

PROMPTINGS



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Wife After Death was a great start to our 2016/17 season – a hugely enjoyable comedy which was well received. A special thank you to Sophie for all the hard-work she put into her directing debut and to the cast and crew who supported her so well. I also enjoyed the ticket sales – 370 “bums on seats” over the 3 production nights, which is around the level of

what we were achieving last season – so keep up the good work and let’s try and achieve the 400 mark during this season!! Flyers can be collected from the LADS cupboard at Lopping Hall on rehearsal nights (next few are: 21st, 23rd, 24th, 28th Nov; 1st, 5th, 7th, 8th , 12th Dec) – please collect and distribute them in your neighbourhood and at work.

Rehearsals for *The Thrill of Love* began on 7th November and the preparation work that has been put in by the cast is showing. It is so important to get your script early when you have been cast in a play and begin familiarising yourself with not only your own part, but the play as a whole. (This is a little friendly reminder to those that haven’t collected their *Streetcar* scripts yet...) You can read Karen’s directors notes inside

Promptings, but I know she is very pleased with everything so far.

It can be difficult to sell tickets for the January production, as it is often cold outside and people are ‘recovering’ after the Christmas excess. However, *The Thrill of Love* is a fantastic piece of drama telling the tragic story of Ruth Ellis, but it surprisingly has many moments of laughter and is very poignant. So, forward the handbill onto all your friends and relations by email – share and retweet our posts and tweets on social media and spread the word! If you are not a member of LADS Facebook group – the link is: www.facebook.com/groups/2399580967. Twitter is @loughtondrama.

Check the calendar below for all the important dates coming up over the next couple of months plus social dates – get the dates in your diary, so you don’t miss anything. Our next social evening is “LADS Christmas in the bar” on **Friday 9th December** from 7.30pm. A very informal evening in the Lopping Hall bar – the LADS’ bar will be open and we invite you to come along and bring a few nibbles for people to share, and have a chat with friends and make new friends. See you there!!

Jean

LADS DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Friday 9 December	Christmas Social - Lopping Hall bar from 7:30pm
Sunday 8 January	Set up - <i>The Thrill of Love</i>
Thur.12 - Sat. 14 January	Performances - <i>The Thrill of Love</i>
Saturday 14 January	After show party - Jean and Garry’s, 28 Woodland Way
Sunday 15 January	Set down
Monday 16 January	Crit & Curry, 7:30pm start in the Small hall
Thursday 19 January	Read through - Dial M for Murder
Monday 23 January	Rehearsals start - A Streetcar Named Desire
Friday 17 February	LADS Workshop - 8:00pm (see article inside)
Saturday 4 March	Wine tasting social - Lopping Hall bar 7:00pm
Sat. 3 and Sun. 4 June	NODA Awards weekend
Sunday 25 June	End of season social - TBA
Monday 3 July	AGM - 8:00pm Small hall
Saturday 30 September	Start of Season event

MEMBERS NEWS

New Members:

We are very pleased to welcome the following new members:

Mark Leonard, Jennifer Hamilton-Smith, Vicky McGillicuddy, Marcel Kay and Graham Milne. Marcel and Graham have been cast in "A Streetcar Named Desire" and Vicky has helped with set up for "Wife After Death". We would also like to recognise the help given to us by Les, who has a professional background in set building and was partly the reason we were able to get the Wife After Death set built so quickly.

Members news:

Congratulations to Dave and Tina Stelfox on the birth of baby Aiden on 29th October. Lots of LADS' love is sent to new Mum and Dad and baby Aiden.

START OF SEASON SOCIAL - 1960S NIGHT

As you can see - it was a fab, groovy and far out evening. Pictured here are... well see if you can identify them!



LADS CHRISTMAS IN THE LOPPING HALL BAR

Don't forget on Friday 9th December we have booked the Lopping Hall bar for a social event to begin the Christmas season. Just turn up - members please bring along a few nibbles. The bar is open to buy drinks. From 7.30pm.

SET UP AND SET DOWN

Remember that set up and set down are classed as social events. Come along in your old clothes to set up, slap a bit of paint about, hammer a few nails, hang a couple of lengths of paper, have a chat to friends, make new friends, have lunch and generally be "part of the team". We are very lucky as a group to have so many people who are prepared to help out and this makes us a very strong society. Set down is a quicker process usually finishing by about 1pm, so instead of lunch, we go and have a drink in the Hollybush opposite afterwards - only to be sociable, of course!!

CRIT. FOR 'WIFE AFTER DEATH' MARGARET GODFREY

A very good choice of play for this company, as from previous experiences you handle comedy well and as Sophie says in the programme it is the hardest genres to bring off successfully and was a brave choice for a first time director.

As usual you had a good attendance for your first night, at least 3/4's full, and plenty of Lads members around to sell programmes, booze and assistance for people to find their seats.

Lovely quality programme by the way. Good, interesting, clear content and great news re your awards - so well deserved. As always an excellent job by Howard on the programme and poster



Our seats were excellent, affording a very good view of the stage as we were on the elevated bit towards the back, so no heads in the way, which was especially good as I had my ever shrinking

mother with me. She was a good sounding board too - literally as well as metaphorically. I thought, you're all going to have to have good projection or I'd soon know about it from her. Unfortunately, my plan was scuppered as she only had one hearing aid in! However as the play begun and some first night nerves were on show for the first 15 minutes or so from some of the actors, the volume could have been turned up, but I didn't have to strain to hear, just extra concentrate. As you who have heard my crits. before - it is something I do bang on about - no point in putting all your efforts into a play if it can't be heard, but that is a general note not specific to this play.



Direction

Overall I would not have know this was a directorial debut from Sophie, whom I have seen on stage as a very good actress. It was not inept in anyway. However I did feel it was a play of two halves. For me the best and biggest laughs came from the second half, the first half being a plot setter, character builder, but a bit of a slow burner from my point of view, and I felt that it took a little while for the cast to settle into it. There are so many pitfalls to putting on a comedy, and one of them is timing, but that is not just the delivery of a line, it's the crispness of the followup line and there were times when there were too many pauses between cues, so slowed up the comedy element to an extent. Not that I didn't find it funny, it was, but just needed to be tighter. Now I have no doubt this was something your director would have pointed out during rehearsal, but we all know the huge difference there is between rehearsal and the actuality of stepping out in front of a live audience, which is enough to put the willies up anyone as we know.

The first act was more restricted in movement but you placed your actors well considering you had a coffin, armchair and sofa, large pieces of furniture to contend with, and you used every

opportunity to move them when you could as it is a fairly static first act and relies very much on the 'comic' delivery of the lines, unlike a farce where there is a lot activity connected with the lines.

There was a smooth scene rearrangement with curtains closed during the interval.

In the second act, when you had more space, you used it to great effect particularly as there was a lot more 'business' to choreograph. The play had really settled down by now and gathered pace and vitality and I think the writer had saved the best till last. The cast handled the props very well and a lot of the moves were towards the front of the stage, which also helps to hear everything going on, and of course you generally managed not to stick your actors behind furniture. It is not always easy for the director to place her actors in positions where they only have to address the audience from the front, so just be aware that you either need to up the volume when you turn your back on the audience or you say your first couple of words upstage then angle yourself using body language (demonstrate) - it's a 'cheat' and of course, some you old hands, and I mean that in the nicest possible way, will know this technique.

You brought out the comedy side to good effect with your direction, knowing when there was a throw away line or when it should be pointed.

So congratulations Sophie. You did a very good job so that the next time, if you choose a drama it will be like falling off a log. (if only that were true!!)



Set and Props

Excellent set. It was obvious we were in an elegant and quality house. Thoughtfully decorated, loved the curtains, pictures, ornaments, furniture, it felt like a home and I thought the flower arrangement in the fireplace was delightful. Plenty to dress the room but it didn't feel crowded - apart from the addition of the coffin of course. I liked the little bit of wall and garden we saw through the french windows too.

The drinks trolley and accompanying paraphernalia was used effectively, and the drink didn't run out! It was not a particularly 'propy' play, but of course the star prop were the 'ashes'. They looked rather too authentic! Did you use a light cement to get that greyish colour? Very effective, though the backstage had to do a thorough clean up job after the play ended while the cast were no doubt enjoying some real alcohol in the bar.

Applause all round for the SM Jean and the stage crew.



And just a word about that thankless task - continuity. If you have never done it, believe me, it takes all your concentration and judgement - was that an extra long dramatic pause or does the actor need a prompt. You hear silence (you can't always see every actor on stage) your notes say - pouring a drink, or taking a sip of drink or pausing for dramatic effect - if you prompt too soon you get daggers, if you prompt too late the pause is noticeable.....and don't talk to me

about actors and their re-action if you get it wrong! So very well done Amanda Smith.

Sound and Lighting

Good lighting plot, no obvious shadows, not complicated to operate (though not necessarily to set up though) and great sound track. Really liked the individual lighting onstage, which added to the authenticity of the set. So big ticks for Sarah.

Costume

Everyone looked absolutely right. For the first act, the appropriate black was worn, but the costumes reflected their characters. The flashy, glamour puss outfit, the fab hat and veil that Laura wore, could have been seen at a funeral in TOWIE. The more sober dress and jacket for Vi, Jane's dress that showed off her legs and Kay's crushed velvet were all great. And of course the chaps in their dark suits, white shirts and black ties - the very image of respectability all of them - how wrong that image turned out to be.

In Act two, more relaxed dress for the 'ashes' scene. Again, we had Laura still in black with a gorgeously sparkly buckle and still glam hair, the more soberly dressed Vi with a maroon top and black skirt, Jane in a black dress then Kay appeared with her bright colourful outfit. Harvey's light grey suit with a red tie (thought by some to be somewhat inappropriate for the forthcoming ceremony) and Kevin thinking he was being devilish with dark purple tie and great over the top pocket hanky - again you all looked great, so thumbs up for Liz Adams.

Players

Harvey Barrett - Iain Howland

This was a huge part - never off stage and I think practically every other line was yours. You were terrific as David's gag writer, and now as a result of David's death, unemployed! You were the glue that kept the play together. You looked very comfortable on stage, relaxed, in control and a very confident performance - you are a natural, with the added bonus of being able to be very funny to boot...and your take offs of David Thursby, even though we never saw him, we believed he was just as you portrayed him. A good and loyal friend - or so you thought, but it seems he actually hated you! You had some great one liners, you were able to point some of

them and also had the ability to execute throw away side lines. I particularly liked the scene in act 2 between you and Vi, which showed the closeness you had with one another, even after you found out about her affair. So glad you decided not to write the biography. And your and Vi's exit at the end of the play was brilliant. Throughout the production you stood well, you knew what to do with your hands - you were 100% Harvey Barrett. Top Notch.



Vi Barrett - Wendy Butler

An actress with a lot of experience. Never an easy task especially in a comedy with mostly just you and Harvey for the first few minutes of the play, to get your audience 'warmed up' and on side as it were, and yours also was not an unsubstantial part. I know you had a bit of a shaky start, but you powered on - gently powered on, and got into your character and stride as the act progressed, so well done. She was the kindest of all them I think, with her rumbustious husband, who must be quite exhausting to live with, you gave Vi a calm dignity and took the affront about your pulling up two chairs (which you must have heard 100 times) with resignation. You did have some of the funniest lines, especially in Act two, they came thick and fast - it's hard laughing out loud and writing in the dark at the same time. The biggest surprise came with the fact that you too had succumbed to David's charms, but more so out of loneliness than anything. Your speech with Harvey was touching when you made up. But you did get the biggest guffaws from the audience and your delivery of them was spot on.....and the exit was superb!!!

Kevin Prewitt - Adam Rabinowitz

Great first entrance - you immediately captured our attention. You looked very good, tall imposing, but a bit of a prat. As David's agent, you were still going to be well employed. You

interacted well with the other characters but wasn't very nice to your wife....and that's before you found out about her 'stationery' episodes! Good with the comedy and handling of props, particularly the double ashes - straight in the kisser both times - that was a very funny scene and I think one of the best comedically. A most capable actor.

Jane Prewitt - Charlotte Pope

You had very good diction and projection, and you looked good too. Though why this very sweet young woman was with Kevin - only she would know, so it's hardly surprising she ended up in the 'store room' with David for a quickie, quite often! You too had some well delivered comic lines and I loved your spat with Kevin in Act two - he got what he deserved from you - all round! Very good portrayal of this character.



Kay - Val Jones

Well, weren't you the mysterious fly in the ointment! You waltz in, stub your fag out in the pot plant and take a good appraising look at everyone. You held all the cards, and they had no idea till much later the power you held. I loved this role and you executed it with aplomb. You looked good, had great stage presence and was that an 'acting' accent or are you from up North? Good comedy with the drink thrown over the body too. This was a lovely part to play and you toyed beautifully with Laura, when you produced your marriage certificate. You played it very well.

Laura Thursby - Kimberley Packman

So we can sure see why David fell for you. Glamorous, great hair, voluptuous figure and gorgeous red lips - what's not to adore - apart from being vacuous, self centred and ambitious.

A delightful character to get your vampish teeth into, though one could not help feeling a bit sorry for the almost Lady Thursby when you discovered that you were in a bigamistic (is there such a word) marriage - your shock at thinking you will lose it all was palpable, plus the fact that your so called husband had slept with every woman present! But, not wanting to disrupt your way of life, you decide to make friends with Kay - the legal wife of the deceased - and come to an amicable financial arrangement, so not daft by any means. Delightfully played.

Well that's about it from me. I hope I have covered the salient points - as usual the LADS have come up to scratch and beyond.

This hobby is a really strange beast. We generally have quite stressful lives at work, bringing up the kids, and these days doing both - trying to have a social life as well as willingly turning up to rehearsal twice a week come rain or shine, learning moves and lines, or plotting moves and everything else involved in directing - which is thinking of everything and the denouement the week of the play, the excitement, the nerves, the relief and loss when it's over.....only to do it all over again - sadists - for sure, bonkers, quite definitely, but it drags you back time and again as in the end - we love it!

Margaret Godfrey

LADS "WORKSHOPS"

The Committee has been thinking for some time that it would be a good idea for LADS to offer some workshops to hone our skills, learn something new - and have some fun.

More details will follow separately by email, but the first date has been reserved for **Friday 17th February (8:00pm-10:00pm)**, in the Small Hall, Lopping Hall.

Topics could include: movement, devised drama, establishing a character, interpreting text.

If you have any suggestions or preferences, please get in touch with Jean.

TIPS FOR LINE LEARNING

While 'Googling' for ideas for Promptings I came across an article on 'top tips' for line learning.

Some of these are pretty obvious but they are worth repeating :

- ◆ Read the lines aloud. By speaking the lines you will hear them and they are more likely to stick.
- ◆ Ask a friend to help you. Friends can correct you on any mistakes you make, give you the cue lines and go back over any weak areas.
- ◆ Practise, practise, practise. This is the only way to make the lines stick. There is no such thing as a "photographic" memory. Everybody has to do this, even Kenneth Branagh.
- ◆ Little and often. Go over them first thing in the morning, a few times during the day and last thing at night.
- ◆ There are several apps which can help with learning lines: With *Line Learner* you record all the lines including those of other characters and then listen to them leaving silent pauses to speak your own lines. With *Rehearsal* you can upload a script and watch it scrolling by as you record your lines to listen to.
- ◆ Even if you don't use an app you can make a recording of the scene with a tape-recorder or mp3 player. Listen to it while you are shaving/washing up/driving (but keep your eyes on the road). It's a good idea to leave gaps in the recording to speak your own lines.
- ◆ Move around while you are saying your lines. This has been scientifically proven to aid memory. The best thing to do is to act and feel the emotions of the character so that you are learning the meaning of the speech as much as the words.
- ◆ Go for a drive or better still a walk. Walking and saying your lines can be quite relaxing (though beware of strange looks from passers-by).
- ◆ Learn the cue lines that lead in to each of your lines. Being prompt with your lines will give you and your fellow actors more confidence.
- ◆ As you say or read the lines, follow the thought pattern of each speech and the overall progression of the scene. Your lines are a part of the play. They don't exist on

their own.

- ◆ In rehearsals, listen to and think about what the other actors are saying. Don't just concentrate on what you've got to say.
- ◆ Make a recording of the cast reading the script and use this to practise with so that you get used to hearing the other characters' voices.

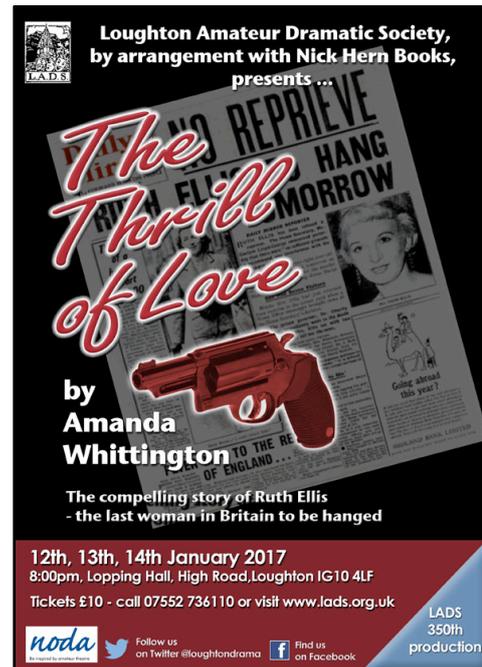
I can certainly vouch for the 'move while you recall' theory. Once I am reasonably secure with my lines, I replay the scene in my head whilst swimming. I can't of course take my script in the pool with me - but it really helps to cement the lines.

Has anyone used any of the many line learning apps now available? Some of these are completely free or only a few quid to download and they are available for both apple and android users. I will try and test one or two of them out and report back in the next promptings.

Howard.



THE THRILL OF LOVE



Two weeks into rehearsal and I'm already really excited about our January production – Amanda Whittington's take on the Ruth Ellis story – *The Thrill of Love*. Set in the seedy Soho nightclubs of post war London, this is a story of women with dreams of celebrity, riches and love.

You may have caught recent the excellent Radio 4 dramatisation with Maxine Peake as Ellis. For the younger members of the society, Ruth Ellis was the last woman to be hanged in the UK, and her case hastened the abolishment of capital punishment. The case has often been revisited in the media and the 1985 film *Dance With A Stranger* made stars of both Miranda Richardson and Rupert Everett. For many the story will be familiar, but Whittington adds a new dimension weaving the action together with a fantastic Billie Holliday soundtrack.

It's a relatively novice cast in Lads' terms, although both Elisa and Sarah who are new members have a wealth of acting experience. I'm delighted to report that everyone is already establishing their character, thinking about the backstories, researching Ellis and learning lines.

See you at set up!

Karen