



LOFT THEATRE FIFTY-FOURTH SEASON 1975-1976

APRIL 21, 22, 23, 24, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, MAY 1.

SEPARATE TABLES
by Terence Rattigan

Cast: (in order of appearance)

Mabel	JAN JONES
Lady Matheson	DOROTHY DILLAM
Miss Mencham	BETTY SANDERS
Mrs. Raiton-Bell	JEAN STEPHENSON
Doreen	JENNY BARNACLE
Mr. Fowler	BERT ROLLINGS
Sybil	JO DE LA MARE
Miss Cooper	PAT HUCKVALE
John Malcolm	WILLIAM WILKINSON
Major Pollock	JOHN FENNER
Charles Stratton	HELEN ASHBOURNE

DIRECTOR: JANE MEREDITH

Table by the Window: Scene 1: Evening - Winter - the Dining Room of the Beauregard Private Hotel, Bournemouth.

Scene 2: The Lounge, after dinner.

Scene 3: The Dining Room the following morning.

Table Number Seven: Scene 1: Eighteen months later, the Lounge after tea.

Scene 2: The Dining Room - dinner time.

There will be one interval of 15 minutes.

Curtain down approx. 10.00 p.m.

Set Designer	Ronald Welch
Stage Manager	Lynn Smith
Assistant Stage Managers	Caroline Pugh, Joyce Welch, John Heritage, David Henson, Geoffrey Mountford.
Wardrobe	Madeleine Gerrill
Lighting Design	Peter Bleasby
Lighting Operators	Alan Snelson
Sound	Jane Larard, Mandy Harding
Construction Manager	Kenrick Badger
Photographs	Mike Lee

THEATRE
Look at all the lonely people

SEPARATE TABLES—Loft Theatre, Leamington, until May 1 (running time: about 2hr 20min.)

All the lonely people, where do they all belong? According to this Terence Rattigan play, a lot of them can be found at a little hotel in Bournemouth.

For every one of the residents we see when we peep into the chintzy lounge and regimented dining room is isolated, and takes consolation in fantasy.

The play is, in effect, two separate dramas revolving around this theme of loneliness and the way it affects the residents, whose weaknesses and lack of security are exposed in different ways.

Linking the two playlets, which are set 18 months apart, is another thread — the predicaments of the permanent residents, who live in their own unchanging, narrow world while life goes on around them.

Perhaps it was nerves on the part of the players, but they were a little reticent, and as most of them are supposed to be no more than caricatures anyway, the essence of such figures is their extravagant eccentricity.

While acknowledging that Rattigan's style is neat,

compact and easy to follow, and Jane Meredith's direction goes a long way to getting the best out of it here.

Apart from a rather flat opening scene, the cast seem to have captured the idiosyncrasies of the guests.

While acknowledging that the first half of the play is

the more serious, the balance between pathos and humour was not quite right last night.

Only the remarkable Jean Stephenson as redoubtable Mrs. Raiton-Bell and Betty Sanders as Miss Mencham, were as effective before the interval as after it. That is partly because they do have many of the best lines, but last night they showed how to get the best out of them.

After the interval, though, Bert Rollings, playing a Mr. Chips-like schoolmaster, and John Fenner, as medic Charles Stratton, also came into their own.

Each of the two principals has a different role in each half. Jo De La Mare plays a superficially confident Mrs. Shankland in the first and a shy, suppressed Sybil in the second.

She copes well with both characterisations, as does William Wilkinson, who is a man trying to get away from his past in the first story and one trying to invent a past in the second.

They are both able to tread the tightrope of credibility, fostering sympathy without losing their direction. And the same can be said of Pat Huckvale as the motherly Miss Cooper.

Ronald Welch deserves mention for producing a composite set to complement a well-executed drama.

John Palmer

Two up for the Loft

The Loft's latest play, "Separate Tables," is an unqualified success. They use their resources, both in acting and set construction, to the full, and the production is delivered with a degree of polish.

To the background of a rather seedy hotel in Bournemouth, which has seen better days, two different playlets are acted out.

The first, while being entertaining, lacked the sparkle of the second, when the actors showed their real capabilities.

Excellent, and tremendously amusing performances were delivered by Jean Stephenson as the domineering, righteous Mrs. Raiton-Bell, and by Betty Sanders as Miss Mencham.

William Wilkinson did well slipping into two different roles with ease and competency. The same applies to Jo De La Mare who did a superb job. Pat Huckvale was an admirable Miss Cooper.

The well-constructed and adaptable set lent itself to the change of scenes. — R.K.

