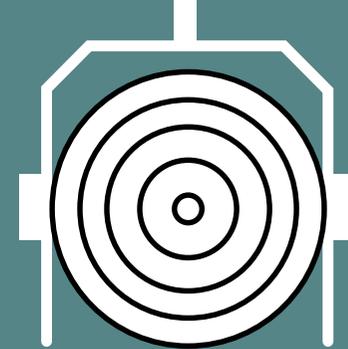


# SPOTLIGHT

Newsletter of the Geneva English Drama Society  
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## IN THIS EDITION

### GEDS WORKSHOPS!

Want to learn more about GEDS and about theatre and acting in general? Then don't miss our free workshops.  
page 2

### PAYING YOUR DUES

It's the start of the new season, so you know what that means – yes, plays! But also, it's time to pay your membership fees ... Sorry.  
page 2

### DIRECTORS, THIS WAY

Would you like to dip your toe into directing with a short play, extract or original piece at our night of one-acts?  
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## Now live – the new-and- improved GEDS website!

This month, we are rolling out the first version of our new website, with the same address ([www.geds.ch](http://www.geds.ch)). As ever, member feedback is invaluable, so let us know what you think and help us develop the best possible platform for our society and for you.

In other news, please note that our official mailing

address has changed; any communications by post should now be addressed to:  
Geneva English Drama Society, 1200 Geneva.

## Not too cool for school

Committee members Viki Lazar and Daire O'Doherty (*below*) spent the morning of Saturday, August 29th at the Welcome Back to School Morning of Ecolint in the courtyard of the La Grande Boissière campus. Parents need extracurricular activities too!



## Starting the season

Hello and welcome to this season's first issue of *Spotlight!* We're very excited to be getting back in the action with our production of *Proof* by David Auburn (29 September–3 October) and a varied line-up of playreadings, including a night of one-acts and our newcomers' playreading. In this issue, we'll have a review of the Royal Shakespeare Company's production of *Othello*, and a review of that most spectacular of GEDS events – the GEDS BBQ at the Barn, plus lots of exciting news for members!



## Proof, by David Auburn

Directed by Frances Favre  
Théâtre de l'Espérance,  
29 September–3 October

**P**roof is a four-person play about genius, madness, love and trust. The production features two newcomers in the female roles. Rehearsals are going well and it is sure to be an excellent



production. Tickets can be purchased from Theatre in English online now, over the phone from 21 September, or – if you're the spontaneous type – at the door on the

night (subject to availability, naturally).

Are you looking for a way to be a more hands-on member? Great – we're looking for hands! In particular, we'd like some extra hands backstage at *Proof*, and for the get-in (starting 9 a.m. on Saturday 26 September at Théâtre de l'Espérance). If you would be interested in helping out behind the scenes, email Stage Manager Richard Brown at [richard.brown74@yahoo.com](mailto:richard.brown74@yahoo.com).

## It's all about you(r membership)!

As a GEDS member, you benefit from free entry to all playreadings and invitations to our social events, and are kept informed through communications aimed exclusively at our members. Most importantly, the membership fees remain unchanged, so you can go on enjoying all this for the same modest price!

As for the fun, fellowship and fooling around we have, how do you put a price on that?!

So why wait? Membership renewals were due on 1 September (and thanks to those who have already paid). Keep a smile on the MemSec's face and get those subscriptions in promptly.

And – most importantly – don't forget to notify any changes to your contact details!

A reminder of the membership fees and how to pay them:

### Yearly subscriptions (from 1 September to 31 August the following year):

- CHF 60 per individual member
  - CHF 40 for retirees over 60 years
  - CHF 30 for students under 25 years and those on unemployment benefit
- Subscriptions from new members joining in the summer count for the full following season.

### Subscription payment methods:

- in cash at a playreading
- via e-banking
- with a bulletin de versement at any Swiss post office.

For e-banking or the post office, you will need to provide the following information:

- GEDS, CH-1200 Geneva
- Post account number 12-10826-9."Membership 2015-16". Add your telephone number or email address

## GEDS workshops – get involved

Starting this year, GEDS will be organising several workshops a year, on non-playreading weeks, coordinated by Christopher Bailey, our Workshops Manager. Like playreadings, workshops are free for members while non-members pay just CHF 5.

### Sign up now for our October 13th workshop "Building a Character" to be held at the English Church Hall (TBC):

Committee member Christopher Bailey invites you to an interactive evening on the steps and process of organically building a character for a show.

Touching on a variety of professional acting techniques, this workshop is a hands-on practical introduction to character metamorphosis without caricature and with



remaining emotionally grounded.

This workshop may also serve as a foundation for future workshops if there is demand. If interested, please email [christophertomlinbailey@hotmail.com](mailto:christophertomlinbailey@hotmail.com) to reserve a place. Places are limited to ensure as much practical

participation of attendees as possible.

GEDS member and Renegade Saint Sam Al-Hamdani will be giving a workshop on improvisation for actors later in the year.

Keep an eye on *GEDS* at a *Glance*, the GEDS Facebook page and the GEDS website for updates.

*The GEDS orientation workshop led by Malcolm Grant and Viki Lazar: it involved an introduction to GEDS, how the society works, and the participants role-played the GEDS audition process*

# A LOOK BACK AT THE SUMMER...

## A Laughing Matter

**W**e closed last season with an open-air performance of the scandalous and riotously funny *A Laughing Matter* by April de Angelis.

Thanks to Nic Sommer and Loulou Stirrup for arranging, Liz Comstock-Smith for

costumes, Owen Boyle for the sound, and Jane Easton and John Newsome for the lighting -- not forgetting Sue and Alan Leather, who provided the idyllic setting!

Let's feast our eyes upon those fabulous costumes once more...



Master chef John Newsome (right) supervises a team of honey-basters including Helene Barr. Photo by Mark Clayton



Pictured left: Liz Comstock-Smith and Evelyn Partridge. Right: Dan Day-Robinson

## The summer barbeque

by Bill Lloyd

**O**n Saturday, 15 August, the Chippendales folded away the building plans for Proof, switched their hi-tech electronic screwdrivers to stand-by and prepared to welcome an intake of eager thespians for

the (4th) annual GEDS BBQ at Crans.

By early evening some 40-odd partygoers had settled into seats in the back garden of the Barn. We enjoyed succulent honey-roasted lamb with the scrumptious salads and the formidable desserts provided by volunteers. A glass or two of wine went down a treat.

Special thanks for a great evening go to the Chips and friends; to Jane and Helene for the organisation; to John for the gourmet roast and its expert carving; to Mark for his discreet photographing of the event and to Nathalie for her amazing outdoor set which provided a lit backdrop strongly

evocative of the Manhattan skyline.

Not forgetting Tim, who in his role of committee spokesman managed to bring us all up to date on the attractions of the forthcoming GEDS season, in spite of some brash heckling from a group seated under The Trump Tower.

# PLAYREADING CORNER

Doors open 7.00pm: playreadings commence at 7.30pm.

Playreadings take place downstairs at the English Church Hall, Rue de Mont Blanc, Geneva

SEPTEMBER 22

## Aren't We All?

by Frederick Lonsdale

David Wark

At the core of the drawing-room comedy's plot is the Hon. William Tatham who, having been consigned to the proverbial doghouse for a romantic indiscretion, is determined to catch his self-righteous wife in an extramarital kiss of her own, while a society grande dame attempts to snare herself a peer prone to afternoon assignations with shopgirls at the British Museum.

To sign up, email [davidwark@outlook.com](mailto:davidwark@outlook.com)

OCTOBER 6

## Blood Relations

by Sharon Pollock

Cécile Van de Voorde

Blood Relations is a psychological murder mystery. The play is based on historical

fact and speculation surrounding the life of Lizzie Borden and the murders of her father and stepmother, crimes with which Borden was charged.

To sign up, email [cecilevdev@gmail.com](mailto:cecilevdev@gmail.com)

OCTOBER 20

## Death of a Salesman

by Arthur Miller

Christopher Bailey

At age sixty-three, Willy has been a travelling salesman all his life. Despite his hard work and gruelling schedule, the Lomans have always lived on the edge of poverty and Willy has always been an underling in his company. Yet Willy constantly tells himself and his family that the "big break" he deserves is just around the corner.

He has raised his two sons, Biff and Happy, to also believe that somehow life has cheated them and insists that one day they will get their due.

Linda, Willy's dutiful wife, lives under the thin veneer of denial that her husband has so long tried to keep from collapsing. Willy is told that because of the changing economic conditions the company no longer has need of his services. Willy is fired and soon discovers that he is unable to find other similar employment. He dies as he has lived, a failure in the eyes of society.

To sign up, email [christophertomlinbailey@hotmail.com](mailto:christophertomlinbailey@hotmail.com)

NOVEMBER 3

## Bus Stop

by William Inge

Neil-Jon Morphy

Bus Stop is a romantic and comedic drama set in a diner in rural Kansas during a snowstorm from which bus passengers must take shelter. This playreading will be performed by GEDS newcomers.

To sign up, email [morphyn@bluewin.ch](mailto:morphyn@bluewin.ch)

## Call for (short) directors

Did you miss the deadline for playreading arrangers? Never fear! Viki Lazar is arranging "A Night of One-Acts" on Tuesday, January 12 and she is looking for 5–6 other directors.

If you're interested in directing a short (10–15 minute) play, or your favourite scene from a play, or a monologue, or anything else that roughly fits the time constraint, get in touch with Viki at [viki.lazar.viki@gmail.com](mailto:viki.lazar.viki@gmail.com).

Deadline for directors is October 31. You'll choose your own cast and run your own rehearsals, with input from Viki if requested.

Don't forget, you can sign up to perform in any playreading by writing your name in the playreadings book during GEDS events at the English Church Hall, or by contacting the director.

## Meanwhile, elsewhere:

Geneva's finest improv troupe, the Renegade Saints, are also back this autumn, with their next performance at Mr Pickwick's Pub on 15 October at 8 p.m. Doors open at 7.30 p.m. Their first show of the season raised 1,500CHF towards the refugee crisis.

The group will also be holding Wednesday night improv classes and weekend workshops from mid-October – go to their website ([renegadesaints.eu](http://renegadesaints.eu)) or their Facebook page ([Renegade Saints Improv](https://www.facebook.com/RenegadeSaintsImprov)) for more info.

Pathé Cinemas are doing a trial run of three performances of the Royal Shakespeare Company, all live in HD.

This is your chance to catch the cream of English theatre without needing to get on a plane! Tickets 30.- Fr., reduced: 27.- Fr. Discounts are available for Pathé Cine Card-holders.

The next showings are:  
15 October at 8 p.m. – *Hamlet*, NT live in HD, with Benedict Cumberbatch  
21 October at 8 p.m. – *Henry V*, RSC, live in HD from Stratford  
12 November at 8 p.m. – *Coriolanus*, NT Encore with Tom Hiddleston, who was given the Olivier Award for Best Actor 2014 for this part.

For more information go to <http://www.pathe.ch/fr/pathelive/theater>.

Theatre of Eternal Values presents *Shakespeare's Women* at the Salle Communale de Commugny, Route de Coppet; a portrayal of some of the women in the Bard's plays. How were they treated? How did they allow themselves to be treated? A thought-provoking evening – has anything changed?  
Friday, 2 October – 8 p.m. – Info: [mgoodman@worldcom.ch](mailto:mgoodman@worldcom.ch)  
Saturday, 3 October – 7 p.m. – a Friends of India dinner-theatre event supporting the empowerment of women in Southern India.

Info: [info@friends-of-india.org](mailto:info@friends-of-india.org)  
Web: [www.friends-of-india.org](http://www.friends-of-india.org)

# OTHELLO - ROYAL SHAKESPEARE COMPANY, STRATFORD

Directed by Iqbal Khan

A tight show with a promising opening, high production values and some excellent performances, let down by its disappointing denouement, but a production that proves that not only does non-traditional casting work, it adds subtext and fresh interpretations

The RSC's production of *Othello* in Stratford is a sight to behold, in more ways than one. The set is simple yet ingenious: surrounded by the crumbling columns of a deteriorating empire, the middle of the stage features a sliding panel with water underneath, on top of which a gondola-like boat is placed to evoke the Venetian setting. The water feature later serves, among other things, as Othello and Desdemona's bathtub. On two balconies either side of the stage is an assortment of musicians providing live music, and the hazy, disorienting lighting is used to great effect.

Then there is the cast. Much was made of the decision to cast a black actor, Lucian Msamati, as Iago. In a play based on race, with the plot centring on Othello's otherness, how could it possibly work? And yet it does. In the opening scene, Iago schemes and

banter with Roderigo as they plot to reveal Othello's relationship with Desdemona to Desdemona's father. It's all fun and games until Roderigo, getting carried away, makes a racist comment about Othello's lips. The laughter stops. There is a brief but tense silence. Then Iago laughs, and begins blowing raspberries with his own lips, joining in on the joke. The tension begins to dissipate. Roderigo relaxes and starts to laugh too. Then, all of a sudden, Iago strikes him across the face. Iago is charming, captivating and witty, but unhinged; we sense the violence bubbling just beneath the surface at all times. We sense his resentment of the elevation of another black man, whom he sneeringly calls "the Moor" (it sometimes sounds like "THE Moor"). This resentment is compounded when Othello snubs Iago in favour of promoting Cassio -- a white

man whose "daily beauty" both Iago and Othello resent.

Not only is Iago black, his wife Emilia (Ayesha Dharker -- who gives a scintillating performance) is Asian, there are several other black soldiers in the regiment, and the Duke of Venice is played by a woman whose right arm ends at the elbow (Nadia Albina, who previously played Blanche in *A Streetcar Named Desire*). In this day and age, such casting choices should no longer be remarkable. Unfortunately, the theatre can be slow to change. Fortunately, companies like the RSC exist and are leading by example.

One might think the effect of Othello's otherness would be lessened by the heterogeneity of the cast; not so. Othello (played by Hugh Quarshie) remains the outsider. A charismatic, commanding, successful general who appears confident and well-

liked, he nonetheless displays a deep-seated uneasiness; a sense, perhaps of the precariousness of his position. He performs his military duties decisively, trusting his instincts, and seems to have unshakeable faith in his relationship with his wife, Desdemona, and the love they share. But his foundations are not as solid as they might appear, and he is shaken and deeply disturbed when thoughts of treachery and infidelity are planted in his mind by Iago, to the point where he attempts to suffocate Iago with a plastic bag. His violence towards his wife is foreshadowed, and perhaps to a certain extent explained, by a scene in which he and his men torture a prisoner, suggesting a desensitisation to violence and encroaching mental instability brought on by years of military service.

The first half of the play



pulses with energy, and there is a palpable undercurrent of menace. Tensions are rife at the post-battle celebration (featuring pop songs, hip-hop dancing, rap battles, and a powerful and unsettling a cappella performance of a strife-filled African song by Iago). The festive atmosphere is shattered by a racist outburst from Cassio and the scene degenerates into a brawl.

The second half, however, fails to make the same impact.

The relationship between Othello and Desdemona lacks intensity, and seems more like puppy love than all-consuming passion. Johanna Vanderham's

Desdemona is indecisively played, vacillating between annoying, rebellious teenager and lacklustre damsel in distress. It is a difficult role to play well, but Vanderham's inability to project her voice is what ultimately deals the fatal blow to the character of Desdemona.

And when the deed is done, the bodies litter the floor and the awful truth comes to light, the feeling onstage, from Othello in particular, can be summed up with a simple "oh", suggesting that the stakes of Othello and Desdemona's love were simply never high enough.

## Members news



*The three newest GEDS Life Members enjoy a relaxed summer lunch with friends, at the home of Jean and Jack Martin. L-R: Jean, Di Klein, Max Wenner, Pam Walsh (and Laika), Julian Finn and daughter Lucia, NicSommer, Jack, Judith Munzinger and David Stieber. Would any reader care to guess how many years of total GEDS membership that represents? (Photo by Kurt Klein)*

Congratulations to our new GEDS life members: Max Wenner, Jack Martin, and David Stieber.

And a warm welcome to our new members: Anita Beck, Diala Beinke, Jeff Donkin, Kirsty Griffiths, Jaimie Guerra, Amanda Linden, Noelle Rentsch, Christiane & Walter Stahel and Vera Stanlea.

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Theatre in English ticket booking [www.theatreinenglish.ch](http://www.theatreinenglish.ch) or 022 5775 2582

### WHAT'S ON ... AUTUMN

Who	What	When	Where
GEDS	<i>Proof</i>	Sep 29 – Oct 3	Théâtre de l'Espérance
GEDS	<i>Blood Relations</i> playreading	Oct 6	English Church Hall
GEDS	<i>Death of a Salesman</i> playreading	Oct 20	English Church Hall
GEDS	<i>Bus Stop</i> playreading	Nov 3	English Church Hall
GEDS	<i>Caught in the Net</i>	Nov 7–11	Théâtre de Terre-Sainte
GEDS	<i>My Wonderful Day</i> playreading	Dec 8	English Church Hall