



Promptings

In this issue



NODA Crit of The
Lion in Winter



My first stage
appearance



Our Next
Production



100th Edition

Message from Jean



I am typing this with gloves on ... my word, it is cold!! Fortunately, the snow stayed away for the show week of "The Lion in Winter", as cold weather always has an impact on audience figures. As it was, we were sold out for Friday night and had a good-sized audience for Saturday night. Unfortunately, it was Thursday night that let us down a bit with only 68 seats sold ... so let's see if we can boost the Thursday night audience for Pygmalion by encouraging more of our friends to come along.

"The Lion in Winter" was a great success and Adam can be very proud of his directorial debut. I know he really enjoyed the whole process and is keen to direct again – so that is very good news. It was lovely to see Peter back on stage, and to welcome new members Mel, Freddie and Alex (who guested for us). We were also honoured not only by Jacquie Stedman's attendance on Friday night, but also the face-to-face crit she did for us at the Monday crit night.

Rehearsals have started for "Pygmalion" and everyone is working hard. Tickets go on sale on Weds 13th February ... please start marketing the production now, tell people about it, come and get handbills from Lopping Hall - give them to your friends, post them through letterboxes, put them in libraries, hairdressers, barbers, leave them out in staff rooms, put them on noticeboards. The handbills do help to gain us new audiences, but "word of mouth" is our biggest marketing tool, so make sure you talk to your friends about LADS, what we do, what we achieve and sell them tickets.

Jean



Dates for your diary

Sunday 24th March	Set up for <i>Pygmalion</i> - from 9:30 am
Thurs.-Sat. 28-30 March	Production nights for <i>Pygmalion</i>
Saturday 30th March	After show party - Adam and Michael's
Sunday 30th March	Set Down - 10:00 am start
Monday 1st April	Crit and curry – 7.30pm start
Thursday 4th April	Rehearsals start for <i>Handbagged</i>



Members' News

We are very pleased to welcome the following new members to LADS: Susie Magill/Hooper (cast in *Handbagged*) Sabi Kaur, Vee Wells (cast in *Handbagged*) and Jack Thompson (appearing in *Pygmalion*). Despite being able to welcome Peter Galloway back onto the LADS' stage for *The Lion in Winter*, it looks like we will lose him again as he has been accepted by the Sussex Police Force – our loss is society's gain!! Good luck Peter, we wish you every success. We would also like to wish good luck to Alex, who played Geoffrey in *The Lion in Winter*, as he has landed a professional role as The Beast in *Beauty and the Beast*.



One Hundred Editions

At the end of the 1993/1994 season, the committee decided to start a LADS' newsletter. At that time Karen was in charge of Publicity and I was Treasurer of the group. We said that we would take responsibility for it and that we would issue 6 newsletters a season (which was probably a little ambitious, as we only issued 5 in the first season and that soon settled down into 4 a season). Karen was a dab hand with

Microsoft Publisher, so we prepared items for the newsletter and put them on a floppy disk (hands up if you remember them) and then we met in Karen and Andrew's spare bedroom and created the newsletter on the computer. The first edition is attached with this 100th edition, and contains information on the Start of Season Event, Foster and Marions' wedding and the news that our ticket prices were going up – shock horror – to **£4.50**, and Membership Fees would rise accordingly to £13.50.

The second edition reported that the membership had been very positive about "Promptings" (as we decided to call it), and I hope that everyone still finds it informative and useful. REMEMBER, this is your newsletter, so please submit items to Howard for inclusion. It could be about anything you feel the membership would be interested in – a play you have seen, a restaurant you have gone to, perhaps a workshop or tips you have been given. Maybe you would like to write about your "first stage appearance" – I particularly like reading these!

Jean x

Do You Remember?

25 years ago: March 1994 (70th anniversary season): “The Importance of Being Earnest” by Oscar Wilde. Directed by Dorothy McCall. Cast included: Iain Caldow, Mike Chissick, Andrew Rogers, Babs Oakley, Karen Harris (Rogers), Gina Thurgood, Sue Bonner, Roger Barker, Roy Dart.



10 years ago: March 2009: “Kindertransport” by Diane Samuels. Directed by Andrew Rogers. Cast included: Christi Drew, Frances Dennis, Karen Rogers, Sophie Robertson (Gilbert), Sylvia Zilesnick, Iain Howland.



5 years ago: March 2014: “Why Me” by Stanley Price. Directed by Babs Oakley. Cast included: Howard Platt, Jon Gilbert, Peter Galloway, Frances Chalkwright, Cathy Naylor, Eileen Stock



End of season event

Our end of season event this year will be a barbecue at Jean and Garry’s house on **Sunday 23rd June**. Get the date in your diary/ phone/calendar now so you don’t forget. It has been a while since we have had a LADS’ barbecue, so we hope as many people come along as possible. We can guarantee good food and lots of fun (and hopefully sunshine). Everyone is welcome, so bring along the family!

LOS (Loughton Operatic) - Soul and Motown Party Night 2nd March

★ SOULTOWN ★

Soul & Motown
party night

LOS
proudly presents
SOULTOWN
An evening of Soul & Motown.
LIVE music with a full party set to follow after the break!

Saturday 2nd March 2019
8.30 hrs at
LOPPING HALL
LOUGHTON

TICKETS: £10
Available online only at:
www.ticketsource.co.uk/los

★ www.ticketsource.co.uk/los ★

The LOS's bar will be open all night from 7pm

NODA crit for *The Lion in Winter*

General

We were delighted to be able to cover this absorbing version of a classic play for your usual rep, Lindsey. This was an inventively staged production with some very strong performances, and it made for a thought-provoking and enjoyable evening. We'd also like to congratulate the cast for their clear and confident diction in what is a very wordy play – we didn't miss a single line.

Players-Leading

Henry II (Andrew Rogers): 'I've snapped and plotted all my life' – Andrew gave a rounded and compelling performance as the scheming, embattled king. He had a great line in bellowing bluster but also provided interesting insights behind the bluff façade. We also enjoyed the well-thought-out physicality of his characterisation – his stance was suitably regal, undercut by his casual way of sitting with one leg thrown over the arm of his throne – a believable and varied character. The Taylor-and-Burtoneque banter with Karen Rogers' Eleanor was also very entertaining – we weren't surprised to learn that they are married in real life as well as on stage, there was so much mutual understanding and trust in their performances.



Alais (Melanie Clark): This French princess was not as passively pliant and gentle as she initially seemed. Melanie furnished Alais with plenty of petulant energy in a

convincingly youthful performance, but she also showed her dramatic range in imbuing her character with real emotional depth, such as when she was pleading not to be made to marry Richard. Always interesting to watch, this was a coherent and well-thought-through performance.

John (Ian Russell): Poor John! From his first entrance daubed with painful-looking spotty make-up, Ian achieved the impressive feat of making a not easily likeable character into a figure of sympathy. Sturdy in the face of his brothers' taunts, he nonetheless had a brilliant way with impotent stumpy juvenile rage – entirely convincing and frequently very entertaining.



Geoffrey (Alex Roth): Alex provided a quiet, steady presence, the contrasting voice of calm who was soon revealed to be as cynically calculating and fickle in allegiance as his brothers. He gave a great, shrewd portrayal, and we particularly enjoyed his condescendingly measured way of speaking. We would, though, encourage Alex to make more eye contact with his fellow performers during long stretches of dialogue – this may have been a character decision, but his tendency to deliver some of his lines out front when most other characters were interacting more naturalistically was a little bit distracting. A subtle and interesting performance, however!

Richard (Peter Galloway): Peter's performance was fascinating to watch. Grim and haughtily imperious, he delivered every line as a wolfish snarl, and you could easily

imagine his prince growing up into the steely crusader Richard I. His physicality and characterisation hummed with pent up anger, and he felt constantly on a knife edge, a fraction away from lashing out – it was very compelling. What a chilling portrayal (his delivery of lines like ‘I’m colder, I feel less’



was truly sinister) – very effective, well done.

Eleanor (Karen Rogers): Initially charming and exuberant, this was a deliciously scheming portrayal that was subtle and multifaceted – Karen really did justice to the sly intelligence of Eleanor, while also conveying her lingering fondness for Henry with great depth and interest. As mentioned in our notes for Henry II above, the pair showed real understanding of each other and were clearly very comfortable working together. We’d also like to flag up her eloquent physical acting, which conveyed so much even when most of her body and, sometimes when standing in profile, her face, was concealed by her costume. Very well done!

Philip (Freddy Parker): This was an impassive and subtle performance, and Freddy really captured the character of a 17-year-old with big shoes to fill, facing up to a much more experienced monarch. We initially found him a little static and inscrutable in his performance, in part because he delivered much of his dialogue out to the audience rather than interacting naturally with other characters – but in the scene where the nature of his relationship with Richard became clear he really came into his own. Thereafter he showed real depth of emotion and humour – very interesting to see.

Director

Adam Rabinowitz has put together a slick and coherent production with varied and very interesting characterisation and a clearly consistent creative vision. The use of space was particularly impressive – as we will discuss further in our notes on the set, this was a relatively compact performance space that transformed into such a wealth of different locations, and the available space was used extremely efficiently and effectively by the performers.



Sound and lighting

Both sound and lighting were operated by Sarah Biggs with great effect and atmospheric results. We enjoyed the Christmassy music which helped to set the scene very efficiently, while the use of ambient sound, such as dripping water, added a lot of character to the various locations featured in the play. Light was used in a similarly economical and evocative way, painting an absorbing picture. Crucially, every creative decision only enhanced the scene in which it was used, nothing was distracting to the audience’s eye or ear. Nicely done!

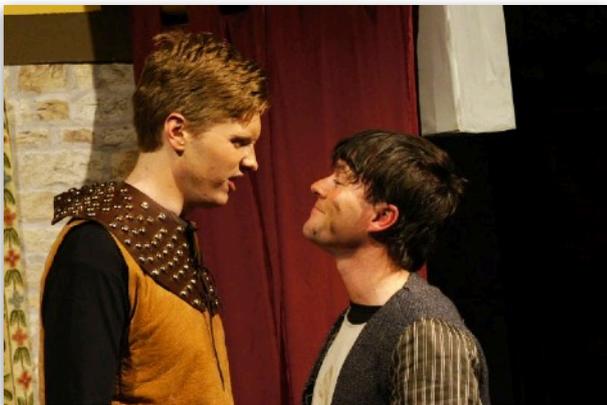
Set Design

Designed and constructed by Lee Kenneth, this was a seriously clever set, making maximum use of a fairly limited performance space, and reducing scene changes to moving a few bits of furniture and folding out/away flats – which makes for a much more efficient and slick production! We were really impressed to see how simply the space could be transformed from throne room to Eleanor’s cell to Alais’ room to wine cellar – I

think we counted five or six different locations in all, depicted with great economy and attention to detail. Very nifty indeed! There were a couple of precarious moments in securing the flats during scene changes, but this may have been because it was opening night and the cast were still getting used to moving the various pieces – it was a great set, and very well-designed, bravo.

Costumes

Credited to Liz Adams and Sylvia Zilesnick, the costumes deserve high praise for achieving something not always managed in a play with a historical setting: they didn't look like fancy dress. Rather, these were convincing clothes, and lovely to look at – like something from a medieval tapestry. Eleanor and Henry's costumes were particularly attractive and well-conceived, and we liked the thoughtful wintry touches such as realistically layered furs to help enhance our appreciation of the time and season.



Programme

Designed by Howard Platt, this was a super programme – attractive to look at, and packed with invaluable historical background information, complete with a timeline and a family tree concerning the dynasties depicted – very handy indeed. You might like to think about entering it for the Programme and Poster competition, details of which can be found on the NODA website www.noda.org.uk

Front of house

Thank you for such a warm welcome – it is always lovely to meet new groups, and our one regret about covering other districts is that we make new friends who we won't get to see again for a while! I hope we get to see another LADS show in the future – thank you for making us feel so at home.

Carly Hilts and Simon Jones
Regional Representatives
NODA London District 1

A message from the Mayor

Dear Jean,

Congratulations on another outstanding LADS production. I thoroughly enjoyed this evening's performance. I thought the cast was excellent and the stage set was outstanding.

Please pass on my congratulations to everyone involved on stage, back stage and front of house - a production like this is always a team effort.

Once again it needs to be said how very lucky we are in Loughton to be able to watch such excellent live theatre.

I was also very pleased that two of the younger members of the cast, Freddy Parker and Peter Galloway were former pupils of mine.

Jean - thank you for organising the particular seat, it was very comfortable for my left leg.

If I am invited to your next production Pygmalion I could attend on Friday 29th March.

Stephen Murray

LOUGHTON TOWN MAYOR 2018/19
Town and District Councillor for Loughton Roding Ward

My first stage experience - Graham Milne



in HMS Pinafore (1989)

Ah yes, well actually my first stage experience was, I suppose, after I went to work in Yanbu, Saudi Arabia, in 1982. Yanbu was a small fishing village on the Red Sea coast 300 kms North of Jeddah, transformed in the late 70s and 80s into a massive petrochemical complex. I was, and am, a great G&S fan and the Village Singers were looking for volunteers for a performance of Trial by Jury. I had a D'Oyly Carte cassette recording which I offered for rehearsal purposes. They assured me they did actually have the music thank you very much and said why don't you come along. I blushed and said oh no I couldn't it would be too terrifying etc, made my excuses and left. My wife Heather joined me in Saudi in 1984 when they were recruiting for The Mikado. She helped me gather my courage and I went along, ending up playing Pooh Bah with pillows that Heather rigged under my costume to give me a portly appearance. No need for that now, so that's saved some money. Great fun and I inevitably ended up on the committee under the buggins rule. In Saudi, never volunteer. I'm sure that's not like anywhere else. We went through most of the G&S repertoire. I hear they are not writing anymore. Shame.

A word about performing in Saudi Arabia. As you can imagine, musical performances, indeed any form of theatrical productions, were frowned upon. Because there was a large expatriate community in Yanbu (managing the

oil refineries and the like), the authorities grudgingly allowed us to perform under strict conditions. Script to be approved by the local authorities, no Saudis allowed to attend, no mixing of men and women unless married, etc. We generally performed in the International School Auditorium, having a ladies only night (dress rehearsal), men only night (including Saudis, who loved it), and then two family nights. As you can imagine, we had a captive audience and the men's night and family nights were generally sell outs. There was the Village Singers doing musicals - we even got the script of Guys and Dolls approved for performance, featuring as it does the Salvation Army, gambling, and alcohol, although we had to cut the pig scene in Act Three. The Desert Players performed drama, under the same tortuous confines. I had a brief go at Arsenic and Old Lace. But the audiences! This was before satellite TV, all we had were two TV channels - Saudi Arabic and Saudi English. I remember watching A Fish Called Wanda - it lasted about 30 minutes, there were so many cuts. Starved of any entertainment as they were, we could read the telephone book and get a standing ovation.



As Pirate King in Pirates of Penzance (1994)

Nicknames abounded within the theatrical community, well researched and justified - The Exocet, the Olympic Torch, The Moth, Errol Flynn were all leading thespians. *See below for translations.

Gone now all gone. When I left Yanbu in 2005 I was one of the last Western expats. The

Village Singers and the Desert Players were distant memories. I thoroughly approve of the not taking videos of performances. My eldest granddaughter rolls her eyes at the VHS videos with her Grandad and others making fools of themselves on stage, gurning and grimacing their way through yet another piece of Victorian melodramatic nonsense. But oh how we loved it. And still do. Hence my hesitant return. All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players. Thanks to LADS and long may they reign triumphant in the Essex stratosphere.

*The Exocet - you can see him coming but can't get away from him

*The Olympic Torch - never goes out

*The Moth – always drawn to the lights

*Errol Flynn – translation not suitable for family consumption.

Graham

Pygmalion



I am very excited to be directing Pygmalion by Bernard Shaw. Pygmalion is one of Shaw's more accessible plays, it doesn't have his normal lecturing tone and introduces some of his most amusing characters, but it still has depth and meaning.

Despite productions of Pygmalion and the subsequent musical My Fair Lady depicting a love story between Higgins and Eliza, this was definitely not what Shaw had in mind. During the rehearsals of the first production of Pygmalion in 1914, Shaw had made it very clear that his ending was not the same the story in classical mythology, in which Pygmalion's sculpture of his ideal woman comes to life and he marries her. However, during the run, Shaw writes that the actor playing Higgins behaved "like a bereaved Romeo" as Eliza left at the end of the play, and by the 100th performance, had added flowers which he tossed after her as she exited.

Shaw was so incensed he wrote a prose sequel to the play, which he published in 1916. In it, he describes Eliza's post-Higgins life, in which she marries Freddy and, with Colonel Pickering's financial support, the couple set up a florist and greengrocer business. In the 1938 film, Shaw actually wrote a conclusion showing Eliza and Freddy in their shop, but was thwarted once more when the director, Gabriel Pascal, discarded it and secretly filmed a different ending – one that showed not an independent business woman, as Shaw wanted, but a subservient Eliza returning to Higgins' home.

We will be striving to be true to Shaw's vision of Pygmalion, showing Eliza – no ordinary flower-girl to begin with – gaining self-esteem and achieving her independence.

Jean

We are in need of several special props for this production (please see next page).

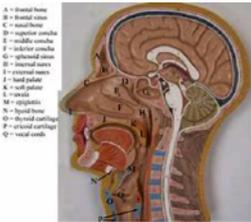
If you can supply from the list (or can point us in the direction of someone else who can) please get in touch with Jean on 07896 910214

We are looking for:

- Plants/aspidistras/ferns
- Victorian style flower pots (cache-pots)
- Tuning fork
- Fountain pen and inkstand
- Old style penknife
- Small tapestry bag
- A Phonograph (see example below)



A life-size model of a half a human head, showing the vocal organs (see example below)



One small armchair (see examples below)



As you will be aware, each season LADS chooses one production to support a charity by donating programme sales and collecting donations during production week and sometimes at a preceding Farmers Market or other local event.

For Pygmalion we are proud to be supporting *in Sue's Name*.

in Sue's Name was set up in honour and remembrance of a very special wife, mother and daughter, Sue Blasotta, who was diagnosed with lesions on the brain in November 2010 and died just six weeks later, aged 42.

The primary aims of the charity are to raise awareness of brain cancer, the leading cause of cancer-related deaths in the UK among children and adult patients under the age of 40; to support clinical research into brain cancers; and to offer a forum of support to brain cancer patients and their families. In Sue's Name has set a target to raise £1 million by 2027 to provide crucial research funds to support Brain Tumour Research's Centre of Excellence at Queen Mary University of London.

You can find out more at www.insuesname.org and make your you order your Pygmalion tickets, which are on sale now!