

# SCENE

The Newsletter of the Leicester Drama Society

## Centenary celebrations

It may not have escaped your notice that 2022 is the centenary year of the Leicester Drama Society... we began our celebrations with the launch of the theatre's new book, *In Our Time*, at an evening in January, attended by the mayor and our patron Richard Cadell (and of course, Sooty too). A video message from Richard Cadell celebrating our centenary year can be viewed on our YouTube channel (scan the QR code opposite).

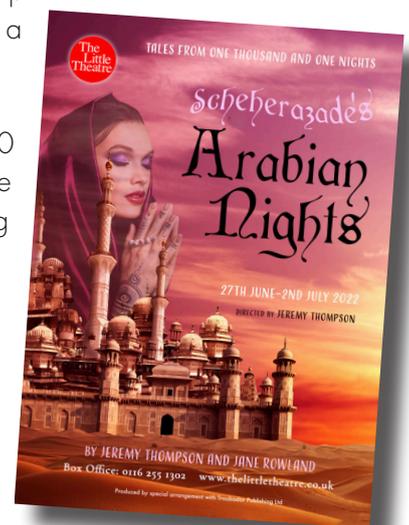


Our centenary celebrations will continue next month with a members' gala performance of *Scheherazade's Arabian Nights* on its opening night, Monday 27th June: tickets for LDS members are just £10, which includes a buffet meal served during an extended interval. So come along and help celebrate 100 years of the LDS at the close of its first (slightly odd) post-Covid season... catch up with new and old friends over a drink and a sausage on a stick\*, and help swell the ranks of our audience at a time when audiences are hard to come by. It's a win-win for all!

\* other buffet-type food will be available!

To buy tickets at just £10 for the gala night celebrations, use the code MEMBER100 when you check out online, or quote it on the phone or in person when booking at the Box Office. There's no limit on how many member tickets you can buy, so bring along some family and friends... first-come, first-served, so don't delay booking!

In September, the theatre will be part of the city's Heritage Open Day, celebrating Leicester's fantastic architecture and history by offering free access to buildings that are usually closed to the public or normally charge for admission. On our centenary year, we'll be throwing open the doors to the public on one weekend day with guided tours, an open rehearsal and other activities. More information as soon as it becomes available.



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(elected unless otherwise stated)

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and minutes secretary** ▶ **Simon Dickens**

**Scene**

Editor: Vacancy

Design: Jeremy Thompson

Contributions to *Scene* are invited. Our deadline is a week before the end of each month – but if you have a story let us know before then to guarantee that we reserve space for you. Contact us via email using the email above.

All photos in each edition of *Scene* are by Mary Jayne Harding Scott, unless otherwise stated. If members use any images of Little Theatre productions in any social media post please give a photo credit to the person who took the photo. In most cases, for production photos, this will be Mary Jayne Harding Scott.

**Jeremy Thompson**

**Editorial**

Following interviews in March, the role of Deputy Theatre Manager has been accepted by Carolyn Young. Carolyn brings with her years of experience leading and running box offices in Leeds, coming to us from her current role managing the ticketing office for Coventry City of Culture. She's due to start with us on 16th May – opening night for *Rabbit Hole* – and we're sure everyone will make her feel very welcome.

This issue of *Scene* sees a warm tribute to our long-standing member and former manager of 23 years Jim O'Donoghue, paid by Roy Smith, who worked with Jim over many years. There's also details of who is joining the operations teams following the round of nominations last month; thank you to all those who have agreed to give their time and experience. If you were unsure about whether to get involved then you can still do so, just contact the theatre office and they'll put you in touch with the right person: hello@thelittletheatre.co.uk.

Although the new 2022–23 season has yet to be announced, planning is well advanced. The productions team hope to be able to make an announcement about next season's shows later in May or early June (as usual, it all hinges on having the performance rights confirmed, which seems to take forever nowadays). However, one show has already been announced, and auditions for some principals and dancers are already in the schedule (see page 8). Tickets for our panto *Aladdin* are already on sale... this year's *Cinderella* was virtually a sell-out, so book early for *Aladdin*!

Notices for auditions are posted on the theatre's website as soon as the show's director has them set, and we also announce them on our Facebook account. We also post each LDS show review on our website on a Tuesday evening, the day after opening night, so you can read what the critic thought before heading out to see the show!

You'll also have seen news of our continuing centenary celebrations on the front page, with a gala performance of *Scheherazade's Arabian Nights* on 27th June for LDS members... along with a delicious buffet, and all for just a tenner! Use the code MEMBER100 when you book your tickets for Monday 27th, and come and celebrate one hundred years of the LDS in style!

## Memories of Jim O'Donoghue

Jim joined the Little Theatre in 1965 where his first role was in *The Boy Friend*. Our paths didn't really cross until we were both in the chorus of several Christmas pantomimes. I'm afraid he had to wait some time before he finally managed to play an ugly sister which he did in *Cinderella* in 2003. Jim always said he had the best principal boy's legs in the business and indeed in fishnet tights they certainly were very shapely. Not that he had much opportunity to show them off, although Geoff Sharpe did cast him as the dame's double in his production of *Mother Goose*,

where his legs were on display as he disappeared down the well for the 'Beauty transformation'.



Jim with from the left, Alan Mitchell, Alan Freckingham and Roy Smith at Jim's 70th Birthday in the theatre bar in 2007.

For many years we also appeared in lots of the music halls which ended the Theatre's season, taking part in the varied sketches, serving drinks to the punters in the audience and joining the other waiters in rousing barber's shop ballads. Over the ensuing years, Jim's talents saw him play a range of parts from those in the Feydeau farces of *Hotel Paradiso* and *Cat Amongst the Pigeons* to *Twelve Angry Men* the courtroom drama. He played for me in my first production at the Theatre, *Irma La Douce* in 1970 as well as *See How*

*They Run* in 1988 where his beloved cocker spaniel Brandy appeared with him on stage much to the amusement of the audience. He also had a great love of Shakespeare and I know he was particularly proud of his achievement as Aguecheek in *Twelfth Night*, played in a long flaxen wig. He would always like to affectionately quote one of the character's lines, "I was adored once" and it's a fitting tribute to him that a photograph of him in the part appeared on the cover of the theatre's 100th Anniversary Book, *In Our Time*.

Even after retiring in 2002, he continued to act and particularly enjoyed playing Major Pollock in Terence Rattigan's *Separate Tables* as well as appearing in *Flare Path* which gave him the opportunity to wear an officer's uniform on stage which he was cut out for. We used to laugh about playing what we called, character number 27. This was the old family retainer, or the vicar roles. In his career he played a number of these characters, but he did them so well and his natural Irish accent, which he could drop into with such ease, was certainly a bonus when he was called upon to play an Irish Catholic priest. Offstage he had a natural aptitude for mimicry, but this was never cruel, just mischievous and he would regularly impersonate different members over the phone much to the confusion of the member on the other end of the line.

Jim applied successfully for the position of theatre manager in 1979 and he was to become affectionately known as 'The face of the Little', always with a welcoming smile and friendly greeting for the audience members who came into the theatre office to buy their tickets. Over the next 23 years until his retirement in 2002 he assembled a loyal band of volunteers to help him run the Theatre office and he even persuaded Isla Henderson, who he'd worked with

# LITTLE THEATRE OPEN AUDITIONS

## WHEN

**Sun 19th June, 2022  
10am**

## WHERE

**The Little Theatre**

**Dover Street, Leicester, LE1 6PW**

**All auditionees will have the opportunity of taking part in a morning workshop session which will be lead by David Cross. This will culminate in a short presentation in front of a group of Directors.**

**After a break for lunch, there will be individual auditions and a chance to show what you can do!**

**To book a place or find out more, please contact Adam Jones on 01164 420 157 or e-mail [adamjones506@btinternet.com](mailto:adamjones506@btinternet.com)**

**[WWW.THELITTLETHEATRE.CO.UK](http://WWW.THELITTLETHEATRE.CO.UK)**

**ARE YOU 16 YEARS OF AGE OR OLDER?**

**DO YOU HAVE A PASSION FOR PERFORMING?**

**ARE YOUR ABILITIES AS AN ACTOR BEING RECOGNISED?**

**DO YOU FEEL TYPECAST?**

**HAVE YOU AUDITIONED FOR PLAYS, BUT NOT YET BEEN CAST?**

**WOULD YOU LIKE THE CHANCE OF BEING SEEN BY A RANGE OF DIRECTORS?**

## Review: Dead Guilty

**Dead Guilty** by Richard Harris is the latest production at Leicester’s Little Theatre. Harris has ventured from his usual genre of TV crime writing into the world of psychological thrillers – the result? A play that covers four months in the lives of two women, Julia and Margaret, who both harbour a dark secret. The action begins and ends with an inquest, and between the two acts of many short scenes, we watch the intermediate effects. Set in the 1990s, at first Julia is in a wheelchair



and housebound, having been injured in a car crash travelling with her lover when he died of a heart attack. She is assisted by a male home help, Gary, and a seemingly ineffectual therapist, Ann.

Enter Margaret, the widow of Julia’s lover, who at first appears fairly innocuous, wanting answers about her husband’s death. But as events unfold, we see a subtle change from someone needy into someone sinister, and finally just plain evil. The ‘awkward’ friendship becomes increasingly dangerous for Julia as Margaret effectively gets Gary and Ann out of the way, leaving her to wield her revenge on her late husband’s mistress.



Julia was played with conviction by Rachel Humphrey as she is slowly ground down by Margaret’s attention and dominance, while Cathy Rackstraw revelled in her performance as Margaret, becoming more believable during the second half as she inhabited the murderous quality of her character. Support was given by Pete Bing as Gary, in his debut performance at the Little, plus Tracey Gosling, prim and proper as therapist Ann.

The single set (very much of the time) was enhanced by the large, domineering, beautifully-lit backdrop of an illusive spider’s web, drawing you into the action, a clever ploy, and each scene change with the emotive music was slick and seamless, a credit to the backstage crew!

Poison is not always a tablet or drug, it can be purely the intangibility of targeting the mind. Harris’s play does this, making you want to know the outcome – which is dramatic and shocking. How? My lips are sealed..!

## Memories of Jim...

at Pool/Lorrimer's, the Leicester hosiery manufacturer, to join him as his assistant in the office. At Christmas he would always generously pay for a Christmas luncheon to say a thank-you to all of them for their support.

You could always guarantee that whatever you needed he was always there to help. Our President Richard Cadell tells of the time, as a young boy he went into the theatre in floods of tears having lost the money his mother Judith Pearson had given him for his bus-fare. Jim comforted him and gave him the money to get him home.

He would regularly go into the Theatre on a Sunday morning after a production to balance the takings from the Saturday night's performance, which could amount to large amounts of money. This was very much before the introduction of credit cards. His partner Michael Brown would often accompany him to clean the dressing rooms when a 'Let' was expected the following week. On a Monday morning he would then walk to the bank with the money in an old shopping bag making sure that he took a different route each time in case he was being watched.

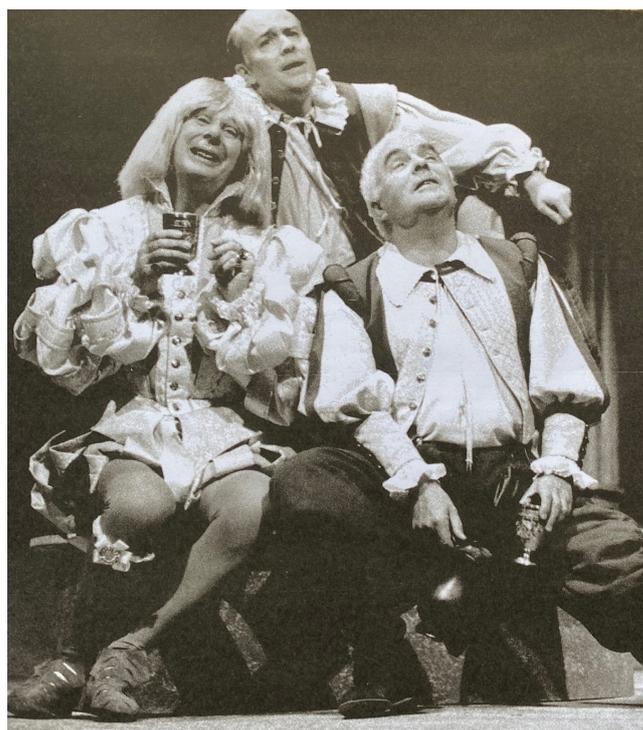
Away from the Little Theatre I had the pleasure of his company over many years of going to see many Shakespeare plays at Stratford, resulting in some amusing incidents. The massive road works around Warwick with the rerouting of the roads leading to the M40 caused so many traffic jams over months and months, with the result that many times we arrived at the theatre late. I do remember on one occasion at the Other Place, because we were so late, we had to sit in the bar which at the time was an area between the cast's dressing rooms and the stage. Jim and I happily spent the time chatting to the actors as they came off stage before managing to catch up with the performance for the second half.

On another occasion, again because we were late, we were hurriedly escorted to our seats at the front of the auditorium in the main house at Stratford by an obliging steward, just in time to sit down before the house lights went out. A procedure usually reserved for visiting royalty and VIPs.

Jim had an infectious laugh and could be known to literally roll around in his seat with laughter. We were at a performance of *Midsummer Night's Dream* in the main house where the play was set in Roman times and when it came to the Pyramus and Thisbe scene, Pyramus wore a helmet with a red bristle plume on top. His endeavours to crawl between the actor's legs playing Wall sent Jim into convulsions of laughter, joined I have to say by the rest of the audience.

I can still remember that visit amongst many others and what happy memories they are.

Jim with fellow actors, John O'Malley as Feste and Tony Ward as Sir Toby Belch in *Twelfth Night* in 1990.



Roy Smith

# Members' Notes

► **From the Archives 2** In 1934, Cecil Chisholm published a book entitled *Repertory. An Outline of the Modern Theatre Movement* (London, Peter Davies Ltd., 1934). While researching his book Mr. Chisholm visited many repertory companies both professional and amateur, including Leicester's Little Theatre. In a chapter titled 'Starting a Repertory Theatre' he states:

"So soon as a society comes into possession of a theatre costs soar. At Leicester, for instance, it is found impossible to put on a play for a week for less than £120. In other words, you must take an average of £20 a night for a week to make ends meet.

"May I emphasise that to run an amateur repertory demands an enormously greater organisation than to run a professional one. The continuous running of the Leicester Little Theatre for amateur repertory is only made possible by the possession of the following assets:

- A society with 500 paying members
- A standing body of 120 amateur actors
- A voluntary scene-shifting corps
- A volunteer corps of attendants
- A group of experienced amateur producers
- A paid general manager
- A theatre to let for 36 weeks in the year
- Two halls to let throughout the year
- A paid designer and an electrician (part-time)

Until at least the skeleton of the first five items in this list has been built up, it may be unwise to launch out into building plans."

Lisa Thirlby

► **From the Archives 3** Over the past few weeks, we have received three donations,

- Margaret Hudson with assorted programmes, with critics of the production and the theatre press releases of

forthcoming productions.

- Wendy and Stuart Saunders donating their father's memorabilia from the time as a member to his unfortunate early demise. John was very good actor, director and stage manager along with his wife Maureen, son and daughter Stuart and Wendy, who were all involved in the theatre.
- A collection of programmes, all in excellent condition, from the family of late Ruth Noon, was a patron for over forty years.

If you or any one you are aware wishes to dispose of any memorabilia whether of the Little or any other venues we can accommodate, as we have contacts with regional public record offices and the Victoria and Albert Museum Theatre Collection – every document is found a home.

\* \* \*

The great actor-manager Sir Donald Wolfit was question why he was always touring, the reply,

"I used to be a tour de force. Now I am forced to tour".

Alan Freckingham

► **It's Not Just 'For You', It's 'By You'** You may have seen a small notice in the theatre that says "Ask not for what your theatre can do for you but what you can do for your theatre." *Scene* is for all members, not just performers, staff, etc., but everyone. So, why not contribute? Yes, we can keep you updated regarding shows, new members, etc., but we would love to hear from you. Imagine all the different jobs, hobbies interests that you must have. The front of house staff enjoy meeting you and hearing your fascinating tales, but that is a very small percentage of membership.

Why not tell us how long you have been coming? Which shows you like best? What is your favourite seat? What do you get up to in your spare time? If you wish to remain anonymous for security or personal reasons, that's fine. Be part of the news. The Little Theatre is for all of us.

Frances Harris

## LDS 200 CLUB

April 2022

1st prize - £250 Share Number - 92  
2nd prize - £100 Share Number - 135  
3rd prize - £50 Share Number - 122

## Operating Teams

Many thanks to the following members who will be working as part of our Operating Teams. Any other members who could offer their services would be very welcome.

### PRODUCTIONS

Jane Towers, Mary Harding Scott, Ruth Cheetham, Simon Butler, Jade Afflick Goodall, Alex Thompson, Doreen Woolley.

### MARKETING

Lynette Watson, Kate Donovan, Jade Afflick-Goodall and Alex Thompson

### FACILITIES

Ian Connor, Tim Neville, Simon Butler, Owen Lee

### MEMBERSHIP

Richard Payton, Ali Levy

### Stage 1

Doug Simpson

## ***Auditions – Aladdin***

**Directed by John Bale**

It may only be the start of summer, but plans for our annual Pantomime are ongoing. This Year's LDS Panto at The Little Theatre in Leicester is *Aladdin*. The Production team is, John Bale, Kerian Whelan-Newby, Paul Timms and Caroline Walsh

We are holding auditions for some of the Principal parts on Friday 10th June 2022 at 7pm at 52 Down (Albion Street).

### **Dancers' Auditions are on Sunday 3rd July at 12 noon**

*Note: We are looking for a team of Senior Dancers, minimum age strictly 16, by the beginning of December 2022. No one younger than this need apply.*

The panto opens on Thursday 15th Dec 2022 and runs for 24 performances until Sunday 8th Jan 2023. There are a few days off here and there. For dates and times of the performances, visit the Little theatre's website and go to *Aladdin* Bookings: [www.thelittletheatre.co.uk](http://www.thelittletheatre.co.uk)

If you are interested (or know anyone who is) and you would like more information about the parts up for audition, please don't hesitate to contact us by emailing [PantoAuditions@thelittletheatre.co.uk](mailto:PantoAuditions@thelittletheatre.co.uk)  
Look forward to hearing from you.

John Bale

WAOS PROUDLY PRESENTS



# SISTER ACT™

THE LITTLE THEATRE, DOVER STREET, LEICESTER  
BOX OFFICE: 0116 255 1302

*24th - 28th May 2022*

Music by **Alan Menken** Lyrics by **Glenn Slater** Book by **Cheri Steinkellner**  
Additional Book Material **Douglas Carter Beane** & **Bill Steinkellner**

Based on the Touchstone Pictures Motion Picture "Sister Act" written by Joseph Howard  
Presented by arrangement with MUSIC THEATRE INTERNATIONAL (Europe) Ltd

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The  
Little  
Theatre

# RABBIT HOLE

A play by David Lindsay-Abair  
Directed by Paul Beasley



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video.



16th–21st May 2022

Box Office: 0116 255 1302 [www.thelittletheatre.co.uk](http://www.thelittletheatre.co.uk)

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