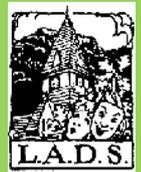




PROMPTINGS



ISSUE 87 - DECEMBER 2015

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Dear LADS,

What a great start to the LADS' 2015/16 season! Anne Boleyn was a fantastic **society** production, with 18 members on-stage, 5 members backstage, and great support from members for set-up, set-down and front of house. Well done to everyone for their enthusiasm, skill, support and sheer hard work – everyone should be proud of what they did to make Anne Boleyn the success it most definitely was. What was particularly heart-warming was that we had over 370 “bums on seats” over the 3 nights. The October production is historically a difficult production to sell, as it is the school half-term holiday, but we not only absolutely smashed the October production records, the 371 audience figure is in the top 5 best-selling productions over the last 6 years!!

So, now onwards and upwards – rehearsals started for “Whipping It Up” on 9th November, it is a small cast production, the production week is in January (when it is cold and people don't necessarily want to leave the house), it is not well-known ... BUT, it is a comedy, it is funny and it is ideal for the post-Christmas blues (oh, and it pokes fun at politicians and we all love that!!) **So, please speak to all your friends who came and saw Anne Boleyn – and to those that missed it - and encourage them to book tickets for Whipping It Up.**

I have already sent you an email with an electronic copy of the handbill and posted some to those who do not have email, do please do forward the handbill onto your friends.

Can I remind members that Cathy will be standing down as Artistic Director at the end of this season, and we will need someone to take over this important role. The Artistic Director takes responsibility for the Play Selection and Play casting committees – chairing meetings and ensuring that the vital work of choosing plays for a season and casting appropriately is done as smoothly and efficiently as possible. The committee members support the Artistic Director in this, as does the General Committee. Cathy and I work closely together to run the society and whoever takes over would have my assistance at all times. Knowledge of how the play selection and casting committees work would be important. If you would like further information on this role, do not hesitate to talk to either Cathy or me.

I hope to see you all on Friday 4th December in the bar at Lopping Hall for our Christmas Social. The LADS' bar will be open, and you are invited to bring along a few nibbles for everyone to share ... Howard will even be giving a sneak preview of the Christmas Crooners Show he is performing in (18th and 19th December at [The Kenneth More Theatre](#), Ilford).

Jean.

LADS DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Friday 4 December	Christmas Social in bar at Lopping Hall - from 7:30pm
Saturday/Sunday December 12, 13	Possible dates for garage clear-outs (see inside)
Sunday 17 January	Set up for <i>Whipping It Up</i>
Thursday 21 - Saturday 23 January	<i>Whipping It Up</i> production nights
Saturday 23 January	After show party at Foster and Marion's
Sunday 24 January	Set down
Monday 25 January	7:30pm Crit. (Small Hall) followed by curry
Thursday 28 January	Read through for Jamaica Inn
Monday 1 February	Rehearsals start for <i>An English Tragedy</i>

MEMBERS NEWS

We are pleased to welcome new members: Sandra Davidson and Richard Cohen, both of whom have been cast in *An English Tragedy*, Val Jones, who is one of the backstage crew for *An English Tragedy* and Sharon Haffenden who helped front of house for *Anne Boleyn*.

FLYERS AND POSTERS

Do come along to a rehearsal and pick up some flyers and posters to give out to friends and family and to anywhere you think may interest people. Rehearsals are every Monday night, AND the following dates: DEC: Weds. 2nd, Weds. 9th, Weds. 16th, Thurs. 17th, Weds. 23rd, Weds. 30th, JAN: Thurs. 7th, Weds. 13th, Fri. 15th.

SET UPS & SET DOWNS

We had a great turn-out of people for the set up for *Anne Boleyn* and I am hoping this wasn't just because it was a large cast. Please make sure that both Sunday 17th January (set up) and Sunday 24th (set down) January are in your diary in red pen and underlined!! Sets do not build themselves and there are plenty of jobs for EVERYONE to do – whether you are making tea, holding up a wall, painting a flat, sweeping up, cleaning brushes, hanging wallpaper, or giving support ... it all needs to be done and many hands really do make light and enjoyable work!! Babs will be supplying lunch again at a very reasonable cost of £2. We start at 9.30 for set up and 10am for set down – drinks in The Hollybush after set down.

PLAY READING COMMITTEE

The Play Reading Committee is hard at work reading and selecting the plays for our 2016 / 2017 season and owing to the difficulties we encountered with lack of availability last season, we are reading more than ever before.

It was the aim of our founders to present plays with 'genuine dramatic worth' and we always aim to adhere to this, as well as selecting a balanced season with roles and opportunities for all of our members. We also have to ensure that our selection will be popular with our audiences so that we have enough 'bums on seats' and

popular with our members so that they want to be involved in our productions. Additionally, we have to consider the practicalities of staging and remain realistic with our cast sizes so a fair amount of juggling needs to be done in order to agree our final selection. On the positive side, reading the plays is great fun, the discussions at our meetings are always entertaining and the satisfaction of finally agreeing our four plays is fantastic and makes all of the hard work worthwhile. Mary also provides fabulous biscuits for our meetings so all in all, we are a very happy gang of play readers !!

LADS are very fortunate to have a healthy membership however, the number of members who are unavailable for some productions is increasing and this is causing us problems. There are a number of backstage roles that don't require too much involvement before the week of the production so if you are unable to be considered for casting due to other commitments, please let me know if you would be able to take on a backstage role rather than making yourself totally unavailable. The support of the backstage team is vital because without it, we wouldn't be able to produce our plays so your help is much appreciated.

Cathy

NODA CRIT. FOR 'ANNE BOLEYN' JACQUIE STEDMAN

I was delighted to be invited to report on your latest production – a re-telling, from another angle, of the story of Anne Boleyn and the King James Bible. This time, however, whilst witnessing her coquettishness and sexual allure as far as King Henry VIII was concerned, we saw a devout woman, keen to meet her 'hero' William Tyndale. We were also able to witness why she



Tom Donoghue & Christian Mortimer

was the inspiration for James I in finding a way forward for the Church of England.

I always think that it is a challenge for any group to recreate such well documented figures and incidents but, once again, LADS did not disappoint. I found the Director's notes incredibly useful in providing the setting and background for the play, and it was extremely clever of Howard Benton to call his play 'Anne Boleyn' rather than 'The creation of the James I Bible' or some other such name. He must have known of the interest and mystique surrounding this most famous of Henry's wives. The writing was excellent with humour and intelligence, giving the audience a very varied theatrical experience.



Howard Platt & Sophie Gilbert

The staging for this production was simple but so effective with the various acting levels on a thrust stage, but also using the floor of the hall, bringing the action to the audience and allowing the players to relate to them directly where appropriate. There was a richness about the setting despite the lack of much furniture or props, and this provided the perfect background to the action of the play. All the players used the levels to advantage and the smooth opening of the lustrous curtain USC provided a prominent exit/entrance for the cast.



Jon Gilbert & Iain Howland

There was very good pace throughout which kept the action moving, with secure dialogue and good

characterisations. The excellent lighting plot worked particularly well and the music was very suitable to the era. All these things, when combined, worked to enrich the production and bring this particular part of our history alive for the audience. The play also cleverly plays with time where it moves between the court of King Henry VIII and the court of King James 1 after the death of Queen Elizabeth I, each Royal House captivating the feelings of the time with James apparently feeling some affinity and fascination with Anne.

The costumes were well judged throughout and quite sumptuous, further establishing the cast as royal personages and courtiers. Against this show of wealth were the followers of Tyndale, country men and women, appearing simply dressed with cloaks and rough clothing.



Roz Gerrie Charlotte Pope & Steph Adleman

I thought your casting was excellent and having seen the play can understand why everyone was keen to be a part of it – there was lots of involvement at every level, and not one weak link in the 'chain' of performance. I think this is very much an ensemble piece with each player making a valuable contribution to the story. However I felt I couldn't just make a blanket appraisal of the performance because everyone deserved recognition of their contribution to the overall enjoyment of the play. For me one of the most interesting things about the play was how



Adam Rabinowitz & Josh Sowerbutts

the characters could almost have been divided up into 'playing' groups.

From her first entrance Anne Boleyn (Sophie Gilbert) held the audience. She was animated, her face full of expression and delivered all those characteristics which, centuries on, we all think we know. She was coquettish with Henry, having an ability to keep him at arm's length sexually for over five years, and yet showing a devoutness which was surprising. With beautiful clear diction she ran the gamut of emotions up to the time of her death. It was very obvious that meeting her 'hero', William Tyndale, put her in danger but such was her devotion that she ignored the warnings.



Charlotte Pope, Steph Adleman, Sophie Gilbert, Foster Barnett, Tom Donoghue & Peter Fox

Her relationship with Henry (Howard Platt) was very believable. Although somewhat of a tease, she was witty and intelligent and he was quite captivated by her. This, of course, was the period when he was regal, young, handsome, a keen sportsman and very susceptible to a pretty face, before he descended into the disillusioned and disappointed monster he became. We saw a man totally under the spell of a clever woman who stopped at nothing to achieve his aim of marrying her, whatever the consequences. However, there was a very tender scene with Anne after her miscarriage, where he was so conciliatory – yet at the same time seeing the Lady Jane for the first time. Howard achieved all this very naturally, moving easily and giving Henry a very human, likeable persona.

Christian Mortimer gave a very good portrayal of King James I. He maintained his Scottish accent throughout with confidence and his timing and delivery were perfect. He did appear to be somewhat extreme at times and had no hesitation in playing with his sexuality because he was the King. He displayed all the traits of a spoilt child and possibly a spoilt childhood. His

somewhat outrageous thoughts and ideas were handled with aplomb, and confidence, by Robert Cecil (Andrew Rogers) who was the stalwart, dependable support for James, trying hard to keep him in order. He was helped in his endeavours by Parrot played by Adam Rabinowitz, who also played Cromwell's man, Simpkin – with a change of costume. The King's relationship with the virile George Villiers (Tom Donoghue) progressed from friend to something more sexual, which Villiers appreciated was to his advantage despite having to debase himself. Tom portrayed Villiers as a rather shallow young man seeing his main chance under the protection of the king. Perhaps a little more attention was needed when playing drunk, not easy to do, but very convincing when done well.



Michael Lewkowicz, Phil Postings, Neil Grosvenor, Roger Barker, Foster Barnett & Andrew Rogers

Thomas Cromwell (Iain Howland) was the scheming, ambitious lord privy seal working with Cardinal Wolsey (Jon Gilbert) in the matter of the King's divorce from Catherine of Aragon. He was played with energy and good pace, clear diction and conviction in the role. One saw his more ruthless side in his conversations with Lady Rochford in the matter of her husband. During the scenes between Cromwell and Wolsey one could see the machinations of bringing the King's plan to fruition.

The ladies of the court, Lady Rochford (Roz Gerrie), Lady Celia (Steph Adleman) and Lady Jane (Charlotte Pope), all added to the story. They had the air of favourites of Anne, showing high spirits with her when required, but ever mindful of their tenuous positions. They each managed to adopt a different set of characteristics which made them come alive within the story.

Dean Lancelot Andrewes (Roger Barker), Doctor John Reynolds (Michael Lewkowicz) and Henry

Barrow were the triumvirate intent on finding a new way forward for religion under James I. All very different personalities, well played with a hint of unrest if they got it wrong. Their scene with James was very well played with James putting forward so many variations on the theme of religion.

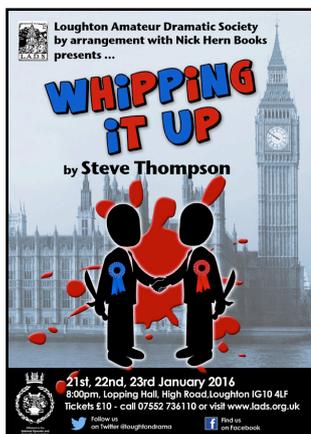
William Tyndale (Peter Fox) was obviously a man of the people – he always appeared with his followers who were country men and women – but was not fazed by meeting Anne, although he did appreciate that he could have been in a dangerous position if caught.

The supporting players - the country men and women, divines, courtiers and servants - combined to give 'dressing' to the action whenever they appeared and conducted themselves in a manner most befitting to their various stations in life.

My congratulations on continuing to bring good theatre to your audiences, giving both them and you the challenges that live performance brings. You never disappoint!

Jacque Stedman
Regional Councillor NODA London

WHIPPING IT UP



We are only three weeks into our rehearsals however, I am delighted to say that several cast members are already on top of their line learning which is enabling us to make excellent progress.

Obviously it's early days however, I'm confident that the play will be very funny with some brilliant performances, the

perfect antidote to the January blues. Tickets are now on sale so please do everything you can to sell tickets and support the production.

Sue is doing a fantastic job to find all the props we need so thank you to everyone who has answered our cries for help however, we are still on the hunt for two old fashioned wooden desks so if you happen to stumble across any, please let me know.

Cathy

LIVE SCREENINGS

If you haven't caught a Live Theatre Screening – do so. I went to see a live screening of "A Winters Tale" last week at South Woodford Cinema. It costs £12.50 a ticket and it was a fantastic experience. The play is filmed and broadcast live to cinemas around the world and it truly gives a feeling that you are there – but with close-ups and extra bits like an introduction beforehand Kenneth Branagh, the director, and readings of other plays that are on The Garrick season programme next year. A great alternative to schlepping up to the West End, paying megabucks for a ticket for a seat behind a pillar and no leg room. Check out the website: www.branaghtheatrelive.com

Jean

GARAGE MAINTENANCE

In order to get some important garage maintenance done in the New Year, we need to clear out and box up some of the props in the props garage and also make inventory of what is there. The dates of Saturday 12th and Sunday 13th Dec (10am to 1pm) have been chosen for this work. So far, I have 3 people for Saturday morning, and 2 people for Sunday morning, and could do with a few more people. **Please let me know ASAP if you can come along and help for a while on either of these mornings.** Email me on lads.chairman@gmail.com, or phone 07896 910 214.

Thank you.

Jean.

SOCIAL NEWS

Many thanks to Foster and Marion Barnett who will be hosting the after-show party for *Whipping it Up*.

Finally, don't forget our Christmas Social on Friday 4th December!