



LEWES THEATRE CLUB
Newsletter No.49 May 2014

Enjoy

by Alan Bennett
directed by Derek Watts

Saturday 24 May to Saturday 31 May 2014
at 7.45 pm except Sundays
Matinee Saturday 31 May at 2.45 pm

Editor's notes

After the 'Winter of our Discontent' we seem to be emerging into a warm and sunny Spring. Congratulations to Nick Betteridge and his cast and crew for the memorable production of *Richard III*. It told the story of those bloody times well and Miles kept us captivated with his performance. It was good to see and hear Shakespeare at Lewes Little Theatre again.

Our next production is *Enjoy* by Alan Bennett and his wry northern humour is a happy contrast to the dour deeds of the history of the Plantagenets. This year is the 750th anniversary of the Battle of Lewes and it is being massively celebrated in the town in May. Lewes Little Theatre is joining in. On 10 May, Miles Jenner will play the role of Henry III on his entry into Lewes with some Lewes Little Theatre actors accompanying him and a procession of walkers all in medieval costumes.

On the following weekend Mike Turner's play *The Day of the Battle* will be performed at three venues around the town by Lewes Little Theatre actors. We are proud to support Lewes in its celebrations

Micheal Turner
michealturner@btinternet.com

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DIARY DATES

PERFORMANCES

The Day of the Battle
 17 May at 3 locations in Lewes

Enjoy
 24 - 31 May

Ernie's Incredible Illucinations
 8 June

Time of My Life
 18 - 26 July

PREVIEW

Enjoy

By Alan Bennett directed by Derek Watts



This is one of Bennett's early plays, first performed in 1980 and at the time it was not well received.

It was successfully revived in 2009 in a sparkling production starring David Troughton and Alison Steadman. Set in a back-to-back terraced house in Leeds, its themes have much more resonance today. The play explores the burgeoning heritage industry, official snooping into private lives, and even reality television shows. It has all the hallmarks of classic Bennett – lyrical and nostalgic, sharply observed and sardonic. Though it is often wonderfully funny, *Enjoy* is also strange, sad and disturbing. Once unheralded as tritely artificial, the work is now seen as a blackly comic modern classic.

The play centres on the fortunes of the Cravens, their family tensions and their interactions with the city council. Alan Lade, seen as Inspector Rough in *Gaslight* two years ago, plays Dad, while experienced newcomer Sue Shephard plays Connie, his wife. We welcome to our stage two actors making their

Lewes debuts - Lala Redin, who plays the Cravens' daughter Linda and Peter Whitton, who will double as Sid and Charles.

Daniel Hardwick steps up from the Youth Theatre to play Heritage, the chauffeur, and Gregory, while Gem Bennington-Poulter makes the transformation from Aslan in *The Lion*, *The Witch and The Wardrobe* to play Anthony. Christine Murphy makes a welcome return to Lancaster Street as Mrs. Clegg, the Cravens' neighbour. Douglas Wragg, the Headmaster in *The Browning Version* and the bumbling vicar in *Gosforth's Fete* appears as Harman, the Council man. Kirrily Long, fresh from stage-managing *My Boy Jack*, will play the enigmatic Ms. Craig.

I am excited to be directing this interesting and engaging piece by one of Britain's leading playwrights. Don't miss it!

Derek Watts

Evening performances at 7.45pm. Matinee at 2.45pm on Saturday 31 May.

THE BOX OFFICE 01273 474826 will be open daily except Sundays from Monday 19 May to Saturday 31 May 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.

Richard III



Like Hamlet, Richard III is one of those parts that numerous star actors and directors have taken on over the years. This darkly comic study of murderous tyranny portrays a seductive rogue in one of the bloodiest chapters in English history but is also a timeless picture of power gone horribly wrong. Modern leaders such as Putin, Gaddafi, Saddam Hussein and Kim Jong Un clearly show that the desperate need to appear powerful can seem, at times, blackly comic.

Shakespeare's second longest play after *Hamlet* was written in 1592 and is rarely performed unabridged. Here director Nicholas Betteridge has 'cut the folio text to distil the very essence of Richard 111 into a two hour performance'. He set the play in Edwardian England and consciously chose to cast women in some of the male roles.

For an actor, Richard III is a study in changes and shifts – a showcase in what in acting terms is called 'actions and activities'. The pragmatic and audacious Richard does whatever

it takes to achieve his end. For an audience a character with a clear and unstinting vision of what they want, who goes all out to get it, is always compelling. They act out our basest, unspoken desires and we look on and marvel. Providing a central character such as this gives any play a powerful engine that can alter the dramatic structure of the story and influence every character. In this case, where the stakes for all concerned are not only power but literally life and death, the stage is set for an engrossing experience.

Miles Jenner as Richard III - a malevolent, puckish, belligerent figure concealing long-felt personal pain, inadequacy and rejection – understood and embraced all the shifts needed to make this part work. For two hours his command of Shakespeare's sublimely imaginative, visceral language remained strong and vibrant. *Richard III* sends an audience on a roller coaster of conflicting emotions – shock, disbelief,

REVIEW

Richard III

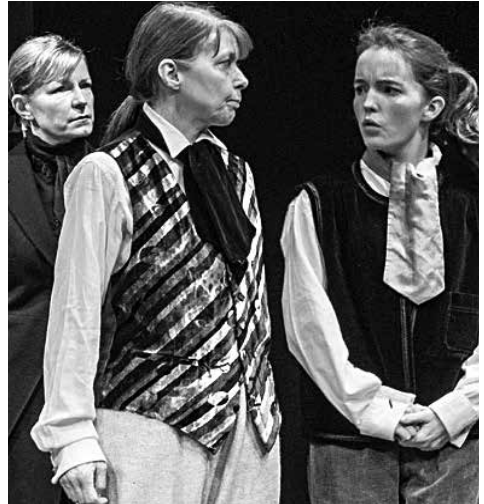


sympathy and a surprising amount of humour. Miles served as an excellent master of ceremonies.

In an ensemble of 18 actors, some of whom played multiple parts, it's very hard to pick out specific performances. Nick Betteridge's extensive knowledge of Shakespeare served his cast very well, and more than that, he directed all his actors with rigour and care. However, I was struck by the immediacy and clarity of Isabella McCarthy Sommerville's performance as Richard, Duke of York. David Parton as Sir Robert Brakenbury delivered his little soliloquy in the cell with The Duke of Clarence beautifully. Tony Bannister as Duke of Buckingham authentically commanded the courtly world and Shakespeare's language with consummate skill and ease. Keith Gilbert's stark, gothic, set was perfect. This play is a timeless and brilliant exposition of the human need for power and has no need for a fussy or period-specific backdrop. It also provided an apt platform for the costumes designed by Alison

Soudain and Gerry Cortese. The detailed, beautifully coloured and well-coordinated Edwardian wardrobe showed well against the black clean lines.

Impressively, Nicholas Betteridge chose a mixed cast of highly experienced actors and newcomers. Carefully casting women in some male roles, he constructed a cohesive, committed and confident cast. In their biographies members of the cast less experienced in Shakespeare mentioned their excitement at having this opportunity. This is something unique that a theatre such as LLT can provide.



It served as a fitting celebration of LLT's 75th season and the 450th anniversary of Shakespeare's birth. And to cap it all the real Richard III has just risen from a car park in Leicester. Shakespeare's *Richard III* was very much alive and as engrossing as ever on the LLT stage last night.

Lucy Fitchett

Richard III



Photographs by Adrian Bowd

Richard III



Club Director's notes

I was very pleased Nick Betteridge offered to direct a Shakespeare play as it is some time since one has been performed at the Theatre. It proved to be very topical, though it was planned before the skeleton was found in the Leicestershire car park. The director, cast and crew worked hard to provide a good production which was much appreciated by the audience. I'm sure it won't be another ten years before we do another Shakespeare play!

The Theatre is participating in the events celebrating the 750th anniversary of The Battle of Lewes in the earlier part of May. On the 10th Miles Jenner will become King Henry III on horseback and greet the Worthies of Lewes, whilst other actors will be knights and soldiers. Mike Turner has written a play which will be performed on the 17 May in three different venues in Lewes.

The last event for us in May is Derek Watts' production of *Enjoy* by Alan Bennett. Rehearsals are well under way and the set, designed by Gerry Cortese is being constructed by our very able backstage team. We are always pleased to receive offers of help in all departments of the theatre.

The Youth Theatre is entering a new phase as Tim Rowland who with James Firth-Haydon runs the Thursday evening group, is now hoping to undertake a Summer School during the school holidays and also run classes on Saturday mornings for young people wishing to take examinations in Drama. We are extremely grateful to him for

offering our youngsters the opportunity to develop their skills and enthusiasm for the stage.

In July, we are staging an exhibition in Lewes House as part of our 75th Anniversary. It opens on the 5th and runs for two weeks.

The season for 2014 - 2015

Opening in **October** - Cathryn Parker is co-ordinating *The Play's The Thing*. Looking back over the past 75 years and performing excerpts from plays performed on our stage. A notice appears in this Newsletter - page 13 - giving a short outline of the project.

In **December** - Chris Weber Brown is directing *The Diary of Anne Frank*.

February - Tim Rowland will direct *Alice in Wonderland* with the younger members of the Youth Theatre and James Firth-Haydon will direct *The Hound of the Baskervilles* with the older members. There will be three performances of each play.

March / April - Sandra Tomlinson who directed the very successful *Calendar Girls* will direct the next play but unfortunately we haven't been able to secure the licence as yet.

May - Miles Jenner is to direct *The Thrill of Love*.

July - Cathryn Parker will be directing the large cast play *Inherit the Wind*, which brings us to the end of the season. It was performed here in 1961 and we think it makes a welcome return. With best wishes to you all

Pat Shrimpton

PREVIEW

The Time of My Life

Which playwright's work is performed more than any other on the English stage? It is Shakespeare, of course, partly because his plays have been around for four hundred years. But second on the list – and ahead of all the others by a mile – is Alan Ayckbourn. His plays, more than seventy of them, are a staple diet for every theatre group in this country and across the English-speaking world. All but a handful of them were first launched on stage at Ayckbourn's own theatre in Scarborough, from where many went to the West End and Broadway. At first sight, an Ayckbourn play looks and sounds like a comedy. Every one of them is filled with comic effect arising from absurd situations involving disparate people in desperate situations doing daft things. But in nearly all of his plays – especially the later ones – he weaves serious themes into the plot: marital difficulties, small betrayals, fading attraction, they are the kinds of baggage carried by the unhappy characters whose problems are gradually revealed as the narrative unfolds.

Ayckbourn's genius lies in wrapping these sad revelations in continuous laughter, simply by showing that what is tragic to one individual can be very funny when viewed from the outside by the rest of us.

A very good example of this prolific playwright's gift for mixing angst with humour is to be found in his *Time Of My Life*, coming to Lewes Little Theatre in July. The setting is simple - it is a couple of tables in a restaurant and the

play revolves around the lives of six people – a couple and their two sons and the sons' two partners.

At first, it seems like a happy birthday celebration but it becomes clear that there are skeletons in the family cupboard. All this is presented through a series of episodes that go backwards and forwards in time to the moment when the senior couple discover their first feeling of love. As with all Ayckbourn plays, the audience is hooked on to the lives of the characters very early on, making it certain that everyone will want to know what happens in the end.

An absolute master of his craft, Ayckbourn plays offer marvellous opportunities for actors and huge enjoyment for audiences. In the course of an evening, he will likely offer tragedy and comedy, misery and laughter, bitterness and warmth – all presented with clarity and wit.

Ayckbourn – actually Sir Alan, knighted in 1997 – was 75 in April this year and as he reaches this landmark, he can look back on a career of unending success in the theatre.

It continues, with his *Small Family Business* now playing at the Royal National Theatre in an acclaimed revival and an unknown number of his other plays playing on stages across the land at this very moment.

***Time Of My Life* will appear at Lewes Little Theatre from 18 - 26 July and closes our 2013 - 2014 season.**

Gini Comyngs

The Battle of Lewes



A PLAY IN THE STYLE OF A MEDIEVAL MYSTERY

This narrative play telling the story of the Battle of Lewes from the points of view of ordinary people in Lewes on 14 May 1264 has been specially written for the 750th anniversary by Mike Turner who has employed rhyming couplets as was customary for early drama. The format used is similar to that of the medieval mystery plays which were performed in the open air by groups of citizens – usually from particular appropriate guilds such as the fishmongers guild performing a play about Jonah and the whale.

This time it is an actors guild from Lewes Theatre Club who are performing.

The play is sponsored by Lewes Town Council.
There will be three performances on 17 May

10.30 in the Gun Garden of Lewes Castle
12.00 In the backyard of Harvey's Brewery
4.00 in the Priory ruins

The Play lasts approximately 30 minutes – bring your own seat if you wish

Illustration by Tom Walker

Letters...

To: Box office

Dear Sirs,

I was in Lewes for a few days recently and was able to see the Friday performance of *Richard III*.

It has been several years since I last saw the play but I have to say it was probably the highlight of my visit to the town. Everything about the play was enjoyable, the acting from all the cast, the interesting costumes, the overall production and not least the setting in such an intimate theatre.

It is good know that places like the Little Theatre exist and if ever I am in Lewes again I will check on your current productions.

Kind Regards,
Trevor Dickerson

YOUTH THEATRE

On 8 June, the Lewes Theatre Youth group will be performing their production of Alan Ayckbourn's play *Ernie's Incredible Illucinations*. An amusing and slightly strange tale of a young lad, Ernie and the adventures conjured by his own mind!

Or are they? As well as this short play there will also be a selection of other workshop pieces that they have been working on over the past few months.

There will be the usual food and refreshments served to make this a highly enjoyable and social event that has proven very popular with the group's families and we would like to extend the offer to the theatre members too. Tickets will be priced at £3.00 or £6.00 if you would like to have some of the refreshments offered. It has always been a very relaxed and informal occasion and we hope to see as many faces there to support this growing and hardworking group.

James and Tim

OBITUARY

Mary Hocking
1922 - 2014



Members will remember Mary Hocking as a regular Lewes Little Theatre supporter who lived just up the road by St John's Church. She died in February at the age of 92 and her passing was noted by the Sussex Express because she was a prolific and successful author of family sagas. Her best known books were the Fairley Family Trilogy. Although she loved theatre she did not like to perform in public but found her way to contribute as prompter.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Acting Opportunities

Anyone who would be interested in being involved in recording crowd scenes for our BBC Radio 4 production of *War and Peace* would they please contact Jane Ellison at Pier Productions on 01273 691 401 - jane.ellison@pierproductionsltd.co.uk

Haywards Heath Movie Makers are looking for actors for a film they are planning for this summer. They need three young people between 20 and 25 as follows:

- Boy** - supervisor in head office of insurance company but pretending to be a world travelling hedge fund manager. (1 evening shooting with 40 lines).
- Girl** - dentists receptionist but pretending to be a fashion correspondent for *Cosmopolitan*. Must be a brunette (2 evenings filming and 37 lines)
- Girl** - found the boy on an internet dating site, but now wants to see an ex-boyfriend hoping to make up. Hair colour doesn't matter (1 evenings shooting and 13 lines)

Contact Richard Mercer, 43 Sunte Close, Haywards Heath, RH16 1QT
Telephone 01444 452624

The Play's The Thing

A Celebration of 75 years of Lewes Theatre Club.

For the opening of our next Season 2014-15 we are looking back over the past 75 years and performing excerpts from some productions which have taken place here. Cathryn Parker will be co-ordinating the show and we are holding a meeting on Saturday 24 May at 10.30am -12.30pm for all actors and directors who are interested in participating in this project. Please let us know if you are interested and able to come. Please also let us know if you are interested but can't make the 24 May.

Please contact Cathryn Parker at The Theatre
loneoakgeo@aol.com or 01444 248129

or Pat Shrimpton at the Theatre
lewpatshrimpton@sky.com or 01273 302905

The actual audition date will be announced later, but it will take place in August.

LEWES RACECOURSE CARNIVAL DAY

This group are organising a Carnival day remembering the 50th anniversary of the closing of Lewes Racecourse on Sunday 14 September. There will be a cavalcade of vintage cars and buses from the White Hart up to the racecourse where there will be a fun fair and various events. They are looking for people to take part and dress in costumes appropriate to the period in which the racecourse operated – from Georgian times to 1964.

If interested please contact Tony Johnson, tj@tjtherapies.com
or Barry Foulks, beejaysfencing@aol.com

BBC at Lewes Little Theatre



We had agreed to hire out the theatre for the day to the BBC for their public recording of the Radio 4 programme called *The Kitchen Cabinet*. The programme is hosted by Jay Raynor with a panel of four cooking `experts` and this edition was heard on Radio 4 on Tuesday 18 March.

The BBC invite their own audience and the theatre was full to capacity. This was good because we were able to provide some publicity about Lewes Theatre Club with distribution of leaflets and flyers. Also, the bar was open and teas and coffees were sold.

Their technicians arrived sometime after midday and set up the stage over a two hour period and later in the afternoon their admin staff and the show's participants arrived. We had set up the larger dressing room as a green room.

They had their own Front of House staff but we were also there to cover Health and Safety requirements. They opened the doors around 6.15pm by which time

both Ian Edwards in the bar and the tea ladies in the foyer were fully prepared! The actual show started soon after 7.30pm and ended after 8.30pm. Not more than about one hour later the stage had been completely cleared and all the BBC personnel had left.

During the Show Miles Jenner was questioned by Jay Raynor about the history of Harveys Brewery and about brewing in general with the panel of experts sampling two of his products.

All in all, I think it was a very successful day for Lewes Theatre which brought us some good publicity. The team who produce *The Kitchen Cabinet* told us that they are the ones who also produce *Gardeners' Question Time* and we made the point that we would be very happy to host that programme as well. An email will be sent to them reiterating that point and also thanking them for all their cooperation on the day.

Chris Weber Brown

information

Members are reminded that seats reserved by telephone must be collected and paid for by no later than 15 minutes before the start of the performance, otherwise they may be re-sold, particularly where there is a high demand for tickets. The prompt collection of tickets will also help to reduce queues developing at the box office and delaying the start of the performance.

If you are unable to attend a performance or have some tickets that you are unable to use, it would be most helpful, particularly where a production is close to selling-out, if you could kindly give the box office as much notice as possible, so that the tickets can be offered for re-sale. The box office telephone number is 01273 474826 01273 474826 , and messages can be left on our answerphone when the office is closed.

LEWES THEATRE CLUB INFORMATION

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

ANTHONY JENNER BAR

All are welcome in our bar. It is open before and after all evening performances, as well as during the interval. 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

Chair Joanne Cull
Director Pat Shrimpton
Treasurer Bob Leeds
General Secretary Derek Watts
Membership Secretary Bob Leeds

Enjoy

OPENING

Saturday 24 May 2014

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
Enjoy	First night only 2 for 1	X				
Enjoy			Evening £8.00			
Enjoy		X	Matinee £6.00			
Time of My Life	First night only 2 for 1	X				
Time of My Life			Evening £8.00			
Time of My Life		X	Matinee £6.00			
Ernie's Incredible Illucinations		X	Tea £6.00			
			No Tea £3.00			

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.