

Lewes
Little
Theatre

Dickens at
Christmas

No. 89

October 2020

Reopening
details

Press Cuttings
performance



Newsletter

The theatre is reopening! After a surreal year, the like of which none of us has ever experienced, there is light at the end of the tunnel – Lewes Little Theatre is reopening! It will not be business-as-usual, as Tony Bannister explains in his column, but there are three events this winter that sees the theatre getting back on its feet.

was just four days from opening in March when lockdown was declared. The dates of this eight-performance run will be determined shortly, but it is likely to be the last week of January or first week of February 2021.

The virus may still be with us, but it is not going to stop our theatrical activity!

8 November – a 'performance' of *Press Cuttings*, Shaw's provocative one-act play that the theatre produced during lockdown as a radio play and which is now ready to be played out in a free performance on Zoom.

8-12 December – a new revue *Dickens at Christmas*, compiled by our new Artistic Director Shaun Hughes, which Shaun explains and invites LLT actors to audition for.

Late January or early February – the delayed production of *Jeeves & Wooster in Perfect Nonsense*, the production that



Reopening details

Well, it's taken a long time, but finally we're back performing live theatre once again! It doesn't seem like it, (or perhaps it does) but we closed our doors to the public over seven months ago on 17 March, only four days from the opening of Jeeves and Wooster in Perfect Nonsense.

Throughout much of the summer, the national lockdown meant that we all had to keep away, apart from our theatre manager and one or two others who were charged with the task of caring for the building and keeping it safe. In the meanwhile we kept a close eye on the developing situation to see when we would be able to return.

Gradually, as the position began to ease slightly, we saw cinemas, museums and others in the leisure sector starting to reopen with some restrictions, but it was clear that theatres, particularly those in the amateur sector, would be towards the back of the queue. But we've stuck it out, and under the current government guidelines we are now able to open for public performances once again, provided we can demonstrate

that we can create a socially distanced, Covid-secure environment.

So, whilst we hope that the quality of performance that you have come to expect at Lewes Little Theatre will not have changed, a number of other things will be different.

In order to enable you to feel safe when you come to the theatre, you will need to book your tickets in advance, so there will be no need to queue to collect your tickets. You will be able to book as a family group of up to six, and sit together, but there will be social distancing between groups and individuals, which means that fewer seats will be available for each performance.

We will be operating a one way system both into and out of the theatre, and performances will be a little shorter than normal, without an interval. There will be sanitisation stations throughout the theatre, and all areas will be fully cleaned after every performance. You will be asked to wear a suitable face covering in the theatre, unless you have a medical exemption.

The requirements for social distancing apply equally behind the scenes, including on stage, which means that we will be limited for the time being to productions with fewer in the cast than usual. If this all sounds bit odd, it's likely to be the "new normal," at least for a while, and we hope you are as excited as we all are about the idea of coming back to see performances after so long away. Rest assured, we will be doing everything we can to make you feel safe and comfortable.

As a footnote, you will appreciate that maintaining a Covid-secure regime does depend on a larger than normal front-of-house team for every performance. If you can spare a few hours and would be willing to come and help out, we would be very grateful. Full training will be given and PPE provided. If you can help, please send a quick email to: manager@lewestheatre.org, giving your name and telephone number. Thank you.

Tony Bannister

Press Cuttings: Don't give women the vote!

Patrons and friends of Lewes Little Theatre are cordially invited to the première and once-only performance of *Press Cuttings*, Bernard Shaw's one-act play that the Lewes Little Theatre community cast, rehearsed and recorded during the time the theatre was "dark". Shaw wrote the play in 1909, basing it on the press cuttings he got to read about the big news stories of the day. He set it three years in the future, but that was simply because he wanted to imagine the suffragette movement having become so rampant that marshal law would have to be declared in central London.

The play is therefore set with the capital under military lockdown but the inept military unable to keep control. Shaw, an immigrant from Ireland, was in favour of votes for women, and he also enjoyed poking fun at the pomposity of the British, so the central character is a bombastic general who can't understand the moral compass of the hapless prime minister, and the two men then have to deal with the Anti-Suffragette League, a women's movement desperate to stop women getting the vote.

As the whole production was done on Zoom, the performance will be via Zoom at the cosy time of 6pm on Sunday 8 November, lending itself to people listening with a cup of something warming. The play itself lasts just over an hour, and will be preceded by an introduction by Chris Bowers, who adapted it for radio and directed this production.

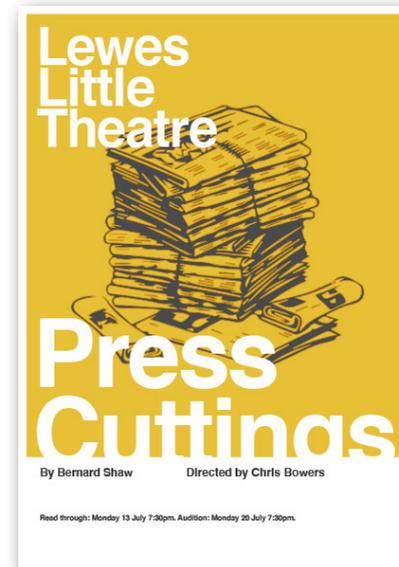
The finished recording is a remarkable triumph. Auditioning, casting and rehearsing on Zoom were all manageable, but recording the performance was a far greater challenge. All six members of the cast had to record onto their own recording devices (some had professional recorders, others used smartphones) while listening to the other characters on headphones via Zoom. The recordings were then sent to the sound editor Trevor Morgan, who stitched them all together and added the various sound effects and noises-off.

Chris Bowers says, "I hope everyone who hears our recording of *Press Cuttings* hears the enjoyment we had

making it. The cast were all brilliant, especially when they had to go three metres from their microphones to get us a special sound effect. But the real star is Trevor Morgan, who has taken about 20 different recordings from seven or eight devices, and made them all sound like they were recorded in a single studio. He is owed several beers from all of us involved."

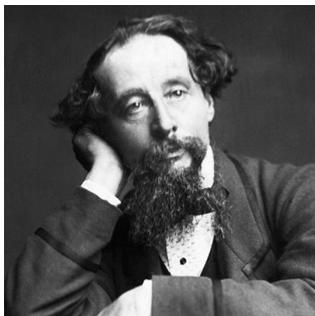
The production will be free of charge to patrons and friends of the theatre. In effect, that means everyone on the mailing list who receives this newsletter, so if you know of others who would like to 'attend', please get them to join the mailing list.

To register to attend, please send an email to manager@lewestheatre.org, and a link to the meeting will be sent around 48 hours before the production.



Dickens at Christmas

What the Dickens! The first on-stage production following the reopening of Lewes Little Theatre will be a revue of readings celebrating the season from ‘the man who invented Christmas’ – Charles Dickens.



Following the resoundingly successful productions of *A Christmas Carol* and *Great Expectations*, this Christmas sees a collection of glorious seasonal excerpts, including from *The Pickwick Papers*, *The Christmas Tree*, *A Family Christmas* and *A Christmas Carol*.

Dickens will forever be associated with Christmas and he personally promoted the season of goodwill in his reading tours of England and America with extracts from his novels and writing. In fact when he died in 1870, a young girl asked a question that demonstrated just how strongly Dickens' writings were linked to the festive season: "Mr Dickens dead? Then will Father Christmas die too?"

Dickens describes the Christmas season as "A good time: a kind, forgiving, charitable, pleasant time. The

only time I know of in the long calendar of the year, when men and women seem by one consent to open their shut-up hearts freely, and to think of other people below them as if they really were fellow-passengers to the grave, and not another race of creatures bound on other journeys." This was what Dickens described for the rest of his life as the Carol Philosophy.

Lewes Little Theatre wants to spread joy and good cheer at this time of the year by performing readings from some of his most famous books and writings. Let the talented cast of this short show (there will be no interval) convey the warmth and comfort of reading a good book in front of an open fire in winter. Relax with your family, young and old, in the comfort of the newly refurbished theatre and let the readings create a Christmas like no other. The show will last just over one hour and will be family friendly.

**Shaun Hughes
Director**

Characters, auditions and rehearsals

Five actors will cover a variety of parts. A mix of male and female will be required. Both genders will cover all characters. The performances will be live in the theatre with socially distanced audiences and cast. Cast members will read from a script and are not expected to learn the passages they perform – but they will need to be strongly aware of the writing to ensure a fluid delivery.

Rehearsals:

14 Rehearsals at the theatre will be called including two Sundays. (Social distancing observed at all times).

Performances:

5 performances with social distancing observed by cast, backstage, front of house and audience: Tuesday 8 December to Friday 11 December at 8pm and 5pm on Saturday 12 December 2020

Auditions:

Wednesday 4 November at 8pm via Zoom, Friday 6 November at 8pm via Zoom.

Please note you will only need to attend one audition

If you have any queries, please call the Director, Shaun Hughes on 07971 815883.

To register your interest and to obtain an electronic script please email: anthonybannister1@sky.com. The link to the Zoom auditions will be sent via email once you have registered your interest.



Become a Member

There are a number of benefits to becoming a Member at Lewes Little Theatre. As a Member you will receive a reduced ticket price - £8 rather than the usual £12 and for the matinee performances you'll pay £6 rather than the usual £8.

Members at Lewes Little Theatre also have the opportunity to participate in productions and help out with all aspects of the theatre's operations from set building to running the Anthony Jenner Bar.

All Members will receive the newsletter which is sent out two weeks before each main stage production.

There are four Membership options; Single, Double, Concession and Double Concession.

*Concessions are under 17s, full-time students or seniors.

You can join at any time but membership subscriptions become due for renewal in August.

Membership Form /renewal

Membership no.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Title	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Forename	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Surname	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Address	<input type="text"/>	
Postcode	<input type="text"/>	
Phone number	<input type="text"/>	
E-mail address	<input type="text"/>	

I would like to receive theatre news and updates by email

Membership options (tick one)

Single	£15	<input type="checkbox"/>	Concession	£10	<input type="checkbox"/>
Double	£25	<input type="checkbox"/>	Double Concession	£15	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please send to Lewes Little Theatre, Lancaster Street, Lewes, East Sussex, BN7 2PX. Cheques payable to Lewes Theatre Club

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