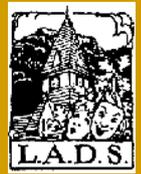


# PROMPTINGS



ISSUE 85 - MAY 2015

[WWW.LADS.ORG.UK](http://WWW.LADS.ORG.UK)



LADS,

Beyond Reasonable Doubt was a great success for the society with 483 people coming to see it over the three nights. It was a popular play which sparked lots of interest and was praised by those that saw it including Jacquie Steadman who wrote a critique of the play on behalf of NODA.

It's easy to forget that the society started working on the plays for this season back in September 2013. The play reading committee's job is to read and choose the plays for the following season and they meet every month from September through to March with the aim to have a final list decided by April. You don't need to be part of the play reading committee in order to put forward a play for consideration. If you have a play that you think that LADS could produce in the 2016/2017 season then please contact Cathy Naylor.

Due to the hard work and commitment of this season's committee, the four plays for the 2015/2016 season have been finalised. Please see the list attached with this mailing. This looks like a very interesting selection of plays which I believe our members and audience will both enjoy.

We have started releasing the tickets for our productions earlier to allow our publicity to lead the public to a live ticket purchasing website and box office. This proved successful for *Beyond Reasonable Doubt* but we must continue to push the tickets sales for all plays. I am very glad to say that our finances are strong this season, but we must never take this for granted. Our profit or loss

on each production depends on the number of ticket sold and therefore we can never take our eye off the ball. We now have a publicity team which is headed up by Jean Cooper so if you have any new ideas that you would like to try out then please talk to her.

Lopping Hall's AGM was held on the 6th of May where Karen Rogers and Martin Howarth were re-elected as trustees. It is really useful for LADS to have two members to be the society's voice on this committee. LADS needs to continue to work with the trustees to improve the hall so please try to make yourself available for the working days when they are arranged.

On the subject of working days, there has been a big decrease in participation at set downs. LADS is strongest when it sticks together so please support your society by making yourself available for as much as you can for each of the four plays in a season.

This is my last chairman's address in Promptings. Much has changed for me over the last two years which has made it difficult for me to be as involved as I would have liked to have been. I would like to take this chance to thank the LADS members that have sat on the General Committee whilst I have been Chairman; their hard work and dedication is a credit to the society.

I look forward to seeing you all at Ghosts and please don't forget to put LADS AGM in your diary, 6th July

*Dan*

## LADS DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

<b>Sunday 14 June</b>	Set up for <b>Ghosts</b> from 9.30am
<b>Mon. 15 June - Weds. 17 June</b>	Rehearsals, Tech and Dress <b>Ghosts</b>
<b>Thurs. 18 June - Sat. 20 June</b>	Performances, <b>Ghosts</b>
<b>Saturday 20 June</b>	After show party, location tbc
<b>Sunday 21 June</b>	Set down from 10:00am -PLEASE LEND A HAND!
<b>Monday 22 June</b>	Crit. night and curry from 7.30pm
<b>Thursday 25 June</b>	Read through for <b>Ann Boleyn</b>
<b>Sunday 28 June</b>	Casting for <b>Ann Boleyn</b>
<b>Monday 6 July</b>	LADS AGM
<b>Saturday 11th July</b>	Love Loughton Day - come and support LADS stall!
<b>Sunday 19th July</b>	LADS end of season boat trip
<b>Friday 2nd October</b>	Start of season social event - to be announced

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## MEMBERS NEWS

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Congratulations to David Steflox and Tina Gray who were married on 11th April in New Zealand. We wish them both every happiness in their future life together.

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## SET-DOWNS A PLEA FROM THE HEART!

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The thing is this – LADS do not have the luxury of having a permanent technical/backstage/set-building team of people. There is Garry and Stephen who design and will manage the build of sets, and then there is the membership of LADS. A recent count of the active membership of LADS comes to about 48. Nine of those people are in my opinion not able to carry large, heavy items up and down stairs. **This leaves approximately 37 people to help with the set build and set down.**

Our set builds usually attract a good amount of people – **which is great, thank you** – especially now the actors have to come in the morning for a word rehearsal and then stay for the rest of the day. However, attendance at set-downs has been dwindling over the last few plays.

**There were just 10 people at the set down for Beyond Reasonable Doubt, and one of them is in my list of “not able to carry heavy things up and down stairs”!**

Those 10 people managed to:

- Move furniture off-stage
- Take apart the whole set
- Clear the flat storage area
- Take all the flats down the stairs and get them put away
- Clear the back store room
- Clean the dressing rooms
- Clear the bar and clean
- Put away the chair numbers

- Put away all the chairs (which was done by ONE person)
- Move the pianos
- Re-fold the druggets and put them away
- Take down the banner in the pouring rain
- sweep backstage, on-stage and the hall
- re-hang the black fly curtains
- put the boards back on the curtain boxes
- stack the tables
- take the re-cycling away
- remove the props
- take down the front of house board
- cleared all rubbish to bins
- re-painting the cyclorama
- and move ALL THE STEELDECK
- ... and more

This took three and half hours to achieve – and the sofa had to be moved to the garage a few days later!

I am sure that most of the people who did not come along had very good reasons for not being there – illness, prior commitments and holiday being some of them. But please – if you can come to the next set down (Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> June) as well as the set up (Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> June). WE NEED YOUR HELP!

Thank you.

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## END OF SEASON - BOAT TRIP

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Don't miss your opportunity to join us on 19th July for the end of season outing - a narrowboat tour of the Olympic Park and river. You should have received an email about this, and details of how to book. If you haven't, please contact Wendy Butler on 07710 641739. Priority booking for LADS members ends on 27th May.

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## PLAY SELECTION

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The play reading committee has completed the selection of plays for next season and I hope we have chosen a varied season, which will appeal to both members and audiences. A detailed synopsis of the plays and a character breakdown is attached, complete with the read through and production dates so please make a note of them. We are still looking for a Director for the January production so if you are available and would like to direct, please let me know.

This season has proved to be very challenging despite the enormous efforts of some of our members and next season, we desperately need your help to ensure the continuing success of LADS. As well as struggling to cast a number of parts and fill backstage roles due to lack of availability, we have also struggled for volunteers to help front of house and at set up and set down. We have been increasingly reliant on a small team of members and whilst I appreciate that it isn't possible to commit to being heavily involved in every production, as members, we should all do what we can to support every production in any way we can, even if we are not cast or part of the backstage team. The continuing success of LADS is entirely dependent on the commitment of its members, so please don't assume that someone else will do everything, make yourself available to be cast or undertake a backstage role, volunteer to help with front of house, come along to set up and set down and at the very least, come to watch the plays to support fellow members and the society.

However, despite the difficulties, the season so far has been a great success for LADS so thank you to everyone who has been involved, offered their support, made themselves available and responded to my many appeals for help, it is very much appreciated.

Finally, we still have one more production this season so please do what you can to lend your support in every way you can, including coming to see the play and I look forward to seeing you then.

**Cathy**

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**CRIT. FOR 'BEYOND  
REASONABLE DOUBT'  
JORDANA BERK**

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Mary Lowe's production of *Beyond Reasonable Doubt* asks its audience to be judge, jury and executioner. When Sir David Metcalfe, distinguished QC, is accused of the murder of his terminally ill wife, he must conduct the most important defence of his life – his own. The premise of this play keeps the audience in a constant state of uncertainty and the ambiguity of Lowe's production echoes this. Until the final moments of the play, the audience is left guessing whether Metcalfe did indeed murder his wife.

The first Act details the facts of the case in a courtroom drama, which resembles an episode of

'Silk'. The second Act is a flashback to the events leading up to Lady Metcalfe's death and explores the couple's relationship. In Mary Lowe's programme notes, she maintains that she wants the actors to immerse themselves in their roles and not to 'put on their role like an overcoat'. The strengths of this production lie in the realism the actors bring to their portrayal of these complicated characters.



**Dave Hinkley, Roger Barker and Neil Grosvenor**

The play opens with the actors ceremoniously entering the stage dressed in traditional QC and Judge's robes. The Court Usher announces the beginning of the proceedings in such a way that it becomes immediately clear the audience is to be the jury in this case. We are reminded by Mr Justice Tredwell (Roger Barker) to remain impartial in the case. Barker's portrayal of the Judge is distinguished, but not over-bearing. He emits an energy of being all-knowing. But Barker also emphasises the comedic moments in the play with the subtle sarcasm in his facial expressions and dead-pan delivery of his lines.



**Eileen Stock**

The court proceedings begin with Anthony Blair-Booth's (Howard Platt) opening remarks, which highlight his hatred for the defendant, Lord Metcalfe. Platt's portrayal of the QC consumed by jealousy of Metcalfe's success is understated; however, he accurately captures the humour of the character's self-importance. Blair-Booth is a force to be reckoned with, who will not be defeated by his nemesis Metcalfe.

As each witness is called, Lowe has cleverly staged the piece so that they enter from the audience. This enabled us to further feel as if we were in a real courtroom, judging the case.



**Chelsea Camp**



**Peter Huber**

We first hear from Detective Chief Inspector Travers (Peter Huber), who is presented as slightly incompetent in the presence of Sir David Metcalfe. Huber accomplishes this by constantly looking at the notes in front of him before responding to the questions. This suggests his fear of accusing a powerful man of a crime he did not commit.

We then meet the acrimonious Mrs Rogers (Eileen Stock), who makes no secret of her hatred of Metcalfe. Stock has managed to capture the prying nature of her character in a humorous manner. She serves as true comic relief in the somewhat monotonous procedures of the court.



**Phil Postings**

Next to the witness box is Dr Weeden (Phil Postings), the Metcalfe's compassionate GP. Postings' performance captures the sympathetic nature of the character.

We then meet Lionel Hamilton (Richard de Berry), Metcalfe's solicitor and 'loyal servant', as Blair-Booth bitterly comments. De Berry's depiction of the lawyer is purposeful y stiff and

straight-laced, which makes him the butt of other character's jokes, particularly in the second Act.

As we hear each witness, Lowe has skilfully ensured the realism of the court proceedings. Each QC is diligently making notes and referring to files and evidence. Mr Cole (Dave Hinkley) gophers around for the insufferable Blair-Booth and the Court Usher (Chelsea Camp) stares stoically into the distance during proceedings.



**Richard DeBerry and Howard Platt**

Finally, we hear from Metcalfe himself. Throughout Act I, Andrew Rogers holds the audience in the palm of his hands, making us laugh at his sardonic jokes and comments about Blair-Booth. Rogers performs Metcalfe with an air of theatricality that makes him believable as a successful QC. When he is in the witness box, Rogers also reveals moments of sincerity when speaking about his uncertainty about whether he was responsible for his wife's death. As he speaks about her, Metcalfe's obvious affection for his wife shines through. As the first act ends, Mr Justice Tredwell asks us to deliberate and reach our verdict.



**Jean Cooper**

In the second Act, the curtains open to reveal the beautifully designed interior of the Metcalfe's living room. Garry Cooper's ability as a set designer is apparent as we see the contrast between the stark courtroom and elegant parlour.

To match the sophistication of the set, Lady Metcalfe (Jean Cooper) is costumed in a stylish,

1980s, blue evening dress that matches the grace of Cooper's portrayal of the character. As soon as Lady Metcalfe appears on stage, there is a sense of brightness that has not previously been seen in the play. Cooper is charming as Millie and evokes empathy from her audience. It is apparent through her small groans and rubbing of her muscles that she is suffering unbearably. However, Cooper hides this from the other characters, showing her skill as an actress. It is only with her husband that she is able to let her guard down.

Rogers also transforms into a jester in this Act, entertaining his wife and guests with amusing quips, poetry and his silly, but hilariously accurate Welsh accent. It is also in this Act that we see Junior Council, Robert Pierson (Neil Grosvenor), come alive. Grosvenor's almost child-like portrayal of the character shows that he looks up to Metcalfe as a father figure and mentor.

In this Act, we see the tenderness in the couple's relationship as well as their quirky sense of humour. Rogers' and Cooper's chemistry on stage is exceptional and enjoyable to watch. It is especially engaging to see the characters 'play-acting' as the nosy Mrs Rogers hovers nearby. A particularly beautiful moment between the characters is when Metcalfe is helping Millie to bed and the stage goes dark, with the exception of the light in the hallway. In this moment, lighting designer Terry Tew has captured the tenderness and sadness in the couple's relationship. In a crucial moment in the production, Millie blatantly asks Metcalfe to help her end her life. Lowe has handled this with a sensitivity that makes the audience empathise with the characters. However, it is unclear in this moment how Metcalfe will respond to his wife's plea, which is just as the director wants it.



**Andrew Rogers**

In the final scene in the play, Metcalfe has been acquitted of his wife's murder and invites the starchy Lionel Hamilton to call. He finally reveals that he murdered Millie in order to relieve her suffering. In a dramatic ending, Metcalfe poisons

himself with the same pills he used to end his wife's life.

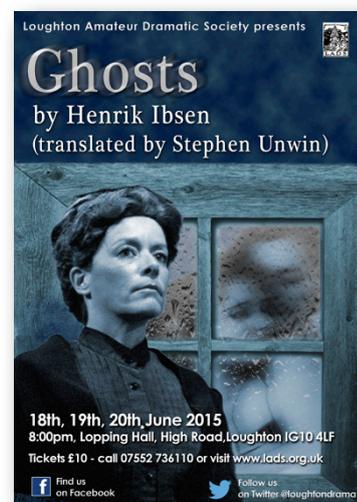
Mary Lowe's production reminds audiences that it isn't always important who committed a crime, but why. The first act could have benefited from some cuts to the script; however, the second half of the play is engaging and causes the audience to question their own ethics and morality. And isn't that what good theatre should do?

**Jordana Berk**

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## GHOSTS

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Finally, if you haven't already done so, don't forget to book your seat for our final production of the season. Tickets are now on sale.

Many successful revivals of this moving play show that it still has the power to shock audiences as it did when it was first presented in 1882.

We have two new LADS members in the cast making their acting debuts with us so please show your support by coming to the play - and spreading the word about it.