

Promptings

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The Father**



**Our Next
Production**

**100
years**

**LADS
Centenary Year**



**2 LADS NODA
Awards!**

Message from Cathy



At the time of writing, the rain is lashing my windows and the heating is still on but I hope by the time you receive this edition of Promptings, spring will finally have sprung and we're all enjoying some warmth and sunshine.

Our production of 'The Father' was an incredible success for so many reasons. The choice of play was exceptionally brave given the obvious obstacles that needed to be overcome. As well as being challenging for the cast and director to convey such deeply complex characters realistically and sympathetically, the entire production was a staging and technical minefield. Nevertheless, the entire team worked together to provide us with a thought provoking, funny, poignant and informative

production that will impact us all for many years to come. We received some wonderful feedback from our audience and I applaud all involved.

Rehearsals are well underway for the final production of the season and are going well, more from Adam and an appeal for props later in the edition so please keep reading. Please also use the attached poster to advertise the production; it would be wonderful to end the season with full houses.

As always, Promptings is full of information, dates for your diary and much, much more so read on and enjoy.

Cathy



Dates for your diary

Fri 26th May	Season Launch, 8pm Buckleys Bar, Lopping Hall
Sun 4th June	Set Up for <i>A Bunch of Amateurs</i> - from 9:00 am
Thur 8th June - Sat 10th June	<i>A Bunch of Amateurs</i>
Sat 10th June	After show shindig in Buckleys Bar - all welcome
Sun 11th June	Set Down - 10:00am start
Mon 12th June	Crit. at 7:30pm in Small Hall followed by curry - all welcome
Thur 15th June	Read Through for first play of 23/24 Season - <i>Time of My Life</i>
Monday 3rd July	AGM 8:00pm at Lopping Hall
Saturday 20th April 2024	Centenary Celebration - time and location tba

In Memoriam

We were deeply saddened to learn of the deaths of two of LADS past but incredibly well remembered members, Marguerite Wheatley and Bobbie Caldwell.

Marguerite was a frequent performer and director with LADS as well as being involved in all behind the scenes aspects of our productions. With her endless artistic flair and dazzling array of waistcoats, Marguerite contributed to many of our productions until she moved to Portugal from where she maintained contact with many members and continued her support for LADS.

Bobbie was a valued member of LADS for over 30 years, along with her husband Bill and son Iain. Bobbie covered many aspects of productions, backstage roles, acting as an occasional extra on stage, Musical Director and was LADS ticket secretary for many years.

While health allowed, Bobbie was a very supportive audience member, attending as many productions as she could.

Both Marguerite and Bobbie will be sadly missed and remembered fondly at LADS.

So... you want to direct amateur theatre?

It isn't often that a group decides it need to increase the quality of its body of directors, and furthermore is happy to open the experience to other groups within their district. Well.....this is exactly what we (LADS) did at the end of February at Lopping Hall. Being in District 6 in the NODA London region meant we could invite members of other groups within District 6 to come along and share in the experience. And it didn't disappoint in any way, shape or form.....everyone had a wonderful time, learned a tremendous amount and came away with increased knowledge of what directing (be it a musical or a drama) was all about.

Sarah Osborne, who is a drama practitioner and writer/director running her own Youth

Company as well as being the Director of NODA Theatre Summer School, travelled down from Wakefield in Yorkshire to impart her knowledge and experience to twenty one students hungry to learn.....some starting from scratch, but many wanting to improve their already considerable skills by learning from a professional.

For some it was gaining new skills to try with their groups, but for some it was almost a validation that what they had been doing up to this point was correct and could be taken further with the knowledge they had gained that day. In fact there were some people there who have never directed (and may not do so in the future), but it gave them an idea of where the director is often coming from in their approach to the whole directing process. You never know.....it may even make them better performers too!

From the start everyone was engaged, getting to know each other by means of games and exercises, before the real work began. Somehow, though, it didn't feel as though we were working. It was all so engaging and, yes, exciting too, that the time just flew by so when it was time for the obligatory 'class' photo everyone felt enriched and motivated....and keen to put into practice their new-found knowledge. A handout is always useful and we took away all those salient points from a day the contents of which will make us sensitive, constructive and kind directors.

Jacque Stedman

***Workshop Participants
(Sarah Osborne is bottom row, 4th from the left)***



NODA Crit. - The Father

Some plays are much more than just an entertainment, some provoke, educate and inform. The Father was so clearly in this camp. It was a play I was glad to have seen and the insights into the father's world were compelling and made me reflect on a condition I know little about.

As a piece of theatre this was no easy production to bring to an audience. From the programme notes we knew we were in for a confused and disorientated experience. Although the film prepared me for the ninety minutes, that emotional connection with the live performance always trumps film in my experience.



Direction

Jean Cooper's vision for this production must have been informed from her seeing the professional production in 2015 and possibly the 2020 film version. Jean's good director's notes in the programme provided the audience with some insights into her approach and objectives for this piece; involving the audience; disorientating the audience; making them mistrust their perceptions and interpretations of what they were seeing. Bold ambitions for sure but largely met for those willing to commit and stay engaged. The challenge of taking the audience through a play without the normal time and plot constructs was well achieved and although the audience needed to be prepared to work a little, their journey was rewarded by gaining insights into the effects of dementia.

Generally, the positioning of the actors was simple without much movement. On a few

occasions André was positioned down stage right with Anne and sometimes Laura upstaging him but all coped well and André made himself heard and seen. There were a few scenes set behind the table and sofa which was okay but with the stage extension in place I wasn't sure why this wasn't used to bring the characters more down stage. Even when André looked out of his bedroom window onto the Paris street, he did so from the curtain line. It seemed a shame not to bring the actors to the audience a little more and use the extension.

Set and Staging

The large room transitioned through various stages via the mind of André. The simplicity of the furnishings became explained and the clever change of picture, lamp stand and chairs gave the audience something tangible to signify either the actual change of location or the perceived one. The sadness of the one chair and sofa appeared as an illustration of André losing many things from his mind.

The changes were quick and surprising and the cast being discovered on each scene added pace and immediacy.

The transition to the sparse room, the 'home' and then the institutional hospital was a clever piece of set design, a round of applause to Garry Cooper.



Cast

André

Andrew Rogers gave another outstanding performance. He enveloped this character totally and brought an emotional attachment to André

that the audience needed to develop the empathy for him. From the mislaying of his watch to the mislaying of his watch, Andrew ensured that André was an engaging central component of this complex play.

The physicality of André was most notable, with the stance, the slight limp in the walk and the pointing at anyone and everyone. The hand gestures emphasised the opinions he made and the forcefulness of his voice made him appear a strong, healthy elderly man in body if not in mind. He had pace and some energy and was able to manage on his own with 'use of his arms, legs and hands'. He was not frail in body and this contrasted well with his poor mental health. On many occasions André was actually the most animated of the characters.

The voice tone was forceful and loud when needed to be. The London accent was more reminiscent of the ex-engineer than the tap-dancing circus conjurer and grounded him in his past. He appeared early on to be a convivial elderly fellow even if he had managed to get through a few carers including poor Isobel. André's aggression to Laura was uncomfortable 'speaking as if I was retarded' as was his crying like a bullied child when the Man slaps him.

This solid foundation of the physical and vocal parts of the character then enabled the contrasts in memory and mind to be demonstrated so explicitly. The panic and anxiety in voice and mood when confused by the chicken was disturbing as was his fictional past which we began to believe and André thought was reality. The line repetition of someone struggling to find words and memory was also well portrayed. The mental chore to comprehend who's flat he was in, his concern and worry about Anne's wellbeing and the perception that it's the others that suffer from memory loss was full of tragedy. André was truly mortified to think he would be discovered in his pyjamas and we felt his pain when he was all alone in Paris.

So, what of André? Does he progress, change or deteriorate through the course of the play? What is his reality and what is perceived by him? With so much to contemplate the play relies heavily on a strong André to carry the ninety minutes.

Andrew Rogers did just that, a tremendous feat from an actor at the top of his game. A fine performance, well done.

Anne

As the character on the receiving end of André's pointy finger and cruel comparisons with sister Elise, Anne's domestic troubles are a large aspect of this play. Emma Middleton navigated the trials of Anne with clarity and compassion. It was testing for the audience to establish what was real and what was in André's head. Had Anne actually met a man? Was she actually going to London? Emma made it clear that she was the victim of much emotional blackmail and unwelcome advice adding the pressure to her life.



Anne's conversation on the telephone was very believable with tricky repeated half lines, not always easy to pull off. Anne's monologue scene was delivered with care and direction and apart from the selected movements, Emma remained wonderfully still throughout which emphasised the demonstration of the hands around the neck. A fine disciplined and chilling scene. The single spot light also added to the intensity.

Anne was always trying to find a way forward and persuade André to move home. Her disappointment and frustration to the lack of progress was well portrayed and made Anne very believable. I thought I saw Anne appear to get tired and worn down as the play went on, as if the situation was getting too oppressive.

Maybe there was an opportunity to deepen the characterisation for Anne a little. The frustrated but controlled woman was possibly a little two

dimensional. A little more colour and complexity to the character may have added another layer but excuse me for wanting everything, this really was a fine performance.

Man

Some well-developed cameos from Adam Rabinowitz aided the questions of who is whom and what is what? As Pierre, the height contrast between Adam and Andrew worked well when both were down stage. Andrew is not a small man but with Adam a few inches higher, Andre looked dwarfed and vulnerable. This was built upon when André gets slapped, a scene that received an audible reaction from the audience and was uncomfortable to witness. Adam could have been stiller up stage behind the sofa and had a tendency to move feet and shoulders for no apparent reason, just something to watch out for.



Woman

Sophie Gilbert gave us a different Anne, although helpfully in same black jacket and scarf. It was her entrance and first scene that started the disorientation of the play for me. Later as Laura, Sophie managed to be threatening and rather intimidating with just a few lines indicating that this was probably in André's



mind. It was a significant scene that helped the audience ascertain what was happening.

Then Martine in nurses' whites brought us to the hospital and the emotional ending. Martine, the kind, smiling, comforting nurse with the embrace and "you'll be alright". Lovely cameos throughout from Sophie.

Laura

The carer looking for a new career dressed in jeans and hoodie was well portrayed by Lizzie Clare. She was almost 'too good to be true' with kind words and a generous interest in André. The strange giggling laughter enabled the Father to show a nasty side with the sarcastic rebuff. Lizzie's set up and humiliated reaction to this was played well.



Pierre

Jon Gilbert was well cast as Pierre and fitted into the domestic scenes with ease. Offering hugs from sitting down and suggesting unwanted solutions was not untypical of a man not prepared to try too hard. At times I would have liked Jon to have picked up on his cues a little quicker as his pace didn't always match that of the others. Pierre's aggression to André was clear as his frustration moved towards anger.



Anyone who had to cancel his Corsican holiday had a right to feel angry.

Sound and Lighting

So, to the blinding light effect. It was interesting to watch the audience members reaction to it. On the first use a few people shielded their eyes or looked away, by the umpteenth use almost everyone did so. It became annoying fairly quickly. We got the point of using the effect early on, that it was to disorientate, confuse, make us uncomfortable but this was then laboured well over the acceptable mark. Could the effect have been used more sparingly? Perhaps stage left and right alternating, or just turn it off. The rig also looked ugly and out of place. Sorry not for me, nice try but this one didn't work.

The accompanying music was well chosen with frenetic frantic pieces of Paganini styling. Although slightly too loud for the number of times used (I missed the last few words of Anne's important monologue) the pieces helped the disorientation between each scene. The contrast of the final soothing strings was evident and rather a relief.

Costumes

All well designed and collected. Andre's look was very comfortable in Cardigan and slippers. He looked sad in his big black coat and tweed cap, as if he had been moved out of his home unwillingly.

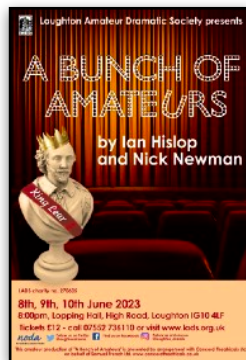
Summary

This was not an easy show to watch but the cast and director worked hard to keep the audience engaged. I applaud you for including The Father in your season and for the fine performances from a talented cast. I suspect the support given to Dementia UK and EFDA was far more than just the funds raised through the sale of the programmes. I suspect the play's powerful impact left many of us understanding this condition considerably more.

Paul Daynes

NODA Regional Representative.

Our next production



Rehearsals are underway for our next production, *A Bunch Of Amateurs* by Ian Hislop & Nick Newman. Tickets are also now on sale - please tell all your friends and family about our final production of the season.

This comedy will be known by some from the 2008 film starring Burt Reynolds and Derek Jacobi. This play within

a play pitches a Hollywood all-action hero into the world of amateur theatre. Can these two disparate worlds of entertainment put aside their differences to pull off the challenge of a successful production of Shakespeare's *King Lear*. Come and find out!

Can you help us with the following props?

A modern looking suitcase without wheels. It needs to be quite smart, befitting of a Hollywood star.

A battery powered nail gun

A Walkie Talkie

Ear piece

If you can help please let me know.

Adam

AGM - 3rd July

Our AGM is on Monday 3rd July at 8pm. LADS is your society so please make a note of the date and come along to show your support the committees who work so hard to keep the society running for all of us. Val will send out the official notices nearer the time so please look out for those. Any member is entitled to put themselves forward for any committee position, general or play reading, so if you'd like to throw your hat into the ring, please make sure you return the necessary paperwork to Val within the timescales given when the information is sent.

Do you remember?

5 years' ago

June 2018

"California Suite" by Neil Simon.

Directed by Christian Mortimer. Cast included: Dolly Howlett, Howard Platt, Lee Kenneth, Ines Mendes, Jo Keen, Adam Rabinowitz, Amanda Smith, Tom Donoghue, Sarah Vickers, Christian Mortimer, Liz Adams



May 2018

"The Memory of Snow" by Sian Rowland.

Directed by Jean Cooper and Cathy Naylor. Cast included: Sarah Hudson, Lizzie Tucker (Clare), Lisa Kirby, Katie Clarke



10 years' ago

June 2013

"Entertaining Angels" by Richard Everett.

Directed by Mary Lowe. Cast included: Sylvia Zilesnick, Wendy Butler, Sian Williams, Camilla Steel, Roger Barker



25 years' ago

June 1998

"Absence of War" by David Hare.

Directed by Val Parker. Cast included: Foster Barnett, Frazer Freeman, John Haylett, Pat Buckley, Christine Eckley, Karen Rogers, Iain Caldow, Amanda Smith, Bill Caldow, Joan Goldsmith, Dorothy McCall, Martin Howarth, Roger Barker, Jean Cooper, Lindsay Andrews, Marguerite Wheatley, Stephen Radley, John Haylett, Mike Smith, Wendy Butler, Irene Elkins, Marguerite Wheatley, Bill Caldow



A lasting gift from Roger Barker

LADS has recently invested a considerable amount of money and replaced all of our flats. Our old flats were very heavy and becoming more difficult to use owing to their age and considerable wear and tear. It was a big investment for LADS but one that the committee felt was necessary to make to ensure the continued excellent standard of our sets. We are very fortunate that Andy Cooper (Jean & Garry's son) offered to make them for us for a fraction of the cost than that of an external company, so thank you Andy and thank you Garry for liaising with Andy to make it happen.

After the committee had placed the order for the flats we received the news that Roger Barker had very generously left a sizeable bequest to LADS in his will. The committee felt that the gift should be used for a specific purpose and not just be absorbed into general funds so after discussion, we decided to use the money towards the new flats as a fitting and long term tribute to Roger. It seems appropriate that Rogers gift will be involved in LADS productions for many years to come, so the biggest thank you goes to Roger and we hope he would have approved of our purchase.

LADS Centenary - save the date

Next year is a very exciting year for LADS, it's our Centenary !! LADS was formed on 6th January 1924 and we're still here as strong as ever and still producing plays of 'genuine dramatic worth', a remarkable achievement.

January isn't an ideal month for a celebration so we will be having a Centenary Celebration on 20th April 2024, please save the date. A small committee has been set up to plan the event and to make this the success it deserves, and to have as many people as possible mark this occasion, they would like your thoughts on what type of celebration you would all like. They have had a few ideas and want to know what you think about them, but also about any thoughts you may have.

Would you please answer the following questions in the link below, with any additional comments in the box at the end of the page and send your answers back by May 10th.

<https://forms.gle/7yvJ1jkgmX56iFXJA>

It's an incredible achievement for our society and the committee wants to plan a celebration that appeals to the membership so please take the time to give them your feedback to ensure that we can make the event as successful and memorable as possible.

Storage

LADS has been incredibly lucky to have had the use of the garages for many years at a peppercorn rent but we now need to find alternative storage for our costumes and small props. If you have been to our garages, you'll be aware of the extensive collection of costumes and props LADS has built up over the years and if we were to lose them it would be heart breaking and have a massive impact on the choice and quality of plays we're able to produce in the future.

The committee is currently investigating a number of options but we need your help. As I said in my email, please don't suggest any of the commercial storage companies as these are way out of our budget, what we need is 'Outside of the box' thinking so please let me know if you have any ideas.

Equally as importantly, please let me know if you have any fundraising ideas. Any solution we find is going to be massively more expensive so we will need to raise some funds to make up the difference.

We don't have long to find an alternative so don't delay, start thinking!

Social Media Guidelines

Many of our members are brilliantly pro-active in using social media to promote LADS and our productions and we would encourage you to continue to do so. Having said that, we are aware that some members may not want their name or photograph to be used on social media in either LADS posts or individual members' posts.

We're not The BBC and we're certainly not aiming to curtail your use of social media for LADS but we do feel that for the safety and privacy of all members, we need to issue some guidelines to be followed when posting about LADS and its members. Please read the guidelines attached but above all, keep posting!

NODA Awards

We are thrilled that LADS has two winners for District 6

Best male character in a play – Andrew Rogers for Richard Nixon in Frost/ Nixon

Best female character in a play – Cathy Naylor for Lydia Martin in The Actress

Massive congratulations to Andrew and Cathy, we wish them both the best of luck at the regional awards on 18th June and congratulations of everyone involved in all of our productions. LADS continue to produce plays of exceptional quality and we should all feel incredibly proud.

If you would like to attend the regional awards to show your support for Andrew, Cathy and NODA, please book your tickets via the link below:

<https://www.ticketsource.co.uk/noda-london>

End of Season BBQ

Andrew and Karen have very kindly offered host a BBQ on Sunday 2nd July from 1pm at 28 Station Road,

The cost will be £7.50 per head and include all food and drink but please bring a garden chair. All members and their families are welcome so please let me or Andrew know if you are able to come along.

Season Launch

Our 2023/2024 Centenary Season launch is on Friday 24th May at 8pm in Buckleys Bar Lopping Hall so come along to find out about the plays for our 2023/2024 season, catch up with friends and enjoy a social evening. Everyone is welcome so if you know someone who may be interested in getting involved in LADS in any capacity, please bring them along.