

# PROGRAMME



by Joe Orton, directed by Nigel Cole

**TUE 7 – SAT 11 DEC 2021**

[teddingtontheatreclub.org.uk](http://teddingtontheatreclub.org.uk)

The logo for Teddington Theatre Club (ttc) features a stylized red bird icon above the lowercase letters 'ttc' in a bold, red, sans-serif font.



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# Loot

By Joe Orton

Act 1:

A room in McLeavy's house. Afternoon.

Act 2:

Two seconds later

This is amateur production is presented by  
arrangement with Concord Theatricals Ltd. on behalf  
of Samuel French Ltd.

No photography or recording!

**fab**

**ZOOM**

6d

Lyons Maid

FREE PICTURE CARDS

Jenny has been in orbit since breakfast time.

From school she rushed off to a Girl Scout meeting, a trampoline class, a trampoline class, and then the pep rally.

Jenny needs a sugar energyless soft drink like a Beatle needs a hairpiece.

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It quenches fatigue

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**Flash**

22" **Back**—Backs the Backs ADDS Square Space Man. Cleans and shines.

3" **Back**—Backs the Backs ADDS Square Space Man. Cleans and shines.

7" **Back**—Backs the Backs ADDS Square Space Man. Cleans and shines.

18" **Back**—Backs the Backs ADDS Square Space Man. Cleans and shines.

Spring cleaning? Be canny. Look for the pack with 50¢ worth of coupons on the back. And here's 2¢ to get you going.

**Clean up with Flash**

## A Welcome from our Artistic Director - Lottie Walker



“the kind of people who always go on about whether a thing is in good taste invariably have very bad taste”  
Joe Orton

Welcome to Hampton Hill Theatre and Joe Orton’s *Loot*: the antidote to Christmas shows! As you will discover elsewhere in this programme actually getting this particular play to this point has been both a labour of love and a test of will. I am delighted we’re finally here.

Since our first attempt to stage this play in 2016 the world has changed possibly even more than it did in the 40 years between Orton’s time and the millennium. The original production was heavily censored and a comparison between what the Lord Chamberlain cited as offensive in 1965 and subsequently removed as opposed to what a 21st century audience might find offensive – indeed shocking - makes interesting reading and is a fascinating insight to social history. Indeed,

“The times they are a changing”, as Dylan wrote a few years before *Loot* was first unleashed onto the stage. And they are changing very fast indeed!

Staging the play at Christmas is an accident of fate, but I have to say I quite like the idea. Orton’s intention was to shock and it’s nice to think that he’s still doing that in suburbia in 2021 and at Christmas to boot.

I do hope you enjoy the show and I for one am looking forward to a Babycham or two in the bar.

See you there!



## Writer - Joe Orton

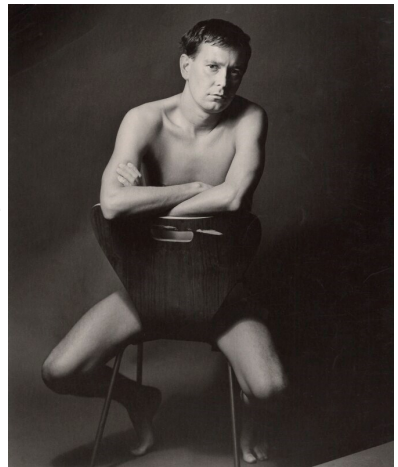
### A Very English Scandaliser

It can be hard to separate Joe Orton's work from his sensational, early death especially as his brutal murder by jealous lover, Kenneth Halliwell, gave him the front-page notoriety he so craved. "If you read his diary, all will be explained" wrote Halliwell as he overdosed on barbiturates, just moments after hammering Orton's brain out of his skull.



Begun in late 1966, at the height of *Loot*'s success, the diaries are certainly an in-the-raw self-portrait of a defiant provocateur. A social nihilist and promiscuous gay man with a savage contempt for any boundaries placed on his personal and sexual freedom, Orton lived and wrote entirely by his own rules, flicking gleeful V-signs at conventional morality. Neither church nor state, the police nor his fellow writers were safe from his ire – which was always razor-sharp and emphatic. "I'm from the gutter. And don't you ever forget it" was his Jagger-like sneer to the suffocating, decadent establishment that still dominated British life in the mid-1960s.

The establishment fought back; sentencing him, along with Halliwell, to six months in prison for defacing library books (although their gay relationship was the real crime) and in the case of *Loot*, through the Lord Chamberlain, censoring some of its more outlandish action and dialogue. But these were merely pyrrhic victories for the old guard. Orton's time in prison was the making of him – it's where he discovered his creative independence from Halliwell – and the censor's interference in *Loot* merely added to its shocking allure. And by 1968, theatre censorship was completely abolished anyway.



That said, Orton was much more than a sixties scandal merchant. He was a brilliant craftsman, honing his plots and dialogue to perfection. Every word, every syllable, every beat was considered, weighted and refined. Dubbed “the Oscar Wilde of the Welfare State” his pithy epigrams are some of the sharpest zingers in the history of British theatre. Furthermore, his savage attack on what he saw as the innate corruption of certain British institutions, still hits home today. Inspector Truscott would revel in the sleaze scandal currently engulfing Westminster, Fay would be right at home in a church trying to bury stories of child-abusing priests, and McLeavy would devour every word fed to him by peddlers of tabloid sensationalism and fake news.

But of course, Orton will be most remembered as a writer who helped define his era. At his funeral, at Golders Green Crematorium, in the late summer of '67, there were no hymns, just the haunting strains of A Day in the Life by the Beatles - a secular requiem if ever there was one. He was part of the fab four's particular zeitgeist, a working-class boy made brilliant who shattered taboos and poked fun at orthodox morality. He was Marlowe to Pinter's Shakespeare. Yes, with a much shorter time in the sun than his famous contemporary but with work that still pulls you in, makes you think and question everything.

Nigel Cole



## Director's Notes - Nigel Cole

### Hilarity in death



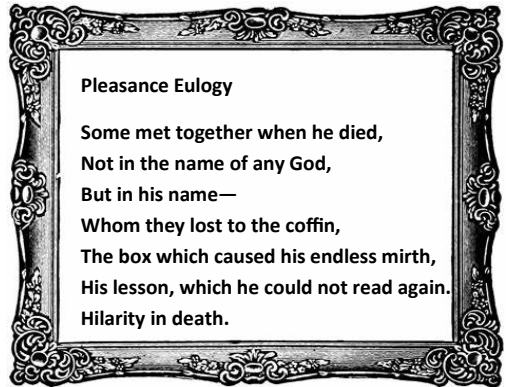
We've taken the scenic route, but at last, I'm delighted to bring Joe Orton's fabulous *Loot* to the Hampton Hill stage. First planned in 2016, we lost the performing rights a couple of months before auditions. Producing *Breaking the Code* in its place was a happy quirk of fate but it didn't dampen my ardour to grapple with Orton's most celebrated work. Four years passed before the next attempt and this time we were a month into rehearsals before Covid hit. Never imagining that theatres would be dark for well over a year, we gamely carried on rehearsing in back gardens and over Zoom until eventually, the cold facts of the pandemic forced us to pull the plug. But here we are, finally, with *Loot* as our 2021 Christmas show - a gloriously unseasonal Trigger's Broom of a production, with only two of our original cast still standing.

Strangely, from its birth in 1965, *Loot* has a bit of a twisted history. I'm not suggesting it has the same dark vibes as the Scottish Play or even *The Crucible*, but it's had its moments. Orton's decision to cast his friend Kenneth Williams as Truscott in the original production may have made good commercial sense but artistically it was a disaster. Williams just wanted to be adored on stage and couldn't deal with darker aspects of the character. Unhappy with the script, Orton was constantly rewriting, forcing the company to rehearse new sections during the day before performing them for the first time that night. It was a recipe for disaster. The audience, expecting Williams' suggestive brand of camp comedy, loathed the macabre aspects of the play (the corpse, the coffin etc) and often left before the interval. Orton commented bitterly in his diaries on the sound of seats tipping back as the punters headed for the exits.

Such a setback might have destroyed more timid writers – it was only his second stage play after all – but not Orton. He regrouped, rewrote and recast and, with a new director, Charles Marowitz in the saddle, made it a huge success second time-around. It opened to rave reviews and won the Evening Standard Play of the Year Award for 1966. Despite the plaudits, Orton and Marowitz never saw eye-to-eye and clashed frequently. Long after Orton's death, Marowitz called him a “mongrel with a noxious character; a writer who made up in levity what he lacked in intellect.” But Marowitz had his own demons. I witnessed a few of them when he was one of my drama tutors at Bretton Hall in 1982. But more of that in the bar maybe...



Despite its success, *Loot*'s dalliance with the macabre continued. After his mother's funeral in Leicester, Orton returned with her false teeth and venturing backstage, mischievously swapped them for Mrs McLeavy's prop gnashers. Kenneth Cranham, the actor playing Hal, was horrified. Only a few months later, Orton inadvertently attended his own funeral, and was the subject of a bittersweet eulogy, written and spoken by the actor Donald Pleasence.



The *Loot* 'curse' continued in a West End revival in October 1984 with Leonard Rossiter (he of *Rigsby* and *Reggie Perrin*) who'd received stellar reviews for his *Inspector Truscott* - passing away suddenly in his dressing room. He suffered a heart attack and was only discovered after he'd failed to arrive onstage. I remember being really shocked at the time, not just because he was a much-loved, talented star in his prime but also because I'd happened to see that production only a couple of months earlier.

But the good news, our own slightly convoluted path to production aside, is that since then, the bad luck associated with *Loot* has largely subsided. There was an excellent revival at The Park Theatre in 2017 with, to my knowledge, no coincidental deaths, souring of milk or other strange portents. And of course, it has long been a staple on the amateur theatre circuit with no evidence of related catastrophes.

Staging *Loot* is not without its challenges though, finding an appropriate playing style being the most pressing. With Orton's constant flow of one-line gags, it's tempting to over-egg the characters and play them purely for laughs. But that would merely re-hash the errors of that very first Kenneth Williams production. *Loot* shows us humanity on the take so it's critical any director maintains its brutal menace and amorality. The characters should be rooted in truth, with clear objectives, but rather than play them naturalistically the actors must find a heightened sense of action and performance. They should be played – as one veteran *Loot* actor perceptively put it – six inches off the ground.

I hope you'll agree that the cast has risen to the task magnificently.

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Photo by Steven Scalet

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Holiday Camps Directory and Magazine, 1965

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# The Cast

Mr McLeavy .....Peter Hill  
Mrs McLeavy.....Angela Gibbins  
Fay .....Amanda Adams  
Hal .....Matt Nicholas  
Dennis ..... Matt Dennis  
Truscott ..... Dave Brickwood  
Meadows..... Dave Dadswell

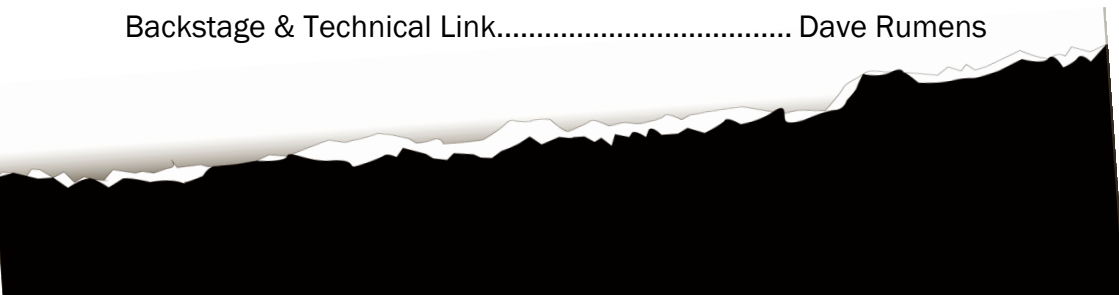
## In rehearsals





# The Crew

Director..... Nigel Cole  
Production Manager.....Angela Gibbins  
Stage Manager ..... Kathryn Smith  
Lighting Design ..... Patrick Troughton  
Sound Design ..... Harry Jacobs  
Sound Assistant.....Joshua Bayfield  
Set Design .....Junis Olmscheid  
Set Build & Paint ..... Alan Corbett, Patrick Troughton,  
..... Mike Elgey, Cath Messum, Peter Hill  
.....Junis Olmscheid, Priya Virdee, Rochelle Taylor-Butcher  
..... Wesley Henderson Roe, Angela Gibbins and Kathryn Smith  
Costume Design .....Zoe Harvey-Lee  
Props .....Jacqui Grebot  
Fight Director .....Dane Hardie  
Videographer ..... Matt Nicholas  
Photographer .....Sarah J Carter  
Publicity..... Christine Wayman  
Artistic Link .....Andy Smith  
Artistic Link ..... Douglas Schatz  
Backstage & Technical Link..... Dave Rumens



# Biographies

## **Peter Hill – Mr McLeavy**

Peter has been performing at Hampton Hill for over ten years. Favourite roles include Guardsman Bowe in *My Boy Jack*, Horner in *The Country Wife*, Alan Turing in *Breaking the Code*, Bertram in *All's Well That Ends Well*, Benedick in *Much Ado About Nothing*, Heydrich in *Conspiracy*, Bertie in *Jeeves and Wooster in Perfect Nonsense* and Charlie Chaplin in *The Cat's Meow*.

## **Amanda Adams - Fay**

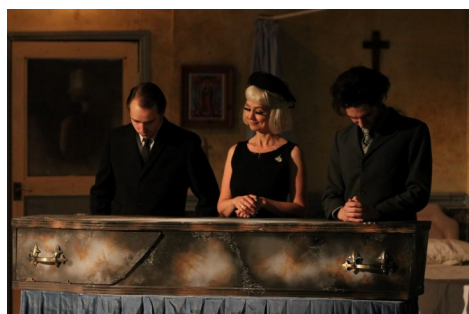
After graduating from ALRA, Amanda adapted *Wuthering Heights* for the stage, in which she played the role of Cathy, at the Edinburgh Festival and the Riverside Studios Hammersmith. Subsequent roles include Lady Macbeth in Ken Campbell's Theatre Stories at the Cottesloe, Rachel in the revival of 24-hour cult classic *The Warp*, and Stella Maris from *The Illuminatus* (The Multiverse of Ken Campbell) at The Olivier. Screen roles include Frances Howard and Anne Boleyn. She recently appeared as Katherine in *Summerland* with RSS, and prior to that as Hedda in *Hedda Gabler*.

## **Matt Nicholas - Hal**

Matt trained at the BRIT School and is a member of several local theatre groups. Characters he's portrayed include The Mad Hatter in *Alice in Wonderland*, The Scarecrow in *The Wizard of Oz*, Bertram in *All's Well That Ends Well*, and Josh Baskin in *BIG: The Musical*. This is his second production with TTC after playing Rodolpho in *A View from The Bridge*.

## **Matt Dennis - Dennis**

*Loot* marks Matt's second time on the Hampton Hill stage, his first being Matthew Peake in *The Ruling Class* in 2018. Between these two shows, Matt has appeared in a number of roles at RSS including Mason in *Journey's End*, Charles in *Kindly Leave the Stage*, The Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come in *A Christmas Carol* and Meadle in *Quartermaine's Terms* and has also taken part in TTC's Wilde Weekend and What's Love Got to Do, both online events during the Lockdown period. Matt also produced RSS's award-winning Halloween film project *Stage Fright* in 2020.



## **Dave Brickwood - Truscott**

Dave first joined TTC in 1989 and has appeared in many roles including Bobby in *Company*, McMurphy in *One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest*, Albert in *Albert Make Us Laugh*, Dave in *Treats*, Christian in *Festen*, and most recently, Thomas Cromwell in *Wolf Hall and Bring Up The Bodies*. In *Inspector Truscott*, he's delighted to be taking on one of the most famous comic characters in British theatre.

## **Dave Dadswell - Meadows**

Loot is Dave's thirty-ninth production for TTC. Favourite roles include Gangster 1 in *The Drowsy Chaperone*, Corporal Bonny in *Privates on Parade*, Mr Boo in *The Rise and Fall of Little Voice*, John Smith in *Breaking the Code*, and Albert the Horse in *The Wind in the Willows*. A regular performer in TTC pantomimes, this is Dave's first appearance in an 'alternative' TTC Christmas show but his second as an officer of the law!

## **Angela Gibbins – Mrs McLeavy**

A former chair of the TTC Board, Angela has been involved in TTC shows for many years. Roles include Valentine in *Twelfth Night*, Charlotte in *We Happy Few*, Nora in *A Doll's House* and Frou-Frou in *Cinderella*. She has also been a member of the creative team on numerous shows – as director for *Albert Nobbs* and 'Allo 'Allo and as sound designer for *Richard III*, *Straight and Narrow*, *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* and *Playing Sinatra*.

## **Nigel Cole—Director**

Nigel's dabbled in theatre for almost 50 years. Acting credits include Jerry in *Zoo Story*, Gethin Price in *The Comedians*, Dudley in *Mary Stuart*, Rev Hale in *The Crucible*, Peron in *Evita*, Treves in *The Elephant Man*, Mack Sennett in *Mack and Mabel*, Lars in *Dinner*, Franz Leibkind in *The Producers*, Dysart in *Equus* and Judge Brack in *Hedda Gabler*. Recent directing credits include: *Boy Gets Girl*, *Privates on Parade*, *La Cage Aux Folles*, *The Rise and Fall of Little Voice*, *Breaking the Code*, *Dirty Rotten Scoundrels* and *Pink Mist*.





# Teddington Theatre Club

Formed in 1927, Teddington Theatre Club is now one of the leading amateur drama groups in south-west London, performing in their own custom-built theatre in Hampton Hill.

Starting out to stage Shakespeare for schools, it soon developed to stage a wide repertoire of plays for the general public, originally to raise funds for its schools programmes.

TTC's first production, in 1927, was *Scenes from Twelfth Night* followed in 1928 with *The Merchant of Venice* and *Scenes from As You Like It*. Since this, the club has gone on to put on over 670 productions and counting as it rapidly approaches its hundredth anniversary.

Having performed four or five productions a year in hired halls for many years, in 1969 the club were granted a lease of part of Richmond Council's Hampton Court House and after two years of conversion work finally opened its own theatre in 1971.

As the lease came towards its end, negotiations with Richmond council secured a site on Hampton Hill High Street for a new theatre and after a concentrated period of fundraising and with a grant from the National Lottery, the well-equipped Hampton Hill Playhouse (now Theatre) was opened in 1998.

TTC present about ten productions a year and welcome new members - from those who wish to be on stage to the technical teams or front of house. There are lots of ways to get involved, so please go to our website to find out more.

**What to keep in touch with what's on at Hampton Hill Theatre? Sign up to our monthly show listing at .....**

**[www.hamptonhilltheatre.org.uk](http://www.hamptonhilltheatre.org.uk)**

**TUE 25 JAN— SAT 29 JAN 2022**

## **TEACHERS**

By John Godber

**An A\* classroom comedy from one of Britain's most popular playwrights.**

This amateur production is presented by arrangement with Concord Theatricals Ltd, on behalf of Samuel French Ltd.

**TUE 1 FEB — SAT 5 FEB 2022**

## **THE RED LION**

By Patrick Marber

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**TUE 15 MAR—SAT 19 MAR 2022**

## **SHAKESPEARE IN LOVE**

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**Based on the Oscar winning film, a play of romance, exuberance, and the magic of theatre.**

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**TUE 22 MAR— SAT 26 MAR 2022**

## **BUT YESTERDAY**

By Jimmie Chinn

## **EDWIN**

By John Mortimer

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# **TEDDINGTON** THEATRE CLUB

Teddington Theatre Club is resident at Hampton Hill Theatre.

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