

THRILL ME

The Leopold & Loeb Story

by Stephen Dolginoff

Relationships can be murder

Tue 31 JAN—SAT 4 FEB 2023


ttc

Programme £2

TEDDINGTON
THEATRE CLUB

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Formed in 1927, Teddington Theatre Club (TTC) 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 then, 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 was 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. All shows at the Theatre are supported by a huge team of volunteers – so thanks to all of those who have supported this show with marketing, front of house, bar, health & safety, box office, finance and more.

There are lots of ways to get involved, so please go to our website to find out more and to keep in touch with what's on at Hampton Hill Theatre, sign up to our monthly show listing at

www.hamptonhilltheatre.org.uk

THRILL ME

BY STEPHEN DOLGINOFF

DIRECTED BY WESLEY HENDERSON ROE

THIS AMATEUR PRODUCTION IS PRESENTED BY ARRANGEMENT
WITH CONCORD THEATRICALS LTD.

WELCOME



Welcome to Hampton Hill Theatre and to Teddington Theatre Club's first studio production of 2023.

Looking at the year ahead, our hard-working Programming Team have curated a characteristically eclectic collection of shows, spanning genre, era and continent: from established classics (Ibsen's *A Doll's House*) to modern (Bennett's *The Madness of George III* and Mike Bartlett's *Bull*), from long-neglected treasures (*Passion Play* by Peter Nichols) to completely original writing (May's *TTC Fringe* and our half-term treat *Treasure Island*). Our embarrassment of riches continues with the delightfully irreverent *The Complete Works of Shakespeare (Abridged)*, Dario Fo's sadly topical cost-of-living satire *They Don't Pay? We Won't Pay!* and a brace of musicals: *Spamalot* at Christmas and tonight's production.

Thrill Me is a worldwide hit. Premiering at New York City's 2003 Midtown International Theatre Festival, it then ran off-Broadway in 2005, featuring author Stephen Dolginoff as Leopold. It has subsequently enjoyed over 150 productions in 16 countries and 10 languages, including several London outings, first at the Tristan Bates (now Seven Dials Playhouse) in 2011 and, most recently, at Jermyn Street Theatre last year. I saw the latter and thought it more than worthy of the 'Offie' nominations and awards that it accrued. So I'm naturally delighted that TTC is bringing this gloriously ghoulish gem to south-west London.

The infamous murder case, defended by the legendary Clarence Darrow, has inspired many dramatic works. Most notable is probably the play *Rope* by Patrick Hamilton (creator of that other deadly 'charmer' Ralph Gorse), written in 1929, just five years after the crime. Another Englishman, Alfred Hitchcock, filmed it in 1948; the movie's greatest claim-to-fame is that it was filmed as one (seemingly) unbroken 'take'.

Proving that great artists steal, 60 years on, Hitchcock's game-changing *Rope* inspired an episode of Pemberton & Shearsmith's TV series *Psychoville*. Check it out - it's sublime. Talking of which, heartfelt thanks to Wes Henderson Roe, Nic Luker, Jacobs Elsey & Taylor and our entire creative crew for a thrillingly theatrical treat. Please join me in also thanking our equally invaluable front of house team.

Enjoy your evening & do return soon!

Daniel Wain, Artistic Director

SONGS, SINGERS & SETTINGS

Prelude & Underscore Piano

Why	Nathan	Joliet Prison - Parole Board hearing 1958
Everybody Wants Richard	Nathan	Jackson Park 1924
Nothing Like Fire	Richard & Nathan	A Warehouse – later that night 1924
Written Contract	Nathan & Richard	Richard's bedroom – the next night 1924
Thrill Me	Nathan	Nathan's bedroom – a few weeks later 1924
The Plan	Richard & Nathan	Nathan's bedroom – a few minutes later 1924
Way Too Far	Nathan	Richard's garage – a few weeks later 1924
Roadster	Richard	Near the school yard – later that evening 1924
Superior	Richard & Nathan	Woods near Wolf Lake – that night 1924
Ransom Note	Richard & Nathan	Richard's bedroom – later that night 1924
My Glasses / Just Lay Low	Nathan & Richard	Nathan's & Richard's homes – some days later
I'm Trying to Think	Richard & Nathan	Nathan's room – a few days later 1924
Way Too Far (reprise)	Nathan	Jackson Park – the next afternoon 1924
Keep Your Deal with Me	Richard	Police Station – early next morning 1924
Afraid	Richard	Richard's jail cell – a few months later 1924
Life Plus Ninety-Nine Years	Nathan & Richard	Back of a prison transportation wagon 1924
Finale	Nathan	Joliet Prison 1958 discovered near the scene of the crime.

SYNOPSIS

It is 1958 at Joliet Prison, Illinois, where Nathan "Babe" Leopold faces the Parole Board for the fifth time. He tells them the facts of the "crime of the century" that sent him to prison thirty-five years earlier (Why). But this time he reveals more than ever, hoping it will lead to his release. In his memory, he goes back to 1924 Chicago, where, as a nineteen-year-old boy, he anxiously meets up with Richard Loeb, a classmate with whom he has shared friendship, sex and participation in minor crimes. Richard, who has been away at college, treats Nathan indifferently. Nathan begs to renew their relationship before separating again after the summer to attend different law schools (Everybody Wants Richard). Richard relents and allows Nathan to join in his activity for the evening – setting an abandoned warehouse on fire. In front of the blaze (Nothing Like a Fire), which arouses Richard, Nathan finally gets what he wants.

The next day, Nathan implores Richard, who is voraciously reading Nietzsche, to stop the criminal activity. Instead, Richard, now empowered by the theory of the Superman, threatens to drop Nathan completely unless they create (A Written Contract) detailing that Richard will satisfy Nathan's sexual needs only in exchange for Nathan's expertise as his accomplice in petty crimes. Reluctantly, Nathan agrees. They sign in blood and their crime spree continues until Richard fails to live up to his end of the agreement (Thrill Me). Richard explains that he is bored with their misdemeanours and wants to commit a "superior" crime: the murder of a young boy (The Plan) and a phony ransom scheme after the killing. Richard insists that their intellect and meticulous plotting will prevent them from being caught. Nathan has no choice but to agree or risk Richard's wrath.

Back in 1958 at Joliet before the Parole Board, Nathan explains his feelings (Way Too Far) as he recalls how Richard prepared the murder weapons and supplies: rope, a crowbar, and a bottle of acid. Richard lures the victim by promising a ride in his (Roadster). While cleaning up the murder scene, Richard extols the virtues of being "Superior" to a shaken Nathan. Back at Richard's house they compose the bogus (Ransom Note) and proceed with their plans. The next day, the newspapers reveal that, despite their careful planning, the body has been found. As a few more days go by, Nathan's missing eyeglasses are discovered near the scene of the crime.

While Nathan panics, Richard tries to calm him (My Glasses/Just Lay Low) over the phone. When the glasses are eventually traced to Nathan, Richard helps him concoct an emergency alibi and coaches him in how to answer the cops (I'm Trying to Think). After Nathan is successful with the police, Richard declares their relationship over so he can protect his future as a lawyer. He reminds Nathan that everything would have been fine if the glasses hadn't been dropped. Feeling betrayed, Nathan cuts a deal with prosecutors, turning in Richard in exchange for a lighter sentence.

When arrested, Richard realizes there is no way out and works his charms on Nathan (Keep Your Deal with Me) by convincing him to give up the deal and accept the same punishment. While awaiting the penalty trial in his jail cell, Richard doesn't realize Nathan can hear him muttering to himself that he is truly (Afraid) despite his strong façade. Thanks to the cunning strategies of their lawyer, Clarence Darrow, they escape the death penalty and are sentenced to prison.

Want to know what happens in the end—read on at page 13

Production References

Clarence Darrow – An agnostic American lawyer of great wit and eloquence who rose to fame in the early twentieth century representing clients like Leopold & Loeb. He held no political favours and was a member of the American Civil Liberties Union and an advocate of *Georgist* economic reform.

Mrs O'Leary's Cow – After the great fire in Chicago in 1871 which destroyed vast swathes of the city a commission was established to review evidence as to how it may have started. Despite the long drought that year and timber structures affected, popular folklore attributed the start to a kerosene lamp kicked over by a cow in a barn on Mrs. O'Leary's farm. The phrase making like 'Mrs O'Leary's cow' then became a buzzword for arson.

DIRECTOR'S TAKES

Wesley

Thrill Me was a show I'd heard about, but previously missed, and the idea of a musical about a murder intrigued me. Then in 2018 a new production popped up at The Other Palace downstairs in the studio space. I went, was hooked, and bought the script. Successive professional productions and COVID then got in the way, but Nic and I agreed it should be on our hit list of small cast shows for after lockdown. We are delighted TTC have given us the green light to stage it here in the Coward Studio space.

The piece of course is not just about a murder, though one did take place, but more about the relationship between two young men ill at ease with their comfortable lifestyles and looking for that something else we all crave in our lives. Unfortunately, in their case this craving led to the death of an innocent youth. However, it is just as much to do with the dynamics within their relationship both sexual and hierarchical which play out across the scenes pushing the audience first one way then another as they try to understand who is leading and who is following as the story unfolds.

We trust you like our simple but hopefully successful portrayal of multiple places in one small space, jumping back and forth from 1958 to 1924 as we tell this strange and remarkable tale of the worst in human nature.

Nic

A lifelong fascination with narcissists and sociopaths drew me to this piece. Even though it tells a story almost a century old, the 'superman', who considers himself above retribution, has and always will exist in the world. You could argue that some of today's nations are led by them. When I saw *Thrill Me* for the first time, I didn't come up for air for 70 minutes, such was its intensity. It was only as the house lights came up that I thought, 'I need to play that music!'

So thank you, Stephen, for creating this dark and beautiful insight into human nature - and the opportunity to play a gem of a score.

THE CAST & CREW

Nathan Leopold	Jacob Taylor
Richard Loeb	Jacob Elsey
Parole Board voices	Steve Taylor & Charles Halford
Newsreader.....	Jim Trimmer
Director	Wesley Henderson Roe
Musical Director	Nicola Luker
Production Manager	Laurie Coombs
Stage Manager	Kathryn Smith
Voice Coach	Lizzie Lattimore
Lighting Design	John Hart & Gary Stevenson
Lighting Operation	Zoe Man
Sound Design and Operation	Josh Bayfield
Costume	Mags Wrightson
Publicity	Hallie Banish & Christine Wayman
Photography	Kim Harding
Artistic Link	Alice Langrish
BAT Link	Patrick Troughton

With additional thanks to:

Harry Jacobs for assistance with Sound.

All at TTC who gave their time to support the production and of course the front of house, box office and bar teams without whom the show couldn't go on!

A WORD FROM THE WRITER/COMPOSER

I must first give my thanks to all of you attending this performance of *Thrill Me*. It amazes me that the little show I wrote many years ago, at the very desk I sit writing at now in New York City, is about to be performed for you right now. Back in the early years, when I was shopping the script around, I was met with such resistance about the subject matter. And while I knew it was an upsetting tale, I felt that by concentrating on the interesting human drama and bringing forward the aspects that made it relatable—mainly through the emotional pull of the music—I had found a way to “make it work.” After so many rejections, finally one brave producer decided to take the risk—and, well, *Thrill Me* has never been out of production or pre-production somewhere in the world in 20 years—with over 200 stagings in 23 countries and 14 different languages. It is an honour to me every time a theatre company or producer or director chooses to put on *Thrill Me*, and I am extremely flattered and grateful that Teddington Theatre Company has joined that list. I hope you will find the story of Nathan and Richard as compelling as I do.

Stephen Dolginoff

Stephen Dolginoff was born in Kansas City in 1968 and graduated from NYU (Tech School of Art). He is a triple threat being composer, lyricist & playwright. *Thrill Me* remains his most successful and most produced work from a cannon of some seven musicals.



IN REHEARSALS



BIOGRAPHIES



Jacob Taylor – Nathan Leopold

Jacob has been a member of TTC since 2014, playing a variety of roles in both the auditorium and studio. Recent past productions include *Ruddigore* (BLOS), *Iolanthe* (HLO), *When We Are Married* (TTC) and *Shakespeare in Love* (TTC), where he stretched his vocal chords further singing as a male alto. In Jacob's escapades offstage, he has written an original score for *The Edge of Darkness* (TTC) and will soon be composing more original music for *Constellations* (OHADS).



Jacob Elsey – Richard Loeb

This will be Jacob's first performance with TTC, but not his first time performing with Jacob Taylor. Formally raised as a musician by his mother, he developed a taste for theatre while at university and has continued to perform in amateur groups around Surrey. He has performed in many classical pieces such as *Ruddigore* (Robin Oakapple) and *The Sorcerer* (Dr Daly). This will be his first performance of modern theatre in a leading role, and he has greatly enjoyed the experience.



Director - Wesley Henderson Roe

Wesley is a well-respected (apparently) and multi award winning director of plays, musicals and operetta. Post COVID he has directed *Ordinary Days* for BROS TC, a revival of *Stones in His Pockets* for TTC and *Trial by Music* for HLO – a piece he commissioned, all here at HHT. In addition, he stage-managed *Merrily We Roll Along* here and was Technical Manager for *Addams Family* at Richmond Theatre both for BROS TC. He is currently working on productions of *Constellations* for OHADS here in April and *Calendar Girls the Musical* for BROS in October. He is hoping for a break in 2024 as he's not getting any younger.



Musical Director - Nic Luker LRSM

Nic is an accompanist and MD for numerous local professional and amateur companies. She was a founder member of Kingston Musical Theatre who promoted new works of musical theatre for several years.

SPOILER ALERT – the end of the synopsis from Page 7

Behind bars, Nathan finally reveals his own shocking plan: fearing the loss of Richard, he went along with the murder but stayed one step ahead the entire time, even deliberately planting his glasses, knowing that all this would ensure his desire to be together forever, or at least for (Life Plus 99 Years). Now that the whole truth has finally been exposed, back at Joliet prison Nathan is granted parole. It is a bittersweet victory; since Richard was murdered by another inmate years before, Nathan must face the outside world alone (Finale).

PRODUCTION HISTORY

- 2003** First performed on 16 July as part of the 4th Annual Midtown International Theatre Festival at the Abingdon Arts Complex in New York.
- 2005** Produced Off-Broadway by the not-for-profit New York Theatre Company from 26 May. From 27 June Stephen Dolginoff takes over the role of Nathan Leopold.
- 2006** Original cast recording released with Dolginoff & Doug Kreeger.
- 2011** First London production at the Tristan Bates Theatre opening on 5 April. Transferred to the Charing Cross Theatre on 17 May.
- 2015** A revival & tour opened at the Greenwich Theatre in April.
- 2017** Minimalist New York revival with the 2006 cast, and another London & Edinburgh Fringe Festival production.
- 2018** Revival by Andrew Lloyd Webber's team at The Other Palace.
- 2019** A production at the Hope Theatre London was well reviewed and due to transfer when COVID hit.
- 2022** The Hope production transfers to the Jermyn Street Theatre London in January.
- By this time well over 150 professional productions have been staged worldwide in 10 different languages.
- 2023** TTC stages its own production here at Hampton Hill Theatre.



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by Stephen Dolginoff
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teddingtontheatreclub.org.uk

ttc

COMING SOON

**Booking at www.thelittleboxoffice.com/teddingtontheatreclub
or phone 020 8410 4546 (5.00pm - 8.00pm Mon - Sat)**

TUE 7 MAR - SAT 11 MAR 2023

THE MADNESS OF GEORGE III

By Alan Bennett

His Majesty was all powerful and all knowing, but he wasn't quite all there.

This amateur production is presented by arrangement with Concord Theatricals Ltd.

TUE 14 MAR - SAT 18 MAR 2023

BULL

By Mike Bartlett

It's just one of those days, one of those meetings

This amateur production is presented by arrangement with Nick Hern Books.

TUE 27 JUN - SAT 1 JUL 2023

THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SHAKESPEARE (ABRIDGED)

By Adam Long, Daniel Singer, Jess Winfield

All the plays in 97 minutes!

This amateur production is presented by arrangement with Josef Weinberger Ltd.

TUE 4 JUL - SAT 8 JUL 2023

A DOLL'S HOUSE

By Henrik Ibsen

Nora makes the most famous exit in the history of theatre.

This amateur production is presented by arrangement with Concord Theatricals Ltd.

Teddington Theatre Club is affiliated to Arts
Richmond and this production is entered for the
Swan Awards for Drama and Musicals.





TEDDINGTON THEATRE CLUB

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Company registration number 939448.

Registered charity number 257265

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