

# Promptings



NODA crit -  
Gaslight



FROST/NIXON



Roger  
Barker



Theatre Trip

## Message from Cathy



The past few months have seen almost as much drama off stage than on stage. The rehearsal period for *Gaslight* was blighted with positive COVID tests, the surge of a new variant and the threat of a further lockdown, all of which gave Christian and the whole production team endless headaches. Despite the uncertainty, the production was a huge success with 390 tickets sold which is an incredible achievement. We received some wonderful feedback from our audience so once again we can all be very proud of ourselves, LADS rocks !!

Looking ahead, rehearsals for 'Frost/Nixon' are now underway and going well. There is a plea

for some props inside Promptings so please read and get in touch if you can help. Please make a note of the dates for your diary. We are planning to launch our 2022/2023 season on 27<sup>th</sup> May so keep the date free and come along. More information will be in the next edition of Promptings.

Also inside are details of a theatre trip, a beautiful tribute to Roger and much more so please keep reading.

Looking forward to seeing you all at the set up for Frost/Nixon if not before.

*Cathy*



## Dates for your diary

|                                 |   |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Sat 26th March                  | Theatre trip - see article inside for details                 |
| Sun 27th March                  | Set Up for <i>Frost/Nixon</i> from 9:30am - Lopping Hall      |
| Thur 31st March - Sat 2nd April | <i>Frost/Nixon</i>  |
| Sat 2nd April                   | After show shindig in Buckleys Bar- all welcome               |
| Sun 3rd April                   | Set Down - 10:00am start                                      |
| Mon 4th April                   | Crit. At 7:30pm in Small Hall followed by curry - all welcome |
| Thur 7th April                  | Rehearsals start for <i>The Actress</i>                       |
| Fri 27th May                    | 2022/23 Season Launch in Buckleys Bar - 8:00pm                |

## Members' News

We are delighted to welcome Selwyn Dindyal who is cast in Frost/Nixon and Jayne Rowland who came along to the read through for The Actress. We hope they will both continue to be involved for many years.

### Lee and Sarah



Many belated congratulations to Lee and Sarah for their marriage last September. We wish them every happiness.

## Leaflets

We have plenty of leaflets for Frost/Nixon because we'd like members to spend an hour of their time leafleting their street and surrounding areas. Leaflets can be collected from Lopping Hall on any rehearsal night or I can arrange to drop some off to you if you get in touch. It would be wonderful to have full audiences every night and we can only do that if we continue to spread the word as far and wide as possible.

## NODA Crit. - Gaslight

It was lovely to return to Lopping Hall and see such a full house for the last night of Gaslight. The audience seemed delighted to be back, meeting friends and looking forward to live drama. I had seen some favourable comments pinging around WhatsApp from the first two nights of Gaslight and so my expectations were heightened.

### Choice of play

As you explained well in your programme 'Gaslighting' is a modern term for emotionally abusive behaviour that has become widely used over the last 10 years or so. To bring the original 1938 play to your audience was a terrific idea. I felt I was watching the most contemporary

1930s play I'd ever seen and couldn't stop wondering what the original audiences would have thought of the play. We know Gaslight was a great success and so I suspect their emotions and reactions were the same as ours.

Another small cast play makes sense during these Covid times but the challenge then still remains of relying on a few people to keep well. I understand the isolation regulations disturbed rehearsals towards the end of last year but, with a talented and dedicated team, you can achieve the same high standards.

### Front of House and Programme

An efficient and friendly welcome as always and help if needed in finding our seats. I do like the seating layout you provide with small blocks and raised areas. It provides excellent sightlines probably at the expense of some ticket income. Very generous and much appreciated.

As always, an excellent Programme with interesting articles and photographs. A good piece on gaslighting as previously mentioned and I liked the suggestions if people needed further help. Advertising your next production makes good sense and enables regular supporters to log the dates. I notice no reference to NODA for which I expect you have your reasons but I'd be happy to discuss if you wished.



### Set and Staging

I thought your set was remarkable. The overall look worked so well and created the living room setting for the play. I loved the high fireplace and mirror which I suspect was tailor-made. The

dado rail and picture rail were a necessary detail and worth the extra work at set build. The furniture and dressing worked well and having a matching chair and chaise longue was classy. The colour scheme blended well together and the wallpaper looked authentic. I wasn't sure about the brown curtains but they merged into the background successfully.

May I offer you a challenge that I do out of respect for the craftsmanship of your construction team. Could you use a mortice latch or roller catch door handle rather than magnet catches? From the sounds the two doors were successfully held shut by magnets which clicked every time they were open or closed. A clunk of a closing door would be lovely, if aspirational.

### Direction

Christian Mortimer did a fine job moving the actors and action around the stage. There was stillness when required, pacing to give character to Rough and a few choreographed pictures to emphasise a point. I liked the image created by Jack leaning from behind on Bella's shoulders towards the end of Act III and its repetition when the tables are turned with Bella's final scene, "watching you go with glory in my heart". His touching of her hand or arm was uncomfortable to watch and conveyed the right tone.

The care needed to find the right balance of melodrama without being overly melodramatic must have been a challenge. I thought the script tended to push more towards the melodramatic but this may have been too crass for this subject matter in these times. For me the balance you achieved was impressive.

There were wonderful performances that can only come from good collaboration between Director and Actor. The discipline of movement and delivery, the building of tension, the anxiety of Mrs Manningham, the storytelling to move the plot along and the viciousness of abuse were well executed and paced by Christian. All of which kept the audience engaged throughout.

### Cast

This was a talented troop that gave very high quality performances. The interactions between all five were intense and required depth of character to portray the emotions without making the play melodramatic. At times the cast made watching the play uncomfortable which was exactly what was required.

### Mrs Manningham



Emma Middleton took on the demanding part of Mrs Bella Manningham. A part demanding in terms of size and scale. A full range of emotions were called for and Emma hit them all with great skill. The early signs of her nervousness towards Mr Manningham set the atmosphere swiftly, followed by the joy at being promised the chance to see Mr MacNaughton. "You've been so much kinder lately" made me cringe in anticipation. Emma's reactions to Nancy "The little beast!" gave us plenty to understand what was going on between Nancy and Jack.

The tremble in Bella's voice when denying moving the picture. The finger rubbing when the anxiety levels rose and the anguish of "Don't leave me". Her state of mind showing signs that enabled Mr M to treat her as "stark gibbering mad". All this made for a superb performance that only real tears could have topped.

By the final scene the audience was willing Bella's defiance and Emma delivered with every ounce she had. A wonderful scene to finish a wonderful performance. Well done.

## Mr Manningham



As a “man of some power” Dean Bartholomew gave us a horrid Mr Manningham in the best possible way. This was a character with nothing to like about him. An abusive bully, able to manipulate and flip to aggression with disturbing ease.

Dean is undoubtedly a very talented actor and this part gave him a wonderful opportunity to display his ability to the full. Indeed, as Sydney Power, Mr Manningham thought he could have been an actor and “take a part and lose [himself] entirely in the character of someone else”. His manipulation of Bella to doubt herself so much was masterfully undertaken. In the first scene Mr M could have been Mrs M’s carer with his choice of language but by “Someone else!” we saw how he could intimidate.

I liked the whistling of ‘Rock-A- Bye Baby’ at the Act II entrance. The murderer whistling the children’s nurse rhyme was very creepy. Then ‘Ride of the Valkyries’ in Act III made me wonder if he had returned from the Opera? Lovely choices.

The final scenes gave Dean a chance to shift the character into the weak bully. He had great expressions during Rough’s explanation and during Mrs Manningham’s delight in revenge.

Above all I thought the way Dean achieved an air of distance between him and all the other characters was impressive. Always manipulating and manoeuvring for his own benefit. A horrific character who appeared quite normal, calm almost caring.

## Rough



Patrick Hamilton gives detective Rough the job of moving the plot along, proving Jack Manningham’s real identity and bringing some humour into this dark world. In Andrew Rogers’ hands we had all that the author asked and more. This was a first-rate performance from an experienced actor in fine form.

Andrew brought an increased pace and energy from his first entrance, lightening the mood and allowing the audience a laugh and a smile. “You’re the lady that’s going off her head” delivered in a familiar accent that aided the comedy superbly. Rough was more animated than the other characters and disciplined in his movement to help define the character.

I loved Rough’s reaction to the insufficient sweetened tea. His telling the Alice Barlow story in an enhanced melodramatic style kept the audience engaged in the unveiling of the plot. Rough’s rather idiosyncratic laugh was delightful and brought laughs from your audience, a lovely touch.

The way Andrew and Emma matched the action, pace and intensity from Act I into the opening of Act II was very cleverly done. It was so much more than just standing in the same places.

Rough’s entrance in Act III relieved the powerful tension between Jack and Bella as our hero in the large black coat comes to save our heroine. We knew Rough would be more than a match to Jack and so it proved.

Shame the cigar wouldn’t easily light, zippo lighters are usually more reliable than matches



or better still cut the smoking when, like in this play, it's not necessary.

I really enjoyed Andrew's performance that was well-crafted and expertly delivered. Nice work.

### Elizabeth



Jean Cooper as Elizabeth gave us a touch of normality amongst the unconventional others. She brought much needed kindness and caring to the play. Happy to help the detective and keep up a pretence despite telling Mr Manningham she would always be loyal to him. This gave the sense that Elizabeth was more concerned about Mrs M and her illness. I liked this character and Jean's fine portrayal.

### Nancy



Amy Taylor played Nancy with attitude (or latitude). Her flirtatious manner made it fairly obvious why she was employed and the power Nancy had over Mrs M was cruel and well portrayed by Amy. The scene in Act III between Nancy and Jack was authentically played and even though the audience knew what their relationship was, witnessing the affair and the

kissing was actually quite a shock. Nancy seemed to have some power over 'Sir', power that comes with being the object of desire. Amy made the most of her scenes and revealed another marred character.

### Two Policemen

Both gave arresting portrayals. I thank you!



### Sound and Lighting

I liked the choice of music between Acts. The slightly creepy piano reminded me of Hogwarts. It helped to create the atmosphere.

The gas lights worked well and looked just right. I liked that they could be turned up and down independently of each other. I wondered if they could have gone down independently when the gas pressure lessened. Perhaps this more gradual dimming would have added a little menace to the tension of Mr Manningham returning to the attic.

### Costumes

A special mention to Liz Adams for another outstanding outing for your costume collection. Everyone looked so well dressed. Rough's style was something he appeared proud of and Bella's rather ordinary attire showed that she was not bought fine clothes.

I liked Mr Manningham's frock coat, very stylish. It was a shame he wasn't given a coat stand to hang it on rather than hanging it over the back of the chair – was that a practice in Victorian London?

**Summary**

Thank you for choosing this play and presenting a subject matter that is rather more common than we may suspect. The cast and crew gave a fine performance that asked a lot of the actors. Each were very skilled and everyone contributed to a superb production.

Thank you for the memorium to Roger Barker in the foyer. Many people were looking at it on Saturday night. A lovely tribute to a lovely man.

**Paul Daynes**

**NODA Regional Representative.**

**Roger Barker**

We were devastated at the death of Roger in December. Roger was an irreplaceable member of LADS and a dear friend to many, we will all miss him terribly.

For those of you unable to attend his funeral I thought you would like to read the tribute that Garry prepared and read on our behalf during the service.

Roger joined the Loughton Amateur Dramatic Society (LADS) in 1956 and had been an active member of the society ever since, acting in over 100 plays and supporting the group in so many other ways. We have received so many lovely memories of Roger from his friends in LADS, both long-standing members and relative newcomers, some which we would like to share with all of you today:

*When my husband Pete and I moved to Loughton in 1970, we quickly became LADS members. My first part was in the play "The Right Honourable Gentleman". Roger played, a politician, and I was his young and unsympathetic wife who fell in love with a younger man which caused a terrific scandal.*

*It was very dramatic and Roger was excellent in the part. He was also so kind and helpful to this young newbie who knew nothing about the Society. We often acted together in plays after that but I never forgot the first one. He later agreed to become a trustee for the charity which I ran called The Christian Drama Resource Centre and was always very supportive.*

*The title of that first play suited Roger to a T, because he was in all his life, acting career and personally ... a Right Honourable Gentleman!*

**Andrea Moles**

*I have very happy memories of Roger over all my years in LADS and also of him in St John's Choir! A leading chorister with more than a twinkle in his eye.*

**Liz**

*Roger was a very capable actor, but never full of himself, and always welcoming and encouraging to newcomers. He was social secretary when I joined and was one for mucking in and turning up for set building to do what he could, even when that became quite difficult for him.*

*His lovely voice was a great asset, giving him gravitas for parts such as cardinals, vicars and judges. He was also good at comedy though, and was cast in "When We Were Married", in which I took my first speaking role with LADS in 1998. The director called on Anna Twinn, a Yorkshire lass we both knew, to listen to our accents and give us tips for improvement. She voted Roger "Best Yorkshireman" showing he had an ear for an accent as well as being able to produce BBC English. I will miss him, but especially at social gatherings, with a glint in his eye and a glass of red wine.*

**Wendy**

Roger was my stage-Uncle – always funny and happy and always positive. We have had such memorable times on-stage and off, but it is Roger's mischievous nature I shall miss the most. One of my first plays in LADS was "The Ghost Train" – in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half, the drama builds, and the passengers are locked in the waiting room with the villains of the piece, of which Roger was one. I was at the back of the stage acting my little heart out, and Roger turned around to me in a villainous way and, with his back to the audience, gave me a wink – so naughty and so Roger!

**Jean**

Roger was such a huge part of LADS history generally and my experience of LADS in particular. I shall miss the cries of "Darling!" in that wonderful mellifluous voice as he first caught sight of you, and his amazing hugs.

I joined LADS 6 years ago after seeing what was Roger's very last stage appearance, in 'Anne Boleyn'. So I don't have the wealth of experience of him that is shared by so many other LADS members. However, in the last 12 months I have certainly benefited from my contact with him. We were so thrilled to give him a chance to perform again when he read the part of Badger in an extract from Wind in the Willows for LADS' YouTube production "A Walk on the Wildside". Then, he and Babs agreed to be interviewed on Zoom by Jenny and me about their experiences of being LADS members since the 1950's, and to talk about how they'd coped with the pandemic.

It was an absolute joy to listen to them recalling their history in the society, laughing and telling stories about past stage mishaps. Roger recounted the tale of being on stage opposite another actor, who happened to be a 'sprayer'. Roger became so transfixed by the sight of the dribble slowly making its way down the man's chin that he took his first ever prompt.

Roger also gave sound advice, one of which was his strong caution to "learn your lines early". I took that to heart when I was cast in a big role in LADS' first play back at Lopping Hall this October. Over the autumn I could hear his voice in my head in those long days as I pored over my script - "Learn your lines. Learn your lines". I

did. And I feel particularly proud and privileged that our play was the last LADS' production he came to see.

**Val**

I may only have been a member for a few years but the first play I came to see and sell programmes for, Roger was helping FOH and took me under his wing and showed me the ropes and where to seat people. For the short time I knew him he was always such a gentleman and a lovely man.

**Vee**

And finally, my own memories of Rog: I had the pleasure of knowing Roger for thirty years or so, but not being an actor, my association with Roger was of a more social nature enjoying his company on trips to Sonning and Stamford for the annual summer outing and occasional meals out with he and Babs.

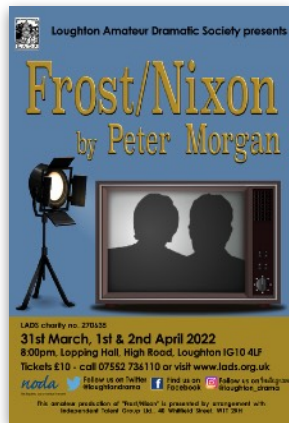
In later years I assumed the role of assisting Roger with his computer. The computer was a thing that he embraced reluctantly but accepted that email and the internet was now part of the modern world. His relationship with "the machine" as he called it was similar to the relationship one has with their dentist, you know you have to go but you also know you're never going to enjoy it. This was how Roger felt about opening the laptop, especially when I explained that it had to be opened at least once a week. Many afternoons were spent getting things working for Roger but there was more to those afternoons for me, he was very good company with a quite wicked sense of humour. I really quite liked being referred to as "My dear boy"

A large light has gone out at the drama society but I think a little light has gone out in all of us. I'm sure you're in a peaceful place now Roger, and a little last wish from me to you is that they don't use email.

**Garry**



## Frost/Nixon



It might be just me, but whenever I start rehearsals for a play I'm incredibly impatient; I almost expect the finished product from the moment blocking is finished. As a director you have a vision of a production and it's easy to forget that it takes the rehearsal period, repeating the same scenes, the same moves to realise that vision. We are about a third into rehearsals for "Frost/Nixon" and it is slowly moving towards that vision. Books are going down and I can see the characters becoming more fleshed out at each rehearsal.

Please don't come expecting impersonations of the main characters, but rather interpretations. Nor should you expect a history lesson: this is our version of Peter Morgan's version of events. "Frost/Nixon" is, above all, a play, not a documentary. Come to be entertained and if you learn a little about the biggest political scandal of the twentieth century at the same time, then that's an added bonus.

**Karen**



## Props - can you help?

Vee is looking for a few props for Frost/Nixon. Please get in touch if you can help with any of them.

Saucer champagne glasses

1970's headphones with microphone \*

Two 1970's lapel microphones \*

\*examples below



## Theatre Trip

A few of us are going to the matinee at The Park Theatre in Finsbury Park to see 'Ghosts of the Titanic' by Ron Hutchinson on 26th March.

On 10th April 1912, Titanic, the world's fastest and most luxurious ship, set sail. On board, Emma Hinton's fiancé Henry has landed his dream job with the ship's orchestra. But by 14th April the 'unsinkable' Titanic is at the bottom of the ocean and 1500 are dead. Tormented by conflicting theories as to why the ship sank and who might have benefited as a result, Emma decides to find out what really happened. Did the Titanic really hit an iceberg? Was the 'unsinkable' Titanic in fact an over-engineered liability rushed into service to satisfy a powerful and impatient owner? Was news of its loss delayed to allow its insurers time to hedge their losses, thereby removing any chance of a rescue. Ron Hutchinson's new play delves into the heart of this compelling story.

A World Premiere from the author of the multi-award winning stage plays, *Rat in the Skull* and *Moonlight and Magnolias*.

We're not arranging to book all the tickets so if you would like to join us the link for booking tickets is below. It would be lovely if you could come along.

<https://www.parktheatre.co.uk/whats-on/ghosts-of-the-titanic>



## LOS ARE BACK!



Loughton Operatic Society (LOS) are back after "Pandemic Postponements" and we'd love you to join us at Lopping Hall for a trip down memory lane.

"Let's Go On With The Show" is a selection of songs from our favourite musicals we've performed over the last 20 odd years - shows include Oklahoma!, Calamity Jane, Guys & Dolls, Bugsy Malone, Me & My Girl, & My Fair Lady to name but a few!

We're easing ourselves back in gently with a 2 night run (28th and 29th April) which is sure to sell out fast so please make sure you book early.

## Do You Remember?

**25 years' ago: April 1997: "Murmuring Judges" by David Hare**

Directed by Babs Oakley  
Cast included: Jean Cooper, John Haylett, Foster Barnett, Jonathan Denne, Lindsay Andrews, Andrew Rogers, Stephen Radley, Bill Caldow, Michael Brandon, Robina Allen, Iain Caldow, Ann Radley (nee Wyles), John Howard, Roger Barker, Ricky Munro, Lee Hawkes, Sue Cole, Ruth Howarth, Martin Howarth, Roy Dart



**10 years' ago: March 2012: "A Man for All Seasons" by Robert Bolt**

Directed by Jean Cooper

Cast included: Iain Howland, Andrew Rogers, Dan Cooper, Jon Gilbert, Karen Rogers, Taylor Keegan, Roger Barker, Howard Platt, John Haylett, Richard Foster, Tom Donoghue, David Stelfox, Camilla Steel, Martin Howarth



**5 years' ago: March/April 2017: "A Streetcar Named Desire" by Tennessee Williams**

Directed by Jean Cooper

Cast included: Dolly Howlett, Christian Mortimer, Sarah Hudson, Jon Gilbert, Lee Kenneth, Cathy Naylor, Ian Russell, Charlotte Pope, Josh Sowerbutts, Graham Milne, Val Jones, Richard Cohen, Marcel Kay.

