

*A Murder is Announced*  
Dir. John Bale

OCT/NOV 2023

# SCENE

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE LEICESTER DRAMA SOCIETY

The  
Little  
Theatre

Visit our website for more information: [thelittletheatre.co.uk](http://thelittletheatre.co.uk)



# Editor's Letter



As October and November have been our busiest months, we've combined the two to create this special bumper issue of Scene!

Spooky season was brought to you by Diani Gatenby Davies presenting *The Innocents* just before Halloween, and *Stags & Hen (The Remix)* and *The IDOLS' School of Rock* were staged in October too. There was also the exciting announcement that *The*

*Secret Garden* will be our 2024 Easter musical.

November has already seen LDS members get together for a Dungeons and Dragons event and *The Sooty Show: 75th Birthday Spectacular* and *The Carpenters Experience* were presented too. In the coming weeks, we'll stage *Fallen Angels* and *One Act Play Festival* – you also might spot me in *Nativity! The Musical*.

We're seeking volunteers to run the kid's bar during panto, commitments can be flexible to suit your Christmas plans. Volunteers are also needed for operating the fly tower (contact Doug Simpson), as well as the ongoing appeal for more people to run the main bar and front of house (contact Graham Muir/ Fran Harris). Please let us know if you're able to help.

**Kerry**

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# The Team

Theatre Manager ► **Graham Muir**  
 Deputy Theatre Manager ► **Carolyn Young**  
 Acting Deputy Theatre Manager ► **Amanda Sadler**  
 Head of Wardrobe ► **John Bale**  
 Premises Supervisor ► **Rob Mullins**  
 Scenic Workshop ► **Dave Towers**  
 Youth Theatre Leader ► **Andy Longley-Brown**  
 Deputy Youth Theatre Leader ► **Kate MacIntyre**

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 Honorary Secretary Elect ► **Simon Dickens**  
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 Trustee for Outreach ► **To be co-opted**  
 Trustee for Productions ► **Joe Middleton**  
 Trustee without specific responsibility ► **Diani Gatenby Davies**  
 Trustee without specific responsibility ► **To be co-opted**

## Scene

Editor of Scene ► **Kerry Smith**  
 Design of Scene ► **Cross Productions**

Contributions to Scene are invited. To ensure your submissions are used, please send them in by the 15th of each month for inclusion in the next month's issue. 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](mailto:hello@thelittletheatre.co.uk).

# 200 Club Winners

## The winners of September's 2023's draw:

1st	136 (£250)
2nd	13 (£100)
3rd	7 (£50)

## The winners of October's 2023's draw:

1st	27 (£250)
2nd	101 (£100)
3rd	6 (£50)

# Join the 200 Club

for a chance to win upto £250 every month

The Little's big cash-prize lottery

Donate £50 to The Little Theatre to enter the remaining 8 monthly lottery draws for 2023.

The next draw takes place at the end of September.

To enter, call us on:

**0116 255 1302**

[hello@thelittletheatre.co.uk](mailto:hello@thelittletheatre.co.uk)  
[thelittletheatre.co.uk](http://thelittletheatre.co.uk)



# Member Profile

## Mary Jayne Harding-Scott Words by Jackie Caunt

Mary was introduced to The Little Theatre at an early age through her parents, Jenny and Martin, who are still active members. It was through The Little Theatre – and being taken to see all sorts of productions around the country – that she's developed her love for the arts and music. She can play several musical instruments including saxophone, clarinet, flute, and a beautiful singing voice, which I can attest to – impressive!

Mary joined the LDS Youth

Theatre at eight years of age and was in every youth production until she was 18. I remember seeing her in quite a few productions, but the one that stuck out for me was *Ziggar Zaggar*, where Mary played Mother (a woman with a questionable taste in men) and I thought at the time: "This girl is going far." Mary also returned to be the musical director for the Youth Theatre's production of *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* in 2019. She has also worked on many other productions during her time at The Little Theatre, doing stints on props, lighting, and backstage. She was taught to DSM by Andy Mear on Noel Coward's *This Happy Breed* and by Dennis Cooper on Tennessee Williams' *The Glass Menagerie*.

After attending Leicester Grammar School, Mary moved on to King's College, London where she attained both undergraduate and master's degrees in Music and Musicology.

During her degrees, she performed at the Minack Theatre (perched on the Cornish Cliffs near Penzance) and at the Royal Hall,

Harrogate. While at university, Mary worked with various groups as their musical director. Conducting highlights while studying include *Iolanthe* (Gilbert and Sullivan), *Carousel* (Rogers and Hammerstein) and *Ruddigore* (Gilbert and Sullivan) which went on to the International G&S Festival in Harrogate, where Mary was nominated for Best Musical Director.

Since graduating, Mary has had a variety of jobs from working in shops, to being a SEN teaching assistant. She was also Acting Theatre Manager at The Little during the building's reopening after Covid. I can vouch for her here, as she set up a lot of what I do now in membership, and was a great help to me.

Mary, now aged 26, works at Curve Theatre as PA to the Artistic Director and Producing Assistant. A job she loves, because it gives her the opportunity to combine her passion for the arts with a variety of other skills she's picked up on the way. These include project management, PR, technical theatre knowledge, and problem solving.

Mary set up her own production company 'Last Word Productions', which she founded with her Mum in 2021. Recently, The Little Theatre audience were treated to *Old Time Music Hall* which was superb.

The Little Theatre will always hold a special place in Mary's heart as it has had a profound impact on her life; from helping her parents with shows to where she met her partner.

I asked Mary what she's working towards next. She wants to stay in theatre and the arts, hopefully finding a way to combine her work with her own performances. Watch this space, it's going to happen.

Jackie Caunt



# Trustees Report

The following main items were discussed at recent trustee meetings:

## August 6 Board Meeting

The meeting discussed the Annual Target document which we are required to prepare each year in line with our audit and the preparation of the lengthy Annual Report ahead of our yearly accounts audit, which will take place in October. Further to a second incident of patrons being stuck in the lift, the maintenance contract has been re-awarded to a previously known and reliable firm of engineers. Acting workshop uptake has been good, with a break over the summer. The board agreed that the next Easter Musical will be *The Secret Garden*. The Sooty Awards evening was in the most part very well-received by those attending and it was agreed to run this again in 2024 with judging through the year: a very positive letter had been received about the event from a long-standing audience family. The meeting discussed how we could improve the website to enable new members to join online.

## August 27 Board Meeting

Tom Brooks was welcomed to the board, joining as the new Technical Trustee. The meeting discussed a potential part-time post to support with clearing several backstage and workshop issues. The meeting discussed the Annual Target document and decided that we will budget for an average capacity for LDS productions of 55%, the Easter Musical at 60% and Pantomime at 95%. We had invited members to submit nominations for election to the five operating teams with a deadline of August 31, and an update was given on those submitted so far.

## October 1 Board Meeting

Jenny reported that *A Murder is Announced* was up against budget and that last year's specials brought in £75K in total – thanks are due to all volunteers who helped, especially those in the bar and front of house. David requested, and it was agreed, that fit-up and strike vouchers be re-instated to encourage members to help LDS shows on Sunday fit-up

mornings and late Saturday strike evenings. Operating team election results were noted and recommended co-options approved by the board and team members noted below. Fran discussed how FOH staffing had been challenging, but the team had managed to cope very well and the need to practice an evacuation was agreed. Joe discussed *The Secret Garden* musical planned for next Easter regarding the music budget. The board discussed the need for all roles to remain fully open to everyone – both members and potential members – at all auditions. Tom Brooks raised the continued challenge of recruiting enough people to help on the fly rail.

## Operating Team Membership 2023-24

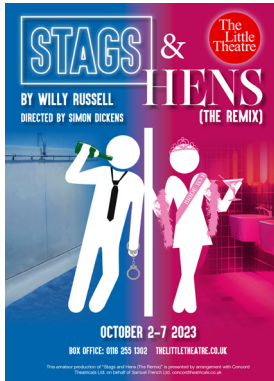
Members are elected or co-opted to support the work of the relevant trustee. The operating teams are vital to support the work needed to keep the theatre running.

David Moore

## Many thanks to the following 23 team members in 2023-24:

TEAM	TRUSTEE	TEAM MEMBERS
Backstage Coordination	Tom Brooks	Andy Crooks (Head of Lighting), Nathan Jones (General Role), Neil Reece (Deputy Head of Stage), Doug Simpson (Head of Stage) and Jane Towers (Head of Properties)
Facilities	Martin Scott	Ian Connor, Simon Entwistle, Owen Lee, Peter Lowe and Tim Neville
Marketing	Tom Young	Emma Bamford and Lynette Watson
Membership	Jackie Caunt	Charlotte Brown, Kane Gray, Kat Lenthall, Richard Payton, and David Taylor
Productions	Joe Middleton	Simon Butler, Ruth Cheetham, Mary Jayne Harding-Scott, Russell Hughes, Annie Tagirova and Jon Worthy

# What's On October



## **Stags & Hens (The Remix)** By Willy Russell

**October 2-7** An LDS Production

Directed by Simon Dickens

For the prospective bride and groom, the stag and hen nights are traditionally a time for getting drunk and raucous behaviour. The final fling, the end of the freedom associated with being single, and a time for your best friends to embarrass you as much as they can. This exuberantly cynical play by the author of *Educating Rita* is a comedy of wedding eve nerves set in the loos of a tacky Liverpool club where Dave and Linda, unbeknownst to each other, are both having their parties. Will they be ready (or in a fit state) for their big day?



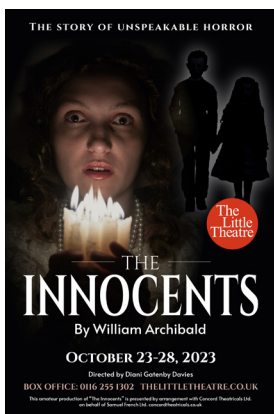
## **School of Rock: The Musical**

By Andrew Lloyd-Webber, Mike White, Julian Fellowes and Glenn Slater

**October 10-14** The IDOLS

Directed by Sam White

Based on the hit film, School of Rock follows Dewey Finn, a failed, wannabe rock star who decides to earn a few extra bucks by posing as a substitute teacher at a prestigious prep school. There he turns a class of straight-A students into a guitar-shredding, bass-slapping, mind-blowing rock band. While teaching these pint-sized prodigies what it means to truly rock, Dewey falls for the school's beautiful, but uptight headmistress, helping her rediscover the wild child within.



## **The Innocents** By William Archibald

**October 23-28** An LDS Production

Directed by Diani Gatenby Davies

The perfect ghost story to get you ready for Halloween. Governess, Miss Giddens, arrives at an English estate to look after an orphaned brother and sister. There's also a motherly cook, however the four aren't alone - they're haunted by fears and phantoms and ghostly shadows.

"In a lifetime of play going, I do not recall a single play which held me as spellbound."  
– *New York Journal American*

## **VISITING PRODUCTIONS**

### **Art of Believing - Flamenco (October 29)**

Composer and flamenco guitarist Daniel Martinez presents his unique musical production, where the audience will enjoy a rich variety of flamenco styles.

### **Nosferatu: A Symphony of Horrors (October 30)**

The original horror film, accompanied by a brand new score, produced and played live by Chris Green.

# What's On November



**Fallen Angels** By Noel Coward  
**November 13-18** An LDS Production  
Directed by Jordan Handford

Fallen Angels is the comedic story of Julia and Jane, two upper-class women in England in the early 1900s. They are married to Fred and Willy, two respectable Englishmen. When Maurice, a former French lover, shows up in England while the two women's husbands are away on a golf trip, he reminds the two housewives what they might be missing. Coward at his inimitable best, the story is a champagne cocktail of wit and charm.



**Nativity! The Musical** By Debbie Isitt and Nicky Ager  
**November 21-25** Knighton Park Amateur Operatic Society  
Directed by Joshua J Knott

Every child in every school has one Christmas wish, to star in a Nativity, and at St Bernadette's school they're attempting to mount a musical version! Only trouble is, teacher Mr Maddens has promised that a Hollywood producer is coming to see the show to turn it into a film. Join him, his teaching assistant - the crazy Mr Poppy - hilarious children and a whole lot of sparkle and shine as they struggle to make everyone's Christmas wish come true.



**One Act Play Festival – New Directors' Showcase**  
**November 30-December 2** An LDS Production  
Directed by Nikki Favell and Tom Young

Our One Act Play week gives you the opportunity to enjoy the work of new directors. Join us in the studio for two plays: *Anyone Can Dance* directed by Nikki Favell – a drama about soulmates and 'what ifs'. And *Breaking & Entering* directed by Tom Young – a comedy about an entanglement of exes.



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.

## ELIGIBLE FOR THIS DISCOUNT ARE:

**Stags and Hens (The Remix)** (October 2-7)

**The Innocents** (October 23-28)

**Fallen Angels** (November 13-18)

## VISITING PRODUCTIONS

### Legends of Motown (November 1)

A high energy tribute show jam packed with all of Motown's biggest hits.

### The Carpenters Experience (November 2-3)

The UK's leading Carpenters show, featuring the amazing voice of Maggie Nestor and eight top-class musicians.

### The Sooty Show – 75th Birthday Spectacular! (November 4)

Sooty, Sweep and Soo are planning a very special birthday party and you're all invited.

# Audition Notice

## The Secret Garden: The Musical

**Production Dates:** 13 performances; March 22-27 & April 3-6, 2024 (various times)

**Director:** Keiran Whelan-Newby

**Location:** All sessions to be held at 52 Down (Albion Street, Leicester)

**Contact Info:** keiranwhelan@btinternet.com or 07445 250475

**Description:** This Easter, discover The Secret Garden and unlock the magic within.

In a lonely manor house on the Yorkshire Moors, Archibald Craven is stifled by his manipulative brother, Neville, and yearns for his beautiful, late wife, Lily. All the while, he becomes more isolated and remote from his son, Colin who is wheelchair bound. Their quiet routine is turned upside down when young Mary Lennox is sent from India to live at Misselthwaite Manor. Mary soon discovers a secret walled garden hidden in the grounds, and – with the help of her new friends Martha and Dickon – releases the magic and adventure locked inside it, changing all their lives forever.

### Audition Date/Time:

#### YOUTH:

Saturday, November 4 - 10am-3pm

#### ADULTS:

**Audition Workshop\*:** Friday, November 10 - All females 7pm. All males 8pm. Workshop finishes at 10pm

**Open Audition:** Saturday, November 11 - 11am onwards

**\*You must attend the workshop if you wish to attend the open audition**

If unable to attend the audition dates, please get in touch to discuss possible alternative arrangements.

### ROLES

Strong singing/acting experience and ability is required for all roles. The production team would like to encourage new and existing society/youth group members to audition. In particular, we are keen to encourage diverse ethnic minority groups to audition. We are operating an open door policy and look forward to welcoming you all. Please familiarise yourself with the story and score. We recommend listening to both the original Broadway and London cast recordings of the show.

**TO ENSURE A SAFE AUDITION ENVIRONMENT,  
PLEASE BOOK AN AUDITION PLACE BY EMAILING  
keiranwhelan@btinternet.com**

**WE WILL BE PRACTISING AN ELIMINATION PROCESS  
THROUGHOUT THE AFTERNOON.**

**IMPORTANT:** Please bring a recent photo/headshot.  
Parents/Guardians with children under 16 are asked to wait  
with their children during the audition. Parents/guardians are  
to fill in a form detailing your child's availability for rehearsals.

Scripts are available to hire from The Little Theatre.

**Audition Workshop** – Director Keiran Whelan-Newby will give an overview of the show and hand out set pieces for the audition. Musical directors Grace Bale and Paul Timms will then teach set songs from the show. We'll ask everyone to perform these set songs and lib. We will also ask you to fill in a form detailing parts you wish to audition for and your availability for rehearsals.

**Open Audition** – You will be asked to perform set lib pieces and songs taught in the audition workshop. Everyone will have a chance to audition for all parts they have selected on their audition form.

**Please note:** Due to the intense rehearsal call pattern, we cannot consider anyone who is committed to other shows or has any long periods of commitments that clash with rehearsals. Please disclose any commitments.



## YOUTH

Female lead role. A young girl sent to live with her uncle, Archibald, when her parents die from cholera in India. Quite the curious explorer, and often finding herself in trouble. Stubborn, ill-tempered and always fighting for what she believes in.

Archibald Craven's son. Spent his life in a wheelchair due to a heart condition. He is very stubborn and throws temper tantrums to get what he wants. He believes his father hates him for causing his mother's death. *As Colin is a shared role, each child will perform 6/7 performances each and will not be required at every tech/dress rehearsal.*

<b>MARTHA</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>18-40</b>	<b>Range: Mezzo-Soprano Belt, G3-D5</b>
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A faithful housemaid. Grew up near Yorkshire and has the accent to prove it. Although she is from a lower-class family, her wisdom is often far beyond her age. Yorkshire accent essential.

**DICKON** Male 16-25 Range: Tenor, D3-G4

Martha's younger brother. Looks after the sick plants and animals – including Mary. A young man between the world of child imagination and adult reasoning. Convinces Mary to take care of the Garden. Yorkshire accent essential

<b>MRS. MEDLOCK</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>50+</b>	<b>Range: Ensemble/Part Flexible</b>
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Archibald's housekeeper. As cold as the Misselthwaite Manor. Yorkshire accent essential.

**DR. NEVILLE CRAVEN**      Male      25-35      Range: Baritone, C3-F#4

Archibald Craven's brother. Trapped by the idea that he is responsible for the caretaking of Colin. Though Lily never loved him in return, he remains in love with her, and is unwilling to move on and leave Misselthwaite.

**ROSE LENNOX** Female 25-50 Range: Soprano, A3-D6

Mary's mother. A "dreamer" from the past. Loyal to her husband. Refuses to leave India during the cholera outbreak that takes her life.

**CAPTAIN ALBERT LENNOX**      Male      25-50      Range: Tenor, D3-A5

Mary Lennox's father – also a “dreamer” from the past. Tries to send Rose out of India during the cholera outbreak.

<b>BEN WEATHERSTAFF/MAJOR HOLMES</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>50+</b>	<b>Range: Ensemble/Part Flexible, E3-D#4</b>
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Head gardener. Secretly entrusted to take care of the garden after Lily's death. Knows a great deal about the history of the garden and the grounds it sits on. He has worked for the family for many years. Yorkshire accent essential.

Major Holmes - He calls himself "an old man" A Major in Mary's father's unit.

**MRS. WINTHROP/MRS. CLAIRE HOLMES**    Female    50+    Range: Ensemble/Part Flexible

Headmistress who prides herself on nurturing girls with tempers. Mary seems to be more than she can handle. Mrs Claire Holmes – Major Holmes' wife.

**LIEUTENANT WRIGHT/FAKIR**      Male      18-25      Range: Tenor, C3-B4

Wright - Officer in Mary's father's unit. Fakir – Mary's Indian servant.

<b>ALICE/AYAH</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>18-25</b>	<b>Range: Ensemble/Part Flexible</b>
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Alice - Rose Lennox's friend. Ayah - Mary's Indian nanny.

Full audition notices and rehearsal dates can be found at [thelittletheatre.co.uk/auditions-the-secret-garden](http://thelittletheatre.co.uk/auditions-the-secret-garden)

# Audition Notice

## Dangerous Corner

*A play of secrets and lies by J B Priestley*  
(author of *An Inspector Calls*)

**Audition Date/Time:** Tuesday, November 14, 7:30PM

**Production Dates:** April 29 to May 4, 2024

**Director:** John Ghent

**Location:** Theatre Library, The Little Theatre

**Contact Info:** j.ghent38@btinternet.com / 07703 764800

**Description:**

The wealthy and successful Caplan family bask in the success of their family's publishing company, although behind the comfortable and privileged facade lingers the unsolved mystery surrounding the death of their sibling, Martin Caplan. J B Priestley investigates the mystery of this situation in his usual fascinating manner, seeking answers which will ultimately affect all their lives.

Characters:	M/F	Age
FREDA CAPLAN	Female	30-40
MAUD MOCKRIDGE	Female	50-60
BETTY WHITEHOUSE	Female	20s
OLWEN PEEL	Female	30-40
CHARLES STANTON	Male	30-40
GORDON WHITEHOUSE	Male	Mid 20s
ROBERT CAPLAN	Male	30-40

If unable to make the audition, please get in touch as we may be able to make other arrangements.

## REVIEW: The Magic Box by VALUES Drama Group

I was delighted to be invited this September to the VALUES drama group's production of 'The Magic Box.' The drama group, for adults with learning disabilities meets twice a week in the Haywood Studio at the Little Theatre, under the guidance of our very own Martin Bell.

And what a treat this show was; the story of an enchanted box filled with magical objects, each of which tells its own magical tale when pulled from the box. This show had it all from a western-style quick-draw to a swarm of killer bees on the loose. We even finished off with a limbo!

Well done to everyone but a special round of applause to compère Tom Goy who kept the whole thing moving.

Great fun... I can't wait for the next.

Jackie Caunt



# Cast Announcements



## April In Paris

by John Godber

January 22-27, 2024

Directed by Leigh White

We're delighted to announce the cast for our January play, rounding out our autumn/winter season on the main stage.

**AL** – Steve Feeney

**BET** – Kat Seddon

**Director:** Leigh White

**Stage Manager:** Simon Dickens

**Set Designer:** Jake Smart

## The Good Life

Based upon the TV Series by John Esmonde & Bob Larbey. Adapted by Jeremy Sams.

February 5-10, 2024

Directed by Ruth Cheetham

We are thrilled to announce the cast for our second-half-of-the-season opener, The Good Life.

**TOM GOOD** – Freddie Dobrijevic

**BARBARA GOOD** – Liz Kavanagh

**MARGO LEADBETTER** – Alexandra Elliot

**JERRY LEADBETTER** – David Lovell

**SIR & POLICEMAN** – Jon Worthy

**FELICITY & MILKWOMAN** – Clare Snow

**MARGARET & MARY** – Carissma Griffiths

**HARRY THE PIGMAN & DR JOE** – Ian Salmon

**Director:** Ruth Cheetham

**Set Designer:** Abby Glover

**Costume Design:** John Bale

**Lighting Design:** Andy Crooks

**Sound Design:** Andrew Northcote

**Stage Manager:** Nadine Hall

**DSM:** Nikki Strickland

**Props:** Darren Wright & Lilli Helps

**Prompt:** Alison Lee



Tickets will be on sale from mid-late November.

# Review: A Murder Is Announced

The killing doesn't just happen in Christie's play. It comes thanks to an announcement in the local paper, stating that it will take place at Little Paddocks, Chipping Cleghorn – the genteel home of Letitia Blacklock (Alexandra Elliott) on Friday the 13th at 6.30pm.

That evening, undeterred, Letitia hosts a gathering of family and friends, and – sure enough – one of those present is despatched in the large drawing room!

With a dead body, a room full of possible suspects, and a shoal of red herrings, the question to be answered is... whodunnit? Enter super-sleuth, Miss Marple (Jane Towers), to investigate, with the assistance of the local police Inspector Craddock (Michael King) to eventually reveal and unmask the murderer.

The play takes time to gather pace and get to where it's going. It lays all the clues out precisely –

typical of the 1950's era. Transitions between scenes are marked by excellent projections of informative newspaper headlines – an interesting play this; far more inventive than the usual blackouts.

As the action rattles on, director John Bale ensures that each character is clearly defined, delving into the realms of both a 'who' and 'why' dunnit, where everyone could be the plausible killer.

Towers brings her own style and commendable subtlety to her role as Miss Marple, at times assisting or hindering Inspector Craddock. King gives energy to the play and is a joy to watch – the two bounce off each other brilliantly.

There are solid performances from all the cast, including Elliott as Letitia Blacklock, and Diani Gatenby Davies makes the most of her role as the refugee maid, Mitzi, providing plenty of comic relief.

The production delivers all the



elements of typical murder mystery and offers an enjoyable evening of suspenseful escapism!

*Lynette Watson*



# Review: I Love Musicals

I was really looking forward to this as some of my favourite performers and members of The Little Theatre were on stage; I expected a good night, and I got it. It really lived up to my expectations.

What a lot of talent we have in Leicester! All amateur and – in my book – a lot better than some professionals I've seen. The only names I will mention are that of Martin Bell and Nick Cox, who ably and comedically led us through the show. Martin, as he knows, has always been a huge favourite of mine – I could be called a groupie but,

alas, I'm too old. Now I've got Nick (director of this incredible show) to add to the list! The banter between the pair was lovely and the timing superb. They led us through musical openings, presenting the plot, duets, solos, and soliloquys.

We got tastes of 'Welcome to Rock', 'The Sound of Music', 'Cell Block Tango', and many more. The last number before the interval was 'One Day More' from *Les Misérables* – my all-time favourite musical, and not an easy number to crack... but crack it they did. During the interval, my husband said they ought to

put *Les Misérables* on their to do list, but as it's still going strong in London, they may not get the rights any time soon. As I have seen *Les Mis* a lot, I even had a go at casting it in my head; I could see who could play Eponine, Marius, Fantine, etc. I hope it happens one day, but I'm no director – what do I know?

Second half was brilliant too with numbers from *Rent*, *Moulin Rouge*, *Waitress* and *Blood Brothers*.

All so believable. I hope they put something like this on again.

Love, love, love it.

Jackie Caunt



# Review: Stags & Hens (The Remix)

I went to see *Stags & Hens (The Remix)* on opening night with some idea as to what to expect from this production, having seen bits and pieces in rehearsal. To say I enjoyed it would be an understatement – it gave me a much-needed laugh. It was fast paced and so lovely to see young cast thoroughly enjoying themselves and this enjoyment extended to the audience. They were all so talented and you believed in all of their characters.

The stags and hens were all maintaining the superstition that bride Linda (Holly Matuisiewicz) and groom Dave (Simon Butler) shouldn't see each other the night before the wedding, as it's bad luck – a belief still held today. Therefore, it was very worrying that they all ended up in the same night club. A very emotional Maureen (Olivia Phillips) relayed to the girls what had happened to her aunt, who had seen her husband-to-be the night before the wedding, and a few months down the line he was run over and killed by a fish van – her aunt "could never look at a piece of haddock from then on".



The fellows were just as daft. They needn't have worried though, as the groom spent the majority of the night in the loo (fortunately off stage but we got the idea from the noises) after heavy consumption of beer and vindaloo. He'd already christened Eddy's (Louis Cole) trousers, which he had to remove in order to try and clean them up on the floor of the men's toilets.

With the groom out of action, the only other person not really invested

in this night out was the bride, who just wanted to have fun. We learn as the play goes along that she's also not entirely invested in getting married. At the end of the play, we see the groom – drunk out of his head – being made to look at the bride by the bride, giving her an excuse not to marry him the next day. She escapes through the men's toilet window to run off with an old flame she met at the club.

The whole cast spoke with a scouse accent, and were so good at it, you'd believe they were actual Liverpudlians.

I would love to name all of the cast because, as we see their characters develop, we realise there is more to them than the superfluous nature they presented at the beginning. A little poignant at times but not overwhelmingly so, meaning the light-hearted nature of this play didn't get swamped by it.

This play was brilliantly directed by Simon Dickens, who I know put everything into it – I walked into the auditorium to find him painting the set one day; there's dedication for you!

Jackie Caunt



# Review: School Of Rock

I went to see the Saturday matinee of *School of Rock*; I saw Mitchell Smith in the role of Dewey Finn, who had shared the part with Simon Collingham throughout the week.

I can see why as the role was exhausting. Dewey, who quite frankly was a bit of a slob, living only for his music while expecting everyone else to live for his music too and provide his lifestyle, food, board, etc.

Dewey soon met his match when he pretended to be a teacher and met his class of kids – I can't begin to tell you how amazing they were. Two of the kids played guitars that were about as big as they were, the keyboard player really let it rip, and then the drummer... I have always loved well-played drums, and boy could this child play! We got singing, a brilliant soloist, dancing, sass, and all the kids could really act and were word perfect.

Brilliantly directed by Sam White, he managed to show the poignancy between the kids who were a little lost, wanting more from their parents, and Dewey, who seemed just as in need of love. It was lovely seeing the kids sass and take charge of him. Although he was coarse, he

tended to relate to the kids on their level, because he was basically the same.

Elsewhere, Natasha Carr played the school's headmistress, Rosalie Mullins. I must confess, I am a huge fan of Natasha, and make an effort to watch when she is in a show. Natasha gave an outstanding performance as the principal; cold, strict, unapproachable, but with a terrific voice, we see the chemistry developing between her and Dewey as she let go of her inhibitions. I loved the duet between Rosalie and

Dewey near the end of the show – brilliantly achieved and making it look easy, even though it was anything but.

I loved this show – unfortunately I didn't see the other performers, but I have been reliably informed they were just as excellent as the guys I saw. They definitely deserved the standing ovation at the end.

I'm told some of these kids are in *Nativity!* coming to the Little, November 21-25, and I know it's selling fast, so book soon to avoid disappointment.

Jackie Caunt



# Connections Report

**September 5, 2023**

"Another opening! Another show!"

The first Tuesday Connections of the new season had an incredible turnout, with about 13 folks showing up – some had previously joined by other means but came along to find where their niche was.

Richard Payton – co-ordinator for Connections – started by welcoming everyone and we had short get-to-know-you session. After the usual introductions, we walked to 52 Down, where the final rehearsal for *A Murder is Announced* (directed by John Bale) was taking place before it moved to the stage. It was looking good - no scripts in evidence, movements assured, and props promptly on the case. This play will be done and dusted by the time you read this; hopefully you all came to see it – I wonder if you all guessed the murderer?

Moving on to 52 Up, we saw part of a rehearsal for *Stags & Hens*

*(The Remix)* – directed by Simon Dickens. The title gives this one away, and although still in the early stages here, it gave me a laugh. The play was written by Willy Russell, with the action taking place in his native Liverpool. I was impressed by how the cast managed to get this dialect; their accents were so good, I thought that Simon had shipped in Scouse actors! This production is on October 2-7. Really looking forward to seeing this.

Then we got a bonus on our travels around the theatre, as our marketing trustee, Tom Young, was running an audition for his one-act play, which will be taking place in the Haywood Studio, November 30 to December 2. He invited us in to observe the audition, and even this early, I got a laugh out of it. I learned later that the auditionee got the part, so all good.

There will be two one-act plays on each evening; *Breaking & Entering* directed by Tom, and *Anyone Can*

*Dance* directed by Nikki Favell.

It's two-for-one, so that's got to be good. Goodness my diary is filling up! I might be too busy to bother about the long-white-bearded chap wearing red!

Backstage, we met Jacob Martin – the set designer for *A Murder is Announced* – ably assisted by Fraser Tew and Andy Crooks. It was a little unusual as a set as you could see all the lights, and Jacob explained his thinking behind this. The idea is that the audience knows this play is happening within a theatre and – as it's a murder mystery – there shouldn't be any trickery in the actual set; all the trickery must come from the cast's performances and the characters they are portraying. I was initially a bit unsure about this but the more I thought about it, the more I became excited by the concept.

It was a very successful evening with five new members joining.



# Connections Report

## September 26, 2023

This was the second Connections in the same month, so we were a small but enthusiastic group, with three people attending.

We took a tour of the premises, starting at 52 Up for the last rehearsal of *Stags & Hens (The Remix)* before the cast moved to the stage. I can't wait it, as it looks to be a good laugh. As stage manager Andy Mear pointed out, it's a time for the bride to be in a reflective mood – does she want to get married? In this bit of the rehearsal, she didn't seem to be having the fun her mates thought she ought to be having, so I guess there's a poignancy with all comedy, underlining the giggles. Thanks to director Simon Dickens and Andy Mear for their input this close to the play being performed.

We then proceeded to 52 Down, where *The Innocents* - directed by Diani Gatenby Davies – was in rehearsal. We arrived to see Diani leading the boy (Daniel Bettles) and his governess, Miss Giddens, (Amber Goddard) through their paces and it drew me in this is going to be so good, it's a ghost story. The boy – who spoke perfectly reasonably but without emotion – put shivers down my spine, while Miss Giddens was

losing it and in considerable distress. This play will be performed October 23-28, and I will get you all in the mood for Halloween! I'm sad I won't be able to catch this play as I'm away.

We carried on with our tour and had another bonus as Tom Young was in the studio again, rehearsing the one act play *Breaking & Entering*, to be performed in late November for the new director's one act showcase. To say it made me laugh is an understatement. This play has a cast of four (Joe Allen, Emma Bamford, Laura Heybrock, and Allan Smith). We got to see Emma and Laura rehearsing a scene where the conversation saw the interplay

between Emma's exasperation and Laura's naivety, which was so funny. Definitely looking forward to this one.

We headed to the backstage area and finally the auditorium, where final touches were being put to the set for *Stags & Hens* which Simon Dickens has also designed (on Monday when I was in the office, I gave a guided tour to a young man who wants to join us, and we encountered Simon painting the set – what a treasure!). Finally, David Moore talked to the group about other aspects of the theatre and details of the set. All three attendees joined the membership.



# Connections Report

## October 17, 2023

Goodness these Connection evenings seem to come round so quickly!

We had four folk arrive. Some others had called earlier in the day to say they couldn't make it but will hopefully be attending the next one on November 7. After introducing ourselves and getting to know each other, we had a little talk about volunteering and how important it is to The Little Theatre.

We set off on our tour, firstly visiting 52 Down to see final rehearsals of *The Innocents*, which will be over by the time you read this. It's looking quite scary - a bit of a warmup to Halloween.

We then proceeded to 52 Up where we saw a bit of rehearsal for Noel Coward's *Fallen Angels*. Martin Bell (who is mentoring Jordan Handford, who is directing his first LDS play) was so lovely to include us in decisions on a particular part of the scene, and giving us a laugh. It does show how hard directors have to work and how raw it is in the early

rehearsal compared to the finished piece of art we see on the stage.

We then went back to the theatre, entering by the stage door where we looked at the upcoming audition notices. I quickly showed them the office, as one of the party was really interested in helping in the box office.

We nipped into the studio to see a bit of Nikki Favell's rehearsal for her one act play, *Anyone Can Dance*. This comedy will be joined by the other one act, *Breaking & Entering*, directed by Tom Young. They're both in the studio from November 30 to December 2.

We had a quick peep inside the workshop and made our way upstairs to the auditorium where the fit up was taking place for *The Innocents*. Although it was in the early stages, it looked to be an impressive set, designed by Gem Greaves. I'd had to nip up to the auditorium the day before where I'd encountered Gem on her knees, painting the stage floor with a roller - I felt tired just watching her!

We had a quick look at the dressing rooms and then went into the wings, where I tried to explain the SM and DSM roles and showed them the desk where all the action takes place once the play is under way. As my knowledge is limited, I was so

pleased to see Martin Scott appear from behind a curtain - this play is getting spookier by the minute - and he very kindly explained the desk and learnt a bit more about the green and red lights. Goodness, the concentration you would need for this job!

We had a quick look backstage and in the mezzanine beneath it, arriving back on the other side of the auditorium, where Jenny Harding was in the process of making her pictures with the lighting. When she's satisfied, she will lock it all in, ready for the play. Jenny talked the group through what she was doing - all very technical - and I know the group appreciated it from comments made. Thank you, Jenny, and thanks to all who helped contribute to the night.

We arrived back in the bar, where all four attendees decided to become members. I was pleased that they all seemed really invested.

### CONNECTIONS DATES FOR YOUR DIARIES:

**December 5**

**January 16**



# Recent Productions

## *A Murder is Announced*

Our first play of the new season was Agatha Christie's *A Murder is Announced*, directed by John Bale. Miss Marple was on the case, aiding investigations after a murder is forewarned in the local paper. A murder mystery once again proved a popular way to start the season, with full houses throughout the week.



"An absolute fantastic performance last night. Well done to all the cast!"



"Excellent."



"Fantastic evening last night great production, well done to all involved."



"Took my daughter and her friends for her birthday - they loved it! Thanks so much for a brilliant evening."



"Brilliant performance. Well done LDS and thank you for a great evening's entertainment."

# Recent Productions

## I ♥ Musicals

Our extended family from LAOS visited in September, with their special *I ♥ Musicals* concert, directed by Nick Cox. A study in musicals and the different components they consist of, it dissected the genre while providing opportunities for many performers to step into the spotlight – some for the first time.



"Loved every minute but especially Six!!! You were all amazing."



"Loved every second."



"How cool is it that I can recognise some of the songs just from the photos? Great costumes and setting."



"It was all fabulous... but my favourite was the Cell Block Tango from Chicago. Well done girls."



"Well done to you all fantastic show - need you to do Sweeney Todd now!"

PHOTOS BY MATTHEW CAWREY

# Stags & Hens (The Remix)

October kicked off with Willy Russell's *Stags & Hens (The Remix)*, directed by Simon Dickens. Featuring the stag and hen parties of the same couple taking place in the same Liverpool night club, this at-times-outrageous comedy delivered a slice of 1970s nostalgia.



"Amazing well done to all of you."



"It was brilliant, so funny, enjoyed every moment."



"I was blown away, if you can, go and see it. Amazing young actors giving a truly professional performance, backed by a funny well-crafted script that will have you laughing out loud."



"A great night out! Fabulous acting from this young cast and how they all managed to keep the Liverpudlian accent throughout the whole play was amazing! Well done all and thank you!"

# Recent Productions

## School Of Rock

Our extended family from The IDOLS visited in October, for their production of Andrew Lloyd Webber's *School of Rock: The Musical*, directed by Sam White. It was wonderful to see so many young people on our stage, carrying the show (ably supported by the adult cast), singing, acting, and playing instruments. Lovely to see the future of our theatre in action!



**"We went to see this show four times! And loved every minute!  
Can't wait for the next one! Well done to all the team, incredible!"**



**"We loved it! Well done to everyone,  
especially the children!"**



**"Absolutely outstanding. Well-done to the whole cast and crew. The youngsters were brilliant.  
And "Dewey" was amazing. Thank you so much."**



PHOTOS BY POYNER + MEE

# The Innocents

Our Halloween production was William Archibald's *The Innocents*, directed by Diani Gatenby Davies. This spooky production told the story of a new Governess coming to look after two young children, only to grow increasingly uncomfortable as she realises not all is well in the house.



"The Innocents was amazing!"



PHOTOS BY DAVE MORRIS

# In The Spotlight

**Name:** Amber Goddard

**Profession:** Music Curator (which sounds fancier than it is, but I make playlists for retail clients, and hospitality – the annoying people programming Christmas music much too early – that's me!)

**Upcoming production:** *The Innocents* by William Archibald

**Noteworthy:** I can't say I've been in anything super noteworthy, as I usually play old men or women. But I am very good at accents and picking up any dialects for shows.

## What was the first theatre show you saw?

The earliest show I can date back to would be *Oliver!* in the Westend. It was a school trip at age 13 as part of the drama curriculum. After seeing the show, we had to put on our own production, where I was cast as Fagin. I can still sing, 'You've got to pick a pocket or two'.

## What was the first play/musical you were in?

Well, I guess that was *Oliver!*. I'd done small youth theatre productions before, but this was my first time being cast as a main role. Playing Fagin ruined my chances of getting a boyfriend anytime soon in secondary school.

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

I've played a lot of fun roles, and some challenging ones. I find any role that puts me out of my comfort zone is one worth noting. I once played an Irish mother with an inappropriate attachment to her son in *The Bog of Cats* by Marina Carr. She was a loud, brash character with an opinion on everything. We had a wedding scene where I did a drunken speech. It was both

comic and tragic – think soap opera meets Irish Folklore.

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

Getting my current role of Miss Giddens is up there! But I'd have to say starring in a period drama – they're always so melodramatic. But I love gritty comedic roles even more. 'Rita' in Willy Russell's *Educating Rita*, or a part in *A Taste of Honey* by Shelagh Delaney.

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

100% Terry Johnson's *Dead Funny*. I'd gone on a whim after a bad audition and caught the last matinee on stage. I had no idea what to expect, and the opening scene was an exposed man! Katherine Parkinson was playing the lead, with an all-star cast that included Steve Pemberton. I've always admired Parkinson, but seeing her in action was mesmerising. She has this ability to have people in hysterics and then make the room go silent in an instant. The play itself is so interesting with that punchy, kitchen sink edge but bleak British humour. I wish I could see it over and over!



## What's your favourite thing about The Little Theatre?

It just holds so much magic and community. It's a special place and proves itself time and time again with the passion that goes into it. I hope to always come back. I also love the theatre bar – so much charm!

## Tell us about your upcoming production!

*The Innocents* is a play of impact; it is hysteria in four walls, all from the perspective of a young governess whose patience is tested by two small children. A haunting take on the classic Henry James tale, *The Turn of the Screw*. If you like to be a little spooked but enjoy a manic woman running around, certainly see *The Innocents*.

# In The Spotlight



**Name:** Freddie Dobrijevic

**Profession:** Retail

**Upcoming production:** *Fallen Angels*

**Noteworthy:** Dennis Dobbins in *A Bunch of Amateurs*, Geoffrey in *A Taste of Honey* and Rudge in *The History Boys*.

## What was the first theatre show you saw?

The first theatre show I remember seeing was *West Side Story* with my family when I was around six years old. I wasn't too excited about going until my Mum informed me there would be fighting in it. I was sorely disappointed that said fighting was through the medium of dance and nothing at all like *Power Rangers* as I was expecting...

## What was the first play/musical you were in?

The first show I was in was my primary school's production of *The Lion King* when I was nine. I landed the role of Rafiki, which I was very excited about as I loved the film, and I got to walk around with a big stick (which was remade several times as I was a little overzealous). Surprisingly, it was one of my most challenging roles to date, as I had to sit still and silent while cross legged on stage for the first 15 minutes before my first scene. Which, to be honest, would still be a challenge today.

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

I've enjoyed a lot of the roles I've played over the years, but I would have to say my favourite

has been Dennis Dobbins in *A Bunch of Amateurs*. It was such a funny show and I loved playing the character. I personally felt he had some of the funniest lines of the play, I also got to have a cracking moustache and rode in and out of some scenes on a mobility scooter. What's not to love?

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

I would say my dream role would be the narrator in *Blood Brothers*. I've seen it many times, and always get chills during its big numbers. Sadly, I cannot sing or do a convincing scouse accent. But other than that, I'm perfect for the role.

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

*The Book of Mormon*. I've seen it numerous times at The Prince of Wales Theatre, London. Being a lifelong fan of Trey Parker and Matt Stone, when I heard they'd written a musical I knew I had to see it, and it did not disappoint. It's hilarious, outrageous, and yet still surprisingly heartwarming for a musical from the minds behind *South Park*.



## What's your favourite thing about The Little Theatre?

The people. I have been a member for ten years and I am still regularly astounded by the sheer number of talented and brilliant people involved in all aspects of the theatre.

## Tell us about your upcoming production!

*Fallen Angels* is a classic Noel Coward comedy rich with interesting characters and lots of humour. It has a great cast and is Jordan Handford's first mainstage production at LDS; he's been a joy to work with and we're all looking forward to bringing it to the stage.

# Tim and Jill Watson

## Extracts of Memories from 50 Years with LDS.



**Tim has kindly provided us with a fascinating and thorough account of his and Jill's time as members of Leicester Drama Society. We will publish the entire document on the theatre's website as soon as we can but wanted to share a few key extracts with you here.**

Jill and I got together during *Aladdin*, the 1972/73 LDS Pantomime and we got married on September 25, 1973. Fifty years later, here we are with two daughters and five grandchildren. Jill reckons that our first encounter was when she tripped over my foot. I was sitting on the paint shop floor as Chris Hole and I were building a sedan chair for the show. This was my normal working mode because of my long-standing mobility issues (for those who don't me, I had polio from an early age). Jill was surprised to be asked if she was OK, rather than getting "the verbals" she seemed to expect from the stage crew.

Fifty years together is a long time, but our individual connections with, and memories of, The Little Theatre go back a lot longer than that. We are not sure which of us has the earliest connection.

Jill thinks her mother was involved in her younger days, perhaps the late 1930s, but has no precise details. Jill herself got involved with stage work at Wyggeston Girls, including a school performance at The Little Theatre. She joined the LDS in the early 1960s, and got a small part in *Alf's Button*.

The Little Theatre always seems to have been part of my life. My connection stems from my mother, Edith, who was a keen play-goer and was – for many years – involved in the theatre canteen, which provided pre-

show light-suppers in the clubroom (Ed: now the workshop).

I was an occasional visitor to the LDS shows prior to the fire in 1955. I have some early evidence of this in the form a photograph of myself at a children's party in December 1945!

The show we were seeing was *Alice in Wonderland*. That is me in the centre foreground, age six, with Alice. I became a regular show-goer when I was in the sixth form at Wyggeston Grammar School for Boys. This was after the fire, when productions were taking place in the Moira Haywood Hall, then a much larger room than today's studio, as it incorporated what is now the theatre bar.

Obviously, we have both worked on lots of shows, each with their own memories – some good, some bad. We have also seen many LDS shows at The Little Theatre.

I asked Jill what was the show that stood out for her. It turned out to be John Ghent's production of *The Diary of Anne Frank* (1973), with its moving performances, particularly Stephanie Pennell as Anne and Ken Milton as her father. There was also a stunning scene change in which a fully dressed set became an empty room in what seemed like an instant.

My choice goes back a bit further to Douglas Goodlad's production of *Look Back in Anger* (1959). As a 20-year-old, I was stunned, and it changed my life by widening my view of what theatre could be.

We shall continue watching shows at The Little Theatre while we can, and hope for some surprises. The right sort of surprises, that is!

Tim Watson



# At a glance

## What's on this season

### NOVEMBER



#### Fallen Angels

Nov 13-18

#### Nativity! The Musical

Nov 21-25



### DECEMBER



#### One Act Play Festival

Nov 30-Dec 2

#### Panto: Puss In Boots

Dec 14-Jan 7



### JANUARY



#### The Same Faces

Jan 13

#### April in Paris

Jan 22-27



## Coming Soon





Visit our website for more information: [thelittletheatre.co.uk](http://thelittletheatre.co.uk)