

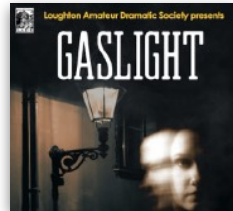


# Promptings

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Today



January  
Production



LADS Tea for  
Babs and Roger



NODA  
Certificate

## Message from Cathy



Well, what a start to the season that was !! Congratulations to all involved in 'A Fine Bright Day Today', it was a wonderful start to our season and our return to Lopping Hall. We weren't sure how confident our audience would be to return but the production was well attended with 281 tickets sold and we received some lovely feedback from audience members expressing their delight that we were back so it was a huge success.

The production week was slightly tense following Jean's positive COVID test but the cast and crew all rallied and carried on with Jean remaining firmly at the helm by continuing to direct via Zoom. Without exception, everyone pulled together to ensure that the production went ahead as smoothly as possible so my thanks to you all. I would like to say particular thanks to Lee who singlehandedly dismantled the set before 9am on the Sunday. Without Garry, Stephen (who also had a positive COVID test) and Andrew, set down could've been a real problem but Lee saved the day like a true warrior !! Thank you Lee.

Looking forward, rehearsals for Gaslight are now underway and going well. Tickets are now on sale so please promote the production and

sell as many tickets as you can. The handbill is attached to the email for you to forward to everyone you know.

Membership fees were due on 1<sup>st</sup> September and there are still a few people who haven't yet renewed. If you are one of them please pay without delay, I really don't want to have to chase because it won't be pretty !!

Please make a note of the upcoming events and put the dates in your diary. It would be lovely to see you at the Christmas Social on 10<sup>th</sup> December and of course, set up on Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> Jan.

If I don't see you before, have a lovely Christmas and all the best for the New Year.

*Cathy*



## Dates for your diary

Fri 10th December	LADS Christmas Social - 8:00pm in Buckleys Bar
Sun 16th January	Set Up for 'Gaslight' from 9:30am - Lopping Hall
Thur 20th - Sat 22nd January	<i>Gaslight'</i>
Sat 22nd January	After show shindig (location tbc) - all welcome
Sun 23rd January	Set Down - 10:00am start
Mon 24th January	Crit. At 7:30pm in Small Hall followed by curry - all welcome
Thur 27th January	Read through for the June production
Fri 28th January	First Rehearsal for Frost/Nixon

## Members' News

We're delighted to welcome Amy Taylor who is playing Nancy in *Gaslight* and Martin Polaine who is assistant props for *Gaslight*. We're also delighted to welcome back Emma Middleton after a long absence from LADS. Emma is playing Mrs Manningham in *Gaslight*.

## NODA Crit. - A Fine Bright Day Today

I was looking forward very much to returning to Lopping Hall after this long enforced break to see live drama again in Loughton. What hit me as strange was that after just a few minutes it was like we'd never been away. There was the familiar buzz in the bar, friendly faces all around and people pleased to meet up once again. Thank you for gathering us together and presenting this delightful well-crafted play.

### Choice of play

I suspect most of the audience wouldn't be familiar with *A Fine Bright Day Today*, I was one of them. So, I bought the script a few weeks ago and settled down to read it. With a tea break in the interval, I read it in one sitting and loved everything about it. What a good find.

It seems to make good sense to go for a small cast play during these socially distancing times, but of course that brings the added pressure of

relying on a few people to keep well. No chance of someone stepping in at the last moment or doubling up. I was sorry Jean couldn't be present for the performances but these are strange times.

### Front of House

I always like the LADS shirts. It helps the audience pick out a helper and gives the impression of a large company with many members all willing to play their part. We always get a warm welcome from the FoH crew, it's now such a feature.

I liked the mobile phone announcement which unfortunately continues to be necessary. I could see that it may interrupt any pre-performance mood but not in this case.



### Programme

At last, a programme I could read without a magnifier! Thank you for using a readable font in a colour that worked, and pictures I could

see. It sounds basic but it is good to see that you are a society that fully understands the importance of a readable programme in a theatre setting.

I would have liked to know what the scene change music was, we did hear a lot of it after all.

### Set and Staging

As I turned to the stage having found my seat I actually said 'wow'. It looked as good as a West End play. The depths and angles gave added interest and the set dressing made the look and feel just like someone's home. Fridges, kitchen cupboards, running water (well done) and even a copy of Delia Smith's Complete Cookery Course which was so Margaret. If this was on Airbnb I'd take it for a week. All well-constructed as I would expect of LADS. Please keep photos if you wish to enter the NODA scenic award.

One thought on the coastal path was that two flats didn't seem enough. Much of the time Milton played his scenes backed by the orange/yellow wall of the hall. The lights cast shadow on the wall too. Perhaps a third flat against the wall would have been better.

### Direction

Jean Cooper made the scenes between the three actors flow so naturally. I was wondering if you choreographed the moves or workshopped the piece allowing the actors to stand, sit and move as they saw fit and what felt natural. That was the impression it gave anyway. One maybe forgiven for thinking that only two actors on stage most of the time would be restricted in creating a variety of pictures but this wasn't the case.

I can imagine that there must have been a very close collaboration between Director and actors. A four hander I would say. I suspect lots of coaching came about to bring such excellent performances and maybe plenty of trying it this way and that until you were all satisfied. The intimacy achieved on stage would have come from the tone created by Jean during those evenings rehearsing and it was thus even more of a shame you couldn't be with your colleagues for performance. I do feel for you.

### Cast

I am full of admiration for all three of you for even agreeing to take on such gigantic parts. Parts where you were so exposed. There is little business in the play to hide behind or even much plot to carry you through. It was mainly you, your characters and their emotions, thoughts and feelings. It was your job to keep your audience engaged and entranced by this situation and you did it superbly with only the script and the words to pull you through.

### Margaret Harvey



Val Jones made Margaret totally believable. It was easy to believe that this Margaret did live in that house, did work in the store up on the bypass, was married to an uncaring Trawlerman and was disappointed in Rebecca's choice of partner. So much so that if I came by Lopping Hall next Thursday I might just find her still there.

The look Val achieved in Margaret in the way she moved, moaned and saw her world gave the character depth and rigour. The clothes were spot on. Margaret was not one to look out for next season's fashion. Well done Liz Adams for giving Margaret such a drab look at the beginning and a slight smartening over time. The accent, straight from growing up in the last house on the row backing onto the moors gave authenticity and was well maintained and with good diction throughout.

I liked the way Val showed awkwardness and fear when Margaret was taken out of her rather tight comfort zone. Seeing Milton in his dressing gown achieved a fluster of note.

Her nervousness when going ‘somewhere strange’ “or talk to people I don’t know”. Although we didn’t actually witness these events we were left in no doubt that this was true. Inside her comfort zone Margaret was always in charge, caring for the kitchen, wiping the table, putting things away, lids on pots and it gave a good contrast.

Val’s delivery was a pleasure to listen to. Good emphasis when required and shaping the line to give impact to the meaning. A fine skill.

Perhaps the character development was slightly underplayed as we saw Margaret fall for Milton or at least the idea of Milton and then “taking the plunge”. Perhaps we could have seen more turmoil in the challenges she was facing, some regret when Margaret lets Milton walk out of the door. Maybe another gear of genuine affection when Milton collapses which makes the departure even sadder for the audience and less of a surprise when they’re off up to bed on “you fit then”. Just a thought.

### Rebecca Harvey



Lisa Kirby brought great life and energy to the part of Rebecca Harvey. Rebecca gives the play the hope that changes are available and shows the courage required to break out of the Harvey household. As she says “We’re all afraid Mum, we just cover it up the best we can”. Lisa grabbed this breaking away sentiment really well and despite Margaret’s fear of losing her, she showed the determination not to be emotionally blackmailed.

The love for Rebecca’s mother was still apparent in the portrayal and the facilitation of Milton staying in the house was a lovely example of bringing something different to Margaret who was so unprepared to seek any kind of change herself.

The North East accent was a great choice and helped place the coastal town somewhere in Northumbria. North of Blyth before you get to Berwick?. Not an easy choice of accent unless you come from those parts. If the accent was adopted for Rebecca, very well done Lisa.

Lisa acted with a natural flow and I believed she had been brought up in that home. The lines fell naturally and she gave much warmth to the part. Rebecca spoke quicker than the oldies which is a common characteristic in people of Rebecca’s age. This gave another differentiation between Lisa and the others. We heard every word though, even with the pace and accent.

One thing to think about is if you could have found ways to get even more inside this character. On one or two occasions it felt like you were acting rather than being Rebecca. Particularly earlier on when sorting through the box and then later in Act II scene 6. Maybe there could have been another gear of real frustration and pain that your mother wasn’t seizing this rare opportunity. A few raised voices. But I’m being very picky, I really enjoyed your performance and you added greatly to the overall piece.

### Milton Farnsworth

Howard Platt played Milton as a gentle, lovely, easy going fellow with a side order of humility and bearing a few secrets which he was happy to divulge when the right moment arrived. We heard of his “struggle with his own inadequacies” and we saw an awkwardness in his character at first. There were a number of layers to Milton and we saw these building over time. A good example of developing a character.

The self-reflecting monologues that Philip Goulding gives Milton I thought were rather poetical and cleverly structured. Act 1’s

description of Broome echoing Milton's own situation is only evident in hindsight and then only for the very attentive. Howard delivered these speeches with sensitivity bringing out Milton's philosophy on life with eloquence. Howard has a lovely tone of voice, easy on the ear and comfortable to be in the presence of. Perhaps a venture into audio bedtime stories beckons. I thoroughly enjoyed Milton telling his stories especially the bees and the accidental wealth, very engaging.



Milton appeared comfortable in his own skin, even confessing to "walking around naked as a babe" at home. His delight to be in his dressing gown gave plenty of distress to Margaret. The interaction and relationship between Margaret and Milton was worthy of note. I did believe they liked each other and found each other's company warm and pleasing. There was a lovely ease between the two actors that welcomed the audience to look on this blossoming friendship. The duologues were played with real skill.

One thing I would point out to Howard was that at the beginning of the evening he did have a tendency to move about rather too much. A bit of 'dancing' with the upper body didn't feel natural and gave a sense of over performing. I suspect this was nerves related because in the final monologue Act II scene 7 the movement was gone and a stillness and discipline of gesture enhanced the poetry of the words and didn't distract from Goulding's fine script. Something to be conscious of perhaps as you develop your fine talent.

### Sound and Lighting

The sound effects played a significant part and well done to Andrew Rogers in collecting the range of birds, cars, music and fighter jets. All appeared carefully chosen.

With 15 different scenes I think we heard the same or similar piano music 15 times in the scene changes. I started off at 8 o'clock liking the few bars of music very much, wanting to know what it was. By the twelfth time I'd had enough. Could you not have used different pieces of a similar style? This was a good example of having too much of a good thing.

### Scene changes

Some of the many changes seemed to take a long while. I appreciate the required costume changes take time but with a blackened stage and that music again it became disengaging. Maybe leave a worker light on. I think it's okay for the audience see the change of props or set up for the next scene.

### Summary

This was a great success reliant on a small, dedicated team that showed real cohesion bringing together a rare performance of a little known play. Fine collaborative acting on a very good set enhanced by sound and lighting delivered a play to remember. As Jean Cooper said in her programme notes' a gentle, poignant and funny play that was very well crafted. Thank you.

### Paul Danes

## LADS Afternoon Tea

I have been a member of LADS for over 30 years, but still feel a relative newcomer compared to Babs and Roger, who have clocked up 70 and 65 years respectively. We had already commemorated the astounding achievement of their combined 135 years earlier in the year by carrying out Zoom interviews which were posted on YouTube, but had been struggling during these pandemic times to work out when we could all celebrate together. Then the committee came up with the idea of an

afternoon tea at Lopping Hall, where we could all chat in the relative safety of the large hall. A date was decided which suited both our guests of honour, and the invitations went out. Lots of LADS members, past and present, arrived to see Babs and Roger and marvel over their achievements (although there were many friends, who could not make the date because of prior commitments, so maybe we could do another event in 2022). The committee had really excelled by decorating the hall with colourful bunting and putting out tables with pretty tablecloths. There was a mountain of cakes which had been baked by members, and delicious sandwiches, as well as copious amounts of tea and coffee and a few bubbles too!!

We presented Babs and Roger with large photo albums which charted all the productions they had been involved in over the past 70 years, and members signed the back pages with messages of love and admiration. If you weren't there on the day and saw the albums, I urge you to give Babs and Roger a call and go and see them (and you can add your name to the pages at the



back). It was a truly wonderful afternoon, full of love and warmth. Well done, the LADS!! Following is an excerpt from the speech I made on the evening ...

*"I have had the privilege of being friends with Babs and Roger, in and out of LADS, for over 30 years. Babs has directed me in many plays and I have played Bab's grand-daughter, Roger's daughter and his love interest – and I have learnt so much from both of them, by just watching and listening. But we have also shared many meals together and theatre trips, as well as us all being involved in the running of Lopping Hall as Trustees and Hall Secretary. It is during these social times that we got time to chat and find out about all the history of their time in LADS ... and the thing that always comes out is the amount of fun they had! We have heard wonderful stories of parties, theatre outings, holidays and travel, and all the things they got up to with their LADS' friends over the years – so much so, that I think there is another YouTube presentation right there.*

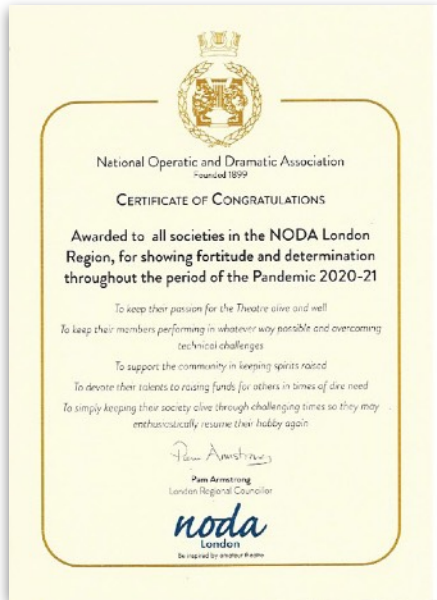
*I have always greatly admired their theatrical skills, but now I admire their resilience as well. Their determination not to retire from LADS, to – in Bab's words- "do what you can"- which have included Bab's bounteous set up lunches, helping members with lines, working FOH serving teas and coffees, sitting on the ticket desk, doing FOH manager and so much more. And during the past 20 months, which I would term "LADS' Zoom Period", both Babs and Roger have been able to perform again in the radio plays we have read and the Youtube productions, including "Isolation stories", poetry in "A Walk on the Wild Side" and, the part Roger was born to play, Badger in "The Wind in the Willows"."*

With love and admiration.

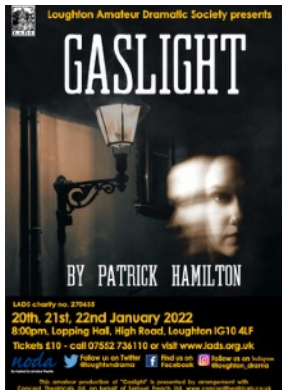
**Jean.**

## NODA Certificate

We were delighted to receive a certificate from NODA congratulating us for 'Showing fortitude and determination throughout the period of the Pandemic 2020 – 2021'. Once again, thank you and congratulations to all involved in our YouTube productions.



## Gaslight



We're only a couple of weeks into rehearsal but the cast are already starting to explore their characters and the play is taking shape. Everyone is working really hard with lines well on the way to being learnt so I'm really looking forward to the next few weeks working with the cast to develop every nuance of their characters, resulting in what I'm confident will be a fantastic production.

## Christian

## Do You Remember?

5 years ago: January 2017

### *The Thrill of Love* by Amanda Whittington

Directed by Karen Rogers. Cast included: Elisa Thomas, Howard Platt, Sarah Hudson, Katie Clarke, Steph Adleman



10 years ago: January 2012

### *Iron* by Rona Munro.

Directed by Iain Howland. Cast included: Jean Cooper, Birte Sponagel, Martin Howarth, Siobhan Schofield



25 years ago: January 1997

### *Chase me Up Farndale Avenue, S'il Vous Plait* by David McGillivray and Walter Zerlin Jnr

Directed by Sue Cole. Cast included: Sue Bonner, Christine Eckley, Liz Adams (nee Holt), Marguerite Wheatley, Roger Barker

