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MORECAMBE

by Tim Whitnall

|| SAMUEL FRENCH ||

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Having received permission from the relevant publishing companies, the author gratefully includes the lyrics to the following compositions:

Previous productions of MORECAMBE have relied upon the services of a musical director/associate to realise each song's arrangement – whether as an orchestrated backing track or performed live with minimal instrumentation.

Morecambe premiered on August 6th 2009
as part of the Edinburgh Festival Fringe at the Assembly
Rooms Rainy Hall, co-produced by Theatre Tours
International and Anna Murphy for Feather Productions Ltd.

On December 9th 2009 *Morecambe* transferred to London's
Duchess Theatre, co-produced by Michael Edwards and Carole
Winter for MJE Productions, before completing
two national tours in 2010 and 2011.

ORIGINAL CAST/ CREW

Bob Golding – Eric Morecambe (and assorted cast).

Guy Masterson – Director.

James Compton – Musical Director.

Julia Bunce – Costumes/Design/Prop making.

This production earned a 2009 “Scotsman” Fringe First Award
for “innovation and outstanding new writing”, going on to win
the 2010 Laurence Olivier Award for Best Entertainment,
Bob Golding himself receiving a personal nomination for Best
Actor in a Musical or Entertainment.

A UK touring production of *Morecambe* began at
the Richmond Theatre on March 30th 2014, co-produced
by Evolution Productions and Feather Productions Ltd,
and directed by Paul Hendy.

INTRODUCTION

by Gary Morecambe

When first I heard about the proposed “Morecambe” play, I was sitting on a beach in Thailand – as you do – with very limited internet service.

I’d received an email from Anna Murphy of Feather Productions, explaining how Tim Whitnall had written a play, which was a journey through my father’s life, and that the actor Bob Golding was planning to present it as a one-man show for the Edinburgh Festival of 2009.

My initial reaction, enhanced by the obscurity of my location at this time, was one of horror. How dare someone write a play about my father without coming to consult me at the outset? I can be very protective of all things Morecambe and Wise, and even more so when on the other side of the world and, to all intents and purposes, out of commission.

Fast-forward a couple of months, and I’m sitting in a theatre watching the play for the very first time, and I’m thinking, “thank God they didn’t ask me to be involved with writing this play”. Reason being: it’s a script of genius by a writer of genius. No wonder Tim Whitnall won an Olivier Award for his efforts!

I met Bob Golding, Anna and Tim prior to this, of course, and Bob and I fell in love at first sight. Unfortunately we were both married at the time, so had to settle on becoming great friends.

Bob’s courage in taking on the daunting task of playing arguably the most famous comedian Britain has produced was only surpassed by his talent.

In a more recent return to the stage of *Morecambe*, my parents-in-law caught up with it in Brighton, and were gob-smacked by how well Bob captured the spirit of Eric. This is not an impersonation – which, to be honest, is not possible to sustain for around ninety minutes – but a deep analysis of what made Eric Morecambe tick. Added to this is his close examination of all Eric’s little gestures, mannerisms and asides, and with the occasional ad-lib thrown in, too. Countless were the times Bob received a standing ovation – certainly every time myself or my sister, Gail, (a stalwart supporter of the 2009 production from beginning to end) were in the audience. A virtuoso tour de force, I think is the standard credit for this type of performance, and one not misplaced on this occasion.

What was fascinating is how emotional theatregoers could be on exiting after the performance. Many were the times they would come up to me in tears to say how much Eric meant to them, and that was always followed by how amazing Bob was in playing him so convincingly.

It could be argued that the play isn’t for the faint-hearted; that it was hard to sit through without shedding a tear, or even a bucket-load of them. But the script keeps returning to the humour of the man, counter-balancing the struggle with decades of poor health, and ultimately a far too premature death.

It’s such a delight to see Tim’s wonderful script in book form, and so right it should be just so. There is nothing I would add, change or suggest to improve this masterpiece, and it is indeed a huge tribute to the one with the glasses, and the sunshine wot he brought us!

FINDING ERIC

by Bob Golding

John Eric Bartholomew... Son, husband, father – oh, and arguably one of the most revered and loved comedians the United Kingdom has ever known. Record-breaking audience viewing figures and an instantly recognisable face, voice and gait. Now study and replicate please.

I must admit if it wasn't for the fact *Morecambe* was such a beautifully constructed script I think I would have been intimidated beyond imagination.

Thankfully I didn't really stop to think about it for too long.

In the creation and journey of the play I have often been asked the archetypal question, "what's it like playing the comedy icon Eric Morecambe." I've never been able to answer the question adequately.

When an actor takes on any role, we get so obsessed with the technical side of playing the part as early as possible in the rehearsal and preparation process. Learning lines and creating the mood of a section and scene in the play, not to mention studying the way the character speaks and moves. So, stopping to take on the enormity and brilliance of the character seems churlish. I spent a long time in this part of the process. It was only when we officially opened the play in Edinburgh 2009, that I (quite literally and audibly) gasped at what I was taking on!

"Just to let you know, Ronnie Corbett and Barry Cryer are in the audience today, Bob!"

In short I think I just tried to simply capture a tiny part of the spirit of "Our Eric". That's all. I'm not even sure if all that character studying and accent analysing made any difference to the end product, because with a beautiful script penned by Tim, and the support of Eric's family and all that laughter on DVD's and anecdotes from friends I was gifted the performance before I even knew I could do it.

It's a privilege and an honour to have played Eric, and what a superb way of doffing one's cap to a personal hero, but let's face it: there'll never be another person who could match what Eric did – and quite right, too.

ONE OF THE FAMILY

by Tim Whitnall

Amongst the many books that Gary Morecambe has written about his father, it was one of the earliest, *Funny Man – Eric Morecambe* that gifted me with an early clue in establishing a theme for my play. Within its pages appears a facsimile of a hand-written letter from Eric's mother, Sadie, sent to him on his twenty-first birthday, not only affirming her love for him but also effectively setting her only son free, wishing that "the sun may always shine" for him. I am forever grateful to Eric's family for granting me permission to include Sadie's letter, not only because it appears at a tipping point in our story (see p.17), but also because it underlines the significance of *family* for Eric along the entire crazy-paved footpath of his life. As *Morecambe* illustrates, he would grow up determined to take care of his own wife and children, tirelessly punching the clock and putting in a shift the only way he knew how...

Those fabulous, far-off Saturday evenings, when not just *with* our families but as families we would howl at the "Stripper" sketch or Eric and Ernie's heretical take on Grieg's Piano Concerto, belong to a time when television could be relished as a collective experience. Perhaps it's that which makes those memories all the more precious to those of us who lived through them.

As a nation we regarded Morecambe and Wise as our own: from us. For us. About us. The headline in *The Times* announcing Eric's death in May 1984 emphasised that proprietorship, describing him as "ONE OF THE FAMILY TO MILLIONS". Only Eric Morecambe could have left an "Eric Morecambe-shaped hole" in our lives.

PRODUCTION NOTES

MORECAMBE is a one-man performance, every role being played by the same actor. As the play evolves he dips in and out of key moments, inhabits his own very personal memories, and quite often engages in passionate conversations “with himself”. The actor must be able to sing, dance, bond with a ventriloquist’s doll, play musical instruments, credibly re-create each character and possess excellent comic delivery and timing.

Additional dialogue is provided by pre-recorded sound cues, notated in this draft along with relevant sound effects and/or. The author acknowledges these titles are subject to copyright controls and has included them in this draft for information purposes only.

SETTING/TIMING

Time and place are suspended, creating a mood of magic and mystery.

The piece runs for approximately 90 minutes, excluding an interval.

CHARACTERS

(In order of appearance)

NEWSREADER

ERIC MORECAMBE

ERNIE WISE

PUNTER 1

PUNTER 2

PUNTER 3

SADIE BARTHOLOMEW

GEORGE BARTHOLOMEW

HALL-OWNER

HEADMASTER

HOTELIER

LIVERPUDLIAN M.C.

DICKIE "LARGE LUMPS" HASSETT

WELSH PUNTER

JACK HYLTON

THEATRE FIREMAN

SCOTTISH M.C.

BERT HICKS

SCOTT SAUNDERS

COMPERE

VIVIAN VAN DAMM

GORDON NORVAL

FRANK POPE

BBC ANNOUNCER

CIRCUS RINGMASTER

ATV DIRECTOR

BILLY MARSH

BRUCE FORSYTH

ED SULLIVAN

(YELLOW) CABBIE

LEW GRADE

WALTER BUTTERWORTH

EDDIE BRABEN

The lighting state creates a rarified, ethereal atmosphere – time transfixed.

Up stage centre a false proscenium evokes a vintage music hall with plush tabs, a small stage and footlights.

At down stage right a theatrical props trunk. At down stage left two old-fashioned theatre seats, a side table, a coat stand and tailor's mannequin – a female torso.

Houselights go down and a sound effects cue – BBC radio pips – segues into a news bulletin from 28th May 1984.

NEWSREADER (*voiceover*) The comedian, Eric Morecambe, has died at the age of fifty-eight. Mr Morecambe who, with his partner Ernie Wise, formed one of Britain's most successful ever comic duos, had been appearing last night in Tewkesbury and is thought to have suffered a heart attack immediately following his performance. Attempts to revive him proved unsuccessful. The Prime Minister said that the country had lost "a genuine national treasure" and that Morecambe and Wise "had brought joy and laughter to millions throughout a long and illustrious career"...

The up stage tabs ruffle as ERIC MORECAMBE, about to make one last stop on his celestial odyssey, huffs and puffs behind them unseen. He calls:

ERIC Mum? Mum?

His head pokes through the tabs about six feet higher than it should do. (N.B. He is actually standing on a concealed stepladder behind them.)

Mum? Are they in? (*Aside*) They're all drunk, the lot of 'em. I can smell it from here! Pardon? What d'you mean, "Hit 'em with the good stuff"? I haven't got any!

He enters, resplendent in specs, mac and flat cap; daft walks and “ya-ta-ta-tas” abounding, chomping on an unlit pipe and lugging a battered suitcase. Almost subliminally he massages his left arm, clearly causing him bother. Gazing around at his unfamiliar surroundings, he calls for his wife:

Joan? Joanie?

No reply. Returning to the tabs he opens them and yells:

Ern?

Slightly disquieted, he defaults to “clown mode”, pretending to be throttled by an arm protruding between the tabs – ERIC’s own, of course.

I’ve always said if it weren’t for Venetian blinds it’d be curtains for all of us. Curtains for all of us! Ahem.

Puts down suitcase, crosses stage left and peruses the theatre seats. Across them lies a female mannequin’s leg with a pink bow tied around it. Picks it up and studies it.

Well, I never! A Christmas gift for Angela Rippon... It’s not her main present – just a stocking filler.

Audience groans.

Have another drink.

Tosses leg into the wings. Spots a bottle of Johnnie Walker whisky on the side table.

Think I might join you. Johnnie Walker. I know him well. Makes you feel double and act single. I’m partial to a small scotch – you’ve met Ronnie Corbett...

Next to the bottle, he espies a human skull.

Blimey! Peter Cushing’s lost some weight!

Picks up the skull, coming over “all Shakespearian”.

Alas poor Peter. Me and Ern still owe him ten guineas.

Growing more confident in his odd, unearthly surroundings – the purgatorial stage of his heavenward journey – ERIC strides into the spotlight.

Your honour's players, hearing your amendment... (*Aside*)
Can we say "amendment"? Pardon? I'll smash yer face in!

(*To audience*) Are come to play a pleasant comedy. For so your doctors hold it very meet; seeing too much sadness hath congeal'd your blood, and melancholy is the nurse of frenzy. (*Coughs*) Arsenal! Therefore they thought it good you hear a play – wot I did not wrote – and frame your mind to mirth and merriment which bars a thousand harms and lengthens life. William Shakespeare – *The Taming Of The Shrew*. Or was it *Paint Your Wagon*? What do you think of it so far?

AUDIENCE RUBBISH!

ERIC (*to SKULL*) What did they say?

Manipulates the SKULL's jaw, "venting" badly:

SKULL Ruggish!

Humming and shuffling, ERIC crosses to his prop trunk, opens it, drops the skull into it then screams before pulling out a Des O'Connor album. Hyperventilating, he replaces it, rummages, and produces a working ventriloquist's doll – a perfect likeness of ERIC's lifelong comedy partner ERNIE WISE.

Well Ern, here we are, pally. Right back where all the trouble started. A big, dark room with lights in it. The roar of the greasepaint, the smell of the crowd. Not like the cold world outside; Lancashire chill, in off the Irish Sea, deep as the black seam, turn you bluer than a miner's skin. Oh, yes. In here it's different. In here, you stand a chance. Soft, plum velvet, gold leaf dripping everywhere like melted butter.

Places ERNIE on one of the seats, moving to hang his coat and cap on the stand – but missing it completely. Underneath, he reveals a knitted tank top, shirt and tie, making him look more boyish. He also deftly swaps his spectacles for a pair of 1930s "regulation roundies".

Bated breath of Hindel Wakes and warm stout, hotpot and stale tobacco. Expectant, *expecting*, check your fly...and on you go...

Mounts the stage, reminiscing:

The footlights grill your shins; spots fry your eyeballs as you squint up to the Gods, Hell-bent on a blessing.

Sound effects: applause/cheers.

Listen Mum, they're clapping! Louder than Gatlin guns, wounded on the punchline, rocking backward for a gulp of air!

THREE PUNTERS *react:*

PUNTER 1 Look at 'is gormless face!

PUNTER 2 Have you seen the lad do Robb Wilton? Swear blind it were 'im!

PUNTER 3 Wait 'while you hear the one about whippet and t'vicar!

ERIC And then Mum's voice hissing from the wings. That pink, pudgy prawn-of-a-finger reeling in her only child.

SADIE Jifflearse! Get off! Leave 'em wanting more, else they'll round on you like a stung bulldog. I'll see to it you're never tied to a whistle like your dad, Eric. Now you see to it you give everyone a business card.

ERIC (*to audience*) "Master Eric Bartholomew, Vocal Comedy And Dancing Act, 43, Christie Avenue, Morecambe". Spit-sopped hanky wiping off the greasepaint, a poke of chips and the bus back after. Half a crown a week she scrapes together to pay for my lessons: music, dancing and singing. Pity really 'cos I can't play a note, can just about dance and can never sing in tune! She calls me "Jifflearse" on account of the fact that I can never stay still. She's even bought me my own plank, genuine oak so's I can brush up on my tappin'. Your proper jumping Jack. And the gift of the gab?

Tries out a joke on his father, GEORGE.

'Ere, Dad, have you heard? Cop shop toilet's been pinched?

GEORGE Oh aye?

ERIC The police have nowt to go on!

GEORGE Fair funny is that, son. Have a barley twist.

ERIC (*to audience*) If he hadn't have been so shy I'd have probably been born two years earlier! Swung a pick and spade for Morecambe Corporation he did, happy as a sandboy 'till the day he retired.

GEORGE T'int right you follow me, son. You should listen to your mother. She knows what's what. There's a seed in you, Eric. Your beanstalk up to a better life.

ERIC (*to audience*) Ten years old, Fridays at the Billiard Club, tables for stages, "Blue Moon" on green baize at five bob a throw... (*Sings*)

BLUE MOON, YOU SAW ME STANDING ALONE...

HALL OWNER Oy! Tap shoes off on't tables, Four-Eyes!

ERIC Sorry mister. (*To audience*) And as for school...

HEADMASTER Master Bartholomew, out of forty-nine pupils, you have attained the lofted position of forty-fifth. D'you not nurture any inkling of ambition, boy?

ERIC I want to play football sir, but I've got two problems – both feet! (*To audience*) The only lesson I enjoy is learning how to smoke. I couldn't tell you who crossed the Red Sea but I know why the chicken crossed the road. My education can't be found in books...

Leaps back onto his stage.

"Kiss Me Goodnight Sergeant Major" on the pier and "Lily Of Laguna" for courtin' couples under it. Old folks home for pie and peas... My granddad knew the exact day, place and time he would die. He weren't psychic, the judge told him! Elms Hotel, ten bob... I wouldn't say me room is damp, but this mornin' I found a goldfish in the mousetrap!

HOTELIER Oh, he's a cracker, your Eric. We'll have him back a week Wednesday.

SADIE I'm afraid Eric's booked solid for three weeks. But you can have him after for twelve bob a night.

ERIC Twelve bob a night!? Takes Dad a week to earn thirty! Barracks dinners, garden fetes, lidos and legions, and then...

Sound effects: a LIVERPUDLIAN M.C. (pre-recorded) announces:

M.C The Kingsway Cinema, Hoylake proudly presents the "Melody Maker" Search For Talent, 1939. Our first finalist hails from the Naples Of The North: Morecambe, Lancashire. He's here – but he's not all there – Eric Bartholomew!

Finding a beret and a tatty old set of tails in the trunk, ERIC pulls them on and climbs onto the stage, redeeming a (preset) ukulele from behind the tabs.

ERIC (*sings*)

I'M NOT ALL THERE, THERE'S SOMETHING MISSING
I'M NOT ALL THERE, SO FOLKS DECLARE
THEY CALL ME LOOBY, LOOBY
NOTHING BUT A GREAT BIG BOOBY
POINT AND SAY, "THAT'S WHERE YOU WANT IT"
BUT THEY KNOW THAT'S WHERE I'VE GOT IT
I KNOW THEY THINK I'M SLOW
LET THEM THINK, LET THEM THINK, I DON'T CARE
SOMETIMES I RUN ERRANDS FOR THE FOLK UP AT THE GRANGE
WITH A FIVE POUND NOTE THEY TRUST ME
P'RAPS YOU'D THINK THAT'S STRANGE
BUT THEY NEVER CALL A POLICEMAN
WHEN I SAY "I'VE LOST THE CHANGE"
'COS I'M NOT SUPPOSED TO BE ALL THERE... CUCKOO! CUCKOO!

Sound effects: applause.

(*To audience*) I did it! I only went and blinkin' well won! What's the star prize, Mum? Summat I can eat or swap? Summat I can set on fire, is it? Oh. An audition in Manchester for bandleader and impresario Jack Hylton. (*Flatly*) Brilliant.

SADIE Now you listen to me, lad. This world owes you nowt. Like I've always told you: "Put in the elbow grease, else you'll be a ha'penny more than a lad from Lancashire". D'you think George Formby was born with his little ukulele in his hand? You're going to Manchester and that's that. Pull it off and I'll buy you an airgun.

ERIC (*reprises enthusiastically*) 'Cos I'm not supposed to be all there!

Pumped up by his mother's promise of a new firearm, he swaps his ukulele for a Chaplin-esque walking cane from behind the tabs – the perfect prop with which to ramp up his efforts.

Right, Mr Hylton. Why don't I give you the lot, see if I can't knock your hat off? (*Deep breath*) "Zing Went The Strings Of My Heart". Words nice and clear, shuffle-ball-change. I want that airgun. Bang! "Never Let Your Braces Dangle". Unclip mine so they do, hike up strides at last second. Smile, don't forget the balcony, their money's as good as the four-and-sixpennies. Does it come with pellets, I wonder? Bang! "Top Hat, White Tie and Tails". Where's me blinkin' cane? Soon be pickin' off beer bottles from the back wall. Bang! Last one now, my piece de resistance... "Lily Of Laguna", down on one knee, arms wide as Morecambe Bay. Give him both barrels, sunshine. Bang, bang! (*Pause*) He's clapping, but not a lot, and who's that sat next to him pouring syrup into his ear? Blow me, it's his West End Wonder Boy, the "Mickey Rooney of Leeds" – Ernest Wiseman!

Crosses indignantly to ERNIE on his theatre seat.

What d'you mean, you were "only nudging him to keep him awake"? (*To audience*) Hitler has invaded Poland by the time my call-up papers arrive.

Produces a telegram from his pocket, reading:

"Youth Takes A Bow", Nottingham Empire. Stop. Jack Hylton! Pleased if Eric should join show. Stop. Touring salary, five pounds per week. Stop. (*To audience*) And I am an airgun richer... POP! Twice nightly, six nights a week. Dickie "Large Lumps" Hassett...

LARGE LUMPS I've got enough money to see me through to the end of me life – if I die at six o'clock tonight!

ERIC “Two-Ton” Tessie O'Shea making her entrance on an elephant...and dear old Arthur Tolcher and his mouth organ...

*Yanks a harmonica from his pocket and plays a few bars of **MUSIC: “SPANISH GYPSY DANCE”**.*

(aside) Not now, Arthur, not now. *(To audience)* Girl singers, boy singers, acrobats and tumblers...and me. Bournemouth Winter Gardens, Bradford Alhambra, Bristol Hippodrome, loving every minute of it. Nothing is going to rain on my parade, not even the Führer.

Sound effects: a bomb descends, whistling.

SADIE 'Ere, Eric. Have you heard? There's a new boy joining the cast in Swansea.

ERIC A new boy? Who's that then Mum?

SADIE Ernie Wise.

Sound effects: bomb explodes.

ERIC The little doodle-bugger! Ernest Wiseman... The blighter's changed his name! That junior sensation from “Band Waggon”, song-and-dance man by seven, stage and radio star at thirteen, joining us?

MUSIC: “I'M KNEE DEEP IN DAISIES” – INSTRUMENTAL.

*A green-eyed **ERIC** observes **ERNIE** from the wings.*

Look at him, cock-sure as a bantam, trilling away like a flamin' skylark. “I'm Knee Deep In Daisies”? Should be elbows deep in “shorthouse's” case.

ERNIE Hah-hah. Not tonight *sonny*, for I'm standing on a toadstool.

ERIC “Sonny”? “*Sonny*”?! Oh no, look at him dance! Gliding over the boards with all the power and grace of a bloody

Spitfire. He's got it all. I hope it's terminal. And hark at that lot lapping it up like kittens.

WELSH PUNTER We're lucky to 'ave 'im, boyo, given the ravages of current hostilities, isn't it?

ERIC crosses to coat stand, hanging up his beret and tails.

ERIC (to **ERNIE**) Bighead! And you wear long trousers, and you are on seven pounds. Seven pounds? The powdered egg I could buy with two quid extra! I call you "Lilywhite" 'cos I can't find anything wrong with you. The daft thing was, I find out you feel the same about me. What a pair of dunces. Oxford is about to educate us...

Sound effects: a knock.

I'm not answering, Mum. It might be the Jerries!

SADIE Good. I can strangle 'em with this scarf I'm knitting.

ERIC That's how it starts – the knock in the night.

SADIE I'll knock you in the night, you soft clot.

Opens the door to discover a forlorn ERNIE.

Ernie, love! You look frozen solid! Come in. You've nowhere to stay? I'm not surprised with all these bloomin' soldiers everywhere bedded down for the night. You're welcome here, love. I'll sleep in the single bed and you can climb in the double with our Eric.

ERIC (horrificed) Me? Sharing a bed with 'im?

SADIE Well, it'll save us all a pretty penny.

ERIC (to audience) Ern's mum has drilled into him that his bankbook is his best friend, so he jumps in with me quicker than a turpentine cat.

Sits beside ERNIE, pulling a blanket over them both.

But, once under the covers, we find out that we make each other laugh. A lot. We both love Abbott and Costello, Laurel and Hardy, Hope and Crosby. In no time we are messing

about in dressing rooms, swapping gags on trains and doing silly voices into the small hours. We can't stop laughing...

SADIE Honestly! I wish you two would put all this mucking about to good use. I don't see why you can't let off some of this steam in front of an audience. You know enough daft jokes between you. Find a song or two. Form a double act.

Eureka. ERIC picks up ERNIE and leaps onto the stage.

ERIC Click! Lightbulb over bonces. Tricky in a blackout. (To ERNIE) I'll be Bud, you can be Lou. "Can I have a pound of sausages? Lean? (He leans) Can I have a pound of sausages?" Live and breathe the act, work our behinds off and keep mum 'till we come up with something.

MUSIC: "BY THE LIGHT OF THE SILVERY MOON"
- **INSTRUMENTAL.**

"Careless talk costs live acts", and all that. Did you hear about the dog in the flea circus? He stole the show! Keep going, we're onto something now... Four weeks to work up four minutes... We're ready, Ern! Thanks for letting us audition, Mr Hylton, Bartholomew and Wise ready to change your world. Gags and patter in the American style, the old soft-shoe and the "Silvery Moon". Wahey! Be honest...

Heads down stage right and sits ERNIE on the trunk.

JACK HYLTON Be honest? I will be honest. Your jokes went out with Disraeli, your stage name doesn't exactly trip off the tongue and I can't abide "By The Light Of The Silvery Piggin' Moon". (Beat) Liverpool Empire. You're on this Friday.

MUSIC: vaudeville-type sting.

ERIC grabs ERNIE, taking him back onto the stage.

ERIC My girl told me I should be more affectionate. So I got two girlfriends!

Sound effects: laughter.

ERNIE What smells of vinegar and giggles? A tickled onion!

Sound effects: laughter grows.

ERIC Did you hear about the thief who stole the calendar? He got twelve months!

Sound effects: belly laughs/enthusiastic applause.

Ern, I can see their teeth! Listen to them, they like us, they really like us! Look at my mum, she's crying. And Mr Hylton was clapping too – his head's a-bob! Well, boss, did we do OK?

JACK HYLTON Highly impressive, lads, highly impressive. How d'you fancy going on again next week?

ERIC D'you hear that Ern? Thanks Mr Hylton. Where are we?

JACK HYLTON The Glasgow Empire.

*Sound effects: thunder and lightning/ **MUSIC:**
"CARMINA BURANA".*

ERIC (to audience) Max Miller used to say, "Play the Glasgow Empire? I'm a comedian, not a missionary". With our feet on the plank, the theatre fireman prods us with his cutlass...

THEATRE FIREMAN Rest assured lads, if they like you, they let you live. It's a miracle if we can get 'em to toast the Empire at the finale, so nae jokes about football, Rabbie Burns or the Pope. There's nae need to look so feared. "Still waters ne'er made a skilled sailor".

ERIC Still waters? Oh God, Ern, I'm seasick already.

MUSIC: "SCOTLAND THE BRAVE".

That's overture and beginners... Two accordion players and a monkey in a kilt! How the 'eck are we going to follow that?

Sound effects: a SCOTTISH M.C. (pre-recorded), booming and portentous.

SCOTTISH M.C. And now from South Of The Border, two young comics up here for the very first time. England's newest hopes, Bartholomew and Wise!

ERIC gulps as the spotlight hits him.

ERIC I never knew a monkey could do *that!* My wife is the most wonderful woman in the world. And it's not just my opinion – *she* thinks so too!

Sound effects: a lonesome wind.

Talking of girls, Ernie once went out with a girl who had a terrible stutter. By the time she said she w-w-wouldn't, she already h-h-had!

Sound effects: a solemn church bell peals.

As for my girl, I know I can count on her – she always wears beads. It's the abacus Madam, you see...counting...beads... Ern, is that my heart or is Buddy Rich on the bill with us?

Shuffles towards wings.

Keep smiling, Ern...and for God's sake – keep walking. Only ten more yards... Feels more like ten miles! Couldn't we hail a cab to the wings?

They reach safety.

Oh, Mr Fireman, are they always that quiet?

THEATRE FIREMAN By the sound of things, they're beginnin' tae like you.

Relieved, ERIC places ERNIE back on his theatre seat.

ERIC (*to audience*) Out of Glasgow – alive; Scunthorpe, a new gag here; Aston, a song there; Grimsby, one more *tiny* beat before the punchline...

JACK HYLTON Eric, Eric, Eric...

ERIC Mr Hylton, Mr. Hylton, Mr. Hylton?

JACK What the hell are we going to call you, eh?

ERIC Call me?

JACK Bartholomew is terrible.

ERIC It's been terrible all my life, Mr Hylton.

JACK HYLTON How about Bartlett? Once knew a pawnbroker called Bartlett. Bartlett and Wise? No. Barton as in Dick

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