

# HANCOCK'S LAST HALF HOUR

## by Heathcote Williams

### TONY HANCOCK - FALLEN KING OF COMEDY.

Tony Hancock was a British comedian and actor. His radio and then TV show, Hancock's Half Hour, started in 1955 and ran for years. He became such an iconic figure that even in 2002, BBC radio listeners voted him best British comedian.

Danes may remember a Norwegian TV show based on scripts from *Hancock's Half Hour*. It was called *Fleksnes Fataliteter* and it aired in 1972 for the first time. The show became trilingual, as it usually starred Norwegian, Swedish and Danish actors.

"Jesters" said King Lear, "do oft prove prophets." And Tony Hancock was a true prophet of his own age and his own fate. For most of his life he lived with a foreboding of doom, brooding publicly on death, on failure, on despair, troubled by illness and broken marriages. He played out in real life the classic role of the stage clown: the gentle, cheery, downtrodden fellow, failing miserably in all he does. Hancock of course tasted great triumph as well as failure, but even in the years when the decline in his powers was most marked, he commanded the affection forever accorded to that small precious band who can make their fellows laugh.

Tony Hancock's wit was verbal and spare. Much of it came across with the non-line, the implied "Oh." He was a master of the great unsaid.

But his appeal was essentially modern. He spoke directly to his own time, drawing on an inner world of fantasy and neurosis to mirror the anxieties of his age. He penetrated the realms of people's loneliness and vulnerability, of petty frustrations and fears and the sense of insignificance that besets the common man in an enlightened age of affluence and automation.

It was a mark of his genius that behind all the banter, the laughs, the grimaces, the quips and stares lurked a worried love of his fellow man and sense of personal dread that gave the news of his death its exquisite touch of sorrow.

Since his tragic decision to take his own life on the 24<sup>th</sup> of June 1968, his fame has not diminished, but contrived to shine ever brighter through repeats of his radio and TV show called "Hancock's Half Hour."

That Theatre Company is proud to present "Hancock's Last Half Hour". With Ian Burns as "the lad himself." Directed by Barry McKenna.

**KRUDTTØNDEN**

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