FLARE PATH

by Terence Rattigan
directed by Cathryn Parker

Saturday 26 November to Saturday 3 December 2011 at 7.45 pm except Sundays
Matinee Saturday 3 December at 2.45 pm

www.lewestheatre.org
2011 marks the centenary of Terence Rattigan's birth. Flare Path written in 1941 and first performed in 1942, draws heavily on Rattigan's own experiences as a tail gunner in the RAF coastal command during WWII. Well received critically, the play was a popular success, running for 679 performances. Rattigan later re-worked much of the material into the script for the film The Way to the Stars. It is an immensely moving story of a time where duty, courage and sacrifice were commonplace values and love was capable of conquering all. In the residents' lounge of the Falcon Hotel, close to an RAF station on the Lincolnshire coast, the women wait... life and relationships hang in the balance.
Enter a Free Man is Tom Stoppard’s first play. Originally written for TV, it was subsequently developed as a stage play and first performed in 1968. As one would expect the play has the linguistic playfulness and sharp wit which are synonymous with Stoppard’s work, but this fledgling play rambles at times and doesn’t fulfil its promise. At times I wondered if this might be Stoppard experimenting with the idea of the structure of the play being a symbolic representation of the stasis of people’s lives. However, it was impossible to watch without enjoying some highly crafted comic moments mixed with pathos. “Stoppardian” became a term describing works using wit and comedy while addressing philosophical concepts, and the themes of the Enter a Free Man are universal.

Human beings are driven by the wish for and admiration of success, recognition and status - however that is framed for each of us. All the characters in the play are striving for fulfilment but are hampered by their place in life. Enter a Free Man opens with the protagonist, the self-styled inventor George Riley, believing he has, after a life time of failure, finally invented something that will change the world in the form of a reusable envelope. His wife and his daughter have supported and accepted his idealistic quest to the extent that it has impacted negatively on their lives. Buoyed by his excitement about his latest invention Riley believes that it is time to break out of what he sees as the family fortress and seek his fortune alone.

George Riley, played by Alan Chapman (with an uncanny likeness to Robert Lindsay) is a charming, solipsistic, inadequate dreamer. His wife Persephone, who he later reveals is called Constance but he has always called Persephone - ‘I didn’t know anyone called Persephone. I thought I ought to’ - is the long suffering backbone of George’s life, who manages to retain some sanity and control over her life by obsessive cleaning and home making. She is played with truth, dignity and delicate comic timing by Jenny Lloyd Lyons in a part that could easily slip into cliché and be purely a cypher for George and their daughter Linda. Lauren-Nicole Little shows the rebellious but frustrated spirit of Linda well. A young woman who has ended up supporting her parents financially and who yearns to break out, sadly she chases a succession of unsuitable men in the hope that they will give her a ticket to freedom. The loving but fractious father/daughter relationship between George and Linda is nicely played. Mike Piller as a comic, shifty, rather malevolent Harry is perfectly pitched and the actor quite clearly had a strong instinct for the rhythm of the writing and therefore was able to create and do justice to the comic and dramatic moments he was part of. Alex Lahood was touching as Able the seaman, a regular in the bar George frequents all too often. Here George is able to be who he wants to be and Able is the perfect foil who admires his seeming success and ambition. He even looks on as George seems to steal supposed former showgirl Florence (played with playfulness and good timing by Sally Ross-Clark) ever on the lookout for her next gin and orange, from under his nose. Carmen (the barman!), played by John White with a lugubrious presence, takes his comic moments well and Brown, the encyclopaedia salesman played by Nick Cooper is perfect as the uncomfortable innocent bystander who is
persecuted by George believing him to be an industrial spy on the look out to steal his latest invention.

The cast work hard to make the play work but Stoppard has created a difficult task as George’s pronouncements on life and his never-ending search for his pot of gold as an inventor are long winded and rambling and what action there is in the play is often held up. The pace of the production suffers and the crucial rhythm and musicality of the lines are sometimes lost, making it hard to create the comic moments and dramatic peaks. Writing of this kind requires discipline and rigour directorially. Due to the wit of the language it is easy to believe the scenes can play themselves but this is deceptive and it is easy, unintentionally, to end up with unwieldy scenes which run away with themselves. At times the actors fell into a naturalistic style of delivery which went against the structure of the writing and led to a loss of pace. Adrian Bowd does well to bring out the detail in the more intimate scenes between the George, Persephone and Linda and has cast his actors well. The set, designed by the director, is authentic and blends the dual stage locations well, bringing back the sights, sounds and smells of the post war 60’s. Apparently Stoppard has said that he started ‘as a language nerd’ primarily enjoying linguistic and ideological playfulness, feeling early in his career that journalism was far better suited for presaging political change than playwriting. This play hasn’t changed the world but it does address the human condition with pathos, edge and wit. Well done to Adrian Bowd and his cast and crew for giving us the opportunity to see early Stoppard on his way to greatness.

Lucy Fitchett

Dear Editor, Can I, rather belatedly, say how much I enjoyed *The Handyman* last May. I thought Alan Bucksey’s portrayal of Roman was unforgettable. I was only a visitor to Lewes but would certainly recommend Lewes Little Theatre.

Jean Gustavson

RE: *Enter a Free Man* - Thursday 13 October 2011

I have debated whether to email the theatre regarding this production for a week now but I feel I must air my views. I am very lucky to have some good friends down in Lewes and have been to see a few of your productions which I have thoroughly enjoyed. The highlight being *The Handyman* which was so polished and professional it deserved to be on the West End!

I have seen *Enter a Free Man* a few times, here and abroad. It is not the most popular of Tom Stoppard’s plays! Firstly I would like to congratulate the lady who played Persephone - she "stole" the show in my eyes! She was quietly confident, professional, well spoken and her timing was excellent! The young lady that played Linda certainly came into her own in the second part of the play and who will, no doubt, get better and better over time.

Now - the gentleman who played George Riley - I had the unfortunate feeling that I was descending into a *My Family* skit! I know he does bear a remarkable resemblance to Robert Lindsay but there was no need for the rushed manic performance that became more and more irritating!

I would also like to comment on the casting of the characters Harry and Florence. I would question the age detail as I’m almost sure that Harry is meant to be a Jack the Lad character and most definitely a lot younger than portrayed. His height accentuated a most unfortunate habit of peering over his fellow actors heads and not keeping eye contact in most cases. I’m presuming that because of the casting of Harry, the director then cast the actress Florence in a similar age group? In the play she is meant to portray someone young and naive - but your Florence, though adequate, definitely felt ill at ease in her attire and on the bar stool! Very distracting.

One very minor criticism - Carmen is spelt as to rhyme with barmen.

I apologize for coming across as a nit picker! The performance of *The Handyman* is still etched in my mind and it would have been difficult to supersede that. However I did expect a lot more from the Lewes Theatre and only hope that my comments are seen as something to take heed of and not just written off as a complaint.

I look forward to attending your production of *Flare Path* at the end of November.

Kind regards

Zoe Gardiner
Dear Editor,
Just wanted to pass on congratulations to all involved in the Noel and Gertie Tour. I saw the show at the Lamb Theatre, Eastbourne. Didn’t know what to expect but the evening was a total joy. Miles Jenner and Meg Deplıá-Lake were mesmerising, perfect in every detail. Lots of hard work well executed. Thank You!
Kind regards
Di Moreton

Miles and Meg as Noël and Gertie, “taking the motor for a spin”.

See our January 2012 issue for a report on the “spiffing good companions tour of Sussex”

Edited version of the AGM Report
We started off last October with Noel and Gertie written by Sheridan Morley on how the lives of Noel Coward and Gertie Lawrence intertwined. Miles and Meg Depla Lake were already planning and rehearsing this earlier in the year with the idea of taking it on tour. I asked them if they would open our Season. They did this very successfully, both giving superb performances. Each time I saw it I was bowled over by the pace, polish and sheer professionalism of the production. They took it on tour to Brighton, the Festival in Rye, Eastbourne, Pelham House in Lewes and Laughton. Our thanks are due to everyone involved in this project. Not only Miles and Meg, but Sue Bain and the travelling piano - which has been a great investment - Joyce Fisher the Director, Mike Batchelor working and transporting the numerous lights, Jo Cull on props, Alison Soudain in charge of costumes and Sue Tait as prompt (she remained silent every night - she could have stayed at home in Barcombe!)

The second production was Groping for Words by Sue Townsend. Well directed by Adrian Bowd, we entered this in the Brighton & Hove Arts Council’s Drama Awards. Seven groups entered including the Burgess Hill group. Unfortunately, we were hit by the bad weather and had to cancel some performances. The adjudicator came on the first night - which isn’t the best one to choose - and we were given the Overall Award for Excellence. It was good to see Sandra Tomlinson back in Lewes after several years absence in Eastbourne, and also a new young man Ben Woodward and Sarah Charlsley who won the Best Young Actress award! Mike Piller came out of the Box Office only to crawl in and out of the children’s Wendy House giving an excellent performance as a homeless person desperate to learn to read. We were able to have a re-run of the play when the weather improved.

Next came our Foyer production Blackbird by David Harrower. This is a modern play with an adult theme. Directed by Chris Weber Brown it was virtually a two-hander. Tony Bannister gave a riveting performance which I know prompted much discussion on the issue of paedophilia. He was ably assisted by Susan Manning who took over at short notice. Two young girls, from our Youth Theatre, Inez Skilling and Juliette Caverly sharing a role, completed the cast. It was a truly thought-provoking evening. Black curtains around the Foyer created a more intimate Studio Theatre atmosphere. This was so successful that we have now purchased lightweight blacks and rails for Foyer productions.

Lyndsey Meer directed the fourth play It Could Be Any One of Us by Alan Ayckbourn. This was an earlier piece featuring one of his typical dysfunctional families, with an elder brother who took pleasure in tormenting his siblings by threatening to leave the family home and possessions to his past pupil whom they hadn’t seen for years. The cast was ably led by John Whitley as the elder brother, until he met his end at the hands of either his sister, played by Judith Egar, making a welcome return to our stage, his brother Alan Chapman, his grand-
Club Director’s notes

dughter Ellie Woodruff-Bryant (from the Youth Theatre) and Sandie Truman who gave a wonderful rendition of the Sausage song! Ian Clegg a wannabe Sherlock Holmes/Inspector Clouseau completed the cast. The backstage crew gave us a great set designed by Keith Gilbert and the lighting by Trevor Morgan created a suitably creepy atmosphere. I must make special mention of John Fisher’s wonderful backdrop tree, which we were able to use again in the next play.

The fifth play, *The Handyman* by Ronald Harwood, was directed by Stella Stone with her usual skill. This was such a good play and wonderfully acted that I was somewhat disappointed that we didn’t get full houses. Alan Bucksey’s performance as Romka was extraordinary. Ella Yates and Peter Welby, a newcomer, gave solid performances as the husband and wife, Derek Watts and Simon Dangoor – another newcomer, played the interrogators with Sandy Truman playing the lawyer – a great change of role from the previous play! Anna Crabtree gave a very moving performance as a nun who had witnessed atrocities and Nick Cooper, another witness who seemed to revel in his past as a torturer. Again, a lovely set by Gerry Cortese and the backstage team.

The Youth Theatre has grown in numbers so Matt Haynes and James Firth-Haydon decided to perform two plays. Both were Foyer productions and the Youth Theatre members excelled themselves. The first performed was *DNA* by Dennis Kelly directed by Matt and the second *Sparkleshark* by Philip Ridley. We wish Matt Haynes well with his new job at South Downs College. He has arranged for Tim Rowland to take his place here for next Season’s production.

*Tonight at 8.30* involving the Archway Theatre and the Oast with us performed a total of ten one act plays by Noel Coward. This was a very ambitious production, even more so than the previous Tri-Theatre production *Damsels in Distress* from the viewpoint of different sets for each of the ten plays, lighting, costumes and sound. The costumes for *Family Album* were a triumph! Although it took a great deal of planning, complicated timetable, and great commitment on behalf of Cathryn Parker, the cast, crew, backstage teams at all three venues the project was enjoyable and very valuable for our theatre.

I didn’t mention the Music Hall in December, as we are having a re-run in March for two nights and a matinee on the Saturday. We collected a total of £80.00 which was gratefully received by the Martlets Hospice.

We began our 2011-12 Season on Saturday 8 October with a Gala Night. We have entered *Enter a Free Man* by Tom Stoppard, directed by Adrian Bowd for the Brighton & Hove Council Drama Awards. We will be returning the Award for Excellence which we won last year.

It’s good to be able to stage a Rattigan in his Anniversary year and I thank Cathryn Parker for taking on *Flare Path*.

The Youth Theatre will be performing two plays, Jim Cartwright’s *Two* and William Golding’s *Lord of the Flies*. Two will be performed on Monday to Wednesday and *Lord of the Flies* Thursday to Saturday with the performance on the matinee. I hope our members will support the Youth Theatre, as two of the members are also performing in *Enter a Free Man* and *Flare Path*.

*The Madwoman of Chaillot* directed by Alison Grant is the first outing in our theatre of this play and it will be followed by the re-run of the Music Hall. David Mamet’s *Speed-the-Plow* comes in March. This is a foyers production and Victoria Thompson, director, will be holding three discussions after performances during the run.

It has been some years since we did *Gaslight* and this play will be directed by Derek Watts in May, followed by Mike Turner who is directing an old favourite, *The Importance of Being Ernest*.

There will be Cafe Theatre event in April, and Roger Paine’s *Philadelphia Editor* will follow in June.

I have been asked to provide some readers to perform *An Evening of Elegance* at Anne of Cleves to raise funds for the House. When this event goes ahead, we may be able to use the readers and script on one of our Cafe Sundays.

Finally, I would like to thank all the volunteers backstage, front of house, box office, directors, cast, publicity and bar staff for all they do for the Club, without whom we would be unable to function. And for the future – if anyone tells me to “Break a Leg” I may not be responsible for a polite reply! Thank you.

Pat Shrimpton

RETIRING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Sue Tait F.O.H. Many thanks for the 5 years she has given to the theatre as F.O.H. Manager. Always ready to step in and do extra nights if anyone on duty couldn’t make it. We welcome Jane Rimington in Sue’s place.

Anna Crabtree Membership Secretary has retired from office leaving Nick Cooper in charge of subs and membership cards. I didn’t realise how complicated was the process of sorting out who had paid or lapsed, changed address, etc., and then issuing membership cards. Many thanks to Anna for her four years hard work.

Chrys Preston has handed over to Jack Wilkinson after many more years than I care to say! Organising the labellers, stuffers and deliverers. Thanks to Jack for taking over – hope I haven’t put him off!

Alan Skull a member for many years, an authority on the type of music needed in productions although he would be the first to admit his preference would be more classical than Rap or Heavy Metal.

We now need a replacement person – not only to advise but also work the new computerised equipment we are aiming to purchase. Thanks to Alan, and any offers to help with sound?

Club Director’s notes
GASLIGHT by Patrick Hamilton  
Directed by Derek Watts  
Audition date Thursday 12 January 2012, at 7.45 pm.  
Playing dates Saturday 19 May to Saturday 26 May 2012.

1880. London in the fog. The gaslights cannot dispel the shadows in the home of recently married Mr and Mrs Manningham. Why do the lights mysteriously rise and fall of their own accord? Who prowls the attics at night? Is Mrs Manningham losing her sanity, or is her life in deadly danger?

Though the play was written in 1938 and is often billed as a “Victorian thriller”, Gaslight continues to offer two hours of absorbing yet escapist entertainment. While the plot revolves around hidden jewels, the dramatic interest is in Hamilton’s study of psychological disorder and the play can be seen as a bridge between the plot-driven Victorian melodrama and the modern, more psychological thrillers of Frederick Knott and Alfred Hitchcock.

The play was the first production in the second season of the Theatre Club, in October 1943, and this is the first revival of one of the most gripping and enduring thrillers in the British theatre.

The Cast  
There are five major characters, all of which offer rich opportunities for strong character acting. Two non-speaking ‘heavies’ appear at the very end.

Mr Jack Manningham  
tall, good-looking, about 45’. Smooth, urbane, outwardly charming but with a hint that something is ‘not quite right’ underneath.  
Think Charles Dance/Ralph Fiennes.

Mrs Bella Manningham  
mid-thirties, ‘has been good-looking…… but now she has a haggard, wan, frightened air’.  
Think Audrey Hepburn/Ingrid Bergman.

Inspector Rough  

Elizabeth  
the cook, about fifty, an amiable, competent soul.

Nancy  
the maid – nineteen, pretty, cheeky, ‘no better than she should be’.

I aim to begin rehearsals in early March, with a reasonable break over Easter. If you would like a script or require further information, please contact me either on 01273 471680, or by email at derek@watts457.freeserve.co.uk.

SPEED-THE-PLOW  
The play by David Mamet was first produced in England some 22 years ago at the Royal National Theatre to great critical acclaim. The plot concerns the ethics of producing artistic work - do you go for economic return or work of great value in other ways. It is the question at the heart of all artistic enterprise and is as relevant today as it was to great writers, painters, poets, musicians through the centuries.

The play is set in America and American accents are essential since the dialogue is such as to demand rapidity of delivery in Act 1 particularly. The 3 characters are;

Bobby Gould  
a film producer, playing age 40-55

Charlie Fox  
his associate, playing age 40-50

Karen  
a temporary secretary, playing age 28-35

All parts are equal in terms of demand.

Scripts will be available from Don Funnell at the Theatre on receipt of a stamped addressed envelope. Rehearsals will commence in earnest in January.

Auditions are Thursday 8 December at 7.30 pm. With a possible second date of Saturday 10 at 10.30. Every actor wishing to audition needs to have read the play and be prepared to read any section requested.

Please contact me if interested, directrice@hotmail.co.uk or 01273 470213

Not at weekends please.
We are looking for more people to serve behind the bar of the Falstaff Club during productions. No previous experience is necessary - you will be given full training - and you will normally only need to give up one evening during any production (around 7 p.m. to 11 p.m.). The work is not too taxing, and it’s a good opportunity to meet some of our members and have a good chin-wag! If you are interested, please contact Carole Leeds on 01273 890883 or at bobaleeds@hotmail.com.

IMPORTANT
When you are booking tickets for a production, please let us know at that time if your mobility is in any way restricted regardless of whether or not you make use of a wheelchair. This information is important to us so that, in the event of an emergency evacuation of the theatre, we will know which seat you are occupying.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Werewolf Theatre
The Club’s Youth Theatre will be putting on two productions this coming December. The first play, *Two* by Jim Cartwright, directed by James Firth-Haydon, is set in a pub during one evening. Meet the landlord and landlady and the accompanying patrons that share this establishment across the night.

*Lord of the Flies* by William Golding, directed by Tim Rowland will follow and will be Tim’s debut production for Lewes Theatre. It is true to the novel in spirit and the theatre lends itself particularly well to the ritualistic aspects of the original story. Both plays will be performed on the main stage and will build on the success and high standard achieved by the Youth Theatre summer double bill. It would be really good to get the members behind this production. So please come along and show your support.

*Two*
Monday 12 December, Tuesday 13 & Wednesday 14 starting each night at 7.45 with the usual 20 minute interval.

*Lord of the Flies*
Thursday 15, Friday 16 at 7.45 and Saturday 17 Matinee only at 2.45 with the usual 20 minute interval.

Please Note
Season tickets do not include the Youth Theatre plays, members should book tickets using the booking form or via the box office.
**FLARE PATH**

**OPENING**
Saturday 26 November 2011
7.45pm

**BOOK NOW**

NAME ........................................................................................................................................

MEMBER NO ........................................

ADDRESS ..................................................................................................................................

TEL DAY .............................................. TEL EVE ........................................................

Please complete the form legibly and send it with remittance and S.A.E. to Box Office, Lewes Little Theatre, Lancaster St. Lewes, East Sussex BN7 2PX. Cheques should always be made payable to LEWES THEATRE CLUB.

TELEPHONE BOOKINGS: 01273 474826. See page 3 for Box Office hours.

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Please note: If the Box Office is able to fulfil only part of a request, a refund may be collected from the Box Office during opening hours. Alternatively, members may prefer to enclose either separate cheques or an open cheque crossed with a maximum amount.