



LEWES THEATRE CLUB
Newsletter No.35 JANUARY 2012

The MADWOMAN of CHAILLOT

by Jean Giraudoux
directed by Alison Grant

Saturday 4 February to
Saturday 11 February 2012 at 7.45 pm
except Sundays
Matinee Saturday 11 February at 2.45 pm

Editor's notes

Since our last newsletter there have been three plays. *Flare Path* was a great success and was a fitting reminder of how involving the well made plays of Rattigan could be. The review on page four gives a good account of the acting and direction but I feel it is time to remind members of the high quality of sound effects (aircraft in surroundsound), lighting (both atmospheric and dramatic) and costumes (period clothes and excellent uniforms) in this historical piece. The wardrobe are looking for new members of the team (see Announcements page 18). The props too reflected the forties. We value our actors and directors but we also recognise that the supporting departments deserve praise when they are successful.

The Youth Theatre presented two plays in the main auditorium as part of the programme for the first time in recent history, *Two* and *Lord of the Flies*.

These plays were a good showcase for our younger members and it is a pity that the plays were not better supported by our members.

Micheal Turner
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FLARE PATH

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DIARY DATES

PERFORMANCES

MADWOMAN OF CHAILLOT

4 - 11 February

MUSIC HALL

2 - 3 March 7.45pm

SPEED-THE-PLOW

24 - 31 March

PREVIEW

THE MADWOMAN of CHAILLOT

by Jean Giraudoux directed by Alison Grant

Evening performances at 7.45pm. Matinee at 2.45pm on Saturday 11 February.
THE BOX OFFICE 01273 474826 will be open daily except Sundays from Monday 30 January to Saturday 11 February 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.

The French playwright and journalist Jean Giraudoux wrote *The Madwoman of Chaillot* in 1942 during the Nazi occupation of France. He was one of many artists and intellectuals who stayed in Paris until the liberation – Picasso, Piaf, Sartre and Camus included.

On the surface the play is pure fantasy – an enchanting mix of whimsy, farce and outrageous eccentricity supplied by the array of street people (jugglers, singers and The Ragpicker), led by the madwoman, Countess Aurelia. She discovers a plot hatched by an evil army of newly arrived pimps, prospectors, money barons and bureaucrats, who want to dig up and destroy the streets of Paris to retrieve the oil which they believe lies hidden beneath.

The Countess, with her equally mad aristocratic friends, lives in the past. They all engage in private fantasies of their own; Constance with Dickie, her canine companion, Gabrielle who converses with inanimate objects and Josephine, who puts the pimps on trial in their absence. Along with their impoverished street chums they are persuaded by the all-seeing Ragpicker that the fate of humanity is at risk. “Little by little the pimps have taken over the world. They don’t do anything, they don’t make anything – they just stand there and take their cut.”

The Countess’s cellar holds the key where the plot rather chillingly reaches its climax.

On a deeper level, the play is an allegory, and not just for the Nazi occupation. Giraudoux believed the pimps and their like were destroying France, with their insistence on efficiency, sterility, neatness and wealth, to the detriment of individuality, artistry, history and culture.

“How can you bear to live in a world where there is unhappiness? Where man is no longer his own master? If these men are the cause of all the trouble, all we have to do is get rid of them.”

The play also has an uncanny resonance for the 21st century – the greed of bankers, the destruction of the earth’s resources and war for oil, and the constant encroachment of power and the powerful on individual freedom.

Alison Grant
Production Director

REVIEW

FLARE PATH



Written in 1941 Terrence Rattigan's *Flarepath* depicts the public and personal duties and dilemmas of those caught up in war. In this moving and engrossing play Rattigan, who himself served as a tail gunner, illuminates the personal stories of ordinary people who acted with stoicism, bravery, and heroism. Reading the foyer exhibition I noted that 51 out of 100 aircrew personnel died in bombing raids. *Flare Path* is particularly refreshing because the characters Rattigan chooses to include in this ensemble piece hail from a range of differing classes and backgrounds. In the extraordinary circumstances of war group ethos, responsibility and affinities become more important than personal front or prejudices.

The action is set in an hotel lounge in Lincolnshire in the autumn of 1942 where aircraft crews and their loved ones spent time before and after bombing raids. Even before the curtain

went back it was clear that a lot of care and attention to detail had been put into this production. The front of house message to turn off mobile phones was delivered in the style of a BBC home service broadcast and was an apt and amusing start to the evening. The perfectly realised set designed by Eddie Redfern and director Cathryn Parker transported an appreciative audience right back to a world of rationing, the occasional pink gin, American cigarettes and cups of tea round the wireless. Cathryn Parker found a cast capable of playing authenticity, humour, pathos and charm with great conviction.

The curtain rises on Doris, now Countess Skriczevinsky and formerly a barmaid played with warmth and humour by Trish Richings. At first her social pretensions are intentionally annoying until we discover later, in a beautifully written and well played 'love letter' scene between her and Peter Kyle that she married Count Skriczevinsky

FLARE PATH

– played elegantly by Tony Bannister while grappling with a Polish accent
– after comforting him when his wife and child had been killed by the Nazis. Endearing young actor Owen Daugherty is charming as Percy the enthusiastic waiter who runs around serving the needs of the residents of the Falcon Hotel. Anna Crabtree is wonderful as the no-nonsense Mrs Oakes who manages the hotel and tries to maintain standards in a war torn Britain.

Chris Parke playing Peter Kyle - the film star whose career is waning - succeeds in making the audience care about his dilemma, which on the face of it, could pale into insignificance when set alongside the fate of the RAF crews. When begging Patricia (played with poise by Meg Depla-Lake as a study in the rather brittle glamour and contained emotion of the period) to leave her pilot husband and come away with him, he laments the fact that he can't get back into real life. His view that the topsy-turvy world at war that he has missed out on was more 'real' than his actor's life was surprisingly poignant. Both the actors and director did well to pull back from too stylised, clichéd portrayals during the romantic scenes.

Damian Sutton made a believable Flight-Lieutenant Teddy Graham, whose teddy bearish charm conceals shattered nerves. The breakdown scene in which he tells his beloved wife, Patricia, of the realities and terrors of bombing raids and which, inadvertently, leads her not to run away with her true love Peter Kyle, was moving. Here, as in many pivotal scenes, Rattigan counterbalances the romanticism by his genius for controlled

emotion and both actors conveyed this well.

Sgt. Dusty Miller (James Collins) and Mrs. Maudie Miller (Lindsay Holledge) were a lovely, humorous double act as the working class young couple whose one night together is cut short by a bombing raid. Rattigan cleverly sets up the possibility that the eager to please Dusty may not come back alive. The understated goodbye between the enthusiastic tail gunner and his sometimes acerbic wife is all the more moving for its simplicity.

I particularly enjoyed Nicholas Betteridge as Squadron Leader 'Gloria' Swanson who was calm, warm and totally believable as the man who stays behind and deals with the fallout of the raids. The scene in which Swanson and Doris watched the planes take off for the dangerous raid was especially gripping.

Flare Path is an extremely well plotted, moving, ensemble piece with timeless relevance. It is a clear and moving portrait of people at war and the personal and public sacrifices made. Teddy Graham's line 'Darling we've got to win this war – oh how very Daily Mail of me!' is just one of Rattigan's many lines which resonate with a modern audience. I enjoyed the production very much and the care and commitment of the director, cast and crew were clearly evident and yielded much. The play and its themes and strands have stayed with me and have prompted me to revisit more of Rattigan's work.

Lucie Fitchett

See more pictures on page 17

REVIEW

TWO

Jim Cartwright, in his first play, *Road*, and the subsequent huge hit *The Rise and Fall of Little Voice*, has made a name for himself by capturing the argot and the angst he absorbed in his northern working-class upbringing. In *Two*, the world-weary and disillusioned denizens of a spit and sawdust local set somewhere in industrial Lancashire, ground down by failed relationships, work, old age and loneliness, presented a real challenge, in terms of age and life-experience, as well as accent, to the young cast assembled by James Firth-Haydon from the Youth Theatre.

The play is essentially a series of vignettes, and has often been played as a two-hander with no interval. Here, quite understandably, the director gave the actors opportunities to play the short scenes, portraying the assorted characters that drift in and out of this humdrum pub. The drawback was that the episodic nature of the piece afforded the youngsters little space to develop a character. The exceptions are the Landlord and Landlady, whose bickering façade ultimately cracks when in a tumultuous climax they are forced to face the loss of their son years before. In the outstanding performance of the evening, Ellie Woodruff-Bryant showed an impressive emotional range, conveying both the desperate flightiness of the gossipy barmaid and the bleakness of a loveless yet co-dependent marriage. Both she and Luke Morphew-Hedges (less clear vocally but with a certain presence) portrayed with precision beyond their years two people in a romantic and professional dead-end.

In the moving climax, Ellie's tear-jerking scream and her husband's touching inarticulacy will live long in the memory.

The punters in the pub, all of whose lives we learn about by reference to an off-stage person, offered a more uneven level of performance. Elsie May-Cranie struck a provocative note and showed acting promise as Mrs. Iger, who had a thing for 'big men', Sara Pumphrey was sultry and vindictive as a vengeful mistress, while Ollie Pickard as Moth, a wannabe Lothario, Ellie Louise Markwick as his girl-friend Maudie and Harry Willsher as a sad, lonely old man all had good moments. Especially noteworthy was Hattie Mills, in a difficult role with almost nothing to say, browbeaten by her bullying but inarticulate boy-friend. She managed to capture the frightened mumbling responses of a young girl trapped in an abusive relationship. Ettie Caverly and Owen Daughtery were believable as a comfortably happy middle-aged couple, as was Tim Telford as Mr. Iger, who just wasn't big enough for his wife. Jordan Rory-Shaw, who suffered from first-night nerves and Guilia Landa-Whitfield, as an Old woman completed a full cast who were ably directed by James Firth-Haydon.

Organising teenage actors, as I know from school productions, is a bit like herding cats and James did a very sound job in crafting a satisfying evening for the audience – and it is to be hoped for his young cast.

TWO

I saw the play on Monday evening. There were 19 in the audience. Quite frankly, the youngsters deserved more than that. I've seen one or two 'adult' productions over the last couple of seasons of a lower standard than the fare on offer from the Youth Theatre. It is disappointing therefore that, beyond friends and families of the actors, the week's productions seem not to have attracted more support from the wider

majority of the Club's membership. All I can say to those who chose not to come, "You don't know what you missed". Congratulations to the Youth Theatre on providing a heartening evening of much promise and some really impressive performances in two challenging and difficult pieces.

Derek Watts



Youth Theatre actors in rehearsal for **TWO**

REVIEW LORD OF THE FLIES

The palm tree in silhouette against the sky set the scene for this adaptation of *Lord of the Flies*, William Golding's first and most famous novel. The book is well-known in schools having been a popular examination text over the years but this excellent adaptation for the stage by Nigel Williams, originally presented by the RSC in 1995, is probably less familiar.

A group of schoolboys is stranded on an island as a result of a plane crash. No adults have survived so they must look after themselves and create their own social structures until rescue arrives. Very quickly conflicts arise as attitudes become more extreme, attempts at democracy are overturned and social conflicts trigger personal violence: as a result people die. You may see this as a bleak view of humanity, that the capacity for evil is latent within each of us and only the imposition of external authority will contain and control it. If that seems too absolute a view, perhaps we should recall from our schooldays the potential for mayhem and cruelty that existed within any classroom. Golding of course was a schoolteacher and presumably had no idealistic notions about the behaviour of schoolboys. Lindsay Anderson's *If....*, the 1968 film about brutality and insurrection in a British public school, comes to mind.

The production of *Lord of the Flies* was a brave venture by the Youth Theatre and the young actors deserve credit for what they achieved. The cross casting in particular was a great success. Although this is a story of a group of boys stranded on an island, three of the

parts were taken, very successfully, by girls.



Inez Skilling gave a fine performance as Ralph, trying and ultimately failing to introduce peaceful democratic consensus to the life of the island. Possession of the conch – whoever holds it has the right to speak and be heard – was an attempt by Ralph to establish a convention for democratic behaviour. This convention was, of course, questioned, disputed and finally destroyed by Jack, the bullying Head Prefect figure, unable to contemplate anyone other than himself in charge. For him the exercise of personal power was more important than ensuring the group survival. This was a capable and authoritative performance by Gem Bennington-Poulter as self-elected leader. Roger, played by Dan Hardwick, was the apparently nice chap who became a blood-thirsty member of

LORD OF THE FLIES

Jack's wild and violent gang. Oberon Parry gave an engaging performance as young Maurice while Meredith Gilbert was effective as the quiet one.

The problem of presenting the twins Sam and Eric was elegantly solved: Eric was Sam's puppet. In an accomplished performance Tom Telford made this double-act thoroughly enjoyable. Sadly, groups often have target victims, in this case the bespectacled Piggy in a persuasive performance from Melanie Henderson. Both Piggy and Simon – the thinker who becomes increasingly distressed, played convincingly by Rupert Flowers – are killed in the course of the frenetic action.

At the end of the play a naval officer suddenly appears onstage – rescue is at hand. This is an adult figure, a genuine authority. Sanity abruptly returns and the children are aghast when they realise what they have done. Here, the naval officer was doubled by the youngest and smallest member of the cast. I have no concern about his performance, he did a perfectly good job, it's the casting decision I query. This was the point in the play at which a genuine adult authority figure was needed.

I sensed that this production suffered from time pressures both in rehearsal and in preparation of the physical setting. In many plays, acting in a bare space and using substitute props can be rewarding for actors and audience alike. Here, the rostra representing the hill were fine, but a little more circumstantial detail in setting, props and costume would have been welcome in helping this



capable and enthusiastic young cast tell the story. Bandages, perhaps? Were none of the survivors injured, even superficially, in this horrific accident? As time passed wouldn't their

clothing have become more ragged? And maybe more work on mime skills might have helped.

The poor audience attendance from the Club membership was very disappointing – if you didn't see it you missed some good performances.

It was unfortunate that the programme was incomplete – I would like to have seen details of the production team and to congratulate whoever did the lighting. But I hope the cast enjoyed doing this play, despite the poor attendance, because their efforts were well worth seeing.

David Williams

Club Director's notes

Firstly I would like to wish all our members a very happy New Year.

The Season began in October with *Enter A Free Man* which was entered for the Brighton and Hove Arts Council's Drama Awards. Thirteen of us represented the Theatre at BHASVIC on 12 December to hear the results. It was an enjoyable evening, with Miles Jenner providing part of the entertainment with two Billy Merson songs. Last year the Awards went to the actors and director of the play, Adrian Bowd. This year I am delighted to say that the backstage people were singled out. The Flower (family) Cup for Technical Achievement was awarded to Don Funnell assisted by Adrian Bowd and Dudley Ward who created "water pipes" on stage which functioned at the end of the play. The award for the Best Backstage Crew went to Dudley Ward and his team. Stage Management was particularly complimented on accuracy in finding specific props (the adjudicator mentioned a period Rupert Bear Annual!).

The very popular *Flare Path* by Terence Rattigan followed in November. This was Cathryn Parker's production and, true to form, with her meticulous planning she directed an excellent piece of theatre. The set was convincing, beautifully constructed, again by Dudley and his team. I'd like to thank David Moon who made the trips from Croydon to paint the panelling. (We would like more people to help with painting scenery on Tuesday evenings, so if you can spare any time, David Matthews would be delighted to see you.) The lighting, sound effects

and costumes were ably managed by all the backstage crew, complementing the plot and period. I would also like to thank Cathryn for keeping me up to date on the progress of *Flare Path* as I was unable to attend rehearsals as much as I wished.

The Youth Theatre followed on swiftly and our resources were rather stretched to provide all they required, but everyone managed admirably. *Two* directed by James Firth-Haydon played for three nights and *Lord of the Flies* completed the week. The young people and directors worked hard to achieve a good standard and although supported by parents and some members of the theatre it seems a pity that we don't get more people in the audience.

We are using more of our younger members in our productions, and are rather short of chaperones. If you feel you would like to join the team, please contact Don Funnell, Production Manager at Lewes Theatre.

Alison Grant's debut at Lewes as a director brings us *The Madwoman of Chailot*. This opens on 4 February and runs until 11 February, rehearsals are well under way.

2 and 3 March brings us once again to a re-run of the *Music Hall* which we had to cancel last season due to the bad weather. We are including a couple of different items and the proceeds will be shared by The Martlets Hospice.

I know we are forever asking for help in the theatre, but if you can spare the time, apart from painting scenery,

Club Director's notes

we do need people helping in the costume department and also during the performances, helping any actors making quick changes of costume. Anne Turner is our Head of Costume. Front of House Manager Jane Rimmington also needs extra hands making tea and coffee!

Lastly on a personal note, I'd like to thank Miles Jenner, Sue Tait and Jo Cull for driving me hither and thither whilst recovering from my broken ankles! I'm nearly back to normal and hoping to be able to drive myself early in January.

I wish you all A Very Happy New Year!
Pat Shrimpton

Brighton & Hove Arts Council Drama Award - Special Award

A shortened version of Meg Depla -Lake's valedictory speech for Pat Shrimpton

Patricia Holford first became involved in the world of drama in 1962 when, aged 23, she returned home to Brighton after completing her Teacher Training. Her mother decided that Patricia needed to 'get out more in the evenings'. So Mrs Holford put Patricia's name down to be contacted by the Co-operative New Stagers Drama Group.

A letter duly arrived, inviting Pat to join them at rehearsal. She was none too pleased, 'I don't want to join the Co-op', she said. However, not wishing to appear rude, she went along to their rehearsal rooms – a basement in Hanover Crescent, Brighton.

Patricia was warmly welcomed and she initially helped with the costumes, but very soon found herself making tea, painting scenery, prompting and eventually acting. Pat also collected the tea money, so she became the Treasurer too! This was not an onerous task as all the bills, apart from the tea and coffee, were paid by the Co-op.

The New Stagers performed at the Co-op Hall, London Road, Brighton. A van was used to transport the scenery and props from the rehearsal basement to the Hall. Another member of the New Stagers you may also remember and who gave his name to an Award this evening, was Arthur Churchill.

Eventually the Co-op withdrew its funding and the group was disbanded, so Pat joined other companies in Brighton helping out backstage and acting. They included The Brighton Arts, who performed at the now demolished Union Hall in Air Street, and Centrestage, who rehearsed in a basement in South Street and also performed at Union Hall and often (like the well-known Myra Stewart Players) at the Methodist Hall in Dorset Gardens. Sadly these Groups too no longer exist.

Many theatre companies today have their own premises, scenery workshops, costume and prop stores, but Pat had to learn all aspects of putting on a production, when such facilities were not so common place or easily available.

Brighton & Hove Arts Council Drama Award - Special Award

A shortened version of Meg Depla -Lake's valedictory speech for Pat Shrimpton

Pat carried her interest in drama into her teaching at St. Luke's Junior School in Brighton. Together with a colleague, Patricia produced songs from the Shows, Old Time Music Halls and plays with music, often writing their own. Pat recalled one school production at the Brighton Dome, when the children sang songs from 'Half a Sixpence'.

By 1969 Patricia was a member of Brighton Little Theatre and it was then that the opportunity arose to teach for a year in another Brighton, the one in Rochester, New York. Pat joined the local Community Players, helping with stage management, props and the English accent when the occasion demanded.

At the end of her year in that school, she produced a selection of songs from the musical *Oliver*. The children worked hard to cultivate cockney accents, leaving the parents somewhat bemused, but 'Hey! our kids are performing! So what the heck?'

Back home, Pat was asked to take part in play readings for the Sussex Playwrights and joined the New Venture Theatre. Here she appeared in several productions, including *Happy Families*, which won the Drama Awards Challenge Cup in 1991 for Best Production.

Back in 1970, after helping a friend with costumes at Lewes Theatre Club, she decided she would become an acting member at Lewes too. It was then that Pat went to prison! Lewes Prison, where she appeared in a play with the inmates. This was a great experience, with a good

deal of drama, mostly offstage. A friend was taught how to pick locks and Pat learned, from a professional burglar, the value of geese. 'I never touch a place with geese. Can't trust 'em. Right evil buggers they are!'

At Lewes Theatre Club, Patricia performed in many plays and helped with costumes, props, front of house and prompting. After retiring from teaching in 1999, she began directing, particularly enjoying those plays with music.

Lewes Theatre Club was founded by the Reverend Kenneth Rawlings in 1938 and in 1939 two significant events occurred. A disused chapel was purchased and a bouncing baby girl, Patricia Helen Holford, was born. Appropriately, Patricia means 'noble' and Helen 'the light' or 'the bright'.

Patricia Holford has worn many hats during her 37 happy years teaching and 50 memorable years in the theatre. Most of you will know her as the Artistic Director of Lewes Little Theatre, Pat Shrimpton.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,
I give you the 'noble and bright'
Pat Shrimpton.**

**Congratulations Pat
The Editor**

OBITUARY

Joan Lloyd



Sadly, Joan died in November just a few weeks short of her 94th birthday. She and her late husband were friends of my parents and I have known her for over 50 years.

Although she would be too modest to agree, she was a stalwart of Lewes Theatre Club. She joined in the late 1960s and both acted and performed as stage manager for many years. As the latter she was a stickler for detail and if you were part of her team and you messed up, she would make her feelings plain although subsequently it's likely you would be indulged by her wonderful booming laugh.

Tony Potter tells a story about a rehearsal of *Cabaret* which Joan stage managed. Trying to be helpful, at the end of a scene he picked up a chair in order to take it offstage. "Put that down", she said. "I'm not having my actors moving the furniture".

She performed in many LTC Productions but will be best remembered for *The Anniversary*, *Enter a Free Man*, *The Killing of Sister George*, *A Question of*

Fact and *The Workhouse Donkey*.

During the War Joan joined the Wrens and worked in the code breaking centre at Bletchley Park although, having signed the Official Secrets Act, she was always reticent about discussing it.

She suffered bereavements during her life. She was widowed in her fifties and lost her son about eight years ago but Joan was a tough lady and bore these sorrows with fortitude.

My abiding memory of her goes back to a cold day last January when I bumped into her outside the Theatre in Lancaster Street. It was shortly before the opening night of *Blackbird* which I was directing, a rather controversial play about a paedophile. "I'm directing this play called *Blackbird*", I said. "But I don't think it's really your cup of tea". "No, dear" she said. "It certainly isn't. But I'm coming to see it anyway!"

I'm so pleased I met her that day. Like many others, I will miss her.

Chris Weber Brown

TOURING DAYS

"We had few qualms, played to capacity business and enjoyed ourselves thoroughly", wrote Noel Coward, reflecting on the first production of *Private Lives* and we can echo his words with a few qualifications. The project had arisen to promote the Theatre Club by taking a production on

tour. It was unexpectedly rescheduled to open the 2010/11 season although the touring goal was never abandoned. Anxious to avoid financial disaster,

we looked for the lowest risk at venues that could provide good box office facilities and agreed a strategy of low priced, unreserved tickets.

We were keen to include a local arts festival and Rye, one of the more prestigious and in its 40th year, asked if their Artistic and Music Directors could see us in rehearsal and asked us to perform. We then booked additional venues in Brighton, Eastbourne, Lewes and Laughton. The task was approached with what Coward once termed "an astounding sense of the reality of the moment." We produced promotional material, monitored box office sales and worked frantically at publicity. Mike Batchelor, our lighting designer, visited each venue before drawing up a universal lighting plot and organising the equipment we would require in transit.

We opened at the Marlborough Theatre in Brighton, a Georgian pub with a sixty seat theatre above it. There was precious little space at the back of the stage for costume changes. The cast had to cross a long landing and enter via the auditorium. A single dressing room and lavatories shared with our audience was indicative



of future touring conditions and it was a measure of the closeness of the company that nobody batted an eyelid.

The 'get in', the technical rehearsal, the performance and the 'get out'

followed one another in a blaze of activity interspersed with snatched meal breaks and constant re-hydration wherever we went. As Gertrude Lawrence once said, "We just took a deep breath and jumped".

The journey to Rye the following day included stops at newsagents to check whether our press releases had been published. We were splashed across the Rye Observer and arrived to find few of the 130 tickets left. During the interval 'Gertie', in scarf and raincoat, managed to mingle with the audience and use the front of house loos without being recognised. We all got back to Lewes way after midnight. The Lamb Theatre at Eastbourne the following Saturday presented similar logistical problems to the Marlborough, occasionally competing with the noise from the bar beneath and suffering a fog of nicotine during the 'get out' as

TOURING DAYS

we repeatedly passed through smokers outside while we loaded the van. About fifty tickets had been purchased at each pub venue, which gave the impression of a very full house in the limited space available. Most significantly, it more than covered our costs in both instances.

Early the next morning we were back in Lewes, at Pelham House, where all 180 seats had been sold, and had our work cut out to set up for our 5.00 p.m. performance. The blackout conditions we had been promised were temporarily compromised by the inability of the staff to operate the blinds over the skylights. We finished the technical rehearsal shortly before our audience arrived and made straight for the dressing room. We could not have wished for a warmer response in our home town. None of the brochures for the Club's 2011/12 Season were left when the audience departed.

Our final sortie was a charity performance at Laughton Village Hall. The organisers had sold a capacity house of over sixty tickets, inclusive of a three course meal, and we were to perform 'cabaret style' with the audience arriving in 1930's dress, from vintage motor vehicles. It was a fitting end to the project and we breathed a sigh of relief that the entire tour had gone according to plan.

Our director, Joyce Fisher, felt that we had given consistent performances wherever we went and energy levels had been maintained. Every performance, had passed without incident and audiences had been very enthusiastic. We had covered all our costs, making a reasonable profit for the Club, and had

learnt a great deal about the logistics and viability of touring future productions. We continue to receive invitations from other venues – including village halls – and this sits well with the Club's stated objectives.

The six performances closed, to quote Coward, "with the gratifying knowledge that we could have easily run on for another six." However, this had only been achieved by the dedication and good humour of the entire team: Sue Bain and her extraordinary musical skills, Joyce Fisher for her directorial vision, Sue Tait for her vigilance 'on the book' throughout, Joanne Cull and Alison Soudain for their constant attention to staging and costumes. Mike Batchelor for his extensive contribution and long hours, assisted at different venues by Roy Gooderham, Arthur Howell, Trevor Morgan and Stuart Nolan. There was tremendous support also from Pat Shrimpton, not least in her choreography, Val Quanstrom, Kate Palmer, Mike Palmer and Mike Piller – not to mention our 'roadies' Edmund Jenner and John Kidd.

Miles Jenner

PREVIEW

Speed-the-Plow

by David Mamet
 directed by Lyndsey Meer
 24 31 March 2012

Speed-the-Plow will make a change for Lewes Theatre. I think the nearest we've had to it was *Blackbird*, so successfully presented by Chris Weber Brown early last year. It deals with similar themes; corruption, abuse, greed, motivation, secrecy, sex and passion but, whereas that play was sombre in its challenges, this one is seriously funny.

Speed-the-Plow is a cynical, furiously-paced story of two days in the lives of two movie men who think they have vast fame and fortune in their grasp until one of them has something of an epiphany - or does he? In brilliantly colourful and realistic language, these alpha males strut and boast, spar and chivvy, fight, flatter and brag until they fall out spectacularly - over a woman and an idea.

This is a play that makes massive demands on professional actors, thereby presenting a huge challenge to amateurs. The two men barely leave the stage and all three actors have to hold us completely, convince us they mean business. We are fortunate at Lewes to have actors capable of this standard of acting.

John Whitley, who has long had an interest in Mamet and lectured on his plays at university, plays Gould the Movie Mogul. John has taken the lead in several American plays during his 40 years at Lewes including *All My Sons* and *The Odd Couple* as well

as such roles as Macbeth, Iago and C.S.Lewis in *Shadowlands*.

In the role of Charlie Fox, an upstart opportunist who believes his time has come at last, is another experienced actor, Mike Truman. Mike teaches drama and has acted and directed since he was 17. He has played several strong leads at Lewes, including a sinister Schmidt in Joyce Fisher's excellent production of *The Arsonists*. Sandy Truman, who challenges both men in the role of Karen, is well known on our stage from such diverse roles as tragic Anna in *Ivanov* and mad Wendy from *It Could Be Any One Of Us*. Sandy also teaches drama and examines for LAMDA.

Well suited to a studio-type, foyer production, this is a funny, modern, exciting piece of theatre full of hard, hilarious bad-mouthed language. It's the sort of play I've been waiting to do and I hope you will come along and see it and let me know what you think.

Lyndsey Meer

FLARE PATH



ANNOUNCEMENTS

WARDROBE

The Head of Costumes for Lewes Theatre, Anne Turner, is looking for more helpers in the wardrobe. They are a friendly team and meet every Tuesday at 7.30 p.m. in the wardrobe. We have an extensive wardrobe, recognised as a regional resource of great worth by the fashion department at Brighton University, to which new team members

will be introduced. They have had a very successful year earning plaudits for their costumes for the Coward season and for the 1940s frocks and uniforms in *Flarepath*. No knowledge or skills are required but people who can sew will be welcome. Anne can be contacted by email annelivertonturner@yahoo.com or 01273 472799.

New email received from
Maggie.Harvey@sussexoakleaf.org.uk

We're looking for a volunteer to support the facilitator of a community theatre group in Hailsham. Please could you pass on the following information to people you think might be interested. Thank you.

I work for a voluntary organisation - Sussex Oakleaf - who support people living with mental health issues to build confidence and rebuild their lives. We have charitable status. The Old Chapel in Carrier's Path, is the South Wealden 'hub' and supports people in and around Hailsham.

My role as Community Links Worker is to support people to integrate back into the community through leisure activities, including sports and arts, through faith spiritual organisations, training and voluntary work.

For more information contact Maggie or Richard at the Old Chapel, Hailsham 01323-849524 or look on the volunteer website www.do-it.org.uk

We are looking for volunteers now as they we need to go through the CRB process. I look forward to hearing from you.

Thanks, all the best Maggie Harvey
Community Links Worker, Sussex
Oakleaf, Hailsham

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 Needle-makers 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 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

The MADWOMAN of CHAILLOT



OPENING

Saturday 4 February 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
The Mad Woman of Chaillot			Evening £8.00			
The Mad Woman of Chaillot		X	Matinee £6.00			
Music Hall			Evening £8.00			
Speed the Plow			Evening £8.00			
Speed the Plow		X	Matinee £6.00			

Grand Total

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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.