



LEWES THEATRE CLUB
Newsletter No.52 November 2014

The Diary of Anne Frank

**by Frances Goodrich
& Albert Hackett**
directed by Chris Weber Brown

Saturday 29 November to Saturday 6 December 2014
at 7.45 pm except Sundays
Matinee Saturday 6 December at 2.45 pm

Editor's notes

This summer we celebrated our 75th anniversary in style with an excellent exhibition in Lewes House about the inception and lifetime of Lewes Theatre. It was well displayed and well organised thanks to Mike Palmer and Paul Myles and well supported by documentary evidence thanks to Joanne Cull and the Jenner family. Paul Myles produced a fascinating book about the founding of the theatre and the involvement of Maynard Keynes and the Woolfs, 'The Genesis of a Theatre', which can be purchased on play nights. Our first production of the season, *The Play's the Thing*, was conceived and directed by Cathryn Parker working with Pat Shrimpton, Stella Stone and Nick Betteridge and it was a good demonstration of the range of productions we have presented in the last seventy five years. The technical side of the theatre was well represented particularly wardrobe which had two hundred different outfits on display. The sound team demonstrated their skills, as did lighting, ably supporting the performers past and present.

Our next production, *The Diary of Anne Frank*, directed by Chris Weber Brown, is a human drama reminding us of the Second World War and its effect on Jewish families hiding from the Nazis.

NEWSLETTER EDITOR

After nine years of editing the newsletter, I have decided that I must hand over to somebody else. I would be willing to mentor any new editor and Mick Hawksworth is willing to continue as designer and compositor. Anybody willing to take on this interesting and important role in the theatre should contact Derek Watts, Honorary General Secretary. Micheal Turner

michealturner@btinternet.com

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DIARY DATES

PERFORMANCES

The Diary of Anne Frank
29 November - 6 December

*Alice in Wonderland and
The Hound of the Baskervilles*
4 - 8 February

AUDITIONS

The Weir
6 December 10.00am Foyer

The Thrill of Love
10 January 10.30am Foyer

PREVIEW

The Diary of Anne Frank

By Frances Goodrich & Albert Hackett directed by Chris Weber Brown

After Anne's death was confirmed at the end of the War her diary was given to her father Otto who was persuaded eventually to publish it. In June 1947 the first Dutch edition was issued and its success was the forerunner to an English translation which in turn led to this theatrical dramatisation.

Eight people spent just over two years hiding in an annexe which comprised a few small cramped rooms and the play examines all those human characteristics which you would expect to find in such a situation. There is bitterness, greed and resentment but also love, tolerance and even humour.

As I write these notes Lala Redin, who was to have played Margot, has been forced to withdraw from the cast through illness and we wish her a most speedy recovery. We have now been rehearsing

for five weeks and we have another five left to become accustomed to both the set and the enormous number of props which will be required.

In my talented cast I am lucky enough to have five newcomers to this theatre, Seer Dindial, Maddy Barnes, Steve Mallen, Julian Message and Jonny Amies. Sharran Rigby-Smith makes a welcome return after a long absence whilst Adrian Bowd appeared last season in *Time of My Life*. The cast is completed by a trio who appeared in the recent production of *Richard III*: Hannah Wilson, Ella Dorman-Gajic and Chris Parke.

We all know there is no happy ending but I hope and believe that you will find the production uplifting.

Chris Weber Brown



Evening performances at 7.45pm. Matinee at 2.45pm on Saturday 6 December.

THE BOX OFFICE 01273 474826 will be open daily except Sundays from Monday 24 November to Saturday 6 December 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

The Play's the Thing



75 years ago Lewes Little Theatre was founded by the Reverend Kenneth Rawlings. A passionate and committed man both personally and professionally, he managed, against the odds to secure the premises that still house the company and the theatre today. Over the last 75 years, 700 plays and musicals have been performed at the theatre. *The Play's the Thing*, co-ordinated, meticulously researched and written by Cathryn Parker, celebrated the company's history as a narrated show featuring excerpts of pieces previously performed at the theatre. A truly repertory style company with actors and actresses of all ages spanning almost the eight decades being celebrated, some who had returned to the LLT after many years absence, worked tirelessly showing an energy and commitment that honoured the occasion with style.

The evening celebrating the history

of LLT comprised of a rich tapestry of eclectic styles, genres and periods from writers such as Coward, Ayckbourn, Shaffer, Bolt, Shakespeare, Shaw, Priestley, Congreve - to name but a few. Faultlessly woven together by narrators Stella Stone, Cathryn Parker and Nicholas Betteridge, they lovingly delivered a detailed and very personal talk against a backdrop of fascinating photos featuring past productions and members who have contributed to making the theatre what it is today. We were also treated to some solo voice overs of Shakespeare soliloquys from members past and present who could not, physically, be involved in the evening. Having done radio drama for the BBC myself, I know what a deceptively hard medium it can be and this was impressive work. Highly enjoyable musical pieces with a very hard working Roger Roser at the piano punctuated the drama during the evening. I especially enjoyed the

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The Play's the Thing



moving, stylishly staged *Oh! What a Lovely War*.

Speaking to Pat Shrimpton after the show I was informed that there was an 'A and B night' with some of the extracts differing depending on the day. The amount of work and preparation that had gone into the two and a half hours of theatre that I saw was clear to see, so to be told that I hadn't seen the full extent of the work produced for the celebration was impressive indeed. Apparently the permission for a number of excerpts that had been applied for had been denied, some at the last moment, which obviously added to the work load and stress levels. None of this uncertainty and last minute preparation showed in the assured performances and slick presentations directed by Nicholas Betteridge, Cathryn Parker, Tim Rowland, Pat Shrimpton and Stella Stone.

The costume department got a well deserved special mention in the evening's narrated history. The standard of both stage design and costumes in the productions I have seen over the last two years at LLT is high and

executed with ingenuity. Gerry Cortese and Alison Soudain working with 32 actors and actresses in over 20 extracts from diverse periods during one evening showed the costume department truly excelling themselves for this project. The staging, stage management, lighting and sound, designed and executed by approximately 30 members was faultless.

I attended the show with a professional actor friend and as we walked to LLT we bemoaned the fact that, as 'professionals', invariably the love of theatre and the engrossing nature of the fascination with the acting process exits stage left. Due to the difficulties of securing work, making a living and being at the mercy of the many different aspects that comprise a production (should you be lucky enough even to be working) it's hard to hold onto the passion that once drove you.



Additionally we noted that in a celebrity driven world theatre endeavours such as LLT are the antithesis of the being famous and rich for being famous and rich era in which we live.

As well as having the potential to be the most engrossing and joyous experience,

REVIEW

The Play's the Thing



theatre can be a therapeutic, life affirming, and empowering medium both for the practitioners and audience alike. The value of 'amateur' theatre with the high standards embodied by LLT is something incredibly worthwhile. This was a proud and fitting celebration of the selfless, tireless work and passion for theatre that has enabled LLT to

endure for 75 years from its inception and creation by the visionary Reverend Rawlings to today where it forges ahead still in its original home in Lancaster Street.

Lucy Fitchett

Photographs by Keith Gilbert



Club Director's notes

Following the success of the Exhibition at Lewes House we ended our 75th Anniversary with *The Play's The Thing*.

With photographs from the archives projected onto a gauze screen and recorded voices from members who have acted on our stage in the past, Cathryn Parker created an evening's entertainment consisting of excerpts of some of the plays and musicals which many of our members regard as being iconic productions. She spent many hours researching the history of the Club, talking to members and studying the material that was included in the Lewes House Exhibition. We had five directors, a large cast including youngsters from the Youth Theatre, three narrators, and an excellent backstage team. All the costumes – more than 200, came from our Wardrobe. Alison and Gerry did a remarkable job in getting them all together in a comparatively short space of time, for which Cathryn and I are extremely grateful. This production was a huge team effort and we have never attempted anything like this before; and much more difficult than we had anticipated. Getting permission for an excerpt instead of the whole play proved frustrating as the agent had to negotiate with the playwright in each case. I am very grateful that Cathryn was able to take on this project which was a fitting end to our anniversary.

Our next production, *The Diary of Anne Frank*, is well under way, and we welcome both old and new members to the cast. It has been entered for the Brighton & Hove Arts Council's Drama Awards and there will be a public

adjudication on the first night of the play. This will take place approximately five minutes after the end of the performance and last about ten minutes for those who wish to stay. The results of the competition will be announced in December.

The Youth Theatre members are rehearsing their productions to be shown in the new year. This is the first time they have been able to perform two plays, one for the older members and the other for the younger ones. It is difficult to find plays encompassing seven to eighteen year olds, so having two productions gives more parts to spread around and therefore the youngsters gain more stage experience. Auditions for *The Weir* and *The Thrill of Love* have been arranged and we hope by February to have the audition date of *Inherit the Wind*.

Following the AGM, Douglas Wragg, who has appeared in several productions lately is now a welcome addition to the Committee, as is Nigel Sharpe our new Membership Secretary. The Committee is grateful to Bob Leeds for dealing with memberships for some time as well as handling the financial side of the Club as our Treasurer.

We are still offering two for the price of one tickets for all members on the first Saturday night and our Front of House Manager, Jane Rimmington has put together a raffle prize package whereby winners will be contacted after the run of the play (see Announcements page 10). We hope to see you at *The Diary of Anne Frank*.

With best wishes,

Pat Shrimpton

AUDITION ALERT AUDITION ALERT

THE THRILL OF LOVE by **Amanda Whittington** Directed by Miles Jenner

Production Dates 16 to 23 May 2015

Audition Date 10.30 am Saturday 10 January in the Foyer

Ruth Ellis was the last woman to be hanged in Britain and the public sense of injustice proved a key factor in the abolition of the death penalty. Our production of this acclaimed new drama will coincide with the 60th anniversary of her trial.

CHARACTERS

JACK GALE 30s-50s A Detective Inspector. A substantial, pivotal role. Part narrator, part player, he needs to connect with the audience and the characters on stage alike.

RUTH ELLIS 20s-30s A model and night club hostess in London. A mother, a survivor. Driven towards the bright lights and glamour, she shunned the social stereotype expected. Strong, brave, passionate and exploited. Contrary to popular belief, she was well spoken. She was 28 at the time of her death.

SYLVIA SHAW 30's-50s Manageress of the Court Club. A down to earth yet sophisticated Londoner. Late thirties to fifties.

VICKIE MARTIN 20's A night club hostess in her twenties. Energetic, playful and determined to succeed. A strange mix of worldliness and naivety.

DORIS JUDD 20s-30's The char/cleaner at the Court Club. Compassionate, sincere, unworldly yet astute. A good singing voice. A Londoner aged twenties to thirties.

Ages are indicative. Please remember that women in the 1950's dressed, and often appeared, older than today's generation. All characters need to portray steeliness as well as vulnerability.

Scripts are available from Chris Weber Brown at the theatre

chriswb16@hotmail.com or 07588 531888

Please read the entire script and briefly research on line prior to the audition. I am looking for a strong, ensemble cast and production team to commence rehearsals in mid February.

Miles Jenner

ANNOUNCEMENTS



★ THE NEW RAFFLE PRIZE ★

There will be two winners

**Each winner will receive 2 Free Tickets
for the next production including 2 Programmes,
2 Drinks from the Bar, 2 Teas - Coffees at the Interval
and a Behind the Scenes Tour of the Theatre
and Lewes Theatre Club Pen**

The strip of RAFFLE TICKETS £1.00

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.

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 Nigel Sharpe

Theatre Memories

Joanne Cull

Joanne's parents, Paddy and John Cull, spent much of their free time at the theatre sometimes taking their daughter with them. Joanne always loved being there. I was first in this theatre in a carry cot in the mid 1950s

Your parents were very early members of the theatre. How did they meet?

John, my father had started in the theatre whilst still a schoolboy in 1938 because of his interest in electricity.

Paddy, my mother, had really wanted to be an actress

but went to Brighton Art College. Whilst at college she ran a drama group; they used the stage at the nearby Technical College where she was introduced to John, who was doing a degree in Civil Engineering and who was to light her production. One of her productions in 1941 was brought to Lewes Theatre. The war interrupted but when John came back from the army Kenneth Rawlings married them. The irony of this is that the previous week Paddy had been in one of Rawlings' productions, *The Distaff Side*, in which she played a bride. Meeting her at the church door Kenneth told her 'You'll never get a better part than this!'

What are your earliest memories of Lewes theatre?

Joanne remembers that there was a



group of children, including her and Miles Jenner, who came down with their parents and joined in with the adults. We went all over the theatre and knew how to behave: when to keep quiet and when we could have fun. I went into the lighting box which was a gallery at the

side of the stage reached by a vertical ladder, and the dressing rooms which were in the condemned cottages which used be at the side of the theatre.

At weekends when my father was preparing lights I sometimes went with him - I remember sorting the lighting gels and working the slider dimmers and playing the old backstage piano when there was nobody else there! One of the most

intriguing memories I have is of finding my mother at home one day in a bath of tea - apparently tanning her skin for a role in a play.

Do you remember Kenneth Rawlings?

Yes, he was lovely - like a sort of grandfather - he was 'Father' and John was 'Daddy'. He was a very charismatic figure and always seemed to be around.

Who else do you remember from the fifties and sixties?

Rowena Bingham knew the Cull family. Then there were the Jenners, the Silks, the Greens and the Haylers - families with children of similar age to me or older, also the Kenwards, the Laughtons, the Collinsons, the Giffords, the Tandys, the Hubbards, the Blundells, Ray Girling, David Moon,

Theatre Memories Joanne Cull

Colin Fuller and many more. Most of my parents' friends were involved in the theatre.

What productions stand out for you?

The first production I think I remember seeing is *Love's Labours Lost* in 1958, which my mother was in, I think it involved the bath of tea. I enjoyed *Alice in Wonderland* in 1961 and *A Servant of Two Masters* 1963. I recall watching *Waiting for Godot* 1964, from the lighting gallery, sitting just behind the tabs!

For the last thirty or so years, since I was in charge of props and furniture I worked backstage on more productions than I've seen from the auditorium.

House and Garden was an amazing project to be part of. One of the shows which stands out for me is *Henry IV*

part II, for which I was involved in the designing and making two huge gauzes, as well as being the stage manager.

How would you sum up your memories of the theatre?

The thing I remember most is loving being there and always feeling very at home. It had a kind of magic. I met and became friends with a great diversity of people of all ages with many different attributes and skills. I realise now how hard those members worked to make the club the great place it is today.

The theatre is still extremely important to me and my feelings about it have not changed, I have many friends there and it still has a kind of magic!

Interviewed by Mike Turner

YOUTH THEATRE

I was extremely pleased with *The Play's the Thing* and I really feel that the bridge between the youth group and the other players is really beginning to develop. We had seven members in the production and hope that we have more opportunities to collaborate again soon. *Alice in Wonderland* and *The Hound of the Baskervilles* are going really well and the extra Wednesday rehearsals are going to take much of the pressure off the cast and myself.

I was also really pleased by the recent positive feedback from the committee regarding our Easter School. After the success of the summer school I am very excited to embark on yet another adventure with the Youth Group.

If you have any questions please email me. darthgiblet@gmail.com

Kindest regards

Tim Rowland

Letters...

Dear Editor,

We felt we must write to congratulate all concerned in the mounting of the 75th Anniversary Exhibition at Lewes House. We thought it presented the origins of the theatre and the range of its work down the years excellently and hope it brought in lots of new members.

Cyril and Sue Colbran

The Diary of Anne Frank



OPENING

Saturday 29 November 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
The Diary of Anne Frank	First night only 2 for 1	X				
The Diary of Anne Frank			Evening £8.00			
The Diary of Anne Frank		X	Matinee £6.00			
Alice in Wonderland			Evening £4.00			
Alice in Wonderland			Matinee £4.00			
The Hound of the Baskervilles			Evening £4.00			
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.