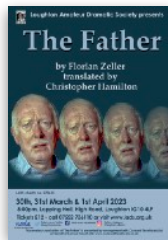


Promptings

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Message from Cathy



What a fabulous start to the year that was! 'The 39 Steps' was marketed as the perfect antidote to The January Blues and it most certainly was. It was wonderful to see Lopping Hall so full of joy and laughter, and when I say full, I mean full. We managed to sell 100% of the tickets available and could have sold many more so a massive thank you to everyone who promoted the production in any way. We received excellent feedback from our audiences and I hope that many of them will come to see our future productions.

Rehearsals for 'The Father' have just started and having attended the first rehearsal I'm confident that this will be another memorable production. It's an extremely thought provoking play that deserves to be seen by as many people as possible so please use the attached leaflet and promote it as much as you can.

Please also make a note of all the dates for your diary, there are lots of things to get involved with so please keep reading for more information.

Cathy



Dates for your diary

Fri 25th February	Directors' Workshop - Lopping Hall
Sun 26th March	Set Up for <i>The Father</i> - from 9:30 am
Thur 30th March - Sat 1st April	<i>The Father</i>
Sat 1st April	After show shindig in Buckleys Bar - all welcome
Sun 2nd April	Set Down - 10:00am start
Mon 3rd April	Crit. at 7:30pm in Small Hall followed by curry - all welcome
Thur 6th April	First rehearsal for <i>A Bunch of Amateurs</i>
Sunday 23rd April	Mayor's Fundraising Event (see article)

Member News

We are delighted to welcome Nina Bressler and Rohini Rajendram who are both involved in 'A Bunch of Amateurs'. Nina is part of the backstage team and Rohini is playing the part of Mary. Many of you will know Rohini from her many years of involvement with LOS and her regular help with FOH for our productions so we're thrilled that she is now a member of LADS. We hope that this will be the first of many productions for both Nina and Rohini.

Directors' Workshop

As you will know from the last edition of Promptings we have arranged a workshop designed at developing the skills of our existing directors and encouraging new directors to take the plunge. That said, the workshop will be interesting for all members whether you wish to direct or not and certainly lots of fun so please let me know if you want to come along, details below

Saturday 25th February 2023 from 9.30am to 4.30pm. The workshop is open to all members at a cost of £20 including lunch and refreshments.

Cathy

NODA Crit. - The 39 Steps

Let me start by declaring an interest. I know this wonderful comic piece well, having seen it three times professionally, a few amateur productions and having directed it a few years ago with Theydon Bois. I think it is a very special work and perfect for a talented and energetic troupe to adapt as they wish. It allows for creativity, interpretation, showcasing individuals and great collaboration.

Although the plot is faithful to Hitchcock's classic film, the form of the play is unmistakably a parody, with numerous references to other works by Hitchcock. Its humour and frantic pace is reminiscent of Monty Python and also of Patrick Barlow's own National Theatre of Brent, which has delighted audiences since the 1980s.

So, with high expectations and a degree of knowledge, I arrived at Lopping Hall very excited. By the end I had seen a wonderful, laugh out loud, masterclass in so many ways.

Set and Staging

The simplicity of the set can underplay the care and decision making of design and what items to use and include. I thought the walls worked well and provided entrances and exits for people and props. You chose to strike most items rather than bring them forward when needed which was fine and kept the acting space clear. The variety of entrances through the front curtains, the auditorium doors and stage left, right and centre, kept the audience guessing and added to the chaotic nature of the play. The themed teal colour scheme of the props and lower walls was a nice touch.

The freewheeling door was used well for outsides and insides and got a few laughs of its own. Going into the Portland Place apartment set this up early on. Its use in The Manor House and for the party was excellent.

I was impressed by the use and functioning of the blind at the window. They are notoriously temperamental but Christian preserved and tamed it in the end, and got the laughs. The telephone ringing gives ample opportunity for comedy and its planned failings always makes for a good gag if the actors can work the looks and awkwardness, which they did.



The two clowns' appearance at the window with lamppost was perfectly timed twice and got the laugh it deserved. It's a Morecambe and Wise moment that worked so well. And to end with the snow brought the window back into view.

The flying Vote McCorquodale banner was suitably homemade and the transformation of the heavy lectern and bentwood chairs into the car, a delight. Congratulations on the hotel desk and bed contraption and to whoever designed and built it, Lee Kenneth? The on cue roaring fire was grate. (Oops great!)



Direction

Cathy Naylor is a skilled director and grasped the style and nature of the play superbly. On one hand *The 39 Steps* is only funny and should be played for all the laughs it can get, on the other, it does have a decent thriller plot which to me was more evident in this performance than others I'd seen. This performance was less frenetic than the professional versions which play on the 130 characters by 4 actors as a main foundation with fast changes, much charging about and pace at lightening speed. We see the players physically tire and perspire and this makes it impressive and funny. This LADS production was less frenetic and gave space for the story line to show through. Between them, Hitchcock and Buchan could knock out a good tale.

I liked the start with the film's theme music and the four artists taking a bow, it set the tone of something different and perhaps a band of travelling players. The pace and patter between the players was excellent and at times the dialogue pinged between them. This was evident in the Mr Memory act which, punctuated by sound effect applause, explained to any unsuspecting audience member the style of the piece. There was good use of the front tabs that were used as a prop throughout.

The trunks for the train carriages and roofs seem to be the approved choice of props for this scene and why not, they work so well but perhaps they then can double up as storage trunks for the cast to take things from later in the play and build on this minimal travelling players theme. You chose to set and strike the trunks which was okay but perhaps a missed opportunity.

The train scene was a great demonstration of the collaborative work with disciplined deliberate moves, well-choreographed and executed for maximum effect. 'Excuse me, sorry', reading the paper, the swapping hats, Mrs Higgins, the kiss, windblown coats and more all ran on time. I think you could have done more windblown clothing, which did get a laugh, but perhaps I'm being greedy.

The window frames worked well, again these aren't in the script but are now part of *The 39 Steps* greatest hits. The audience loved the climbing through each time, perhaps Hannay could have put his fist through the first one to smash the non-existent glass. The chase scenes were short but impactful especially the ones after the McCorquodale speech. The fight in the theatre box and the flying stunt double got an eruption of laughter.



How you were to do the aeroplane chase and crash was much anticipated and climbing the ladders worked well with the fighter pilot helmets and great sound and lighting effects. Damn that impenetrable Scottish mist.

Congratulations on the car transformation, I didn't anticipate the lectern being involved and the hat steering wheel was simple and effective.

The mimed movement was in unison and the sheep sounds make for the plot and fun. Having the two characters then handcuffed for much of the rest of the play brings its own challenges especially when on the moor and climbing the stile. I think Cathy let Cristian and Fiona off lightly with the climbing over the stile, I've seen this be much more complex and probably funnier.

The script has so many great lines; "My wife! Well done", "Bob's your uncle", "some of those hymns are terrible hard to get through", "I'm not surprised you're an orphan". These and many more were well delivered and landed the gags.



Cast

Christian Mortimer

Christian played Hannay as one of the chaps, a club man who was a little bored and up for adventure. His accent was spot on for this character and made me chuckle immediately. More matinee idol than rough adventurer, this portrayal lent on Robert Donat heavily and gave an exaggerated nod to the film. Hannay had an eye for the ladies and they for him, he knew it and enjoyed it. A bounder in love with his own good looks, what a cad!

Christian's timing and delivery were excellent throughout and each gag was planned and well executed. The running on the moor became more and more funny, rather strange leg actions. The recognition of the Radio Announcer describing his good looks could I thought have been played for more, perhaps a slowdown to enjoy the compliments.



The McCorquodale speech was well handled and the realisation of the mistaken identity came across in Christian's facial expressions. It's another silly part of the play but the sport is in the reactions of the two old boys. By Hannay keeping the speech going, it allows the audience to watch the nodding off of McQuarrie in particular which totally upstages Hannay but that's part of the ensemble give and take of this play and worked wonderfully with this foursome.

Christian made the most of this terrific part and entertained the audience very well. Good work.

Fiona Delves

Annabella is possibly my favourite of the 3 characters that Fiona got to portray. It's the accent that sets it apart; "involved" "Beeg ouse" and the silliness of the situation which seems pure Monty Python but is all in the film.

The timid Margaret was lovely and very different from Annabella. The instant bonding between Margaret and Hannay leaves nothing to a relationship build, goes straight into the joy of London, realising the newspaper story and into the passionate goodbye kiss.

Pamela becomes a foil for the others in much of the play and Fiona did well not to try to compete with the other extreme characters but allow the action to take place around her.

The hotel scene gave the opportunity for some good sparring with Hannay. Filling in the register and the bedroom scene were very funny. Taking off the stockings is always fun if on this occasion a little contrived. Hannay's hand should happen to fall on Pamela's knee and it's then awkward for Hannay, what I saw was Hannay reach for the knee almost deliberately but it still got a big laugh mainly for Hannay's expressions.

Fiona kept the story line flowing and delivered the lines with good pace and rhythm, another excellent performance.

Dean Bartholomew

Thanks Dean for your variety of wonderfully ridiculous characters. Congratulations for your Music Hall Mr Memory and the 13 lines of engine features. Dean could also mime juggle without once dropping a ball. His Scottish Crofter was excellent and a tribute to Jon Laurie. His loathing of the English Man in the big hoose and the manic grace before supper made me laugh out loud.



Louisa Jordan was more Bond villain than Lady of the Manor, but then Mr Jordan wasn't exactly Chairman of the Parish Council. We also saw Louisa's brother at the political meeting putting out the chairs in the guise of Dunwoody.

Well done on balancing the chairs and the lectern after the car scene, strength and balance required.

I'd pick out Mrs McGarrigle as Dean's finest moment. The little sideways crab like dance he produced made me chuckle. That hotel was The League of Gentlemen territory, funny, spooky and bizarre all at the same time. I liked the telephone talking behind the hat.

The close work with Phil was of the highest quality and Dean made the most of this almost unique part. A joy to watch.

Phil Watson

I'm not sure if I've seen Phil on the Loughton stage before but what a treat he gave the LADS regulars. I loved the cheeky Milkman, Phil and Christian pushed through all those one liners at great pace, perfect!

Phil's collection of Scottish accents were a joy to hear as we moved around the Outer Hebrides, through the highlands and into Glasgow, an aural tour the SNP would probably have hated! The mimed bagpipes were funny and led nicely into the McGarrigle hotel

Professor Jordan was splendidly OTT for this production. His reaction to the thirty-nine steps was wonderfully stupid and showing the missing finger, spot on. The scene between Jordan and Hannay was a real highlight of the play as Phil went from bizarre to Germanic manic bonkers and Hannay played it straight and serious. Phil gave a great cameo with expressive expressions, disciplined moves and audience engagement. And then to finish the Act with the weird dance with Mrs J. It was time for a drink!

The Garibaldi eating Sheriff who switches sides was another delight from Phil as was McQuarrie at the meeting who struggled with the oversized lectern and ended up laying upon it, beautifully choreographed and executed. Then his slow steady lowering into the chair, almost touching the seat before rising again slowly to take the podium. This is exactly what I mean by controlled, disciplined precision, and rarely seen to this standard on an amateur stage.



On one occasion, I think as Mr McGarrigle, Phil managed to smile with one side of his mouth and face and then followed with the other side, it was quite extraordinary. This was a memorable performance of detailed discipline in the hands of a talented performer.

Sound and Lighting

The sound and lighting designs played an important part in the production and Sarah Biggs

and Andrew Rogers were certainly kept busy. The lighting on Hannay asleep in the chair, evening and morning worked well as did the haze of the Forth River and the drop from the bridge with a well-timed splash.

The party sounds with the opening and closing of the doors was terrific and couldn't have been easy to do and I liked the screech of the gramophone needle to abruptly finish the music.

Thanks for the note in the programme about the sound effects. They were the work of Max Batty and Colin Guthrie of the Tower Theatre Company based in Stoke Newington. They would be delighted to know their efforts found another outing.

Costumes

You must have raided the societies wig box with a passion. They were mostly appropriately ridiculous and looked stuck on, apart from Annabella's but that's live theatre for you.

Sherlock fancy dress for Dean's inspector made me smile as did Professor Jordan's attire. Lots of quick changes were needed and this must have been part of the selection of which costume to use. The changes were slick and added to the performance.

Programme

As good as ever but special mention for the film graphic, I thought this was clever and attractive. Nice one Howard!

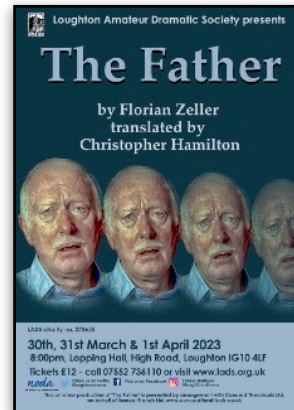
Summary

The 39 Steps was a great piece of work and a wonderful opportunity to showcase the talents of these four performers. This is a challenging piece to tackle and Cathy should be pleased with her and the team's achievement. Now you can have a well-earned rest; Garibaldi anyone?

Paul Daynes

NODA Regional Representative.

Our next production



When I heard LADS had chosen "The Father" as part of the 2022/23 season, I must admit I was concerned. I had seen the production with Kenneth Cranham and Claire Skinner at the Cambridge Arts theatre back in 2015, and my immediate reaction then was "well, that is a play we can't do at LADS" ... however, interestingly I had said the same thing when I saw "Pressure" with David Haig, and we all know I wasn't right about that. My concern with both plays was the staging – with "Pressure", it was the huge meteorological maps, and with "The Father", it was the way the set disappears without the audience being aware.

However, where there is a will, there is a way ... or maybe where there is a Garry/Terry, there is a way. Our first ideas were to have revolving flats with furniture attached to them, but that was quickly dismissed as too clunky and too noisy, so we then looked to having a backstage team who were strong enough to manoeuvre large items of furniture quickly and quietly through spaces in the set with strong leadership from the stage manager in the guise of Cathy. To make it doubly difficult they will have to do this in a complete blackout, helped by 'blinding' light projected into the audience! *I hope I am not putting you off coming and seeing the play!!* As with so many of our sets, we won't really know until show week if it will work as we want it to, but I am quietly confident all will be well – and if it isn't, we have the support to make it so!

With regard to the play itself. What an amazing piece of writing. It is 90 minutes long, without an interval (*so lots of time in the bar afterwards to discuss and talk about the production*) and it is

totally immersive. The writing is honest and real, but has the power to destabilise the audience. They will leave the theatre feeling like they have just spent the time inside *the Father's* mind, seeing and hearing things as he does. They should feel angry and confused, disorientated and discombobulated – and then they will realise that is the whole point of the piece. So, an enormous challenge for all involved, but one we are all looking forward to immensely.

Jean

Charities

LADS has chosen two charities to support this season, Epping Forest Dementia Action Alliance and Dementia UK. We hope to raise money the profile of both charities throughout the season.

For more information visit their websites:

[Epping Forest Dementia Action Alliance](#)

[Dementia UK](#)



Epping Forest Dementia Alliance (EFDA) was launched in May 2016 seeing individuals and organisations come together that are truly committed to improving the health and social care outcomes for those affected by dementia.

The Alzheimer's Society awarded Epping Forest District a Dementia Friendly Community status in 2019. EFDA continued to grow throughout the pandemic, at a time when those affected by dementia needed their care and support more than ever.



Dementia UK nurses (known as Admiral nurses) provide life-changing care for families affected by all forms of dementia – including Alzheimer's disease.

Their nurses are there when people need help. They have the time to listen and the knowledge to solve problems. As dementia specialists, Admiral Nurses help families manage complex needs – considering the person living with dementia and the people around them – and they can advise other healthcare professionals.

For families affected by dementia, they can be a lifeline.

When people are struggling, their nurses help them take back control. They help people living with dementia to stay independent for longer, and support the people caring for them so they have the strength to cope with the bad days, and the energy to enjoy the good days.

Admiral Nurses give people the quality of care that we would all want for ourselves and our loved ones – and they are working hard to increase the number of nurses across the UK so no one has to face dementia alone.

Do you remember?

Many apologies for the errors made in the last Promptings in the “Do You Remember” section. I had put “Lion in Winter” in for Jan 2018, and “Benefactors” in for Jan 2013. In fact they were Jan 2019 (LinW), and Mar 2013 (Benefactors).

So below, I have added the correct Jan 2018 play, which was “The Elephant Man”, and replaced Benefactors with the correct Jan 2013 play which was “Blithe Spirit”... sorry for the confusion!!

5 years' ago in Jan 2018

The Elephant Man by Bernard Pomerance. Directed by Jean Cooper

Cast included: Christian Mortimer, Tom Donoghue, Howard Platt, Amanda Smith, Peter Fox, Richard Cohen, Marcel Kay, Elisa Thomas, Jo Keen, Wendy Butler, Joshua Sowerbutts, Martin Howarth, Val Jones, Charlotte Pope



5 years' ago - Mar 2018

“Come back to the Five and Dime, Jimmy Dean, Jimmy Dean by Ed Graczyk. Directed by Andrew Rogers.

Cast included: Jean Cooper, Cathy Naylor, Joshua Sowerbutts, Sarah Vickers, Dolleen Howlett, Shea Donovan, Karen Rogers, Elisa Thomas, Sophie Gilbert.



10 years' ago - Jan 2013

Blithe Spirit by Noel Coward. Directed by Dan Cooper.

Cast included: Ellie Atanasonva, Liz Adams, Howard Platt, Martin Howarth, Wendy Butler, Jean Cooper, Gemma Garside



25 years' ago - Mar 1998

When We Are Married. Directed by Jean Cooper

Cast included: Lindsay Andrews, Babs Oakley, Stephen Radley, Anne Wyles, Martin Howarth, John Howard, Roger Barker, Sue Bonner, John Haylett, Mike Smith, Wendy Butler, Irene Elkins, Marguerite Wheatley, Bill Caldow



Mayor's Fundraising Event

Cllr Barbara Cohen, Loughton Town Mayor has announced that Loughton Town Council is organising a Treasure Hunt to raise funds for the installation of an air conditioning unit in Lopping Hall.

The event will take place on the morning of Sunday 23rd April 2023 and as this will be raising money which directly benefits Lopping Hall and LADS, it would be lovely if we could support this event. Please let me know if you are able to join in.

The poster features a large pink starburst shape in the upper left containing the title. In the upper right is the Loughton Town Council logo, which depicts a stag standing on a green hill with trees. The background of the poster is a black and white photograph of a residential street with houses and trees.

**Town Mayor's
Treasure Hunt**

How well do you know Loughton!

Test your local knowledge and enter the Town Mayor's
"Treasure Hunt" and help raise funds for the Lopping Hall
(installation of an air conditioning unit)

10am ~ Sunday 23 April 2023
at Lopping Hall, 189 High Road IG10 4LF

The walking quiz will take place around Loughton High
Road, each team will have 2 hours to answer and find clues
hidden around the Town. Earn points for each clue, the team
with the most points in the quickest time wins!

Refreshments available ~ Prizes for the winners
Fun for all the family

Entrance price £10 family or £5 individual

For more information or Register your entry please contact
Loughton Town Council, 1 Buckingham Court, Rectory Lane, Loughton IG10 2QZ
contact@loughton-tc.gov.uk 020 8508 4200