

## OBITUARIES

# Willie Ross

North east comic and actor Willie Ross has died, aged 61.

Willie was a well-known face on television and stage. He formed half of the successful act Lambert and Ross, who split up after two decades in 1988. They toured the northern club circuit, playing cabaret clubs and summer seasons at the major holiday resorts as well as appearing at Bromley and the London Palladium and latterly moved into pantomime.

Willie left the cabaret circuit and moved from the north east to Northamptonshire and started to expand his career. He became the veteran of a series of highly rated films and television dramas and gained a reputation in the more exalted quarters of the British film world.

The film that initially brought attention to Willie was *Rita, Sue and Bob Too* in which he played Sue's inebriated father and stole the show. After *Rita* came a part in *Trevor Griffiths' play Comedians*. Here he was spotted by Peter Chelsom and was recruited for the film *Treacle*, in which he played a club concert secretary to huge acclaim.

Willie went on to do many theatre productions in repertory and in London. His television and film credits include *The Cook, the Thief, His Wife and Her Lover*, *Riff Raff* and *Restoration*. Among his memorable performances for television were *Our Mutual Friend*, *Our Friends in the North*, *Road, Stay Lucky* and *Madame Bovary*. His last stage appearance was as *Teddy* in *Card Boys* at the Bush, receiving rave reviews.

He was working up until his death on *Turning the Tide* for *Amber Films*.

Willie was a much loved man, both professionally and personally. Despite his later success, he never left his roots behind and remained faithful to the clubs in which he started his career, socially and in the tales he told.

With his boundless energy, he brightened the lives of everyone he came into contact with. He will be greatly missed.

Willie leaves behind Joan, his wife of 20 years, and daughters Claire and Jane.

Lou Coulson

### REGINALD JESSUP

An actor for over 50 years, Reginald Jessup collapsed and died on February 1 after suffering a heart attack outside the Chelsea and Westminster Hospital.

Jessup did his National Service with the Parachute Regiment and trained as an actor at the Old Vic School. Never a star name, he nevertheless had an interesting and varied career, having two years with the Royal Shakespeare Company, including a tour of the United States and Europe when the company featured Alan Howard, Ben Kingsley and Charles Dance.

He played in repertory and made countless tours. In the West End he appeared in *Balthazar* at the Duke of York's with Simon Callow, *Licence to Murder* at the Vaudeville and *The Moon is Blue*, also at the Duke of York's. Other notable stage engagements were *Henry V* at the Ludlow Festival, *Twelfth Night* at York Festival, a tour of Canada with Hayley Mills in *Rebecca*, *Long Day's Journey Into Night* in Frankfurt, *Kiss Me*, *Kate* at both the Old Vic and the Savoy, and a subsequent long tour, and *Pickwick* with Harry Secombe at Chichester, Sadler's Wells and on the tour.

He also appeared frequently on television and radio. In the

former he was in the BBC's cycle of Shakespeare's plays, and was in numerous series, among them *Shine On Harvey Moon*, *Dr Who*, *Z Cars*, *Softly, Softly*, *Gideon's Way*, *The Saint* and *Coronation Street*. His radio credits were very diverse, including *The Likely Lads*, *Woman's Hour* and numerous series and single plays.

He was also in two films, *The Man Who Had Power Over Women* and *Vengeance of Robin Hood*.

His wife, the actress and director Janet Brandes, who had her own company for a time, died several years ago, but Jessup had a number of interests which kept him occupied. For instance he was a keen tennis player right up to the end of his life, and he was a member of several organisations, including the Shakespeare Society. He is survived by two younger sisters.

Peter Hepple

### PATRICK BEDFORD

Dublin-born actor Patrick Bedford, known as Paddy, has died in New York, aged 67. He had been mainly living in that city since he went to Broadway with the Brian Friel play *Philadelphia, Here I Come!* in 1966.

He started out as an amateur actor in the Father Matthew Hall and the Peacock Theatre, taking his first professional role in *Hilton Edwards* and *Michael MacLiammoir's production Tolka Row* in 1951. He was to remain a lifelong friend of these two, who ran Dublin's Gate Theatre, and he played a variety of roles in that theatre during the fifties and sixties. When his two friends died, they left their shares in the Gate to Bedford, and in 1988 it was formed into a trust. But Bedford was still actively associated with the Gate and returned from New York for opening nights and board meetings.

In New York for a time he tried the movie industry, but without success. In 1966 he had a role in *Up the Down Staircase* with Sandy Dennis, but did not like the experience.

He had better luck in the musical *1776*, which lasted two years and toured 38 US cities. Flushed with cash from that tour, he came back to Dublin to buy a house, but soon returned to New York because of high Irish taxes.

In 1984 he married theatre critic Patricia O'Haire, with whom he lived in New York until he died.

Aidan O'Sullivan

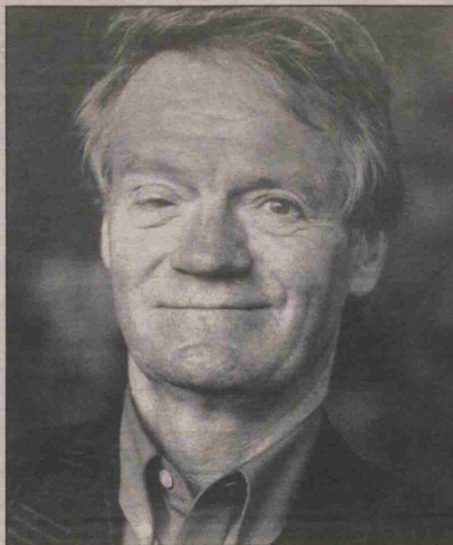
### IVAN SHAKESPEARE

Ivan Shakespeare was a good writer and a good man. He was kind, generous and unfailingly gracious. His death at the age of 47, from a heart attack, while out jogging, is a great loss.

He shared his advice, his contacts and his time as freely as he shared his money for the next round in his local, The Yorkshire Grey, and though he was self-effacing about his own work, he had endless enthusiasm and belief in the abilities of others.

Ivan was a founding member of the Comedy Collective Web site. His degree in sociology and politics from Lancaster University proved useful as a commissioned writer for BBC Radio 4's political satire *Week Ending* (1992 to 1997). He also wrote for *The News Huddlines*, *The Beaton Generation* and *The Treatment*, as well as contributing regularly to the long-running topical stage show *Newsrevue* at the Canal Cafe, London.

After leaving *Week Ending*, he was a regular writer for Channel 4's *Rory Bremner* (1997 to 1999). His gloriously energetic BBC Radio 4



Boundless energy – comic and actor Willie Ross

spoof of Virginia Woolf, *A Square of One's Own*, was broadcast in 1996, and repeated in 1997. In 1998 he was awarded a grant from the prestigious Peggy Ramsay Trust. As well as writing, Ivan also ushered at the Almeida for many years.

He had the courage to give up a job as an accountant, at the age of 37 (with the full support of his partner, Elspeth McLean) to pursue a writing career. He also had the fortitude one needs to be a true satirist – he wrote a sketch about the fatwa issued against Salman Rushdie, and when he heard that several people with foreign accents had phoned the broadcaster and demanded the name of the writer, he just laughed and wrote another, more scathing sketch on the fatwa the next week. Ivan's quiet passion, honesty, integrity, deep belief in social justice, and great sympathy and empathy for underdogs everywhere will be missed.

Ivan Shakespeare was born on July 19, 1952, in West Bromwich, and died on February 3. He is survived by Elspeth McLean.

Kim Morrissey

### LORD KITCHENER

Lord Kitchener, who has died in his native Trinidad aged 77, was a popular figure on the London nightclub scene in the fifties and sixties. He was seldom a starring attraction, more often playing and singing atmospheric background music with a small group.

Yet he deserves to be remembered as a true pioneer of calypso in this country. A lilting and often witty musical form which has a long tradition in Trinidad, it caught the public imagination here, thanks largely to Lord Kitchener and his compatriot Lord Beginner.

Lord Kitchener, whose real name was Aldwyn Roberts, came to Britain on the *Empire Windrush* in 1948 and made the headlines on his arrival when he sang his own composition, *London is the Place for Me*, for the assembled newsreel cameras. Both he and Lord Beginner slipped into the London showbusiness and musical scene, participating in the first calypso recording session at Abbey Road studios at the beginning of 1950.

Most of Kitchener's recordings were, however, on the Melodisc label, which for some years specialised in Caribbean music, and featured a number of West Indian musicians, such as Fitzroy Coleman and Clary Wears, who accompanied Kitchener on disc.

In 1958 Lord Kitchener opened his own club in Manchester, but

was soon back on the West End scene before returning to Trinidad, where he continued to perform and was honoured in 1994 when a statue of him as the Grandmaster of Calypso was unveiled in Port of Spain.

Peter Hepple

### MIKE HOBMAN

Mike Hobman spent most of his adult life working in, and devoting himself to, the theatre. A jack of all trades and master of many, Mike had more than 30 years experience ranging from teaching drama, to stage management, through to being a tour director and director of productions.

Often seen as dogmatic and stubborn in his professional life, the private Mike was extremely caring and incredibly devoted to his family and friends.

Mike was loved by many because of his utter refusal to toe the line in whatever he did. He was admired by many as he relentlessly, and often vocally, followed the life he had set out for himself, never straying from his own path.

In 1968 he enrolled at the Northern College of Speech and Drama, studying drama there and later at Manchester University (LAMDA). Completing his studies in 1970, he found work as a tour rep and then as a stage director, jobs which were to take him around the UK and to the Donovan Maule Theatre in Nairobi, Kenya.

In the seventies he worked in some of Britain's most prestigious theatres, including the Bristol Old Vic, Haymarket, Leicester, the National Theatre in London and, between 1979 and 1981, the Royal Lyceum in Edinburgh.

Basing himself in Edinburgh for many years, Mike worked closely and became great friends with Jimmy Logan, eventually spending time as a tour director for RCL Leisure. He later moved to the west of Scotland and Glasgow, where he started his own *Europeal Theatres* company.

Recently Mike had settled in Ireland, where he pursued his passion for youth and community theatre. As a qualified youth leader, he put on plays with young actors, through his BRATS and Hotchpotch projects.

Mike spent the last few years in Cobh, near Cork. His intention was eventually to return to, and settle down in Yorkshire – the place of his birth. An ox of a man, Mike touched more people than he ever realised, in a life that could never be adequately summed up in words. We will all miss him greatly.

Michael Hobman died of

a stroke in Cork University Hospital on February 4, one month before his 55th birthday.

John Prince

### JULIE MORTON

Born Julie Mellon in Ealing in 1943, she attended the Pamela Howard School for Dancing at the age of six and aged 11 won a scholarship to the Royal Academy of Dancing.

She graduated to the Royal Ballet Upper School, and at the end of her training, after appearing in various productions, she joined the famous *Fold-de-Rols* company on tour around the UK.

It was in this company that I first met her and, with her petite beauty and her impish sense of humour, I fell in love with her straight away. We married in 1964 and worked together for Derek Salberg at the Alexandra Theatre in Birmingham. In 1966 we moved to London when I joined the BBC and when we were expecting a family, Julie left the business to concentrate on bringing up our daughters Belinda and Jennifer.

Julie appeared in a number of television productions before becoming a dance teacher for Pamela Howard. When we moved out of town she opened her own school in Chesham and later another branch in Gerrards Cross. Then in 1977, we moved to Tring, where she opened the Julie Morton School of Dancing in the town, which has now been running successfully for more than 20 years. Our daughters both trained at the Arts Educational School and went into the business, following in their mother's footsteps.

Sadly, late in 1999 cancer was diagnosed, which Julie fought bravely, enduring rigorous treatment without complaint. However, an infection set in which she was unable to combat.

She died in hospital on January 29.

Belinda and Jennifer are determined to continue running the dancing school to which their mother had devoted her life.

She will be sorely missed not only by us, her family, and the hundreds of relatives and friends who attended her funeral, but also by the many pupils and parents who were influenced by her tireless dedication over the years.

Bill Morton

### JAYNE SNOW

The actress Jayne Snow has died in Dublin, aged 47.

Born in Solihull, she was educated in Cornwall and graduated from the Central School of Speech and Drama in London. Soon afterwards she met her Irish husband, Brian Snow, and moved with him to Dublin, after spending brief stints in Saudi Arabia and Britain.

In Dublin she trained under Deirdre O'Connell at the Focus Theatre and went on to produce and direct many productions at the theatre. This earned her the name, 'Queen of the Fringe' – a title she enjoyed in her light-hearted way.

Her work spread from theatre to film and television. She had roles in Irish soaps *Fair City* and *Nighthawks*, both produced by Irish state television station RTE. She also had parts in the movies *All Souls Day* and *November Afternoon*, and was for 20 years a central figure in Dublin theatre, TV and films.

She is survived by her mother Mary, her husband Brian and her children Daniel and Tasmin.

Aidan O'Sullivan

Obituaries can also be found on **The Stage's** Web site at:  
[www.thestage.co.uk](http://www.thestage.co.uk)

## BAMBERGER

Jean ('Bunnie') Bamberger died on February 10th 2000 after more than twenty years of being well cared for in hospital in Surrey.

Jean toured for many years as one of 'The Three Redheads' having started as an acrobatic dancer in cabaret at The Trocadero in her teens. For a time she was Betty in Wilson, Keppel & Betty.

In memory of

## RUTH SENDLER

21st February 1990

## HEDGER WALLACE

Actor and Writer

Died January 30th

Loved companion of June and sadly missed by many friends.

"What a character! Never had a conversation with him that didn't make you laugh – and that wonderful voice!"

## NOËL JOHNSON

Memorial Service

Tuesday 29th February, Noon,

St Mary The Virgin,  
Twickenham.

All Welcome

(enquiries 0370 225227).