



LEWES THEATRE CLUB  
Newsletter No.37 APRIL 2012

# Gaslight

by

**Patrick Hamilton**

directed by **Derek Watts**

**Saturday 19 May to Saturday 26 May**  
**at 7.45 pm except Sundays**  
**Matinee Saturday 26 May at 2.45 pm**

## Editor's notes

Welcome readers to our Spring edition. Our last production, *Speed-the-Plow*, was enjoyed by small but appreciative audiences in our foyer. The new black out curtains helped to create a studio theatre atmosphere. We still have two classic plays to come this season: *Gaslight* by Patrick Hamilton is one of the great thrillers of the theatre and promises to have us on the edge of our seats whilst Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest* is one of the wittiest plays ever written.

A small group of theatre members working with Sussex Downs College and other local actors will have performed an extract from my play *Witnesses to the Battle* as part of the Battle of Lewes celebrations at Lewes Castle in April. We hope to tour the full play in 2014 making Lewes Theatre Club an important contributor to local events.

**Micheal Turner**

[michealturner@btinternet.com](mailto:michealturner@btinternet.com)



Rehearsal pictures from *Gaslight*

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## DIARY DATES

### PERFORMANCES

#### GASLIGHT

19-26 May

#### IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST

21-28 July

### AUDITIONS

#### CALENDAR GIRLS

3 May



PREVIEW

# Gaslight

by Patrick Hamilton directed by Derek Watts

Evening performances at 7.45pm. Matinee at 2.45pm on Saturday 26 May.  
**THE BOX OFFICE** 01273 474826 will be open daily except Sundays from Monday 14 May to Saturday 26 May from 10.30 am 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.**

1880. London in the fog. The gaslights cannot dispel the shadows in the home of recently married Jack and Bella Manningham. Why do the lights mysteriously rise and fall of their own accord? Who prowls the attics at night? Is Bella losing her sanity, or is her life in deadly danger?

For me, finding Patrick Hamilton feels somewhat like joining a secret society. He was born in Hassocks in 1904 and was a writer of rare early promise. He wrote his first novel at 19; it was published three days after his twenty-first birthday and he enjoyed great popularity from the late Twenties until the early Fifties. Graham Greene, who might be considered something of an expert on the seaside resort's underbelly, hailed *The West Pier* as "the best book written about Brighton". Hamilton's stage plays, *Gaslight* and *Rope*, enhanced his reputation and became celebrated Hollywood movies. Despite his early success, however, he was never a happy man: he descended into alcoholism and died in the Norfolk seaside resort of Sheringham in 1962, his ashes scattered on the Blakeney mud flats. After his death, his reputation declined and his name dropped out of the British literary pantheon. However, he has recently undergone a revival and the re-publication of his *Gorse* trilogy and the fresh West End production of

*Gaslight* at the National Theatre in 2007 have launched a critical re-appraisal of his worth.

*Gaslight*, written in 1938, is often billed as a "Victorian thriller" but while the plot revolves around hidden jewels, the dramatic interest is in Hamilton's study of psychological disorder and the play can be seen as a bridge between the plot-driven Victorian melodrama and the modern, more psychological thrillers of Frederick Knott and Alfred Hitchcock.

Established Lewes actors Ian Clegg Alan Lade and Ellie Woodruff-Bryant, whose *Barnmaid* in *Two* made such an impression last December, join relative newcomers Trish Richings (the Countess in *Flare Path*) and Constance Owen, last seen in *Travesties* in 2004, who returns to play Bella, the role made famous by Ingrid Bergman in the 1944 film.

The play was the first production in the second season of the Theatre Club, in October 1943, and this is the first revival of one of the most gripping and enduring thrillers in the British theatre. Over 70 years on, *Gaslight* continues to offer two hours of escapist yet absorbing entertainment.

Don't miss it!

**Derek Watts, Director**

**REVIEW**

# Speed-the-Plow



David Mamet's *Speed-the-Plow* premiered on Broadway in 1988. Nominated for Tony Awards, and a sell out due (partly) to Madonna being cast in the role of Karen, since then it has been performed countless times worldwide including a production at London's Old Vic in 2008 starring Artistic Director Kevin Spacey, Jeff Goldblum and Laura Michelle Kelly. Mamet's most famous play for which he received the Pulitzer prize is *Glenarry Glen Ross* which, like *Speed-the-Plow*, deals with the world of business and the drive for a buck versus morality. Mamet sets out his stall for this play in the frontispiece for *Speed-the-Plow* quoting William Makepeace Thackeray: "Which is the most reasonable, and does his duty best: he who stands aloof from the struggle of life, calmly contemplating it, or he who descends to the ground, and takes his part in the contest?" The drama of the play hinges on this

dilemma faced by the main protagonist Hollywood producer Bobby Gould. Clearly the director Lyndsey Meier and her actors understood, intellectually, the world of the play and the style needed to deliver Mamet's blistering, playful, visceral language. Mamet's characters don't simply converse, they weave and swop fractured, rich, robust tapestries of language. His is an audacious, thrilling and utterly authentic voice which pulses with full blooded humour. Jack Kroll of Newsweek described *Speed-the-Plow* as "another tone poem by our nation's foremost master of the language of moral epilepsy".

What thrilling tour de force roles these are for actors. John Whitley played the newly promoted Hollywood producer Bobby Gould. He has a good ear for, and clearly relishes, the rhythm of the writing and carried his scenes with warmth, detail and gusto. Mike Truman, as the junior partner Charlie Fox whose

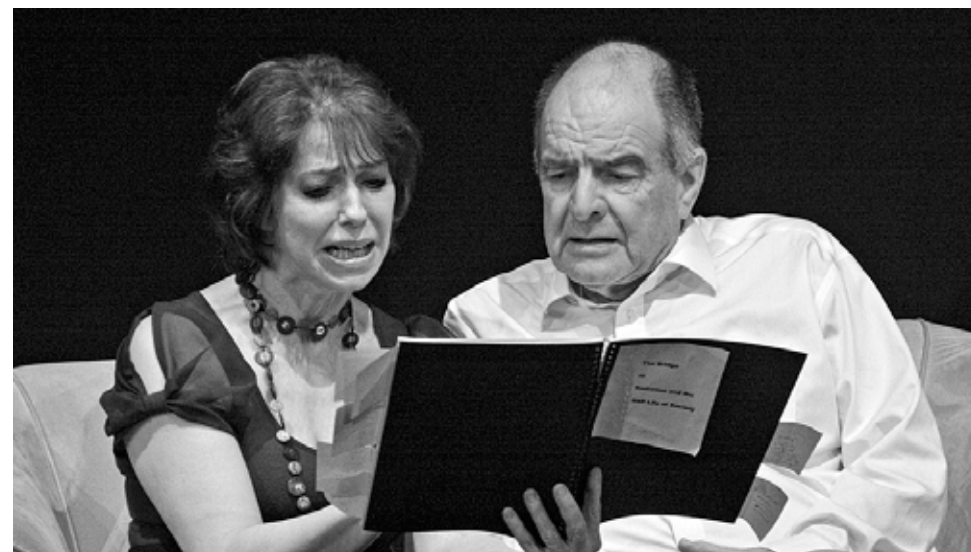
# Speed-the-Plow

hands are probably too sweaty to be able to negotiate the greasy pole he longs to climb, captured the desperation and pathos of the last chance saloon. Sandy Truman as the initially seemingly naïve temp secretary Karen was assured with her passion and ruthlessness. Mamet has been criticised for writing his female characters as secondary, however it struck me that Karen appears in the midst of the male madness as a kind of Mary Magdalen figure, acting as the catalyst to drive the plot to its conclusion.

As in all well-structured dramatic pieces the main protagonist, in this case Bobby Gould, goes on a journey. In order to achieve the required shifts in character, the first half of the play needs to be played with a harder edge. In the scene in which Bobby invites Karen to his house, ostensibly to bed

her but ending up enthralled by her seeming purity and passion for good, sexual tension needs to underscore the action. Then, the push and pull between the character's wants would be clear and strong and the underlining humour would also flow more easily.

Although *Speed-the-Plow* could be seen as a universal fable, it is rooted entirely in the maelstrom of commerce which is the US of A. Language, style and location could not be more intrinsically American. Mamet's plays are wordscapes, and the foundation of the dialogue, the engine of the play and the believability of the characters are carried on the engine of the accents. It was a shame that the lack of hold on this aspect of the production hampered the actors on occasion. However, Mamet's work with all its intricacy of subtext and stunning verbal



**REVIEW**

# Speed-the-Plow



pyrotechnics is a task not to be taken on too lightly and director Lyndsey Meer was brave and committed in tackling it. I enjoyed being able to see this play at LLT in the 'studio' space created in the foyer. The house was full and although the robust language might have been a bit uncomfortable for some it was clear that they appreciated the hard work and commitment shown by the cast and director.

While writing this review I found these two comments from David Mamet speaking about his play which seem, initially, to contradict each other. 'But what about High Art? I, personally, don't think it is the lookout of drama. I believe that the business of America is business, and the aim of drama is to put tushies in the seats; and that the best way to do that is to write a ripping yarn, with a bunch of sex, some nifty

plot twists and a lot of snappy dialogue. If you are looking for such, I suggest *Speed-the-Plow*.'

'I remembered the saying that you see on a lot of old plates and mugs 'Industry produces wealth, God Speed-the-Plow.' This, I knew, was a play about work and about the end of the world, so *Speed-the-Plow* was perfect because not only did it mean work, it meant having to plow under and start over again.'

In fact, *Speed-the-Plow* is about the tension between these two themes conveyed by thrilling language, clever but clear plot, humour and great characters. I was excited to see the play and will be looking up my Mamet collection for some more red blooded word and thought food.

**Lucie Fitchett**

# Club Director's notes

We managed to gather the cast together to perform the *Music Hall* which we had to cancel after one performance in December 2010. With three weeks rehearsal time it was fairly tight considering that many of the cast were involved in other productions, with some only able to have two rehearsals. In fact we never had a full cast until the First Night! However it went very well. Although some members of the original cast were unable to participate, Sandra Tomlinson and Sue Wicks stepped in to join us, making a welcome addition to the cast. We will divide the proceeds between the Theatre and the The Martlets Hospice. We provided free programmes but members kindly made donations for these and also gave generously after the performances. These donations totalled £256.73p.

Victoria Thompson elected to direct *Speed-the-Plow*, by David Mamet, but as she had to withdraw, Lyndsey Meer took over the production. We did not want to change the programme, so we are grateful to Lyndsey for taking over. Mamet's style of writing challenges the actors and our three gave excellent performances which were well-attended by our members.

We have decided to use black curtains in the foyer for future productions, as they create a more intimate atmosphere more like a studio theatre than a foyer.

We were asked if we would care to take part in the forthcoming celebrations in 2014 commemorating the Battle of Lewes. As you may know from the previous newsletter Mike Turner has written a mystery play and an excerpt

is being performed at Lewes Castle on April 14 this year. Let's hope the weather keeps fine for everyone! The play will be performed in its entirety in 2014 perhaps in the form of a touring production.

Rehearsals and set are well under way for our next production, *Gaslight* directed by Derek Watts. This thriller of the season deserves a revival as about 69 years have passed since it was last performed here and although many of our members may have heard about it they have never seen it.

I have asked James Firth-Haydon and Tim Rowland who run the Youth Theatre if they would like to perform again this season. We hope that some of you will be able to come along and enjoy a Café Sunday with our younger members.

I have been asked by Francesca Byrne BA (Hons) MA about the possibility of holding an Acting Workshop. I am quite prepared to organise this, but it does depend on how many people are interested. There are of course various options: playing in Shakespeare; voice, comedy of manners, farces, specific plays ; *Journey's End*, *Importance of Being Earnest*, *The Winslow Boy*, *Hedda Gabler* for example. The difficulty would be finding something to suit everybody. The fee would depend on the number of people attending. If anyone is interested, I would be pleased to hear from you. Contact me either at the theatre or by email [lewpatshrimpton@sky.com](mailto:lewpatshrimpton@sky.com)  
Many thanks

**Pat Shrimpton**

# AUDITION ALERT AUDITION ALERT

## Calendar Girls by Tim Firth

Directed by Sandra Tomlinson. Performance dates 13 - 20 October  
**Audition in the foyer Thursday 3 May 7.30 pm**

*Calendar Girls* is an extremely funny, yet moving play, based on the true story of a group of WI members who posed nude for a calendar to raise money for the Leukaemia Research Fund. Based on the Miramax motion picture, *Calendar Girls* opened at the Chichester Festival Theatre in 2008 and has since become the fastest selling play in British theatre history.

When Annie's husband John dies of leukaemia, she and best friend Chris resolve to raise money for a new settee in the local hospital waiting room. They manage to persuade four fellow Women's Institute members, Cora, Celia, Ruth and Jessie, to pose nude with them for an "alternative" calendar, with a little help from hospital porter and amateur photographer Lawrence. The news of the women's charitable venture spreads like wild fire, and hordes of press soon descend on the small village of Knapeley in the Yorkshire Dales. The calendar is a success, but Chris and Annie's friendship is put to the test under the strain of their new-found fame.

*Calendar Girls* offers wonderful parts. I'm looking for 'real' men and women with whom the audience can relate and warm to. I'm also looking for team players! This is essentially an ensemble piece and the quality of the interactions and relationships are essential to its success. Clearly anyone auditioning for one of the 6 'Calendar Girls' shouldn't

feel self-conscious about their bodies. That said Tim Firth notes: 'as in the best traditions of vaudevillian fan dances, the art of the play's nudity lies in what is withheld. The choreography of this sequence is best described as "fabulous concealment". Should we see anything we shouldn't, the whole scene will deflate like a soufflé on which the oven door has been opened too quickly.' I would advise you to read the script if auditioning. Be prepared to read and move for your audition pieces but also be prepared to read in to support other auditions. Don't be surprised if we don't stick to this list rigidly!

Rehearsals start on 13 August 2012. I am very excited about this production and anticipate a lot of fun in rehearsals. We will need to work hard and I would ask you not to audition if you know you will be unavailable during the rehearsal period. Due to the nature of this play I need a reliable cast who are fully committed to the production. I will do my best to organise a rehearsal schedule that only calls you when you are needed.

Contact me on [sdt1717@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:sdt1717@hotmail.co.uk) or leave a message on 01323 733748 if you would like a script or have any questions.

**Sandra Tomlinson**

# AUDITION ALERT AUDITION ALERT

## Cast and audition pieces

- Chris** 50s Centre of attention, confident, lively, chatty, mischievous, funny. drives the project. Pg 18-19, pg 45-46, pg 63-64, pg 71-72
- Annie** 50s Annie is more traditional and conformist than Chris but joins in with the mischief. She has a gentle strength. pg 10-11, pg 20-21, pg 24-25, pg 45-46, pg 71-72
- Cora** 40ish Cora is an unlikely Vicar's daughter, single Mum and joker in the pack. Ideally plays piano or can learn simple chords. pg 12-13, pg 68 and sing first verse of Jerusalem.
- Jessie** 60/70 Retired teacher. Strong matriarch figure, strong minded and a lover of life. pg 31-32, pg 64-66
- Celia** 35-50 Expensively dressed, glamorous, if not a little tarty, a bit rebellious pg 12-13, pg 58-59.
- Ruth** 40s Eager to please, wants everyone to be happy, tries hard. Easily put upon, gains in confidence pg 52-54 pg 64-66.
- The bond between these six women is at the core of the play.**
- Marie** 50s The WI is her life. She is in charge and everyone knows it. Puts on airs and graces. pg 12-13, pg 22-23, pg 52-54
- Brenda Hulse / Lady Cravenshire** 50s/60s Plays both parts. The woman who comes to give a talk on broccoli in the first scene. Mousey, no charisma. pg 5-6. In contrast Lady Cravenshaw is very posh! Think Penelope Keith. Is used to holding court. pg 22-23
- Elaine** 20's Beautician, think Essex girl, has had an affair with Ruth's husband. Rather patronising to the ladies. pg 64-66
- John** 50s Annie's husband, everyone likes him. He is kind and warm with a good sense of humour. pg 10-11, pg 20-21, pg 24-25
- Rod** 50s Chris's husband and John's mate. He really loves and understands her. Deadpan humour. pg 18-19, pg 62-64
- Lawrence/Liam**, 20's Lawrence is the shy, hospital porter who gets involved as an amateur photographer. Sense of humour. pg 29-31. In contrast Liam is the cocky, smooth young man directing the photo-shoot, perhaps with a sense of weariness that he would rather be doing something else. pg 70-71

Ladies, please be prepared to sing *Jerusalem* together. I look forward to seeing you on 3 May 2012 .

**Sandra**

# NOTICE OF MEETING

**There will be a Special General Meeting of Lewes Theatre Club on Saturday, 9 June at 10.00 a.m. at the Theatre. The meeting is called by the Trustees under Article 9 (five) of the Constitution.**

## Agenda Apologies for Absence

To confirm the decision taken at the Annual General Meeting of the Theatre Club held on 25 September, 2010 to ratify the amendment printed hereunder as Item 9: 'Amendment to the Constitution':

### AGENDA ITEM NO.9 PROPOSED CHANGE TO ARTICLE (6) OF THE CONSTITUTION

#### Current wording

(6) Members may attend performances and other events organised by the Charity at charges fixed by the Trustees and, subject to any conditions that the Trustees may lay down, they may bring guests.

#### Proposed wording

(6) Members may attend performances and other events organised by the Charity at charges fixed by the Trustees and, subject to any conditions that the Trustees may lay down, they may bring guests. This does not preclude the admittance of non-members to performances and other events organised by the Charity, at charges and in circumstances fixed by the Trustees.

#### Rationale for Change

The object of this amendment is to facilitate the proposed experiment, circulated to all members in the newsletter, whereby members of the public would be able to purchase unsold tickets following the members' priority booking period under a two tier pricing system for members and non-members. The Committee has received no adverse comments from members since the proposal was published.

#### Committee Recommendation

The Committee commends this proposal to the membership for ratification.

#### Voting

This proposal shall be passed by a two thirds majority of those members attending and voting at the AGM.

#### Result

The proposal was ratified in general meeting held on Saturday 25 September 2010.

# NOTICE OF MEETING

Members of the Club are reminded that as provided in Article 6 (two) "... any such amendment is made by resolution passed by not less than two thirds of the members present and voting at a general meeting".

Under article 11 a quorum at a general meeting is: " 50 members entitled to vote upon the business to be conducted at the meeting; or one 40th of the total membership at the time whichever is the greater".

## Explanatory note

Members of the Club may recall that at the 2010 AGM it was agreed that the new arrangement which followed the adoption of the amendment at that meeting was for an experimental 12 month period. The Club now needs to look at how it has worked in practice in order to be able to make a decision about whether it is to become permanent or not.

**Derek Watts Hon. General Secretary.**

## INFORMATION

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION £10 Double £16  
Over 60s, Student & Juniors £6 Double £10  
ADMISSION PRICES Evenings £8.  
Matinées £6

#### THE FALSTAFF CLUB

Anthony Jenner Bar, all L.T.C. members are automatically members. The Bar is open before, during and after all evening performances and on special Club social occasions. 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.

#### THE WARDROBE

Hiring of costumes – phone the Wardrobe Team. Alison 479471 Kate Palmer 472622 or Gerry 479432 ten days before to make an appointment. Deposit required.

#### 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 Miles Jenner  
Director Pat Shrimpton  
Treasurer Bob Leeds  
Gen Secretary Derek Watts  
Membership Secretary Nick Cooper

# Gaslight



## OPENING

Saturday 19 May 2012  
7.45pm

## 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 |
|-----------------------------|----------------|-----------|--------------------|--------------|--------------------|-------|
| Gaslight                    |                |           | Evening £8.00      |              |                    |       |
| Gaslight                    |                | X         | Matinee £6.00      |              |                    |       |
| Importance of Being Earnest |                |           | Evening £8.00      |              |                    |       |
| Importance of Being Earnest |                | X         | Matinee £6.00      |              |                    |       |
| <b>Grand Total</b>          |                |           |                    |              |                    |       |

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.