

WIMBORNE COMMUNITY THEATRE

ENQUIRE WITHIN 2: HOUSE

Allendale House 2007



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Scene 1: Prologue On the Stairs

Audience enters the hall. The four House characters are on the stairs. Other cast is dotted around the audience. A copy of Enquire Within is visible in the hands of House 1.

- House 1: Of what is a house made, really made?
Bricks and mortars to be true, no argument
And timber and plaster and glass and iron
But the whole story? No.
- House 2: What of memory, what of echoes?
What has a house seen, heard, witnessed?
I can hear the symphony of whispers that is this place, was this place
And will be it yet.
- House 3: When a house is left for the last time
It's never empty. It lives on in people's minds
Long after they've left it. You can never know
All there is to know about a house.
- House 4: You pass through one door
And out another and leave behind
A trace in every room –
- House 3: All the days and nights
All the men and women
In their sitting rooms, studies, halls,
All their deals and promises,
Lies and prayers, their secrets,
Music and books, recipes and menus.
- House 2: In the office, bedroom, back stairs and front stairs,
In the kitchen, dining room, larder,
Strong room, office, cubby hole, attic,
Lavatory, landing, stored within my walls.
- House 1: You can never know
All there is to know
About a house.

House 3: Under the floor boards, dust,
Behind the skirting boards, dust,
In the fireplace, ash,
Under the floorboards, a toothbrush,
Behind the wall, a charcoal pencil,
Under the step, a key, a hinge, seeds ... fragments.

House 1: Someone is coming ... is coming back or is still here, always here. A trace in every room, a trace made flesh. A whisper made real ...

We hear Susie approach. She is talking to herself. Other House characters exit.

House 1: I hear all the voices, out of time, from rooms, behind doors. I can conjure them, they are here now, with us now. Always with us.

Suzie Funnell coming down the stairs with her handbag, confused.

Susie: It's all changed. Excuse me, is this where I could collect my Rates Book? This is the Council Offices, isn't it?

House 1: Susie Funnell, Certified Teacher. Miss Susie Funnell's School for Young Ladies.

Susie: How strange coming back – last time was so ... such sad difficult days, everyone leaving, the end of an era.

House 1: A house of young women for thirty years, with Miss Funnell at the helm. You ran that respected school here, within these walls. A house of enquiring minds.

Susie: There was so much energy in this place then, such hope.

House 1 (*looking in the book*): Corynebacterium Diphtheria. All gone now.

A pupil runs down the stairs past Susie.

Susie: Not so fast, dear – you'll fall.

Pupil disappears, laughter from the place where she goes.

House 1: Just echoes and whispers left.

Images of Allendale House projected. The school slide of diphtheria virus as wallpaper.

Images. SFX. Sound comes from drawing room of children singing carol: The Holly and the Ivy.

Susie: Christmas, just before the holidays, when this house was at its happiest. Sometimes they'd say they saw someone on these stairs. "But I did see her", they'd say ...

House 1: Echoes and whispers.

Susie: Ann Castleman, they'd say it was, grieving for her lost child; or they'd see a young girl at the window, a Workhouse girl looking in, wanting to learn too.

A child appears at the window.

Susie: Of course, I rebuked them. Quite improper behaviour for young ladies to see what did not exist. *(Pause – softer)* And yet ... I too have seen glimpses. Like in *The Tempest* ... "Be not afeard – the isle is full of noises, sounds and sweet airs that hurt not." And I heard things.

She begins to look absentmindedly in her bag as a Christmas Carol starts up in another room.

House 2: You can never know all there is to know about a house. Voices out of time. Your past, their present. Be not afeard.

House 2 opens the drawing room door to the next scene.



Scene 2
Christmas 1830

The door to the drawing room opens and House 2 invites the audience into the drawing room as the carol singers continue to sing The Holly and the Ivy.

Images projected: musical box, child playing with dolls' house, drawing room figures.

The cast form a tableau in front of the fireplace as they introduce themselves, facing the audience. Ann, heavily pregnant with son-to-be William, sits with her daughter Emily, then aged 6, next to her friend Florence.

The carol singers finish the carol. The family applaud politely.

Mary: Charming! Charming!

Ann: How clever your Gerald is, Florence dear! To make the poor little Workhouse children sing so beautifully! Well done, Gerald! Wasn't that lovely, Emily dear?

Emily: Thank you for the singing. It was lovely.

Mary (*clutching hanky*): Not too close, Emily! Thank you.

Emily gives the carol singers a present. Everyone looks. The carol singers exit. Emily returns and sits with Florence and they turn pages of a book, pointing at the pictures.

William (*then aged 64*): Good evening, ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls.

House 2: William Castleman, formerly steward of two great Wimborne families – the Hanhams of Dean's Court and the Bankes of Kingston Lacy. Father to Edward, Charles and Henry, husband to Mary.

William: As I bid you all welcome to Allendale House, the Castleman residence, at this time of festivity and goodwill, I hope you'll agree that our humble abode, built for my family to the designs of the eminent architect, Sir Jeremy Wyattville ...

Edward (*interrupting*): Who, let it be known, Father, designed St George's Chapel in Windsor.

House 2: Ah, Edward, eldest son, schooled in jurisprudence and finance, now steward to the landed gentry, following in his father's fine footsteps.

Mary (*holding hanky to her face, interrupting*): Edward! Let your father, finish.

House 2: Mary Castleman, devoted wife and mother, whose whole world was within these walls.

Edward: Humble, Father? This fine family house is a monument to progress, designed for optimum health and hygiene, a beacon of light in the town.

Charles: Yes, Father, with Bonaparte vanquished for good, (*all applaud*) this great nation reigns supreme.

House 2: Charles, younger son, a lawyer and campaigner to bring the railway system to Wimborne.

Charles: And with the coming of the great engines thundering to and from London, our lives will never be the same again.

William: For is it not our duty, each of us, to learn how to better ourselves, as I have done, ladies and gentlemen. Son of a humble farmer from Hinton St Mary. And now look at me! In my fine house! And I have reared my sons to do the same – to ride in the vanguard of progress.

Edward: And we also own ten public houses in the town.

Mary: Edward, dear, I am not sure how much of interest the inns of the town are to the good ladies and gentlemen.

Edward: Mother, Wimborne's prosperity is built as much upon its populace's love of fine ales as any other product!

Ann: And for that ...

House 2: Ann Castleman, wife to Edward.

Ann: ... we should thank my grandfather! Isaac Gulliver.

Edward: The famous gentleman smuggler.

Ann: *Entrepreneur*, dearest, please.

Mary: Remember, Edward, Ann's grandfather ended his days as Churchwarden of the Minster and a fine upstanding gentleman. But enough talk of ale-houses – what will our guests think of us? My husband has a fine record as an upstanding pillar of the community. In fact, he has always done his duty as a

Christian to ensure that the good people of Wimborne are not lured into the ways of drunkenness and debauchery! Tell them about the Deanery Court, William ... the scandal on the Sabbath.

William: Indeed, as steward to the Deanery Court, I reprimanded a certain young gentleman of high rank who was discovered in the Minster graveyard in a state of intoxication ...

Mary: When he should have been in church, setting a fine example to his tenants.

Edward: And it was (*mouthing*) Sir Michael Hanham himself! (*All tut tut!*) And you really went gunning for him, didn't you, Father?

William: Because he contravened one of the Dean's Court laws made by his family. I had him up for it – and he received a severe reprimand! And learnt his lesson, oh yes! That's the kind of man I am!

Edward: Not that we have anything against a little tippie now and again, do we, Father? God sent us the grape and the apple, as well as the hops.

Mary: But we mustn't forget the Good Book and its Laws ...and, indeed, why we let our other son, Henry, take the cloth – and now with his own parish in Christchurch, and still in his twenties.

Projected image of Henry, preaching in the pulpit.

William: Very devout, is our Henry.

Edward: Just a deuced shame about his backward-looking ideas!

Mary: Edward! Please do not criticise your dear brother Henry in public.

Edward: But, Mother, the man's a fool!

William: Edward, have you been at the sherry?

Charles: Edward's right, Father! He has no understanding of progress!

Mary: Charles, I will not have a repeat of this nonsense! Do you wish to send me to an early grave?

William (*changing the subject*): Do as you mother says, boys. Besides, Henry has a wonderful voice on him! Finest tenor for miles around!

Mary: Like an angel, the Rector at the Minster used to say!

Mocking reactions from Edward and Charles.

- Mary: Let us change the subject, dear. Pray, tell our guests about your important work at Kingston Lacy!
- William: Oh, I could tell you a few tales about the squire up there – Mr William John Bankes. Even though he has been absent from these shores for some time.
- House 2 (*looking in the book*): Aiding the Duke of Wellington in the Peninsular War.
- William: He keeps sending ancient bits of stone over from Egypt! The catatytcs, I believe!
- House 2 (*looking in the book*): *Caryatids*! Statues of women which act as pillars.
- Edward: Mr William John Bankes is a very learned gentleman and adventurer with ugly rumours following him about.
- House 2: Rumours? Rumours? Or facts?
- William: Don't believe a word of them myself! Lies spread by jealous troublemakers! Just like the rabble-rousers stirring up discontent in the countryside as we speak! "Times are hard" they whine. Well, not if you're prepared to work hard, I say! We Castlemans are known for our strength of steadfast character and honesty, isn't that right, boys?
- Edward: That's right, Father. It's not for us to question the wealth of the landowners. That's why we Castlemans have always stood by the Bankes and the Hanhams.
- Mary: And why we've instilled in you boys the importance of a good education. Without which one is bereft. Edward is extremely highly regarded in Wimborne like his father before him.
- Ann: As will his future son, God willing.
- Mary: And Charles, forging ahead with such dreams.
- Charles: More than that, Mother dear. I hear the hiss of steam! The rhythm of steel on steel ... I feel the heat of the furnace as the engine plunges through forests and fields ... to Wimborne.
- Florence: And yet his ecclesiastical brother Henry talks of monsters.
- House 2: Florence Rowe, wife of Gerald Rowe, a senior governor of the Workhouse and close friend of the Castlemans.

Ann: Just as he does about the new farm machines. Now the servants talk of them in fearful tones.

Song. Projected image of threshing machine.

William: When, in fact, ladies and gentlemen, these new threshing machines will change the condition of the labouring poor forever. Just look at this wondrous invention. No more back-breaking labour, no more winnowing, no more gleaning. My dear late father would have given an eye for one of these on his farm at Hinton St Mary!

Edward: And they will increase the production of corn sevenfold. Bringing vastly increased profits to the landowners, the small farmers, the suppliers, the distributors.

William: Yes, yes, this is indeed a good time for all upstanding residents of Wimborne Minster! *(Raises his glass)* Your very good health! TO THE FUTURE!

All: To the future.

The family raise their glasses.

With a gesture from House 2, the Castlemans freeze and the tone changes. Images, sound, music.

House 2: And Molly, silent servant to this house, to this family. What if we gave you a voice, could say what you never said back then. What would you say, Molly? What would you say?

Molly, *the servant (holding a candle at the window)*: A good time for the poor? Listen to them singing in the Workhouse. Just across the garden. Sniff. Go on. And you'll maybe smell the boiled cabbage and maybe the drains. Look how Ma'am always keeps her handkerchief in her fist.

House 2: Molly who was servant here from the start, and before that in The Dormers, and before that up at the big house, Dean's Court. A Witchampton girl.

Molly: With my parents, my sister and me in one room I had to go into service. Now my little niece, Alice, is coming here to join me. Same reason. Our story doesn't change so fast as the Castlemans'. Their profits go up but the labourers' wages go down – seven shillings a week now round here. *(Sotto voce)* But there's a stirring in the air tonight as the poor step out of their hovels. Listen!

She moves to the window.

Projected images on the shutters. Men running with flaming torches, muddied faces, running wild and free. SFX: Running feet, whispering voices.

Like a herd of stallions ...sparks flying from their hooves ...At last! The men from the north. From Handley. And Amos, my nephew. There are letters to be delivered tonight. They've stopped at the Workhouse to visit Emma and Cousin Frances (*turns, back, a change in tone*) before coming here. This is not the first grand house they have visited. Nor will it be the last ...

SFX – loud thud as if from outside which awakens the tableau.

Molly goes to answer door.

Family unfreezes.

Mary: What is that dreadful noise, dear?

William: Perhaps the mummers, come to perform St George and the Dragon for Christmas-tide!

Edward: Of course, every year we let them in to play. We give them charity.

Ann: Christmas cheer.

Charles: Quaint old country customs!

Family freezes.

The group of Mummers enter and perform for the Castleman family.



Scene 3

The Swing Riots – The Mummers' Play

Lead Mummer: Make room! Make room, my gallants all,
And give us space to rhyme.
We've come to show St George's play
Upon this Christmas time.
For here am I, old Father Christmas,
And welcome in or welcome not,
I hope old Father Christmas,
He'll never be forgot.
For though I've only a short time here to stay,
I will show you mirth, and merriment
Before I go away.
For in this room
There shall be shown
The most dreadfulest battle
That ever was known.

Turkish Knight Mummer: In comes I, the Turkish Knight,
Just come from Turkeyland to fight.
The valiant soldier I do not fear,
No matter what sharp sword he bear.
If his head be made of brass,
Or his belly lined with steel,
From my shoulder to my knuckle-bone
That's the place to feel.
I'll cook his wings,
He shall not fly,
I'll cut him down,
Or else I'll die.
So, I comey here to finds Saint George.
Huh! That noble man of courage bold!
If his blood run hot,
I'll quickly make it cold.

Saint George Mummer: In comes I, Saint George! (*cheer from crowd and family*)
A valiant man with naked sword and shield in hand
It was I that fought the fiery dragon
And brought him to the slaughter
And by these means did win

The King of Egypt's daughter.
Now hold on, hold on, my gentlemen,
Thy talk is very bold
Thou talkest like those other gentlemen
Of whom I have told.
I'll bring thee to thy bended knee
And bleeding I will leave thee.
So if thy be a Turkish Knight,
Draw thy sword,
Let's fight!

Battle sequence follows. It ends with the Turkish Knight slain.

Turkish Knight Mummer: Groan!

Lead Mummer: Saint George, Saint George,
What hast thou gone and done?
Thou's cut this knight down
Just like the setting sun.

Saint George Mummer: He gave me first challenge,
Why should I give the eye?
Draw thy sword and fight, said I.
Or, pull out they purse and PAY!

Saint George Mummer (*pointing his sword at Edward Castleman*): If you do not meet our
demands, we'll burn your ricks, destroy your farms!

Lead Mummer: And here's a letter for you, Mr Castleman!

*He hands a letter to Edward. The Mummers leave.
Edward Castleman takes the letter and reads it. Charles joins him.*

Charles: Who's it from, Edward?

Family freezes.

House 2 (*taking and reading the letter*): "Edward Castleman,
This is to acquaint you that if Bankes' threshing machines at Kingston Lacy
are not destroyed directly, we shall commence our labours. For you are an
inhuman monster and we will dash out your brains. Bankes and your sett
ought to be sent to Hell. Revenge for thee is on the wing.
From the determined Captain Swing."

House 2 stops reading the letter and puts it in Edward's hand.

House 2: Revenge for thee is on the wing ...

Music starts: Chords of Captain Swing song.

Edward (*after a long pause*): Captain Swing?

William: Who on earth is Captain Swing?

Captain Swing Song.

William: Edward, summon the magistrates!

Edward: Yes, Father. Damnable blackguards!

Charles: Ignorance is what holds man in servitude.

*Edward and Charles exit. William stays to protect the women. Family freezes.
SFX: Voice giving factual information about the riots.*

Molly: There was no fire that night.

House 2: Not here.

Molly: But the dragoons from Dorchester gave chase and soon the ringleaders were caught and sent to Van Dieman's Land.

House 2 (*looking in the book*): The other side of the world. Tasmania.

Molly: But the Grim Reaper did cast his shadow over this house that night. (*She walks to Ann*) Ann Castleman was so shook up she gave birth early to her son and heir, named William, after his grandfather. (*She presents Ann with a baby*)

House 2: But little William was always a sickly infant. At the age of four, he caught a fever and was taken away. (*House 2 takes the baby away*)

Molly: Broke his grandparents' hearts, they say. Shortly after that the old master and mistress, William and Mary, both went to join him, all within eight years of those Handley torches' visit to Allendale that December night.

House 2: All harvested, if not by a threshing machine, then by a scythe.

Molly: Ever since then, Ann Castleman was different. Poor Ann, never the same again.

Stillness.

House 2: Someone is coming ...



Scene 4
The Twentieth Century, The 1940s
The Schoolroom

Susie enters, looking younger than before.

Susie: Now, girls, what do we do when a member of staff enters the room? We stand and we say ... *Good Morning Miss Funnell*. So ... all together ...

All: Good morning Miss Funnell.

Susie: Now I'm afraid I must interrupt your lesson. I need your undivided attention. I said *undivided*, Victoria. Now, follow on.

Susie takes the audience to another room where a Christmas performance is being rehearsed.

House 4: Susie Funnell – why, you look so young. Young, but not without your troubles.

Kathryn: Miss, Miss, look at this. We have worked the whole thing out.

Brittany: We know who is going to be who.

Emily: ‘*Whom*’ – Miss Funnell tells us it’s supposed to be ‘*Who is going to be whom.*’

Lily (*Shannon*): We have checked that all the costumes are in the box.

House 4: Perhaps this, when you look back at a long life, may have been the hardest day you faced.

Kathryn: We need some angel wings.

Brittany: I am the angel – ‘Mary, do not be afraid for I bring you good news’.

Emily: And I am one of the Three Kings – ‘We should follow yonder star’. I have made my crown and I was going to make something to be the Myrrh, but I don’t know what Myrrh looks like.

- Kathryn: I am the Inn-Keeper – ‘I am ever so sorry, we are full as you can see. The only space we have is our poor stable out the back. It is hardly a place for a child to be brought into this world, but I have nothing left to offer!’
- House 4: How do you tell these poor girls – your young ladies?
- Lily: And I am the lamb – ‘Baah!’
- Susie: Very nice, Lily.
- Lily: Miss Funnell, do you think I could have some more to say?
- Susie: Lily, please listen to me.
- Lily: I do say ‘Baah!’ a number of times, but it is always just that, just ‘Baah!’.
- Susie: Please, girls, you cannot imagine how hard this is for me.
- Lily: I just want to say more than ‘Baah!’.
- Susie: Not that, Lily, not that. You see. Oh, this is so hard - I have to inform you, reluctantly, that it is no longer possible for the school’s Christmas Concert to be performed ...
- Kathryn: Oh Miss!
- Susie (*tenderly*): Please do not interrupt me!
- Brittany: But we were so looking forward to it, Miss Funnell.
- Emily: That’s just not fair, Miss Funnell. We’ve worked so hard.
- Susie: I understand your sense of disappointment ... as you know this school prides itself on its instruction in the Arts ... music, dance ...
- Kathryn: We’ve learnt all the words, Miss Funnell. We’ve been practising whenever we have no lessons.
- Brittany: Yes, Miss, and we’ve been making all the props in our lunchtimes!
- Susie: Do not proceed with these untimely remonstrations, girls.
- Lily: But why, Miss Funnell?
- Susie: Sometimes there is no simple answer to a simple question, dear.
- Brittany: But why, Miss Funnell?

Susie: Precisely.

Kathryn: But you always tell us that *knowledge is the answer to everything*, Miss Funnell.

Brittany: Like Socrates, Miss.

Susie: And what does Socrates tell us, girls?

Kathryn: “Learning makes the soul ready for life’s journey.” Remember, Miss?

Brittany: You made us copy it down only yesterday, Miss.

Emily: I wrote it out on a piece of paper and put it above my desk, Miss. Socrates was very clever.

Susie: He was indeed and very correct in his observation. But in certain cases ... in this particular case ... life does not proceed as we anticipate ... it is beyond our control ... you see ... (*tearful*)

Lily (*whispering*): What’s wrong with her?

Brittany: Never seen her like this before.

Kathryn (*aloud*): Are you feeling ill, Miss Funnell?

Pause.

House 4: Be strong, Susie Funnell.

Susie (*gathering herself together*): I am afraid, girls, that as from tomorrow, the school will have to close. And it seems, girls, that it will not just be for a short time, but perhaps for ... Believe me, this is a decision taken most reluctantly ...

Door opens. Parent enters angrily.

Kathryn: Lily, it’s your father!

Emily: What’s he doing here?

Lily: I must be in trouble!

Mr Yates: WHERE IS SHE? Where’s my Lily? I won’t have her in this cesspit a minute longer!

Kathryn: What's a cesspit?

Susie: Mr Yates? Please have some decorum!

Mr Yates: Decorum? It's a disgrace! Your prospectus boasts about excellent sanitation – we give you our hard-earned money in good faith and you cannot even keep the place free of disease!

Brittany: Disease?

Lily: What disease?

Kathryn: Actually, I don't feel very well.

Emily: I had a headache last night.

Lily: I feel fine.

Susie: Mr Yates, you are scaring the girls.

Mr Yates: They are right to be scared! This place is a joke! Only I'm not laughing! And nor are the other parents queuing to see you outside.

Susie: Other parents?

Mr Yates: And make no mistake – I want all my money back – every penny. And I shall tell all the other parents to do the same. Now tell me where you've hidden my Lily and I'll be off. I don't want to catch any diseases. Ah, Lily! Come with me now! We're getting you out of here.

Lily: So I won't even say 'Baah!'?

Susie: Not this year, Lily. I'm sorry.

Mr Yates leaves with Lily.

All the girls say their goodbyes.

House 4 walks up to Susie and puts on her 'older' clothes.

House 4: Ah, Miss Funnell. What could you do against *Corynebacterium Diphtheria*? A sanatorium of girls with swollen lymph glands and high fevers overlooking the Minster.

House 4 passes Susie the copy of Enquire Within.

Susie: I had no choice. The inspectors arrived and the school was closed. All that work, all that learning. Ruined - all gone.

Susie looks at book Enquire Within. She packs a case.

Susie: *Enquire Within Upon Everything. (she packs book away)* This was left in a cupboard. We did Enquire, we all did, every day.

House 4 opens the door for Susie to exit.

House 4: In through one door and out another, William, Mary, Charles, Edward, Martha, Susie, Lily Yates, through days of mourning and celebration, boredom, cold, the sun pouring onto the carpet, and every day the chimes of the Quarterjack, sound without fail ...

House 3: You see what I have seen, have witnessed over the years? Youthful vitality and energy matched only by the waste of young life ...

House 4: So much waste, such sadness, such sickness. The Diphtheria outbreak and so much else that is gone for good. Polio, consumption, typhus, cholera – and of course the scandal of the smallpox epidemic.

House 3: But be not afeard, there is nothing left to catch but the voices and the echoes.

House 3 opens the door for Mrs Betty Frampton to enter.



Scene 5
In the Upstairs Drawing Room, 1839

House 3: Mrs Betty Frampton. New Housekeeper. A breath of fresh air. That's what this place needed just then. After poor Molly had died from Smallpox.

Mrs Frampton: Don't mind me, Ma'am. I just need to polish these few bits here.

Projected image: Letter in The Times.

House 3: 1839, and another letter brought trouble for the Castlemans. A very public letter about the Workhouse and Mr Edward was at the very centre of it. In spite of the fact that Mr Gerald Rowe, the Governor of the Workhouse, was his good friend. Tut! Tut! Such a to-do! An anonymous letter in none other than The Times newspaper ...

Ann: Mrs Frampton! Why is that new nursery maid ...

Mrs F: Maisy, Ma'am?

Ann: ... why is she pushing baby Edith around the grounds?

Mrs F: Taking the air, Ma'am ...

Ann: Did you instruct her to do so?

Mrs F: I think it was a whim on her part ... (*Doorbell rings.*)

Ann: Go and reprimand her most severely. Doesn't she know there's been another case of smallpox in the Workhouse? And I don't understand why you had to take on another of their hopeless creatures! Supposing she's infected!

Mrs F: She's a good clean girl, Ma'am. We had Mr Place ...

House 3: ... the Workhouse surgeon ...

Ann: Yes, I know Mr Place.

Mrs F: ... here only last night, wasn't he, Ma'am? Anyway, that nice Mr Place gave young Maisy a thorough checking over.

Martha enters.

Martha: Excuse me, Ma'am. Mrs Rowe is here to see you.

Ann: I cannot see her now.

Martha: With respect, Ma'am. She seems very agitated, Ma'am.

Ann: Oh, very well, show her in. But Martha ...

Martha: Yes, Ma'am?

Ann: Be sure to come back in five minutes and tell me that Cook needs to discuss the luncheon menu with me.

Martha: But with respect, Ma'am, you've already discussed the luncheon menu with Cook.

Ann (*sarcastically*): With respect indeed! I know we have discussed it, you fool, but Mrs Rowe does not.

Martha: I see, Ma'am.

Ann: Bring her in. And what are you standing about for, Mrs Frampton? By now the nursery maid will be gossiping with the Workhouse inmates, breathing their noxious germs over baby Edith.

Mrs F: Oh, rest assured, Ma'am, she wouldn't do that, not after all my instruction. But I'm on my way to sort the matter out, Ma'am. Oh, and afterwards, shall I see if Miss Emily has finished her piano lesson, Ma'am?

Ann: Very well.

Martha reappears with Mrs Florence Rowe as Mrs Frampton exits.

Martha: Mrs Rowe, Ma'am. (*She withdraws*)

Florence (*Weepy. Clutching a copy of The Times newsletter*): Oh Ann! Have you seen this? I don't know what to do!

Ann: Be calm, Florence. Do sit down.

Florence (*shows her the newspaper as she sits*): As my oldest friend, I just had to speak with you about it. Such a cruel and spiteful letter! After all the hard work Gerald has put into improving the Workhouse. Who could have written such a wicked letter, Ann?

Ann: Florence, you must not become so overwrought about matters which we women have little control. I am sure Gerald and Edward will sort the matter out.

Florence: Edward? How is he involved? Gerald has only just found out about this dreadful letter!

Ann: It is merely a letter expressing concerns about the conditions in the Workhouse. It was only a matter of time before the rest of society learnt of them.

Florence: You sound as if you agree with the foul sentiments expressed, Ann! You know how hard Gerald and the other guardians have worked to accommodate so many more people ... of course, there have been problems – but this (*indicates letter*) accuses Gerald of mismanagement. It could ruin his reputation. And you still have not told me how Edward is involved in this matter?

Ann (*beginning to lose patience*): I am sorry, Florence, but surely you realise how worried we have all been since the outbreaks of smallpox! After all, it is we who have to live next door to the Workhouse, not you! Your house is a safe distance away.

Florence (*trying to interrupt*): But ...

Ann: Edward says it is the dirty habits of the poor there that is behind the disease, allowing heaps of dirt and filth to accumulate!

Florence: Exactly! So it is not Gerald's fault!

Ann: But it is surely up to the guardians to deal with the problem? To be candid, Florence, I hope this letter will bring about the necessary and overdue reforms that may allow me once again to open my windows in summer and allow my children to take the air without fear of contagion. Not to mention without breathing the stench of poverty!

She takes a pinch of smelling salts. There is a knock on the door. Martha appears, as ordered.

Martha: Er ... Ma'am ... Cook wishes to speak to you about dinner ... I mean about luncheon ...

Ann: Thank you, Martha. (*She stands as if to show Florence out*)

Florence (*pause, looking suspicious*): Ann Castleman, I am not leaving this house until you tell me how you and Edward are involved in this matter.

Ann: Very well. Last evening during dinner we had an unexpected visitor, the surgeon from the Workhouse.

Florence: George Place! But why? ... *(Pause. She is incredulous)* Are you telling me that it was he who wrote this wicked letter to The Times?

Ann: I am.

Florence: But what did he want with your Edward?

Ann: Edward has agreed to be Mr Place's legal advisor in case of any action against him in response to the letter. Place is afraid the guardians will cry libel in order to protect themselves.

Florence: And so I should think! Why, the wily treacherous upstart! And as for Edward, how could he think of betraying our friendship by agreeing to help this troublemaker?

Ann: Remember, we have already lost our son and heir through sickness. We do not wish to lose our daughters too.

Florence: And you dare to blame Gerald for a tragic act of God? Really, Ann! You insult my intelligence and our friendship. I shall not stay any longer in this dreadful house. *(Goes to the door, which Mrs Frampton opens. Turns back to face Ann)* Words fail me! (

Florence leaves. Ann stares out of the window.

Mrs F: The poor mistress.

Martha: Her little boy gone and now her best friend turned against her.

Mrs F: Is that progress. I wonder? *(Physically helps Ann off stage)* You and I, Martha, need to make ourselves indispensable to her in this hour of need. We need to console the poor thing.

Martha; As we always have. To her and Master Edward.

Mrs F: And Charles.

Martha: He's your favourite, isn't he? I see it.

Mrs F: Always rushing around trying to outdo his brother. Nobody thought he could possibly surpass Master Edward, apart from myself. I always had faith in him.

Martha: Do you think he'll do it?

Mrs F: He'll do it.

Martha: It'll be such a commotion!

Mrs F: A locomotion!

Martha: There'll be such celebrations!

Mrs F: Imagine!! The coming of the trains to Wimborne.

House 3: *Still* Betty, *silent* Martha. Someone is coming ... is coming back ...or is still here, always here.

Mrs Frampton freezes as Susie walks in.



Scene 6
The Council Offices, June 1953

Susie: The trains ...? There was something about trains in here. I'm sure there was, so much about so much ... how to dance, English dialects, dressmaking, embroidery, medical conditions ... *(Pause. She looks around and goes to the window)* That's where the parents arrived from the station to collect their girls who stood there and waved ...

House 3: But you are lost, Susie, poor Susie Funnell, the trains are not arriving today. There is no school today, today the Council run this place ...

Joyce Holder, Council employee, calls from offstage.

Joyce: Miss Funnell, Miss Funnell?

House 3: And you have strayed.

Joyce: Are you there?

Joyce enters with Miss Funnell's Rates book.

Joyce: Excuse me. *(Pause)* Miss Funnell? *(Pause. Susie lost in reverie, tearful)* Miss Funnell? Are you feeling alright? Come on, come with me ...

She takes everyone to another room.

Joyce *(to Susie)*: Here have a chair. Sit down a moment.

House 2: Bless you, Joyce Holder, employee of the Wimborne Urban district Council. How kind you are.

Susie *(confused, thinks she is addressing a pupil)*: You will have to leave, dear. The school is closed - all gone now ...

Joyce: I've brought your Rates Book, Miss Funnell. You left it in the downstairs office. We've been looking for you all over the building. Here. *(Gives her book)* All ship shape and Bristol fashion, as we used to say in the WRENS. *(Pause. Susie is confused)* In the War, Miss Funnell. I was in the Navy, down in Weymouth.

- Susie: Who are you? Which class are you in? I don't recall your face, girl.
- Joyce: I'm Joyce Holder. I didn't come to your school, Miss Funnell. I went to the Minster School and then St John's. But I work here in the Ratings Office downstairs - where you were earlier today – by the big bookshelf?
- Susie: But you just said you were in the Navy.
- Joyce: During the War years. *(Pause)* It's 1953, Miss Funnell.
- House 2: Your past, their present.
- Susie: Oh dear. How silly of me. Do forgive me.
- Joyce: Don't worry.
- Susie *(gathering herself together)*: I mistook you for one of my pupils. I used to teach here. Long ago.
- House 2: Long ago.
- Joyce: Yes. The other girls were saying downstairs. It must be strange, coming back, now it's the Council Offices.
- Susie: Yes. So many changes. Yes. *(Pause)*
- Joyce: Would you like me to show you downstairs, Miss Funnell? When you're ready.
- Susie: Thank you. *(Looks around once more)*
- Joyce: It's just that we're closing early – what with the Coronation. Are you going to listen on the wireless?
- Susie: I ... don't know ... Princess Elizabeth?
- Joyce: Soon to be Queen Elizabeth. A new age!
- Susie: Yes.
- Joyce: I'm travelling up tomorrow to stay with my friend from the WRENS, Audrey. She lives in London now. And we'll watch it all on her new television set. Her family have bought one especially! We'll see the great procession from Buckingham Palace, all the crowds down the Mall ... everything! Even the crowning inside the Abbey!
- Susie: Really?

Joyce: I can't wait! And Audrey says afterwards we'll watch all these other exciting programmes, you know. Cowboys and Indians, Mantovani, American serials ... all in the corner of your own room!

Susie: Enquire Within Upon Everything!

Joyce: Beg pardon, Miss Funnell?

Susie: A new Elizabethan age.

Door opens. Mr Marshall, another Council employee, enters, a bit severe.

House 2: And Mr Marshall – perhaps not so kind?

Mr Marshall: Ah! Here you are, Miss Holder. Driving poor Miss Funnell to distraction, I shouldn't wonder, with your idle chatter!

Susie: Oh no. Miss Holder is teaching me all about Mr Baird's wonderful invention.

Joyce: The television, Mr Marshall!

Mr Marshall: I am aware of that fact, Miss Holder, fuddy-duddy as I am. I am, however, of the opinion that we have all managed perfectly satisfactorily with the wireless until now.

Joyce: They say we'll even have them in Wimborne Minster soon.

Mr Marshall: Heaven help us! How will I ever get you to do your work then, Miss Holder?

Susie: Ah, but all things must change. The universe itself is constantly altering its state.

Mr Marshall (*changing subject to get her out of house*): Well, I'm sure you know best, Miss Funnell, being as you were a teacher and so on.

Susie: Progress.

Mr Marshall: That's as may be, but I'm afraid we're about to close the offices, so Miss Holder will escort you to the door. Have you got your Rates Book?

They exit.



Scene 7
Railway Day, 1847

House 2: Progress indeed, Susie. The only constant is change, such have I learned.
People learn – houses learn.

Emily (*passing the audience, calling*): I can still see smoke in the sky, Mother!

House 2: Emily Castleman. Now aged 20. Impressionable. Excited. (*to the audience*)
Follow, be not afeard, it is only a steam Locomotive.

The audience move to the Reception Room.

Emily: Look, Edith!

House 4: Edith Castleman. Aged 12. A little shy.

Edith: Yes, I see it too!

Emily: Such an exciting day! I loved it all! The whoosh, whooshing of the steam! All
the crowds in their finest attire! Cheering and shouting! And Uncle Charles
so proud in his new coat! I even loved the smell of the fumes!

Ann: Where on earth can they be? They were supposed to be here two hours ago!

Edith: I can't wait to see Uncle Charles!

Mrs F: I'm sure they'll be here very soon, Ma'am.

Ann: But the champagne will be warm!

Emily: Don't fret, Mama. It will only bring on your headache.

Edith: Why are you not happy, Mama?

Mrs F: I'll see if there's any more ice, shall I, Ma'am?

Alice, the servant, enters.

Ann: Well?

Alice: They're on their way, Ma'am!

Emily: About time.

Edith: I shall have to have words with Uncle Charles.

Ann: Edward promised back at the new station they'd come straight here! Where can they have been?

Mrs F: Oh, you know what gentlemen are, Ma'am. *(to Alice)* Fetch some more ice, Alice! For the champagne.

House 4: Too late! Someone is coming.

The doors burst open and Charles Castleman is carried in triumphantly by a band of male supporters. They are drunk and celebrating. As they enter, they pretend to be a steam train, chuffing around the room.

Edward: Well done, Charles, old man!

Gentleman 2: You've done it!

Gentleman 3: Progress!

Gentleman 4: At last Wimborne's on the map!

Gentleman 5: And steaming ahead!

All *(laughing)*: Good one! Yes, yes! Steaming!

Charles: How about some bubbly! Champagne!

Edward: Yes, come on, Mrs Frampton! We're thirsty!

Gentleman 2: Yes, it's a jolly long way from The Dormers, y'know! I'm parched!

Edward: Let's have a smile, my dear! This is a happy day for the Castleman family!

Charles: And Allendale House!

House 4: Hear! Hear!

Gentleman 2: And for Wimborne!

General laughter and cheering as champagne is distributed.

Edward (*raising glass*): To the Castleman Corkscrew! To my brother, Charles Castleman, without whose vision ... (*All Oooh!*) ... and perspicacity (*All Oooh!*) ... and sheer bloody-minded obstinacy ... (*All laugh*)

Charles: Steady on, Edward!

Edward: It would never have happened! 'Cos, you know, he always was an awkward...

Gentleman 3: Get on with it, Eddie!

Edward: Yes, yes ... To Charles!

All: To Charlie! (*All drink toast*)

Emily: Well done, Uncle Charles!

All freeze.

Gentleman 3 (*under breath*): Champagne's a bit warm ...

Gentleman 4: Just look at Mrs Castleman – miserable as sin! Would have thought she could manage to serve chilled champagne!

Gentleman 5 (*under breath*): Don't bother with the canapés, old chap ...Yuk! Think they must have stolen them from the Workhouse!

Freeze. Servants speak.

Mrs F: Just look at Master Charles! What a gent!

Alice: Fancy all them high and mighty folk in their cups! Ma'am don't look none too happy!

Mrs F: As per usual!

All unfreeze.

Gentleman 2: Do us your speech again, Charles!

Edward: Yes, do it for Ann!

Emily: Yes please, Uncle Charles!

Ann: I was present, dear, if you recall ... before I had to return to prepare the Reception ...

All: Speech! Speech! Let's hear it again!

Emily: Do it for me, Uncle Charles!

Edith: And me!

Charles: Oh, very well. If you insist!

Ann (*to Emily*): Steady yourself, Emily. Remember you are supposed to be a young lady.

All: Hip! Hip! HURRAY!

Charles (*climbs onto chair and raises glass*): On behalf of the Board of the South Western Shareholders it gives me great pleasure to officially open the westward line. The railway has arrived in Wimborne at last!

All: Hurray! Choo-choo! (*laughter*)

Charles: The future is steam! We have overcome all the obstacles, convinced those who poured scorn, those who cast doubt ...

Edward: Miserable old priest! Bet he's hiding in the pulpit! (*mimicking vicar*) Oh Lord, protect us from this unnatural monster, this embodiment of Satan! (*All laugh*)

Charles: ... those who resisted change ... now will see we were right! And the Great Western Company, the losers (*All respond*) must concede that the best team won in the end! (*All: Hear! Hear!*) Let us express our gratitude for the genius of our industrious and able friend, Captain Moorson, the finest engineer in the land. (*All cheer*)

Alice: Is that the one who can't keep his hands to himself?

Mrs F: That's the one!

Charles: This day will go down in the annals of Wimborne's history ... no longer a sleepy country town, but an artery beating fast with the blood of progress, heading westwards!

Gentleman 2: Well said!

Gentleman 4: The man's a poet!

Charles: Look around you ... all are here ... the landed gentry, the business men, all united in this endeavour ... I thank you for your confidence and support through the many years it has taken to bring our scheme to fruition. We are all here to gain ... by the train!

All: Gain by the train! Yes, yes!

Charles: New manures for the farmers and new products for our shops. Profits and Progress! Speed and Success!

All drink again and give glasses to the servants.

Charles: Remember, my friends – only four hours to London!

All cheer and start forming a train-type conga, moving about the room.

Charles: London to Winchester!

All: Choo-choo!

Charles: Winchester to Southampton!

All: Chuff-chuff!

Charles: Southampton to West Moors!

All: Choo-choo!

Charles: West Moors to Wimborne!

All: Wimborne! Hurray!

All chuff off as train, in state of intoxication.

Ann: Edward – a word! If you please!

Edward: But we're off to the Dolphin, my dear! Can't keep old Harold waiting!

Ann: It will only take a moment, Edward. *(to servants)* Clear away! *(they start to clear away)* Edward, you promised me the guests would return here for drinks immediately the ceremony at the station was concluded!

Edward: Did I? I really don't remember!

Ann: I arranged with the servants for the champagne to be chilled, the canapés served, to the agreed time, Edward. And yet you, your brother and your companions remain carousing in The Dormers for two whole hours! You made me a laughing stock!

Edward: No, dear.

Ann: I heard them mocking me!

Edward: No, no ... I assure you ...

Ann: It's Charles, isn't it? He has no respect for me! He persuaded you!

Door opens. Charles returns.

Charles: Did someone call? Come, Edward! We are all waiting for you in the cold! Hurry up, man!

Edward: Really, Ann, this is not the time or place ...

Ann: I have to speak out, Edward!

Edward: Not in front of the servants, dear!

Charles: Ann, let Edward be free! Don't be such an old hen! Hurry up, Edward!

He makes clucking sound to tease Edward. Charles exits.

Edward: Coming, Charles! *(to Ann)* You are spoiling Charles' great day, Ann!

Ann: Why must he live here in *our house*, Edward? I married *you* not *your brother*.

Edward: The house belongs to the Castleman *family*, Ann. You know that.

Edward exits. Sounds off.

House 4: Belongs to ...? Belonged to ...One never truly owns a house, I fear, merely keeps it in trust for future generations. For a house can outlive a man, a family.

Servants start to clear way. Mrs Frampton pours herself a glass of champagne.

Mrs F: Well, did you hear such a to-do? *(tastes drink)* Mmm! 'Tis a bit warm. But what a way to speak to Master Charles – and on his special day!

Alice: I keep thinking about those eerie, whistling noises we heard! Like a monster, the Reverend said. And the sky all black with smoke.

Mrs F: Myself, I can't wait to travel up to London! To the theatre, maybe. Just imagine! Just think, Alice, you'll be able to visit your sister in Dorchester soon in no time – no more long cart rides. An hour and you'll be there!

Alice: I don't like the sound of it!

Enquire Within 2: House, at Allendale House 2007

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Mrs F: Well, I reckon Master Charles is right. Times are going to change hereabouts in Wimborne. For the good.

Alice: Change? I'm not so sure. As far as I can see there's always been big houses and there'll always be Workhouses – some things don't change.

Mrs F: But now, Alice, there'll always be a railway station in Wimborne!

Projected images: Railways

SFX: Steam, train

Susie Funnell enters, looking in her book.

Susie: Yes, here it is. I knew there was something in here about the railways – such a useful book.

She looks up and for a moment we can tell that she and Mrs Frampton can see each other. A still moment when they both try to process this.

They freeze.

House 4 walks between them.



Scene 8: Epilogue On the Stairs

House 4 (looking at Mrs Frampton): “There will always be a railway station in Wimborne”?
Of course, Mrs Frampton, servant to the Castlemans, how could you know what lay ahead? Or you, Miss Funnell, Certified Teacher, how could you know that you would one day swap your school books for your Rates Book in this place? One day that was then the future, is now the past.

A beat and all cast (except the four House characters) become part of a closing chorus as cast, not characters, back on the stairs.

Shannon: The train arrived in 1847.

Brittany: The train left in 1967.

Emily: But when a house is left, it's never for the last time.

Kathryn: When Miss Susie Funnell went out one door, Wimborne Urban District Council came in another, following in her footsteps.

Yolanda: You can never know all there is to know about a house.

House 1: Of what is a house made, really made
Bricks and mortars to be true, no argument
And timber and plaster and glass and iron
But the whole story? No.

Tony: Up the stairs, and down the hall, went the Castlemans, went Molly and Martha, Alice and Lily, Mrs Frampton and Florence.

All: All gone.

Jackie: Just echoes and whispers left.

House 4: Always with us.

Paul: The only constant is change – the change continues still ...

Chris: There is only one kind of Wimborne that resists change ... When it's midday in London, it's still 1953 in Wimborne Model Town.

House 2: You pass through one door
And out another and leave behind
A trace in every room –
All the days and nights
All the men and women

John: When the young man with the inquisitive mind in Colehill sat down to write a computer code which was to be free of charge to all, it was to be called:

All: 'Enquire'.

Clare: But now is known as:

All: 'The World Wide Web'.

Ellie: And the world changed again ...

All: Progress.

House 3: And one day, when the history of this place is told again, by those yet to come.

Dave: They will talk of all it has been and all it has seen, the knight who stood night-guard and was so ill-used – with lager in hand and traffic-cone helmet.

Katrina: The grand opening at the turn of the new century. The grand closing as the dry rot ate at this place from the ground up. The grand re-opening.

House 4: And one day some will say:

All: Once ... an entertainment was staged.

Tracie: An evening of everything and nothing.

Tuppy: Of smoke and mirrors.

Tracie: Of recollections and memories.

Tuppy: Of pretence and truth.

House 1: And when that day comes, you will not be watching the story, you will be the story. You will be joining the legion of echoes and whispers, always with us. Be not afeard, for of this, of us, is a house really made.

The End
(All bow)