

Alphabetical Order
Dir. Paul Beasley

NOVEMBER 2022

SCENE

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE LEICESTER DRAMA SOCIETY

The
Little
Theatre

Visit our website for more information: thelittletheatre.co.uk

Editor's Letter

Five one-off specials visited us at the end of October through to the first week of November. The Little loves to welcome visiting productions and is fortunate enough to be able to provide a fabulous stage and facilities to other production companies.

Thanks to this, Leicester audiences could catch Tom & Elvis, Steptoe & Son Radio Show, Nelly – A Folk Musical, The Soul Train, and Three Men in a Boat – if you're reading this before November 4, there's still chance to see them!

Last month we also enjoyed The Shape of Things, 42nd Street and Alphabetical Order – three very different productions that brought in great audiences.

Coming up, Joe Orton's swinging sixties, black comedy Entertaining Mr Sloane is our LDS play for this month, directed by Sally Bruton. Later this month, I'll be on stage myself in 9 to 5: the Musical, directed by Steve Duguid, playing in my first lead role!

Currently in the making, the two-person cast of Educating Rita is gearing up to rehearsals for their performance in January. I'm thrilled to see part of the cast list for the very first LDS musical The Railway Children (full announcement coming



soon), and I hear auditions for Home, I'm Darling went exceptionally well with director John Ghent in late October. John Bale's panto rehearsals for Aladdin are also in full swing – judging from the cast's social media posts, it looks like they're having a blast!

The Little has also just welcomed the Little Theatre Guild's central regional conference. There were various workshops run, such as improv with Tom Young, diversity in theatre, and social media management with Sharon Clement of Cross Productions. LTG represents amateur theatres across the UK so it's a big deal for us to host them in our building.

Kerry

Contents

Editor's Letter	2	Member's News	5
The Team	3	Panto Kids' Bar	5
200 Club Winners	3	Obituaries	6
Cast Announcement	3	What's On This Month	7
Have Things Changed in 80 Years?	4	Recent Productions	8 - 9
Member Profile	4	A Note From the Archives	10
		Board Report	10
		In The Spotlight	11

The Team

Theatre Manager ▶ **Graham Muir**

Deputy Theatre Manager ▶ **Carolyn Young**

Leicester Drama Society Ltd Board of Trustees

Chairman & Technical Trustee ▶ **Andy Crooks**

Company Secretary ▶ **David Moore**

Honorary Secretary ▶ **Mary Jones**

Treasurer ▶ **Jenny Harding**

Trustee for Facilities ▶ **Martin Scott**

Trustee for Front of House ▶ **Frances Harris**

Trustee for Marketing & Outreach ▶ **Tom Young**

Trustee for Membership ▶ **Jackie Caunt**

Trustee for Productions ▶ **Joe Middleton**

Trustee for the Studio ▶ **Russell Hughes**

Trustee without specific responsibility
and minutes secretary ▶ **Simon Dickens**

Scene

Editor of Scene ▶ **Kerry Smith**

Design of Scene ▶ **Cross Productions**

Scene

Contributions to Scene are invited. Our deadline is a week before the end of each month. If you have a story, let us know before then to guarantee that we reserve space for you. Contact us via email on hello@thelittletheatre.co.uk.

200 Club Winners

September

1st	087 (£250)
2nd	098 (£100)
3rd	012 (£50)

You can join the 200 Club monthly draws now for a payment of £30. This payment will include you in the seven remaining draws for this year (November 2022 – April 2023). Your payment will provide valuable support to The Little Theatre and give you an excellent chance of winning a prize of £250, £100 or £50 each month.

Call The Little Theatre Box Office on 0116 255 1302 to join and make your payment.

Cast Announcement

BEDROOM FARCE By Alan Ayckbourn

Production dates: March 6-11, 2023

I want to say a big thank you for the really encouraging number of people who turned up to audition for Bedroom Farce. We had two very enjoyable evenings, and no one was phased by being asked to leap into a very bouncy bed in the studio. My commiserations to the very talented people I was unable to cast on this occasion.
Mary Jones, Director

Cast:

Malcolm - Simon Butler
Kate - Rachael Humphrey
Nick - Jordan Handford
Jan - Diani Davies
Trevor - Andy Longley-Brown
Suzanna - Helen White
Delia - Karen Gordon
Ernest - Adam Jones

Crew

Director - Mary Jones
Set Design - Phil Newman
Costume Design - John Bale
SM - Russell Hughes
DSM - Andy Mear
LX - Jenny Harding/Martin Scott
Sound - Stewart Wale
Prompt - Sandra Brown

Have things changed in 80 years?

A look at front of house rules compared with the 1940s By Frances Harris - Trustee for Front of House

How have things changed in 80 years?

Recently, Lisa Thirlby was kind enough to show me the front of house duties from the 1940s. Although most are basic common sense – which still prevail – I have to admit one or two items made me glad we've moved on a little.

The House Manager

'You should arrive 10 minutes before the doors are opened to the public.'

In 2022, the manager is there half an hour before, as radios and terminals have to be unplugged and taken to the foyer, with the equipment made ready for the staff. There is also a general check round to make sure everything is in order before the public are admitted.

Gas Lighting

'The following gas jets are lit. Main stairs 4, light boxes 4, rear stairs 1, backstage stairs 1, stage door entrance 2. Total lights 12.'

Thank goodness for electricity! (ed's note: nowadays our only gaslighting is in *The Shape of Things*).

Refreshments

'See that the coffee tables are all ready for serving and that the stewards carry in the coffee urns at least ten minutes before the coffee interval.' And: 'Arrange for the stewards to help at the coffee tables by tipping up the coffee urns for the servers and help in any ways possible, if requested by the coffee supervisor.' ...I think we all prefer the ice cream trolley in the auditorium and the queues at the bar.

Latecomers

This appears in a couple of sections, worded slightly differently but the message is the same: "After the curtain rises, suggest to latecomers with centre seats that they stand in the gangway until the curtain falls, or occupy accessible empty seats until the interval."

Pardon? Nobody is allowed to stand in the gangway! We do place latecomers in suitable seats so other patrons are not disturbed. At the pantomime, we ask they wait for applause so that performers are not distracted.

This is theatre and you can't beat live entertainment, especially the quality provided at the little.

Member Profile



Joe Middleton

Introducing Joe Middleton, who was elected as Trustee for Productions in March 2022.

Joe, 30, graduated from De Montfort University with a first-class degree in Drama Studies. He now works as an estate agent in the city centre, progressing to office manager,

He previously spent time working in retail at Buckingham Palace. Being in London presented the opportunity to visit theatre productions and musicals, with the latter being a personal passion.

At The Little, Joe has been an LDS member for over 10 years. His first roles were Francis Flute in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and Will in *August Bank Holiday Lark*. In addition to becoming a trustee, he's also supported with props and as a bar volunteer.

Joe works very hard for the theatre, with his goal as Productions Trustee to diversify and widen audiences, expand our outreach to Leicester and beyond, and strive to build on our high artistic standard as amateurs. He is currently assistant directing on LDS's musical adaptation

of *The Railway Children*. An innovation for the theatre, the Easter musical aims to provide more opportunities for children to perform and encourage more family trips to our theatre. It'll be on stage March 31 to April 15, 2023.

Before that, if you'd like to see more of Joe, he'll be playing the Genie of the Lamp in our Christmas pantomime, *Aladdin*. If you wish to attend, get your tickets soon, as sales are hotting up! Jackie, Trustee for Membership

FUN FACT: Joe was born on February 29, and was featured on BBC Worldwide Live News' story about leap year babies. He feels quite lucky to be able to celebrate on either February 28 or March 1, as well as claim to be seven and a half years old!

Members News

I thought I might give you more of an insight as to what goes on at Connections Evening – this is a summary of what happened on the October 18 edition.

We were joined by 10 folks, some of whom were already new members, having joined online. Our usual lead Richard Payton was away, so it was left to Joe Middleton (Trustee for Productions), Fran Harris (Trustee for FOH), David Taylor, and me to share the duties. Carolyn Young (Deputy Manager) kindly stayed to open and close the bar for us.

We began with a welcome (soft) drink and a brief talk about activities they could volunteer for within the theatre. Fran explained about FOH, and Joe took the lead talking about all aspects of performing, and backstage support (props, stage management, prompt, dressing, etc).

We began our tour in 52 Up to view a rehearsal for *Entertaining Mr Sloane*. We watched Ken Huggett, Carolos Dandelo and Ben Cusack in action. I was really lost in this scene, feeling the menace and sardonic

humour. I was surprised how well this was going as they are in the early stages of rehearsal.

We then moved on to the props cellar with David showing the group around before progressing to the office where Carolyn talked about the need for office, box office and FOH volunteers, especially on performance days.

We then moved on to the workshop, pointing out the costume design area – we didn't venture in as there was a lot of sawdust on the floor, and didn't want to get John's (Widow Twanky) designs mucky.

We took a quick look at the studio, before moving on to the auditorium, where a rehearsal of *Alphabetical Order* was in progress. Director Paul Beasley has warned me that this would be his cast's first time on stage – always a bit daunting for the actors – but we were really entertained. As I watched, I found myself relating to Rachael Humphrey's character of Leslie. "Oh my goodness," I thought, "I'm coming to see this play and I think I might be

the villain of the piece!"

As the play will be over when this edition of Scene goes out, if I relate more to Leslie, I think I'll keep it to myself! The play looks really good and I'm looking forward to seeing it.

Joe took the lead as we toured backstage before we headed back to the bar. We're delighted to have some new members! Thanks to Sally Bruton and Paul Beasley for allowing us to preview their plays.

If you want to come on a tour of the theatre, whether to refresh your memory or bring a friend, let us know in the office and we'll look forward to seeing you.

In other news, I'd like to thank Kerry and Tom for their work on and bringing Scene to us each month.

Also, a reminder that paid up members can purchase tickets for LDS productions at a discount price of £10 (when booked within a month of opening night). Login to your account when booking online and this will be applied automatically, or call the box office.

Jackie, Trustee for Membership

Panto Kids' Bar

Every year, our Panto Kids' Bar and our colouring contest are an intrinsic part of The Little pantomime experience. They're a key differentiator from our competition and our customers arrive year after year, queuing up to get involved in the magic.

Can you help?

We need three people every performance to make the Kids' Bar work. Whether it be selling flashing lights and cheap sweets or helping and encouraging young people to complete the colouring competition.

If you can spare time to help on one or more performances, Jenny Harding will be delighted to hear from you... ("oh yes she will!")

Get in touch via email j.a.harding@lboro.ac.uk or call 0116 272 0767.



Obituaries

Michael Hughes

Passed away September 8, 2022

We had the pleasure of working with Michael on many productions and very much appreciated his help in the Panto Kids' Bar for many years. His passions included science and music as well as drama and we had many interesting conversations whilst Michael very kindly sharpened interminable numbers of crayons for the colouring competition and changed hundreds of batteries in flashing lights over the years. As well as his regular performances on stage, he was also a valuable member of the Marketing Team for several years. Julia, Michael's wife has sent the following message: "The Little was a lifeline for Michael when we first moved up to Leicester. I am still amazed to see the number of productions Michael was in (we have all the programme) – my particular favourites being 'A Number' in the Studio, 'Lady Windermere's Fan' in the main theatre, his one-off presentation on Dylan Thomas (filling a gap in a One Act Play Festival), and, of course, his voice as the Giant in 'Jack and the Beanstalk'!



Thank you to all who knew him and put up with his occasionally irascible nature."

Michael's funeral will be held on Wednesday, November 2 at 3.30pm at Great Glen Crematorium. Family flowers only but donations, if desired, to Prisoners' Education Trust, or Crisis.

Everyone who knew Michael is very welcome and Michael's family are hoping it will be a celebratory rather than funereal affair (they would prefer no black suits please).

Jenny Harding and Martin Scott

Kathie Layfield

1940 - 2022

The name Kathie Layfield may not be very familiar to many present members of the Little Theatre but in her early days she was actively involved in many aspects of the Theatre, which included running ARENA, the Theatre's student group. She was an extremely versatile and talented lady who was an accomplished musician.

At the Theatre, Kathie, who had a very good singing voice, appeared in a number of productions in the early 1960s and 1970s including *Dark Of The Moon*, *The Prime Of Miss Jean Brodie*, *Picnic* and the role of Rosa in *The Rose Tattoo*.

Her illustration skills were put to good use in the designing of more than fourteen memorable sets from *When We Are Married*. Kathie also liked the challenge of the more demanding design needs of *The Royal Hunt Of The Sun*, *A Flea In Her Ear*, *Henry V* and *The Taming Of The Shrew*.

She also used her imagination to create a huge number of costume designs. Her illustrations were beautifully drawn, particularly the male characters who were always extremely tall and slim. I remember the military costumes in *Cinderella* which caused problems



for the wardrobe department when they had to adjust the design to fit a motley assortment of different sized gentlemen of the chorus.

An exhibition of her costumes was mounted on the upstairs gallery. I suggested that she meet the editorial team at Ladybird where I was Art Director. They commissioned her to illustrate a book on nursery rhymes. Her style proved so popular that she went on to illustrate over thirty titles for Ladybird, mainly for well-loved fairytales. The books are still around today and Kathie would have been proud of the enjoyment she'd brought to children and the lasting legacy she's left behind.

Roy Smith

What's On This Month



Entertaining Mr Sloane

By Joe Orton

LDS, November 14-19

Dir. Sally Bruton

Orton's sharp black comedy tells the story of Mr. Sloane, a 20-year-old man with a dangerous charm. He enters the house of Kath, her brother Ed and father Kemp, looking to rent a room. It doesn't take long before both Kath and Ed become infatuated with Sloane.

Although Sloane believes he holds all the cards, he soon becomes the pawn in a game of desire and sexual manipulation...



9 to 5: The Musical

By Dolly Parton and Patricia Resnick

KPAOS, November 22-26

Dir. Steven Duguid

Pushed to the boiling point, three female co-workers concoct a plan to get even with the sexist, egotistical, lying, hypocritical bigot they call a boss. In a hilarious turn of events, Violet, Judy and Doralee live out their wildest fantasy – giving their boss the boot! While Hart remains "otherwise engaged", the women give their workplace a dream makeover, taking control of the company that had always kept them down. Hey, a girl can scheme, can't she?



Visiting Productions

The Steptoe & Son Radio Show (November 1) breathes new life into Galton & Simpson's classic sitcom.

Nelly - A Folk Musical (November 2) tells the story of how Nell Gwynne became the most famous woman in Restoration England.

Soul Train (November 3) delivers a fun presentation of 60s and 70s soul, motown and disco showstoppers.

Three Men In A Boat (November 4) sees Jerome K Jerome recount his boating holiday along the River Thames with two companions and his dog.

Frank Sinatra - His Way (November 18, matinee only) explores the rise, fall and rise again of Ol' Blue Eyes with award winning singer, Robert Habermann.



Recent Productions

The Shape of Things

A busy October began with our production of *The Shape of Things*, directed by Diani Gatenby Davies. This dark romantic comedy prompted many questions, and enraptured audiences throughout the week.



"We love going to The Little Theatre, everyone who works there is so friendly and welcoming. *The Shape of Things* was a great production."



"Brilliant show. Well done to all involved."



"A wonderful, thought-provoking play. Brilliant acting, a very enjoyable evening."



"Absolutely loved this play last night. Excellent performances and a really thought-provoking premise; can't get it out of my head!"



"A very interesting play with great acting!"

PHOTOGRAPHY: MARY JAYNE HARDING SCOTT

Recent Productions Alphabetical Order

Our second LDS play of the month was Michael Frayn's *Alphabetical Order*, directed by Paul Beasley. A charming comedy about the battle between order and chaos, it featured a fantastic ensemble performance.



"I loved this performance; the characters personalities were fantastic, and the actors really portrayed them in fine comedic style! A very enjoyable show!"



"Another well-acted and enjoyable performance... thank you!"



"Some great performances. Well done"

"Really enjoyed that, I thought it was great. Well done all."

A Note From the Archives

We put together a display for the Heritage Open Day (September 10) which brought out of storage several items that rarely see the light of day, and which demonstrated the breadth and scope of LDS's archives. Production programmes, photos and crits are just a small part of what we hold. Though not a complete collection, we have the society's committee minutes from the very beginnings - these are an invaluable record, especially if one is trying to write about our history! Scrapbooks donated by former members, from the 1930s onwards, offer a different insight into years of the society's story. There are folders of press cuttings and photographs about the buildings, the chapel, our former patron, our years at The Minack, and so on...

Following the sad death of our former archivist, Jim O'Donoghue earlier this year, we were fortunate to receive a generous donation from his estate to be used in the conservation of the society's archives. This is enabling us to make a start on transferring the production records into acid-free storage, particularly important for the early years where the programmes are becoming very fragile.

We are continuing with the huge task of writing actors' names on the back of production photos. There is also a

large box of 'unknown' items, which we will get round to sorting one day.

Going through the boxes of production records, we've found that they are incomplete. Here is a list of some things we don't have:

1954-55 - *The Castiglione Brothers* by Alberto Colantuoni, directed by Leslie Walker.

Nothing - no programme or photos.

1988-89 - *Old Time Music Hall*, directed by Thea Craine. No photographs.

1990-91 - *The Sea* by Edward Bond, directed by Josè Johnson. No photographs.

1992-93 - *Passion Play* by Peter Nichols, directed by Michael Lynch. No photographs.

1997-98 - *April in Paris* by John Godber, directed by Judy Price. No photographs.

If anyone can help by providing photos from one or more of these productions, we would be very grateful. Please contact me on 07816 472 998 or lisa@thirlby.net.

Lisa Thirlby, Archivist

Board Report

The Trustees typically meet at the end of each month, (with the exception of summer months due to holidays).

After a break in August, they met again on September 25 to review management of the Theatre.

There is generally a lot to discuss as you might imagine, and each trustee reports on their area of responsibility.

Following Jeremy Thompson's resignation from the Board, Tom Young has agreed to be co-opted to extend his role to become Marketing & Outreach Trustee. The two important roles work well together, as both involve work to reach our regular and new patrons, as well as drama groups and partners that might be interested in working with us. Thanks to Tom for agreeing to extend his role.

The 200 Club draw took place with September's results posted in the last issue of Scene. Do consider joining the 200 Club if you want a chance of winning a cash prize each month. This helps us raise money for the Building Fund.

From the Treasurers Report, Jenny advised that our energy prices for electricity and gas have now doubled and whilst bar takings have generally been lower, high attendance on certain shows yields good takings with lower overheads thanks to the happy band of volunteers who work the bar these days.

We will ensure that our future productions are ones that people want to see, as our theatre costs around £1,500 per day to run. Season ticket sales are up on last year which is good news. We are getting good takings from costume hires, despite having reduced paid staff now - thanks to John Bale for his efforts here.

In September, the Heritage Open Day proved to be really popular, with the history of the theatre well documented in the studio for all to view. Thanks to all technical, front-of-house and bar volunteers for all their help with this event.

Tom noted he wants to look at new ways of getting our audiences to return for future shows and we explored different ideas for alerting those who do come about upcoming shows, following a performance. The meeting reflected on how successful the first play of the season, *Black Coffee* by Agatha Christie, was. It gathered over 20% of additional sales in the production week after the excellent reviews posted on social media.

The trustees were also really pleased to hear that the Society had received the "Community Impact" award at the Niche Magazine Business Awards.

That's all for now folks!

David Moore, Company Secretary

In The Spotlight



Name: Natalie Toni Tebbutt

Age: Older than I look. Younger than I feel.

Profession: I profess that I like proffering profiteroles.

Upcoming production: *Entertaining Mr. Sloane*

Noteworthy Productions: Won Best Supporting Actress at the One Act Play festival, like a good bra. I'm also pretty good at picking up accents. You just grab them by the tail and you'll be fine.

What was the first theatre show you saw?

First theatre show I remember seeing was *A Midsummer Night's Dream* with my school. I was about...12/13? It was a beautiful production and I remember Puck being very funny.

What was the first theatre show you were in?

The first play I was in was *A Christmas Carol* at school. I got to play Scrooge. I was...13, I think. The first musical I was in was *Bugsy Malone* with my school, I was age 15. We performed at The Y and I was Tallullah. My microphone didn't work and so I just sang louder. That's a brag, I know. I wanted to do both because... I've always loved reading and it was like an extension of that, getting to play the characters out loud and be in the stories.

What's your favourite role you've played to date?

My favourite role I've played was probably the March Hare in *Alice in Wonderland*. Mainly because I got to dress weirdly and be bouncy and fun. But then - a cliché, I know - all my roles have been fun and have given me something different and worthwhile.

What's your dream role that you're yet to play?

I don't know if there is such a thing as a dream role for me. Anything different that I can play around with. Maybe Harley Quinn. She's so herself and so weird and wonderful.

What's the best theatre show you've ever seen?

I saw *White Christmas* at the Curve with my lovely friend and fellow actor, Olivia Morrissey, in 2018. Everything about it was well acted and designed and they had a surprise at the end, where artificial snow rained all over the audience, and made it even more magical.

What's your favourite thing about The Little Theatre?

The openness and inclusivity. There's no pretension, that I've seen. Everyone has been professional and friendly.

Tell us about your upcoming production!

Come to see my fellow cast members in *Entertaining Mr. Sloane*. It's a dark comedy about a family ignoring the line between desire and duty. If that intrigues you, come and see it. If it doesn't...





Visit our website for more information: thelittletheatre.co.uk