



LEWES LITTLE THEATRE

Newsletter No.56

June 2015

Inherit the Wind

by Jerome Lawrence and Robert Edwin Lee



directed by
Cathryn Parker

Saturday 4-11 July 2015
at 7.45pm except Sundays
Matinee Saturday 11 July at 2.45pm
£10/Members £8

Opening Productions of 2015-16 Season

10-17 October

HEROES

By Gerald Sibleyras

Translated by Tom Stoppard

Directed by Nigel Sharpe

28 November - 5 December

THE CIRCLE

By Somerset Maugham

Directed by Graham Stapley

STOP PRESS...STOP PRESS... STOP PR

Ticket prices frozen for next season

**Tickets for the 2015-2016 season
will remain at £8 for members
and £10 for non-members.**

**Letters and comments to
Mike Palmer or Paul Myles please
pmyles.pm@gmail.com**

Preview: Inherit the Wind

Why did God plague us with the power to think? So asks Henry Drummond, defence attorney, at the height of the trial scene in *Inherit the Wind*, which will be playing at Lewes Little Theatre from Saturday 4th – 11th July.

The right to think is at the heart of Jerome Lawrence and Robert E. Lee's iconic play which burst upon Broadway to outstanding critical acclaim some 60 years ago. Written as a polemic against McCarthyism in 1955, the playwrights use the infamous Scopes "Monkey Trial" of 1925 as a dramatic backdrop for their compelling argument in support of the dignity of the individual human mind.

90 years ago almost to the day, John T. Scopes, a Tennessee schoolteacher, stood in the dock of the Rhea County Courthouse, Dayton Tennessee. His crime? Teaching his pupils Darwin's Theory of Evolution in defiance of The Butler Act, a Tennessee state law that prohibited the teaching of...

any theory that denies the story of the Divine Creation of man as taught in the Bible, and to teach instead that man has descended from a lower order of animals.

His trial became an epic event of the twentieth century, a debate over free speech that spiralled into an all-out duel between science and religion. Featuring two of the century's greatest orators, attorneys Clarence Darrow, celebrated agnostic and self-appointed champion of the underdog, and William Jennings Bryan, three times Democratic presidential candidate and famous orator renowned for his devout Christianity and reforming political agenda, it was America's first major media event, with hundreds of reporters and live nationwide radio coverage dispersing the sensational news.

This panoramic drama is not an accurate historical account of those events, but a parable, a metaphor for any kind of mind control and a defence of intellectual freedom and is as resonant today as it was 60 years ago.

At its heart is a titanic clash of courtroom gladiators but it is so much more than that.

Lawrence & Lee have said: "The collision of Bryan and Darrow at Dayton was dramatic. Moreover, the issues of their conflict have acquired new dimension and meaning in the years since they clashed at the Rhea County Courthouse. So *Inherit the Wind* does not pretend to be journalism. It is theatre. It is not 1925. The time is *Not long ago. It might have been yesterday. It could be tomorrow...*

Tony Bannister and Michael Bulman lead a cast of over thirty talented actors in this epic play which will amuse, grip and inflame you in equal measure.

Book now to avoid disappointment!

Cathryn Parker

Play Director

Preview: Inherit the Wind



Club Director's Notes

The *Thrill of Love* received many accolades from members of the audience as they left the theatre last week. It was a very tight and at times completely riveting production of a modern play centred on the life and trial of Ruth Ellis, the last woman to be hanged in Britain. Under the direction of Miles Jenner, the actors gave performances that will be remembered for some time. The research and subsequent detail that followed in this production was well worth the time and effort as the set, music, costume and acting conveyed the period of the 1950s.

Many new non-members attended the performances drawn in by Miles and the use of Annie, his little Austin 7 used in his publicity drive. She's been a great asset, and not only in this play!

Our last play of the season is *Inherit the Wind* directed by Cathryn Parker, another true story and a great play. The rehearsal schedule alone must have been a logistics nightmare for Cathryn working with such a huge cast and planning around holiday or "I can't come on the following night" dates. Rehearsals are in full swing though, the set under construction and the ladies of the wardrobe up to their ears in costumes!

I'm happy to welcome back David Moon who has once again joined us as the set designer. I'm pleased that Esther Egerton who worked with Miles and the cast during the last play agreed to work with Cathryn and the actors with movement and characterisation. We are also lucky that Sue Bain is free to lead rousing choir rehearsals! I think this will be a great end to the 2014-15 season. Do come and join us.

Many people have mentioned our new brick wall and the gates. It was expensive, and we are very grateful for the donations we received in the form of bequests which helped to pay for this great improvement. So we would like to thank Brian George, Roger Cattanach and Mary Hocking for remembering us.

Club Director's Notes continued

I noticed members of the audience sitting on the wall during the interval of *The Thrill of Love*, so it's already in use. Personally, I've always thought it would be nice to have a seat which surrounds the tree – although we'd have to make sure the branches were sturdy! People could sit there during the intervals on fine evenings.

Our new wall leads us to the sorry state of the windows and the porch. You will be pleased to learn that the windows are scheduled to be replaced. However the porch is attached on one side to a window, therefore the porch or one side of it will have to be removed. The porch does give shelter for people queuing in the rain and it was built at the request of Joyce Knight a former member when she made her will. On leaving the theatre, step down into the porch and you will see above the open doorway a narrow wooden carving. It reads: Remembering Joyce Knight Hon. Sec.

So the windows should be installed by the new season but we may have to wait for the porch.

With best wishes
Pat

**There will be a
SALE OF COSTUMES
Saturday 29th August
at 10.30 a.m.**

The Thrill of Love

Amanda Whittington's *The Thrill of Love* had its debut two years ago when it was commissioned by the New Vic Theatre. Amanda is a 45-year-old east Midlands-based writer whose name rarely appears on the critics' lists, as the majority of her work is commissioned by regional reps and almost exclusively produced outside London. Yet since she made her debut with *Be My Baby* in 1998 Whittington has built up a body of genuinely popular, accessible dramas whose raucous humour and lightness of touch belies the dark, often disturbing subject matter beneath.

She is drawn to writing about women struggling to escape trapped situations. This play about Ruth Ellis, what led to her killing her lover David Blakely and the infamous trial that ensued with Ruth being the last woman executed in Britain, is perfect material for her. It's a meticulously researched piece that weaves together fact and fiction in documentary drama form with authentic, imaginative language. Quirky film noir references and nuances pepper the script giving it texture and a real sense of period.

Having grown up 5 minutes away from the Magdala Pub in Hampstead where Blakely was shot Ruth's story was part of my teenage culture. The bullet holes are still visible on the outside wall of the pub. At that time the 1980's film *Dance with a Stranger* made Ruth seem like a tragic but rather glamorous siren. *The Thrill of Love* is a visceral evocation of a stark era where the death penalty was still in existence, diminished responsibility was not recognised and domestic violence and sexual exploitation were not taken into consideration as they would be today.

The play opened on Keith Gilbert and his teams' excellently executed monochrome, slick, stylish set representative of a post war aspirational time where polish and glamour were part of a brave new world. It provided the perfect contrast to the reality of the messy human story unfolding on stage.

Eve Costello's appearance and poise conveyed Ruth Ellis as every inch the aspiring model cum actress who had spent many of her young years climbing the swish but slippery social ladder based in nightclubs and bars frequented by men who paid for her attentions. In order to bring Ruth to life she'd made a strong vocal choice evocative of the screen goddesses and the technicolour world she aspired to. Eve's detached quality as Ruth amplified the fragile emotional and physical state she was in at this point in her life.

Nick Reason was perfectly cast as Jack Gale the Detective Inspector who delves deeper into Ruth's background and psyche and therefore uncovers the truth of a damaged woman. Nick melded an empathy and stillness with gritty realism and his chosen accent and delivery was truly from another era.

Jenny Lloyd Lyons was excellent, moving and totally believable as Sylvia Shaw the nightclub manageress who attempts to help Ruth and tried to protect naïve newcomers to the nightclub scene. She conveyed a woman who had seen it all but struggled to maintain a hard won sense of dignity.

Isabella McCarthy Sommerville played Vickie Martin, the ambitious but fresh faced girl from Surrey dazzled by the bright lights of London who meets a sorry end. She captured the pert and pushy naivety of the part wonderfully.

Rebecca Warnett as Doris Judd, the cleaner at the club where Ruth worked, portrayed a believable detailed character who, like all the women in the play, struggled to better herself. Rebecca skilfully provided warmth and earthy humour offsetting the brittleness of the other characters.

Skilfully designed lighting by Mike Batchelor created moving and dramatic moments as they unfolded on the stark and clean lined set. Alison Soudain, Gerry Cortese and their team provided very stylish and detailed costume design that perfectly reflected the monochrome set.

It's clear that Miles Jenner felt a real sense of responsibility directing this play and that he wanted to do justice to the tragic events surrounding not only the life of Ruth Ellis, but of all those women who lived unprotected, unfulfilled lives at the mercy of the hypocrisy, class status and social mores of the period. He had made sure his assured and concentrated cast really steeped themselves in research and got under the skin of the period. This combined with an excellent production crew ensured his care and commitment shone through.

It struck me that there is additional worth in LLT producing this play at this time. Although we may have moved on in some areas of legality, how little has actually changed for those women who find themselves trapped by poverty and lack of real education or self-worth. The papers still delight in printing salacious tabloid stories about women who are drawn to men, money and what appears to be a glamorous lifestyle that ends up anything but, so echoing the life of Ruth Ellis who was executed 60 years ago. – Lucie Fitchett

The Thrill of Love



The Thrill of Love 'The Musical'!

Audition Alert

HEROES

by **Gérald Sibleyras**, translated by **Tom Stoppard**.

Directed by Nigel Sharpe

Production Dates: 10 to 17 October 2015

Audition Date: 7.30 pm. Wednesday 15 July 2015 in the Foyer

This little gem of a comedy provides a satirical portrait of three old soldiers from the Great War, who find themselves at the veterans' home. They are bound by the minutiae of routine but then things take on the scope of a major campaign with hilarious results. Here is an opportunity to be part of a closely-knit cast, where skillful use of timing and body language, together with a taut script, will make this a delight to watch and take part in. Although set in France (and indeed originally written in French) accents will not be required. There are no long speeches. There will be an interval.

The cast requires only three ageing men (sorry ladies!) and a stone dog. The characters were all in WW1 and the play is set in 1959. (You do the maths!). Actors could age up if necessary. The original cast at Wyndham's Theatre in 2005 comprised Richard Griffiths, John Hurt and Ken Stott. I just need to find Lewes's equivalent of these fine gentlemen!

Holidays are not compatible with this production. All the characters are in all 6 scenes. So a rehearsal without even one would be pointless. Before you put yourself forward please make sure you do not have any commitments during the rehearsal period commencing 14 August. I will assume all those auditioning are available for all rehearsals on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays in the evening and Sunday 4 October all day.

CHARACTERS

Henri An enthusiastic organiser. Has a leg which is permanently straight due to an old wound. He walks with a limp and uses a walking stick but is nevertheless the most active of the group. "A sturdy son of the common people". Sincere but touchy. Has been 25 years at the home and never married.

Gustave Cantankerous, sarcastic recluse with a violent streak. A loose cannon. Claims to be descended from nobility. Married in 1915. Has been at the home 6 months. At one point carries Philippe on his back.

Philippe Plain speaking, good-hearted. Used to be a medal-winning pianist. A bit of shrapnel in his head causes increasingly frequent blackouts and falls. Has been at the home for 10 years. Is carried on the back of Gustave for a minute.

PROPS ALERT

We require an old canvas hose pipe to be used, not for water but as a rope, in this play.

ARTIST ALERT

A creative person is needed to make a full size "statue" of a large dog, which plays a pivotal role in the play! Please call for details.

SCRIPTS

available from Nigel Sharpe

Nigel Sharpe, Email: nigeld.sharpe@hotmail.co.uk

Audition Alert

THE CIRCLE

by Somerset Maugham.

Directed by Graham Stapley.

Production Dates: 28 November to 5 December 2015

Audition Date: TO BE CONFIRMED.

A period drawing room comedy dealing with the difficulties of love within marriage, with the pressures of society and with the triumph of character over circumstance. It was first performed at The Haymarket in 1921 with Fay Compton as Elizabeth and revived at the same theatre in 1945 with John Gielgud as Arnold and Yvonne Arnaud as Lady Champion-Cheney.

The action takes place over two days in the stately drawing room of Ashton Ashley, the furnishings of which attract more attention from the owner than he affords his beautiful young wife, Elizabeth. The marriage is failing after just three years. Elizabeth is bored and becomes fascinated with the elopement of her husband's mother, Kitty, thirty years earlier, who chose to leave the status and strict conformity of her marriage to answer the call of love. Now Kitty is revisiting the house for the first time since her hasty departure with her lover, Lord Porteous. The characters of the two interlinking triangles of love are the plot and they retain their vitality today.

CHARACTERS (Playing ages given are approximate).

Arnold Champion-Cheney, M.P. 35 years old. A cold fish intensely interested in appearances and furnishings in particular. He prefers order and protocol to the exclusion of romance. He is unable to forgive his mother for her elopement when he was five years old.

Elizabeth 25 years old. Bored with her marriage and in search of true happiness. She is vulnerable to the conflicting calls of duty and love. She is drawn to know more of the experiences of her absent mother-in-law.

Clive Champion-Cheney 65 years old. He was Private Secretary to his great friend, Lord Porteous, prior to being made a cuckold. With his political career behind him he has developed a cynical attitude to human relations, which has enabled him to maintain his jaunty self-esteem. He is perceptive to Elizabeth's dilemma and works hard to persuade her not follow Kitty's example.

Lady Catherine Champion-Cheney (Kitty) 57 years old. When she abruptly left the marriage with Clive, she was "one of the great beauties of the day". After thirty years of living in sin and exile with Lord Porteous she makes a vain effort to deny the passage of time. She is keen to ensure Elizabeth knows of her harsh experience.

Lord Porteous Aged about 65 years old. The adulterer who was tipped as a future Prime Minister before scandal drove him from office and the country. He is now an argumentative eccentric at odds with the world and his failing health.

Edward Luton Aged about 25 years old. On leave from a rubber plantation in Malaya. He is invited to the house party to provide Elizabeth moral support and promptly falls in love with her. An effusive character with alluring plans.

Mrs. Anna Shenstone An elegant house guest aged about 40 years old. A friend of the Champion-Cheney's. She is aware of the mounting tension and offers support for both Elizabeth and Arnold.

Footman Limited dialogue in three appearances.

Butler Even less dialogue in two appearances.

THE REHEARSAL SCHEDULE

begins on 21 September on Monday, Wednesday and Friday evenings and two Sundays prior to the production.

THE SCRIPTS

are available from Graham Stapley. gstapley@btinternet.com, 01273 812976 & 07732 224066.

Lewes Theatre Club Information

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION £10 Double £16 Over 60s, Student and Juniors £6 Double £10

ADMISSION PRICES Evenings £8, Matinées £6

ANTHONY JENNER BAR All are welcome in our bar. It is open before and after all evening performances, as well as during the interval. Interval drinks may be ordered in advance.

THE NEWSLETTER Published before each production. Contributions in the form of articles or correspondence are welcomed and should be addressed to The Editor, Lewes Little Theatre, Lancaster Street, Lewes, East Sussex BN7 2PX.

MEMBERSHIP Applications should be sent to the Membership Secretary. Acting Membership involves no extra subscription. Members wishing to act are invited to attend auditions announced in the Newsletters.

CAR PARKING Limited space at the theatre is available to those with disabilities. Municipal Car Parks, close by in Brook Street and the Needlemakers Centre, are open free of charge after 6pm.

THE WORKING PARTY This hard-working group undertakes set building, costume, repairs and maintenance, both inside and out, meeting every Tuesday evening.

DISABLED PEOPLE Members who have difficulty negotiating stairs and steps may enter the Theatre by the former entrance on the east side of the building. Seating close to this entrance is in Rows G9-11, H10-12 and J5-7. We can accommodate one wheelchair at certain performances. For details, ask at the Box Office. A disabled persons' toilet is located between the two main doors to the Auditorium. A fully operational induction loop has been installed. Aids should be adjusted according to the manufacturer's instructions.

OFFICERS President: Joanne Cull; Director: Pat Shrimpton; Treasurer: Bob Leeds; General Secretary: Derek Watts; Membership Secretary: Nigel Sharpe.

Buying your Tickets

Evening performances at 7.45pm. Matinee at 2.45pm on Saturday 17th October. THE BOX OFFICE 01273 474826 will be open daily except on Sundays from Monday June 29 to Saturday July 11, 10.30am until noon and from 7pm to 7.30pm. Postal bookings received before the Box Office opening period will be given priority. Tickets not paid for 15 minutes before the performance is timed to start may be resold.

In any case seats booked in advance but not taken up must be paid for if not resold.

BOOK NOW

NAME

MEMBER NO

ADDRESS

TEL DAY TEL EVE

Please complete the form legibly and send it with remittance and S.A.E. to Box Office, Lewes Little Theatre, Lancaster St. Lewes, East Sussex BN7 2PX. Cheques should always be made payable to LEWES THEATRE CLUB.

TELEPHONE BOOKINGS: 01273 474826. See page 3 for Box Office hours.

PLAYS	Preferred Date	Alt. Date	Matinee or Evening	No. of seats	Preferred Location	Total
Inherit the Wind	First night only 2 for 1	X	Evening £8.00			
Inherit the Wind			Evening £8.00			
Inherit the Wind		X	Matinee £6.00			
Heroes	First night only 2 for 1	X	Evening £8.00			
Heroes			Evening £8.00			
Heroes		X	Matinee £6.00			

Grand Total

Please note. If the Box Office is able to fulfil only part of a request, a refund may be collected from the Box Office during opening hours. Alternatively, members may prefer to enclose either separate cheques or an open cheque crossed with a maximum amount.