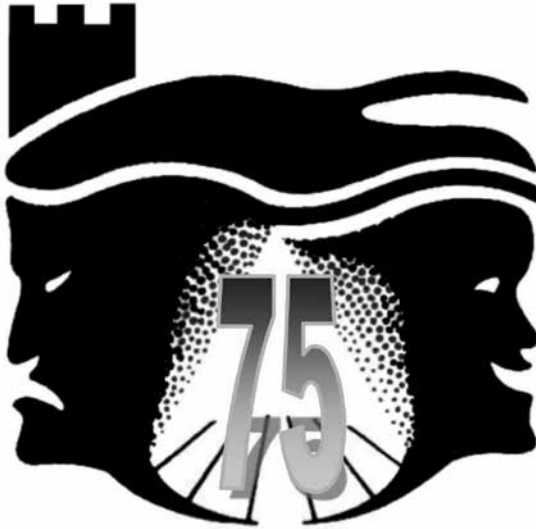




**LEWES THEATRE CLUB**  
Newsletter No.51 September 2014

# **The Play's The Thing**



**directed by Cathryn Parker**

**Saturday 11 October to Saturday 18 October 2014**  
**at 7.45 pm except Sundays**  
**Matinee Saturday 18 October at 2.45 pm**

## Editor's notes

Welcome to the first newsletter of the 75th season for Lewes Little Theatre. We are celebrating with our first production of the season being a selection of extracts from our past performances – plays and songs performed by actors from our company. Look out too for the exhibition at Lewes House, Seventy Five Years which tells the story of the founding of Lewes Theatre with fascinating details about our founders and patrons.

The Volunteers' lunch was a great success again this summer reminding us of just how many people volunteer their services to keep the theatre going in all the backstage, front of house and management areas. The delicious lunch was prepared and served by Sally Jenner ably assisted by Joanne Cull, Sue Tait and Pat Shrimpton.

The Theatre Club AGM will be held in the main auditorium on Tuesday 30 September at 7.30 pm. Members wishing to ask questions should submit them in writing to the Honorary General Secretary before the meeting.

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

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## DIARY DATES

### THEATRE EXHIBITION

13 - 27 September

AGM

30 September

### PERFORMANCES

*The Play's the Thing*

11-18 October

*Only Fools and Boycie*

14 November

*Diary of Anne Frank*

29 November - 6 December

### AUDITION

*The Weir*

6 December

PREVIEW

# The Play's The Thing

directed by Cathryn Parker

**T**he *Play's The Thing* is a celebration of 75 years of Lewes Little Theatre devised and co-ordinated by Cathryn Parker together with Nicholas Betteridge, Stella Stone, Pat Shrimpton and Tim Rowland.

A cast and crew of over sixty combine to tell the story of Lewes Theatre Club through extracts from memorable productions. Nicholas Betteridge, Michael Bloom, John Cole, Joyce Fisher, Jennifer Henley, Miles Jenner, Jenny Lloyd Lyons, Patti Page, Wendy Tidman, Christopher Weber Brown, John Whitley, Keith Willoughby, and a host of others provide a glimpse of the genius of Shakespeare. The varied programme pays tribute not only to the dynamic and visionary founders of the theatre and the major contributors to its development, but to all those, named and un-named, who have toiled invisibly behind the scenes to produce the magic of theatre



to delight our audiences time and time again.

I am delighted that this project has brought back together (for the first time in forty years for some) a range of our finest actors, young and vintage and some new faces to the Lewes stage.

There are extracts from the first play ever presented by Lewes Theatre Club directed by our founder, Reverend Kenneth Rawlings, *St Simeon Stylites*; medleys from memorable musicals - *Cabaret*, *Lock Up Your Daughters*,

*The Beggars' Opera* and *Oh! What a Lovely War*; with a whole raft of iconic plays from every genre including *Alice in Wonderland*, *Brief Lives*, *Dear Octopus*, *Gaslight*, *Of Mice and Men*, *Shadowlands*, *The Way of the World*, *The Importance of Being Earnest*...and many more.

You've seen the exhibition – now see it brought to life in *The Play's The Thing*. Book early to avoid disappointment.

**Cathryn Parker**

Evening performances at 7.45pm. Matinee at 2.45pm on Saturday 18 October.

**THE BOX OFFICE** 01273 474826 will be open daily except Sundays from Monday 6 October to Saturday 18 October 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

## Time of My Life



**T**he multi-awarding winning Sir Alan Ayckbourn CBE has had nearly eighty of his plays produced worldwide. At the age of 75 his latest piece will be premiered at his own Stephen Joseph Theatre in Scarborough later this year. It is frequently claimed that Alan Ayckbourn is the most performed living English playwright, and the second most performed after Shakespeare. The 44th of his plays, *Time of my Life* premiered at the Stephen Joseph Theatre in Scarborough in 1992, in the West End in 1993 and was revived by Ayckbourn in 2013. He has described it as an exploration of “a family’s lives, past, present and future, in a three-way journey through time.” The play traverses yesterday, today and tomorrow and by so doing allows the

audience to see the importance of actions being made by the perpetrators who are innocent of the ramifications. We see the shadows forming before they do.

The play is set entirely in one Mediterranean style restaurant where, over the years, the self-made Stratton family have always celebrated family events. Deliberately, Ayckbourn does not specify the nationality of the Essa de Calvi which is owned by Ernesto and run by a gallery of comic waiters (all played by Adrian Bowld). By doing so Ayckbourn says this could be any family experiencing universal issues throughout the passage of a lifetime. Gerry Stratton (Ken Collins), seemingly a jovial successful local builder and businessman, has arranged a family party to celebrate his wife Laura’s

**REVIEW**

# Time of My Life



(Chrys Tarr) 54th birthday. Joining him is his smooth son Glyn (James Firth-Haydon) who, after an affair, has just patched up his failing marriage with long suffering, sympathetic Stephanie (Lindsey Hodge) to please his parents, and youngest son callow Adam (Jack Bowman) has brought along his desperate to impress hairdresser girlfriend Maureen (Lauren-Nicole Little). As things progress you realise the family party is both a celebration and a wake. Skeletons come out of the cupboard, relationships shift, falter, fail and are seen in a new light. Tragically, the booze fuelled drive home from the restaurant is the last that Gerry ever makes. Thereafter characters reform and a new course is set as the men lose their way and the women grow in stature and independence.

This was a very strong cast, expertly directed with detail and pace by Gini Comyns. The understanding and execution of Ayckbourn's tight musical language was disciplined and crucially, entirely did justice to the comedy at the soul of his work.

The scene between Gerry and Laura when they reminisce about when

they first got together – he being the 'dangerous' teddy boy who she was excited but frightened by until she later felt she could love him because she realised what a softie he was - was especially truthfully and sensitively played by Ken and Chrys.

The faltering relationship between Glyn and Stephanie was poignant to watch, and even though there was some satisfaction in seeing Glyn (James Firth-Haydon), capturing both sides of a flawed character with skill, get his comeuppance, his understated vulnerability was spot on and affecting, while a nicely self-contained Lindsey playing Stephanie, touchingly maintained the care for the man she once adored.

The most obviously comic scenes in the play are those between Adam and Maureen. Although from different social spheres, both are desperate to impress and be loved. Seeing Adam (talented and assured newcomer Jack Bowman) trying to contain the volatile, excitable Maureen (a watchable and inventive Lauren-Nicole Little) delighted the audience.

If LLT were to have awards Adrian Bowd

**REVIEW**

# Time of My Life

may well have won Comic Actor this year. His five waiter characterisations were great and executed with the necessary perfect comic timing and although broadly played, completely believable. His characterisation of Ernesto was particularly detailed.

It must be mentioned that the superb set by Cordelia Haynes and Adrian Bowd drew applause from the audience. The detail of the Essa de Calvi restaurant was perfectly executed and would have stood out in any professional theatre.



Photographs by  
Adrian Bowd



This play is particularly gripping because its canny, inventive structure drives the characters, and you as an observer, towards a painful ending that you hope you won't reach but that you already know.

"How often do you enjoy an event at the time rather than on reflection or in anticipation?" said Alan Ayckbourn. The "Time of your Life" is often used to describe when you were happiest but didn't know it, and therefore perfectly illustrates the bitter/sweet, tragic/comic themes characteristic of Ayckbourn's work.

Gini Comyns directed an accomplished and extremely enjoyable production of a funny but also very painful play.

**Lucy Fitchett**

## 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 or 01273 474826 , and messages can be left on our answerphone when the office is closed.

# Club Director's notes

**A**lthough the theatre has been 'dark' for the past couple of months, we certainly haven't been closed. Two full days were spent by the backstage team ripping up the floor of the stage and laying a new one. This wasn't an easy task as it is all in sections and quite tricky as there's a trap underneath which has to be opened for certain productions. We now have new slim-line heaters in the foyer and auditorium which we hope will be more efficient.

During the summer break, Tim Rowland held our first Summer School, which proved to be very successful, and he now runs a drama class on Saturday mornings for young people who wish to work for exams set by Trinity College. This is in addition to the Thursday evening group run by Tim and James Firth-Haydon. There are approximately eighteen in this group and the older ones are also appearing onstage in our adult productions.

By the time this Newsletter reaches you, the Theatre's Exhibition at Lewes House will be over, but the posters that have been specially made will be on display in the foyer. Hours of work went into this project and our thanks go especially to Joanne Cull, Mike & Kate Palmer, Miles Jenner and Paul Myles. It was a splendid display and created much publicity for us. Thanks also to all the members who helped, welcoming visitors to the exhibition, chatting and explaining about us and what we do. We are now looking forward to our 2014-15 Season. The first production is *The Play's The Thing*, the last of our 75th Anniversary events. Cathryn Parker has co-ordinated a miscellany of

excerpts from plays and musicals which have been performed over the years. This has been a huge and challenging undertaking involving four directors, a large cast and probably the largest number of costumes the wardrobe has ever had to provide for one production. We hope this venture will be well supported as it is the first time we have attempted anything of this nature. I am sure that there will be something in the programme that will appeal to you and bring back memories of past times in the theatre or maybe introduce you to productions you've heard about but never seen.

*The Diary of Anne Frank* has been cast and rehearsals due to start in September. The Youth Theatre started to rehearse during last Season for *Alice in Wonderland* and *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. We are now arranging an audition for Sandra Tomlinson's production of *The Weir*, soon to be followed by Miles Jenner's audition for *The Thrill of Love*.

The Volunteers' Lunch was again very successful and Sally Jenner's food absolutely wonderful! I've had many emails and letters of thanks which I have passed on to Sally. We are grateful to our volunteers and the annual lunch is a way of giving our thanks to them. You may wish to pass on the following information to anyone who makes enquiries.

Due to the lack of volunteers to work in the wardrobe, we are no longer hiring out costumes.

We hope to see you at the AGM on 30 September

With all good wishes

**Pat Shrimpton**

# AUDITION ALERT AUDITION ALERT

**THE WEIR** by **Conor McPherson** Directed by Sandra Tomlinson

Production Dates 21 to 28 March 2015

Audition Date 6 December at 10.00 am in Theatre foyer

**D**escribed as a modern classic, *The Weir* was written by the acclaimed Irish dramatist Conor McPherson and won the Evening Standard, Critics' Circle and Olivier Awards for Best New Play. *The Weir* premiered at the Royal Court Theatre in 1997 and has enjoyed long runs in the West End and on Broadway. *The Weir* is a one act piece of theatre set in a remote Irish pub where the locals swap ghostly stories as they try to impress a visiting stranger, a woman new to the area. Haunting, funny and moving, I need an ensemble of five skilled actors who can transfix an audience and make the most of McPherson's rich and vivid writing; actors who can fully convey the humour and emotion of the piece. Each wonderful but challenging role is as important as the next. The men will require west coast Irish accents and the woman a Dublin accent. Due to the nature of the piece I will need a reliable cast who work well together and are enthusiastic and fully committed to the production. I would ask you not to audition if you know you will not be available during the rehearsal period.

## CHARACTERS

- JACK** 50s Garage owner, bachelor and elder statesman of the lads.
- BRENDAN** 30s Barman, farmer and confidant to all, he is the spine of the play, holds it all together.
- JIM** 40s Lives with his mother, helps Jack out in the garage 'jack of all trades' grave digger and amateur tipster, could be seen as simple but actually pretty shrewd.
- FINBAR** 40s Married, property owner bumptious, arrogant wants to be 'one of the boys'. Endures their ribbing to be accepted as part of the group.
- VALERIE** 30s to 40s Attractive, gentle, pleasant. Has come to the village to escape the tragedy of her past. Her monologue is one of the classics of modern theatre.

**Note** I will be looking for naturalistic pub banter, gripping monologues and convincing accents.

We will be rehearsing on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 5 January 2015. If you would like a script or details of audition pieces or have any queries please email me at [sdt1717@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:sdt1717@hotmail.co.uk)

**Sandra Tomlinson**

# VOLUNTEERS' lunch



# Letters...

## LEWES THEATRE CLUB INFORMATION

Dear Editor,

It was good to read Christine Mason's follow up to Mary Hocking's obituary and learn things about her life and work that I hadn't known. It reminded me that, though Mary often said she loved everything to do with producing plays, prompting was the only job that allowed her close involvement with the text and the acting but still left her free to walk away at the end of the evening without production problems buzzing in her head to distract her from her writing.

Mary was indeed a master of her craft in the prompt corner, mentally logging the mistakes you made, a little here, a word there which might affect the sense of what you were saying, and having a quiet word at the end of a rehearsal, often reminding you that you had done it twice before and were in danger of it getting fixed in your head.

I last saw her in September 2012 after Tim Frost's funeral. She was heading out of St. Anne's churchyard and onto the hill and I caught up with her assuming that she was going for a taxi. Not a bit of it. Despite her failing eyesight she was on her way down the High Street to her home at the bottom of the town. I walked with her and we laughed again at some of her favourite stories from the past of moments that came close to disaster. We said our farewells, she got her key out to open the door and said, "I hope something has arrived to entertain me for the afternoon." Lying on the doormat was an audio CD of *Lord of the Rings*.

**John Cole**

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 Bob Leeds

# ANNOUNCEMENTS

## only fools and boycie

*Meet Only Fools and Horses Star  
John Challis for an intimate evening  
of amusing anecdotes.*

**Friday 14 November at 7.30pm - tickets £15.**

### **The Battle of Lewes**

Lewes Town Council is showing the video of Mike Turner's mystery play *The Day of the Battle* on Saturday 25 October at 2.30 and 7.30pm at All Saints. There will also be the opportunity to see a recording of Helen Glavin's Oratorio *The Sword of Freedom*. Entrance £3 in aid of the Mayor's charities, Parkinsons UK and Lewes Citizen's Advice Bureau.

### **Box Office**

This is to confirm that we are extending the 2 for 1 offer (members only and applicable to the first night of each main production) for another season - you may be aware of this from the AGM papers. For the two Youth Theatre productions next year we have decided to have a common ticket price - members and non-members of £4.

### **The Diary of Anne Frank**

directed by Chris Weber Brown, opens on Saturday 29 November and runs for one week. Tickets are available in the usual way through the Box Office on 01273 474826 or by post. After the war Anne's father was persuaded to publish his daughter's diary and this stage adaptation was first performed in 1955.

### **Victorian Christmas Market**

The Manager, Natalie Brown, of Cheese Please on Lewes High Street has asked if any of our actors would like to participate in the first themed Victorian Christmas Market on 15 November at the Corn Exchange. This will be a charity event in aid of The Chestnut Tree Foundation and St. Peters & St. James Hospice.

Actors will be asked to come in character, mingle with the shoppers and interact with the costumed stall holders.

**I will pin the details on the noticeboard in the foyer. Anyone interested may contact Fiona or Natalie at Cheese Please**

# The Play's The Thing



## OPENING

Saturday 11 October 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 Play's the Thing	First night only 2 for 1	X				
The Play's the Thing			Evening £8.00			
The Play's the Thing		X	Matinee £6.00			
Only Fools and Boycie		X	Evening £15.00			
Diary of Anne Frank	First night only 2 for 1	X				
Diary of Anne Frank						
Diary of Anne Frank		X	Matinee £6.00			

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.

**Grand Total**

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