

The Good Life
Dir. Ruth Cheetham

MARCH 2024

SCENE

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE LEICESTER DRAMA SOCIETY

The
Little
Theatre

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



Editor's Letter

Exclusive to LDS members, this month begins with The Little Theatre hosting its first quiz night in a long time. Organised by the membership committee, the first social of the year will encourage members to mingle, with teams chosen at random to help us all get to know each other a little better. See you in the bar!

Meanwhile, suspense,

deception, and intrigue await us in Frederick Knott's *Dial 'M' for Murder*. Directed by Mary Jones, I'm excited to see what she and the cast have done with this classic thriller.

Next up will be *The Secret Garden* directed by Kieran Whelan-Newby. I've performed on The Little's stage in many shows performed by the musical

societies in our extended family, but this will mark my LDS debut!

In other news, an ITV reporter contacted us in February, requesting to feature The Little in a piece about theatre life post-pandemic. By the time you read this, you may have already spotted us on ITV news!

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 scene@thelittletheatre.co.uk.

200 Club Winners

The winners of February's draw:

1st Prize (£250) – 17
 2nd Prize (£100) – 67
 3rd Prize (£50) – 83

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

The Little's big cash-prize lottery

Donate £15 to The Little Theatre to enter the remaining 3 monthly lottery draws for 2023-24.

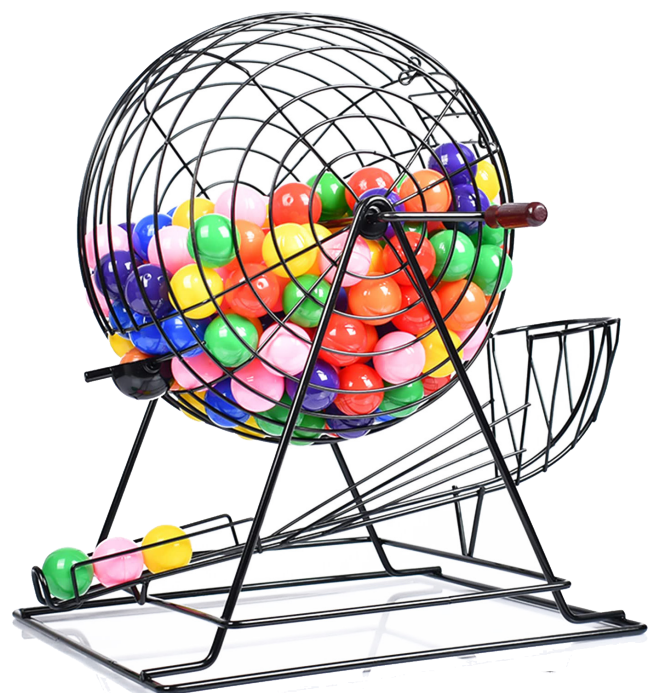
The next draw takes place at the end of March.

Call us to enter:

0116 255 1302

hello@thelittletheatre.co.uk

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Member Profile

Charlotte Brown *Words by Jackie Caunt*

Charlotte grew up in Leicester, attending Fulhurst Secondary School and going on to study at De Montfort University, where she did a two-year foundation course in Performing Arts. She went on to study at the University of Central Lancashire, earning a BA in Contemporary Theatre and Performance.

After her final year at university, Charlotte was lucky enough to be picked to represent England at a theatre festival in Slovakia. Think Eurovision but for theatre.

Charlotte has had various jobs in customer service, before finding her niche working in property. She currently manages student accommodation all over the country, and also works as a freelance model. She's a house model for PGD photography studios.

Joining The Little Theatre in 2014, Charlotte landed a part in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* as Cobweb, her first role outside of education. That same year, Charlotte went on to play the lead role in *A Taste of Honey*, as well as making her studio debut in a play called *The Cagebirds*.

I first became aware of Charlotte

when I saw her in KPAOS's version of *9 to 5*, which saw her nominated for Best Supporting Performance in a Musical at the first annual Sooty Awards. Charlotte played Roz, the straight-laced office supervisor who was in love with her boss. It wasn't until we saw what was underneath her formal clothing that we realised she might not be so straight-laced after all! I also caught her in *Olde Time Music Hall* as Burlington Bertie from *Bow*, and I think if Vesta Tilley was around today, she would be most impressed. I loved it!

Ten years after her debut, Charlotte is an active member of the LDS, as well as several local musical theatre societies, and will be on our stage as Margot in *Legally Blonde* from April 16-20. This fun packed show is definitely not one to miss. Charlotte is also rehearsing for the role of Maureen in LAOS's production of *Rent* – one of her dream roles – which will mark her Curve debut; something she is 'over the moon' about.

During her time on The Little's membership committee, not only has she organised a Little Theatre quiz but hopes to plan more events in the



future to promote the community side of the LDS.

When I asked Charlotte about The Little Theatre, she said it feels like a home away from home, with everyone there feeling like family. She has made amazing memories and friends for life and would encourage anyone on the fence about signing up to take the plunge.



Little Memories

Debbie Longley-Brown

In our new regular feature, we invite our LDS and extended family members to share their memories of The Little Theatre, whether that be on stage, in rehearsal, in the audience, or anywhere else in the building. This month, Sooty Award winner Debbie Longley-Brown shares a memory from *Calendar Girls*.

I couldn't talk about The Little Theatre without remembering the 2022 KW Productions show, *Calendar Girls*.

I had first seen *Calendar Girls* a few years earlier whilst on a Hen Party and knew, there and then, that if the opportunity to be in it ever came up, there wasn't a chance I was saying no. So, when Keiran Whelan-Newby asked me to audition in autumn 2021, I was straight in there... leaving the realisation that I'd eventually have to take my clothes off on stage pushed somewhere to the back of my mind.

The pinnacle of *Calendar Girls* is where 'the reveals' takes place during a number called 'One Night Only'. We spent a lot of time in rehearsal perfecting that sequence (after all, one slip of a dressing gown or a misplaced prop and the audience would be getting quite a bit more than they paid for) and the eight of us developed quite the relationship during the process. Knowing that everyone had your back (and front) during the performances made that sequence incredibly empowering and just so much fun.

Every time someone made their 'reveal', the reaction from the audience was incredible; each night we had to stop and wait for the cheers to go down. I went into that sequence on opening night utterly terrified, but by the Saturday, I definitely saw myself through different eyes.

Though I do have to laugh when I think about the final part of the song.

All the *Calendar Girls* come back on stage carrying a large wooden cracker for the 'December' photo. Now, as Cora, the one who played the piano, and with no time at all to put a stitch of clothing back on, I was absolutely stark-naked behind that cracker!

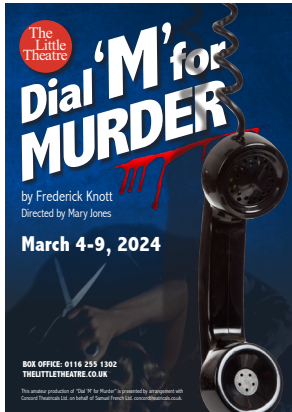
And let me tell you, that cracker was heavy (which I still can't fathom as to why anyone would make it so heavy with the risk of full-frontal nudity if it got dropped). You can imagine our collective panic when one cast member – who shall remain nameless – went back to the dressing room early on not one, but two performances, and only just got back to us with a fraction of a second to spare before we had to go on with that blasted cracker.

Once the number was over it was a quick change into finale outfits, and it was utter carnage backstage with so much naked flesh bouncing around. Poor Simon Dickens had hidden himself out of the way by the ladder to the flies, not realising that was the exact spot I'd popped my costumes.

After a quick shock for us both, he was very much the gentleman and turned away until I was changed, and very sensibly found somewhere else to hide for the rest of the week.



What's On



Dial 'M' For Murder

By Frederick Knott
March 4-9, 2024 An LDS Production
Directed by Mary Jones

Ex-tennis pro Tony Wendice plots to murder his wife after learning she had an affair that has since ended. Using blackmail, he persuades an old school acquaintance to strangle her, but when things go drastically wrong, Tony sees another way to guarantee her death... and his wealth.

Will he succeed or will the plot to murder his wife be foiled?

An evening of suspense, deception, and intrigue in Knott's classic thriller.



The Secret Garden: The Musical

By Marsha Norman & Lucy Simon; based on the novel by Frances Hodgson Burnett
March 22-27 & April 3-6, 2024 An LDS Production
Directed by Keiran Whelan-Newby
Musical Direction by Grace Bale, assisted by Paul Timms

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 unable to walk.

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.

Based on the 1911 novel of the same name, this stunning Tony award-winning musical holds a special place in many people's hearts.



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:

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

Dangerous Corner (April 29-May 4)

Alice in Wonderland & Through the Looking Glass (May 17-18)

Cast Announcements

Table Manners

By Alan Ayckbourn

June 10-15, 2024

Directed by Russell Hughes

We're delighted to announce our cast for this summer's production of *Table Manners*!



ANNIE – Holly Matuisiewicz

SARAH – Emma Bamford

TOM – Graham Muir

REG – Freddie Dobrijevic

NORMAN – Allan Smith

RUTH – Tabz Fogg

Reg finds food rather scarce, despite having it thrown at him by Sarah... Sarah is scandalised by Annie... Annie is disappointed by men in general and Tom in particular... Tom knocks down Norman... Norman's romantic proposals are ruined thanks to Ruth... Ruth loses her patience, her temper, and her glasses... and everyone has trouble deciding where to sit.

The events of one weekend, as seen from the dining room in this serving from Ayckbourn's 'Norman Conquests' trilogy.

Tickets are available now from our box office (0116 255 1302) and at thelittletheatre.co.uk/whats-on/table-manners

Thank you to LGS Big Band

Words by Jackie Caunt

I caught the Leicester Grammar School Big Band when I stewarded for the theatre for the first time in February, and I was impressed. I have only ever seen them once before, many moons ago, when Mary Jayne Harding Scott was a member. They always seem to be on a Friday night which – until recently – hasn't been a free evening for me.

I felt it was lovely to see all these talented youngsters enjoying what they do; the confidence they gain from

this is tremendous and to give their time to The Little Theatre to help with fundraising deserves a big thank you!

I particularly enjoyed the Gramophones who sang acappella, a bit like Barbershop singers. I don't usually enjoy this kind of music, but they somehow made it different, and I would have enjoyed hearing more.

Further thanks to Martin Scott and Jenny Harding for their hard work during the evening to help bring this all together.



Recent Photos: *The Good Life*

Our first play of the spring/summer season was Jeremy Sams' adaptation of *The Good Life*, directed by Ruth Cheetham, and based on the TV series by John Esmonde and Bob Larbey. A taste of 70s nostalgia, the play was a recreation of four classic episodes from the much-loved BBC sitcom. With a stellar cast, including four leads Freddie Dobrijevic, Liz Kavanagh, David Lovell and Alexandra Elliott, audiences were thoroughly entertained and kept a laughing throughout the week.



"If you fondly remember the sitcoms of the 1970s you really should treat yourself to this!"



"A bit of nostalgia, and a goat! Perfect."



"We came to see it last night and loved it. The voices and mannerisms were perfect and it was like going back in time. I also loved the nostalgic music, theme tunes and adverts played prior to the show starting and during the interval."

PHOTOS BY SALLY EVANS

Review: *The Good Life*

Jackie Caunt reviews our February play, directed by Ruth Cheetham

Before I came to see this play, I must confess that I never really enjoyed the television series; I only watched it for Penelope Keith's Margo, who stole the show for me.

The first act was very good, letting us into the discontent of Tom (Freddie Dobrijevic) and Barbara Good (Liz Kavanagh). Feeling like they were on the corporate treadmill, they choose to switch to a rather all-consuming life of growing, making and brewing their own food and essentials, adding livestock like chickens, pigs and a goat to their garden.

I loved the part where Barbara was telling Jerry Leadbetter (David Lovell) that she would have to start knitting booties, as a litter of piglets was

imminent and – apparently – they had to have their little trotters kept warm. Jerry fell for it, and I must admit, so did I! 'Real townie', that's me. The first half had the audience in fits of laughter, finishing with Geraldine the goat running amok in the Leadbetters' house.

Abby Glover's set design for this play was really good and well thought out. As a patron who stays in the auditorium during the interval, I loved the little play-within-the-play that saw two very weary/lazy painters and decorators fixing up Margo and Jerry's house after the goat fiasco. Therefore, I got it when Margo complained of rubbish workmen and how long it was taking during the act two opening.

I was a little disappointed that the second act didn't quite continue with the energy and pace the end of first half promised. However, the friends I came with loved it, and I got good feedback from the audience as they left the theatre on my Thursday-night-stint as FOH manager.

The play had a strong cast of experienced actors and I really enjoyed all the performances. I particularly enjoyed Alexandra Elliott's performance as Margo, and the chemistry between The Policeman (Jon Worthy) and Mary (newcomer Carissma Griffiths) – very flirty!

As I said above, *The Good Life* is not my favourite sitcom, but even so, it was a very enjoyable evening.



From the archives: Greg Hicks

Words by Lisa Thirlby

This week in the archives, I've been doing a bit of research to prove or disprove that Greg Hicks, the Leicester born, well-known stage and film actor, was a member here in his teens. John Ghent is certain that the young Greg Hicks was in a production of Pinter's *The Dumb Waiter* and that this was one of the plays in a one-act festival in the early 1970s. There is no record of this event in the archives' database.

Having ascertained that Mr. Hicks was born in 1953 and that he attended Rose Bruford College, I searched again in the boxes from 1969-70 through to 1972-73. There was nothing. Then I turned to Findmypast, the family history website which has a very good collection of regional newspapers and an advanced search system.

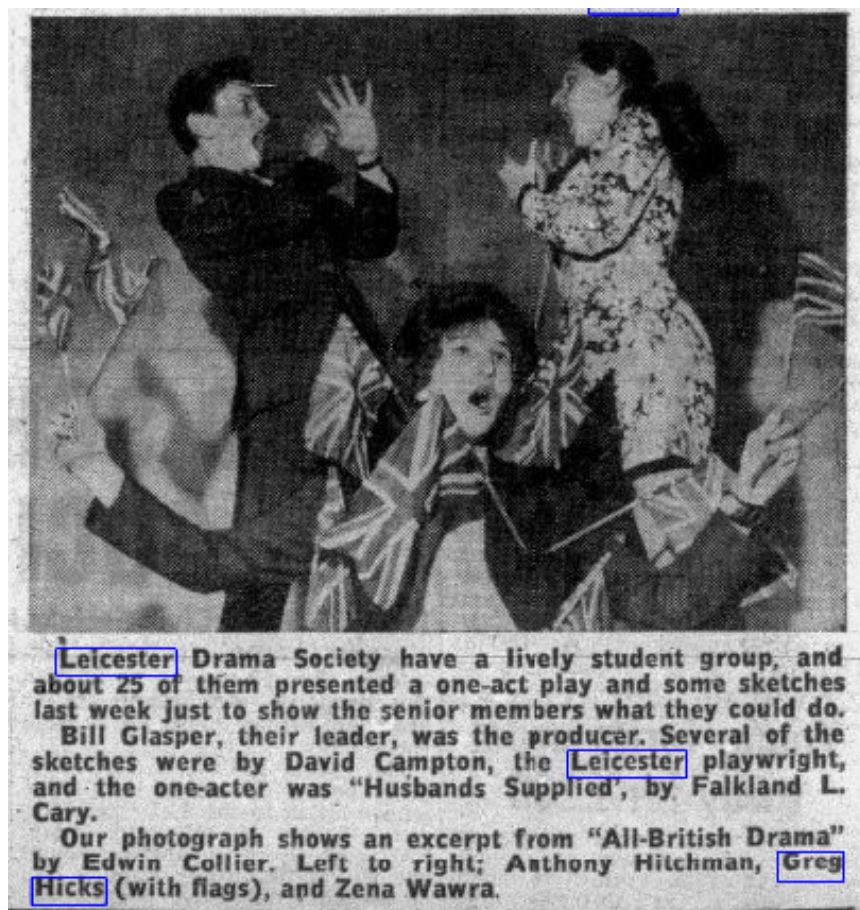
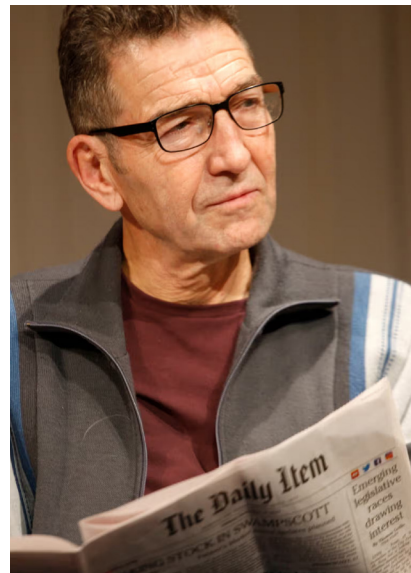
Eventually, I found three press cuttings from the Leicester Mercury – the first (right) is a photo with a lengthy caption about several sketches and excerpts from plays performed by the Student Group (one of the forerunners of Thursday Workshop) in which Greg appeared in May 1971. The second is a piece published in November 1971 about him winning the Leverhulme Scholarship at Rose Bruford College.

It goes on to mention that, indeed, Greg was in *The Dumb Waiter* at The Little Theatre in September 1971.

If anyone has more information about either of these events, I'd be very pleased to have it for the archives.

Oh, and the third press cutting I found, quite by chance, is a very amusing write-up from a member of the orchestra for one or more of the musical societies shows about 'where the orchestra goes to in the interval'! It is reproduced on page 11.

If you have any information, documents, or theatre memorabilia that could be donated to the archives, contact Lisa Thirlby at lisa.thirlby@thelittletheatre.co.uk.



You may have seen Greg Hicks in:

- *Snow White and the Huntsman* (2012)
 - *Son of God* (2014)
 - *The Knock* (1994)
- and various British television shows including *Marple*, *The Bill*, *Heartbeat*, *Casualty*, and *Midsomer Murders*.

PHOTO BY SIMON ANNAND

From the archives: Doleful Lay of a Wandering Minstrel

Words by Denis Downes, reproduced from his "stage page" in the Leicester Mercury, Tuesday, May 16, 1972

"Don't shoot the piano player, he's doing his best." That was the appeal to unruly elements in the rip-roaring saloons of the American Wild West.

At Leicester level, we're much more polite.

In a charming, whimsical letter, Mrs Irene McMillan, of 14 Ash Tree Road, Oadby, who plays in some of the orchestras at The Little Theatre, makes a light-hearted protest.

She asks if the audiences have ever wondered where the orchestra goes in the interval.

"Who can watch them disappear through the dark doors at the side of the stage without a pang of envy?" she says. "Who does not burn with curiosity at what lies beyond. Few can realise what they are missing.

"The musicians have a most inviting square of concrete about six feet across, forming the last of a steep flight of concrete stairs. For their further comfort, there is a radiator immediately behind the door, much frequented by string players in low-cut dresses, opposite an open window overlooking the graveyard, which is favoured by the more warmly clad.

"It is possible to rest against the iron railings at the top of the stairs to smoke your cigarette, and every now and then there is a mass intake of breath as a tray of tea is borne through to the dressing rooms.

"At the bottom of the stairs is the much sought after radiator in direct line with the stage door. This is reserved for those who can get downstairs first; double bass players have the longest legs. Wind players in the main do manage to get a drink, having not only the necessity to wet their whistles but being

geographically nearer the bar and better placed to beat the audience to it."

Victor Bonfield, secretary of Leicester Drama Society appreciates Mrs McMillan's sense of humour, but he points out that arrangements for accommodation for the orchestra are the responsibility of those who book the theatre.

He points to their chronic shortage of space for normal theatre activities, including rehearsal, but says he will ask the Theatre Manager, Michael Cox [sic] if anything can be done to improve the lot of the wandering minstrels.

NOTES FROM LISA:

The stairs mentioned are the original ones in the back corridor (leading up to the dressing rooms), as they were before they had to be replaced in the 1990s. The orchestra used to congregate on the first landing. The radiator mentioned is the one opposite the doors to the studio.

Vic Bonfield's response to the lady's comments is a bit harsh – there was nowhere that the hirer of the theatre could book for the orchestra to use because every room was always in use (Ed: some things never change!).

Angela Richards (also mentioned in the Mercury article) appeared at The Little, just once I think, in June 1962 when (as Angela Twigg) she played the maid, Burton, in *Angels in Love*.



In The Spotlight



Name: Adam Jones

Age: Septuagenarian!

Profession: Deputy Headteacher (retired)

Upcoming production: *Dial 'M' For Murder*

Noteworthy: Heightened survival skills in a number of recent productions: pushed repeatedly face down into a garden pond (Alan Ayckbourn's *Time & Time Again*), standing on an unsteady dining table to fix a live light flex above my head (Alan Ayckbourn's *Absurd Person Singular*) and being wrapped from head-to-toe in black refuse sacks, bound with parcel tape and placed in a freezer (Peter James' *The Perfect Murder*). The production risk assessments made for interesting reading.

What was the first theatre show you saw?

A family visit to *Mother Goose* at South Shields Pier Pavilion in the early 1950s during which, being in possession of the 'lucky programme', I was called up onto the stage to be given a prize of a Rowntree's Dairy Box of chocolates. Sweet rationing had only ended in 1953, so that was some prize. The actor playing Mother Goose said: "Give the little boy a clap". It was a rather special moment.

What was the first play/musical you were in?

In the 1950s and 60s it was still the convention in single-sex schools that the younger boys played the female roles and so it was that, at the age of eleven, in the South Shields Grammar School for Boys' production of Sheridan's *The Rivals* I was cast in the role of Lydia Languish. I would add that, by contrast, in the fifth and sixth forms I was playing a range of crotchety old men.

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

Such a difficult question! In 2011, I played Danny in the LDS production of *Brassed Off* which really resonated

with me having grown up in a mining community. It was a great privilege to work with and conduct The Enderby Band as part of the show.

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

I think I have probably reached the point where I am just happy to be involved in a production and rather grateful that directors still offer me roles, both with Leicester Drama Society and Ratae Co-operative Players.

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

Another difficult question! The North East in the 60s, 70s and 80s was well served by the major touring companies and I was fortunate to see a wide range of theatre, including Lila Kedrova in Chekov's *The Cherry Orchard* (1965) Marlowe's *Dr. Faustus* with a young Ian McKellen making his RSC debut (1974) and possibly the most memorable of all, if only for its sheer scale, the RSC production of *The Life and Adventures of Nicholas Nickleby*, which played in two parts with a total running time of eight and half hours and an interval long enough to eat a meal (1986).

What's your favourite thing about The Little Theatre?

The camaraderie and commitment of all the people in the rehearsal room intent on creating something special for our audiences.

Tell us about your upcoming production!

Dial 'M' For Murder by Frederick Knott. In this classic suspense thriller, Tony Wendice, having married for money, pursues the perfect crime to murder his wife. He becomes entangled in his own web of lies. Will his guilt be exposed? First staged in 1952, it soon became a hugely successful Alfred Hitchcock film. Come and see this play, which has gripped audiences for over seven decades.



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