

Stephen Meredith Max von Essen
 Anne Meredith..... Elisabeth Gray
 Diana Streatfield..... Mikaela Izquierdo
 Dr. Alan Kirby..... Todd Cerveris
 The Rev. Canon Gordon Meredith..... John Hutton

Setting: Summer, 1933

Act I Anne and Stephen's country home.

Intermission

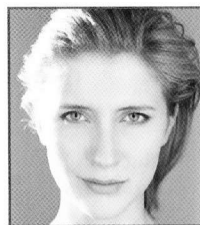
Act II The same, two months later.

Intermission

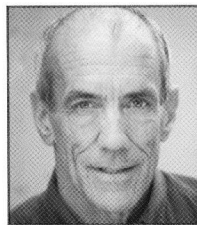
Act III..... A room in town which Stephen and Anne keep for occasional use.
 Ten days later.



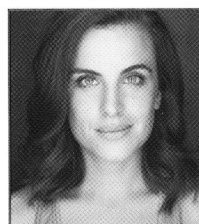
TODD CERVERIS



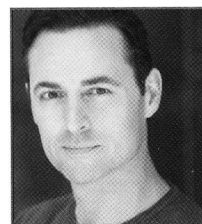
ELISABETH GRAY



JOHN HUTTON



MIKAELA IZQUIERDO



MAX VON ESSEN

A BIOGRAPHY OF MILES MALLESON

By Maya Cantu

As a playwright, screenwriter, director, producer, and character actor, Miles Malleson established himself as a theatre artist of dazzling versatility. Yet while Malleson “acted the fool most memorably”¹ in dozens of plays and films, he was also a playwright of provocative wit, searching insight, and a sense of “ethical passion”² drawing upon a lifelong engagement in progressive politics. Described by *The Manchester Guardian* as “no respecter of authority,” Malleson wrote comedies about modern love, sex, social justice, and personal freedom, in which “the dogma is notably anti-dogmatic.”³

Born on May 25, 1888 in South Croydon, Surrey, William Miles Malleson formed his values amid “two family backgrounds:” one agnostic and one “passionately puritanical.”⁴ The son of Edmund Taylor Malleson, a manufacturing chemist, and Myrrha Borrell, Malleson enjoyed an idyllic childhood in Brighton, where his “enormously unbelievably happy family group” moved at the age of two. His experiences with “family number two,” however, more directly informed Malleson’s plays. At the vicarage of his Uncle Philip at Great Tew, where Malleson and his sister Alice spent family holidays, his grandmother’s fire-and-brimstone interrogations of “impure thoughts” would leave Malleson (as he recalled in 1968) “absolutely terrified with guilt and fear for my life...it took me years and years to throw off, even if I’ve done so now.”⁵

From the split worlds of his Victorian upbringing, Malleson entered the Junior School at Brighton College in 1898, and, from 1908 to 1912 attended Emmanuel College at Cambridge. The captain of the cricket team at Brighton College, Malleson strove to win a cricketing Blue (or highest athletic honor) at Cambridge. Stung by the loss of a freshman cricketing match—and



(William) Miles Malleson, 1964

the chance at his Blue—Malleson ventured into Cambridge’s Amateur Dramatic Club, where he “acted very regularly throughout the three years.”⁶ Though excelling at degrees in history and music (and revealing such a gift for composing that Ralph Vaughan Williams encouraged him to pursue further studies on the continent), Malleson set his mind upon the professional stage. An elaborate practical joke sealed the deal. When the conservative MP George Haddock (set to appear before the Cambridge Debating Society) cancelled his speech, Malleson stepped in:

Miles went to London, had himself made up as an old man, visited his mother, who failed to recognize him, returned to Cambridge, dined at the head table, and gave an excellent Tory speech...only at the end of the speech did people realize there was something ‘fishy’ about Mr. Haddock.... Miles’ parents, impressed by his accomplishment, then supported his decision to go to drama school.⁷

At the Liverpool Playhouse, and then at Herbert Beerbohm Tree's Academy (soon to be the Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts), Malleson gained acting experience and wrote short plays, including *A Man of Ideas* (1913). He also met Lady Constance Annesley. The rebel daughter of an Irish earl, who performed under the stage name Colette O'Neil, Annesley later distinguished herself as a novelist, memoirist, and travel writer. Two decades later, she recalled Malleson as:

The only student at Tree's who came anywhere near genius.... He acted, wrote plays, composed music, sang, played the fiddle and the piano, and had an unerring instinct for the 'production' side of the theatre.... Miles Malleson looked exactly like a hobgoblin—with his humorous, intelligent eyes peering whimsically from behind rimless pince-nez.... M. and I didn't exactly fall in love: we slipped into it.⁸



Constance Malleson, 1922

At the advent of World War I, both Mallesons moved among bohemian circles, joining movements in pacifism (with the No-Conscription Fellowship), Socialism, Women's Suffrage, and causes of free love. After a short period of serving with the City of London Fusiliers in Malta, Malleson

was invalided from the army in January, 1915, due to "weakness of the feet." Shortly after, he eloped with Constance, only for Annesley's outraged family to demand a church wedding. The marriage—conceived as an open one—would shortly live up to its premise with the entrance of philosopher and activist Bertrand Russell, with whom Constance embarked on a sexually and intellectually passionate affair that lasted on and off for decades. According to Constance, Malleson accepted the relationship with understanding: "He was so gentle and tucked me up so tenderly."⁹

An excerpt from *YOUTH* (1916)
by Miles Malleson

You see, in the theatre, if a man makes love to one woman, it's a pretty play; if he makes love to two, it's a drawing-room drama; if he makes love to three, it's a farce. I've written a play about a man who wants to make love to every other woman he meets, and it's a tragedy. People hate it. They tell me it's "young" but then, most people are, some time or other in their lives. If it's the less interesting for that, you might as well say Spring isn't interesting until it's Summer. They tell me it's "Improper" and shows a hopeless "Lack of reticence" that's the phrase. But I talk about it because I want to find out definitely what is improper. Nobody seems to know. At least people have wildly opposite ideas. You see- people don't face all the facts of love and...emotion... and...all the rest of it. Individuals solve these questions for themselves or try to in dark little corners of their lives and say nothing about it. It's all so difficult and often ugly...when it ought to be simple and terrific and beautiful. At least that's what I feel...

Throughout the WWI years, and into the 1920s, Malleson immersed himself in the theatre, leading parallel lives as a classical actor and a modern playwright. He broke out as a playwright with *Youth* (1916), a backstage comedy that J.T. Grein described in *The London Times* as "fresh, frank, original and romantic with the additional quality that it is true." *Youth* followed the affair between an actress and a Malleson-like playwright, who explains: "(I am) the result of an essentially modern mixture. The temperament of a Huxley and the temperament of a Byron." Malleson more directly confronted the horror of WWI, and a "world gone mad," with his one-act plays *D'Company* and *Black 'ell*. In October of 1916, the British government seized copies of both plays from the publisher and denounced them as "a deliberate calumny on the British soldier." Outside of his political activism, Malleson earned acclaim as "the best Shakespearean clown in the contemporary English theatre,"¹⁰ as well as for his fools and fops in Restoration comedy.

Adapting his progressive ideas to Jazz Age London, Malleson drew consistent admiration as a playwright. Critics praised Malleson's nuanced craftsmanship in which "the dramatic, rather than the debatable, engages one's interest."¹¹ With *Conflict* (1925; presented as a Mint Further Reading on February 13), Malleson spun a deft comedy of manners around themes of wealth inequality, in its story of a Labour MP and an aristocrat's questioning daughter. Running in 1927 in the West End for 313 performances, *The Fanatics* (first published 1924) gave Malleson his greatest commercial success. *The Fanatics* affirmed Malleson's conviction in a more honest and liberated post-WWI world, as much as it provoked discussion with its daring themes of premarital sex and a scene of onstage semi-nudity. While *The Guardian* noted the "poignant naturalism" of *Merrileon Wise* (1926), *Four People* (1928) evoked "the play

of a mind which is at war with usage and with institutions, which puts the happiness of people before the tyranny of things, and which can accept no sanctity of a social routine unless it justifies itself in human values."¹²

With the never-produced *Yours Unfaithfully* (1933), Malleson continued to joust against social convention, offering a probing, self-reflective look at the complex "round dance" of open marriage. The play drew heavily upon Malleson's tumultuous romantic history with Constance (who amicably divorced him in 1922), the physician Joan Billson, a pioneering force in women's health and birth control, whom he married in 1923, and journalist Beth Tomalin (for whom he left Joan, "intensely distressed"¹³ by the open marriage, in 1931). At the same time, the play drew inspiration from the marriage of Bertrand and Dora Russell, to whose progressive school, Beacon Hill, Miles and Joan had sent their son, Nicky, born in 1923. Their younger son, Andrew, was born in 1931.



Miles Malleson in *Stage Fright*,
dir. Alfred Hitchcock, 1950

Although Malleson wrote a number of plays in the 1930s and 1940s, including *Six Men of Dorset* (1934; co-written with Harry Brooks), and produced and directed such plays as *Night Must Fall* (1935), he increasingly devoted his time to the British

cinema. With such historical dramas as *Victoria the Great* (1937), as well as the 1940 fantasy *The Thief of Bagdad*, Malleson became noted as one of England's most successful screenwriters. Appearing in dozens of films, Malleson regularly stole scenes as an array of blustering and bumbling "jovial old gentlemen,"¹⁴ including the poetry-quoting hangman in *Kind Hearts and Coronets* (1949) and Reverend Chasuble in *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1952), to small roles in *Stage Fright* (1950) and *Peeping Tom* (1960). He also entered into a third marriage in 1946, with producer Tania Lieven.

Malleson alternated his film work with continued vitality on the London stage. After contributing an "unsurpassably lifelike Polonius"¹⁵ to John Gielgud's 1944 production of *Hamlet*, Malleson joined Tyrone Guthrie's company at the Old Vic. Malleson returned to playwriting in 1949 with "free adaptations" of Molière's plays, in which he also starred. With the goal of drawing working-class audiences beyond the West End, Malleson's vernacular, prose versions of *Tartuffe*, *The Miser*, and four other Molière classics played to popular and critical success: "the new text (of *The Bourgeois Gentleman*) loses neither its style nor vivacity," observed *The Manchester Guardian* in 1951. Also among the cast of Orson Welles's 1960 staging of *Rhinoceros* at the Royal Court, Malleson concluded his acting career with a musical: playing Merlin in the 1964 London production of *Camelot*. Having retired from the stage due to failing eyesight, Malleson died at the age of eighty on March 15, 1969, following declining health and a failed eye surgery that caused him to go blind.

Though one of the most prolific and versatile English theater artists of his era, along with such polymath peers as Charlie Chaplin and Noël Coward, Malleson downplayed his place in posterity: "Sometimes it seems...that drama is such a passing business. A performance is given, a picture screened, then probably forgotten. Only occasionally do you hear that something is remembered, and then you feel you may have added a little to the knowledge about the stuff of life." Yet, in the range of his talent as a "scholar, a wit, a born storyteller, and an idealist with the courage of his convictions,"¹⁶ Malleson might be better remembered. Progressive in their themes, defiant in their optimism, and strikingly modern in their tone and ambiguities, Malleson's plays resound with new rhythms in the twenty-first century, where definitions of love, sex, and family continue to expand—even as modern lovers persist in "acting the fool most memorably."

1. E.B., "London Theatres," *The Manchester Guardian*, June 12, 1930, pg. 13.
2. I.B., *The Fanatics*, *The Manchester Guardian*, March 16, 1927, pg. 14.
3. Ibid.
4. Malleson, Miles. *After All: Provisional Title for an Autobiography*, 1968 (unpublished; courtesy of Andrew Malleson), pg. 7.
5. *After All*, pg. 8.
6. Ibid., pgs. 9-10.
7. Malleson, Andrew. *Discovering the Family of Miles Malleson: 1888-1969*, 2012, pg. 41.
8. Malleson, Constance (Colette O'Neil). *After Ten Years: A Personal Record*. London: Jonathan Cape, 1931, pgs. 75-76.
9. Clark, Ronald W. *The Life of Bertrand Russell* (New York: Knopf, 1976), pg. 308.
10. Ervine, St. John, "David Garrick," *The Observer*, March 5, 1922, pg. 11.
11. H.H., "Conflict," *The Observer*, December 6, 1925, pg. 11.
12. I.B., "Books of the Day: Three Plays," *The Manchester Guardian*, May 22, 1928, pg. 9.
13. *Discovering the Family of Miles Malleson: 1888-1969*, pg. 52.
14. De La Roche, Catherine, "Miles of Characters," *The Picturegoer and Film Weekly*, October 1, 1949, pg. 20.
15. L.H., "Mr. Gielgud's *Hamlet*," *The Manchester Guardian*, October 16, 1944, pg. 3.
16. "Miles of Characters," pg. 20.

TODD CERVERIS (*Dr. Alan Kirby*) Broadway: *Twentieth Century* (Roundabout Theatre), *South Pacific* (Lincoln Center). Off-Broadway (premieres): *Southern Comfort*, *Almost, Maine*, *The Booth Variations* (co-author), *The Butcherhouse Chronicles*, *Somewhere, Somewhere Else* (Clubbed Thumb), *Dick In London* (Target Margin). National tours: *War Horse*, *Spring Awakening*, *Twelve Angry Men*, The Acting Company. Regional: *Mr. Wolf* (Cleveland Play House), *Hillary and Clinton* (Philadelphia Theatre Company), *The Great Immensity* (Kansas City Rep & The Civilians), *All The Way* (Denver Center), *True West* (Arena Stage), *All in the Timing* and *August: Osage County* (Old Globe Theatre), *Outside Mullingar* (Depot Theatre), *Aloha, Say The Pretty Girls* (Actor's Theater of Louisville), *Boy* (La Jolla Theater). International: Edinburgh Fringe Festival (*The Booth Variations*), Actors Touring Company (*Iphigenia Crash Land Falls...*). Film & TV: "Allegiance," "One Bad Choice," "White Collar," "Nurse Jackie," *One True Thing*, *Living and Dining*, "Law & Order," "The Rake's Progress." Faithfully, for Angela.

ELISABETH GRAY (*Anne Meredith*) Broadway: *Breakfast at Tiffany's*. Off-Broadway: *Wish I Had a Sylvia Plath*, *Southern Discomfort*. TV: "Limitless," "Forever," "Unforgettable," "The Affair," and "Understudies" (www.UnderstudiesTheShow.com). Film: *Sunspring*, *The Voorman Problem*, *Big Significant Things*. BA (Hons) Oxford University. www.ElizabethGray.org

JOHN HUTTON (*Rev. Canon Gordon Meredith*) For most of the last twenty-five years John was a member of the resident acting company at the Denver Center. More recently he's been to Prague for PBS, Oslo for a Norwegian mini series called "Nobel", Northern Stage for *Our Town*, Arizona for *King Lear*, Brooklyn and Steiner Studios for "Power", Portland Center Stage for *Great Expectations*, Boulder, Colorado for The Colorado Shakespeare Festival, Michigan for a film called *The Dwarves of Demrel*, The Hud-

son Stage Co for *You Will Remember Me* and here in Manhattan for ABC's "Time After Time."

MIKAELA IZQUIERDO (*Diana Streetfield*) Broadway: *Cyrano de Bergerac* (Roundabout Theatre Company). Off Broadway and regional: *Perfect Arrangement* (Primary Stages), *Stay* (Rattlestick), *10x25*, *The New York Idea* (Atlantic Theater Company), *Lone Star Spirits* (Crowded Outlet), *The Cloud* (Slant/HERE Arts), *L(y)re* (ArsNova ANTfest), *West Lethargy* (59E59/Edinburgh Fringe/FringeNYC), *Unrequited* (Public Theater Shakespeare Lab) Training: BFA, NYU Tisch, Public Theater Shakespeare Lab Alum.

MAX VON ESSEN (*Stephen Meredith*) has appeared on Broadway in *An American in Paris* as Henri Baurel (2015 Tony Award nomination), the revival of *Evita* as Agustin Magaldi, the first revival of *Les Misérables* as Enjolras, *Dance of the Vampires* as Alfred, the closing company of the original *Les Misérables*, and the first revival of *Jesus Christ Superstar*. Other New York: *Death Takes a Holiday*, *Hello Again* (Drama League nomination), *Jerry Springer: The Opera*, and *Finian's Rainbow*. Tours include *Xanadu* as Sonny Malone, *Chicago* as Mary Sunshine, and *West Side Story* as Tony. Television and film credits include "Law & Order: SVU", "Elementary", "Boardwalk Empire", "The Good Wife", "Royal Pains", "Gossip Girl", "The Beautiful Life", *The Intern*, *Sex and the City 2*, the short film *Blonde* and the web series, *Submissions Only*. Find Max on social media as @maxizpad.

CAROLYN MRAZ (*Scenic Designer*) is a Brooklyn-based theatermaker. Favorite recent designs include: *Porgy and Bess* (Spoleto Festival USA), *Afram ou La Belle Swita* (Spoleto Festival USA), *King Tot* (Clubbed Thumb Summerworks, NYC), *Wilderness* (En Garde Arts, Abrons), *I'll Never Love Again* (The Bushwick Starr, NYC), *Charlatan* (Ars Nova NYC), and *The (*) Inn* (Target Margin Theater, NYC). Carolyn is a proud Associated Artist of Target Margin Theater in Brooklyn