

The same procedure as every year



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Happy New Year! How did you celebrate your new year? Did you make any resolutions? And did you watch 'Dinner for One' on television? Freddie Frinton's sketch about James, the butler, serving dinner to Miss Sophie and her friends has become a TV classic and a New Year tradition in Germany.

The frequently repeated phrase "the same procedure as every year" has entered the language. And the *Dinner for One* sketch has entered the Guinness Book of Records as the most often repeated TV programme. It has been broadcast in Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, South Africa, Spain, Switzerland, the USA - but never in Britain! When it was first recorded in 1962, the BBC said it wasn't good enough for British television - and they have never revised their opinion!

So how did the sketch become known in Germany? From the 1950s, the comedian Freddie Frinton worked as a stand-up comic in Blackpool, a Northern seaside resort. And it was here, in 1962, that the German TV star, Peter Frankenfeld, saw Freddie doing the *Dinner for One* sketch on stage with his partner, May Warden. Peter Frankenfeld invited the comedy duo to come to Hamburg and record the sketch for NDR. The eighteen minute sketch was a huge hit and it was bought by TV companies worldwide. But Freddie Frinton and May Warden only ever received a one-time payment of DM 4,150!

In 1968, NDR wanted to re-film the sketch in colour but, two months before they were due to start filming, Freddie died of a heart attack, at the age of 59. In 1999, a colour version of the sketch was made, with the help of computer technology. But this version was not popular and usually, the black and white version is still broadcast.

However, one alteration has been accepted, much to the relief of English teachers everywhere - the correction of a grammatical mistake made by the announcer, Heinz Piper. In the original introduction, he quotes James, the butler, as saying: "The same procedure *than* last year?" and he gives Sophie's answer as: "The same procedure *than* every year, James." As a result of protests, NDR replaced *than* with *as* and, since 1988, English teachers have been able to watch the sketch with their enjoyment unmarred by grammar mistakes!!

Did you know? _____ Network Now

Enjoy the evergreen *Dinner for One* by clicking on:



http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NDqD0Dz_J-M&feature=player_embedded