mary)
Dick (his youngest son)
Martin (foreman at the glassworks)
Mrs Henderson (mother of a sacked employee)

David Pritchard
Vivienne Bate
Jane Gorton
Rachel Newby
Matthew Newby
Will Andrews
Robert Colbeck
Dianne Newby

The action of the play takes place in the living-room of John Rutherford's house, which is built on the fell overlooking the huge glassworks he inherited from his father and in which he has worked since he was a boy

Act One 7 pm on a Tuesday evening in December 1885
Act Two 9 pm three days later
Act Three 11 am the following day

There will be an interval of 20 minutes between Acts One and Two. Act Three will follow Act Two after a minute's break to denote the passage of time.

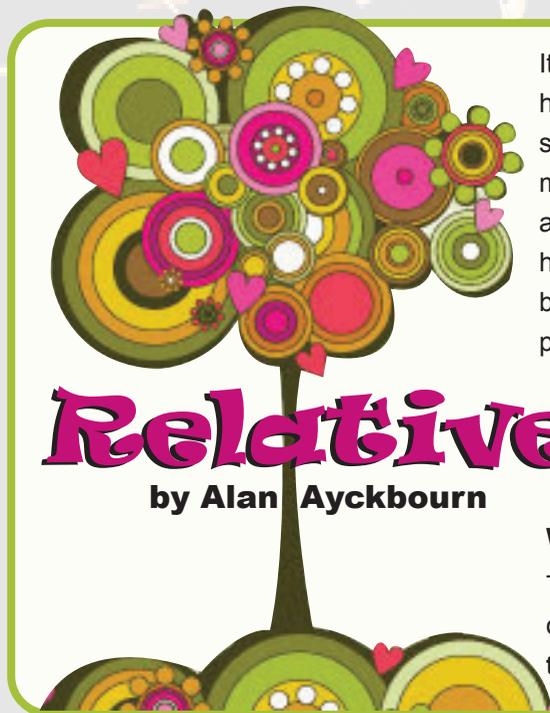
Director's Note: The formula for making the "white metal" referred to in the play is glassmakers' slang for the formula for making clear glass, and a "lear-man" is the workman whose responsibility it is to see that a furnace has reached the correct heat before the moulded glass is sealed in to be fired.

PRODUCTION TEAM

Director	Pat Riley
Assistant Director	Bernard Riley
Stage Manager	Ron Darby
Assistant Stage Managers	Arthur Duce, Pete Stringer, Viv Stringer, Tom McMeeking
Set Design and Painting	Beth Duce, Shell Peart, David Lancaster
Special Effects	David Newby
Lighting	Robin Peart
Sound	Andy Sneddon, Ed Hoskin
Props	Carol Crossfield, Anne Andrews, Amanda Munns, Lucy Heap
Costumes	Anne Andrews, Dianne Newby
Prompt	Janet Porter
Publicity	Jon Holmes, Shell Peart
Front of House	Mike Andrews, Alan Foale, and members of Adel Players

NOTICEBOARD

NEXT PRODUCTION



It's the swinging sixties. Greg only met Ginny a month ago but he's already made up his mind that she's the girl for him. When she says she's going to visit her parents, he decides this is the moment to ask her father for his daughter's hand and, discovering a scribbled address, he follows her to Buckinghamshire. There he finds Philip and Sheila enjoying a peaceful Sunday morning breakfast in the garden but the only thing is... they're not Ginny's parents!

Relatively Speaking

by Alan Ayckbourn

Wednesday-Saturday, 21-24 January 2015

Tickets can be reserved by phoning Anne and Mike Andrews on **0113-2755585** or by e-mailing them at tickets@adel-players.org.uk.

REFRESHMENTS

Patrons are welcome to make use of the bar before the play, during the interval, and after the performance. It speeds up service at the bar if as many patrons as possible pre-order interval drinks. However, please note that for safety reasons drinking glasses may not be brought into the Hall. If you have not finished your drink, please ask the bar staff for a plastic container.

During the interval tea and coffee will be served in the Gladys Tetley room and ice cream in the Hall.

THANKS

Our continuing thanks to Dragon Timber and Plywood Ltd of Leeds for the company's invaluable support of all our productions. For the best timber in Leeds, telephone 0113-2362362 or e-mail jeff@dragontimber.co.uk.

Rutherford & Son is presented by special arrangement with **Samuel French & Co.**

WEBSITE

Visit our website at www.adel-players.org.uk where you will find lots of information about our group. Like us on **Facebook** and follow us on **Twitter @AdelPlayers**

Adel Players is a section of Adel War Memorial Association - Reg. Charity No. 523466

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HAZEL'S ADVERT

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