

# PROMPTINGS



ISSUE 80 - MARCH 2014

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It was great to see so many members, past and present at our 90th birthday celebration. Over sixty of us enjoyed a bite to eat and then a boogie into the night at Theydon Golf Course. Apart from the different styles of dancing that were on show the slide show of photos that was playing on the TV

really served to remind me of the strong history that the society has. On behalf of the society I would like to thank Roger Barker for his speech and the general committee members for helping organise the evening. Special thanks must be given to Frances Dennis whose hard work made the evening what it was.

I am pleased to say that LADS continued to provide our audience with enjoyable evenings of theatre with our production of *Why Me?* The chatter in the bar afterwards was positive with stalwarts and new audience members both saying what a success it was. A review from Jessica Bostock is included in this issue and is worth reading even if you were not involved in the play as we can all learn and improve our skills by listening to other people's perspectives and constructive criticisms. I can ensure you that the "intimidation tactics" which were used to get a kind crit were purely by accident!

Since our last issue of Promptings representatives of LADS and LOS have met with the Lopping Hall Trustees to discuss the ongoing issues with storage and the redevelopment of Lopping Hall. I am glad to say that there will be additional storage created in the Hall for some of our items and until these areas are completed we will not have to clear the scenery store. That said the days of popping downstairs to pick up some essential

materials for a set up are now gone and we must be mindful of the requirements for each production so that we are fully prepared before the Sunday get in. The Trustees are keen to further understand the needs of the performing societies and therefore we will be inviting them to come to our set ups and be backstage during a dress rehearsal. They have asked for suggestions on how we would like the theatre space to be improved and refurbished so please let me know your suggestions and I will collate them and forward them on.

Compared to other performing societies LADS is not a large one. However the membership does pull together and through the hard work and dedication we manage to produce fantastic productions. However it wouldn't take a lot for the society to become fragile and unstable and small examples of this have already occurred this season. A number of options are being considered to combat this at the committee level but I am keen to hear from the membership about what direction you feel LADS should be heading in, your ideas on how it could be strengthened and how to grow our membership.

I wish everyone involved with our production of *A Lie of the Mind* the very best with rehearsals and everyone please don't forget to tell your friends, family and work colleagues about this hard hitting drama set in the gritty American west. Show dates are the 3rd, 4th and 5th of April.

*Dan Cooper*

## LADS DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

<b>Sunday 30 March</b>	Set up for <i>A Lie of the Mind</i> from 9.30am
<b>Mon. 31 March - Weds. 2 April</b>	Rehearsals, Tech and Dress <i>A Lie of the Mind</i>
<b>Thurs.3 - Sat.5 April</b>	Performances, <i>A Lie of the Mind</i>
<b>Saturday 5 April</b>	After show party, at John and Mary Lowe's
<b>Sunday 6 April</b>	Set down from 10.00am
<b>Monday 7 April</b>	Crit night and curry from 7.30pm
<b>Thursday 10 April</b>	Rehearsals start for <i>The Imaginary Invalid</i> , 8pm Small Hall

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## NEW MEMBERS

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We are delighted to welcome three new members, all of whom will be involved in our final production this season - The Imaginary Invalid.

Wayne Gilbert will be Stage Manager and Louise Clarke will be Assistant Stage Manager. Nick Martin is playing the part of Thomas Diaforus

Also, Phil Postings, who will be making his acting debut with us in The Imaginary Invalid, playing the part of Beralde and we are pleased that Amy Morris-Barnes will be guesting in the part of Angelica.

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## LADS 90TH - DINNER AND DANCE

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Oh what a night!

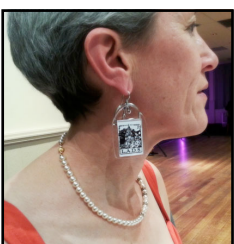
After months of planning and preparation, LADS celebrated the incredible 90th anniversary of the society on the 8th February 2014 with a dinner and dance at Theydon Bois Golf Club.

The venue was beautifully decorated by Fran Dodd and the finishing touches she added were delightful, souvenir menus for every guest, commemorative key rings and who could forget the wonderful cake. If you were lucky enough to taste it, you will surely agree that it was the best fruitcake ever made.

Following a delicious three-course dinner, Roger and Dan made short speeches, the cake was cut and the dancing began. We were entertained by Robin Jerome singing and I think many of us suffered from aches, pains and blisters for several days after our excursions on the dance floor!

It was wonderful to see so many current and past members, family and friends, some of whom had travelled a long way to join us in the celebrations. I am sure that all of you who came will agree that it was a truly memorable night and a very fitting celebration to a very special anniversary. Here's to the centenary!

**Cathy**



**Jean Cooper, pictured at the Dinner Dance, modeling the latest in must-have jewellery - the LADS ear ring**

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## MEMBERSHIP DRIVE

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The Play reading committee has now finished reading all of the plays for next season and we are in the process of compiling our shortlist. It has always been the aim at LADS to try to provide as many acting roles as we have acting members but as you are all aware, this season has been extremely challenging due to lack of availability. If you know that you are going to be unavailable next season, please can you let me know so that the committee has an idea of the number of roles we are aiming to target? Thank you to all of you who have already done so.

LADS has always been very proactive in promoting our shows and we are getting better all the time so I would now like to ask for your help in promoting LADS as a society. We are very lucky to have some very talented members but we desperately need more. Increasingly, we are relying on the same people to take on parts and work backstage and in order avoid this, we need a much bigger pond of members to fish in. Do you have any friends who you know have secretly harboured a desire to act or work backstage? If so, please give them a push to fulfil their ambitions and ask them to get in touch.

Better still, bring them along to set up so that they can get involved straight away, I can assure you that they will be made very welcome. If you have any other ideas to promote the society and attract new members, I would love to hear from you. We have so much to be proud of so please spread the word !

**Cathy**

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## CRIT. FOR 'WHY ME?'

### JESSICA BOSTOCK

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I came to the Friday night performance of 'Why Me?' The ladies on the ticket desk were bright and efficient , and the system seems to work really well. It was good to see a pretty much full house and nice to see such a wide range of ages in the audience. The programme was very professional looking and the support of the Loughton Foodbank a nice touch.

I thought the intimidation tactics to which you resorted in order to get me to write a kind crit were a little on the strong side; did you have to sit me right in the centre of the row with Dan on one side and Andrew on the other??? It seemed a

little heavy handed! The PA announcement was a useful addition to a modern play. I love the audience participation too; you have a very vocal lot, I've never heard a PA announcement barracked before! I liked the 80s soundtrack and knew all the words, and was pleased to see that the play opened at bang on 10.31.



**Cathy Naylor and Howard Platt**

The set was, as ever very clean and perfectly functional. The lines were clean and the acting space adequate and uncontrived. I liked the 3-d effect brickwork outside the windows. I don't think I've ever seen such a weird colour television, however. The set dressing and props were functional and were all handled well.

The lighting was bright and uncomplicated and the sound operation perfectly executed on every cue. 'Yes Minister' was a nice touch and immediately recognisable, dating the piece perfectly.

I understand you had encountered problems with the production – a January show can often be a bit of a problem, but they were not evident.

I enjoyed the play. It was fast-paced and well-written with a clever script and a very natural style. I know I always go on about the style of a piece and it was lovely to see that under Babs' experienced hands the whole cast acted in the same style; there was a natural feel to it all, it was realistic and true to life (as much as a stage play ever can be). All the characters were well-presented and did not slip into caricature – the only character in danger of this was Mary, and Eileen ruthlessly pulled her back from the precipice any time she teetered towards it! Well done – it makes for a much more enjoyable experience when there is a cohesive feel to the piece. The script was delivered clearly, with good projection and cracked along at a good pace

without being rushed; you all made the most of any funny lines, but I would urge some of you to learn the art of waiting for the audience to stop laughing before delivering your next line, because when we are enjoying a play, we want to hear it all!



**Jon Gilbert and Howard Platt**

There were lots of small scenes in each act, which involved lots of costume changes, and these were all pretty slick and the time did not drag and the play flowed well, with the first act ending promptly at 10.31. Act II opened on the dot of 10.31 and launched straight back in with good pace and sharp and snappy delivery, and 4 short scenes later the play closed at a respectable 10.31.(NB the clock needs fixing!) On a less positive note – those chairs don't get any more comfortable do they? I now know why I was in so many plays or worked backstage – that way one avoids the exquisite torture that is a Lopping Hall chair!

I will now go on to the individual characters, and in true Oscar style I will address them more or less in reverse order.

### **Tom**

Peter, you played Tom well. You delivered your lines clearly and were of course, on your appearance, nothing like you had been described by your parents – but then what child is as their parents describe them? Your projection was good and improved as you progressed through your scenes. Your body language also improved. You seemed a little apologetic in your opening scene which didn't match your relaxed delivery which could have taken some sulky swagger, but as we saw more of you, you seemed to relax into the part and actually seemed most relaxed in drag – perhaps your body language improved with the improvement in your relationship with John. And your Act II opening scene with Howard was particularly good. It was obvious to the audience



pretty early on exactly what kind of clubs you were working and your figure and legs are great. You handled the double entendres well and the 'went down well at the clubs' line was delivered very well.



**Fran Chalkwright and Eileen Stock**

### **Arthur**

Jon you played Arthur nicely. Your projection was good, and your diction was for the main part, clear. It has to be said, I had been remembering the 80s with a sort of rosy fondness until I saw your totally horrific shirts! You would have helped Howard more in the bow tie scene if you had delivered more out front generally, so that Howard could have reacted more to the double entendres about Gwen. I felt this was a general note for you, as whilst addressing the person to whom you are speaking adds realism, it can sometimes restrict you and those around you. In your later scene, I felt it would have helped you more and would have been nice for the audience if you had delivered your revelation more out to us. You played your confusion and worry well, so it would have been nice to see you rather than your profile. It is also important that you feed people the right emotion for the script and whilst it is important to add light and shade into a performance, and you did, if someone is going to tell you to calm down, you must have carried your anger through that far; your rage had already abated before the line which made Gwen's line redundant. Watch your head angle, you seem to hold everyone in deep suspicion by raising your chin so high so you look down on them!

### **Gwen**

Gwen was a sweetie, I liked her a lot. Cathy, I understand you came into the role at short notice and it really didn't show. Your delivery was lovely and clear and your character was sweet and likeable. You coped well with all your props and were most natural – well done with the nuts; it is an art to eat on stage without timing it wrongly

and ending up with a mouthful when you need to deliver a speech. Your character remained highly sympathetic and somehow decent despite her indecency! Your costumes were good and you looked great in them all – it was nice to see how your character grew through the play and that you were beginning to spread your wings by the end and find a place for yourself. It was interesting that your costumes reflected your changing mindset and your poise and demeanour also changed.



**Peter Galloway**

### **Mary**

Mary was a joy of a part and Eileen, you played her to the max. I liked that you constantly invaded the personal space of the person to whom you were speaking, and that you peered up into their faces (except Gwen) with a sort of concerned fear. Your delivery was clear and sharp and I heard every word. You coped well with all the props you had to deal with and as I said before, always snatched Mary back from the danger of caricature in the nick of time. The 'shushing' was particularly good and made me laugh out loud. I liked the fact that you were both worldly wise and naive, and the fact that you were so accepting of Tom's situation and knew what was going on whilst never letting on was not unexpected for the audience, but was obviously a surprise for your family who didn't really see you for what you were. Nicely played.

### **Helen**

Frances, you have to be the most glamorous pizza executive ever!! – I thought you were a croupier on your entrance! Gorgeous costumes – you looked fab! I liked Helen, you played her with a humour and realism; it was so nice that you were portraying a strong woman, but that you didn't resort to raising your voice or sounding cross to put strength of character across – well done! I liked the relationship between you and John, it seemed real and warm and good humoured, and the pace and picking up on cues was excellent. I was really put out that you were

such a nice person and were spoken about so unkindly – I thought they were mean. When it came to the ‘bow-tie’ scene, I would have liked your irritation to spike more sharply, so that when you left threatening not to return, you were cross enough for me to believe you meant it! I thought again you handled all props very well and the cheesecake, like a pro! I did find the ending of the play a little convenient – a fault of the script, not the cast, and I am not sure that Helen would have been quite so understanding and forgiving so quickly, but for the sake of pace..... I thought Helen was great, and that you played her well, professionally and sympathetically.

### John

When I see Howard’s name in the cast list, I always know that a strong performance is in the offing – and I was not disappointed. You arrived on stage like a whirlwind and set the play off at a cracking pace which was sustained throughout without losing realism or style. You handled all your props well, made incredibly quick changes, milked every comic line for all it was worth and picked up on cues perfectly. You delivered all your lines clearly and with a nice offhand humour. I liked the relationship you had with Helen, sympathised with your affair with Gwen, and still liked you. It is the strength of the performance that allowed you to do things I didn’t like, and treat Helen badly and still keep the audience’s sympathy. I have never seen a tall, elegant person make an apron look so unflattering and dumpy! – I don’t know how you did it! There was an amazingly large number of tracks on one of your 8 records, by the way. You reacted very well to Jon’s speech about Gwen, but were slightly hampered by the fact that he kept looking at you! I liked the way your relationship with Peter grew, and was pleased that you and Helen would be getting back together in the end – even if you were extremely lucky that she was so forgiving!

So thank you for an enjoyable evening. The play could have been set in 2014, not 1984-ish, it seemed pretty relevant today. The ending was a little convenient, and I have to say most of the things that were revealed were a little predictable, but on the whole, an enjoyable piece which didn’t need the intimidation tactics to ensure a favourable crit!

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## SUPPORTING LOUGHTON FOODBANK

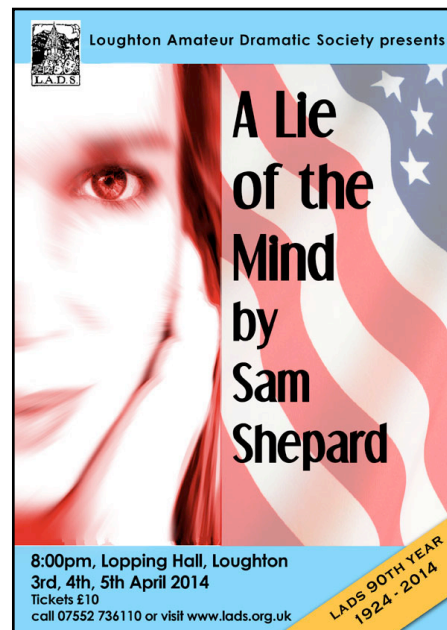
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During the January production of Why Me LADS raised money for the Loughton Food Bank. This is a new local charity which organises the distribution of three days supply of emergency food to those in need, a vital lifeline for some. Volunteers from the charity came and saw the production and really enjoyed themselves saying that they would definitely be back and we were pleased to be able to give them a cheque for £362.58. Thank you to everyone who put their hands in their pockets and gave generously. More information about the charity can be found on their website [www.loughton.foodbank.org.uk](http://www.loughton.foodbank.org.uk)

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## A LIE OF THE MIND

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When I was first asked to direct A lie Of The Mind, I was a little daunted. Sam Shepard's modern american classic is a highly challenging play for any cast. Yet here we are, nearly five weeks into rehearsal and the cast have thrown away their scripts and are hunting down every nuance with supreme enthusiasm and skill. It's thrilling to work with such a dedicated troupe on a play of such quality.

'So what is it about? Is it a comedy? A love story? A drama?' I've been asked these questions a lot, but the answer isn't that easy to pin down. I won't go into the full story-line here. I'd rather you discovered that for yourselves. however it involves the lives of two american families,

connected by the marriage of the son of one (Jake) to the daughter of the other (Beth). This is what The New Yorker said of Lie Of The Mind:

'Sam Shepard is surely the only dramatist alive who could tell a story as sad and as frightening as this one and make such a funny play of it without ever skimping on its emotional depth.'

I really hope that you will all turn out in your droves for this one. The cast are hugely excited by the project and are working so hard, it deserves to be seen by three full houses. Plus a play such as this that genuinely entertains, moves and surprises will certainly offer a great evening out to you, its very deserving audience.

### **Props - can you help?**

A quick call for props now. Liz is doing a fantastic job as always but if anyone has any medals and particularly any model airplanes, we would love to hear from you and although I accept it's a tad unlikely, if anyone can lay their hands on the back half of a deer, we would be delighted (and quite frankly, amazed).

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## **CAPTION COMPETITION**

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From time to time, Garry and I capture some priceless expressions and unexpected 'moments' in our dress rehearsal photos. Not all of these make it to the Front of House display or are even shown to the cast, for fear of embarrassment or offense.

We thought it might be fun to see if you can come up with some captions.

In this issue, here's a picture from Lilies on the Land, which LADS presented in October 2011. This picture did actually make it to the display board.

### **What are Liz and Sophie thinking about what they have just seen in the audience...?**

Answers please (by e-mail, or or when you next see me) and I'll publish them in the next issue - sorry, there are no prizes, it's just a bit of fun and please - keep it clean!

Howard.

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