

Promptings

In this issue



NODA Crit of
Pressure



My first stage
experiences



Our next
production



Xmas Social

Message from Jean



Wow! What a stupendous start to our 2019/20 Season. *Pressure* was a huge success on so many levels: Tickets sold – 415; Full houses; Excellent reviews (NODA review in Promptings); Fantastic feedback from our audiences; AND we raised £479.35 for Blesma, The Limbless Veterans, our 2019/20 charity. Well done to not only those directly involved in the production, but also to the whole LADS' family, who support each other and every production with such love and hard work. Thank you!

Colder Than Here is now in rehearsal, having got over a couple of casting hiccoughs, and is on track to be another great LADS' production (9th, 10th, 11th January). A big welcome to Vicky, who has taken over the role of Harriet. As always, flyers for the production are available at Lopping Hall, so pick some up and get marketing. As this is only a four-hander, we need everyone to buy tickets and spread the word. All the information you need is on the website: www.lads.org.uk, where you can also buy tickets, or phone the box office on 07552736110.

While I am talking dates, don't forget the LADS Christmas Social on Friday 13th December at Val and Lesh – 3 Habgood Road, Loughton from 7.30pm. (more details inside). This is a great opportunity to sit down with friends and have a good old "chig-wag" without thinking about putting up sets, painting furniture, learning lines or missing cues. I can't wait!!

Cheers

Jean



Dates for your diary

Friday 13th December	Xmas Social at Val & Lesh - 3 Habgood Road, Loughton
Sunday 5th January	Set up for <i>Colder Than Here</i> – 9.30am start
Thurs - Sat 9th, 10th-11th January	Production nights for <i>Colder Than Here</i>
Saturday 11th January	After show party at Liz & Malcolm's, Hill Top, Loughton
Sunday 12th January	Set down – 10am start
Monday 13th January	Crit and curry – 7.30pm small hall
16th January	Read through for <i>The Actress</i> - 8.00pm, small hall
Monday 20th January	Rehearsals start for <i>A Tale of Two Cities</i>
Tuesday 28th January	Committee meeting



Members' News

I would like to thank everyone for paying their membership subscription so promptly this year ... it is unheard of, but to date, I only have one person to chase for their subs ... so thank you from the bottom of my heart – chasing people for money is my most hated job! Membership is very buoyant at the moment, with lots of new members having been in Pressure, Vicky being cast in *Colder Than Here* and then *A Tale of Two Cities* giving opportunities to almost everyone in its massive cast of 21 people! Since our last Promptings, we have welcomed Shona Hernon and Eleanor Stylianides to LADS.

NODA Today magazine



The Autumn issue of the NODA Today magazine is now in the LADS box at Lopping Hall (situated on the wall on the way round to the Small hall). Please feel free to take it and read and then return to the box. The magazine is for all society members, so this is the best way to share it around. It has many interesting articles, information on the NODA Summer School and information on costume hire and grants and much, much more. If you look carefully, you will see a photograph of yours truly (and my article on Summer School).

LADS Xmas social



The LADS Christmas social will be at Val and Leshs' house on Friday 13th December, from 7.30pm (3 Habgood Road, Loughton). Parking is difficult in their road, so you may need to park in The Drive and walk (or in the car park by Morrisons if you are hale and hearty). As with the after-show parties, LADS will be supplying beer, wine and soft drinks (if you want something different, bring your own). Val and Lesh will not be catering, so please bring along a few nibbles to share with everyone. Santa hats are not compulsory!!

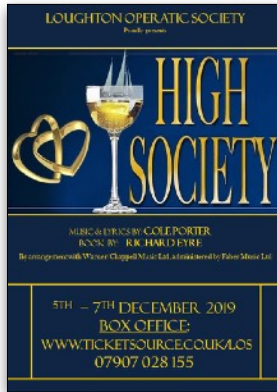
A reminder



Could you please ensure that your friends that come and see our productions are aware that due to licensing restrictions (and as a consideration to other audience members) that the taking of photographs and videoing during the performances is strictly forbidden. It is a growing trend that we need to stop, as we could get into trouble with the licensing companies. We will re-do the announcement regarding mobile phones for the January production and include this in it.

Thank you.

LOS in High Society



LOS are producing *High Society* at Lopping Hall on 5th, 6th and 7th December. I love this show and will be attending on Thursday 5th Dec. LOS members are great at coming along and supporting LADS, so it would be lovely if you could buy tickets and support them. Their shows are always great fun and full of energy, and the LOSers bar (as they call it) will be open as normal.

Do you remember when?

5 years ago: January 2015

The Curious Savage by John Patrick. Directed by Jean Cooper. Cast included: Pam Macdonald, Nick Martin, Rebecca Phillips, Dave Hinkley, Wendy Butler, Howard Platt, Martin Howarth, Kimberley Packman, Sylvia Zilesnick, Charlotte Pope, Jon Gilbert



10 years ago: January 2010

See How They Run by Philip King. Directed by Sue Cole. Cast included: Sophie Robertson (Gilbert), Lisa Mathews, Martin Howarth, Liz Adams, Howard Platt, Tom Donoghue, Andrew Rogers, Matthew Cole, Foster Barnett



25 years ago: January 1995

Les Liaisons Dangereuses by Christopher Hampton. Directed by Babs Oakley. Cast included: Val Parker, Sue Bonner, Natalie Palmer, Steve Sander, Andrew Rogers



NODA crit for Pressure

General

I was really glad to be asked to cover this show, and to have the opportunity to see another LADS play after so enjoying 'The Lion in Winter' before – you put together such interesting productions, and the welcome is always so warm. This play in particular was well-rounded and very well-acted, well done to all involved.



Players-Leading

As 'Dr James Stagg', Dean Bartholomew achieved a real stand-out performance with a very believable character enhanced by moments of superb emotional depth. From the start Dean gave us a thorough and always interesting portrayal, capturing the brisk, urgent mood of 'Stagg' very effectively with really good pace of dialogue. His brusqueness was often very funny, which contrasted well with his anxiety for his pregnant wife – his panic attack, with shaking hands sloshing tea from its cup, was poignantly believable. What really impressed me, though, was the rapport that he built with the audience – when 'Stagg' took a phone call with news of his wife and tearfully said 'thank you for letting me know', a genuine ripple of concerned sympathy could be heard running through the audience, and when he later revealed that it had been good news and he had a son, one man cheered. The audience was evidently utterly absorbed in 'Stagg's' story, something that I haven't seen before in any play that I've been to for NODA – congratulations.

Fiona Delves' 'Lt Kay Summersby' was a lively and engaging character. I really enjoyed her 'capable head girl' persona, and the opening

scene where she strove to hide her evident exasperation with 'Stagg' behind a bright smile was very funny. Her relationships with other characters were very human and believable – the physical cringe in her interactions with 'Krick' told us everything we needed to know about his character, while her blossoming friendship with 'Stagg' was a very enjoyable journey. The key relationship was, of course, with 'Eisenhower', and was depicted with real sensitivity and feeling – Fiona has such an expressive face, and this really came to the fore in the beautifully tender look that she gave the general when he fell asleep after talking about American Football towards the end of the play. Fiona also has excellent comic timing – I particularly enjoyed her tipsy acting, which was very convincing and funny!



As 'General Eisenhower', Howard Platt portrayed a complex and impressively varied character, demonstrating his great dramatic range by swinging from jovial optimism to ferocious temper, with some very sweet moments with 'Summersby' in between. The loving look that he gave her from the doorway when she was cooling herself at the window was utterly believable – this pair had great stage chemistry. He had a good consistent accent and also did a pretty impressive Winston Churchill impression – an entertaining and thoroughly interesting characterisation.

Support

The play found a worthy antagonist in Phillip Watson's 'Col Irving Krick' – he showed really interesting character development over the course of the play, as 'Krick' initially came across

as merely exasperatingly ebullient and over-exuberant (providing a striking contrast with his more buttoned-up British colleagues), before emerging as a much more confrontational figure. Very effective.

Freddie Parker represented a genial and engaging figure as 'Andrew', but I'd particularly like to commend him for his quick reaction when the hat stand fell over in the first scene – Freddie didn't drop character, but smoothly picked the stand back up, saying 'Let me get that, Sir', before continuing with the scene – a flawless cover, and professionally done! Nice work.



I would also particularly like to commend Graham Milne for his amazingly contrasting performance as the 'Electrician' and 'General Spaatz' - he managed to create two such different characters that I had to check the programme to see who was playing the general, as I didn't recognise him. The jovial, if weary and homesick, electrician was a very likeable salt-of-the-earth type; the transformation into 'Spaatz' was impressively comprehensive, whether in his accent, his demeanour, or even in the way that Graham held himself, it was like watching two different men. Really very well done indeed.

Together with 'General Spaatz', 'Sir Trafford Leigh Mallory' (a dignified and statesmanlike Martin Howarth), 'Admiral Ramsay' (an authoritative performance by Richard Cohen), and 'Commander Franklin' (Michael Lewcovicz, a believable leader of men) formed a very effective quartet of martial leaders – each was very much his own character, and each had an

impressively military bearing in the way he held himself – they were very convincing officers.

As the 'Naval Meteorologist', Nick Charles was a calm presence on the stage. He was particularly good at 'background bustle', though, always active and always creating something interesting to see. This didn't detract from the main action, but helped imbue the set with the sense of it being a real working place.



Adam Rabinowitz gave an earnest performance as 'Lt Battersby', contrasting well with his other appearance as 'Captain Johns'. Well done for creating two distinct characters, and for an entertaining performance.



Director

I hope Christian Mortimer is proud of this emotionally rich production – all of the characters were really well devised and well rounded (it seems odd to say 'they seemed really real' when the play is a true story, but this is testament to the great performances given by the cast), and the relationships between them felt very believable. Good use of the available

space – the ‘office’ very much felt like a real place – but I was most impressed by the pace and energy of the dialogue, which flowed beautifully. Well done!

Stage Management

I don't have much to say about stage management, which is always a big complement to how smoothly everything went! Well done to SM Jean Cooper, ASM Emily Cooke, and Backstage Assistant Judith Thompson for keeping things rolling so effectively and efficiently – there was nothing to distract or pull the viewer out of the story.

Sound and Lighting



Lighting was designed by Terry Tew, and sound by Cathy Naylor; they were operated by Sarah Biggs and Val Jones. The lighting was used efficiently to create a sense of a real indoor space (I realise I have mentioned realism in quite a few sections, but the feeling of looking through a window onto an actual situation was very impressive); there were no superfluous effects or anything to break the spell of authenticity. Sound was also used to great effect, such as the distant noise of the crashing aircraft, and well-timed ringing of the telephones.

Set Design

Designed and constructed by Stephen Radley, the set was really immersive, creating a believable sense of a real workplace. It was impressive how a few well-chosen pieces of furniture really captured the historical period, and I was particularly taken by the big weather maps, which were the perfect finishing touch and looked fantastic. I was talking to the chap behind the bar during the interval who said they had

been specially made for the production – the effort was certainly worth it, they were great!



Props

An excellent assemblage of period-appropriate props had been put together by Val Jones and Vee Wells, including some impressively specialised meteorological equipment that must have been tricky to source or make. This really enhanced the historical feel of the production – nicely done.



Costumes

Well done to Liz Adams for putting together a historically appropriate and very consistent wardrobe for the cast. The uniforms were very sharp (though was ‘Krick’s’ slightly too big for him?), enhancing the characters’ military bearing, and very much adding to the period feel of the play.

Programme

Designed by Howard Platt, this was an attractive and very interesting programme. LADS programmes are always so informative (I enjoyed the handy historical context and dynastic family



trees given for the 'Lion in Winter' too), and in this case the historical background information and the text about weather forecasting was great to read. Best of all though was the inclusion of photos of the real people who were being portrayed – it really brought home that this was a true story and was a very neat touch.



Front of house

Thank you very much for such a warm and friendly welcome – your FoH team were so kind. I'd also like to mention the barman (I wish I'd noted down his name!) who I spoke to in the interval – after clocking my badge, he had all sorts of interesting insights into the production to share, not least the creation of those wonderful weather charts. Always a joy to come to a LADS show – I hope to see you again!

Carly Hilts and Simon Jones
Regional Representatives
NODA London District 1

My First Stage Experiences - Sarah Hudson



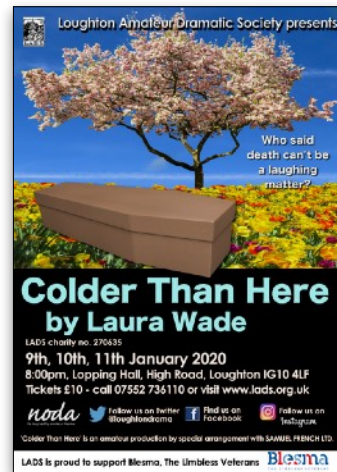
When I was aged three, I went to see a pantomime for the first time with my grandparents. Before the final number, one of the characters asked if any of the children would like to go up on the stage. My grandparents turned to ask me but found an empty seat; I was already halfway up the aisle on my way to the front. So, I don't think I've ever been shy about being onstage!

The first proper stage experience I can remember was as an angel in the church nativity. All the speaking parts went to adults, but that didn't bother me. Playing an angel meant you got to wear a long white dress and tinsel in your hair, which was clearly a better deal. My mum was asked to play Elizabeth, which I don't think is usually the most memorable or glamorous part, but she totally stole the show (it did help that she had actually learned her lines and delivered them with feeling, which couldn't be said for all the cast). I remember being so proud and hoping I could be like her one day. Growing up in a small market town in Suffolk, there weren't loads of opportunities to get involved in theatre, but I did my best. In primary school productions I was usually the one who wanted to rehearse one last time to make sure we got it exactly right (I don't think anything has changed there) and I was on occasion known to whisper stage directions to the other children to make sure they were doing what they were meant to do (thankfully, I think I've grown out of that one). My school and the local youth theatre group preferred to write their own shows, which means I'm probably one of only a handful of people who've performed in

musical versions of Hamlet, Doctor Faustas and the eruption of Mount Vesuvius I'm a bit of a musical theatre girl at heart and it was when I went to university and joined the musical theatre society that my love of performing really developed. In theory I was studying languages, but in practice I spent most of my time in the rehearsal room. I was in loads of shows and also spent a summer performing at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival. It was a really fun time and I met some of my closest friends during this period. In my twenties, I moved around a fair bit with work and tended to join a theatre group wherever I ended up; I found it one of the best ways to meet people. I lived and worked in Brussels for a few years which surprisingly has a very active English-speaking theatre scene. That's where I met my husband and he had his first ever experience of amateur theatre. We'd only known each other for a few weeks when he came to watch me in a production of Hello, Dolly!, which he describes as 'memorable'. (I haven't asked if that is a good thing). I also got involved in some more unusual acting ventures out in Belgium, including an appearance as a First World War nurse in a film at the In Flanders Fields Museum in Ypres. It's still showing there, in case you ever happen to visit! Now I've reached my thirties and settled in East London. My theatre habit shows no sign of slowing, although these days I'm more likely to be found in a play than a musical. I hope I may have passed on some of the acting bug to my own daughter Clara, especially since I was in a production of These Shining Lives when pregnant with her. One thing I've noticed about all the different theatre groups I've been part of is that they each have their own 'personality'. Some are more about having fun, whereas others take things more seriously and are focused on the end result. What I really love about LADS is that it does both equally and I hope I continue to be part of it for many years to come.

Sarah

Our next production



Rehearsals are underway for *Colder Than Here*. After a wobbly start, we finally have a full compliment of cast and crew.

Vee Wells is playing Myra, and is making her second Lads appearance for us. Her naturalistic portrayal will be a joy to watch I'm sure. Michael Lewkowicz is taking on his largest role yet (lines wise!) as Alec. He may be my 'life' partner, but he is getting no special favours, I can tell you!

Sophie Gilbert is playing Jenna, and she is already almost off book! She was last seen in Boeing Boeing and I'm sure will deliver a sterling performance, as per usual.

Finally, we have Vicky Harris, playing Harriet, who is a Lads newbie and has had to step in at the last minute to help us, and has achieved so much in so little time... I'm sure she'll be grrrreeeat!

Adam