

# PROMPTINGS



ISSUE 94 - SEPTEMBER 2017

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



Welcome everyone – all refreshed after our summer break, I hope and ready to launch into our 2017/18 season. Before I talk about what is coming next, a word or two about “Dial M for Murder”, the final play of last season. We were tantalisingly close to the 400 “bums on seats” we had been chasing all season, at 397 tickets sold. Thank you to members who sell tickets, post flyers, help at marketing events, tell their friends and family and generally spread the word about LADS and the shows. *Dial M for Murder* was not only a success selling tickets, but also a great production, with tension and surprise, a superb set and costumes firmly set in the 1950s – well done to everyone involved, but especially to Howard on his directorial debut – here’s to many more! See the crit for *Dial M* inside Promptings.

The season starts with “Breaking the Code” and rehearsals have already begun. Cathy is directing and is very excited about the play and has been working all summer on the play – see Cathy’s comments inside. We do have lots (10,000) season leaflets, which we would like to distribute in the local area and beyond by posting through letterboxes. If every LADS’ member takes 150 leaflets each (which is approximately 3/4 streets’ worth), we will use them all up – you can collect

them from Lopping Hall, or from me (give me a ring first 07896910214).

Our Start of Season Event is a Fun Quiz on Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> September. Garry and I will be running it and it will be unusual in that it will not just depend on your general knowledge – there will be games of chance and skill, of luck and lunacy – the emphasis will be on “FUN”. It cost £8, which includes a sumptuous buffet supper. Information on how to get tickets are inside Promptings – we do need to know numbers to be able to cater for everyone.

Following the success of the in-house workshop earlier this year, we are planning two workshops for this season. The first will be on Friday 20<sup>th</sup> October and will be a “Physical and Vocal Characterisation Workshop”. We will be exploring and developing physical characterisation techniques – see inside for more detail.

See below for upcoming dates. Please get these into your phones, diaries, computers and calendars ... Don’t miss a thing!! As ever, lots of information can be found on the LADS’ website: [www.lads.org.uk](http://www.lads.org.uk) – the password for the members’ area (at the bottom of the “Membership” page) is wilingale.

*Jean*

## LADS DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Sat 30 <sup>th</sup> Sept	Start of Season event – <i>Fun Quiz</i> - £8 includes supper. Lopping Hall. 7.30pm for 8pm
Sat 7 <sup>th</sup> Oct	LOS Murder Meal - Lopping Hall - £10. 7pm for 7.30pm. Tickets: <a href="http://www.ticketsource.co.uk/los">www.ticketsource.co.uk/los</a>
Sun 8 <sup>th</sup> Oct	Farmers Market – Loughton High Road – help at the LADS’ stall
Fri 20 <sup>th</sup> Oct	“Physical Theatre Workshop” (more info inside)
Sun 29 <sup>th</sup> Oct	Set up for <i>Breaking the Code</i> . 9.30am start
2-4 <sup>th</sup> Nov	<i>Breaking the Code</i> production nights
Sat 4 <sup>th</sup> Nov	After-show party at Jean and Garrys – 28, Woodland Way, Woodford Green, IG8 0QG
Sun 5 <sup>th</sup> Nov	Set down for <i>Breaking the Code</i> . 10am start
Mon 6 <sup>th</sup> Nov	Crit and curry night. 7.30pm Lopping Hall small hall
Thurs 9 <sup>th</sup> Nov	Read-through for <i>Come back to the 5&amp;Dime, Jimmy Dean, Jimmy Dean</i>
Mon 10 <sup>th</sup> Nov	Rehearsals start for <i>The Elephant Man</i>

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## MARKETING AT FARMERS MARKET AND LOVE LOUGHTON

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LADS have a stall at the Love Loughton afternoon at St Marys Church on Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> September (12 noon to 4pm) and also at the Farmers' Market on the morning of Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> October (9am to 1pm). Please volunteer to come along and help – chat to people about LADS and what we do and give out flyers and information.

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## CHEERS FOR CHAIRS FUND

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LADS managed to raise £116 for the chair fund at the Jessel Green fun day in July. The fund currently stands at over £8000 – only another £3000 to go and we can have comfy seats. Thank you to all LADS' members who have contributed to the fund – if you haven't, and you want to - you can send a cheque to: Lopping Hall, FAO Stephen Radley, 189 High Road, Loughton, IG10 4LF, made payable to "The Lopping Endowment" – or make a bank transfer: Account name: The Loughton Lopping Endowment Fund: Account number: 90545325, Sort code: 40-30-25.



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## START OF SEASON FUN QUIZ

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Saturday 30th September at Lopping Hall  
7.30pm for 8pm start  
£8 per person  
Includes buffet supper, bring your own drink

For tickets, please send a cheque (payable to LADS) for £8 per person to: Martin Howarth, 16 Marjorams Avenue, Loughton, IG10 1PT. Or make a bank transfer to LADS (sort code: 405240; account no: 00017610) and send email to Martin (martin.anthony.howarth@gmail.com). Martin will confirm your booking by email, post or telephone.

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## LOS MURDER MYSTERY NIGHT

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On Saturday 7th October, LOS will be presenting a Murder Mystery Night at Lopping Hall. It's entitled The 13th Funghi, and features our very own Jean Cooper as one of the suspects!

Doors (and the bar) open at 7:00pm and the fun kicks off at 7:30pm. Tickets are £10 available from [www.ticketsource.co.uk/los](http://www.ticketsource.co.uk/los).

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## POLO SHIRTS AND SWEAT SHIRTS

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We have a fresh supply of LADS' polo shirts and sweatshirts. They are a good quality and cost £11 for a polo shirt and £14 for a sweatshirt. We do like our front of house people to wear a polo shirt or sweatshirt as it creates a professional image. Contact Jean for purchase.

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**NODA CRIT. FOR  
'DIAL M FOR MURDER'  
JACQUIE STEADMAN**

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I was pleased, once again, to have the opportunity of being able to report on your latest production, and also Howard Platt's directorial debut. I have seen Howard in many productions and it was good to see that he had transferred his skill from the dramatic to the all-encompassing directorial. I hope it has given him confidence to undertake the role again, given that this production was so well received by the audience. Whilst I am sure having an experienced cast helped, it is the Director's vision that has to be interpreted and, for a new director, to have an assistant in the person of Dolly Howlett, must have proved invaluable.

I think this is a play that some people assume was written by Agatha Christie, but Frederick Knott provided us with a good story (which meant the audience had to concentrate throughout), and some very clear well fleshed-out and clearly defined characters.



The set was authentic of the early 1950s and, in those days, would have been regarded as elegantly furnished, compared with the utility pieces with which most homes were filled after WWII. It is also interesting to note that, whilst Tony Wendice was a full time tennis player, he didn't command the fees that today's professionals do. I liked the fact that the photographs in the frames were authentic of the characters and the trophies were substantially real for a tennis champion. The props within the room gave it a 'real' feel of a home.

The stylish costume plot was, likewise, very much of the time – dresses for Sheila and suits and sports jacket and trousers for the men with a good sprinkling of hats for everyone (except Max) – well researched. I do think that Sheila would have worn seamed stockings though.

Lighting was simple and appropriate and the voice of Roger, as the announcer on the radio was timed beautifully. Likewise the telephone! The music throughout added just the right amount of suspense and atmosphere. Congratulations to Martin Howarth and his entire technical crew (whatever their department) for ensuring such a well run performance.

There was good pace throughout this production which kept the plot moving well and, apart from one prompt which I heard, the lines appeared secure. Although the play was very wordy in parts there was sufficient movement from the players, during delivery of the long speeches, to keep one's attention and enough changes in the tone of delivery to maintain interest in the story.



Everyone looked very natural on the set and moved around it easily. The diction was very precise – very 1950s upper class – portraying a public school camaraderie. The casting for this production, like so many I have seen you do, was just right with each player bringing their own strengths to the roles they were playing.

Karen Rogers suited the character of Sheila Wendice very well. She interacted well with Max Halliday (with whom she appeared to be still in love) yet managed to be the devoted wife to Tony Wendice when he arrived home. Her tall elegance and grace of movement combined with her cool control was maintained throughout Act I which made her descent into fear and nervousness after her attack the more shocking. Her response to the attack was very believable and the strangulation well staged resulting in her killing her attacker. Her reactions to the attack were convincing and it was at this point she started to fall apart, full of shock at what she had done, but still totally innocent of the part her husband had played in the scenario in which she found herself. Her re-telling of the events of the evening in question was particularly well done because she moved her head and her hands in a most natural manner (as one would) to illustrate what she was saying.

Max Halliday (Dean Bartholomew) was the assured writer of criminal fiction. He was confident, articulate and very easy on the stage with an inbuilt assurance in his own talents. His bewilderment at Tony's lack of action on behalf of his wife when he tells him the story he should tell the police was very convincing. His regard for Sheila was apparent and his care for her at the end of the play very touching. The way he had, unknowingly, arrived at the truth of the situation was told with a degree of innocence, but with the knowledge of the crime writer who knows that the plot never turns out as expected.



Captain Lesgate (Adam Rabinowitz) was a much less savoury personality, although he didn't easily succumb to Tony's proposition, until it became apparent that he was going to be blackmailed. He portrayed what would have been called a 'cad' in the 50s and he certainly looked the part. His diction was clear and measured but do try not to keep turning your head to your left at the end of sentences – maintaining eye contact is crucial unless you are going to look directly out at the audience. He managed to maintain a somewhat outraged demeanour when Tony was outlining his plan regarding the murder of his wife, but it was only when he was faced with exposure...and money.....that he finally succumbed. His entry to the flat and the tussle with Sheila, and subsequent stabbing, were well done and he was very brave in choosing to have his face to the audience when he fell at the back of the desk – well done, it would have been much simpler for you to face US but you took the more difficult option!

Tony Wendice was a very different character to those usually played by Lee Kenneth, but he proved his versatility with this part. Like everyone, he moved with ease around the set and appeared very natural within it. He had several rather long speeches which were delivered with clarity and the right amount of movement and inflection to maintain interest both on the part of the character he was addressing

and the audience. His facial expressions spoke volumes in lots of places and he maintained his clipped diction throughout. He managed the balance between devoted husband and conning manipulator very well right up until the time his involvement was exposed at the end of the play, when he crumpled and, I suspect, a silent cheer came from the audience at his denouncement.



There was an element of control over Sheila throughout the play but this is indicative of the attitude of men to women at the time. He appeared to have the quick mind of the manipulator, and changed his character, and his story as to his movements and the reasons for them, with ease when necessary, sometimes with just the right amount of menace – as with Captain Lesgate.

The law was represented by Inspector Hubbard (Andrew Rogers) who brought an air of calm and logic to the proceedings. He carried his authority with ease and his questioning, particularly of the distraught Sheila, was measured and very authoritative but quite gentle, conveying the character of the successful police officer without fuss. From the time of his entry into the flat the whole pace of the play became very controlled and the final denouement, delivered by Hubbard with his air of authority and conviction, although complicated, was clearly explained enabling both audience and players to absorb the complexities of the solution of the crime.

The tension of the plot built well through Act III making an intelligent end to the play - and this is not easy to maintain when the players know what is due to happen. Unfortunately it is the nature of a play of this kind that the audience sometimes finds relief in laughter at those times when there is tension in the story.

The other time, on Thursday evening when we attended, was when Tony rang the flat to get Sheila to the desk in the sitting room. Having then heard the tussle on the telephone one could almost see his face when she picked up the phone again and spoke to him.....which she wouldn't have done had everything gone according to plan. I think that this proves the audience were totally involved in the story – which is where you want them to be. However, I am sure the director warned the cast that this could happen and it didn't faze them in the least.

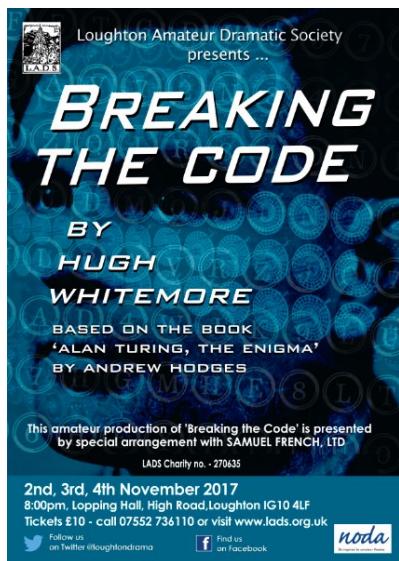
Thank you very much for making David and I so welcome – it is always a pleasure to come along and cover for Andrew, and I look forward to your next season.

Jacquie Stedman  
Councillor – NODA London

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## BREAKING THE CODE

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At the time of writing, we have only had four rehearsals but we have completed the blocking and are now starting to work on the play in depth. The cast have all made great efforts to learn their lines so I thank them for that, it makes my job so much easier.

Although it's early days, I'm confident that it's going to be a fantastic production so please do all you can to sell tickets. If you need any handbills or posters, please come and collect some from me on rehearsal nights.

We are looking for two wooden chairs which need to be as plain as possible and suitable for the period which is 1940's to 1950's. If you have a couple of chairs that you think might be suitable, please let me know.

Cathy

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## WORKSHOPS

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Our first workshop for 2017/18 will be "Physical and Vocal Characterisation Workshop" on Friday 20<sup>th</sup> October at Lopping Hall starting at 8pm. It will be run by Jo Keen and Jean Cooper. In this workshop you will explore and develop physical characterisation techniques. The types of movement created will then be connected to vocal delivery, with a view to developing consistent, authentic and original characters. The workshop is designed to free your mind and body so that you are able to move beyond your default character types; you will move slightly out of your comfort zone and find out what else you can do.

For the second half of the session you will need to be armed with the memory of a character that you have played in the past; this is so that you can apply the techniques developed earlier to a specific character (Please note that this is a physical workshop and participants will have to have a reasonable level of fitness). To book onto the course, please contact Jean on [jean.famcooper@btinternet.com](mailto:jean.famcooper@btinternet.com) or phone/text 07896910214. There is limited space on this course, so booking is essential.

In 2018, we wish to run an Accents course – concentrating on "General American". This will hopefully take place in late January/early February in order to help with the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> plays of the season, both of which are American plays. Watch this space for more information.