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CONCORD
THEATRICALS

Some Mothers Do 'Ave 'Em

by Guy Unsworth

Based on the TV series by
Raymond Allen

SAMUEL FRENCH

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SOME MOTHERS DO 'AVE 'EM was first performed at the Wyvern Theatre, Swindon on 21 February 2018 ahead of a UK Tour. It was produced by Limelight Productions. The cast was as follows:

FRANK SPENCER ..... Joe Pasquale
BETTY SPENCER ..... Sarah Earnshaw
FATHER O'HARA ..... David Shaw-Park
BARBARA FISHER ..... Susie Blake
DAVID WORTHINGTON / TERRY LUSCOMBE ..... Moray Treadwell
CAMERA OPERATOR / CONSTABLE / US FRANK SPENCER Chris Kiely

UNDERSTUDIES

BETTY SPENCER / BARBARA FISHER ..... Leoni Kibbey
MR LUSCOMBE / MR WORTHING / FATHER O'HARA / CAMERA OPERATOR / CONSTABLE ..... Peter F Gardiner

CREATIVE TEAM

Written and Directed by ..... **GUY UNSWORTH**
Based on the original TV series by ..... **RAYMOND ALLEN**
Set & Costume Design ..... **SIMON HIGLETT**
Lighting Design ..... **MATT HASKINS**
Sound Design ..... **IAN HORROCKS-TAYLOR**
Casting ..... **EMILY JONES**
Choreography ..... **JENNY ARNOLD**
Stunt Co-ordinator ..... **KEV MCCURDY**

PRODUCTION TEAM

General Management ..... **LIMELIGHT PRODUCTIONS**
Production Manager ..... **JILL ASHALL**
Costume Supervisor ..... **MISCHABEL WAKEMAN-READ**
Company Stage Manager ..... **NIK RYAL**
Deputy Stage Manager ..... **AMY CLARKE**
Assistant Stage Manager ..... **DAVID WILLIAMS**
Sound Operator ..... **SIMON HAWKINS**
Chief LX (Touring) ..... **TERESA NAGEL**
Wardrobe Mistress ..... **HILDA GREENWOOD**
Production Carpenter ..... **DANIEL GAVIN-MILLS**

CHARACTERS

(In order of appearance)

FRANK SPENCER – (30–50)
BETTY SPENCER – Frank's Wife (25–40)
FATHER O'HARA – An Irish Catholic Priest (55–75)
BARBARA FISHER – Betty's Mother (50–65)
DAVID WORTHINGTON – A Scottish Bank Manager (50–65)
TERRY LUSCOMBE – BBC Entertainment Chief (50–65)
LESLIE ROBIN – A Camera operator (25–45)
CONSTABLE – A London Policeman (25–45)

The play is performed by six actors. The following roles are doubled: Mr Worthington/Mr Luscombe and Leslie/Constable.

The roles of Leslie and Constable can be played by any gender. Spelling and pronouns should be adjusted accordingly (I.e Lesley Robin)

SETTING

At the house of Frank and Betty Spencer.

TIME

The action takes place in real time one evening in the spring of 1974.
Subheadings are included in the script for ease of rehearsals.
The action, however, is continuous.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Born in the late eighties, I wasn't one of the twenty-six million who watched Some Mothers Do 'Ave 'Em at its peak, but by accident caught re-runs of it as a teenager. Slapstick had always made me laugh and I remember finding Frank Spencer utterly hilarious.

Years later, I re-watched the episodes and fell in love with it once more. I was struck not only by the daring stunts, but by a great heart at the centre of it. Here were two characters, so brilliantly played by Michael Crawford and Michele Dotrice, who had no money, no house of their own, no job, no hope of a job, but they had each other. And whether Frank got the sack, demolished their home, or gave his psychiatrist a mental breakdown, there was always a very real and poignant

relationship between these two individuals who totally adored each other. This struck a chord with me far beyond the enjoyment of a twenty-five-minute episode, and suggested that maybe, just maybe, we could spend an evening with Frank and Betty in a theatre.

A few years later at the Playhouse Theatre in the West End, I was the Associate Director on the Monty Python musical *Spamalot*. Joe Pasquale was playing King Arthur. On a sweltering afternoon in June 2013, Joe and I stood in front of an electric fan in the green room trying to cool down, but it was clear that the fan was completely useless. Joe bent down to fix it when, at the lightest of touches, the entire contraption fell to pieces. We both laughed and referenced Frank Spencer, and in that brief moment discovered our mutual love of Some Mothers.

To cut a very long story short, we managed to make contact with Raymond Allen, original writer of the TV series, and asked if we could visit him at home on the Isle of Wight where Joe happened to be performing in his stand-up tour. A message came back from Ray: "I love Joe Pasquale, I've already booked tickets for his show, I'll see you there". That was about it. I think that Ray, the kindest gentleman you could find, was so pleased with the idea of Joe playing Frank that, without further ado, I found myself creating a stage play of one of my favourite TV shows, with one of my favourite comedians and collaborators.

To Ray for trusting me, thank you. To Joe for being there every single step of the way, I'm eternally grateful.

That was autumn 2015, after which I set about writing a first draft. I wanted the play to be nostalgic – a homage to the time, style and music of the original, but specifically written for the stage rather than lifted directly from the TV series. The trickiest part was incorporating the stunts and, more to the point, sustaining the Some Mothers format for a full length play without it feeling like a dragged-out episode. I'd grown up watching great comedies on stage, from Ayckbourn to Cooney, Frayn to Feydeau, so I was keen to honour the style which had always worked so well in the theatre. But my first draft was wildly out of proportion: there were multiple locations, three actors on roller skates, lamp-posts, collapsing roofs, real (and loose) chickens, and far too many script dead-ends.

Through multiple redrafts, two rehearsed readings and a week of workshopping the show, the final draft of the play was tighter and funnier, and, in the hands of my superb set designer Simon Higlett, stageable. Incidentally, and useful to anyone putting the show on themselves, we discovered very early on that there was no mileage in doing impressions of the original actors. However skilful, no one could match the real Michael Crawford, and in any case the novelty of an impersonation would wear off very quickly.

In this case it would also have been a missed opportunity, as I was lucky to have the charming naivety which Joe Pasquale naturally brings in bucketloads. Also, Joe's relationship with the wonderfully warm Sarah Earnshaw as Betty (Sarah had already played opposite Joe in *Spamalot*) was evidently touching in its own, unique way. I was lucky to be able to reinvent Frank's mother-in-law for the brilliantly skilled Susie Blake, whilst Moray Treadwell, David Shaw-Parker and Chris Kiely heroically rose to the challenge as the straight men to Frank's mayhem. Impressions were out, but Frank and Betty's world still firmly remained.

My sincere thanks goes to the many brilliant and talented individuals who contributed to the development process with such skill and good humour, to Theatre Royal Bath for generously supporting the second reading and workshop, and to Limelight Productions for enthusiastically taking on the challenge of producing the show. A special thank you must go to Christopher Luscombe who so tirelessly contributed as a friend, mentor and script consultant throughout the whole process.

In February 2018 we began rehearsals for a UK tour and, with such a verbally and physically demanding piece, the cast all agreed to arrive on day one word-perfect. They did so, brilliantly, and it was the best decision we ever made. Three and a half weeks later, we opened the UK tour in Swindon. From the moment the curtain went up, there was a palpable sense that the audience was happy to be back in the charming, cosy, carefree world of Frank and Betty's living room. With different actors, yes, but with characters they knew well and were extremely fond of. The stunts were great highlights, the seventies music went down a treat, and the terrific cast exuded charm from start to finish.

However, as the final moments of the play drew to a close, I was reminded once again of the thing which had attracted me to *Some Mothers Do 'Ave 'Em* many years ago: that all the chaos aside, Ray Allen had provided us with one of the great British love stories. Frank and Betty showed us, and continue to show us, that even when the world around us is falling apart, a little bit of love will conquer anything.

To everyone who gave a little bit of love to this – and you know who you are – thank you.

Guy Unsworth

ACT I

(Spring, 1974.)

(The ground floor of **FRANK** *and* **BETTY***'s house. We can see the living room and stairs.)*

(On the wall is a framed poster of Engelbert Humperdinck, an unframed poster of Bruce Forsyth, and a smaller framed picture of Jesus. On the floor is a homemade Wendy house.)

*(***FATHER O'HARA** *and* **BETTY** *are having a cup of tea.)*

TEA WITH FATHER O'HARA

FATHER O'HARA. I know Mr Spencer has a tendency to worry, but I think it's best to tell him sooner rather than later, don't you?

BETTY. He's been having a hard time recently. Looking for work, and no money coming in. I'm sorry, Father, I just get so worried.

FATHER O'HARA. Try not to be anxious, Mrs Spencer. It's just a case of taking things easy and getting plenty of rest. And Doctor Smedley can always prescribe a tonic.

BETTY. Oh yes! That would really help him.

FATHER O'HARA. Not for Frank, for you! You don't think it will come as a surprise to him do you?

BETTY. Oh yes it's bound to, I told him I was off to the dentist.

FATHER O'HARA. Mrs Spencer, your husband does *want* a child, doesn't he?

BETTY. Of course he does. It's just that we've been trying so hard. For so long. And he lost his job this week.

FATHER O'HARA. Oh dear. How did he cope with that?

BETTY. The same as last week.

FATHER O'HARA. I see. It must be hard for you both but I'm sure things will settle down.

BETTY. He's been trying for a job at the Civic Hall today.

FATHER O'HARA. Oh, are they looking for new cleaners?

BETTY. No, he's been auditioning.

FATHER O'HARA. Auditioning?

BETTY. For Mr Lockwood's magic show.

FATHER O'HARA. Mr Lockwood's – right – Frank's a… right.

BETTY. He'll be home any minute actually.

FATHER O'HARA. Then I must do a disappearing act too. I'm off to the Civic Hall *myself* tonight.

BETTY. Oh, is there a concert?

FATHER O'HARA. No no it's a gang show. I thought we should raise some money after the Civic was broken into last month.

BETTY. Oh yes, I heard, terrible.

FATHER O'HARA. *(Top secret.)* Six and a half thousand pounds they took!

BETTY. Goodness.

FATHER O'HARA. Anyway, thank you for the tea.

BETTY. Thank you for dropping in, Father – I hope it wasn't out of your way.

FATHER O'HARA. Not at all. *(Referring to the Wendy House.)* Is this a Wendy House? You're not receiving gifts already are you?

BETTY. Oh that's not for the baby, Father – Frank made it for the chickens.

FATHER O'HARA. The chickens?!

(The sound of a key in the front door.)

BETTY. That must be Frank now.

FRANK ARRIVES HOME

*(***FRANK** *enters in trench coat and beret. He is holding his magic case.)*

FRANK. Hello Betty, I'm home.

BETTY. Hello, Frank. We've got a visitor.

FATHER O'HARA. Good evening, Mr Spencer.

FRANK. Oh hello, Father O'Hara, what a lovely surprise. Doing the rounds are you?

BETTY. Father O'Hara just popped in for a cup of tea, Frank.

FRANK. Oh nice. And does my eye deceive me, Father, or are you admiring my new development?

FATHER O'HARA. Well, yes it's very... impressive Mr Spencer, but you can't keep chickens in the living room.

FRANK. Chick*en*.

FATHER O'HARA. I'm sorry?

FRANK. *(Whispering.)* Sshh. Mr Lindbergh is now a widower.

FATHER O'HARA. *(Whispering.)* Mr Lindbergh? What is he talking about?

BETTY. *(Whispering.)* The chicken, Father. There was an unfortunate accident at the weekend involving *Mrs* Lindbergh.

FATHER O'HARA. *(Whispering.) Mrs* Lindbergh?

FRANK. *(Whispering.) Mrs* Lindbergh, God bless her, had a visit from a greedy fox on Sunday, and was, let's just say, taken before her time.

FATHER O'HARA. *(Whispering.)* Well I'm sorry to hear that, but –

*(***FRANK** *lifts up the chimney gently as* **FATHER O'HARA** *peers in.)*

FRANK. Mr Lindbergh, this is Father O'Hara. Father O'Hara, this is Mr Lindbergh.

(With a squawk, feathers burst out into **FATHER O'HARA***'s face.)*

He's going through a rough patch, father, it's a difficult time.

FATHER O'HARA. But these are not his natural surroundings, Mr Spencer. You don't want social services to find out you're keeping a rooster in your living room – they'll send the police round.

FRANK. The police?! Oh, I better put him outside then. I hope Mr fox doesn't return for a second sitting.

FATHER O'HARA. *(To* **BETTY***, heading towards the front door.)* Mrs Spencer, I really must go, I need to eat before I head out.

BETTY. Of course. Father O'Hara's off to the Civic Hall *himself* tonight, Frank.

FRANK. Oh, is there a concert?

FATHER O'HARA. No no it's a gang show. I thought we should raise some money after the Civic was broken into last month.

FRANK. Oh yes, I heard, terrible.

FATHER O'HARA. *(Top secret.)* Six and a half thousand pounds they took!

FRANK. Goodness.

BETTY. Frank used to help out at the gang show, didn't you Frank?

FRANK. Yes the last time I was at a gang show, the scout master swallowed his woggle and I had to perform the Heineken manoeuvre on him.

BETTY. Why don't you stay and have supper here, Father? You could then go straight to the Civic Hall.

FRANK. Yes we're already expecting Betty's mother, so the more the merrier.

FATHER O'HARA. Oh right, I see, well that'd be lovely!

FRANK. And I'm cooking!

FATHER O'HARA. – But I need to sort out a few things at home.

FRANK. Betty's not been feeling herself lately so I'm stepping in. *(To* **BETTY.***)* It's all them carrots you've been munching. *(To* **FATHER O'HARA.***)* All she ever eats – carrots!

BETTY. If you change your mind, Father, you're more than welcome.

FATHER O'HARA. Thank you, and do give your mother my regards.

(To **FRANK.***)*

Look after her now won't you, Mr Spencer?

FRANK. *(Offended.)* Excuse me?

FATHER O'HARA. She'll need looking after if she's not feeling so good, won't she?

FRANK. *(Pert.)* Yes, thank you, father. You are not a doctor are you not?

FATHER O'HARA. I'm sorry?

FRANK. You are not, are you not, not a doctor are you not?

FATHER O'HARA. What?

BETTY. *(Gently reprimanding.)* Frank.

FATHER O'HARA. I'm sorry I don't think I –

BETTY. Don't worry, Father. Goodbye.

FATHER O'HARA. Right, goodbye then.

FRANK. Yes, goodbye.

BETTY. *(Calling after him.)* Thank you!

*(***FATHER O'HARA** *leaves.* **BETTY** *closes the front door.)*

WHAT WAS ALL THAT ABOUT?

What was all that about?

FRANK. Funny man.

BETTY. Father O'Hara?

FRANK. Telling me to look after you like that.

BETTY. He's only trying to help, Frank.

FRANK. I'm always looking after you. He doesn't need to tell me to do it. I just do do it, don't I?

BETTY. I know you do, Frank, but he didn't mean it like that –

FRANK. I'm a man!

BETTY. Frank, he was actually referring to a bit of news I got today.

FRANK. Nothing serious I hope. Not after the day I've had.

BETTY. Oh sorry Frank, I forgot to ask – how did the audition go? You tell me *your* news and I'll tell you *mine*.

FRANK. *(Defeated.)* You know how nervous I get when I'm performing.

BETTY. All performers get nervous, Frank.

FRANK. But the other magicians are more impressive than me. They all wear top hats! And tails! They escape from metal cages, make birds appear out of nowhere, while I'm stood juggling in front of Mr Lockwood, knowing that my balls are misshapen and my wand is smaller than everyone else's.

BETTY. What about your new trick? How did that go? Did you make his watch disappear?

FRANK. Well you *could* say it went better than usual.

BETTY. I bet Mr Lockwood had no idea where it went.

FRANK. No he didn't.

BETTY. So what was the problem?

FRANK. Neither did I.

BETTY. But you found his watch in the end didn't you?

FRANK. Nearly.

BETTY. Nearly?

FRANK. Not really.

BETTY. Frank!

FRANK. But I said to him, "Mr Lockwood, it will appear when you least expect it". And then I left.

BETTY. You left? What did he say?

FRANK. He said, "Give me back my watch, you silly man, or I'll tell your mother!" Only he used different words for "Silly"... And "Man" ... And "I'll tell your mother".

BETTY. Oh Frank!

FRANK. His face went bright red and his breathing was very erotic.

BETTY. I'm not surprised.

FRANK. So that's *another* job I won't be getting.

*(***BETTY** *starts to clear the tea from earlier.)*

BETTY. Don't be like that Frank, you've only been out of work two days. Mr Rogers next door hasn't worked for six months.

FRANK. Mr Rogers is eighty three years old!

BETTY. Yes but he likes to keep active doesn't he? And he's still got all his faculties.

FRANK. *I've* got all *my* faculties. Young ones all raring to go. But nowhere to facultate.

BETTY. Oh Frank.

(She takes the tea into the kitchen. **FRANK** *slightly adjusts the picture of Jesus to straighten it. As he turns to walk away he places his hand on the banister knob, which comes out. He replaces it and the lamp by the door flickers.* **FRANK** *smacks the wall the other side of the door and it stops.* **FRANK** *looks inside his trousers, concerned.* **BETTY** *comes out.)*

It won't get any smaller just by looking at it.

FRANK. It's gone all the way round the back now.

BETTY. Let me have a look.

(Looking into his trousers.)

I can barely see it. I don't know what you're worrying about.

FRANK. *(Scratching.)* It keeps moving that's why.

BETTY. Well stop touching it, or it's bound to get bigger.

FRANK. My mother said if both ends join up you drop down dead.

BETTY. That's an old wive's tale. A rash won't kill you. And it's the worry that's brought it on.

FRANK. What do you expect, Betty? We need money. But I won't *find* that money if I don't get any work as a magician and I won't get any work as a magician if I don't find some money to improve my act. *(On the side nearby.)* And look at these heating bills. They're rising excrementally!

BETTY. Are you saying that's *my* fault?

FRANK. No-no-no. But we've got to economise. The whole country's facing a slump. And we're slumping quicker than the country.

*(***BETTY** *heads upstairs and* **FRANK** *runs after her.)*

BETTY. It's just as bad for me. I don't enjoy seeing you worried. I'm doing the best I can to save money.

FRANK. No-no-no I didn't mean that Betty.

BETTY. You're always criticising me.

FRANK. Please Betty!

BETTY. I don't want to discuss this any more –

FRANK. *(Sternly stopping her.)* Betty! Don't make me run! It gives me the cramps.

THAT'LL BE THE PHONE

(The phone rings.)

That'll be the phone.

BETTY. It's probably Mum.

FRANK. You get the phone, I'll start dinner.

*(***FRANK** *goes into the kitchen.)*

BETTY. *(Picking up the phone.)* Grays-Thurrock-Five-double-six-seven-o? … Hello Mum… Yes he's home now he's just started cooking.

(Bang/crash from the kitchen.)

(Whispering.)

Have I told him? I've not had the chance yet… Yes I know, I know… Mr Worthington? Well yes of course… All right we'll see you around half past seven…yes see you shortly. Bye. *(Calling.)* That was Mum, Frank. She's bringing Mr Worthington with her.

FRANK. *(From the kitchen.)* Mr Worthington?

(Opening the hatch.)

"Mr-Worthington-from-the-bank" Mr Worthington? Mr Worthington of "Worthington-and-Sons" Mr Worthington?! Why's he coming here?

BETTY. Mum's met him a few times now and, well I think… You know…

FRANK. To what are you alluring?

BETTY. Well, they've become… "Good friends" to one another.

FRANK. *(Offended.)* "Good friends" eh? No wink nor nudge required, Betty Fisher. When I think what married people get up to these days!

BETTY. Mr Worthington lost his wife a few years back, and Dad's not exactly around anymore is he? Listen it's none of our business so don't make a thing of it. Besides, Mr Worthington's been very helpful to Mum.

FRANK. *(A bright idea.)* And he could be very helpful to us, Betty. If I can get Mr Worthington to invest in my costume and equitment for Magic Frank, we'll have the answer to all our life problems. With Magic Frank flying high, we'd have money in the meter, real flowers in the vase, Brucie in a frame. And as he's coming to see us here, I can integrate my magic record player too. Stamp your foot, Betty!

BETTY. Frank.

FRANK. Go on, Betty, stamp your foot!

BETTY. Not now, Frank.

FRANK. All right, *I* will.

(He stamps his foot and mysterious music plays: A song in the style of **["ALBATROSS"]** *by Fleetwood Mac.*)*

(Mysterious voice.)

Ladies and Gentlemen, welcome to the world of Magic Frank.

BETTY. Very good Frank, but could we have a chat before they arrive?

FRANK. For my first trick, I will make your watch disappear in front of your very eye.

BETTY. Frank, they'll be here soon.

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