

# Promptings

**In this issue...**



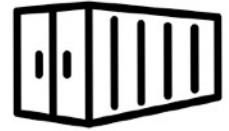
**NODA crit - A Bunch of Amateurs**



**Our Next Production**



**Centenary Celebration**



**Storage Update**

## Message from Cathy



Welcome to the first edition of Promptings for our 2023 – 2024 very exciting Centenary Season. I hope you have all enjoyed the summer break and are now looking forward to the fun and challenges of another LADS season and celebrating our magnificent milestone.

Last season ended very strongly with 'A Bunch of Amateurs'. It was another wonderful production with some excellent performances so congratulations to Adam and the whole team.

Rehearsals for 'Time of My Life' are already underway and from what I've seen, going extremely well, - see more from Karen this issue and please let her know if you can help with any of the props listed. Jenny is still looking for volunteers to help front of house so please contact her if you haven't done so already.

You should have received the season dates with the start of season mailing so please make a note of all the dates. You should also have received information about paying your membership. Many thanks to everyone who has paid and those of you who haven't, this is your first friendly reminder !!

We will be planning some additional events for our Centenary season so please look out for emails and get involved. We should all feel extremely proud that our society continues to grow and is still entertaining audiences to such an incredibly high standard. This is only possible because of our strong, vibrant and talented members so thank you. Lets make our Centenary season the best yet !!

I look forward to seeing you at set up if not before

*Cathy*



## Dates for your diary

Sun 22nd October	Set Up for <i>Time of My Life</i> - from 9:30 am
Thur 26th Oct. - Sat 28th Oct.	<i>Time of My Life</i>
Sat 28th October	After show shindig in Buckleys Bar - all welcome
Sun 29th October	Set Down - 10:00am start
Mon 30th October	Crit. at 7:30pm in Small Hall followed by curry - all welcome
Thur 2nd November	Read Through for <i>Death of a Salesman</i>
Fri 8th December	Xmas get together - Buckleys Bar, Lopping Hall

## Members news

We are delighted to welcome several new members. Sekai Mulwandi, Alice Smith, Steve Lee, Nick Bateman, Meg Larmour and Phil Preston are all involved in 'A Murder is Announced'. Natalie Hayes joined after the latest casting but we hope she will be involved in all aspects of LADS as soon as possible. Lina Lee and Anjali Johnson are both involved in 'Time of my Life'. Welcome to you all and I hope you'll be members for many years to come.

## Storage update

We have now completed the storage shuffle so my sincere thanks to everyone who came along to help both prior to the move and on the day of the move. Our costumes have moved to the old furniture garage and our furniture and small props are now stored in a container in Stapleford. We still have more sorting and organising to do but the main part of the move is completed. Please bear in mind that the container isn't as handy to 'pop to' at short notice as the garages were, so forward planning is essential to make sure we have everything we need prior to set building and show week.

## Centenary event - 20th April 2024



The Centenary planning committee is still working hard to plan a very special celebration for us all. You should have all received your 'Save the Date' email and have already put it in your diaries but if not, do it now !! We want as many members, past and present to join us in celebrating this very special milestone. Full details of the event will be available soon so keep an eye on your email, it's going to be epic!

## Charity

The Committee has chosen Lopping Hall as our charity for the coming season. As it's our centenary and Lopping Hall has been our home for all this time it's very fitting that we should acknowledge this. LADS has a wonderful relationship with the directors of Lopping Hall and we are continually grateful for their support and the fantastic improvements they continue to make to the hall. The directors of Lopping Hall have a full programme of planned improvements so we aim to raise much-needed funds and increase awareness of the fantastic facilities the hall offers.

## NODA Crit. - A Bunch of Amateurs

Thank you for inviting me to watch A Bunch of Amateurs, on a warm but comfortable evening at Lopping Hall. By this I mean the play by Hislop and Newman not the cliched description of ..... well you get it. Why has this phrase grown to mean something of poor quality or badly organised? It certainly didn't apply to this production, to LADS or to most local theatre, but it does make for a good title.

### Set and Staging

Another cleverly designed LADS set which gave different static areas for the barn and the Bed and Breakfast dining area. The space taken for each was appropriate and more than adequate for the number of actors on stage and allowed for smooth changes between these two locations. The brick walls contrasted with the B&B wallpaper and even the two doors positioned close together didn't confuse. The airport and physio areas were well zoned with lighting and the reveal of the stage area behind the curtains was fun to leave until partway into the play. The whole set was well thought out and so congratulations to Stephen Radley.

One small comment was that when part of the playing area is raised as high as the dining area was in Mary's Bed and Breakfast, you may want to consider sightlines from the audience's seated level. Being so high, much of the audience couldn't see anything on the table, therefore the tablets

and the takeaway for example, were talked about but not easily seen. Also, when Jefferson was talking to Jessica the vase of flowers on the front of the table blocked their faces for some of the audience. When rehearsing on the flat these issues don't exist and only come to life when on the stage. If the actors had held up the tablets and the takeaway a little before putting them on the table that might have helped or don't raise the playing area quite so high.

I wasn't sure about the sprinkler high in the wall until it went off and then I was laughing in admiration. I do love a good slapstick effect.



### Direction

I've seen this play before but, embarrassingly for me, never really understood what was going on. The clarity that was given in this production established the context and plot easily and the scene at the airport when Jefferson lands gave me everything I needed to sit back and watch the funny and ludicrous plot play out.

Adam Rabinowitz did an excellent job setting the actors in the space provided and created some lovely pictures. The plea from Dorothy for the £50,000 was well handled and fun for the audience to feel part of the production. The positioning of Jefferson and Denis stage right and left worked well for their exchange and the mix of actors facing front or face-to-face gave a variety of positions. The celebrity tantrum at the end of Act 1 was presented as Jefferson versus the others on stage which looked good. Seeing and hearing David (and Archie) on the iPad was a lovely touch and something I suspect was added in for this production.

The table centre stage for Act 1 was rather large and took up a lot of the area pushing the actors into a small space between the blue curtain and the chairs. The running around the table was fun but if a smaller table had been used or no table at all, as in Act 2, it would have provided more acting space.

I felt the pace of the play seemed to stay in the same gear for long periods. Plodding along nicely without really taking off. Whether the pace could have accelerated and then decelerated a little more I'm not sure, but usually pace and attack can bring contrasting shades to a two-hour play. This didn't take away from a well-directed comedy which had the audience laughing out loud.

### Cast

#### Dorothy Nettle

Vee Wells played Dot with a calmness that suggested she knew all would be well and that any problems could be overcome. Dorothy was not only King Lear's director but also the facilitator of the plot holding the storyline together. Vee had some wonderful sarcastically delivered lines and was generally unimpressed by Jefferson the star, although warmly affectionate to Jefferson the man.



Perhaps Vee could have enveloped the character of Dot a little more and made her more believable. Her ability to influence and persuade the likes of Nigel, Denis and Mary to do what Dot wanted them to do was a constant characteristic. Perhaps this provided an opportunity to show a more manipulative Dot rather than just her as the good community leader. Having said that, I enjoyed Vee's performance very much and

thought she contrasted well with the larger characters in the play.

### **Nigel Dewbury**

Nick Charles showed some good timing on his comic lines and played Nigel with confidence and attack. As with most of the supporting roles, this part didn't have much depth to it but Nick displayed his frustration at Jefferson's acting incompetence to good comic effect. His bow was strangely funny on each of its repeats and his pomposity came across consistently. The change of heart towards Jefferson was convincing and I liked the sword fight.



### **Mary Plunkett**

Rohini Rajendram developed Mary into a warm and engaging character, excited by the presence of the screen star Jefferson Steel. Her enthusiasm and wanting of everything to go well was fun to watch and she didn't miss out on the opportunity for some awkward flirting as only Mary knew how. Her confusion over which actor starred in which film was a good running gag which the audience enjoyed. The sight of the flamenco dress with castanets and Roh's expression facing out front was a memory that makes me giggle as I think back on it now.

Mary's facial expressions gave much to this portrayal. Little grimaces as she realised she'd said something embarrassing, broad smiles at the joy and excitement of meeting a Hollywood legend and the shock in the eyes on discovering Lauren and Jefferson. As Act 2 progressed we saw an angry and jealous Mary and again Rohini played this just right with attack and venom but within the character of Mary. We also got a few glimpses of Rohini's fine singing voice. This was a

good performance in Rohini's first non-singing show, well done.



### **Denis Dobbins**

From Denis's comic entrance through the back curtains his character was quickly established and well portrayed by Marcel Kay. His simple way of life in rural England seemed at odds with his ability to play classic Gloucester but therein lies the comedy. Denis moved to become Jefferson's minder with serious enthusiasm and again this brought many laughs as did the lines written on Denis's back.

Also, congratulations to Marcel for a good and successful stab at the Suffolk accent. As a native of Norfolk, I have spent my life listening to people doing poor East Anglian accents believing that 'yokel west country' is good enough. So, when I heard Marcel say 'Youtoob' and 'Scootuh' I wanted to cheer. Good work Marcel and much appreciated.

### **Jefferson Steele**

Howard Platt did a fine job as Jefferson Steel. From his airport entrance he established the plot construct and the misunderstanding of the Stratford players. Howard's Jefferson was very believable and he looked, sounded and acted the American star really well. I think the audience even had some sympathy for him and certainly felt his pain stuck in this situation. I liked the expectation that Mary was wanting his autograph but was really taking his breakfast order, and that his tour of downtown Stratford took just three minutes. Jefferson had some good lines about Shakespeare's writing talents and shortcomings, e.g. "Needs a re-write" and

Ultimate Finality 4 was a marvellous film title. (The art work in the programme for the movie poster was wonderfully funny and not at all self-indulgent, Howard!)

I would imagine that this part is not easy to position with the absurdity of a Hollywood star being in a village production of King Lear with all its funny but obvious references to trailers, riders and food requirements. He also needed a warmth and ultimate admiration for the people around him. Howard navigated this voyage well and made the absurd acceptable and landed the intended comedy. Well done.



### Lauren Bell

Vicky Harris took on the role as the sponsor's wife Lauren with style. She obviously had more to give than just being 'the Beer Broad' and either as a physiotherapist or a Shakespearean actor, Lauren got her opportunities. The massage scene worked very well and was a clever piece of positioning, acting and timing. Mary's eyes, as she came through the door, said it all.



### Jessica Steel

The backpacker, Jessica, added much to the play when she arrived later in Act 1. The plot took on

another element and Lizzie Clare played with confidence and energy to confront the megastar with his parental failings. I really liked the relationship between Jefferson and Jessica and the breakfast scene showed that they knew each other in depth. Both actors brought a genuineness that carried through to the end when Jessica was ill and in need of care.

Jessica's asthma being brought on by her allergy to her father made me laugh, as did, I'm ashamed to say, her collapse during the King Lear play. Lizzie's accent was well placed and consistent throughout.



### Sound and Lighting

I really liked the different music played between scenes. I took up Adam's programme challenge to see how many I could spot. Airport by the Motors, English Country Garden and the traditional Indian music made me smile. Some of the music was played a little too long as the actors were in place ready to go but kept in the dark.

Sound effects of bleating sheep, shouting paparazzi, fire alarms, ambulances and Mission Impossible were all good fun.

The lighting design of designated areas worked well as did the single spot on the blanketed Jefferson.

### Costumes

The well selected costumes complemented the characters and appeared in keeping. Mary particularly had a fine ever-changing wardrobe with bright dresses and skirts to fit her sunny nature. The flamenco dress was terrific. Nigel came to rehearsals dressed in blazer with bow tie or cravat. Denis' blue boiler suit fitted his

maintenance role in Act 1 and Jefferson’s shirts brought Hawaii to Suffolk.

The King Lear requirements added to the large wardrobe but again all looked spot on, even Marcel as Goneril.



**Props**

There were some lovely props with The Sun worthy of special note, complete with headline and front-page photo. The pool table, mobility scooter, take-away curry and wheelchair all needed gathering. Well done to Karen Rogers and Mel Taylor.

The challenge of this play is that it’s a well written, fairly light comedy, with a good set up and story wrapped around King Lear, which is not known for its laughs. It then requires the cast to perform a five-minute chunk of the heavy historical at 10.15pm. This is not easy for any audience, however good the acting. You did a good job contrasting the two styles but I wish Messrs Hislop and Newman hadn’t foisted this part upon us.

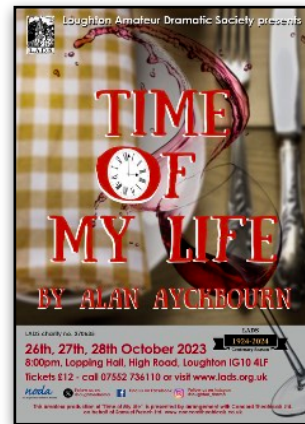
**Summary**

So as Jefferson said, us amateurs, why do we do it? We all have our own personal reasons but I suspect we can all at least agree with Denis, “It gets us out of the house”.

**Paul Daynes**

**NODA Regional Representative.**

**Our next production**



It seems fitting that we should start our Centenary Season off with a play by Alan Ayckbourn, one of the most prolific and successful British playwrights of the past century. “Time of My Life” is both a deceptively simple play – the intertwined stories of three couples from the same family – and also, with Ayckbourn’s treatment of time, a clever and quite complex one.

It’s also a play with strongly written and recognisable characters, every one of which has given our actors something to get their teeth into. Rehearsals are progressing well, with lots of hard work from the cast and crew, but I can’t believe that, at the time of writing this, we only have two weeks left until set-up Sunday – gulp! We are looking forward to seeing you all at set-up and during the run of the show. Please pass details on to friends and families. Let’s make this a great start to LADS’ 100<sup>th</sup> birthday celebrations.

**Can you help with the following props?**

- Plain white crockery including cups and saucers
- Remy Martin bottle
- Round table cloths , one for 5ft diameter table m,
- two for 2ft diameter tables to floor length
- Play food or similar: cakes tarts (see example below) If you can help please let me know.



**Karen**

## Do you remember?

**5 years' ago: October 2018**

**"Boeing Boeing" by Marc Camoletti. Directed by Dolly Howlett.**

Cast included: Sophie Gilbert, Christian Mortimer, Dean Bartholomew, Sylvia Zilesnick, Sarah Hudson, Charlotte Pope



**10 years' ago: October 2013**

**"Playboy of the Western World" by J M Synge. Directed by Jean Cooper**

**Directed by Jean Cooper**

Cast included: Dean Bartholomew, Paul Caira, Howard Platt, Frances Dodd, Cathy Naylor, Tom Donoghue, Roger Barker, Martin Howarth, Lindsay Swinson, Jodie Seymour, Sophie Gilbert, Foster Barnet, Wendy Butler



**25 years' ago: October 1998**

**"All My Sons" by Arthur Miller. Directed by Jean Cooper**

Cast included: Bill Caldow, Roger Barker, Martin Howarth, Wendy Butler, Ginnie Holliman, Andrew Rogers, Andrew Cooper, Sylvia Zilesnick, Liz Adams, John Haylett

