



LEWES THEATRE CLUB
Newsletter No.41 JANUARY 2013

Shakespeare's R&D

by
Joe Calarco

directed by
Chris Weber - Brown



Saturday 26 January to Saturday 2 February 2013
at 7.45 pm except Sundays
Matinee Saturday 2 February at 2.45 pm

Editor's notes

Well Winter's here and we will be glad of the heating in the theatre after being rather overheated this Summer. The double bill was great success. It was so good to see the Youth Theatre group being allowed to use the main stage in a proper play for a whole week – just like the senior members – and to see them achieving a good standard with *Animal Farm*. Well done guys!

The Browning Version was a perfect piece of period drama, with Cathryn Parker's well rehearsed cast keeping us engaged and even enraged as they portrayed the politics of education and relationships, in a minor public school in the forties. The set, costumes, sound and lighting helped the atmosphere and Peter Wellby's central performance was a tour de force.

The next production, Shakespeare's *R & J*, is also set in a school, this time in the fifties, and concerns a group of girls learning about Shakespeare and love as they read *Romeo and Juliet*.

Chris Weber-Brown, the director, promises us it is a 'nice play' and has recruited an exciting cast of young actors to perform for us.

HAPPY NEW YEAR

TO ALL OUR READERS

Micheal Turner

michealturner@btinternet.com

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DIARY DATES

PERFORMANCES

SHAKESPEARE'S R & J

26 January - 2 February

THE DIVA IN ME

9 - 16 March

AUDITIONS

Entertaining Angels

9 February 10.30 am

The Sunshine Boys

23 March 10.30 am

CAFE THEATRE

24 March, 7 & 14 April

PREVIEW

Shakespeare's R & J

by Joe Calarco, directed by Chris Weber-Brown

Shakespeare's R & J is set in 1950s post-war Britain. It was a time when children played safely in the street, walked to school, were offered sweets only as a rare treat and given a teaspoon of malt and cod liver oil before bedtime. Television was in black & white, there was no central heating and, if you got into a fight, nobody sued. Above all, it was a time of conformity.

The play revolves around eight girls in a boarding school where conformity is very much the order of the day and where everything is regimented and oppressive and many books and plays are banned as being considered unsuitable for young ladies. When chapel and lessons are over, one of the girls produces a copy of *Romeo & Juliet* which she has found and slowly they all begin reading from it. At first they are tentative and treat the script with a degree of girlish giggling but then the play takes on a dreamlike quality as they throw away the script, throw off their shackles and start performing the main scenes for real.

We see a parallel between the oppression suffered by the schoolgirls and that suffered by some of the characters within *Romeo & Juliet* and of course this particularly applies to Juliet. How sadly topical is the scene between her and her father when he tells her

that she can starve or die in the streets if she refuses to marry the man of his choosing.

The play culminates in the final death scene of the two lovers and then the dream is over and the girls are reluctantly forced to return to their previous regimented existence.

I have been extremely fortunate in gathering together a talented cast of whom only one has acted previously at the Little Theatre (Star Bray in *Calendar Girls*.) Several of the newcomers are performing arts students (Sophie Baker and Star study at Sussex Downs College) whilst Leah Graham and Chloe Hobden recently graduated from Central Sussex College. Ella Dorman-Gajic recently performed in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and Rosie Sargent has just completed a role in *Stepping Out*.

Someone who came to see the last play which I directed at the Little Theatre, *Blackbird*, told me that it was a nasty play and that she would not come to my next one if it was similar. To her and everyone else let me say that this is a nice play and I urge you not to miss it.

Chris Weber-Brown
Director

Evening performances at 7.45pm. Matinee at 2.45pm on Saturday 2 February.
THE BOX OFFICE 01273 474826 will be open daily except Sundays from Monday 21 January to Saturday 2 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.

REVIEW

ANIMAL FARM



George Orwell's *Animal Farm* was first published in 1945 and since then it has been studied, translated throughout the world, filmed and adapted by Peter Hall for the National Theatre in 1985. This 'fairy story' as Orwell called it continues to fascinate and pose questions to its audience. The simple fable of animals and the subsequent corruption of power and rebellion can be seen on many levels. It is a timeless story that illuminates the human condition by using animals to show us what is perhaps unpalatable about ourselves.

Orwell described what gave him the idea for the setting.

"...I saw a little boy, perhaps ten years old, driving a huge carthorse along a narrow path, whipping it whenever it tried to turn. It struck me that if only such animals became aware of their strength we should have no power over them, and that men exploit animals in much the same way as the rich exploit the proletariat."

It is apt that LLT chose to stage this production with their Youth Theatre. It is at this time when many young people start to become aware of, and interested in, issues such as freedom, oppression and how the world works.

What wonderfully imaginative parts these are for actors. The cast, some as young as ten, concentrated throughout, at ease with each other and their

audience, they brought out the humour and charm that is part of this piece. Therefore when the story takes a dark turn this helped create the appropriate pathos. In particular, the moving role of Boxer was very well portrayed by Inez Skilling with sensitivity and imagination. Gem Bennington-Poulter strode the stage and owned the part of the animal leader who becomes the dictator - Napoleon - with authority and charisma. Rupert Flowers as Squealer the pig, played as a bureaucratic control freak, was concentrated and committed in his characterisation and brought out the humour well.

The Youth Theatre put together this production over three months, meeting only once a week. If they had more time I'm sure the directors Tim Rowland and James Firth-Haydon would have developed the physicality of the characters the young cast created. I really liked the retro picture book feel of the set. Congratulations to designer Chris Berry and the team.

It is great to see emerging talent at LLT and a number of audience members commented on this. Mounting a double bill with the Youth Theatre and an adult play is an excellent way of encouraging members to support budding actors.

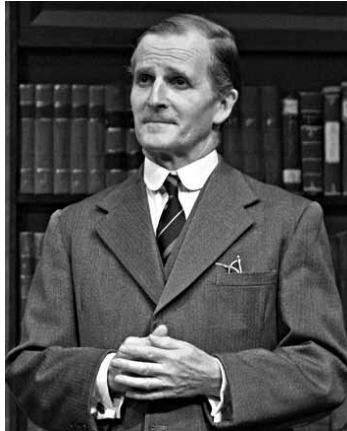
Lucy Fitchett

REVIEW

The Browning Version

Terence Rattigan's acclaimed one act play was first performed in 1948 very successfully in London, the 1951 film version starred Michael Redgrave giving, what many hailed, the performance of his life. Born in 1911 Rattigan had a privileged background and was educated at Harrow and then Oxford. *The Browning Version* is set in a boy's public school in 1948 and centres on the end of the career of an unpopular and outwardly emotionally cold master, Crocker-Harris, who is forced to take early retirement due to ill health. It is a raw and poignant story of the pain of failed ambition and dreams against a backdrop of English reserve, class and tradition – themes Rattigan dealt with in much of his work.

Director Cathryn Parker, whose production of *Flarepath* I saw, clearly has a strong understanding of and passion for Rattigan's work and she cast this production well. Talented young newcomer to LLT Jake Kroeger as Taplow captured the feel of the period with the right mix of the poise of privilege and boyish guile needed to attempt to get pass marks out of the Master dubbed 'the Himmler of the lower fifth'. Peter Wellby as the Master Crocker-Harris was pent up, dessicated and at times appropriately painful to watch as a casual act of kindness by his pupil Taplow leads



to the opening of the emotional dam. Chris Parke as Frank Hunter, the Master who is rather reluctantly having an affair with Crocker Harris' wife, was truthful and convincing trying to follow decorum while dealing with his needy lover without cruelty. Jennifer Henley, as Millie Crocker-Harris, the bitter wife of what she perceives to be her failure of a husband, had the right measure of the brittleness and vulnerability of this unfulfilled woman. Douglas Wragg as the Headmaster of the school delivering devastating news to Crocker-Harris regarding his future was rightly bluff, no nonsense and professional in his concern. James Collins as the new Master taking Crocker-Harris' place has a warmth and sensitivity on stage which lent itself well to the interaction between him and his predecessor. Emma Ladd was sparky and brash as Mrs Gilbert with a distinct whiff of the social climber over-excited by the prospect of her status as public school Master's wife. David Hare was recently asked to write a new play - *South Downs* - to double bill with a new production of *The Browning Version*. That acclaimed production had critics, once again, calling *The Browning Version* 'indisputably great'. It is indeed a gem and this production did it justice. In an economically cruel world of cuts, recession and redundancies Crocker-Harris' predicament felt all too relevant.

Lucy Fitchett

REVIEW

calendar girls

written by Tim Firth



Nearly everyone, in some way, must have been touched by the subject of this play based on the real life story of the brave WI Ladies who decided to pose in a very unlikely WI way for their fund raising calendar. I also guess that many of us have seen the film and possibly a professional stage production but now it has come out for the amateur stage, this in no way seems to have diminished the interest shown in regard to audience numbers.

In this production, director Sandra Tomlinson certainly caught the quirkiness and poignancy of this extremely British story told to us by the very talented cast. The characterisations were excellent with the insecurities of all the ladies involved from the Knapeley WI coming through which combined well with the fun and the pathos that the making of the calendar produced.

Avril Francis-Bell and Jenny Lloyd Lyons as Chris and Annie were the instigators of the project which arose from the

death of Annie's husband John. We were privileged to go with them through the ups and downs of their friendship and David Morley as Annie's husband gave a very moving performance.

The rest of the cast, whether calendar girls or not, made their characters come alive and the story was told with great sensitivity.

The action mainly took place in Knapeley Church Hall with a wonderful view through the window to John's Hill where the sunflowers were planted. When the action moved to the hill, the scenery was effortlessly moved to reveal this lovely countryside.

This was a movingly thought provoking play with a good balance of humour – I wasn't able to stay for the adjudication which took place on the night I attended but I'm sure the remarks would have been very positive.

Brenda Gower

Regional Representative for the National Operatic and Dramatic Association

Club Director's notes

We have now come to the end of 2012 with two productions completed. Brighton and Hove Arts Council's Annual Drama Competition took place at the beginning of the Season. Altogether there were five groups competing. We entered *Calendar Girls* and out of the fifteen categories were given seven awards. The Best Set designed by Adrian Bowd, the Best Backstage Crew, Best Lighting by Roy Gooderham and a cup for the Best Technical Achievement by the team. It is gratifying to know that our backstage volunteers have been recognised in so many areas.

The Best Director Award of the competition was given to Sandra Tomlinson, who was making her debut with us. David Morley won the Best Supporting Actor, Jenny Lloyd Lyons the Best Actress. We were also nominated for awards in the remaining eight categories.

The standard of this production was high and everyone worked hard to make it such a success so my thanks, which I know will be echoed by the Committee, to all involved.

The *Double Bill* was an experiment of having two one - act plays, one performed by the Youth Theatre and one by our adults. The Youth Theatre's performances are usually attended by parents and a few of our members, however Cathryn Parker offered *The Browning Version* as we hoped more people would come along to see both plays as *Rattigan* is very popular at the moment.

The Youth Theatre leaders often have

the problem of some children having to withdraw near to performance time due to pressure of school work. This occurred two weeks before the production, so the young actors were given extra lines to learn, growing in confidence as the week progressed. They will also be performing on 24 March as part of our Café Sunday programme.

Judging from comments made by the audience when I was Front of House Manager, *The Browning Version*, was very well received. The standard of acting was very high throughout and Peter Wellby gave an outstanding performance as Andrew Crocker-Harris. Young Taplow was played by Jake Kroeger; this was his first performance apart from school productions, which bodes well for his future – hopefully with Lewes. I am very grateful to Cathryn for making this 'experiment' a success.

Also Cafe Sunday presents *A Miscellany of Mirth* presented by Edmund Jenner, Susan Bain, Jack Wilkinson and friends. 7 & 14 April

After the last performance of the *Double Bill*, two scarves were found in the auditorium. We now have several items of lost property by the Box Office. If you think you may have left something behind, do let us know. There are always people around on Tuesday Working Party evenings when you could come along and see if we are storing any of your belongings.

I wish you all a Prosperous New Year
Pat Shrimpton

PREVIEW

the diva in me

by Charlotte Jones, directed by Joyce Fisher

Performances Saturday 9 March - Saturday 16 March at 7.45 pm
Matinee Saturday 16 March at 2.45 pm



Philippa is a middle-aged single mother from Coventry, but inside she is *Diva*. As she tells us her life story she sings in the manner of her diva of the moment – be it Eartha, Maria, Billie or Amy, but her constant muse is Judy Garland who keeps “popping up” to steer her towards her final triumph as she finds her

audience at last. This most appealing play, by the author of *Humble Boy*, is poignant, funny and musical. Don't miss it.

Joyce Fisher

AUDITION ALERT AUDITION ALERT

Entertaining Angels

by Richard Everett directed by Adrian Bowd

Saturday 25 May - Saturday 1 June 2013

**Audition Saturday 9 February 2013 at 10.30 am
in the theatre foyer.**

As a Vicar's wife, Grace has spent a lifetime on her best behaviour. Now, following the death of her husband Bardolph, she is enjoying a new found freedom to do and say exactly as she pleases. But the return of her eccentric missionary sister, Ruth, together with some disturbing revelations, forces Grace to confront the truth of her marriage. With sharp-edged comedy and probing wit, this play asks whether God can be trusted to do anything right at all, or is the whole thing a divine exercise in trial and error ?

The play was first produced at Chichester in 2009, and was well received, the Daily Telegraph commenting, "An evening of pleasure. A funny, touching, and genuinely thought provoking comedy."

Cast

Grace - aged 61
Ruth - her elder sister - mid 60's
Bardolph - Grace's husband - 60's
Jo - Grace's daughter - early 30's
Sarah - early 30's

For a script or information on the play, contact Adrian Bowd on 07815 646366
 e-mail adrian.bowd@talktalk.net

AUDITION ALERT AUDITION ALERT

the sunshine boys

by Neil Simon directed by Jenny Lloyd Lyons

Saturday 20 July - Saturday 27 July 2013

Audition Saturday 23 March 2013 at 10.30 am in the theatre foyer.

Neil Simon, best known for *Barefoot in the Park* and *The Odd Couple*, tells the story of a Vaudeville double act, Willie Clark and Al Lewis who performed together for over forty years despite bitter rivalry. Willie's nephew, Ben, is an agent and brings the news that CBS television are interested in screening a "History of Comedy" retrospective, but this would mean a reunion with his partner Al who he has fallen out with. Ben does not have an easy time persuading him, but Neil Simon's dry, Jewish wit is ever present. One of their most well known sketches, The Doctor, provides an opportunity for other characters: a stage manager, a patient and a buxom nurse (hired for all the wrong reasons)!

The play ends with Al and Willie together again but not in the way they had intended. This is a wonderful opportunity especially for two, mature male actors to demonstrate a range of emotion, and some lovely supporting roles.

Cast

- Willie Clark** 70s Never off stage, irascible, witty, a kid at heart with a temper,
- Al Lewis** 70s. Apparently calmer, the "peacemaker" but also shows a range of personality traits including his share of child-like petulance.
- Ben** Willie's nephew 30-50. Earnest, gets easily exasperated with Willie for totally understandable reasons.
- Patient** Ageless. Doctor sketch only. Small, fun role, lots of laughs.
- Nurse** Young. Doctor sketch only. Buxom, with many opportunities for stereotypical "blonde" wit.
- Eddie
asst. director** Young. Doctor sketch only. Always appears with head set, trailing wires, trying to keep the whole thing together.
- Registered
Nurse** 54ish. A lovely scene with Willie both trying to outwit each other. Very dry sense of humour, and eats lots of chocolates!

Scripts are available from Chris Weber Brown – email, chriswb16@hotmail.com
If you have any queries about the play or would like information about audition pieces, please contact me, Jenny Lloyd Lyons - email, jennylylloydlyons@gmail.com
or call my mobile 07864 565153.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

It is with sadness that we learned of the death in November of Michael Wright, actor, director and playwright who had worked with many of us at Lewes Theatre Club. Our sympathy and condolences go out to his widow, Pat, and his family.

Mobility Requirements

We want your visit to Lewes Little Theatre to be as comfortable as possible, therefore if you use a walking aid, e.g. stick, wheelchair, walking trolley or you have any other mobility requirements, please tell us at the time of booking, or give us as much notice as possible before your attendance date. We regret that if we are not told of your requirements ahead of your visit we may not be able to accommodate you on the day.

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

Chairman Joanne Cull
Director Pat Shrimpton
Treasurer Bob Leeds
General Secretary Derek Watts
Membership Secretary Nick Cooper

Shakespeare's R & J

OPENING

Saturday 26 January 2013

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
Shakespeare's R & J			Evening £8.00			
Shakespeare's R & J		X	Matinee £6.00			
The Diva in Me			Evening £8.00			
The Diva in Me		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.