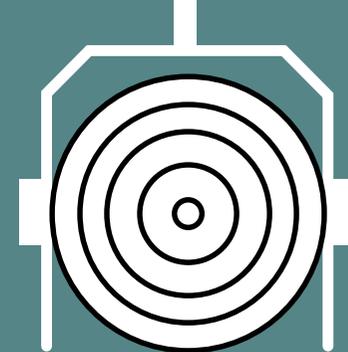


SPOTLIGHT

Newsletter of the Geneva English Drama Society
1200 Geneva

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www.geds.ch



IN THIS EDITION

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We pay tribute to beloved GEDS member and friend Sue Leather

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FORTHCOMING

Coming up in April: two evenings of original one-acts for charity and the GEDS AGM

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Rabbit Hole – have you booked yet?

by David Lindsay Abaire, directed by Tim Hancox

Becca and Howie Corbett have everything a family could want, until a life-shattering accident turns their world upside down and leaves the couple drifting perilously apart. *Rabbit Hole* charts their bittersweet search for comfort in the darkest of places, often with telling humour, for a path that will lead them back into the light of day.

Winner of the Pulitzer Prize for Drama, "David Lindsay-Abaire has crafted a drama that's not just a departure but a revelation— an intensely emotional examination of grief, laced with wit, insightfulness, compassion and searing honesty," *Variety*.

Cast: Chaitan Jain, Daire O'Doherty, Gemma Parkes,



Noelle Rentsch, Cécile Van de Voorde.

The show runs from 1–5 March 2016 at Théâtre de l'Espérance, rue de la Chapelle 8, 1207 Geneva.

Tickets are available now from [Theatre in English](#).

Help front of house required

As always, we need your

help to sell programmes, tear tickets, and usher for all five performances. These jobs can be performed on the same evening you have a ticket to see the show and only require 45 minutes of your time! Help on additional evenings is very much appreciated.

If you are able to volunteer for this show, please sign up on the Doodle poll below, indicating which night(s) you are available: <http://doodle.com/poll/ud7rizvdeipmyvms>

Thanks to those who have already signed up but we still need help! If you are free Thursday, Friday and Saturday evening please sign up via the Doodle poll (full name please!) or contact Front of House Manager [Viki Lazar](#).

Welcome to *Spotlight*

Ch-ch-ch-changes! As the seasons turn, there are new and exciting happenings afoot in GEDS. Firstly, our annual committee spring cleaning – that's right, with the AGM coming up in April, it's time for the future leaders of the Society to step forward. Out with the old and in with the new! Then, in September 2016, GEDS will be bidding a fond farewell to the English Church Hall and taking up residence at Uptown, just behind the train station. We look forward to welcoming you to playreadings in a warmer building with comfier seats, and a stage you can see from the back of the room!



TRIBUTE TO SUE LEATHER

Sue Leather: talent, generosity and caring as a way of life

"Calmness personified amidst the confusion..."

"A heart-warming smile, a wicked sense of humour..."

"Forward-thinking and progressive..."

"It felt like a privilege to be a member of her company..."

These are from some of the many tributes that have been paid to GEDS member Sue Leather, who has died aged 68, after a brief and bravely fought battle with cancer.

London-born Sue became involved with GEDS in the early 1990s, doing set decoration for *A Man for All Seasons* (1994). She helped organise, and appeared in, GEDS' entries for Geneva Fringes in 1996, 1997 and 2001. Her career with the Society covered two decades and included stints as Front of House manager, production assistant, props manager and, famously, assistant director and prompt for the 2014 production of *Much Ado About Nothing*.

She also served on the Committee from 1999 to 2002,



as Minutes Secretary and Vice-Chair.

On stage, Sue appeared as Lady Lelouche in *Three Birds Alighting on a Field* (1997), Harriet in *Broken Glass* (1999), Cynthia in *The Real Inspector Hound* (2004), Catherine

in *Gaslight* (2009), Annie in *Calendar Girls* (2013) and The Principal in *Baby With The Bathwater* (2014) – a range of roles demonstrating her open approach to theatre, her diverse interests and her acting skills. She also

arranged, and appeared in, many playreadings.

Outside GEDS, Sue was a pillar of the Divonne-based group Theatre Someone. With Lesley Sherwood, she devised, wrote and acted in *Jane Austen Invites...* (2011) and *A Poem For My Sister* (2012), both directed by Sue Humphreys; both of these plays went to the Edinburgh Fringe Festival. Her last completed work was a large-scale historical drama, *A Tale of Two Voltaires*, which she wrote in collaboration with Lesley and other Theatre Someone members. It was previewed in the GEDS 2014–15 playreading season and favourably received; Sue's untimely death halted work towards a full stage production.

A Tale of Two Voltaires, the fruit of long research, was Sue's tribute to human rights and social justice. Sue was a consummate professional in all she did. She left no stone unturned, spending an inordinate amount of time researching plays and parts. In her professional life Sue won

acclaim for her work at the ILO in HIV/AIDS awareness in the workplace and she was a long-time member of the British Labour Party. She leaves behind her husband Alan, daughter Amy and son Jack, as well as little grand-daughter Cecilia, whose arrival in 2015 was a delight for the proud grandparents.

Sue will be sorely missed by GEDS and its members. The following are taken from some of the tributes *Spotlight* has received:

RIP Sue: always kind, always talented, always reliable, always interested, always interesting, always ready with a warm smile – and now, always missed.

Gemma Parkes

I organised a playreading of *WIT* (about a literature professor dying of cancer) with Sue Leather and Gillian Barmes. Sue played Evelyn, an older colleague of Vivian (Gillian). She created a heartbreaking moment where

character and actor become one person. Evelyn/Sue visits Vivian/Gillian at the final stage of dying in hospital. Sue lay down next to Gillian, read to her from the only thing she could find at hand, a children's book called *The Runaway Bunny*, closed the covers and said, "It's time to go," giving her the comfort and permission she needed. A deeply felt emotional silence filled the hall and whenever I think of Sue, who played this with total honesty, I am once again moved to tears. She could give of herself with complete generosity and soul.

Chuck Slovenski

Sue acted as Stage Manager on *Godot*, calmness personified amidst the confusion... Later I asked her if she liked Jane Austen... I had long thought of devising a play around an old cookbook from the Austen family which I owned and that is how Sue & Lesley came to devise, write and act that wonderful piece of theatre. It was the vehicle for our first venture to Edinburgh. Without her,

TRIBUTE TO SUE LEATHER

Theatre Someone would never have known the joy of being a part of the Fringe Festival! Sue hated to be defenceless in front of an audience and would always try to place herself behind a piece of furniture or upstage of an actor. I giggled (internally of course!) when I saw her in *Baby with the Bathwater* as she was happily ensconced behind her desk practically the whole time!

Sue Humphreys

In my head and my heart I'll keep the memory of Sue's gentle encouraging voice, her wonderful smile and her infectious enthusiasm.

Beverly Rousset

A lady, in the best sense of the word

A heart-warming smile

A wicked sense of humour

A definite, never aggressive opinion

A person to be relied upon

A clever, inquisitive mind

A soft-spoken assurance

A guiding hand

A saving voice from behind a hedge

All this and so much more ...

A friend!

Gillian Barmes

I had the pleasure of having the Leathers over for dinner. Over the course of the lovely evening we talked about life, love, theatre, and of course the huge intersection of those topics. But I also found out about Sue's pioneering work on HIV/AIDS guidelines. It was so special to find someone who had the same mix of interests of theatre and health that I have.

Chris Bailey

In the 2014 production of *Much Ado About Nothing* our Sue, as the Assistant Director, also took on the role of prompt. Unfortunately, every evening she was much in demand. This complicated the video recording that I was making, but by manipulating the recorded sound and dodging between camera angles I managed to completely exclude the regular



requests of "Line?" as well as Sue's much-needed responses from somewhere behind the scenery. Sue's comment when she watched the DVD was "BRIAN'S CUT OUT ALL MY LINES!"

Brian Thomas

I first met Sue Leather when I joined the GEDS committee in the late 1990s. I was immediately struck that she

seemed a forward-thinking and progressive person, both in theatrical matters as well as in her outlook on the social and political issues of the day. What struck me most about Sue was her ability to absorb herself in other people's views and opinions and always seem to take them on, validate them and then go on and add more to them. It never seemed necessary to her to compete with others' views, rather she

would encourage, develop and offer additional insights to their ideas.

Malcolm Grant

Sue had a gift for friendship. She offered everything at her disposal, and that was a great deal – a profound sense of loyalty and commitment; immense integrity; elegant and incisive thinking; great empathy (she seemed to know what you needed even before that need had sprung into your head); and a delightful and deliciously wicked sense of humour. In addition to our friendship, we also worked together, writing and performing two plays. Both were produced (by Theatre Someone) in diverse locations in the Pays de Gex and Geneva and also at the Edinburgh Festival. Creating something from scratch like that was a wonderful and extremely satisfying experience. We never argued or thumped tables or fulminated at each other – we just had a lot of fun.

Lesley Sherwood

Sue was kind, clever, creative, and generous – changing a single line of her wonderful Voltaire script earned cast members a co-writing credit. I think this reflects how collaborative and joyful she was, with theatre as with friends.

Ben Lewis

I cherish the memory of the several play readings Sue organised over the years and which I enjoyed taking part in. They were unusual, well researched and often dealt with the challenges met by women in their everyday lives; ordinary women transcending their lot to become extraordinary. They were always original and worthwhile and gave audience and performers the sense of taking part in something of value.

Mary Stuttard

Sue's last appearance on stage was in June 2015, when she and Alan took part in

TRIBUTE TO SUE LEATHER

the summer playreading, *A Laughing Matter*, which they had kindly agreed to host at their home. It was no secret that neither of them particularly liked the play to start with, but nonetheless were wholehearted in providing support, wise advice and practical help, all of which proved essential. It was noteworthy that, of the large cast, many had not known Sue before but were ardent admirers by the end of it, such was the atmosphere she and Alan had helped create.

Nic Sommer

Dear Sue, if heaven exists, it is surely peopled by evolved souls like yours! And I imagine you'd lovingly spar with the best of them. Would you kindly transmit through Alan and selected friends any tips you glean to restore down here a bit of what's up there? The preview would motivate us to keep striving...

Sanda Freeman

Sue was a lovely, kind, talented person who modestly hid her manifold merits behind a bushel. I treasure memories of playreadings with her, both in the church hall and in the lovely Leather garden in Chevry. I greatly admired her writing – not just her ambitious *Tale of Two Voltaires* but also the delicate *A Poem for my Sister* in which she acted beautifully alongside Lesley Sherwood.

David Lewis

Working with Sue on *Calendar Girls* afforded me the chance to get to her know her better and to appreciate her thoughtful approach to her role. I enjoyed her wry humour and will forever hold dear that cheeky appearance of hers with the tea pot and her flirtatious "one lump or two?"

Mary Ahern

“A disappointment to the sports mistress but a find for the English teacher...”

Alan Leather throws light on Sue's early life and their first meeting

Sue was born in west London, South Kensington/Chelsea. She attended the French Lycée until she was 12, hence her love of the French language. During this time she read books about the adventures girls had at boarding schools – midnight feasts in the dorm, that sort of thing.

She persuaded her parents to send her to such a school, Upper Chime, which was situated on the Isle of Wight. She was a great disappointment to the sports mistress but a real find for the English and drama teacher. She appeared in numerous plays, usually playing male parts because of her height.

At 17 Sue went to Sussex University where she



studied modern languages, specialising in French. She continued her interest in

theatre, appearing in the student review.

Sue and I met through

an NGO, Return Volunteer Action, where she was the Executive Secretary. Sue had spent two years as a volunteer in Laos teaching English. She later learnt that she had been selected because she had a complexion like an English rose; you can imagine her response on finding this out.

I had been a volunteer in Northern Rhodesia and as an RVA member I decided to visit the office. Sue was out getting a sandwich for lunch; there was only one spare seat in the office, which I took, not knowing it was at Sue's desk. When she returned she wasn't too pleased that this upstart stranger had moved in. The rest, as they say, is history...

Theatre Someone – drama on Geneva's fringe

by Sue Humphreys, theatrical director

Theatre Someone grew from a conversation with Alan Leather at the cast party after I had directed him in *Game Plan* for GEDS (2008). We found we both really enjoyed more intimate fringe theatre. I had recently been living in Hong Kong where I had founded and ran a small profit-share theatre group successfully staging this type of show.

Around this time, GEDS had been approached by an art gallery in the Old Town that wanted to expand into more of an arts centre. GEDS was not interested but I thought, "Why not?" and set about staging *Someone to Watch Over Me* by Frank McGuinness, with Alan, Gary Bird and Ian Farley. It was very well received and we then took it to Theatre 50 in St Jean de Gonville as the very first play to be staged in Director Fred Desbordes' new home/theatre; at his suggestion we decided to



call the group Theatre Someone, registered as an Association based in Divonne. We continue to stage intimate productions in various venues including church halls, schools, bars, bistros, and other small spaces around the region and are starting rehearsals for *My Old Lady* with

Gary Bird, Lesley Sherwood and Annelies Breman.

As far as I know, Sue had not written a play before I suggested she and Lesley collaborate on writing about Jane Austen, though she had told me she always wanted to write.

Over the years we have staged:

Someone to Watch Over Me
by Frank McGuinness;

Waiting for Godot by Samuel Beckett ;

Jane Austen invites... by Sue Leather and Lesley Sherwood;

The Devil and Billy Markham by Shel Silverstein;

A Poem for my Sister
by Sue Leather and Lesley Sherwood;

A Tale of Two Voltaires
by Sue Leather and others
(presented as a playreading by GEDS).

We performed *Jane* as part of the Feats Fringe and have taken both *Billy* and the two plays written by Sue and Lesley to the Edinburgh Fringe with much success – Jane even sold out! Sue had dreamed of making the Voltaire play a full stage production and I hope that one day our group will have the resources to do so.

CAUGHT IN THE NET: REVIEW

by Christopher Bailey

If you happened to be driving by Coppet the week of 17 November, you may have felt some tremors of the earth. That was no tectonic shift, but the reverberations of laughter and applause emanating from the Théâtre de Terre Sainte where *Caught in the Net* recently ran.

Playing to packed houses, the audience each night was caught up in the manic frenzy of the antics of this somewhat non-traditional family. Ray Cooney's story is about a London cabbie who could not make up his mind (and here all similarities to Hamlet end) when it came between choosing two women he would like to marry. So he did not choose, and married them both, setting up separate households in two proximate suburbs of London.

Caught in the Net is a sequel to Cooney's previous play *Run For Your Wife*, which told the story of how this unusual marital situation came to be, and the original GEDS production in 2006 was a near sell out. In the sequel,



**Théâtre de Terre-Sainte, Coppet
17–21 November, 2015**

Cast: Cathy Boyle (Barbara), Megan Davies (Vicky), Barrie Duggan (Stanley), Sharon Gill (Mary), Tim Goodyear (Dad), Theo Marceau (Gavin), and Charles Slovenski (John Smith)

each household now has a teenage child, a son in one (Gavin, played by Theo Marceau) and a daughter in the other (Vicky, played by Megan Davies) who meet on the internet and try to hook up in person, amused by their identical last names but otherwise oblivious to the possibility that they may actually be half-siblings. When their father John Smith (played by Charles Slovenski) gets wind of this imminent rendezvous, he proceeds to shuttle between the two houses to try to prevent by hook or by crook this English comic twist on very traditional Greek theatrical themes. This aspect does not seem dated, unlike references to 'this internet thing' which places the writing in a particular time in the recent past, making many of us in the audience suddenly feel older than we had thought.

Slovenski's John Smith is portrayed as a classic



everyman and is, for the two-hour affair, an essay in exasperation. In the manic tradition of *Fawlty Towers*, the humour Slovenski goes for is neither caricatured nor cheap, but the humour of a man at his wit's end trying to keep the strands of his lifetime of deception from tangling around him, and now his children.

Charles Slovenski may not be an immediately obvious choice for the role of cockney cab driver, but his performance is sold on the emotional blinders he puts on to preserve his web of lies which inevitably unravels to great comic effect.

His wives, Barbara and Mary, play both foil to and bemused observer of Smith's struggles. Cathy Boyle's Barbara gives a no-holds-barred performance with an abundance of energy. Sharon Gill's Mary was a

more subdued personality, providing an emotional foundation that helped ground the rest of the performances. Barry Duggan's Stanley, the best friend, gave a very precise comic performance, which complemented well with Slovenski's objective-

driven interpretation. Theo Marceau and Megan Davies as the young lovers/siblings (if they were really siblings, would they be that nice to each other?) brought a fresh spontaneity to the show which was a delight during their scenes. But perhaps the biggest surprise of the evening was Tim Goodyear's Dad, a relatively minor, one-joke supporting role, played with such precision and grounded reality that although not given much stage time, his captivating performance was felt throughout the show.

The production was ably directed by Pam Walsh who clearly worked effectively with her cast to get the tricky timing of a farce down to crescendoing manic intensity without becoming chaotic and muddy - no mean feat indeed.

The original production of the prequel was directed by the husband and wife team of Richard and Pam Walsh and

is fondly remembered by the GEDS community. Richard died a few years ago, giving this production directed by his wife Pam an added dimension of celebrating



Richard's contribution to Geneva theatre through laughter and joy, and showcasing Pam's own considerable contribution.

Clearly, based on the lobby conversations and the vocal reaction of the audience, the expat audience loved this play which provided a nice contrast to the equally well-produced but darker-themed *Proof*. The classic 'seven door' set served well, with the clever addition of adjacent rooms visible

off stage adding a scenic richness to the proceedings. Ultimately, the rather difficult themes of marital deception

and possible incest are a tricky balancing act for a comedy, handled deftly by the writer, director and the cast, touching on these themes, but also maintaining a pace and a mechanical unfolding of plot to not give the audience too much time to think about the unsavoury

situation. The result was the barest ephemeral sketch of relationships, which allowed the laughter to fly without the ballast of actual emotional ramifications of their acts.

Perhaps this is one of the joys of farce, like the gangster film genre, to have the guilty pleasure of vicariously enjoying behaviours we might abhor in our lives, but from enough of a distance to give ourselves plausible deniability, because of course, WE would never behave that way,

Original one-acts and FEATS

On 29 and 30 April (TBC) we're proud to present two home-grown pieces, *Working Girl* by Béibhinn Regli and *A Business-Like Affair* by Bill Lloyd. Some of you may have seen playreading versions of these two pieces.

In *Working Girl*, Sophie, a college student struggling to pay her way during the economic crisis in Ireland, decides to take an unusual part-time job. Can a small community in "Holy Catholic Ireland" find its way out of the dark ages and

into the 21st century? *Working Girl* is a comedy with a serious, relevant and contemporary message, which GEDS is submitting to this year's Festival of European Anglophone Theatrical Societies (FEATS) in Brussels this May.

A Business-Like Affair is a comedy that sets out to push the envelope on business communications while simultaneously moving forward within an end-user perspective of Anglo-French relations. The drama unfolds against a background of delicious

international cuisine. A parody of management-speak, you'll be rooting for the characters in a not-so-classic story of unrequited love.

Proceeds from ticket sales will go to Aide Suisse Contre le Sida.

Keep an eye on the GEDS Facebook page and our newsletter GEDS at a Glance for updates on the venue and how to buy tickets. Tickets are now on sale for the FEATS festival in Brussels and the complete running order will be announced in March.

GEDS AGM and new committee

If you want to have a say in the future of your Society, be sure to come to our AGM at the English Church Hall on April 19, where we will be debating important matters pertaining to the running of the Society and voting in a new committee for 2016-17

season. All 13 positions on committee are to play for. If you would like to play a more active role in the Society, don't be backwards in coming forwards - no experience is necessary! You can choose to run for a specific position on committee or to be a general

committee member and have a role assigned to you. The list of committee positions will be sent out with the documents relating to the AGM. Please email Secretary [Viki Lazar](mailto:Viki.Lazar@geds.ch) by 14 April to register your interest in running for committee or to nominate someone else.

PLAYREADING CORNER

ACTING WORKSHOP

Doors open 7.00pm: playreadings commence at 7.30pm.
Playreadings take place downstairs at the English Church Hall, 14b rue de Mont Blanc, Geneva

Workshop – Monday 4 April
English Church Hall, 14b rue du Mont-Blanc

MARCH 8

Sian Ackroyd

Les Liasons Dangereuses

by Christopher Hampton

A venomous couple make a bet. If the man, the Count de Valmont, can deflower a virtuous woman, then his ex-lover, the Marquise de Merteuil, promises him another night in bed. The plot thickens when Merteuil manipulates everything behind the scenes so that she will win. And she does – only to find nothing in the end. Neither does he. Both are defeated, when they had hoped to discredit the notion of romantic love in favour of sexual, predatory behaviour, based on desire and conquest.

MARCH 22

Alan Leather

Shylock

by Arnold Wesker

Set in the Jewish Ghetto of Venice, 1563, this play reworks not

Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* but the three stories from which Shakespeare wove his play. The core plot remains, the relationships are different. Shylock, a successful loan-banker with a passion for collecting old books, is a friend of the world-weary Venetian merchant, Antonio, whose long-forgotten godson, Bassanio, a fortune hunter, seeks him out to borrow 3,000 ducats for the wooing of Portia, an educated woman of the Renaissance, and an heiress.

Antonio must borrow the ducats from his friend, who unhesitatingly agrees but is offended when Antonio asks for a contract. His Venetian friend reminds him: the laws of Venice permit no dealings with Jews without contract. Shylock angrily proposes an absurd contract for a pound of Antonio's flesh to mock the laws of Venice. Antonio's ships are wrecked; the pound

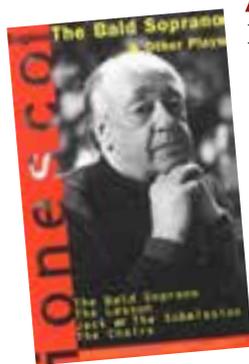
of flesh must be forfeited. Portia argues that the contract is nonsense. She saves Shylock's life but not his fortune. Antonio loses a friend, Portia must marry a man she despises and Jessica, Shylock's daughter, realises too late she's linked herself to a religious bigot.

APRIL 12

Frances Favre

The Bald Soprano

by Eugene Ionesco



A masterpiece of Theatre of the Absurd, Ionesco got the idea for this play partly from the strange dialogues he found in language textbooks when he was trying to teach himself English, and partly from a game he used to play on trains with his wife – to the astonishment of their fellow passengers!

The play is largely a series of sketches with no real connection, perhaps about the difficulty of true communication or perhaps simply intended to amuse.

APRIL 26

Robert Bartram

A Whistle in the Dark

by Tom Murphy

A Whistle in the Dark tells the story of the climactic confrontation between Michael, the oldest of the Carney sons, and his father and brothers, a brawling, hard-drinking, criminal gang of Irish immigrants living and working in Coventry.

The action centres around the attempts of Michael to break out from the group and to ensure that the youngest is not sucked into the same patterns of violence as the others - but with astonishing and terrible consequences. A powerful portrayal of tribal violence and the devastation it brings in its wake in spite of attempts to stand against it.

Each time we see a piece of theatre, we must make a 'leap of faith'; we must go down the rabbit hole and accept that what we are seeing is real, not simply actors imitating life. That 'leap' ideally is made during the very first moment of a play, a scene or an entrance. When an actor or a play has to 'warm up' into a performance minutes into the production, that magical suspension of disbelief is often lost to the audience and is very difficult to regain no matter how well the actors perform throughout the rest of the show.

In this workshop, GEDS member Christopher Bailey will conduct practical exercises on specific techniques to ensure that the actor's performance is fully realised in the very first moment of a scene. For this workshop, please prepare and have memorised a monologue, or other piece that can be performed theatrically. Feel free to coordinate with other attendees if you prefer to do a scene. To reserve a place, please

contact Christopher Bailey at christophertomlinbailey@hotmail.com

Thank you to everyone who attended our directing workshops on 16 and 18 February, and thank you to Neil-Jon Morphy for organising and leading the events.

Also on in and around Geneva

Volunteers needed for the GAOS costume store

For many years now, Sue Bergomi has been renting out items from GAOS' vast costume collection to other not-for-profit organisations in the canton and beyond. The Society has profited immensely from her hard work and GEDS shows also benefit from having access to this costume store.

Understandably, Sue feels that she cannot continue with this task, so the GAOS Committee is looking to put together a team of people who would be willing to take it in turns – for one or two months a year – to reply to requests for costumes. No sewing skills are required!

The task is almost entirely administrative: meeting the "customers" at the costume store and helping them to find the costumes that they require, drawing up an invoice on the basis of the existing price list, receiving the costumes when they are returned and

arranging to get them cleaned, and restoring them to their proper place in the wardrobe. Over recent years, there have been 10 to 12 requests per year, and Sue estimates the average time involved at 4 hours per request (not including time spent getting to and from the costume store).

The GAOS Committee is planning to organise an orientation session early in the new year, to allow potential team members to learn what's involved before they commit. Interested? Let us know! You'd be doing GAOS a huge service and will revel in the grateful contact with our customers. Contact Robert Boyle at technical@gaos.ch or Sue herself at susan.bergomi@bluewin.ch.

Seeking young Romantics!

Calling male actors with a playing age of around 25-30:

The Château de Chillon is looking for two English-speaking actors to perform the roles of Romantic writers Lord Byron and Percy Bysshe Shelley as part of their programme of events celebrating the bicentenary of the authors' visit to Switzerland. Byron was 30 at the time, while Shelley was about 25.

There is no script to be learned and all the necessary information and costumes will be provided. The actors will be expected to read poetry and interact with the guides and visitors at the temporary exhibition "1816-2016: Byron is back! - Lord Byron, le retour!"

The actors must be available on the following dates:

- One day in March (TBD) for costume-fitting, explanations and photo shoot (photos will be used on the Château de Chillon Facebook page)

- Thursday 28 April, from 4pm to 8pm, opening of the exhibition (in presence of the British ambassador)
- Saturday 21 May, from 4pm to midnight, for La Nuit des Musées
- Sunday 26 June, from 9am to 7pm, for the commemoration day of Byron's visit to Chillon. Fee to be negotiated. If you are interested, please email Mercedes Gulin Koch at mercedes.gulin@chillon.ch.

15-17 AND 22-24 APRIL 2016

GAOS – Chitty Chitty Bang Bang

Casino Theatre, rue de Carouge, Geneva

Eccentric inventor, Caractacus Potts, saves an old race car from a scrap dealer, and restores it for his children Jeremy and Jemima. They soon discover the car has magical properties, including the ability

to float and take flight. But evil Baron Bomburst from Vulgaria wants the car or its inventor. A beach outing becomes a wild adventure, batty Grandpa is kidnapped, the rescue trip to Vulgaria sees the children enticed away by the Childcatcher. With the help of the magical car and lovely Truly Scrumptious, Potts and family defeat the baron, his child-hating wife and cohorts, with lots of laughs, catchy music and dancing along the way.

NODA Summer School

Bookings are now open for the 2016 NODA (National Operatic & Dramatic Association) Summer School (www.noda.org.uk/summerschool) to be held on 30 July to 6 August 2016 at the University of Warwick, UK (30 minute drive from the RSC Stratford-upon-Avon). (Courses are residential or non-residential and, as GEDS is a member of NODA, GEDS members are exempt from the £30 special registration fee)

Courses include :
Actors' Toolbox
The Plays of David Mamet
Acting Shakespeare
Directing Drama
Costume Design
Stage Management
Stage Combat
Sound for Theatre
Sound Design

St Patrick's celebrations

If you're at a loss for a fun way to celebrate Saint Patrick's Day, look no further! The Geneva Irish Association is holding a Saint Patrick's Day Gala Ball on Saturday 19 March at the Beau Rivage Hotel from 7pm. 150 CHF (125 CHF for members) will get you an apéritif featuring traditional Irish music from the Rockhill Ramblers, a four-course meal and the chance to be entered in a raffle.

Corporate tables of 10 may be booked for 2000 CHF. Dress code: formal. Email tara8connell@yahoo.co.uk to register.

THE DIVIDE REVIEW

by Beverley Roussett

A reading held at Stephen Joseph Theatre, Scarborough on Sunday 27 October 2015, written and directed by Alan Ayckbourn

When you go to the theatre, mostly you expect to be out again in about three hours. But when the audience took their seats for the reading of Alan Ayckbourn's most recent work, *The Divide*, we were forewarned that it was going to be a marathon – and it was. Starting at 3pm, with three mini-breaks and one supper break, we were held enthralled until 11.30pm. Read by a large cast of well-known actors, local Scarborough actors, Stephen Joseph Theatre staff, and Lady Ayckbourn – the actress Heather Stoney – *The Divide* is set at the end of the 21st century and is a narrative of individual diaries, official reports, council meeting minutes, letters to newspapers etc. of two communities, one comprised solely of women and the other solely of men.

Before the reading, Alan Ayckbourn described his epic (which, in fairness, he thought would end at 9.30pm) as "a deliberate attempt to jump away from anything familiar to me. It's a dystopian fantasy set



in a completely re-imagined world where men and women live totally separately." He added darkly, "It will never be repeated again – not in this form."

But an Ayckbourn imagination running riot through five acts is not something to be easily put

away in a drawer and I can imagine listening to it online or on a CD, which would probably also allow a greater enjoyment since one would be assured of staying alert and appreciating every step of the story.

The audience at the reading found itself in a weird world, a hundred years or so

hence, where a plague has decimated the population and a Preacher (referred to as "she") has decreed that men and women must live segregated lives on separate sides of the Divide. While men and women can meet for official purposes, provided they are covered in microbe-proof suits, social interaction between a man and a woman is totally forbidden. Women form families of MaMas and MaPas and children are applied for and conceived by artificial insemination. As the central character, Soween, tells us "Girls become women when they are 10. They will then all stay here till they grow old and die. Boys, when they become 18, have to move over to the North of the Divide to live with the men. One day my brother Elihu will have to go North and I won't see him again which makes me sad. That is the rule of the Preacher".

We, the audience, have the privilege of looking at both sides – both ruled by a rigid rule book. Men wear white (symbol of purity) and women

are head to foot in black. Wearing colour is forbidden. Most inhabitants accept the rules, but rebels/dissenters do exist and make their presence felt. Breaking some rules results in punishments like being ostracised for a certain number of days; breaking others results in death. Dark? Yes. But this is Ayckbourn, so humour creeps in every now and again. Soween tells us that "in the olden days women and men used to live together, but they weren't very happy and used to argue a lot." When Elihu, a boy, meets Giella, a girl, by chance when both their faces are uncovered, the whole social structure that their families have lived in all their lives is called into question.

Act five ended at 11.30pm with a standing ovation, and the audience crowded into the theatre bar for a quick drink and the chance to thank cast members and Alan Ayckbourn for this unforgettable day. I left the theatre very tired, but with the feeling that I'd been offered one of the most unique theatrical experiences of my life.

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New members

A warm welcome to our new members:

Frédérique Delapree
Barrie Duggan
Deborah Hill
Anna-Lena Schluchter
Rick Vincent

WHAT'S ON ... SPRING

Who	What	When	Where
GEDS	<i>Rabbit Hole</i> – show	1–5 March	Théâtre de l'Espérance
GEDS	<i>Les Liasons Dangereuses</i> – playreading	8 March	English Church Hall
Renegade Saints	<i>Improv show</i>	10 March	Mr Pickwick Pub
GEDS	<i>Shylock</i> – playreading	22 March	English Church Hall
GEDS	<i>Acting preparation workshop</i> – workshop	4 April	English Church Hall
GEDS	<i>The Bald Soprano</i> – playreading	12 April	English Church Hall
Renegade Saints	<i>Improv show, with guest players the Royal Stage Monkeys</i>	14 April	Mr Pickwick Pub
GAOS	<i>Chitty Chitty Bang Bang</i> – show	15–17, 22–24 April	Casino Theatre
GEDS	AGM	19 April	English Church Hall
GEDS	<i>A Whistle in the Dark</i> – playreading	26 April	English Church Hall
GEDS	Original One Acts – charity show	29–30 April (TBC)	Nicolas Bouvier (TBC)