

„Shirley Valentine“ by Willy Russel – The New Play at The English Theatre of Hamburg



Come and enjoy a glass of wine with me. Cheers.(c) ETH
Good news, dear friends of ETH!

Your favourite stage has recently reopened its gates and welcomes you to a heart-warming comedy featuring Sharon Facinelli, one of the Westend's most popular stars, in a one-woman-show. This two-hour monologue is kind of a marathon, oscillating between joyful moments and deep frustration. A great performance by an actor

who is at home in all genres, be it film, TV, theatre or musical. We are sure that you will greatly enjoy the play after the long-lasting lockdown in most European countries and abroad. Although Willy Russell already wrote “Shirley Valentine” way back in 1986, the play has not lost any of its charm and still appeals to an audience that goes for romance. Many thanks to Sharon Facinelli and director Paul Glaser who made the premiere a success.

Here is the plot



To hell with this boring housework! (c) ETH

Shirley Bradshaw, née Valentine, is a middle-aged, “slightly” overweight Liverpudlian housewife, who talks to herself and to the walls of her kitchen while her husband Joe is at work. But even at home, he rarely talks to her. Shirley feels lonely and unloved. In her frustration she has taken to drink and always keeps a bottle of wine in her fridge. While peeling potatoes and preparing salad for dinner, she fills her glass many a time until the bottle is empty and she has to open a new one. In her tipsy state Shirley’s memory goes back to the olden golden days when she was the young attractive still

unmarried Shirley Valentine, full of life and great expectations. In another flashback she sees herself and Joe after their recent honeymoon in their new house splashing paint at each other while painting their kitchen. However, these sunny days have gone forever and now Shirley feels lonely and terribly unhappy. During her long marriage to Joe, her unloving hubby, she has lost her own identity and craves for an independent life. But what can she do to escape this hell of wedlock? When she is again close to tears, her friend Jane calls and asks Shirley to fly to Greece with her to spend a holiday in the sun. For the first time in years Shirley takes a decision without asking Joe and packs her suitcase for a trip to a sunny Grecian island.

Act two



Bye bye, see you in Greece! (c) ETH

In act two we see Shirley on a sunbathed beach, relaxing in a deckchair, a sparkling drink in her hand. My god, how easy and stressless life can be, she thinks while enjoying the view of the crystal clear water of the sea in front of her and the high mountains

in the background. Shirley seems to have completely changed. She looks so much younger than before in her brand-new smart outfit and seems to be at peace with herself in this wonderful Mediterranean holiday resort. When a young attractive Greek named Costas turns up Shirley is delighted and consents to go on a boat-trip with him. Jane is utterly concerned and warns Shirley not to lose control over her life. But Shirley is overwhelmed by her newly won freedom and even dreams of a life in Greece until the end of her days. But can she leave Joe alone in rainy England while she is enjoying her life far away from him? Dear spectator, now it is up to you to find out which decision Shirley will finally take. Our lips are sealed,

By the way, all of you, dear aficionados of our theatre, must listen very carefully since Shirley's monologue is held in the Scouse dialect that is spoken in Liverpool and the whole Merseyside region. The Beatles grew up in Liverpool and started their career from here. Pity we do not hear any of their hits during the play.

A few words about the author

Willy Russel was born near Liverpool in 1947. In his "first life" he worked as a hairdresser embellishing ladies and gentlemen. Later he started writing and performing his own songs. And one day he discovered his talent for writing plays and musicals. "John, Paul, Ringo... and Bert", featuring the life of the Beatles became a box-office success and won him the prize of best musical of the year 1974. "Shirley Valentine" premiered in the Westend in 1988 and later on Broadway. It proved to be a long-lasting hit on both stages. Russel also wrote a number of plays, among them "Blood Brothers!", "One for the Road" as well as the charming comedy "Educating Rita" which was also performed in the English Theatre of Hamburg in 2003.

Last but not least we wish to draw your attention to our next premiere on November 18, 2021: "The 39 Steps" is a thriller farce

by Patrick Barlow. Do you remember Alfred Hitchcock's "39 Steps", filmed in black and white in 1935? A fantastic thriller, spiced with lots of British black humour. Patrick Barlow's version is not a remake, but an immensely witty and thrilling farce of the original. We are looking forward to seeing you in November.

Final performance of "Shirley Valentine" on October 30, 2021