



**THE ENGLISH THEATRE
OF HAMBURG**

presents

**JEEVES AND WOOSTER
IN
PERFECT NONSENSE**

A farcical comedy inspired by the works of

P.G. Wodehouse

by

The Goodale Brothers

STUDY GUIDE

Premiere on 28th November 2024

Preview performances at reduced prices on 25th, 26th, and 27th November 2024

Tuesday – Saturday 19:30

selected Sundays 14:30

Wednesday/Friday 11:30 (Matinee performances weekly alternating)

THE ENGLISH THEATRE OF HAMBURG

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TICKETS

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The English Theatre will premiere **JEEVES & WOOSTER IN PERFECT NONSENSE** on 28th November 2024, with the usual preview performances at reduced prices on 25th, 26th and 27th November. You can use the cover of this publication to advertise the play in your school or workplace. Bookings have already started. Teachers who wish to preview the play before bringing a group of Tstudents to the theatre should contact marketing@englishtheatre.de

The Works of P.G. Wodehouse

"**JEEVES & WOOSTER IN PERFECT NONSENSE**, written by the brothers Robert and David Goodale, was inspired by the works of P.G. Wodehouse. "Pelham "(Plum') Grenville Wodehouse was born in Guildford in 1881. After leaving school he spent two years as a banker before switching careers to sports reporter and columnist at the Globe newspaper. Around this time he started writing short stories, mainly for boys' magazine The Captain, before discovering his talent for comic dialogue. By 1910 he was reaching millions of readers all over the world and dividing his time between his homes in the U.S., France and Britain." "Taken from NICK HERN BOOKS, London, www.nickhernbooks.co.uk"

About the Authors and the Play

"Like many siblings growing up together, writers Robert and David Goodale enjoyed their own, very particular brand of humour. As children they created a range of ridiculous characters that seamlessly evolved into members of their extended family. It was only later that they discovered that P.G. Wodehouse had beaten them to it, in creating an entirely credible world full of even more deliciously bonkers characters."

"As adults entering the real world, Robert became an actor, while David pursued a career as a documentary filmmaker, but both remained committed to making people laugh. In 2010 they were encouraged to combine their comic talents to adapt P.G. Wodehouse's **THE CODE OF THE WOOSTERS** for the stage. They finally put pen to paper, and several drafts later, with the blessing of the Wodehouse Estate. **PERFECT NONSENSE** was born."

Taken from NICK HERN BOOKS, London, www.nickhernbooks.co.uk

The Evolution of PERFECT NONSENSE

By Robert Goodale

"My first taste of P.G. Wodehouse came in my early twenties when my twin brother and a mutual friend of ours used to quote PGW phrases, sentences and extracts back and forth at each other during late-night drinking sessions. I was never sure whether it was the whisky, the Wodehouse or a combination of the two that was making me laugh hysterically, but for years my experience of the great man was confined to the blurry hours of the night."

"It was only when looking for material for a one-man show that I picked up a Jeeves and Wooster book in the cold light of day and realised what a comic genius Wodehouse really was. I also discovered that some of his best material was being filtered through the mouthpiece of Bertie Wooster. Here was a storyteller, raconteur and vaudevillian performer who was capable of charming any group of people into submission. Not only was he a perfect frontman, but the characters who peopled his world were gloriously eccentric, mad and passionate, all with their bizarre and peculiar obsessions. Twenty pages into **STIFF UPPER LIP**, Jeeves and I knew that I had my one-man show."

"The idea of indulging in a world where the loss of an objet d'art from your silver collection was perceived as being a matter of life and death could not have been more appealing. So, I went ahead and performed



a couple of one-man shows based on this material at the Edinburgh Festival and roped in my brother David to direct **THE CODE OF THE WOOSTERS**.”

“Twenty years later, the two of us were approached by Mark Goucher to create another Wodehouse show, but on a larger scale. It dawned on us that if we wanted to keep Bertie as the raconteur, we should write a play in which, encouraged by his drinking pals, he would take over a West End theatre and attempt to tell one of his stories in the form of a one-man show. As his loyal valet, Jeeves would naturally accompany Bertie to the theatre and, in the certain knowledge that the show was destined to go horribly wrong, he would have made certain contingency plans. The script almost wrote itself, and we reveled in the idea that the inscrutable and dignified Jeeves might draw on some hidden talents to play a number of the other characters.”

“We passed **PERFECT NONSENSE** on to Mark Goucher, did a reading of it for him and in turn the Wodehouse Estate, who gave it their blessing. The wonderfully inventive comedy director Sean Foley was then brought on board and his inspired suggestions combined with Alice Power’s brilliant ideas for the set design, helped raise the script to another level.”

“Although I had absolutely nothing to do with Stephen Mangan’s or Matthew Macfadyen’s involvement, I was thrilled when they were cast. Having worked with them both at the Royal Shakespeare Company, witnessed their extraordinary comic abilities and observed how well they got on together, there was no question in my mind as to how perfect a pairing they could be.”

“What was most gratifying about the whole process was that all of the above – along with Mark Hadfield (as Seppings) – were completely in tune with the conceit of the show and a lot of what was discovered in the rehearsal room found its way into the script. A true process of evolution, we like to think.”

“Taken from NICK HERN BOOKS, London, www.nickhernbooks.co.uk



SUMMARY

ACT ONE

The play opens with Bertie Wooster deciding to stage a one-man show to recount his recent adventures. However, Bertie quickly realizes that he can't manage the task alone and enlists the help of his resourceful valet, Jeeves, and another servant, Seppings. Together, they set the stage for a chaotic and hilarious retelling of Bertie's latest misadventures.

Bertie is tasked with a mission by his Aunt Dahlia to steal a silver cow-creamer (Originating in Holland, a cow creamer is a container used for pouring cream. It is shaped like a cow with an opening or lid on its back for filling. Once commonplace, today they are in demand.), a valuable antique that Sir Watkyn Bassett, an intimidating magistrate, has recently acquired. The cow-creamer is of sentimental value to Aunt Dahlia's husband, Tom Travers, and Bertie is determined to retrieve it. Bertie sets off for Totleigh Towers, Sir Watkyn's imposing estate, accompanied by Jeeves.

Upon arrival at Totleigh Towers, Bertie encounters a host of eccentric characters, including his friend Gussie Fink-Nottle, who is hopelessly in love with Madeline Bassett, Sir Watkyn's dreamy and somewhat naive daughter. Madeline believes in fairies and has a romanticized view of the world, which complicates Gussie's attempts to win her heart.

Bertie also meets Stiffy Byng, Sir Watkyn's mischievous niece, who has her own agenda. Stiffy wants to marry the local curate, Harold "Stinker" Pinker, but Sir Watkyn disapproves of the match. Stiffy enlists Bertie's help to convince Sir Watkyn to change his mind, adding another layer of complexity to Bertie's already challenging mission.

As the first act progresses, Jeeves and Seppings expertly switch between characters, using minimal props and costumes to create a fast-paced and farcical atmosphere. Bertie's attempts to navigate the various predicaments lead to a series of comedic misunderstandings and mishaps, setting the stage for the chaos that unfolds in the second act.

ACT TWO

The second act ramps up the hilarity and confusion as Bertie continues his efforts to steal the silver cow-creamer and help his friends. Roderick Spode, a menacing figure with a secret passion for designing ladies' underwear, arrives at Totleigh Towers, adding to the tension. Spode is fiercely protective of Madeline and suspicious of Bertie's intentions, creating further obstacles for Bertie to overcome.

Bertie's attempts to steal the cow-creamer are repeatedly thwarted by Sir Watkyn's vigilance and the unpredictable behavior of the other characters. Gussie's efforts to woo Madeline are equally unsuccessful, leading to a series of awkward and humorous encounters. Meanwhile, Stiffy continues to scheme, enlisting Bertie's help in increasingly elaborate and convoluted plans to win Sir Watkyn's approval for her marriage to Harold Pinker.

Throughout the second act, Jeeves remains the calm and collected voice of reason, using his intelligence and resourcefulness to devise clever solutions to the various problems that arise. Seppings continues to play multiple roles, adding to the comedic chaos with his quick costume changes and versatile performances.

As the play reaches its climax, Bertie's attempts to steal the cow-creamer come to a head, resulting in a series of madcap chases and misunderstandings. Just when it seems that all hope is lost, Jeeves steps in with a brilliant plan that resolves the chaos and ensures a happy ending for everyone involved.

In the final moments of the play, Gussie successfully wins Madeline's heart, Sir Watkyn reluctantly agrees to Stiffy's marriage to Harold Pinker, and the silver cow-creamer is safely returned to Aunt Dahlia. Bertie, relieved to have avoided disaster once again, thanks Jeeves for his invaluable assistance. The play concludes with a sense of triumph and satisfaction, leaving the audience in stitches from the non-stop laughter and witty dialogue.

THE END



Study Questions

1. What object was Bertie asked to steal?
2. Who is Bertie's valet?
3. What is the play's genre of comedy called?
4. Where does Bertie travel to in the play?
5. Who is in love with Madeline Bassett?
6. Who wrote the books that the play is based on?
7. How does Jeeves help Bertie throughout the play?
8. Who owns the silver cow-creamer?
9. What is Roderick Spode's secret passion?
10. How does the play resolve the various predicaments Bertie faces?

Answer Key

1. The silver cow-creamer. 2. Jeeves. 3. Farcical comedy. 4. Tottleigh Towers. 5. Gussie Fink-Nottle. 6. P.G. Wodehouse. 7. Jeeves uses his cleverness and resourcefulness to extricate Bertie from predicaments. 8. Sir Watkyn Bassett. 9. Designing ladies' underwear. 10. Jeeves's cleverness and ingenuity resolve the chaos, ensuring a happy ending.