

Promptings

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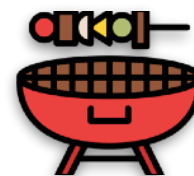
NODA crit -
Frost/Nixon



The Actress



LADS AGM



End of
Season BBQ

Message from Cathy



Welcome to another addition of Promptings that's bursting with news and information so please keep reading to make sure you don't miss out.

Looking back, *Frost/Nixon* was another triumph for LADS and my congratulations go to everyone involved. Audience feedback was incredibly positive and everyone who saw it was blown away by the performances, staging and the overall concept of the production. Ticket sales weren't as good as we'd hoped but we should never judge the success of a production based on that. It was a huge success on many, many levels and was yet another production that we can all be immensely proud of.

Rehearsals for *The Actress* are now well underway and going well. We have a few prop requirements so please have a look and see if you can help. Tickets are now on sale once again so please do your bit to spread the word. It would be fantastic to end our season with full houses. There are several dates for your diary including the season launch and the end of season event so please make sure you make a note of them all.

I hope you're all enjoying the longer days and slightly milder weather and I look forward to seeing you at the season launch if not before.

Cathy



Dates for your diary

Fri 27th May	2022/23 Season Launch - 8:00pm in Buckleys Bar, Lopping Hall
Sun 12th June	Set Up for <i>The Actress</i> from 9:30am - Lopping Hall
Thur 16th - Sat 18th June	<i>The Actress</i>
Sat 18th June	After show shindig in Buckleys Bar - all welcome
Sun 19th June	Set Down - 10:00am start
Mon 20th June	Crit. At 7:30pm in Small Hall followed by curry - all welcome
Thur 23rd June	Read through for October production
Mon 4th July	LADS AGM - 8:00pm
Tue 12th July	Lopping Hall AGM - 8:00pm
Sun 17th July	Barbecue at Jean & Garry's - 28 Woodland Way, Woodford Green

Members' News

We are thrilled to welcome Bernard Moule as the director for *The Actress*. Bernard is a long time friend of LADS having attended many of our productions and done several crits for us and we wish him every success with *The Actress*. We also welcome Jenna Young as a guest performer. Jenna is playing Nicole in *The Actress* and we're delighted that she was willing to join us for the production and hope it will be the first of many.

Season Launch

As already mentioned in the last edition of Promptings, we are launching our 2022/2023 season on 27th May in Buckleys Bar at 8pm. The play reading committee has worked incredibly hard to produce an exciting and varied season that we are very excited to announce so please come along. We will be inviting a number of potential new members so it would be great to have as many existing members as possible there to tell them how wonderful LADS is and convince them all to join us. The bar will be open and there may be a nibble or two so it will be a fun evening to catch up with friends and learn all about the upcoming season.

LADS AGM

Our AGM is on Monday 4th July at 8pm in the small hall. Val will be sending out all of the notices, nomination forms and resolutions suggested by the committee in advance so please keep an eye out for her email. Can I remind you that any member is entitled to put themselves forward for any committee role (including Chairman!!) or a position on the play reading committee. If you would like to do so, please return your completed nomination form to Val by the date specified in her email.

Lopping Hall AGM

The AGM for Lopping Hall is on Tuesday 12 July at 8pm. There will be snacks, cheese and wine and the opportunity to explore parts of the building you didn't know existed. There have been many improvements to the hall in the past few years and there are many still to come so

please show your support and thanks to The Directors of Lopping Hall for everything they do.

Rehearsals

LADS has always had a policy that any member is welcome to attend rehearsals and this is still the case however, the committee would like to clarify the attendance of members at dress rehearsals. If you are unable to attend the production on actual show nights and would like to see a dress rehearsal, please seek permission from the director in advance and be prepared to be asked to leave while the director gives notes and talks to the cast. As you would be seeing a polished production with a complete set and costumes, payment of the usual ticket price should apply. Thank you for your understanding.

End of season event



Jean and Garry have very kindly offered to throw open the gate to their garden and host a BBQ on Sunday 17th July. Everyone is welcome so feel free to bring family and friends but please let Jean & Garry know in advance so they can buy enough food !!

1pm onwards
28 Woodland Way, Woodford Green, IG8 0QG
BBQ food and soft drink provided - please bring a bottle.
£5 a head - payable on the day.

Please let Jean know if you will be going:

jean.famcooper@btinternet.com –
07896910214

NODA Crit. - Frost/Nixon

Frost/Nixon was the third LADS play I'd seen in my NODA capacity and the previous two had set the quality bar very high. Although comparisons are not always fair or even useful, previous productions naturally give your audience a degree of expectation. With Frost/Nixon my high expectations were undoubtedly met and, in many aspects, surpassed. This was an exceptional production, acted and directed with great care and skill, telling an enthralling tale superbly.

Choice of play

This is a story that we think we know. As Karen Rogers says in the Director's Notes, we know of Watergate and the disgrace of Richard Nixon, we also know that every political/celebrity scandal now comes with '.....gate'. Is the latest 'Partygate'? I'm not sure I can keep up. I, for one, didn't know the details and not having seen the Frost/Nixon film or original production, I was ready to be educated. Docudramas have been popular with TV and Film makers for many years and I suspect amateur theatre audiences are also keen to see these plays, if the society can pull them off.



Interpretations of well-known characters is a big ask for actors, not everyone is Martin Sheen, but in the hands of the quality of this LADS cast the audience were able to be taken into this world and emotionally engaged in the story.

Front of House and Programme

As always, a good pre-show atmosphere awaited me at Lopping Hall. The Bar was buzzing and great service from Garry Cooper had me

organised with an interval drink. I liked the foyer display, particularly the What was Watergate? In easy-to-read news headline style language. This is now something I look out for.

An excellent programme, as always, and the Who's Who? was interesting and informative. Thank you, Howard Platt, for another good piece of design.



Set and Staging

Full marks for the concepts behind the design of the set. It presented us with 1977 and the press and posters displayed throughout reminded us this was based on a true story. A careful look at the end of the production showed me some fascinating cartoons and I'm sure I remember that Radio Times front cover.

The TV camera and spotlight were a nice touch, particularly as the spotlight was echoed on the programme.

The large screen projecting the images worked on a number of fronts. A TV for a TV based play of course, but also the choice of the hotel room, the residence, London, the Dinner Party etc. gave the audience a useful map of where each scene was set. It enabled a minimalist set to convey the variety of numerous scenes. The close-up photo of Nixon's face illustrated Jim's speech like a picture book. Very clever and well thought through. I see more video and projection being used in amateur theatre, it adds another dimension for the audience.

Direction

I could comment for pages on the excellence of the Direction from Karen Rogers but I'll try and be brief.

The tremendous pace throughout swept the storytelling along. That's not to say that the poignant moments were washed over, far from it. When a play has pace, the tone has somewhere to go to when required to calm. The linking between all those scenes was expertly handled. One example was when Jim Renton moved into a New York scene and in a stride we were taken to NYC and in another he was shaking Frost's hand. Also changing the chairs on the hoof with an efficient crew getting on with the task. It all enabled the retention of the pace and the seamless flow between scenes which could have been clunky in less expert hands.



The telephones on either side of the stage with the actors looking out front worked well and was consistent throughout. There was a lovely picture of the three aides in half-light focused on Frost whilst he was on the phone to Nixon towards the end of Act 1.

Most of the scenes required little movement which was well disciplined and respected by the actors. The interview in the armchairs was by definition static. However, the movement and the body language was a masterpiece of attentive direction. I loved the careful detailing of every lean in and sway back, the hand to mouth when in defence and the open gestures of attack. We think of setting actors to cross the stage, to sit or stand, but here was setting in a different guise. Very impressive.

The Boxing analogies hit me right between the eyes. Jack starts these when introducing the interview and the script runs with it with lines such as "throwing in the towel" or "worthy opponent". Karen created a full heavyweight

about with each character going for the win. Even the final round was preceded by the two challenges facing off with a "Mr President, Mr Frost" before 'touching gloves' and awaiting the bell.

The final champagne moment pose drew this play to a celebratory close and your audience were wanting to applaud with gratitude and admiration.

Cast

Richard Nixon

Andrew Rogers is to be warmly congratulated on this well researched interpretation of Richard Nixon that delivered an extraordinary performance.

The makeup was striking and changed Andrew's appearance dramatically, excellent work of whoever administered. With the distinctive voice and accent that was consistent throughout and the slow methodical walk, Andrew enveloped this character.



At times we saw the showman who understood television. With his presidential wave and greeting that even impacted Jim Renton, you could believe here was a successful elected representative. His ability to tell an absorbing story about meeting Brezhnev or an after-dinner speech gave Andrew the opportunities to move into different gears and we warmed to his Nixon.

Andrew also portrayed the man whose desire for wealth overshadowed his decision making. We saw his angst at being in the wheelchair. We saw the anger of Nixon once Watergate was

mentioned and eventually the exhaustion of trying to continue to hide the lies.

I really admired the anger and menace Andrew achieved in his speech on the telephone to Frost as he attempted to push Frost's face further "into the dirt". This showed Nixon's poor judgement that dogged his political career as the speech actually became motivational to Frost and inspired him to go for the win in the final round. Under pressure Nixon cracks and unconvincingly pleads that he is "not a criminal" "not illegal".

Great work, much enjoyed!



David Frost

I am always glad to see Christian Mortimer perform and Frost gave him the opportunity to show much of his range and repertoire. Christian gave another outstanding performance.

Who is Frost and how should he be portrayed? is a running theme throughout the play. Is he "a performer not a journalist or an interviewer", a talk show host on Australian Television? Is he attempting to build his celebrity status, disappointed at being compared to Vidal Sassoon? Caroline describes him as "The vain, self-important older man" who drives a Bentley not a Rolls Royce.

In contrast to his three aides, Frost finds this all a bit of a game. This is the mix that Christian demonstrated so well in his portrayal, showing all sides of Frost and by the end I'm not sure we are any clearer who he actually is. Indeed, today, how would anyone define David Frost?

Christian's work in the interview was exceptional. We saw the contrast of Frost trying to get into the conversation that Nixon was controlling and winning. We saw the vulnerability of Frost in the dressing room when this project was on the ropes and the Australian show was cancelled.

For the final round of the Watergate interview Christian initially took on a relaxed temperament, he gave us "something different". He was then able to move gear for the rapid jabs that rocked Nixon. The well-known "three things to say" was beautiful and a lesson in delivery. It even caused Nixon to nervously lick his lips for what may have been the first time in the play.

The relish Christian showed in the final pose, back amongst the celebrities, will be a lasting image.



Jim Reston

Philip Watson gave a tremendous performance as Jim Reston, the young angry Turk that wanted to give Nixon "the trial he never had". Philip relayed the deep knowledge with fantastic pace and attack throughout, just staying on the right side of manic. Collaborating well with the other two aides we saw Jim as Frost's key player in the Nixon fight. We never doubted that Jim would have thoroughly researched the papers and written the 80-page dossier. We witnessed the joy in Philip's voice and face when he realised he had the "haymaker punch".

There is a challenge of how to play narration to an audience. Should it be a conversation or a lecture? Should Jim be a host or a reporter? I

think on balance Philip played it correctly not compromising pace or tone when addressing the audience directly. It could be argued that there was a missed opportunity to change gears and bring the audience into the story as with a Shakespearean soliloquy. This however can become patronising and lose some realism.

Jack Brennan

Nick Charles did a good job playing the main adviser and support to Nixon. It was he that told Nixon there's "nothing to worry about".

Jack Brennan was a Colonel in the US Marines and saw active service in Vietnam. He was firstly a military man rather than an administrator and therefore would likely stand very straight and tall. We got the tall from Nick but not always straight. Nick's accent was on the whole good with a little waiver here and there. It is Jack that introduces the Boxing analogy and it was believable that Jack had boxed. A square jaw with a long reach, good casting.



I also appreciated Nick's discipline in walking into the light and then out of it when intervening during the interview. It was important that no one other than Frost and Nixon was in camera shot and Nick led the line on this.

Jon Birt

It was good to see Adam Rabinowitz back on-stage playing TV producer Jon Birt. First mention has to go to the wig, what a find! Adam rightly played Birt as a businessman with an eye for the story. He was the current affairs programmer with a journalistic slant. He looked great and gave a good characterisation throughout.

Bob Zelnick

The third aid, with less of a flair for fashion, was Jon Gilbert's Bob Zelnick. Bob looked like he was at home in the TV or radio studio and although a journalist, brought another dimension to the three Frost supporters. Jon's accent, pace and timing were good, although I lost his diction on a few occasions.

As a three Jon, Philip and Adam linked well together. Their different characters complemented each other and there was some generosity as each was afforded their moments of dialogue. Three strong characters, well played, gave the play the depth and interest beyond the main two protagonists.

Caroline Cushing

Elizabeth Thomas gave a nod to gender balance in this male heavy play. This experienced actor knew just how to make the best of this cameo and certainly had the measure of Frost. Elizabeth made the aeroplane scene work well and set up the Caroline/Frost relationship well. Loved the red shoes!



Manolo Sanchez, Swifty Lazar, Mike Wallace

Further support came from Marcel Kaye, Michael Lewkowicz and Richard Cohen. On the whole accents were good as were the characterisations. Perhaps the "CBS hatchet man" could have been a little more fierce and the Hollywood talent agent a little more ruthless. The cheque was there for the snatching.

Others ably assisted the scenes and the telling of the story.

Sound and Lighting

Great choices of sound effects from the aeroplane bleep to the dinner party cutlery. The

music was appropriate and of the time. I liked the way 'Nobody Does it Better' was left on for the audience to exit to.

The lighting design brought in the camera lens during the interview and divided the playing area well for other various scenes. Good blackouts, I thought, which is not always easy at Lopping Hall.

Costumes

Another excellently costumed production by Liz Adams. The double-breasted suits, flared trousers, ties and the President's casual wear was well researched and implemented. Glasses were of period as were the wigs. The Italian shoes were pleasingly as described and when the play allowed for a colourful dress then Amy, Judith and Elizabeth were well catered for. Even the full air hostess uniform had another appearance and the army uniform was spot on.

This level of care and detail brought an authenticity to this play.

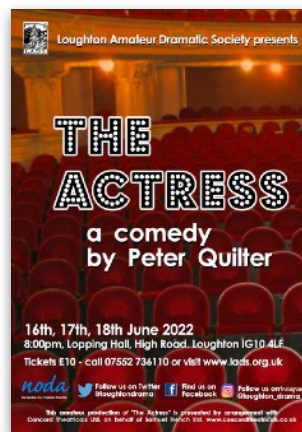


Summary

The Frost/Nixon story is worth telling but the portrayal of such famous figures is difficult and not for the unskilled. With excellent direction and actors prepared to work hard in and out of rehearsals, LADS achieved another notable success. Thank you for a great evening's entertainment.

Paul Daynes

The Actress



Having seen a number of recent LADS productions, when I was invited to direct a play for them I was delighted to accept.

The Actress is a bitter-sweet comedy written by Peter Quilter. It's set in the dressing room of Lydia Martin, a grande-dame of theatre who is giving her last stage performance before retiring to Switzerland with her rich, elderly lover. During the course of the evening she receives visits from her daughter, her agent, her dresser, her ex-husband and the company manager. A certain amount of mayhem ensues before she can finally leave everything behind when the final curtain falls.

I am working with a great cast, two of whom are old friends who have been directed by me before (and have still come back for more!) together with five new friends, all of whom are creating an exciting ensemble. We are well into rehearsals and everyone is working hard on their lines and characterisations. I'm confident we're going to see some terrific performances.

The support and assistance I have had from the Company in terms of back up has been second to none and will make a big contribution to what I believe will be a very entertaining show.

Bernard Moule

Props - can you help?

We are looking for a few props for *The Actress*. Please get in touch with Cathy if you can help with any of them.

lads.chairman@gmail.com
07968 486484

Flower bouquet boxes, wrap, ribbon,
A small musical jewellery box (not a
child's one)

Small CD player

Empty brandy bottles

Empty boxes of chocolates

Intercom style phone wall mounted *



Perfume bottles *

*see examples below

Do You Remember?

25 years' ago: June 1997 - *Murder by Misadventure* by Edward Taylor

Directed by Marguerite Wheatley

Cast included: Foster Barnett, Andrew Rogers, Ginnie Holliman, John Howard



10 years' ago: June 2012 - *Lilies on the Land* by The Lion's Part

Directed by Lisa Mathews

Cast included: Sophie Robertson, Liz Adams, Roz Gerrie, Camilla Steel, Foster Barnett, Jon Gilbert, Richard Foster, Caris Grey



5 years' ago: *Dial M for Murder* by Frederick Knott

Directed by Howard Platt

Cast included: Karen Rogers, Dean Bartholomew, Lee Kenneth, Adam Rabinowitz, Andrew Rogers

