



Editor's Letter

First of all... what a panto!? On behalf of everyone at The Little Theatre, we'd like to say a humongous thank you to all the members who helped make *Aladdin* happen, from the FOH, bar and kid's bar volunteers to the technical and backstage crew, the cast, production team, and office staff. This combined team effort was as magical as the panto itself.

It's not just for panto that everyone came together though. Over the last season, we're immeasurably grateful for all casts and crews, volunteers and staff for keeping our audiences happy. It's great to have full houses but it can be hard work. Those involved have done a great job of putting on fantastic performances, managing crowd control, multitasking, and dealing with last minute rota changes due to people suffering with Covid. Hats off to you all.

The new season kicks off next month with The York Realist (Feb 6-11) followed by some brilliant one-off shows for Leicester Comedy Festival, including Murder She Didn't Write. Our Marketing Trustee, Tom Young, will also be performing as part of the festival with his improv group, The Same Faces. They'll be at Upstairs at the Western on

February 26 and at Wygston's House on February 9, 16, and 23. We want to hear from you for our members news section, so if you have any performances, life events or milestones to report, do let us know!

One part of The Little's marketing strategy this year was to invest in some billboard advertising and build brand awareness. You can now see The Little and our individual shows being advertised on a digital billboard in Rushey Mead. Take a pic and tag us (@thelittleleics) if you spot it!

Kerry

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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

The winners of December 2022's draw:

1st 037 (£250) 2nd 128 (£100) 3rd 088 (£50)

You can join the 200 Club monthly draws now for a payment of £20. This payment will include you in the four remaining draws for this year (January – 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.

Notice of AGM

Please be advised that Leicester Drama Society's Annual General Meeting will be held on Sunday, March 19, at 7pm in the theatre auditorium.

Open to all LDS members, the business meeting includes trustees' annual reports and presentation of accounts. A short interval will then be followed by an opportunity to ask questions to the board.

The Year Ahead

Happy New Year!

The start of a new year gives us the opportunity to evaluate the theatre's goals and trajectory for the next 12 months.

The first opportunity to do this on mass will be at the Annual General Meeting on March 19 at 7pm. The business meeting will be followed by an opportunity to ask questions to the board of trustees.

Before we look too far ahead, on behalf of the trustees and the whole theatre community, can I take a moment to thank everyone who's helped to make the first half of our season such a success: all our casts and crew, directors and designers, front of house and bar volunteers, office staff and wardrobe team. It's been an incredible collective effort to make the public as happy as possible, especially during panto, with extra support required for the kids' bar. To everyone who has played a role, thank you.

It's been really gratifying to see our audience numbers gradually increasing since the start of our autumn/ winter season. While we've only had a handful of soldout shows (aside from panto), we're delighted that numbers are generally up across the board by comparison to last year. It's also been wonderful to see younger audience members joining us, as this will help to secure the theatre's long-term future. There's still room for improvement, but rebuilding our audience post-Covid is a process, and one that I continue to encourage everyone to be an active part of.

Share our social media posts, bring friends to shows, tell families and everyone you know about The Railway Children, and come to support shows (remember the £10 members' ticket for LDS productions, with some exceptions). It all helps, and builds our community spirit. We've so much to be proud of and shout about!

Our spring/summer season officially starts next month with The York Realist, and includes Bedroom Farce, our easter musical The Railway Children, Home, I'm Darling, Bouncers (Remix), and Shakespeare in Love, as well as visiting productions from our extended family, including Ghost: The Musical (WAOS), Anything Goes (LOPs), Gypsy (KW Productions) and Celebratory Centenary Old Time Music Hall (Last Word Productions).

We'll be celebrating all these productions (as well as those from September 2022 to January 2023) at our end of year awards on July 29 (affectionately dubbed "The Sooties" in honour of our patron). All year, our panel of judges has been attending our shows, and we'll be awarding prizes including "Best Lead Performance"

(in both plays and musicals), "Best Director", "Best Set Design" and more. A fun night set to include several performances and followed by a party in the bar/studio.

Our autumn/winter 2023-24 season is currently being shaped, but we do know our first play will be Agatha Christie's A Murder is Announced. Following the successful visit of Hercule Poirot in last year's Black Coffee, we're excited to have Miss Marple on the case this September.

In November, we'll be visited by our patron Sooty and his right-hand man, Richard Cadell, to celebrate Sooty's 75th birthday. We'll also be gearing up for our next pantomime, Puss in Boots (on sale now).

Throughout the year, we'll have our Connections evenings, acting workshops, youth theatre, members' socials, not to mention all the rehearsals! It's a busy year ahead at The Little Theatre, and we look forward to seeing you!

Words by Tom Young, Trustee for Marketing & Outreach

KEY DATES FOR 2023

FEBRUARY 6 SPRING/SUMMER SEASON STARTS: The York Realist by Peter Gill

MARCH 19

Leicester Drama Society AGM

JULY 29

The Sooty Awards: End of Year Celebration

SEPTEMBER 11

AUTUMN/WINTER SEASON STARTS:

A Murder Is Announced by Agatha Christie

NOVEMBER 4

The Sooty Show - 75th Birthday Spectacular

DECEMBER 14

Puss in Boots (Panto 2023)



What's On This Month



The Same Faces: Improvised Comedy

An LDS Fundraiser

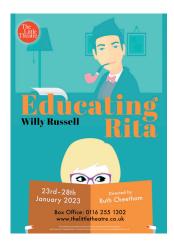
Saturday, January 14

Leicester's longest running improvised comedy group, The Same Faces, are making their Little Theatre debut.

In this special fundraiser for LDS, the two-time Leicester Comedy Festival award finalists will deliver their unique blend of sketches, songs and oneliners – all made up on the spot and based on your suggestions!

100% of ticket proceeds are going to the theatre, and with no props, set, costume or script fees, it's all profit! Come and enjoy this special night of improvised hilarity!





Educating Rita

by Willy Russell

January 23-28, 2023

Dir. Ruth Cheetham

Educating Rita is the unforgettable story of the relationship between a feisty Liverpudlian hairdresser and a jaded university professor.

Rita has a passion for literature and is intent upon self-improvement. Frank's disillusionment with life has driven him to the bottle.

But despite their differences, it seems like each has a lot to teach the other...





Don't forget that LDS members are entitled to one ticket (per member per show) at the discounted rate of £10 for the five LDS plays in our spring/summer season. These are available to purchase within a month of the production. The plays eligible for this discount are:

The York Realist (February 6-11)

Bedroom Farce (March 6-11)

Home, I'm Darling (May 8-13)

Bouncers (Remix) (June 12-17)

Shakespeare in Love (July 3-8)

ALSO AVAILABLE ON THIS RATE ARE:

The Same Faces: Improvised Comedy (January 14)

Gypsy (KW Productions, June 20-24)

Connections Report

Hello everyone,

When you read this, Christmas and panto will be done and dusted (it's behind you!) and we'll be on our way to Easter and *The Railway Children*; can't wait to get sneak previews of this one in rehearsal.

Our last Connections Evening of 2022 was on December 6, and very well attended. As per usual, we began in the bar for a small introduction to all the different aspects of the theatre and the areas where volunteers are sorely needed (bar, FOH, box office, backstage, etc).

We then started our tour by visiting a rehearsal of *Educating Rita*, directed by Ruth Cheetham. We were able to see a little of the interaction between Leeann Rana's Rita and David Lovell's Frank. Leeann had an excellent Liverpudlian accent, and the production is looking good. Ruth very kindly spoke to our potential new members about how important volunteers were to our productions, from FOH, backstage, bar staff, prompts, dressers, etc, and – of course – actors. The performance couldn't go ahead without all the puzzle pieces being in place. Thanks to Ruth for allowing us a preview.

We then visited the props cellar, office, studio, and workshop, proceeding up to the auditorium via the dressing rooms where work had been put into creating some wonderful and wacky wigs; I think we all know a certain dame who would be wearing those.

After a trip backstage, we arrived in the auditorium where Jenny Harding and Martin Scott were working on the lighting for panto. Jenny was experimenting and showed us



how she creates a picture with lights. For example, Abanazar appears stage left, where Jenny uses a dark green colour to give that side of the stage a menacing appearance, while The Spirit of the Ring enters stage right in a lovely soft orangey colour. Jenny then zoned in on Martin's ladders, first making them bright pink and then blue (ladders would be more interesting in those colours). Once the colours have been decided, Jenny will programme them in and set all the magic for panto. Thank you Jenny and Martin for showing us what can be achieved with lighting.

Our next Connection is on January 17

All members are welcome to come along and refresh your memory of the theatre and even bring a friend. Please let the office know you are attending and we can pop you on the list. Wishing you all a happy and healthy 2023. Jackie Caunt, Trustee for Membership

Member Profile

Fraser Tew

Fraser is 19 and currently attending Nottingham Trent University where he is studying Film Production Technology. He works part-time at McDonald's and has also been employed at Curve and De Montfort Hall as a casual technician in productions.

Fraser has been coming to the theatre for over six years, helping backstage. Always the youngest, he valued the help of the backstage team and learnt new techniques from people like Simon Dickens and Andy Mears.

This ultimately led to Fraser taking on the role of Stage Manager for *Black* Coffee and *Entertaining Mr Sloane*.

Recently, Fraser has been occupied with set painting for Aladdin alongside Jacob Martin; the set did look amazing. He also took responsibility for the fly rail during the panto run and helps with fit ups and strikes before and after performances.

I found Fraser very outgoing and fun to be with and hope he will achieve his ambition to be a professional Stage Manager. Jackie Caunt, Trustee for Membership



Obituary Lynda Ragg

August 8, 1943 - November 20, 2022

Long-serving members will be sorry to learn Lynda passed away on November 20. Although never appearing on stage herself, she had been a member for a considerable time, and often supported her husband, John, during his long and distinguished career with Leicester Drama Society.

During the early day of Olde Music Hall, Lynda and John would often organise the catering for the Gala Evening. During the summer, they would also open their house for garden parties, much to members' enjoyment.

Often going above and beyond to support the theatre, they would also host summer rehearsals in the garden, ahead of tours to Minack, Cornwall, with shows such as *David Copperfield*. In recent years, they'd moved to Market Harborough, and become active with Harborough Drama Society.

LDS sends our love and condolences to John and the family.

Alan Freckingham



Trustees' Board Report

The board met for a short meeting in December to gain an overview of the draft accounts which will be considered in more detail at the next meeting this month, once the auditors have completed their work.

We had some challenges with the heating system early in the panto run, which required us to hire an industrial heater for a short period whilst repairs took place; this was successfully completed after a few days – thanks to Martin Scott for sorting this.

Following Joe and Holly's departure from our Youth Theatre, and after interviewing a strong shortlist of candidates, Joe Middleton is pleased to announce the appointment of Andy Longley-Brown as the new Youth Leader and Kate McIntyre as Deputy Youth Leader. Andy is known for appearing in *Calendar Girls* and *Black Coffee*, is completing a drama qualification, and has experience working with young people in theatre, notably in Melton Mowbray. Kate has a degree in theatre and a Masters in scenography and has much experience of acting and directing at The Priory Theatre in Kenilworth (a fellow member of the Little Theatre Guild).

When we heard that Leicester City Council was raising their evening car parking charges to £5 in January, we wrote to the Mayor, making the case for our volunteers and audiences to plead for this not to be levied. The Mayor's response says that the charges were unavoidable, as the council had some really difficult decisions to make regarding its finances. We have explored other car parks close by and recommend the station car park, which currently charges a £2 evening rate. There's also the on-street parking, which remains free in certain places.

Finally, we have now planned our next Annual General Meeting for Sunday, March 19 at 7pm, to be held in the auditorium. Please put this date in your diary; we hope to see many of you at that meeting.

David Moore, Company Secretary

A long journey

Some ladies conceal their age, but others are proud to have hit a milestone.

One of our Front of House staff will become an octogenarian in early February, and it has been quite a journey. Being born during the war, she remembers rationing until she was seven. A quarter of sweets for 6d and a bar of chocolate costing the same took care of her shilling pocket money (that's five new pence).

She was born in the Cotswolds and – until she was allowed a bicycle when she was eleven – had to walk the country roads between the villages. At this age, she attended Burford Grammar School and if you missed the school bus you got out your bike and peddled the six miles using the short route.

When she was sixteen, with work not being very abundant in the area, her parents moved to Leicester,

where she worked in an office during the day and attended typing and shorthand classes in the evenings. But when she reached twenty, she changed course and joined the Leicester City Police Force, spending many hours directing traffic on Gallowtree Gate crossing, plus loads of court work (which is why she's unphased by large quantities of people). The variety was endless; one minute she could be dealing with a children and young persons matter and the next escorting a prisoner to Strangeways.

So, when you buy an ice cream or are being shown to your seat, you know you are in safe hands by someone who worked under Chief Constable Robert Mark. But a word of warning (for those with a sense of humour) – she was shown things that are not in any rule book!

Anonymous

Beds wanted

Three beds are required for March's production of Bedroom Farce.

If you're thinking of buying a new one in the January sales, or have one to get rid of, **PLEASE**

CAN WE HAVE YOUR OLD ONE?

If you can help, please contact Mary Jones on 07814 510059.



Members' News



We're delighted to be able to announce an engagement within our theatre family.

Timothy Neville and Ellen Dewson

Having worked on dozens of productions over the years, many will know Tim as a key member of our tech crew and as our website manager.

Congratulations to both, and we wish you many happy years together.



Audition Notice

Bouncers (Remix)

By John Godber

Audition Date/Time: February 16 at 7pm

Production Dates: June 12-17, 2023

Director: Jane Towers

Location: Haywood Studio, The Little Theatre,

Dover Street, Leicester

If you intend to audition, please let the director know. If you can't make the audition date, but would still like to, please get in touch, as it may be possible to work something out.

Contact Info: 07891 167305 or jane_towers@yahoo.co.uk

Description: A physical theatre production. Four bouncers play over twenty characters in this hilarious take on the nightclub scene. Actors must be able to command a certain 'presence' as the bouncers, as well as switching characters and using physicality to portray the other parts.

Characters:

Lucky Eric

Judd

Ralph

Les



Aladdin Review

I went to see Aladdin in December and boy was it great!

This year hasn't been a good one for many people, including me, so I won't be sorry to see the back of it. Yet I have never laughed so much as I did at the antics on stage. I was still laughing about certain things as I was lying in bed that night.

The costumes and set were amazing. I got quite jealous of some of Widow Twanky's dresses and the pink wig was to die for. I could tell backstage were working hard changing scenes. Everything was perfect.

I will never hear the word "triangle" again without thinking of Karen Gordon (The High Empress of China) and wonder if Tim Stokes (Wishee Washee) had ringing in his ears after those cymbals.

It was perfect storytelling for kids, and my great nephew William (aged eight) and my Grandson Josh (15) really enjoyed it. William joined in with all the singing and his favourite character was Nikki Favell (The Spirit of the Ring). Sitting in the audience, I realised the kids were totally absorbed by it, even giving advice to Aladdin (Rose Bale) and Princess Jasmine (Amy Hollis).

I thought everyone – cast, dancers and crew – put together a magical performance, and now I'm very much looking forward to Puss in Boots – get your tickets early!

Jackie Caunt, Trustee for Membership

Recent Productions

Aladdin

Aladdin, our annual pantomime, proved a great hit with audiences. A fabulous cast – including director John Bale giving us his Widow Twankey – a magnificent team of dancers, and talented production crew made sure that it was an easy-to-love festive treat.



"Great time tonight. We have been for the last few years and have a great time. We're always on the front row and finally tonight was my turn to be called out."



"John and his fellow actors are great, the costumes are superb, and the stage setting is perfect. Interaction with the audience is all you could want for from a panto! Thoroughly enjoyed our visit. Got a second one already booked!"





"These pantomimes get better and better – love a traditional, fun family panto. Thank you everyone. See you in Puss in Boots."



"We had such fun last night, All the cast were fantastic! Widow Twankey was the best I've ever seen- absolutely brilliant! Well done Little Theatre."



"It was amazing! Another great panto – thank you for the laughs, John Bale."



Theatre Superstitions

Many of us will be aware/observers of certain theatrical superstitions, but are you aware of their origins? We thoughts we'd explore a few of the most popular.

Saying 'break a leg' instead of 'good luck'

A few different theories for this custom exist. For the longest time, I believed it was to avoid jinxing your fellow cast members by wishing something positive for them; instead, encouraging the mischief-making spirits of the theatre to bestow the opposite upon them.

Alternatively, it's because the curtains that mask the backstage area are referred to as 'legs' – 'breaking a leg' means you've crossed this boundary and entered the stage – the ultimate goal of any would-be actor.

Another version suggests that you should say 'break a leg' to an actor as they go to an audition, as this would result in them 'being in the cast'.

Whistling backstage is a jinx

This is a superstition with a practical origin. In the 'good old days', when all theatres had manually operated fly towers – before either hydraulics or advanced rigging systems made this safer and easier – the stagehands would cue each other by whistling.

These days, we use radio headsets and a cue from the DSM desk, but before this, an errant whistle could accidentally cause a stagehand to drop or raise scenery, potentially causing an unsuspecting performer to be crushed by a falling wall or sandbag.

The best way to avoid becoming a theatre ghost was to avoid whistling altogether – this grew into a superstition and survives to this day.

Bad dress = good show

No-one is entirely sure of the origin of this one – it may have been the quiet prayer of an exhausted drama teacher!

Many theatre folk cling to this idea, in the hope that a bad dress rehearsal is an omen for a great opening night. Occasionally this maybe true, though it is likely because the bad dress has made the cast and crew aware of potential flaws that need to be corrected, so they're now conscious of them. This, mixed with adrenaline, talent, and preparation should lead to a great show.



Speaking the name of 'The Scottish Play'

No, not Taggart.

For many actors, it's the ultimate faux pas. Speaking the name of Shakespeare's 'Scottish play' backstage can result in a considerable level of displeasure from your castmates, and you'll suddenly be presented with a range of counter-curses required to undo the damage. These might include:

- Reciting any line from the lucky play, Two Gentlemen of Verona
- Reciting this line from A Midsummer Night's Dream: 'If we shadows have offended, think but this and all is mended, that you have but slumbered here, whilst these visions did appear.'
- For the more athletically inclined, one should exit the theatre, spin around in a circle three times, and spit. But why is this? Some of the play draws on witchcraft incantations that supposedly call upon evil spirits. Others believe it's because the original actor who played the title role died tragically during the performance, and the play has been cursed ever since.

Another theory suggests that because the Scottish play is relatively short, and usually popular with audiences, talk of it backstage might suggest your own show is in danger of cancellation, and could be replaced at short-notice by Shakespeare's iconic tragedy.

Words by Tom Young, Trustee for Marketing & Outreach



In The Spotlight

Name: Leeann Rana

Age: 48

Profession: English Teacher/Actor

Upcoming production: Playing Rita in Educating Rita

Noteworthy Productions: My last LDS production was A Bunch of Amateurs in Feb 2022 - it's been great to work with so many of the

same people on Educating Rita

What was the first theatre show you saw?

The first show I vividly remember was Joseph and the Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat at The Palace Theatre, Southend-on-Sea when I was around six years old. My older sister had to stop me running onto the stage as I loved it so much! I recall being in awe of the music, the colours, the lighting – I knew even then it was a world I wanted to be part of.

What was the first play/musical you were in?

Apart from dancing shows and Gang Shows with the Girl Guides(!), the first proper show I performed in was A Midsummer Night's Dream during Sixth Form. I recall desperately wanting to play Helena and being really disappointed when I was cast as Bottom, only to realise during rehearsals that comedy character parts are much more fun to play! This sparked a lifelong love affair with Shakespeare as well as a desire to always make the audience laugh (when the part permits!).

What's your favourite role you've played to date (and why)?

I've been fortunate enough to play many roles whom I've loved, including Audrey in Little Shop of Horrors and The Baroness in Chitty Chitty Bang Bang. However, playing Beryl in Made in Dagenham at The Little in November, 2021 was an absolute joy. Being able to deliver the show's most hilarious lines in my 'native' Essex accent with just a spattering of expletives (ahem) was an experience I'll never forget.

What's your dream role that you're yet to play (and why)?

I have always wanted to play Beatrice in Much Ado About Nothing. I love the verbal sparring between her and Benedick and believe she is one of Shakespeare's finest, most well-written female characters. If I had to choose a musical theatre character, it would be Nancy in Oliver, mainly due to her gutsy nature and her fabulous solo, 'As Long As He Needs Me'.

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

I was incredibly moved by Come From Away a few years ago; a show I knew little about and got last minute tickets to see on a whim. Watching David Tennant in Much Ado About Nothing 11 years ago was incredibly special for many reasons (he's my favourite actor of all time in one of my favourite Shakespeare plays); and although I have seen Rocky Horror countless times, the best time was in London in the 90s when Richard O'Brien himself was sitting behind me in the audience – amazing!

What's your favourite thing about The Little Theatre?

The people! Everyone is so welcoming and there is always a friendly face in the bar, even if you go to see a show on your own. Everyone backstage and in production works so hard to put on the best shows possible and I love sharing the stage with good friends. I feel at home performing here and know how lucky we are in Leicester to have this valuable resource.

Tell us about your upcoming production!

Educating Rita is Willy Russell's iconic play of a working-class Scouse woman's attempts to 'better' herself through learning about English Literature. It is equally funny and moving. The very talented David Lovell, the production team and I have worked tirelessly to bring it to life and do it justice.



