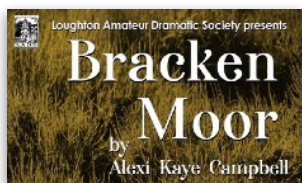


Promptings

In this issue



NODA crit -
The Actress



Our Next
Production



Noda
Awards



India Grill
pre-theatre deal

Message from Cathy



Welcome back after our LADS' summer break – I hope you all had a lovely time.

Rehearsals have already started for 'Bracken Moor', more from Andrew later, and we've had the read

through and cast 'The 39 Steps' so our season is already well under way.

Inside Promptings you will find the NODA report for 'The Actress'. It was a wonderful end to our season so congratulations to everyone involved.

The play selection committee will begin their meetings very soon to look for plays for our 2023/24 season, so if you have any ideas of plays you think LADS could do, please let Andrew know (with a copy of the script please) and he can add it to the mix.

You will all have received the season dates with the start of season mailing which was sent out

in August. Please ensure you put all the dates in your diary/calendar/phone . With the start of season mailing, there was also information about paying of subs – due on 1st September. Thank you to all those who have paid, and for those who haven't ... take this as your first reminder !!

We were delighted with the audience numbers for last season but we would like to build on that success and strive for bigger audiences this season. Please do everything you can to promote our plays and the society, the more the merrier !!

I look forward to seeing you all at set up if not before.

Cathy



Dates for your diary

Sun 16th October	Set Up for <i>Bracken Moor</i> from 9:30am - Lopping Hall
Thur 20th - Sat 22nd October	<i>Bracken Moor</i>
Sat 22nd October	After show shindig in Buckleys Bar - all welcome
Sun 23rd October	Set Down - 10:00am start
Mon 24th October	Crit. At 7:30pm in Small Hall followed by curry - all welcome
Thur 27th October	Read through for <i>The Father</i>
Fri 16th December	Christmas Social - 8:00pm Buckley's Bar

Members' News

We're delighted to welcome Jamie Mudle who is playing Terence in 'Bracken Moor' and Aleksandra Kucharska who is doing props for 'Bracken Moor'. We hope it'll be the first of many productions for both of them.

We were deeply saddened to learn of the death of Paul Mansfield. Paul was an active member of LADS when he lived locally and following his move further afield Paul continued to support LADS as an audience member, often bringing a large party to our productions. Paul will be greatly missed and remembered fondly.

NODA Crit. - The Actress

Thank you for the invite to see *The Actress* at Lopping Hall. On the hottest night of the year so far, the fans were out in the audience in both meanings of the word. Maybe it's time to allow water bottles or bar drinks into the auditorium as seems to be the case at most theatres/community halls these days. Anyway, the heat certainly fired up the audience and it must have been hot on stage for the performers. All this led to a production of warmth and thoughtfulness, sparked with some funny lines.

Choice of play

The Actress was not a play I was familiar with and it's always a pleasure to be introduced to something fresh. Having read the play before attending I was really looking forward to seeing the show and understood why you had included it in your 2021/22 season. Some terrific characters and good lines, with a wonderful opportunity in the part of Lydia.

It's described as 'A comedy' which I wasn't sure about. This production went more for poignancy and reflective thoughts rather than rip roaring laughs. Admittedly there were some good gags and funny lines and Margaret was played comedic, but I wouldn't be surprised if some of the audiences were left a little confused expecting something that wasn't as advertised. For me, *The Actress* falls between not having enough consistent comedy

ingredients to be classed as a funny play but has too many funny bits to be classed as a serious drama.

Front of House and Programme

As we approached Lopping Hall, we could see quite a crowd waiting outside the entrance in the High Road. Was this a queue for returned tickets or fans waiting to see Lydia Martin on her farewell performance? I suspect it was just the heat but it made us wonder.

Lovely welcome as always although trouble with getting a signal for the card reader put the Bar team into a bit of a panic, poor Christian wandering around Lopping Bar with machine in hand. Of course, the Bar and Teas teams are willing volunteers and we are ever grateful for everyone's help but we did struggle to get a Soda & Lime and a Cider, repeated for the interval. It proved a challenging order to serve and price. I felt for the volunteer and was reminded that everyone in the team needs help and support. We comfortably downed our drinks in the end, being reminded we couldn't take them in with us.



Set

This production gave Stephen Radley the challenge of producing a 'terrible room' as Lydia calls it. We got a bleak cell of a room with no windows, one door (with nice clunk! reference my show report for *Gaslight*, well done) and utilitarian furniture. This looked spot on as the dressing rooms in even the best establishments are little more than this. The glamour is out front, not back stage.

The plot requires 'an abundance of flowers' and you did this justice. They all looked real, so if

they weren't, well done. The show poster was a nice touch and the chocolates, champagne, cards and gifts gave us the impression of a room for a much-admired star.

Full marks for how you presented the stage for the Cherry Orchard, very clever. Centre stage with red velvet curtains that weren't intrusive during the rest of the dressing room scenes. It also enabled Lydia to come from her dressing room onto the stage authentically. The Cherry Orchard set was cleverly lit and the simple furniture, spot on. Whoever thought of positioning this section up stage, take a bow. So much better than squeezing on a rostrum left or right.

Direction

One of Bernard Moule's first decisions could have been in which period to set the play. I see that the script leaves this up to the director. The choice of modern day worked well for me and enabled the audience to see the challenges facing Lydia as contemporary and not of a time.

I liked that the sofa was pushed up stage allowing space to play many of the scenes in front of it. So often actors have to work behind a sofa or table restricting action and sight lines. It was Bernard's job to ensure the cast projected voice and character from up stage which they did every time.



I'm sure Bernard didn't simply 'mumble useless comments' as this play had good pace and allowed space for some of the more poignant lines to land. There were many good groupings creating interesting pictures; the scene where Lydia describes the beauty of Switzerland, and

the final threesome with Nicole at Lydia's feet, are examples of this.

The ending was super, leaving so many questions unanswered; Will Lydia come back? Will the audience wait for her? Will Paul wait for her? And then the lights fade. And breathe....



One of the highlights was the dressing scene at the end of Act1 sc1. We saw Lydia slowly getting into the zone, relaxing, the music, the ritual repeated so many times before. Lydia stands in a structured pose, still, awaiting the transformation not just with costumes and wigs but into character. This was given time and a rhythm that showed the audience two people at their work. I loved it.

Also, a good idea I thought to put the lines of The Cherry Orchard on tape. This avoided any projection issues and enabled a deep echo of an auditorium. These scenes did go on rather long and perhaps would have benefitted from a few cuts. The key message of the closing of the estate and the orchard was a good metaphor for Lydia's career but there was also lots of extra that perhaps wasn't needed.

Cast

Lydia

Occasionally a meaty, witty, challenging lead role for women comes along, Lydia is definitely one of those. Lydia has much to say and reflect upon and in Cathy Naylor we saw a skilled actor able to deliver an excellent interpretation. From the first sudden energetic arrival in that fabulous red dress to the nuanced slow fade of the ending, Cathy brought colours and shading,

energy and contemplation to this character with so many questions to ponder.



Cathy had the voice for the great actress with superb diction, projection and delivery. Only a hint of a North West accent showed through, suggesting Lydia had worked on her voice rather than natural RP. She also showed a theatrical flair in gesture and posture when the moment required. Lydia was rather formidable but never the ogre the drunken Harriet describes later in the play.

Lydia landed some wonderful lines “From tomorrow we’ll have nothing but time” “so the bitch can be comfortable” and the sarcastic “Oh I shall miss the camaraderie of the Theatre” were just a few of my favourites.

The play uses Lydia’s relationships to tell its story and these were well developed and genuine. It certainly appeared that these people had known each other for many years with their colourful backstories.

Cathy captured the high of coming off stage in Act1 sc3 believably. “Has there ever been a night like this?” “I want to bottle it”. It was a joy to watch and feel the intensity of that moment. Here Cathy showed the reason that Lydia wanted/needed to perform and that was borne out in her curtain speech in Act 2.

I liked the ‘They don’t write parts for us’ speech. Nice writing, delivered with feeling.

It was Cathy’s performance that set the tone of the show. She didn’t play the part for laughs although the comedic lines were there, rather

she let the others deal more with that side. We saw vulnerability and acknowledged failings as a mother and a partner and her fear of fading as a star actress. Lydia came over to me as genuine and not just a character. A good performance that Cathy should be proud of. Well done.

Katherine

The ever-faithful Katherine was played well by Wendy Butler. The accent was a nice contrast to the others and especially to Lydia. I’ve referred to the dressing scene and Wendy worked that very well, never rushing and giving the ceremony the reverence it deserved. It was well choreographed and Wendy ensured the process was clearly followed.



Katherine was dedicated to her job, which at this time was with Lydia but we all knew that another actress would be along soon and would receive the same care and attention. Wendy could have picked up her cues a little quicker in places but this was a fine performance over all. I especially liked the stillness Wendy observed during the Cherry Orchard scenes.

Margaret

Never one to leave a comedy performance on the script, Dolly made the most of the funny opportunities Margaret was given. Some great lines such as ‘The taxi got lost’ and ‘on the end of a spike’ were very well delivered. There were lovely moments such as the embarrassment of discovering Lydia and Paul ravaging each other and the brandy in the face scene. Dolly has a great touch for enjoying these moments and providing the audience with a good laugh.

Some of the physical comedy can just go over the line. Struggling with the vase that wasn't so heavy and moving out of the spot light with the big grin just edged into a different style for me. Worth any director keeping an eye on Dolly's propensity to take it to another level.



It was clever to see Margaret develop her relationship with the unseen Roger. We felt we knew him without ever meeting.

Nicole

The relationship that Nicole, played by Jenna Young, had with her mother was a terrific way in to discover more about Lydia's past. The tense sarcasm of the early exchanges where Nicole is patronising Lydia seems rather odd and certainly disrespectful. It's only later that we see Lydia reflect on her mothering and how she was rarely there to look after Nicole. If Lydia had been a poor mother, then perhaps Nicole can get away with the jibes which are not so far from the truth. These jibes are then thrown back to others in by Lydia, Paul, Harriett, Katherine. Jenna handled this significant element very well.



Charles

Martin Howarth did a fine job with Charles. He was a charming gentleman if not as lively on his feet as he must have been once. Certainly, all those trips from front to back of house was taking their toll by the end of the evening. I'm sure the thought 'so Lydia, what was it that first attracted you to the wealthy swiss banker?' crossed the minds of the audience. Martin's Charles was charming and safe and would give Lydia perhaps something she wanted away from the profession and able to retire gracefully. I liked his final line "That is why it's so quiet"



Charles' contrast with Paul was blatant and as required. It was good casting to put Martin against Howard and worked very well.

Paul

It was clear from the start that Paul would always be a better match for Lydia than Charles but perhaps not as husband and wife. Howard Platt played a fun, interesting handsome Paul with great finesse and skill.

The play gives Paul a super entrance and Howard was on the mark from the get go. Lovely lines delivered with attack and pace as Cathy and Howard bounced along together. These two knew each other well enough to ignore the rebukes and glide over the sometimes venomous remarks. The cutting up of the flowers and then displaying them in the vase was lovely.

Paul has his fair share of the funny lines and Howard delivered them well, "Oh, I'm delightful. You just have to get to know me" "at least I did marry you. Nobody else has managed that" "that's horrible, very nasty. I think I'll have another" and the rather sad "Maybe you should have looked up from your scripts occasionally"



The face slap with head turn sort of worked when I saw it on the Friday, difficult to rehearse and get the timing spot on.

The kissing leading to ravaging each other is a rather strange element in the play which seems a little incongruous to the set up. However, Howard and Cathy went for it with full commitment and it worked well. You even managed to kick the flowers whilst going for it.

Howard gave a fine well-disciplined performance of an interesting character with depth. Well done.

Harriet



Harriet is a lovely theatrical character and Sandra Davidson played it with a warmth and charm and the sense that Harriet was always in a fluster. She gave some meaty speeches after Harriett's view of the world and with a love for the brandy, got more drunk through the play. I liked the smoke blowing scene which both Sandra and Cathy handled well, and the unrehearsed toast that fell away in need of 'a good director'. Nice character work.

Costumes

The costumes were fine in places I thought. Paul's shirt, Charles' suit, Harriett's outfit and Lydia's red dress were well chosen. The Chekhov costumes both worn and on the dress rail gave a good contrast. I thought more could have been done for Nicole and Margaret.

Summary

I great vehicle for Cathy Naylor to perform at the very top of her game. To be honest I thought the play read better than it came across on stage, but this was probably me rather than the performance. The Actress was well designed, acted and directed with some outstanding moments. Well done to all involved.

Paul Daynes
Regional Representative District 6
NODA London

Bracken Moor



Bracken Moor is a rare piece of theatre. Written relatively recently – premiering in 2013 – though set in the 1930s, it is a play filled with genuine suspense; but much more. With strong social commentary, relationships under pressure, well-drawn characters and humour, it asks questions about the nature of friendship, trust, love and responsibility to our fellow man. And it is a ghost story...or is it? I leave the audience to draw their own conclusions. Rehearsals are well under way and the cast are having great fun exploring this interesting play. I look forward to seeing everyone at set up on Sunday 16th October and during show week, either at the play or helping FOH, or both, of course.

Andrew

India Grill - pre-theatre deal

Already popular with some of our regular supporters, India Grill (just a stone’s throw from Lopping Hall) is now offering an exclusive deal to out audience members each night of the run of Bracken Moor. The deal is 20% discount on meal bookings made for any time between 5pm and 5:45pm. Note: the deal applies to food only and will exclude drinks and their normal service charge will apply. India Grill is situated at 159a High Road, Loughton. Their website is www.indiagrill.co.uk. Please call 0208 508 7799 to book a table, stating that you are a LADS pre-theatre party.

Please do spread the word about this offer - if there is a good take-up, we hope to make this a

regular arrangement for other productions this season.

A reminder of this deal will appear on our website as well as when people make ticket enquiries and bookings.

NODA Awards

LADS have triumphed at the NODA Awards yet again, with two well deserved wins:

The Shinfield Players Scenic Award

A Fine Bright Day Today

The Charles Sumner Award Best Male in a Play

Andrew Rogers for Inspector Rough in Gaslight

Pictured below are Andrew, receiving his award from Paul Daynes at the NODA Awards ceremony and Andrew and Stephen Radley with their awards at the LADS AGM.



Rogers, Christine Eckley, Wendy Butler, Martin Howarth, John Howard

Do You Remember?

5 years' ago - Oct 2017: **Breaking the Code** by



Hugh Whitmore

Directed by Cathy Naylor. Cast included: Dean Bartholomew, Graham Milne, Tommy Ray, Sylvia Zilesnick, John Gilbert, Martin Howarth, Michael Lewkowicz, Charlotte Pope, Ian Russell

10 years' ago - Oct 2017: **My Boy Jack** by David Haig

Directed by Jean Cooper. Cast included: Iain Howland, Cathy Naylor, Camilla Steel, Ashley



Flexen, John Haylett, Jon Gilbert, Dan Cooper, Dean Bartholomew, Peter Galloway, Tom Donoghue

25 years' ago - Oct 1997: **Tartuffe** by Moliere

Directed by Babs Oakley. Cast included: Bill Caldow, Val Parker, Jilly Spencer, John Haylett, Jonathan Denne, Ruth Howarth, Rick Munro, Andrew

