



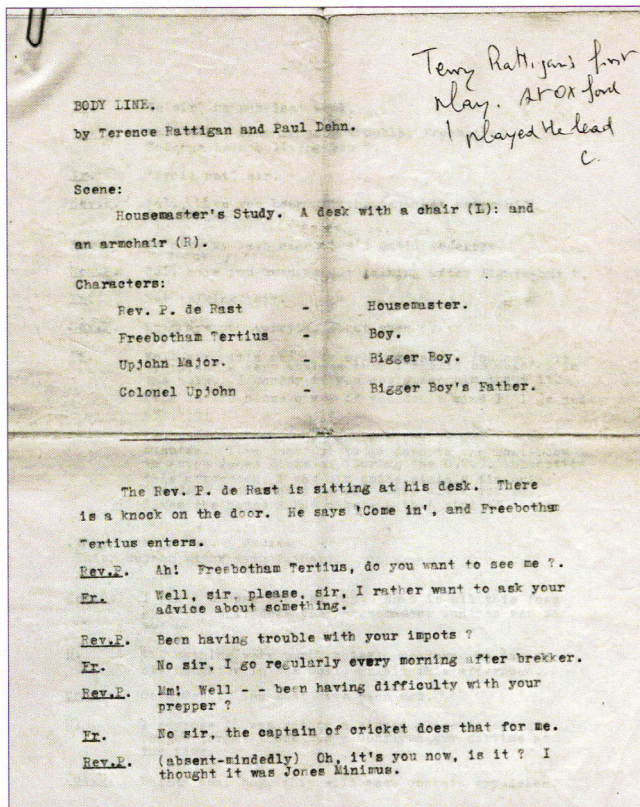
# The Rattigan

The Newsletter of  
The Terence Rattigan Society

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# Version

## A new Rattigan script discovered



**David Charles Manners  
discovers an early Rattigan script**

Colin McFadyean was a favourite amongst my mother's cousins. Erudite, cosmopolitan and naturally generous, his death in 2007, aged 92, was widely mourned. And yet it was not until April 2021 that his daughter Melanie discovered a folio of typed pages tucked into his desk, on the title sheet of which her father had written, 'Terry Rattigan's first play. At Oxford I played the lead.'

Colin had spent his professional life as a noted

international business lawyer; his father, Sir Andrew McFadyean, as a diplomat, Liberal politician and philosopher. In contrast, Colin's mother, Lady Dora, was one of the celebrated Chute theatre dynasty. Her great-grandmother had been the first woman theatre manager in Britain; her great-uncle none other than the Great Macready himself.

Colin inherited his forebears' theatrical faculties. He excelled on stage in his youth at Rugby School, and on going up to Brasenose College in 1933 joined the Oxford Union Dramatic Society (OUDS). It was there that his talents won him the lead in a piece written by two fellow Society members: Terence Rattigan and Paul Dehn.

The duo's debut work was a spicy farce entitled *Body Line*, in reference to a controversial cricketing tactic devised by the English team for their 1932-33 Ashes tour of Australia. The playlet opens in a headmaster's study and consists of three scenes for four characters:

Reverend P. de Rast	-	Housemaster
Freebotham Tertius	-	Boy
Upjohn Major	-	Bigger Boy
Colonel Upjohn	-	Bigger Boy's Father

The Reverend, played by Colin, was a mocking representation of the all-too-familiar eccentric, yet predatory, public schoolmaster: *'I've just got to go down to the boot-room to swish Jones Minimus. During the O.T.C. inspection this afternoon, I saw him quite plainly fingering the Coy. Commander's pouch. Very slack indeed. Gives the house a bad name - that kind of thing.'*

The Reverend's character is **Cont. on page 8...**



## A new Rattigan script

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contrasted with that of the stuffy, censorious parent: Col. Upjohn: *'It's you who are mad, sir. You're just another of those filthy sexual maniacs. I shall remove my son this very instant, and I shall inform the police.'*

The humour of the piece is unashamedly bawdy, founded in a clumsy confusion over cricketer terminology and the boys' sexual proclivities: Rev. P. de Rast: *'He's a quick learner, you know. I was playing with him myself the other day. I must say I found him much better on matting than on grass. Of course, on matting one's balls tends to get up very quickly. One of mine hit him in the eye before he could turn round.'*

Considering the subject matter, such a work could never have been intended for public presentation. The OUDS ran a private club called Smokers, where notoriously camp, risqué, in-house revues were staged once a year for the exclusive indulgence of members and their guests. It seems most likely, therefore, that *Body Line* was meant for none but this select assembly.

In the same year that Colin took the lead in *Body Line*, Rattigan defied his own censorious father, who intended him for the Diplomatic Service, by leaving Trinity College without sitting his final exams. A few months later, Rattigan's first full-length play, *First Episode* – another collaboration, this time with Philip Heimann – opened at Kew and was soon rewarded with a transfer to the West End. The trajectory of Rattigan's career was set.

Rattigan maintained his friendship with Paul Dehn after Oxford. By the outbreak of war, both were noted members of another discreet society that gathered in the bar beneath the Ritz Hotel. This place of safety and assignation was known as The Pink Sink and ruled by a remarkable woman known affectionately as Sodomy Johnson, 'the Buggers' Vera Lynn'.

As it happens, Colin also found himself returned to the company of Paul Dehn during the war, when both were recruited by Ian Fleming

## Dates for your diary

At long last we have some events to look forward to!

### Sunday 22 August 2021

'**The Browning Version**' at the new Riverside Studios, starring Sir Kenneth Branagh, a fundraising venture for RADA. 2.15pm performance. Full details are enclosed. Personal booking only.

### Thursday 23 September 2021

**Annual Birthday Dinner** at the Oxford & Cambridge Club, Pall Mall, 7 for 7.30pm. Full details and booking form are on the enclosed flyer.

### Thursday 2 December 2021

'**While The Sun Shines**' - a visit to the Orange Tree Theatre, Richmond, for the 2.30pm performance has been arranged. Details and a booking form have been sent. A few places remain, so if you would like to attend please contact: [phillward@me.com](mailto:phillward@me.com)

### STOP PRESS!

### Saturday 4 December 2021

'**Flare Path**' - a visit to the Palace Theatre Westcliff is proposed for a matinee performance of 'Flare Path'. More details to follow.

into Naval Intelligence. Colin had lived in Berlin as a child and spoke fluent German. He was therefore appointed chief interrogator of captured U-boat captains. Dehn, the quiet, witty poet, became not only a trainer of spies, but, according to John le Carré, a professional assassin. He subsequently found fame as an Oscar-winning screenwriter and is today referred to as 'the gay godfather of James Bond'.

Not until 1960 would Dehn and Rattigan again combine their literary art for the writing of a musical, *Joie de Vivre*. As this is widely regarded as their first and only collaboration, the discovery 61 years later amongst Colin's effects of what is likely to be the only surviving copy of *Body Line* – their true earliest collaboration – is made all the more remarkable. ☞

*David Charles Manners is a writer, charity co-founder, and a representative of the anti-bullying charity Diversity Role Models. He preserves private letters written by both Rattigan and Dehn during their Pink Sink years. His own play, Here at Last is Love, based on these and other inherited letters, opens next year. [www.davidcharlesmanners.com](http://www.davidcharlesmanners.com)*