



Promptings

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NODA Crit for
'California Suite'



My first stage
appearance



NODA CRIT



NODA
AWARDS

Message from Jean



Hello and welcome to LADS 2018/19 season of laughter – I hope you are feeling refreshed after our very hot summer and are raring to go.

Inside Promptings you will find the crit for “California Suite” – the 4th play of our 2017/18 season. The 357 seats sold showed that it was a popular choice with our audience and we had great feedback. Thank you to Christian for not only agreeing to direct it – his debut with LADS – but also to take a part as well. We sincerely hope he will direct for us again!

Thank you to everyone who came along to the AGM on 2nd July – I know AGMs are not usually the most interesting event to attend, but I like to think ours are pretty good. It is certainly a chance to say thank you to everyone, especially the hard-working committees that keep the society running. We had a very successful year at the NODA Awards, and Andrew re-presented the awards to the talented recipients at the meeting (full details inside).

You will have all received a copy of the full dates for the coming season – all rehearsals, shows, socials, set ups, set downs, etc... Please put the dates in your diary, so you don't miss a thing! Below is a shortened calendar with all the important dates up to the end of the year. PLEASE NOTE: We are holding the read-through and casting for the March play (Pygmalion) on October 11th. The casting for this play is normally done in November, after the first play – but I am directing it and will be going away for 5 weeks after Boeing Boeing, so that is why it is earlier than usual.

See inside for information on the Start of Season Event – cheese and wine tasting – on Saturday 6th October. If cheese and wine isn't your thing, come along afterwards and join us for a drink and catch up with friends – we will be running a full bar for the rest of the evening.

Jean



Dates for your diary

| | |
|----------|--|
| 28th Aug | Rehearsals start for <i>Boeing Boeing</i> |
| 6th Oct | Start of season social – Cheese and Wine |
| 11th Oct | Read through for <i>Pygmalion</i> . 8pm Small hall |
| 28th Oct | Set up for <i>Boeing Boeing</i> – 9.30am start |
| 1-3 Nov | Production nights for <i>Boeing Boeing</i> |
| 3rd Nov | After show party - TBA |
| 4th Nov | Set down – 10am start |
| 5th Nov | Crit and curry – 7.30pm Small hall. |
| 8th Nov | Rehearsals start for <i>The Lion in Winter</i> |
| 1st Dec | Xmas social in the bar |



Start of Season - Cheese and Wine Social

Our start of season celebration this year will be a “Cheese and Wine Evening and Social” on Saturday 6th October in the bar at Lopping Hall – cost £8 per person, which will include 6 wine tastings and accompanying cheese. You can book and pay for your tickets on the membership form. There is a maximum amount of people of 30 for the cheese and wine part of the evening, but if you don’t drink wine or eat cheese, please join us afterwards for a general social and chat – no charge!



Membership Subs

Membership subs are due now. Please use the on-line forms for membership if you can. The links for this is on the members’ page of the website (www.lads.org.uk – Membership tab – scroll to bottom and click on Members Area – password: Willingale). You can click on the link and complete the form and then arrange payment (by cheque or on-line banking) using the details on the form. If you should have any problem with using the forms on-line, there is a form attached you can use to fill in and post. Also don’t forget to click ‘yes’ for the

gift aid donation as this will allow the society to claim back tax on your payment.

Members may also wish to join the Season Ticket Member scheme. Season Ticket members get a ticket for each of the four shows in the season for the price of three and also enjoy a priority booking period. Please point out the benefits of being a subscription member to your friends and families.



NODA Awards

Nominations for Scenic Award for *Streetcar Named Desire* and *Come Back to the Five and Dime*, Jimmy Dean, Jimmy Dean.

District 6 winners for Karen Rogers for Best Female in a Play for Joanne in *Come Back to the 5 and Dime*, JD, JD and for Ian Russell for Best Cameo for Nikos in *Breaking the Code*.

Overall London Trophy WINNER for Best Play for *Breaking the Code*

Overall London Trophy WINNER for Best Male on a play for Dean Bartholomew for Alan Turing in *Breaking the Code*

District 6 Flame Award for LADS' production of *A Streetcar Named Desire* and the 2017\18 season with the following citation:

NODA LONDON FLAME AWARD 2018

District 6

For Inspirational Contribution to the Pursuit of Excellence in Theatre

Awarded to: LADS

A Streetcar Named Desire and the 2107/18 season.

The programme for LADS is always challenging for both players and audience but with *A Streetcar Named Desire*, they pushed the boundaries and truly surpassed themselves. This was not a feel-good, sanitised, production - it was 'nitty gritty, real life this is what happened to people' stuff. done really well without losing the controversial attitudes and high-octane emotional performances. With a well-designed, accurate and authentic set, the exceptional cast, which included Cathy Naylor as Blanche duBois and Christian Mortimer as Stanley Kowalski, gave life to the Director's sensitive handling of the script and was masterpiece of interpretation.

This excellent season also included: *Dial M for Murder*, *Breaking the Code*, *The Elephant Man* and *Come Back to the 5 and Dime*, *Jimmy Dean*, *Jimmy Dean*

Do You Remember?

25 years: October 1993 – *Gaslight* by Patrick Hamilton.

Directed by Chris Harris. Cast included: Christine Eckley, John Haylett, Foster Barnett, Sylvia Zilesnick, Kate Leng, Jonathan Denne, Chris Jarvis.

10 years: October 2008 – *Map of the Heart* by William Nicholson.

Directed by Babs Oakley. Cast included: Howard Platt, Jean Cooper, Roz Gerrie, Dan Cooper, Martin

Howard, Simone Webb, Graham Perkins, Matt Cole, Wendy Butler.

5 years: October 2013 – *Playboy of the Western World* by J. M. Synge.

Directed by Jean Cooper. Cast included: Dean Bartholomew, Paul Caira, Howard Platt, Frances Dodd, Cathy Naylor, Tom Donoghue, Roger Barker, Martin Howarth, Lindsay Swinson, Jodie Seymour, Sophie Robertson, Foster Barnett, Wendy Butler.



NODA Crit. for 'California Suite'

Thank you for, once again, giving me the opportunity to report on your latest production. I have always found Neil Simon's writing about ordinary people fascinating, but I am aware that this kind of play is somewhat of a departure for your company. However.....it all worked.....and Christian Mortimer's debut production was a very pleasant surprise. Not because I thought he couldn't do, but directing is a different discipline to acting and not all good actors can cross 'the divide' so to speak. However, Christian's understanding of the characters and the directing process worked well and produced a good production.

Whilst your Production Team list is not as extensive as some companies have, all the names on it are seasoned members of the society and must have been of great assistance to a new director.



The programme was, as always, informative about the play and the playwright..... and also about your success this year with the NODA Awards.

On entering the auditorium was greeted with The Eagles – Hotel California, excellently atmospheric and in keeping with the theme. The music you choose always does so much to set the scene.

There was a good set showing a suite in a hotel. The half walls worked well – opening up the stage – and the actors didn't give any indication that they knew they were there. Everything was visible with good sight lines. The bathroom door was not visible from every seat but it was evident where it was. It was an authentic touch to have

self-closing doors out to the corridor of the hotel. The scene changes were well choreographed throughout and the simple lighting plot was all that was needed. Costumes too, were all suitable to the characters wearing them – well thought through.

Act 1 - Scene 1 Visitor from New York

It was very evident that Hannah Warren (Dolleen Howlett) wasn't looking forward to her visitor who turned out to be her ex-husband William Warren (Billy) played by Howard Platt. There was good nervousness before he arrived and the bantering between the couple showed how far they had grown apart since their divorce. This was reinforced by a fair amount of animosity, although the players themselves appeared to be very natural with each other. He had moved on with his life in a more satisfactory way than she had, although she was successful in her career, but obviously not handling the daughter growing up very well. She also seemed rather resentful that he had now got to a very happy stage in his life, whilst she was still struggling with work and stress.

Against her anxieties and volatility, and scared that she was losing her daughter, he was calm and very satisfied with his life and obviously idolised their daughter. I think there was still a



grudging affection between them and Hannah eventually recognised the sense in what Billy was saying about arrangements for 'sharing the daughter's time'. Between them Dolleen and Howard painted a very convincing picture of a couple struggling to find some common ground over their daughter's future.

Billy dropped his voice a lot which made some of his dialogue difficult to hear – in those moments when he was trying to be conciliatory with Hannah - but his body language was gentle and relaxed and she did eventually respond.

Scene 2 – Visitor from Philadelphia

Marvin Michaels (Lee Kenneth) was a man manic with fear of discovery and realisation of what he had done. He also looked absolutely dreadful after his night with the prostitute – he had good make up to reinforce his very dishevelled appearance. The pace was excellent for the scene with lots of movement from him, combined with well delivered, secure dialogue. He had lots of Jewish mannerisms, especially



when the wife arrived, which were never overdone.

Millie (Jo Keen) was a 'typical' Jewish wife worrying about what to wear for the Bar Mitzvah, how Marvin looked, and what sort of occasion this was going to be. From her entrance she looked and sounded like the sort of wife who would brook no arguments about anything. Her insistence on going to the bathroom, via the bedroom, coupled with Marvin keeping her out of the bedroom was done very well. When Marvin did eventually make his confession it became obvious that she didn't like the husband's family and blamed the situation on his brother for procuring the prostitute in the first place. The roles were reversed after she saw the girl in the bed and she was then the wronged party, putting conditions on their future together. However, it became very poignant at the end of the play when she was talking to the children – after all she had to think of their futures!!

The girl in the bed (Ines Mendes) was suitably limp and unmoving at all times and completely unconscious considering how much she was pulled about although she wouldn't have worn tights considering the night she had with Marvin. Well done on looking so convincing all the time!



Act 2 – Scenes 1 and 2 Visitors from London

Sidney and Diana Nichols (Adam Rabinowitz and Amanda Smith) were the husband and actress wife in California for the Academy Awards. They were convincing as a couple – she a very elegant woman and rather regal but a typical actress with all the insecurities that brings, and with typical actress paranoia. Being a 'failed' actor the marriage was the disguise behind which he hid his true sexuality. Thus, he often appeared to be 'handling' his wife – with some irritation. Amanda had a lovely clear voice, with precise pronunciation, and gave an assured performance – try to balance different levels of delivery to make it more natural and convincing. The banter between them moved well – it must have happened many times before!!

Two hours later they were both convincingly drunk (well done) and turned quite vicious towards each other, bringing out the very worst in their relationship.

Scene 3 – Visitors from Chicago

This was the scene which used the most physicality which could almost have descended into farce, but stopped just in time. The fight wasn't too long and therefore, too contrived. The two couples, Mort and Beth Hollander (Tom Donoghue and Sarah Vickers) and Stu and Gert Franklyn (Christian Mortimer and Liz Adams)

worked together well to get the feel and the animosity across to the audience. Gert did a really super faint and the three were well co-ordinated getting her into bed. After the initial dissatisfaction between Mort and Stu surfaced, the whole scene became dominated by the



'fight' that ensued which was accompanied by manic dialogue.

When the two guys were fighting the dialogue couldn't always be heard clearly but that didn't seem to matter because the scene was then very visual, and the whole thing very convincing. Well done in giving the audience a very well-synchronised display.

Generally I don't like to see the director take part in a production because he/she cannot always see the perspective of their performance in relation to the others, but I understand this scene was directed by someone else, giving Christian the opportunity to participate in this final offering.

'One act' plays are always difficult because there is not a lot of time to build the back-story but Neil Simon's writing works so well and builds each scene totally. Although originally written for the same actors to play all the parts it works well for non-professional groups in giving each of their members 'worthwhile' roles within the production.

Each set of actors had convincingly created their own bit of home-spun culture within each of the scenes, and whilst this is not LADS usual vehicle it didn't disappoint the audience – certainly on the night David and I were there.

I was very pleased to see the piece in the programme about your NODA Awards this season. I have felt in the past that, as Andrew is your Regional Rep, you may have felt penalised that you couldn't get the recognition you deserve so this year (my last as Councillor) I was determined that you would.....and fortunately Andrew agreed. Well done to you all – it is justly deserved – and I sincerely hope you will continue to challenge both your players and your audiences to produce excellent theatre.

With best wishes

Jacque Stedman
Councillor
NODA London

A message from the Mayor

Dear Jean Cooper

Thank you for the invitation to this evening's performance.

I thought it was excellent in every way. From the acting, front of house and the technical side of such a production. I thoroughly enjoyed my evening.

As a town we are so very lucky that there are amateur companies such as L.A.D.S who can put on such excellent productions.

On a personal note I was delighted to see that a former pupil of mine, Sarah Biggs, was in charge of the sound and lighting operation. As Tom Donoghue's line manager at his place of work I will never quite see Tom in the same light after his performance this evening.

Please pass on my congratulations to all involved.

Kind regards

Stephen Murray - Town Mayor

My first stage experience - Howard Platt



According to my mother, my first appearance on a 'stage' was probably during one of our family holidays in the mid-60's, when I was about 6 or 7. These were invariably spent at one the Warner Leisure holiday camps, Sinah Warren on Hayling Island. Whilst mum and dad were enjoying the delights of the Hi-De-Hi style entertainment, my sister and I were off rehearsing our own 'show', under the enthusiastic direction of the children's entertainment team. I can't remember exactly what we performed, but the picture shows me as part of a band of cut-throat pirates – I think the cheesy grin was my attempt to look menacing.

Performances at school were a mixed bag. As I'm Jewish I didn't take part in nativity plays at primary school. I went on to Ilford County High (then for boys only) and our school plays were generally for an all or mostly male cast: *Goodbye Mr Chips*, *The Royal Hunt of Sun* and one year, *War and Peace*. My main memories of this nearly three hour epic (during which our Headmaster could clearly be seen dozing in the front row) are me screaming at the top of my lungs whilst having my leg amputated and a scene featuring a drunken card game, for which we substituted real vodka for the water supplied by props – warning to LADS performers, don't do this!

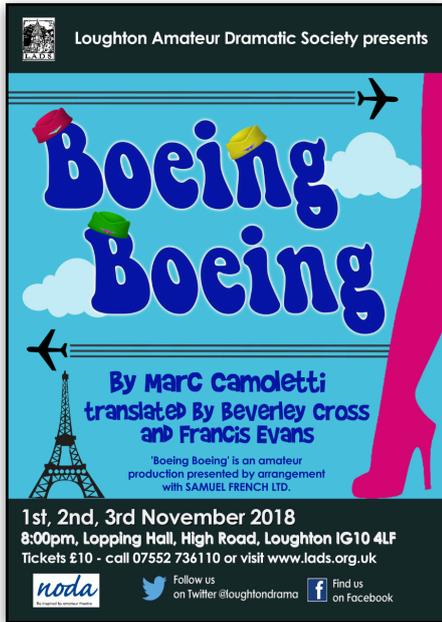
When I was thirteen, my mother spotted an advert in the Ilford Recorder looking for someone to play the cat in a local production of Dick Whittington. It was through this that I joined the Renegades Theatre Company, run by James Cooper. He had formed the company in 1947 with a performance of Hamlet at Ilford Town Hall. In 1973 we performed in The Ilford Playhouse – exclusively ours, which had been converted from a church and is now, inevitably a block of flats. The Renegades was run like a professional repertory company presenting 12 productions a year, including plays, variety shows and pantos. No auditions, you were just invited by Jimmy to take part. Although he often cast his strongest players, he gave plenty of opportunities to nurtured young or inexperienced performers – some of whom went on to work as professionals.

I didn't get the part of the cat but I joined the panto chorus and went on to spend 10 years with the Renegades (with a hiatus when I was at University) during which I did everything from making and serving interval coffee (actually served at peoples' seats), to painting scenery, and on one occasion helping unblock the drains! I took part in several productions a year much to the consternation of my parents who rightly feared my school work would suffer. My first big role was the Genie of the Lamp in *Aladdin*. I had to have a bath every night to remove the green body paint and still managed to ruin a number of bed sheets. I gradually progressed to other small parts and then to juvenile leads.

After Jimmy retired and the Renegades disbanded I joined a number of local societies performing at the Kenneth Moore Theatre in Ilford - plays and musicals. Then one evening in 2000 I got a phone call from Babs Oakley, asking if I would 'guest' in *Major Barbara*. I so enjoyed the experience that I joined LADS and the rest, well you know the rest.

Howard

Boeing Boeing



Rehearsals are now underway and tickets are on sale - please tell friends, family (or even total strangers) about our first production of this season of comedies.

It is one of the most performed and popular plays in the amateur canon, and had a very successful revival in the West End a few years back, so please support and promote it to get our season off to a 'flying' start (sorry - couldn't resist the pun).

We are in need of the following for this production:

A tartan holdall or bag and 1960's style sofa - some examples are given below:

If anyone can help with these, please contact Jean



Members' News

Congratulations to Tom Donoghue and Chloe, who have just announced their engagement.

Congratulations also to Dan and Rosie Cooper (and proud grandparents Garry and Jean) on the birth of daughter Lyra, on Friday 7th September.

