



LEWES THEATRE CLUB
Newsletter No.36 MARCH 2012

Speed-the-Plow



by David Mamet
directed by Lyndsey Meer

Saturday 24 March to Saturday 31 March
at 7.45 pm except Sundays
Matinee Saturday 31 March at 2.45 pm

Editor's notes

Well, we had another play interrupted by snow but not cancelled – and it was a fabulous play. Giraudoux's fable was well interpreted and presented by Alison and her team and well received by our audience. With its colourful costumes, attractive sets and a group of actors from across the age range all giving their energy to the production it had a lot going for it. Well done all concerned. Lyndsey Meer is directing the next play, *Speed-the-Plow*, in the foyer, having taken over from Victoria Thompson who had to withdraw from directing. It is a modern play with strong language but it is a compelling work which offers rich rewards to the small cast of actors. All departments in the theatre are happy to meet and recruit new members. So whether you want to act, design, paint, work with lighting and sound, set build, work on costumes, serve tea, help with front of house or serve in the bar we would be pleased to see you any Tuesday evening after 7.30 pm in the theatre where we will show you around and help you choose how you can join in.

Micheal Turner

michealturner@btinternet.com



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PERFORMANCES

MUSIC HALL

2 - 3 March 7.45pm

Matinee 3 March 2.45pm

SPEED-THE-PLOW

24 - 31 March

GASLIGHT

19-26 May

AUDITIONS

IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST

26 & 28 April

PREVIEW

Speed-the-Plow

by David Mamet directed by Lyndsey Meer

Evening performances at 7.45pm. Matinee at 2.45pm on Saturday 31 March.
THE BOX OFFICE 01273 474826 will be open daily except Sundays from Monday 19 March to Saturday 31 March 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.

John Whitley, Mike Truman and Sandy Truman play the three protagonists in this terrific play by the controversial playwright David Mamet. Expect great acting and exciting theatre.

Like many of Mamet's plays, *Speed-the-Plow* explores the human cost of striving for personal and financial success with humour, irony and much vulgar language. It examines such human concepts as friendship, loyalty, morality, betrayal, greed and sexual desire with lively and ironic humour.

Charlie Fox (Mike) comes to his superior Bobby Gould (John) with a deal the two movie men think will make their names and bring them huge fame and fortune. They strut and boast, spar and chivvy, fight, flatter and brag until Karen (Sandy) comes on the scene and divides the men in a way neither of these hard-bitten cynics would ever have foreseen. Karen manages to appeal to a side of Bobby that he almost never knew existed - his desire to be 'good' - and her influence provokes a vicious showdown. In Mamet's plays everyone wants power and Charlie does his best to show his friend how he has unwittingly walked into a different kind of struggle for control.

This is a play that makes massive demands on actors, presenting a huge challenge to amateurs. All three actors

have to hold us completely and convince us they mean business. We are fortunate at Lewes to have actors capable of this standard of acting.

John has long had an interest in Mamet and lectured on his plays at university. This play will be his 50th performance at Lewes and many of you will have seen him in some wonderful parts such as Macbeth, Iago, Tartuffe, C.S.Lewis in *Shadowlands*, Joe in *All My Sons*, Oscar in *The Odd Couple* and Scott in *Terra Nova*.

Mike, an experienced actor, who teaches drama, recently received brilliant reviews for his performance in *Blackbird* at the Brighton Festival and has commanded several strong leads at Lewes, including a sinister Schmidt in Joyce Fisher's excellent production of *The Arsonists*.

Sandy Truman 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. Our sparse set and minimalist foyer production pushes the language of this play and the acting skill needed to interpret it right to the front of our attention - where it should be.

Lyndsey Meer
 Production Director

REVIEW

THE MADWOMAN of CHAILLOT



The Madwoman of Chaillot is a satirical fable written in 1942 by French playwright and journalist Jean Giraudoux during the Nazi occupation of France. It was first performed in Paris in 1945 after the writer's death.

Theatre Arts magazine described the play as, "one part fantasy, two parts reason." The New York Drama Critics' Circle hailed the 1948–50 production as, "one of the most interesting and rewarding plays to have been written within the last twenty years", "pure gold, with no base metal", and having, "an enveloping and irresistible humour". Giraudoux uses the convention of the classical unities where, broadly speaking, the action follows one central storyline, in a single physical space, with the action taking place over no more than 24 hours. This structure serves the non-naturalistic style of the play well and provides an appropriate engine to drive the plot to a moralistic end.

Opening in a seemingly idyllic Parisian square, corporate executives of Paris are making plans to dig up the city to plunder its oil. *The Madwoman of Chaillot* – The Countess Aurelia – is told of this looming disaster and resolves to



THE MADWOMAN of CHAILLOT

fight back and rescue humanity from the scheming and corrupt developers. She enlists the help of her fellow outcasts: the Street Singer, The Ragpicker, The Sewer Man, The Flower Girl, The Sergeant, and various other 'common' people. One by one the greedy businessmen are lured by the smell of oil to a, literal, bottomless pit. Peace, love, and joy return to the world.

In this production there was a creditable feeling of engagement from the actors. Although many of the large cast had few lines they contributed with energy and complete commitment to the action as befits their central role in the play.

in their design helped to illustrate the timeless element of this fable.

In such a truly ensemble production it seems inappropriate to mention individual performances. However Dilly Barlow played The Madwoman of Chaillot as a beautiful, at times coquettish, bird of paradise and must be singled out for her detailed, intelligent performance that never lost pace. Jennifer Henley as Constance and Christine Murphy as Gabrielle were beguiling in the fantastical and crucial (if rather extended) scene when Aurelia and her 'madwoman' friends



The set, designed by Gerry Cortese, drew applause from the audience having been transformed, in the second half, from a colourful Parisian café exterior into the flamboyant underground chamber of the Countess complete with a hidden trap door leading down to the bowels of hell. The standard of the costumes (in particular for the women) by Gloria Mercer, Alison Soudain and Pearl Bates was high and mixing eras

illustrate with pathos and humour what is essentially a debate on what is madness and what is sanity. This richly imaginative scene reminiscent of Alice in Wonderland serves as an engrossing illustration of the central theme of the play - humanity and its potentially life enhancing imperfections versus the corporate need for tangible profits and product.

REVIEW**THE MADWOMAN of CHAILLOT**

Ellie Woodruff-Bryant as Irma, looking like she had just stepped out of a French impressionist painting, was poised and moving in her speech about expressing love.

On a directorial level the production would have benefited from a broader, less naturalistic style of playing. This would have helped the actors to bring out the rich humour and satirical nature of the piece more fully and further build the highly dramatic moments needed to make an audience suspend their disbelief.

The plays of Dario Fo and his use of the commedia dell'arte style are close cousins to this piece. On the wings of absurd comedy and satire an important message can hit home while keeping the pathos intact. However, the structure of this play is very difficult and to have pulled it off this successfully is a tribute to the commitment, hard work and care of the director Alison Grant and her actors.

It is easy to see why the director chose to revive this play. Listening to audience members during the interval and post show, it was clear they were struck by its relevance in these days of banker and corporate greed. On a deeper level Giraudoux explores the intrinsic importance of creativity, and the acceptance of human diversity as a force for good. The gallery of street entertainers, 'common' people, and the 'madwoman' Aurelia and her friends create the downfall of the prospectors, magnates and bureaucrats and are symbolic representations of all that is free flowing, spiritual, inspirational and human.

It is gratifying that LLT produces plays such as this at a time when the West End exists mostly on tribute plays, musicals and dance shows.

Lucie Fitchett

Club Director's notes

In spite of the weather members and many non members managed to get to see *The Madwoman of Chaillot*. This was Alison's Grant's debut production at Lewes Theatre Club, bringing in many young members to our stage, among them Aran Bokrum, a fifteen year old juggler and Ellie Woodruff-Bryant, a member of the Youth Theatre. It was good to see so many young people on stage and we hope they will return for future productions. The play was enjoyed by many people and both sets designed by Gerry Cortese were a delight. We also welcomed back to our Wardrobe department Gloria Mercer who organised the costumes assisted by the other ladies of the wardrobe.

Our next production is the Music Hall on 2 and 3 March. I'm hoping that there will be no more snow and we don't have to cancel once again!

To avoid any more confusion there IS A MATINEE on Saturday 3 March. There was a rumour that there would only be two evening performances, but we are going to perform all three that we missed. As before, we shall be giving half our proceeds to the Martlets Hospice in Brighton and Hove. Like many of our local hospices they are struggling to continue giving their services to the public.

Following the Music Hall, Lyndsey Meer will be directing *Speed-the-Plow* by the American playwright, David Mamet. Lyndsey has taken over this production as Victoria Thompson had to withdraw.

Once again, Lou Taylor brought some

students from the University of Brighton who are studying fashion. They looked at our original costumes in the wardrobe department, taking particular interest in how we acquired them. Alison Soudain, and Gerry Cortese organised this event, and we are very grateful to Pat Frost who came along to explain how she started the collection. Lou believes we have costumes worthy of a museum and is most impressed that we keep them in good condition considering the age of them. In fact, we don't use them on stage because they are extremely fragile, and also quite small. When we have our next Costume Exhibition, Lou has offered to come along and give a lecture and I'm sure we shall take her up on this.

We have next season in hand, but there are now some restrictions on obtaining some copyrights. In the past we could publish the full list well in advance, but for some plays permission will not be granted until a certain time has elapsed between our enquiry and our proposed date of production. I am hoping that by August we will be able to publish the full list of plays for the 2012-13 season. In the meantime though, we do have permission to perform *Calendar Girls* in October. We decided that this would be our first play of the new season as it is only available to amateur companies for one year, and we had to decide upon it very quickly. It will be directed by Sandra Tomlinson.

As usual, to all our volunteers without whom we could not function.
Many thanks.

Pat Shrimpton

AUDITION ALERT AUDITION ALERT

The Importance of Being Earnest by Oscar Wilde

Directed by Mike Turner Performance dates 21 to 28 July Matinee on 28 July

Auditions in the foyer

Thursday 26 April 7.30 pm and Saturday 28 April 10.30 am

This classic comedy is probably the only play which evokes a quotation from the listener when they hear the title spoken, 'a handbag!' The wit and sharp social observation are still fresh and require pace and timing to put them across and ensure a great audience response. Set in the last decade of the nineteenth century it has scope for wonderful costumes and will be performed in an attractive but minimal set.

CHARACTERS

John Worthing (Jack)	JP – a bachelor and man about town playing age 30
Lane (Jack's Manservant)	playing age 30-70
Algernon Moncrief (Algy)	Jack's friend poverty stricken young man about town- playing age 30
Lady Bracknell (Algie's Aunt Augusta)	Scion of London society playing age 50-65
Gwendolen Fairfax (her daughter)	a Debutante – Jack's intended playing age 18-25
Cecily Cardew (Jack's adopted daughter)	playing age 18-21
Miss Prism (Cecily's governess)	playing age 50+
Merriman (Jack's Butler)	playing age 30-70
Canon Chasuble (Anglican cleric)	playing age 60+

Audition pieces will be selected from the classic duologues:

ACT I Jack and Lane, Jack and Algy, Lady Bracknell and Algy,

ACT II Miss Prism and Cecily, Cecily and Algy. Miss Prism and Canon Chasuble,

Cecily, Gwendolen and Merriman

Act III Lady Bracknell and Miss Prism

I will also be looking for some stage crew for the scene changes.

Scripts can be obtained from Don Funnell at the theatre and further information from the director of this play Mike Turner 01273 472799 or michealturner@btinternet.com



Next Touring Production



Following our touring venture last year, we continue to receive enquiries from local arts festivals, village halls and pub theatres. Building on our initiative to raise the club's profile, encouraging new audiences and promoting the benefits of membership, we are planning another touring production. Pat Shrimpton has agreed to my directing two Georgian 'afterpieces' - these were one or two act plays (often comedies) that immediately followed a main production and rounded off the evening in London and provincial theatres during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries:

Miss in her Teens (1747) is a farce in two acts written by David Garrick, cast of six males and three female.

Polly Honeycombe (1760) is a 'dramatick novel of one act' by George Colman cast of three males and three females.

Both plays are ideally suited for our purposes. They are very amusing, well written pieces which read like short Restoration Comedies. There are good roles, across a range of ages, for both men and women. I envisage minimal

sets (we will probably be performing in the round), and restricted costumes and props (possibly an ensemble black dress code supplemented with a frock coat and hat, for example). If there is sufficient interest, I would be looking to create a touring company with more than one person covering each role. This would mean that nobody would be precluded from auditioning for mainstream productions and we would have options for performing dates. As both plays are long out of copyright, we will not need to apply for licences or budget for royalties. No performance dates are planned as yet, nor will they be until we have a very slick production that we are confident will attract favourable comment and encourage new members to join our ranks. If you would like to be involved in any capacity, please e-mail me at maj@harveys.org.uk or phone me on 07717 377316. I will subsequently organise an initial meeting, for all those who have expressed an interest, to explain the project in greater detail.

Miles Jenner

More pictures **THE MADWOMAN of CHAILLOT**



Pictures by Adrian Bowd

1264 Battle of Lewes Day Celebration 14 April

Mike Turner has written a mystery play for the commemorative celebrations of the Battle of Lewes and has been asked to present an excerpt from the play (about 10 minutes in length) at Lewes Castle on the evening of 14 April as part of the annual celebrations.

The extract will need a cast of nine

Shepherd	playing age – 50
Squire	playing age 18-30
Shepherd's daughter	playing age 16-20
Simon de Montfort	playing age 50
Priest	playing age 18 – 70
King Henry III	playing age 50
Prior	playing age 50-70
Sentry	playing age 18-60
Prince Edward	playing age 18-30

Would anyone who is interested in this project contact Mike by email michealturner@btinternet.com or 01273 47799

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 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

BOOKING ARRANGEMENTS

Foyer Production *Speed-the-Plow*

Seats are unreserved - we are already getting bookings from members who have assumed that it is being performed on the main stage and

Season Ticket Holders To Note

At the beginning of the season I issued tickets to season ticket holders assuming that we would be using the standard seating plan for the foyer, with reservable seats. It later became apparent that the seating arrangement for *Speed-the-Plow* would be slightly

different and it was decided that the easiest course would be to have unreserved seats (max of 60 per performance). Since season ticket holders will otherwise be arriving at the theatre looking for specific numbered seats, **would season ticket holders please note that, while their tickets for *Speed-the-Plow* remain valid, all seats are now unreserved, and there are now no allocated seats for this production.**

Speed-the-Plow



OPENING

Saturday 24 March 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
Speed the Plow			Evening £8.00			
Speed the Plow		X	Matinee £6.00			
Gaslight			Evening £8.00			
Gaslight			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.