

Courtesy of "Spankstatement"

THEATRE

THE LITTLE HUT

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Thanks to [Richard Windsor](#) we now have a much better quality still of Roland Culver spanking Anne Vernon in a stage production of *The Little Hut* from 1953. And thanks to Harry for writing this fascinatingly detailed history of the play and its' notorious scene of Desert Island Discipline!

Originally a French farce, *The Little Hut* tells the story of a love triangle that develops when Susan is shipwrecked on a desert island with her husband Philip and his best friend Henry, who also happens to be her long-term lover. The two men solve the obvious problem by sleeping with her for alternate weeks. In their "off" weeks they will sleep alone...in the little hut.

The spanking in *The Little Hut* was added by Nancy Mitford for the English translation; it isn't in the 1947 French script by Andre Roussin. It happens early in the second act when Susan teases her estranged husband Philip by calling him to the telephone – except of course there is no telephone on a desert island...

SUSAN: Now you're in a bait.

PHILIP: I'm not in a bait at all, I'm very angry indeed.

SUSAN: Temper-temper.

PHILIP: And you must be punished.

SUSAN: Catch me first.

(They dodge around the mast – he catches her and pretends to slap her bottom.)

SUSAN: Ow! Mercy! (Shrieks) Help – murder

(Enter Henry)

HENRY: What – oh no, it's too much.

(Henry exits)

SUSAN: You're really hurting.

PHILIP: Yes, I mean to.

That is from the original version, which I have seen in typescript. The scene developed in rehearsal, so that the published version is more precise about the stage action:

He puts her across his knee with her head upstage and counts out twelve slaps. What is especially remarkable is that he lifts her skirt and spanks her on her black lace panties – and this was in 1950!

The first production was directed by the legendary theatre director Peter Brook. It opened at the Edinburgh Lyceum in July 1950 and toured before opening in London. (There had been a plan to open it at the London Globe in June, but this fell through.) Robert Morley played Philip and Henry was David Tomlinson (the father in Mary Poppins. It was Morley who suggested American actress Joan Tetzl for the part of Susan.

There were some cast changes during the run: Tetzl was understudied by Doris Duke, who appeared on occasion, and Joyce Redman took over for a month to allow Tetzl a holiday. Likewise, Robert Flemyng stood in for Morley for some time. In 1952 the play was recast with Hugh Sinclair and Diane Hart, who played the roles for the rest of the London season and then for a protracted tour in 1953-5. So it was a production which ran for five years – and that's a lot of spankings!

In the 1957 MGM film version the spanking scene was left out amid rumours that star Ava Gardner refused to play ball. The scene was included in the script of the film version which went to the Hays Office in 1956, but was later cut. Whether this was Ava Gardner's doing is something we shall never know for sure, but Ava very nearly got a public spanking in a California bar during an interview with Joe Hyams of Look magazine. He had asked her a slightly near the knuckle question and she punched him, knocking him out of his chair. In his autobiography, *Mislaide in Hollywood*, he tells what happened next:

Picking myself up, I jerked Ava from her chair and started to lay her over my knee for a spanking. It was the first time I had touched her, and I was surprised that she was so light, and so soft and feminine. For a moment we were frozen in a tableau. Then I was aware of sounds around us and eyes on us. 'Don't ever do that again,' I said, slowly releasing her. She looked at me then, but instead of being angry she was smiling.

Hyams doesn't explicitly give a date for this, but from references to other events it looks like it must have been in 1955, the year before she avoided the spanking in *The Little Hut*. The incident is mentioned prominently in [Hyam's obituary](#) in The Times – he died in 2008.

I can name some more actresses who *didn't* escape. There was a summer stock tour of the US in 1954 with Barbara Bel Geddes (later of Dallas), and on the other side of the ocean in the same year there was a repertory production with Pauline Yates (later the wife in *Reginald Perrin*).

Blonde film starlet Felicity Young got her spanking in 1958 (the year before she appeared on screen in black lingerie in *Cover Girl Killer*), and a 1974 revival featured James Villiers spanking Geraldine McEwan, the television incarnation of Miss Jean Brodie. I also heard rumours that there was a revival in the 1980s with Mandy Rice-Davies of Profumo notoriety.

Surprisingly, this long neglected play has now been revived and is touring in theatres around the South of England. It stars Jamie Dee as Susan, and she's been getting plenty of glowing notices.

But does she get a glowing bottom too?

None of the critics I've read mention a spanking, but they all seem to agree that Ms Dee thoroughly deserves one.

Is there a more enchanting actress on the British stage than Jamie Dee? It's not just that her fairy godmother blessed her with good looks. It's that she combines good nature, good humour, an unforced charm and an unselfconscious sensuality with a sense of mischief. To see her is to understand why "wicked" has become a hurrah-word." (The Times)



Janie Dee, floating around in a skimpy green cocktail dress, is a pleasure to watch: she makes it abundantly clear that Susan, far from being a victim of male machinations, is a blessedly free spirit." (The Guardian)

I hope someone will be able to confirm whether there is a spanking in this production or not. It sounds like an edge-of-the-seat kind of show!