

PROMPTINGS



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WWW.LADS.ORG.UK



The excellence of LADS' productions continues.... A *Streetcar Named Desire* was extremely well received by audiences and just as after *A Thrill of Love*, I was stopped several times over the last few weeks by people who saw *Streetcar* and wanted to congratulate LADS on what they thought was an amazing production. Well done to everyone involved, as it was truly down to team-work and support (talking of support – “Sue, I hope your wrist is better!”). Tickets sales were good at 352 (290 plus 62 season tickets), although we are still chasing the 400 mark for this season ... could we break through the 400 barrier for *Dial M for Murder*? Let's try and make it happen – tickets are now on sale and can be purchased on www.lads.org.uk; box office: 07552 736 110 or email: lads.boxoffice@gmail.com. It is a great classic thriller – not so much as a “whodunit” rather a “will he get away with it”. Sell tickets and don't forget to re-tweet and share on Facebook.

You should have received notification from Karen of LADS' 2017/18 season by email –information inside. I would like once more to thank Karen, our Artistic Director, and the Play Selection committee for their hard work in reading, discussing and choosing our next season. This is a difficult and time-consuming job and can be very frustrating at times when plays are chosen only to find that the rights are not available – however, hard work is rewarded and the season gives a lot of opportunity for members across gender and age, so excellent work.

Check all the dates in the calendar below and get them in your diary so you don't miss anything. Coming up on 3rd and 4th June is the NODA Awards weekend. We would like to see as many LADS' members as possible at the Awards ceremony on the afternoon of 4th June to support our well-deserved nominations/winners - Sarah for Best Female, *Jamaica Inn* for Best Play, *Jamaica Inn* for Scenic Award and Roger for his Lifetime Achievement Award. Plus it would be lovely to have members coming along to workshops (mornings of 3rd and 4th), and to the Showcase on the afternoon of 3rd June. Tickets can be purchased at www.ticketsource.co.uk/noda-london or by phoning the box office: 07717671765. More details about the weekend are inside Promptings.

The read-through for the first play of 2017/18 (running order to be decided once directors have been chosen) is on Thursday 22nd June, with the end of season social on Sunday 25th June – this year we are doing a walk in Upshire, followed by lunch at The Horseshoes pub. We have booked 20 seats and currently have 13 people, so if you want to join us for lunch, let me know ASAP!!

Look out for the papers for AGM (Monday 3rd July) coming out at the beginning of June. We will be looking for people for the general committee and for the play reading committee – so please speak to either Karen or me if you are interested and would like some information. Please come along to the AGM – as members we should get together at the end of each season and show support for the hard-work that goes on behind the scenes.

Jean

LADS DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Sat. 3 and Sun. 4 June	NODA Awards weekend
Sunday 11 June	Set up for <i>Dial M for Murder</i> - 9:30am
Thur.-Sat.15, 16, 17 June	Performances - <i>Dial M for Murder</i> (party on Saturday 17, venue tbc)
Sunday 18 June	Set down 10am
Monday 19 June	Crit and Curry - 7:30pm in Small Hall
Thursday 22 June	Read through for 1st play of 2017/18 season
Sunday 25 June	End of season social - walk and pub lunch - see information inside
Monday 3 July	AGM - 8pm Small Hall
Thursday 24 August	Read through for 2nd play of 2017/18 season
Tuesday 29 August	Rehearsals start for 1st play of 2017/18 season
Saturday 9th September	“Cheers for Chairs” Fundraising Day at Lopping Hall
Saturday 30 September	Start of season event - “A quiz for people who don't like quizzes”

MEMBERS NEWS

We are very pleased to welcome the following new members: Fred Collins, Steve Sinclair and Claire Richardson - we hope to involve you all in our future productions and hope to see you at all our social events soon.

CHEERS FOR CHAIRS

You should now all be aware that the Directors of Lopping Hall are raising money to replace the chairs for the main hall, making the theatrical experience for our audiences much more comfortable. The Directors have to raise £11,000 and currently have raised £3,000. There will be several initiatives launched over the next few months and I hope LADS' members will get behind them - I would like to thank those members who have already bought a chair or a part of a chair ... every little amount helps. We will be launching (or depending on when Promptings goes out - we have launched) the "Big White Chair" at the Farmers' Market on Sunday 7th May. The over-sized chair will turn from white to red as money is raised and will appear at all fund-raising events. We will be approaching Loughton businesses to see how they can help and are planning a Cheers for Chairs Fundraising Day and Evening on Saturday 9th September, where we hope to get as many users of Lopping Hall involved.



END OF SEASON EVENT

Our end of season event will be on Sunday 25th June and will be a group walk around Upshire, followed by Sunday dinner at The Horseshoes pub in Upshire. You can join the walk and/or the pub lunch. We have provisionally booked 20 spaces at The Horseshoes, so we do need you to confirm your space for the meal. If you wish to book for the meal, please email me (lads.chairman@gmail.com) or phone 07896910214.

NODA FESTIVAL WEEKEND 3RD & 4TH JUNE

The Radlett Centre, Aldenham Road, Radlett, Herts, WD7 8HL....just a few minutes off the M25

The weekend starts with our Performance Showcase on Saturday to which everyone is invited to support the groups taking part (£5 per person, or free if you have booked a Saturday workshop). Both days will include workshops, which will run from 10.30 – 12.30 each day and on the Sunday there will be the presentation of NODA London Awards by the National President, Michael Hastilow.

Tickets for workshops, showcase and awards afternoon can be booked at www.ticketsource.co.uk/noda-london or by telephone to the box office on 07717 671765. The delegate fee for each day will be £5.00. Delegates will receive a full colour brochure covering the two day event and listing all the award nominations with written reports from both the Councillor and the President. Both the bar and café will be open at lunchtime and there will be a choice of food which you should pre-order on arrival to save queuing at lunchtime. There are also various eateries and coffee shops in the immediate vicinity. Overflow parking is across the main road in the Budgen's car park, opposite the theatre.

Workshops

We are widening our net with regard to workshops this year and you can book for one of the workshops at the same time as you book your tickets at a cost of £10 each.

Saturday Workshops (£10 per person - includes ticket for Showcase in the afternoon)

Stage Conflict with Tom Jordan, Fight Director with the RSC

Singing Masterclass (Max 6 students): with Peter Allanson

Sunday workshops (£10 per person)

Accents for Actors: Gemma Wright of Rose Bruford College

Acting Workshop: Pat O'Toole (Head of Drama) Rose Bruford College

Hair and Stage Make-up: Caroline Fitch – recreating the era of the 1920s

Song and Dance: Annie Hertler-Smith and Graham Thomson will be looking at two numbers from Chicago. Singers only welcome too.

Come along and celebrate all that is good in amateur theatre within the NODA London region.

**NODA CRIT. FOR
'A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE'
JACQUIE STEADMAN**

I am always delighted when I am available to come along and report on your show because Andrew is unable to, and this visit was no exception.

Tennessee Williams is a very in-depth writer and one which a lot of societies either will not or cannot attempt to do.....not so LADS. Almost everything LADS does is good/excellent in varying degrees but I really felt that this production pushed the boundaries. I was delighted to see almost a full house, because this is not feel-good stuff – it is 'nitty gritty real life this is what happens to people' stuff done really well.

I was so pleased that the Director, Jean Cooper, and the cast did not attempt to sanitise the script. 'Streetcar' is very much of its time and the values and social mores need their original setting for the audience to appreciate how very shocking they were in their day. It also gives the cast an opportunity to display some very controversial attitudes and responses which, maybe with our modern thinking, would not make for such an emotional high-octane piece, enabling the cast to draw on their reserve of acting talent to achieve this.



From the very start the open curtains showing a composite set, poorly furnished in accordance with the life Stella and Stanley were living,, with half-walls allowing the audience to see the actors all the time, let us know that there was no surplus money here available for life's luxuries. Everything was well placed with the bedroom SL and the kitchen US, allowing good movement through the main living area from the front door, making full use of the stage. Doors off the bedroom to the bathroom were also well placed. With the kitchen US and the refrigerator SL in that alcove, there was no necessity to have a

'period' fridge which might have proved troublesome, but it was a working prop which extended the illusion....and the door was full of bottles!!! The old cooker placed within that kitchen area worked well and looked authentic. The use of the apron DSR leading to the upper portions of the house, where Steve and Eunice lived, extended the playing area well, and allowing the cast to use the floor of the auditorium and the two exits to indicate various street scenes, opened up the whole 'community' area. Congratulations to Gary Cooper for his vision and interpretation – no doubt in conjunction with the Director.



Congratulations also to Wardrobe (Liz Adams and Sylvia Zilesnick) and Properties (Sue Bonner) who managed to create and maintain the 1948 hardship of New Orleans. Overall the crew moved with speed and precision when re-setting and were never intrusive to the action.

You are very fortunate in having such a wealth of good performers in your group and this production used four of them as the main protagonists to perfection, each giving highly-charged and emotional performances within the confines of their character.

From the very start the play moved at a good pace with no hesitations at all, making sure that the audience were engaged from the beginning. The accents were all consistent throughout and it only took a few minutes for me to 'tune in' my ears to the drawl of the New Orleans dialect. When delivering 'important' dialogue speech was very clear, but when it was all secondary and peripheral there was some babble and chatter, not out of place in such an excitable community.

The difference in the two sisters was very marked from the beginning. Stella Kowalski (Sarah Hudson) was down to earth, kind, realistic, trusting and easy-going. All these emotions she portrayed very convincingly and naturally.

Outwardly very happy with her life with Stanley at the start of the play we see how the presence of Blanche affects him (and ultimately her), and how finally she comes to a kind of acceptance of the man he is and the life she will have with him. She showed genuine affection to Blanche, aware of her fragile mental state, but unaware of the real depth of her problems. After Stanley's assault on her sister, she fell apart and realised that she has abandoned Blanche to an institution and she must somehow find the strength to go on.



Blanche Dubois (Cathy Naylor) bore no resemblance to her sister at all, and at the time of the play had only a shared childhood in common. On her entrance we were immediately aware that there was a large degree of 'superiority' in her character which obviously caused some problems in both her relationship with Stella and with Stanley. This was a stellar performance from Cathy, who ran the gamut of all emotions known to man in her amazing portrayal of this fragile, damaged creature living a fantasy existence in her own mind. She was always just on the edge of reality and we, the audience, could believe that she believed what she was saying was absolutely true. Her moods were mercurial - she moves from hysterical to flirty, especially when the young collector man (Josh Sowerbutts) calls, and he is suitably out of his depth when she comes on to him. She spun a web of fantasy and lies to entrap Mitch – both of them needing someone in their lives and his rejection of her when he learns the truth was another blow to her sanity, even though she pleaded with him not to desert her. Her final and most devastating disintegration comes after Stanley rapes her. She has taunted him throughout the play and his final act of supremacy completely destroys her.

It would have been very easy to overpay that scene, but as Stanley moved towards her as she leant against the bedroom wall she flinched and moved her head away from him in such terror, which clearly indicated that she was fully aware of what was going to happen. Afterwards she became calm and assumed an air of normality when the Doctor (Graham Milne) and the Nurse (Charlotte Pope) came to take her away so that, finally, she was actually relying on 'the kindness of strangers' which she has always maintained had happened in her life.

Stanley Kowalski (Christian Mortimer) was written and portrayed as a sexual animal, with that sexual magnetism brooding just below the surface. Christian had managed to bend and position his body into what I can only describe as a 'hulk' and from his first entrance his stance and demeanour left us in no doubt of his personality. His whole manner held an underlying feeling of menace, especially when talking to Blanche although there were explosive shades of this when speaking with Stella about Blanche. He did not have the same protective feelings for Blanche and clearly showed that he suspected of her of trying to cheat Stella (and ultimately him) out of her share of the money from the family home. This resentment of Blanche built throughout the play – she put him down at every opportunity – and when he appeared in the satin pyjamas he had worn on his wedding night, he displayed a mixture of triumph and menace which culminated in the sensitively-handled rape scene



Harold Mitchell (Mitch) (Lee Kenneth) was an unlikely friend for Stanley, fostered during their army days, and almost the polar opposite, being the son caring for an elderly mother. It was very clear that the idea of her death and the thought of having to look after himself, was one of the driving forces in his pursuit of Blanche, although he was initially captivated by her charm and sexuality. Shy, diffident and self-conscious he was completely bowled over by Blanche's lies.

His hurt and disbelief when he realises, through Stanley, that they are lies, were painful to watch. As was his reaction when Blanche was taken away and he was seated at the kitchen table in the middle of a game of cards....his pain and embarrassment was there for all to see.

There were good performances from all the supporting players with the upstairs neighbours Eunice Hubell (Dolly Howett) and Steve Hubbell (John Gilbert) displaying the kind of noisy, volatile personalities of the people in the neighbourhood. It is actually Dolly who is with Stella when they take Blanche away and who tells her, in a matter of fact way, that life must go on. The card school which included Pablo Gonzales (Ian Russell) was well played – quiet when required – but always active with calls and bids (and no lack of concentration) in what would appear a normal situation, when the action in the bedroom was much more emotionally charged. Other members of the



cast played various other characters from the community.

Seeing the play and doing this report has prompted me to look into the writing of this play and I read that it was written from Blanche's point of view, and that it is the fantasies we create to escape which actually imprison us. Jean Cooper's sensitive handling of the script was a masterpiece of interpretation and insight into Blanche's condition and the reaction of other people to her – she was imprisoned by her fantasies from which there would never be any escape for her

My congratulations to you all.

Jacquie Stedman
Councillor – NODA London

DIAL M FOR MURDER



Our final play this season is best known for the Hitchcock film version. It was adapted for the screen by the playwright himself and the stage version is just as ingenious and entertaining as the film. The film was Hitchcock's only venture into 3D - we can top that as our version is not only 3D but live as well!

As Jean has said, this has been a really good season for LADS so far, so please show your support by coming to see the play, telling people about it and getting them to buy tickets. We are donating programme sales and holding collections for Chigwell Riding Trust, a charity which does really terrific work for people with disabilities, so you'll be supporting them as well as LADS - see their website for more details.

<http://www.chigrade.org.uk/>

PROPS needed

If anyone has, or know where we can source the following, please contact me by phone or email:

A desk (approximately 4ft by 2ft 6in) - any period up to early 1950s and with at least one drawer

A drinks trolley - again, up to 1950s style

Sports/Dancing cups or trophies

Many thanks,

Howard (07985 923257 -
how_platt@yahoo.co.uk)

2017/18 SEASON

After reading over 50 plays and much discussion, the LADS' Play Selection Committee have finally reached their choice for next season. We hope that the four plays make up an interesting season, with lots of opportunities for involvement both on and off stage. The plays are

California Suite	by Neil Simon
The Elephant Man	by Bernard Pomerance
Breaking the Code	by Hugh Whitmore
Come back to the Five & Dime, Jimmy Dean, Jimmy Dean	by Ed Graczyk

Having arrived at our four plays, we now need four directors. If you are interested in directing next year, please let me know (karenrogers06@tiscali.co.uk or 07973529753). We have some copies of the scripts if you wanted to read one before signing on the dotted line! If you are keen to direct but have never done so before, we promise that you will have as much support as you want/need to ease you into the role.

Dates for next season are:

Week from Sunday 29 October 2017
Week from Sunday 7 January 2018
Week from Sunday 18 March 2018
(due to a VERY EARLY Easter)
Week from Sunday 3 June 2018

Karen