

**MARKS & CO., Booksellers**  
84, Charing Cross Road  
London, W.C. 2

25th April 1990

Dear Theatregoer,

Welcome to the Plaza Theatre, and the Maskers Theatre Company's production of "84 Charing Cross Road".

The play really started life by accident, back in 1949, when a Miss Helene Hanff, a struggling American actress turned script writer, wrote to a London bookshop asking them to send her rare and secondhand 'antiquarian' books. So began the love affair between Helene and the shop that was to last for over twenty years.

The shop was Marks and Co, the lady, a merry New Yorker who didn't believe in being formal. Instead of writing orders for books, she wrote "long, goofy letters" first to Frank Doel, the manager, and then to members of his staff and family. Fortunately she kept all the letters, and this extraordinary relationship was revealed first in a book, then in a BBC television play starring Frank Finlay, and later in James Roose-Evans faithful adaptation as a stage play, first performed, incidentally, at the Salisbury Playhouse in 1981. The play was a huge success in London and a monumental flop on Broadway, but regained success when the film was made of this delightful story, starring Anne Bancroft and Antony Hopkins.

The action of the play is set in the New York apartment of Helene Hanff, and in Marks and Co's bookshop in London, and spans the years 1949-1971. There will be one interval of 15 minutes - time for a visit to the bar, and do keep your ears open to what will be playing on the speakers throughout the theatre!

In this production, the part of **Helene Hanff** is played by **Mollie Manns**. Mollie has played many major roles for the Maskers, including appearances in our open-air productions at Mottisfont Abbey. She works at the college of Higher Education in Southampton as a Personnel Assistant. **Albert Minns** plays **Frank Doel**, the bookshop manager. Albert has recently returned to the Bar after two highly successful years as Campaign Manager for the Wessex Children's Cancer Unit Appeal. He joined the Maskers in 1986, and was last seen at Romsey as Sargeant 'Dusty' Miller in Rattigans' "Flarepath". He is joined at "84 Charing Cross Road" by **Jane Royle** who plays **Cecily Farr**, **Philippa Taylor** as **Megan Wells**, **Kevin Mitchell** who plays **Bill Thomas**, **Douglas Coates** who plays **Mr Martin**, and **Jan Ward** as **Mrs Todd**.

**Jane** in 'real life' is a Senior Health Promotion Officer for the East Dorset Health Authority, and is playing here at Romsey for the time. Appearances for the Maskers have included "Accrington Pals" at The Gantry, Southampton. **Philippa** has directed and played in many shows for the Maskers, and will be seen at this Summer's open air production, "A Penny for a Song". **Kevin** joined the Maskers Youth Theatre for their production of "The lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe" and directed a show for them at The Gantry last autumn. **Douglas** has been with Maskers for many years and is currently the company's Artistic Director. **Jan Ward** does sterling service as Secretary to the Maskers - by day (and night!) she is Concert Assistant at the Turner Sims Concert Hall in Southampton, and has done invaluable work backstage for many Maskers shows. Finally, Helene's bosom pal **Maxine Stuart** is played by **Hazel Burrows**. Hazel's beautiful silk painting may be known to many of you - in her spare time she makes regular character appearances for the Maskers

I am grateful to all the technical crew who have worked on this show - I hope I haven't left anyone out!

Stage Manager

Angie Barks

Assisted by

Jean Durman  
Julia Campone

Set Designer  
Set Builders

Ken Spencer  
Ron Tillyer  
Geoff Cooke  
Edwin Beecroft

Lighting Designer  
Lighting Operator

Ron Tillyer  
Chris Bennet

Sound

Lawry Gee  
Tony Lawther

Wardrobe

Fran Morley  
Katharine Morley

Props and Furniture

Ella Lockett  
Meri Lawther

Publicity Manager

Michael Patterson

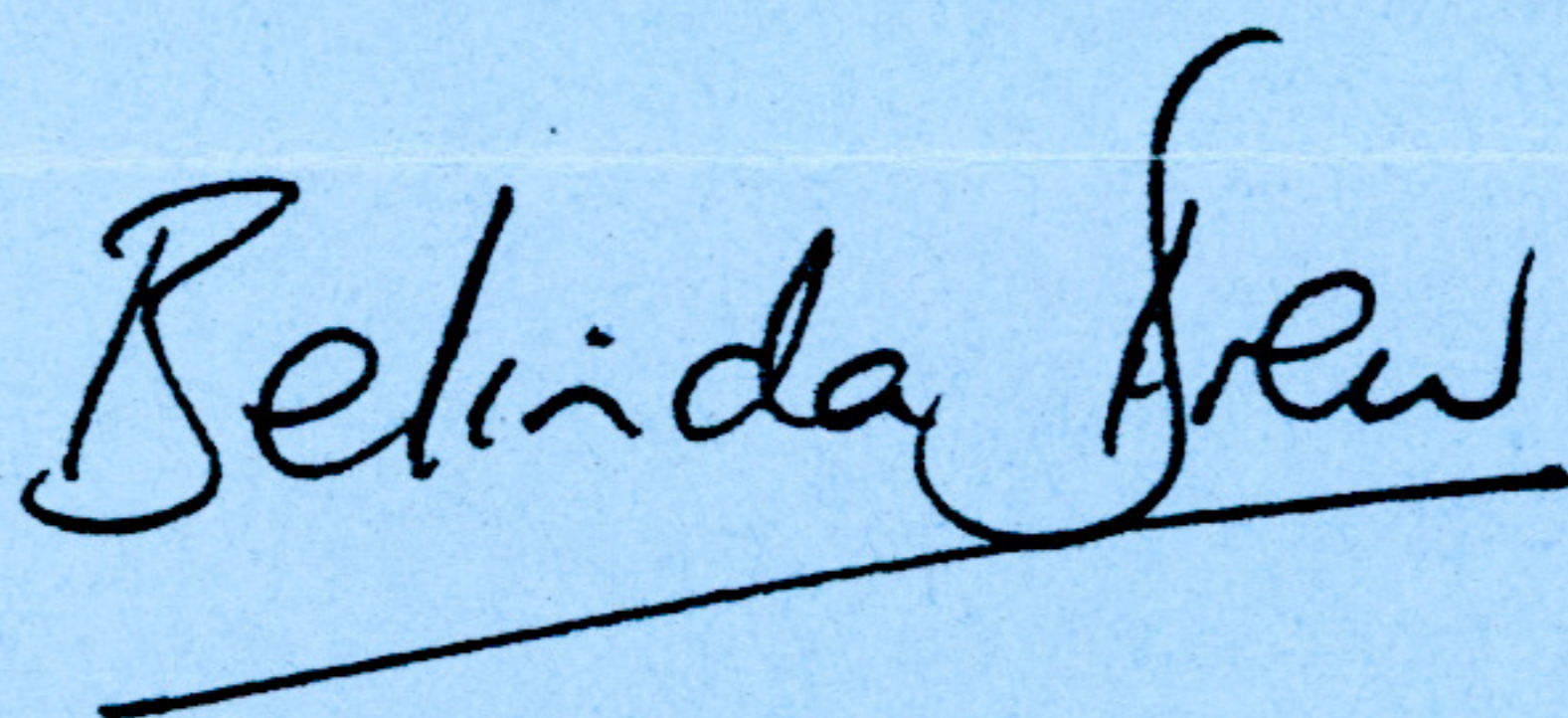
Front of house coordinator

Christine Baker

To increase the intimacy of the feelings of the characters, I decided to include live music during the course of the action, rather than the normal taped sound effect, based almost entirely around one theme, "Deep Purple", which many of you will recognise. Michael Patterson, known to many of you as a director for the company, plays the piano.

I am particularly delighted at the appropriateness of the support for this production from **Gilberts Bookshops** of Southampton and Winchester. The enclosed sheet tells you more about this 130 year old firm. In addition, I would like to thank **Motley Books**, Mottisfont Abbey for their technical help and advice; **E J Tomes (Opticians)** of Shirley High Street, Southampton for special lenses; **The Bitterne Historical Society**; and **Thorntons plc**, Southampton.

I hope you all enjoy the show.



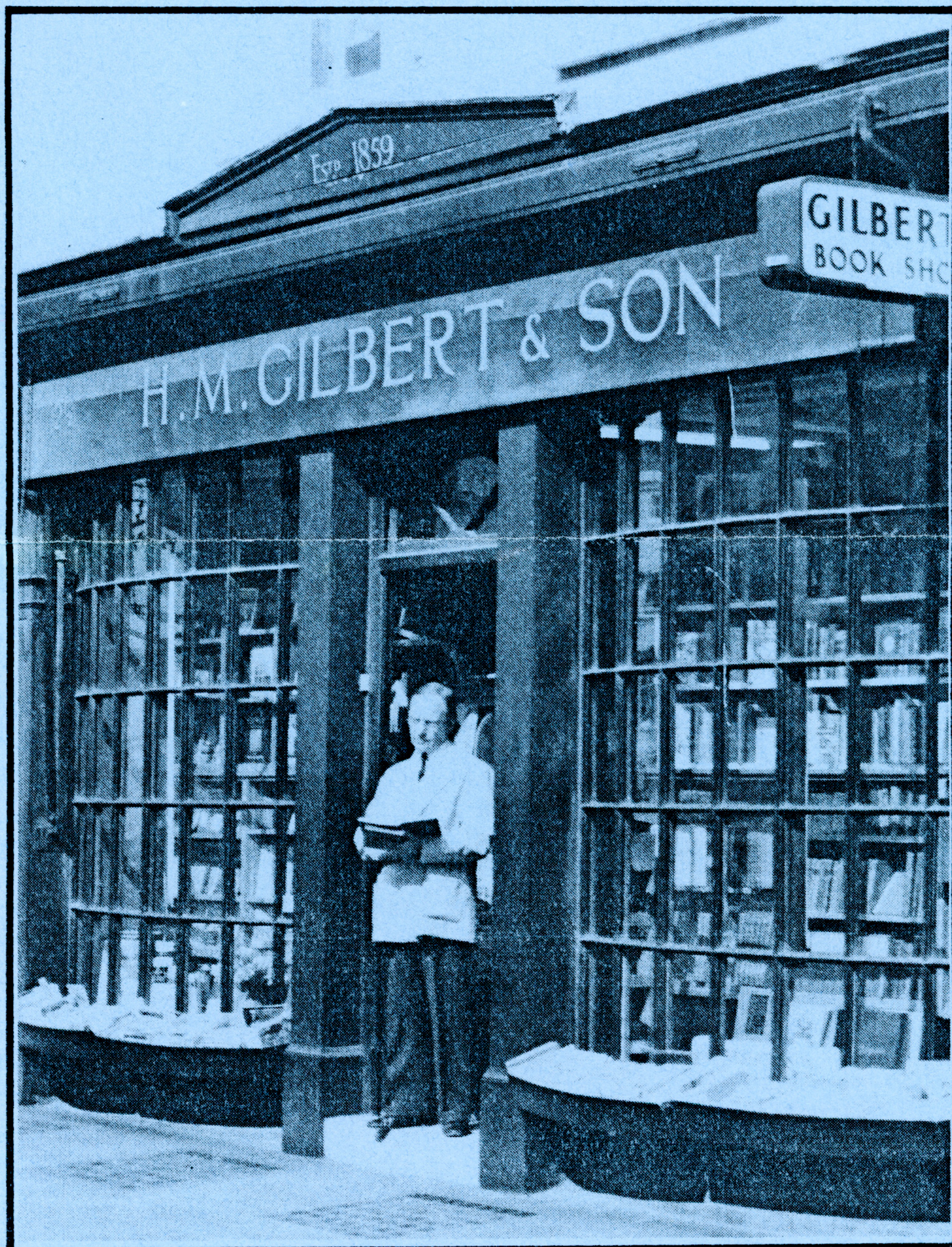
**Belinda Drew**  
Director

PS Patrons are advised that smoking is not permitted in the auditorium. Unauthorised photography, tape or video recording is not permitted.

The audience may leave at the end of the performance by all exit doors.

All gangways, corridors, staircases and passages which afford a means of exit shall be kept entirely free from obstruction.

Persons shall not be permitted to stand or sit in the gangways.



### **H M GILBERT & SON**

*The business was founded by Henry Gilbert (1809-1869) at Halstead in Essex, transferred in 1857 to Sudbury in Suffolk, and then to Bernard Street in Southampton in 1859. His son, Henry March Gilbert, whose name is still carried by the shop, took over in 1869. He moved premises about 1875 to 103 High Street and then to Above Bar to what is now part of the Marks & Spencer site. In 1895 he opened a Winchester branch in the High Street, moving 9 years later to the present position in a medieval building in The Square.*

*Just in time the current premises in Portland Street were acquired in 1939: the Above Bar building was bombed before the last of the stock could be transferred!*

*Like Marks & Co, Gilberts have retained a high reputation in the world of secondhand and rare books alongside new publications, which after 130 years gives them a unique place in today's changing bookshop scene.*



### MARKS & CO

A bookshop was established in Charing Cross Road about 1920 by the two partners, Mr Marks and Mr Cohen, and one wonders if any pun was intended by the name style "Marks & Co".

In the late 20's a young man named Frank Doel joined the staff and subsequently became manager. They established a reputation still remembered by people in the trade today for courtesy and fair dealing.

Mr Marks died in 1968, and when Frank Doel also died in December of the same year, the premises were sold and redeveloped with the shop next door. They are today a specialist compact disc and hi-fi store.