

April In Paris
Dir. Leigh White

FEBRUARY 2024

SCENE

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE LEICESTER DRAMA SOCIETY

The
Little
Theatre

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



Editor's Letter

The Good Life opens The Little's new season of shows, a throwback to the 70s with a modern-day message about sustainable living. The play will also be part of Leicester Comedy Festival (LCF), hopefully bringing our theatre to a new audience!

Following that, LCF brings a handful of specials to the theatre, including *Murder She Didn't Write*, an improvised comedy for which the audience plays Agatha Christie!

I thoroughly enjoyed it last year.

One we look forward to returning to our stage each year is the LGS Big Band, who say The Little is a favourite venue of theirs. We're very grateful that they choose to raise funds for us with their big band jazz show, featuring instrumental numbers made famous by the likes of Frank Sinatra.

Rehearsals are now well underway for our Easter musical

The Secret Garden, and thriller *Dial 'M' for Murder* – tickets for both are on sale from the box office and website.

We have an amazing line up of shows this season. If you're interested in quite a few, it's worth investing in a Little season ticket to help save money. But get them quick because February 10 is the last valid day for purchase. Enjoy!

Kerry

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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.

200 Club Winners

The winners of January's draw:

1st Prize (£250) – 131
 2nd Prize (£100) – 83
 3rd Prize (£50) – 80

Join the 200 Club for a chance to win upto £250 every month

The Little's big cash-prize lottery

Donate £20 to The Little Theatre to enter the remaining 4 monthly lottery draws for 2023-24.

The next draw takes place at the end of February.

Call us to enter:

0116 255 1302

hello@thelittletheatre.co.uk

thelittletheatre.co.uk



Member Profile

Russell Webster Words by Jackie Caunt

Russell is a Leicester lad, and went to school at Bishop Ellis Primary and English Martyrs, where he still helps occasionally with the technical side of their productions. He works with performing arts schools (Stagecoach and Starlets) and a dance group; I thought he was quite nimble on his feet during panto.

A couple of facts about Russell: he has three older siblings (two sisters and a brother). Russell also owns a Sprocker Spaniel named Beau.

At school, Russell discovered he had a liking for lighting and sound, which prompted him to join QT theatre group an amateur drama company in Syston. When the group needed a young man to play a male nurse in the play *One Day I'll Fly Away*, Russell signed up, and so began his love of performance.

Russell joined The IDOLS and his first role was playing Audrey II in *Little Shop of Horrors*, followed by Mr Bumble in *Oliver!*.

Then... Covid!

When theatre reopened, his first part was in the LDS production of *Chariots of Fire*, where he met director Mary Jones, which led to him joining Ratae Players and their

panto of *Dick Whittington* as the dame, Sarah the Cook. He's also played the villain in two pantos for the Barrow-upon-Soar drama group.

He then auditioned for *Aladdin*, The Little's 2022 panto, and was cast as the Grand Vizier. He was a perfect foil for Karen Gordon who played the Empress. I thought this pairing was outstanding and I enjoyed the chemistry that he and Karen brought to the panto. That's when I first really took notice of him and thought, 'this guy has talent'.

Russell also appeared in *Anything Goes* with LOPs as Lord Evelyn Oakley; I thought he was brilliant with such good comedic timing.

Next, a bit of comedy-drama playing Billy Blake in *Stags and Hens (The Remix)*. Again, a superb performance, before returning to panto appearing as Fusspot the Lord Chamberlain in *Puss in Boots*. I just enjoy watching him and how well he draws in and relates to the audience.

Russell's interests include reading (especially 'whodunnits'), as well as both board and video games. He also likes to travel and went off to Italy last year with friends.

I asked Russell if he had any



performing ambitions beyond The Little and he said he wouldn't mind having a bash at the professional stage. I can see him doing this.

If you want to catch Russell performing, he will be appearing as Dr Neville Craven in *The Secret Garden: The Musical*, coming to The Little Theatre from March.

I really enjoyed interviewing Russell and writing this profile on him, and I will leave with a phrase he said to me that I was very pleased to hear: "I'm very content with my life." How lovely is that? Thank you, Russell.



Selfie Competition Time!



REQUIREMENTS:

- 1 Take a selfie with the billboard
- 2 Post it on Facebook and/or Instagram – ensure it's a PUBLIC post or we won't be able to see it
- 3 Tag 'The Little Theatre' (on Facebook) or @thelittleleics (on Instagram).
- 4 Include the caption "There's lots of great shows coming up at The Little Theatre! Tickets available from thelittletheatre.co.uk"

Find us on social media:

Facebook: The Little Theatre

Instagram: @thelittleleics

LinkedIn: The Little Theatre (Leicester)

We're very excited to have our new billboard up at City Hall! It features the announced shows for 2024, and it's lovely to have a long-term, prominently located reminder of our theatre in the city centre.

We want even more people to see it, so we're promoting a competition!

As the billboard is just a short walk from The Little, we want as many people as possible to go and take a selfie with it – as you can see, our marketing trustee has already been! Everyone who does so will be entered into a prize draw to win two free tickets to one of the shows featured on the billboard*. The winner will be able to choose which show and which date, subject to availability.

The deadline is Sunday, February 25.

The winner will be revealed on Monday, February 26 in a video by Tom, our marketing trustee.

Due to our past history with scammers, please don't believe any other comments claiming you've won unless it correlates with the video.



*At time of writing, we're waiting to hear back from LOPs as to whether they're happy for *Legally Blonde* to be included, but all other shows are confirmed as eligible.

Connections Report

Words by Jackie Caunt

January 16, 2024

Our first Connections of the year started well with 10 folk attending. Some had already signed up to be new members and had come to have a look around the theatre. We started with the getting to know each other session and a short talk by Richard on getting to know what the theatre has to offer and how they could be a part of it.

The tour began but we were a bit disappointed that there weren't any rehearsals going on in 52. On the other hand, it was a bit of a bonus as it was below zero outside, and it saved us a walk up the road. That said, I would have liked to see a bit of rehearsal for *The Good Life*, which is on February 5-10. However, as it turned out, Keiran Whelan Newby was in the studio rehearsing singers for *The Secret Garden* coming to the theatre at Easter. The singers were being put through their paces by Grace Bale, who has an amazing voice herself and it all sounded terrific.

We moved on to the workshop, where work on an upcoming set

was in progress. We then went up to the auditorium to watch the technical rehearsal of *April in Paris*. We saw Steve Feeney (playing Al) and Kat Seddon (playing Bet) going through their parts whilst sound and lighting were being sorted out by Andy Crooks and Tim Neville. The crew and actors were being directed by Leigh White; it was looking good and gave me a laugh, even amongst all this organised chaos! Looking forward to seeing this one.

Trying to be really quiet, we went backstage where we met up with Andy Crooks. He gave the group a brief talk on the duties of a deputy stage manager (DSM), with an impromptu demonstration by Jane Towers, ably-assisted by David Moore, which was



much appreciated by the group.

Returning to the bar, six folks joined as members, and others took an application form home.

I'd like to thank Carissma Griffiths, a new member who has landed a small part in *The Good Life*, and came to talk to the group about her experiences within the theatre so far.

The next connections evening is January 30 – everyone welcome! Come back to refresh your memory of the theatre, or if you have a family member or friend that might be interested to join, please bring them along to show them the opportunities we have available.



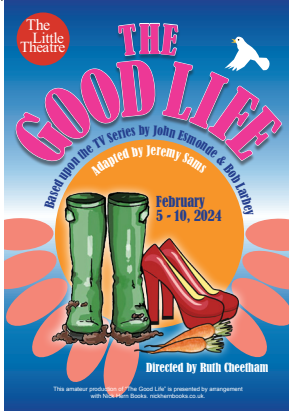
CONNECTIONS DATES FOR YOUR DIARIES:

February 27

March 12

April 23

What's On



The Good Life

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

February 5-10, 2024 An LDS Production

Directed by Ruth Cheetham

When Tom and Barbara Good decide to exchange the pressures of the rat race for an alternative, more sustainable way of living, they become the model of self-sufficiency in Surbiton – much to the annoyance of Margo and Jerry next door.

A taste of 70s nostalgia in this compendium of episodes from the iconic British sitcom.

Specials

The Upbeat Beatles

February 11 – 'Get Back' to the swinging 60s and relive those 'Fab' days and timeless songs!

Do You Think That's Wise? The Life and Times of John Le Mesurier

February 14 – An affectionate tribute to one of Britain's best-loved comedy stars, leading impressionist Julian Dutton.

LGS Big Band

February 16 – An evening packed full of big band jazz! Vocal and instrumental numbers made famous by the likes of Frank Sinatra, Glenn Miller, and Count Basie.

Murder She Didn't Write

February 17 – You become Agatha Christie in this improvised comedy as an original murder mystery play is created based entirely on audience suggestions.

The ABBA Sensation

February 18 – Widely considered to be one of the best ever ABBA tribute acts.

Top Secret: The Magic of Science

February 21 – Fusing the mystery of magic with wondrous and miraculous feats of science.

Jersey Beats – Oh What A Nite!

February 22-23 – A tribute to Frankie Valli and the Four Seasons.

The Greatest Star: Barbra Streisand Tribute Show

February 24 – Kearra Bethany takes you on a magical musical journey through the career of an icon.



Don't forget, 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:

The Good Life (February 5-10)

Dial 'M' For Murder (March 4-9)

Dangerous Corner (April 29-May 4)

Audition Notice

The Darling Buds Of May



Production Dates: July 1-6, 2024 (rehearsals begin mid-May)

Director: Mary Jones

Location: 52 Up, Albion Street

Contact Info: adamary86@hotmail.com or 07814 510059

Description: Based on the hugely popular 1991 TV series of the same name (which starred David Jason, Pam Ferris, and Catherine Zeta Jones). There was also a 2021 remake, *The Larkins*, starring Bradley Walsh.

Audition Date/Time: Sunday, February 11, 2024 @ 2pm

Character	Gender	Character	Gender	Description
Pop Larkin	Male	Mr Charlton (Charlie)	Male	A shy, earnest young man
Ma Larkin	Female	Miss Pilchester	Female	A hearty, middle-aged spinster
Mariette	Already cast	Pauline Jackson	Female	A seductive young lady
Montgomery	Male – 17	Angela Snow	Female	A sexy rival to her peers
Primrose	Female – 13	The Brigadier	M – 40+	The Larkins' neighbour
Petunia	Female – 11	Sir George Bluff - Gore	Male – 50+	
Zinnia	Female – 11	Lady Bluff - Gore	Female – 50+	
Victoria	Female – 9	Tax Inspector	Working age	

(Auditions for younger children will be later in the season, but do register any interest)
Please get in touch to register interest or any queries. Scripts available in the office now.

Table Manners

Production Dates: June 10-15, 2024

Director: Russell Hughes

Location: Haywood Studio, The Little Theatre, Dover Street

Contact Info: russell.hughes@thelittletheatre.uk or 07922 979801

Description: A dysfunctional family gathering for the weekend reunites three siblings and significant others in the kitchen family home with farcical consequences.

Audition Date/Time: Tuesday, February 6 and Friday, February 9, 2024 @ 7pm

Character	Gender	Description
Annie	Female	The youngest sibling, stay-at-home carer for 'mother'
Tom	Male	Annie's neighbour and 'hanger on', an indecisive vet
Sarah	Female	Annie's highly strung sister-in-law, would rather be anywhere than here
Reg	Male	The middle sibling, married to Sarah for eight years
Ruth	Female	The oldest sibling, married to Norman who is more of an inconvenience than anything
Norman	Male	Ruth's husband, Annie and Reg's brother-in-law and the cause of a lot of trouble



As far as age goes, I'm looking at late 20s to 50s. This is not set in stone, but everyone needs to be roughly in the same age bracket (or at least believable as a family group).

If you intend to audition, please let me know. If you can't make the audition date but would still like to, again, please let me know and we'll sort something out.

Memories of Dial 'M' for Murder

Words by Al Davis (via Mary Jones)

Former Little production designer Al Davis got in touch with me recently when he saw that I was directing *Dial 'M' for Murder* this year, with the following memory...

Dear Mary,

Beware! I recall seeing the leading actors from *Z Cars* perform this play at Southsea many years ago... and had serious problems with the lighting cues at the end.

For some reason, the DSM on the book missed a cue and instead of going to DBO (Dead Blackout), the lights remained on. The next line reminded him that the lights should have been killed, so he plunged the stage into darkness, much to the cast's surprise.

Realising that the following dialogue didn't work either, he called for the lighting to be restored at the very moment the lights were supposed to go out again.

At this point, there must have been an argument between LX and the DSM and the lights seemed to go into strobe mode. The cast struggled on through the howls of laughter from the audience, but the moment of tension had been lost.

In the end, two of the bulbs on the no. 2 SB blew up, showering the stage with glass and the working lights were suddenly brought up just in time for the curtain calls.

It was a sparkling and unexpected ending to what had otherwise been a very pedestrian production... the cast of *Z Cars* were not good actors when removed from the TV Studio, and the audience went home chuckling happily.

Sadly, for the rest of the week, the lighting was flawless.

Regards,
Al

With the excellent team for our upcoming production of *Dial 'M' For Murder*, there will be no danger of similar disasters! The play is on our mainstage March 4-9, 2024.



Recent Photos

April in Paris

Our first play of the year was John Godber's *April in Paris*, directed by Leigh White.

This two-hander was the story of Al and Bet, a Yorkshire couple who's marriage had stagnated. Al spends his time creating abstract paintings in his shed, while Bet spends her time entering magazine competitions. Victory in one such contest earns them a trip to Paris, that reignites the spark in their lives, and returning their joie de vivre.

It received phenomenal reviews throughout the week!



"Fabulous!"



"This was incredible! We absolutely loved it!"



"Loved it!"



"What a fantastic show. Your professionalism shone through. Loved it! Sat next to Steve's mate, and the accents were brilliant. Well done."



PHOTOS BY MARY JAYNE HARDING SCOTT

Review: *April in Paris*

Words by Jackie Caunt

I had seen just a smidgeon of this play during tech rehearsal and it made me laugh but I wasn't sure about it. "Goodness," I thought, "There's still a lot of work to be done on the set before opening night." It turned out that what I saw then was basically what you got.

The whole set was white – even the stage floor. There were a few black dining chairs and stage blocks spread around, which were used throughout the play as various pieces of furniture such as tables, train seats, and brown suitcases, but no other colour.

The play opens with married couple Bet (Kat Seddon) and Al (Steve Feeney) at complete odds with each other. On the one hand we have Bet – glass half full, always doing competitions, full of *joie de vivre* – and on the other, Al, the grumpiest of grumps, lost his job, miserable as sin, and spends most of his time painting pictures in the shed.

Bet suggests things like going out and meeting friends, but Al always puts a downer on things. We eventually see the painting he has been working on; it's an abstract, and

Bet really doesn't get it. Although she's kind about it, she does state it's the same as all the others. I liked it but then I like abstract painting. This is hung on the set wall; "Ahh!" I thought. "A bit of colour!" It was mainly blue and grey – not a lot, but a beginning.

Bet wins a trip to Paris from one of her competitions, and – of course – grumpy-pants doesn't want to go. But here you begin to see signs of jealousy in Al, when Bet tells him she'll ask a friend to go with her instead of him. Of course, he does go, but is still moaning on the ferry, and at one-point climbs up on the blocks to look at the sea and Bet more or less told him to throw himself overboard! I was with her on this. We see Al's gentleness and concern for Bet when she has really bad seasickness. This was so well demonstrated by Seddon, I began to feel queasy.

Once in Paris, and with Bet's enthusiasm, Al begins to loosen up and enjoy himself and you see there *is* love there. Although, you realise this will always be an edgy relationship.

The suitcases contained all the

props required for the actors to set the different scenes on their travels. I loved the lamp that came out of a suitcase for various situations; e.g. For *le café en France*, they produced a table cloth, lamp, and a beret for Bet.

Once the pair had returned home, Al seems to retreat back to his shed and Bet to her magazines and competitions. But eventually, Al joined in with this, and they found a winning formula between them. With the aid of projection on the white walls, we were treated to their holiday photographs from other prizes they'd won.

Bit by bit, the cleverly hidden hooks on the walls started to fill with colour, and the *pièce de résistance* was Al's painting of the Eiffel Tower, which took centre place on the wall.

This play was cleverly and sympathetically directed by Leigh White, and beautifully acted. You definitely believed in Al and Bet. To bear witness to that, while on FOH duty the night before I saw it, I was asked by audience members if Feeney and Seddon were really married! I could see where they were coming from!



Late Member Mentioned in Judi Dench's Book

Words by Lisa Thirlby

Our long-standing members will remember Orry Pochin (1932-2002), who has been referenced in Dame Judi Dench's new book. The following is an extract from Dame Judi's *Shakespeare – the Man who Pays the Rent* (Michael Joseph, 2023) and the chapter about the play, *Richard II*.



RICHARD II

Queen Isabel

The first Shakespeare part that I ever played was Queen Isabel in *Richard II*. I was fifteen and it was a production at Bootham School in York. At the time, Bootham was an all-boys school and they asked a few girls from the Mount, which was my school, to play the women. I shared the part with Rachel Hartley, and we did two performances each.

Then, years later, I played Queen Isabel again – at the Old Vic with Alec McCowen as Richard II. We took over the parts from John Justin and Maggie Smith.

After discussing the Old Vic production, the chapter ends at the point in the play when King Richard is being taken off to prison and he and his Queen bid each other a fond farewell. But then Judi Dench returns to the first time she played this part.

In the years that followed, Orry returned to Leicester, the family business and Leicester Drama Society. Like his father (Roy Pochin) before him, he was a gifted actor and an excellent director. It was always a pleasure to work with Orry. I also understand that his wife, Kathryn, was at The Mount School in York the same year as Dame Judi.

Isabel must feel so helpless. Seeing somebody you love suffering and not being able to reach them and support them. It's like watching somebody die, which . . . well, lot's of us have been there . . .

They kiss goodbye, never to see each other again. Can you imagine what that kiss was like at Bootham School? I had to kiss a beautiful boy called Orry Pochin, who I was madly in love with. I heard a long time afterwards that I'd apparently kissed him very nicely. Whereas Rachel Hartley was a bit half-hearted.

It sounds as if Rachel Hartley had a much stronger moral compass.

Oh, no doubt. I was far too eager. I was fifteen and had never been kissed.

The background is a vibrant red collage of movie-related icons. It includes a large yellow film reel in the top left, a yellow cinema ticket with 'CINEMA' and stars in the top center, a black and yellow comedy/tragedy mask in the top right, a yellow Oscar statue in the middle left, a yellow director's chair in the middle right, a black and yellow comedy/tragedy mask in the bottom left, a yellow director's chair in the bottom left, a yellow cinema ticket in the bottom center, and a yellow film reel in the bottom right.

The
Little
Theatre

THE LDS PRESENTS...

MEMBERS' QUIZ NIGHT

Friday 1st March
2024 @ 7pm

MEMBERS ONLY EVENT!

£3 ENTRY FEE
BOOK ONLINE

LOCATION:
THE LITTLE THEATRE BAR

In The Spotlight



Name: Liz Kavanagh

Age: I have left some clues for you about this!

Profession: Programme Administrator in the School of Psychology at the University of Leicester

Upcoming production: *The Good Life*

Noteworthy: My last two shows have involved stripping. I am happy to be keeping my clothes on this time!

What was the first theatre show you saw?

The first show I remember seeing was *Oklahoma!* at the Leicester Haymarket Theatre in 1979, aged six – though I suspect this wasn't my first trip. My mum and Auntie Shirley took me – quite an unusual choice to take a little girl to see that particular musical, because the story is actually very dark. The sinister edge clearly went right over my head – I just loved the dancing and the opening number, "Oh what a beautiful morning". It felt like sunshine on stage.

What was the first play/musical you were in?

I was in *Kips War* at the Leicester Haymarket, aged 13. It ran all summer and I still maintain that this was the best summer of my life! It was a musical telling the story of an evacuee, Kip. I'm not quite sure how I heard about the auditions, but they were pretty daunting and involved quite a lot of "rounds". Lucky for me, I made the cut! Kip was played by a young actor from *Grange Hill* and one of the adult leads was the lady from the "Shake and Vac" advert! I felt like I'd hit the big time!

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

I have been lucky enough to play some great parts: I was most challenged by Mari Hoff (*The Rise and Fall of Little Voice*), danced my feet off as Peggy Sawyer (*42nd Street*) but if I must pick a favourite, it has to be Celia in *Calendar Girls*. The sense of "team" in that production was like nothing else. And taking one's clothes off on stage is actually quite a thrill!

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

I am now a little too old to play Annie (though I did get to play Miss Hannigan, which was wonderful). I would love to have a go at Mrs Lovett in *Sweeney Todd*. I'd also really like to have a crack at panto one year.

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

My parents took me to see *Nicholas Nickleby* at the RSC in Stratford. I think it was 1987, it was in two parts, and in total, eight and a half hours long! It was staggeringly good and also the first time I had been to Stratford. I really was very fortunate.

What's your favourite thing about The Little Theatre?

It gives amateur performers the opportunity to perform on that wonderful stage in the wonderful auditorium supported by a wonderful team of people. Where else in Leicester can we do this? I have made some great friends and it really is my happy place.

Tell us about your upcoming production!

The Good Life is iconic. So many people remember the show and this production retells their stories: Tom and Barbara's bid to become self-sufficient in 1970's suburbia, and Jerry and Margo's horror and bemusement at their efforts. In many ways Tom and Barbara were ahead of their time, as notably sustainability wasn't as common topic of conversation back then. I have big wellies to fill in playing Barbara, made famous by the utterly gorgeous Felicity Kendal and hope to do her justice. It is wonderful to play opposite Freddie Dobrijevic for the first time and to be back on stage with old friends.

At a glance

MARCH



Dial 'M' for Murder

Mar 4-9

The Secret Garden: The Musical

Mar 22-Apr 6



APRIL



Legally Blonde

Apr 16-20

Dangerous Corner

Apr 29-May 4



MAY



Alice in Wonderland & Through the Looking Glass

May 17-18

Grease

May 21-25



JUNE/JULY



Table Manners

June 10-15

The Darling Buds of May

July 1-6





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