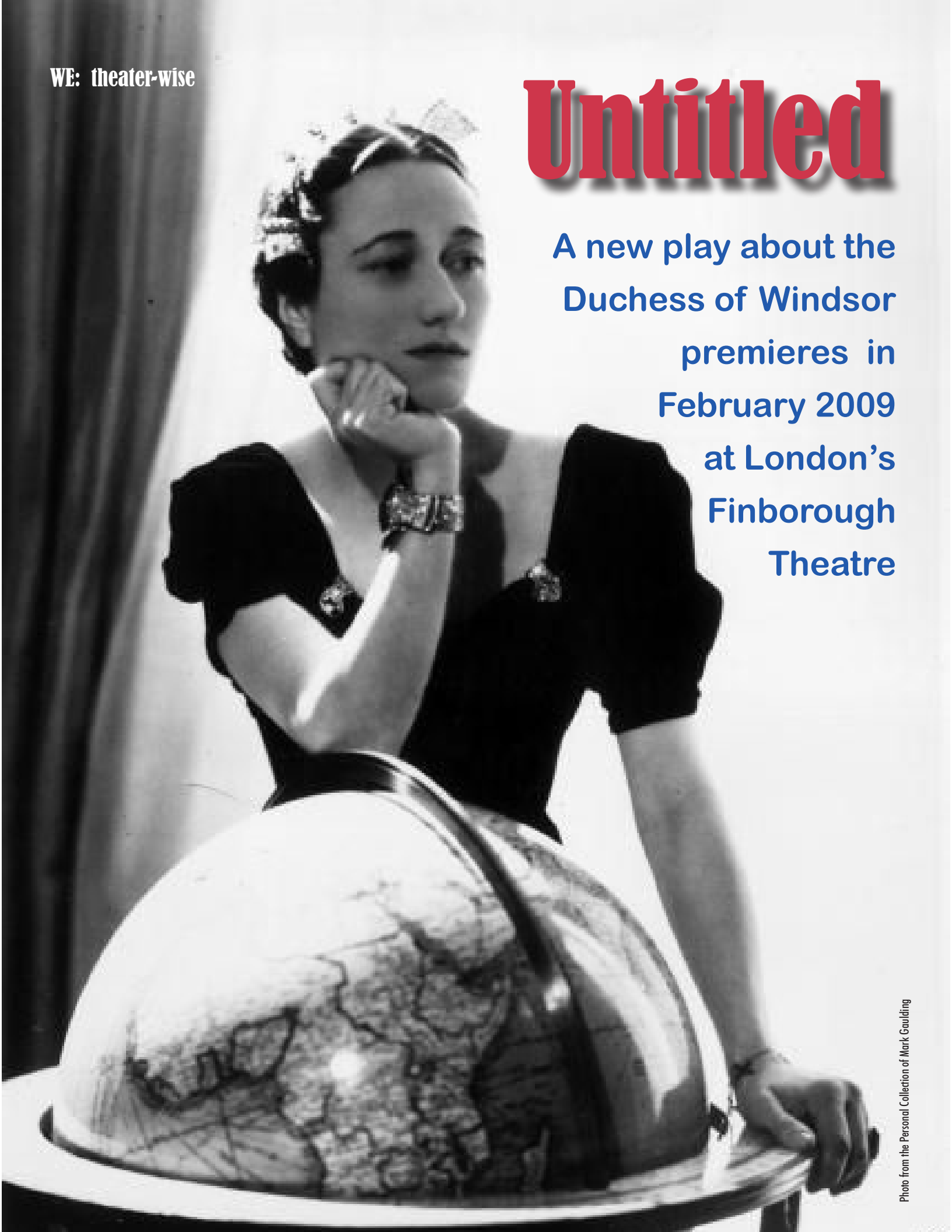


WE: theater-wise

Untitled

A new play about the
Duchess of Windsor
premieres in
February 2009
at London's
Finborough
Theatre



A new play about the Duchess of Windsor punningly titled, **Untitled**, will have its European premiere in February 2009 at London's off-West End Finborough Theater. The opening is scheduled for a six week limited season beginning February 3, 2009.

Written by South African-based playwright Lena Farugia the play drew interesting reviews in the original South African 1990 production: "Throwing light on many of the darker corners of the somewhat suppressed and often misrepresented history...Elegant, richly entertaining production that should not be missed," reported *The Citizen*, Johannesburg.

The UK production will star Olivier Award winner Nichola McAuliffe as the Duchess as well as Patrick Rycart, a familiar face on UK television and film.

The play is set in Paris in the 1980s. Dazed by prescription medication, a frail old American lady is a prisoner in a grey imposing mansion in the Bois de Boulogne. Once the most famous woman in the world, Wallis, Duchess of Windsor's only crime was to be a divorced woman who fell in love with a member of the British Royal family—the Prince of Wales, later King Edward VIII—precipitating his abdication from throne to marry for love.

Ten years after the Duke of Windsor's death, his widow is attended only by a shadowy butler, played by Rycart. We find Wallis in a twilight world where her beloved "David" has never really left her. As she refuses to relinquish the vivid memories of her extraordinary past, we soon discover why the incarceration of this vibrant and stylish woman is so vital to those whose lives she changed so dramatically. Her past is too full, the damage to her husband's family too great, her ostracization too complete for her to be anything other than a dangerously loose cannon.

The production is directed by Peter Cregeen who's theater credits include many Shakespeare and other plays at the Ludlow Festi-

val, Salisbury Playhouse as well as Stoll Moss Theatres. Cregeen has also been responsible for many of the most popular television drama series at both ITV and the BBC where he was Head of Drama Series.

This is a two person play with three characters. Rycart has a dual role as the Butler/Duke.

The play was originally staged in South Africa under a different name, with Farugia in the starring role. Press reviews of those performances are enticing:



"Untitled's" actors Nichola McAuliffe as the Duchess of Windsor and Patrick Rycart as the Butler/Duke photo by Robert Workman

"Farugia's perceptive writing is stunningly evocative...Extremely clever in the writing, with some bitchy turns of phrase that could do justice to a Noel Coward" *The Star*, Johannesburg

"Bitterness there is but it is spiced with so much humor, so many interesting observations and revelations—the play avoids any potholes of self-pity. In fact, it is theatrically brilliant...the remarkable story of a remarkable woman. It makes for remarkable theatre." *Sunday Star*, Johannesburg

It will be interesting to see how the UK production is received by London theatergoers. Past theatrical plays about the Windsors over the last two decades have been rather unflattering for the couple.

Farugia researched the play in 1988 and 1989. It was performed in a number of cities in South Africa in the early '90s.

I interviewed the playwright, Lena Farugia. Society Members and

other readers will find this exclusive interview very interesting. The playwright is very well-versed on the Windsors which I was very pleased to discover.

Performance times and ticket prices as well as contact information for the Finborough Theatre can be found on page 19. The play runs from February 3 through March 14, 2009. For more information about tickets visit the Finborough's website at www.finboroughtheatre.co.uk.

"A woman with a history from a nation without one"

The Duchess' butler in *Untitled*