



LEWES THEATRE CLUB  
Newsletter No.38 JULY 2012

# The IMPORTANCE of BEING EARNEST



by **Oscar Wilde**  
directed by **Mike Turner**

**Saturday 21 July to Saturday 28 July 2012**  
**at 7.45 pm except Sundays**  
**Matinee Saturday 28 July at 2.45 pm**

## Editor's notes

The last play, *Gaslight*, received almost universal approval but see Readers' Letters (page 13) for contrasting views. Everyone loved the set, designed and painted by Gerry Cortese with set dressing by Alison Soudain. However one correspondent says that it is just the right sort of play for Lewes and that it was well done whilst another thinks it wasn't up to our usual high standard. Let us know what you think.

*The Importance of Being Earnest* is now in rehearsal - let us hope that with this classic play we will end the season with a resounding success, both artistically and with full houses.

We are still open to non-members and still recruiting new members. The Special General Meeting to revisit the issue of membership was unfortunately not quorate (50 members needed) so it was resolved to make this an item at the AGM on 22 September.

The next newsletter will be sent out on the 31 August so the copy deadline will be the 19 August.

**Micheal Turner**

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

## IN THIS ISSUE...

- 3 PREVIEW** *The Importance of Being Earnest*
- 4 REVIEW** *Gaslight*
- 6 NODA REVIEW** *Gaslight*
- 7 DIRECTOR'S NOTES**
- 8 AUDITION ALERT**  
*Shakespeare's R & J*
- 9 YOUNG PERSONS & THEATRE REGULATIONS**
- 10 READERS' LETTERS**
- 8, 10, 11 ANNOUNCEMENTS**
- 11 & INFORMATION**
- 12 BOOKING FORM**

## DIARY DATES

PERFORMANCES

**IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST**

21-28 July

AUDITIONS

**SHAKESPEARE'S R & J**

8 August

**AGM** 22 September

**WARDROBE SALE** 29 September

10.00 am to 12.30 pm

**PREVIEW**

# The IMPORTANCE of BEING EARNEST

by Oscar Wilde directed by Mike Turner

Evening performances at 7.45pm. Matinee at 2.45pm on Saturday 28 July.

**THE BOX OFFICE** 01273 474826 will be open daily except Sundays from Monday 16 July to Saturday 28 July 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.**

It is a challenge to direct such a well known and well written play as *The Importance of Being Earnest*. Oscar Wilde subtitled it, *A Trivial Comedy for Serious People*. Since it was first performed in London in 1895 it has been one of the most popular plays in the repertoire of international theatre. Most people studied it at school and many have seen it, some of them recently (it has been performed in Lewes earlier this year and there were three productions in the Brighton Festival). So we will be relying on Wilde's wonderful wit and the talents of our actors to draw in our audiences. I was privileged to direct and present Tom Stoppard's *Travesties* (which borrows many aspects of *The Importance*) at Lewes Little Theatre some years ago and have wanted to direct the original ever since.

The cast includes Meg Depla-Lake who will be remembered for her role as Gertie in *Noel and Gertie*, Simon Hellyer, who was Marlow in *She Stoops to Conquer* and St George in our Mummers play and Christine Murphy will give us her Miss Prism. The redoubtable Lady Bracknell

is played by Trish Richings who has just impressed us with her playing of the maid in *Gaslight* whilst Canon Chasuble will played by Lewes stalwart, Barry Smith.

This three act version of Wilde's play demands three sets and will be performed in period costumes including one made from an 1898 pattern by Anne Turner who will be managing the costumes for this play.

This play will sell out quickly, make sure you book early.

**Mike Turner, Director**

## REVIEW

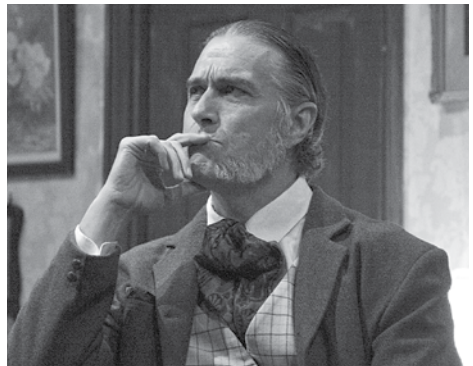
## Gaslight



Patrick Hamilton had a relatively short and turbulent life and died aged 58 from drink related illnesses. The son of writers, his father was an alcoholic which led to a fractured childhood due to financial and domestic problems, much of it in boarding houses in Chiswick and Hove. At 15 his mother took him out of Westminster School which meant the end of his formal education. Briefly an actor he began writing, publishing his novel *Monday Morning* in 1925 aged 19. His first real success was the play *Rope* written in 1929. Later on that and *Gaslight*, first performed in 1938, made Hamilton a rich man. He died in 1962, his literary output and relationships having been affected by his personal problems. Doris Lessing said, 'He was a marvelous novelist, who's grossly neglected' and his fans include Graham Greene, JB Priestley, and David Lodge. Due to the rich tapestry of life he witnessed during his formative years, Hamilton often told tales of the disadvantaged using black and acerbic humour.

*Gaslight* is a psychological thriller with elements of theatrical melodrama and

has an unusual structure for the genre – the reveal happening relatively early. Opening on the seemingly respectable world of a middle class, Victorian, married couple (the excellent set designed by Gerry Cortese drawing applause from the audience), we watched with increasing discomfort as it became clear this was a damaging relationship between a controlling husband and his nervy wife. I felt like we were watching a compelling episode of *Eastenders* from the golden days of Den and Angie - a guilty pleasure watching the impending car crash. An Inspector arrives gaining the trust of Bella Manningham, revealing the murder her husband, Jack, committed 20 years before in the house they now live in. She realises she is not insane, as her husband has suggested and helps engineer the arrest of Jack Manningham gaining her independence and sanity.



As ever LLT doesn't shrink from challenging the actors. Most of *Gaslight* comprises two hander scenes with a mass of dialogue. Director Derek Watts' actors were assured, fluid and fully committed. Ian Clegg as the

# Gaslight

psychopathic Jack Manningham was convincing and detailed, not overplaying the sinister aspect of the character but often hiding his madness and malevolence under the cloak of a middle aged grump. Constance Owen as Bella Manningham maintained the bird-like, neurotic, needy element of the role.

A bigger change was needed after it was revealed that her husband had been tricking her into thinking she was going mad, in particular when she realises that items he accuses her of 'losing' were hidden by him. However, being on the stage for virtually the whole play was a tough task and Constance carried it off with concentration and conviction, never lapsing into cliché. Alan Lade as Inspector Rough was polished and entertaining. The humour and delicacy he used while dealing with the damaged Bella Manningham was touching. You need a charismatic actor for parts such as these as they deliver the detail of the plot and Alan Lade served the play very well.

Trish Richings was totally believable as Elizabeth, the salt of the earth maid who has seen it all, bringing a twinkle to the comedic elements.



Ellie Woodruff-Bryant was perfect as Nancy the maid on the lookout for the main chance. I remember Ellie from *The Madwoman of Chaillot* and her commitment to the truth of acting is clear in her awareness of detail. I did think that the scene between her and Jack Manningham where she tries to seduce him was rather confusing directorially. In it she is duping Jack into thinking she is in love with him to hasten her climb up the social ladder. However this scene was played with sincerity as if she were really in love with him so an element was lost.

As noted on the programme cover, this is 'an enduring and gripping thriller'. Derek Watts and his cast and crew did justice to the play and provided us with an entertaining and engrossing evening. *Gaslight* revolves around the central malevolent figure finally being duped by those he has previously controlled. It struck me there might be, unconsciously, an element of wish fulfilment by Hamilton due to the impact his father had on his childhood.

It's heartening that Patrick Hamilton has gained new interest in his work. Locally, Lewes Library has a long list of reservations on Hamilton's novels. Amongst various revivals *Hangover Square* is being filmed starring Keira Knightley. After a troubled life his star is rising once again.

**Lucie Fitchett**

## REVIEW

## Gaslight



*Gaslight*, a real Victorian thriller, was certainly burning brightly (except, of course, when the lights were eerily lowered) on stage at Lewes Theatre Club. Although it was first produced in 1938, it still packs a powerful punch. Patrick Hamilton who was a prolific novelist and playwright and who also wrote *Rope* never had another major success after that and *Gaslight* (which was known as *Angel Street* in the USA as mentioned in the programme).

The extracts from Vaughan Williams' "A London Symphony" were ideal as an introduction to each act, giving the necessary chilling feeling to what was to come.

The set was well arranged as a Victorian living room (with street lamp shrouded in fog) due to the skills of set designer Gerry Cortese, set constructors Dudley Ward and David Sharpe and set dresser Alison Soudain.

Ian Clegg's Jack Manningham was chilling in the extreme, going from displaying kindness to his downtrodden wife Bella to severe mental torture in a bid to turn her mind completely so

that she could be out of the way in an institution in order that he could find the jewels that he had murdered the previous occupant for.

Bella was played by Constance Owen, giving the character all the pathos that was needed to gain the audience's sympathy for a young woman in this terrible situation. Alan Lade was the jovial ex-Police Inspector Rough, telling Bella on his entry that "You are up against the most awful moment of your life and your whole future depends on how you act in the next hour." Strong words indeed for poor Bella, but the Inspector really was her salvation. He was helped in this by Elizabeth (played by Trish Richings) who had great sympathy for her mistress. The pert maid Nancy (Ellie Woodruff-Bryant) certainly had no sympathy for her at all and was only too willing to become Jack's paramour. I do hope that RADA have the sense to accept this talented young actress.

It's always interesting to see rehearsal photographs in the programme and they certainly showed the tension that was apparent in this production.

Director Derek Watts and his team are to be congratulated for bringing this full of suspense thriller to our attention.

**Brenda Gower**  
Regional NODA Representative

# Club Director's notes

Our last production, *Gaslight* was well received by our audiences, many of whom told me that although it is a well known play and a "classic" they had never actually seen it, so it was good that Derek Watts was able to bring it back here after a period of about 66 years.

*The Importance of Being Earnest* ends our season and then we take a break to complete a list of tasks essential to the maintenance of the theatre, including: Lights to be taken down, checked and cleaned.

The workshop and paintshop prepared for the new season.

The set constructed for *Calendar Girls*. The wardrobe areas tidied and costumes packed away from this season and then work starts preparing for the next one. We also hope to open in October with a newly - painted foyer .

On Saturday 14 July we have been asked by the Brighton and Hove Arts Council to take part in Peoples' Day, by performing some items from our *Music Hall* and a song featured in *Noel and Gertie*. This will be a free show at the Pavilion Theatre Brighton. Anyone wishing to come along is welcome to get in touch with me either at the theatre or [lewpatshrimpton@sky.com](mailto:lewpatshrimpton@sky.com)

There are other groups taking part this day and I will be able to give details and times nearer the event.

If any of our members are 'Friends of the Anne of Cleves House', we finally have a date for our Miscellany of Readings, Friday 7 September at 7.30 pm. Our AGM will be held on 22 September.

## Our next Season 2012 - 2013

13 - 20 October

*Calendar Girls* by Tim Firth  
directed by Sandra Tomlinson.

1- 8 December Double Bill

*Animal Farm* by George Orwell  
(subject to permission)  
directed by James Firth-Haydon  
and Tim Rowlands  
presented by the Youth Theatre.  
*The Browning Version* by Terence  
Rattigan (subject to permission)  
directed by Cathryn Parker.

26 January - 2 February

*Shakespeare's R & J*  
by Joe Calarco  
directed by Chris Weber- Brown.

9 -16 March

*The Birthday Party* by Harold Pinter  
(subject to permission)  
directed by Joyce Fisher.

25 May - 1 June

*Entertaining Angels* by Richard Everett  
directed by Adrian Bowd.

20 -27 July

*The Sunshine Boys* by Neil Simon  
(subject to permission)  
directed by Jenny Lloyd-Lyons.

In the meantime we hope you will come along and enjoy the last classic of this season.

With all good wishes,

**Pat Shrimpton**

# AUDITION ALERT AUDITION ALERT

**SHAKESPEARE'S R & J by JOE CALARCO**  
**DIRECTED BY Chris Weber Brown**  
**PERFORMANCE DATES 26 January - 2 February 2013**  
**AUDITION in the theatre Wednesday 8 August at 6.30pm**

This delightful play is set in a 1950's girls boarding school where everything is strict, austere and regimented and where many books and plays are banned as being considered unsuitable for young ladies.

When lessons are over, one of the girls produces a copy of *Romeo & Juliet* and, tentatively at first, they begin reading from it. Slowly the play takes on a dreamlike quality as the girls not only throw the script away but also throw off their shackles and start performing scenes from the play for real.

Gradually it takes a hold on them so that in the final death scene of the two lovers the audience may be as moved as they would be if watching a real production of *Romeo & Juliet*. Finally, the dream is over and the girls are forced to return to their previous regimented existence.

There is a cast of 4 girls in the age group of 17 to 20. Each one plays several roles from *Romeo & Juliet* and each one is onstage throughout the performance. If you would like a script, please contact me [chriswb16@hotmail.com](mailto:chriswb16@hotmail.com)  
mobile 07588 531888  
**Chris Weber Brown**

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## ANNOUNCEMENTS

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### ***News from the wardrobe***

Elizabeth Muirhead has asked that her mother Margaret's notes about her life in the wardrobe called *Gossip from the Wardrobe 1960 to 1966* should be included in the theatre archive which is held in the Maltings in Lewes. It begins with details of the severe floods in Lewes in 1960 that led to the cancellation of bonfire and has details of productions in the 60s. Rowena and Lionel are mentioned. Rev. Rawlings makes a complaint about politics in the newsletter which 'has to stop!'

The editor has given the wardrobe team a copy - if anyone else would like to see it contact Mike Turner and he will arrange for you to borrow a copy.

### **Theatre Archive**

Ann Thomas is relinquishing the post of archivist and the theatre is seeking a replacement. Ann is willing to induct the new archivist and give initial assistance. If anyone is interested please contact Pat Shrimpton or Derek Watts.

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# Young persons and theatre regulations

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The Theatre Club has two groups which encourage school age people to take part in theatrical activities: the junior group which operates on Thursdays 5.30-7.00pm, and the senior group which follows at 7.30pm. Both demand considerable input from the organisers. In addition the Club has to ensure that all our youth activities conform to the current legislation.

School-age children, up to and including Year 11, who are taking part in or rehearsing for a public performance on more than three consecutive days must by law be accompanied by a registered chaperone, if the child cannot be accompanied by their parents or carer. The East Sussex County Council Child Employment Officers issue the licences and monitor our activity. However, this places a particular responsibility on parents and our chaperones.

As a parent, if you leave a child with the chaperone you must check that the chaperone has signed the child in and at the end of the session you must sign the child out yourself. No one else can do this. The child must not leave the theatre until this is done. If, as a parent, you are willing to accompany your child to each rehearsal/performance then you must be available at all times. You cannot

also take on another responsibility i.e. act, work backstage or front of house. Parents cannot assign their children to the care of another parent unless that parent is also a licensed chaperone. It also goes without saying that children should always treat chaperones with respect, and rudeness will not be tolerated.

As must be evident, the Theatre Club assumes a considerable responsibility when it involves young persons in productions. We would like to encourage parents of both the junior and senior groups actively to participate in the Youth Theatre events. This is the only way that we can continue to provide performance opportunities for the Youth Theatre. The best way that they can do this is to become a Licensed Chaperone which involves a training session with East Sussex County Council along with CRB checks. The Club will pay for this training.

If you are interested please contact Don Funnell the Production Manager on 07966205306 or via the Theatre.

## READERS' LETTERS

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Dear Editor,

We would like to extend a very big thank you to all at Lewes Little Theatre for the production of *Speed-the-Plow* by David Mamet directed by Lyndsey Meer. Sandy and Mike Truman, together with John Whitley, brought a true professionalism to their parts. All playing "from the heart," their convincing spontaneity kept the audience riveted through a roller coaster of emotion as the theme of Art versus Entertainment was explored. Perhaps future productions of such calibre would benefit from a post performance discussion between actors, director and audience.

Yours sincerely,

**Jenny Hall and Sue Sawthwaite**

Dear Editor,

I have seen so many great plays at the LLT that the inadequacy of *Gaslight* made me sad. The husband should improve his voice projection because he could not be heard at the back - until he lost his temper. The wife did not sound anguished, frightened or bullied. The Inspector was more like a PC Plod than a detective. I was expecting a dramatic twist at the end but it just suddenly fizzled out. The play generally lacked any suspense or atmosphere, unlike Hitchcock. I am sorry if this depresses the Director but he can only work with the materials provided. The set was excellent.

**Jack Dudley**

Dear Editor

A really excellent production of *Gaslight* tonight, much enjoyed. Full marks to everyone concerned, all deserving commendation, but perhaps an extra mark to Alan Lade as Inspector Rough. If only the cast had come back for a second curtain call they could have enjoyed even more applause. Well done!

**G M Wykes**

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## ANNOUNCEMENTS

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### ***THEATRE EVACUATION***

At the end of the Tuesday performance of *Gaslight* we carried out a pre-planned emergency evacuation of the theatre which is something we are required to do at least once every season. We would like to offer our sincere thanks to every member of the audience for their co-operation. Whilst obviously these exercises are carried out with their safety very much in mind, nevertheless we do appreciate the inconvenience which is caused and are grateful for the forbearance which was shown. Thanks are also due in no small measure to Joyce Fisher (Stage Manager), Jane Rimmington (Front of House manager) and the cast and crew for their input and assistance.

# ANNOUNCEMENTS

## NEWSLETTER DELIVERY

Firstly may I apologise for any late or non-arrival of newsletters this season. There have been one or two gremlins in the system this year, but I have tried to sort out any problems which have been brought to my attention.

Secondly I would like to thank my trusty band of helpers who come to the theatre to label and stuff envelopes and then hand deliver the newsletters. This saves the theatre a considerable amount in postage. Some of our long-standing helpers have decided to call it a day, so if anyone feels they would be able to help with any of this, please get in touch with me. My phone number is 01273 475404 or email

[jackthevlak@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:jackthevlak@hotmail.co.uk)

**Jack Wilkinson**

## 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

# The IMPORTANCE of BEING EARNEST



## OPENING

Saturday 21 July 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
Importance of Being Earnest			Evening £8.00			
Importance of Being Earnest			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.