

PROSCENIUM

Ladies' Day

By Amanda Whittington

Ladies' Day

Wednesday 8 to Saturday 11 November 2023
Compass Theatre, Ickenham

Ladies' Day

Cast

Pearl, <i>a fish packer</i>	Zena Wigram
Jan, <i>a fish packer</i>	Lynette Alston
Shelley, <i>a fish packer</i>	Eva Peerless
Linda, <i>a fish packer</i>	Sarah Rabin
Joe, <i>their supervisor</i>	Charles Anthony
Fred, <i>a ticket tout</i>	Richard Kessel
Jim McCormack, <i>a TV pundit</i>	Mark Sutherland
Patrick, <i>an Irish jockey</i>	Max Campbell
Kevin, <i>a gambler</i>	Paul Davis
Barry, <i>a bookie</i>	Mike Williams

Creative Team

Directed by	Izzie Cartwright
Stage Manager	Linda Hampson
Assistant Stage Managers	Crystal Anthony, Shirley Wootten Hannah Lester
Set Design and Build	Izzie Cartwright, Mike Williams Members of Proscenium
Lighting Design/Lighting and Sound Operation	Helene Smith

The play is set in Hull and York in June 2005

There will be one interval of fifteen minutes between Act 1 and Act 2

With thanks to East Lane Theatre Club, St Lawrence Players,
Pirton Players, N.O.D.S., Beaufort Players, Nick Hern Books,
Caroline Shanbury, Will Unwin

Amanda Whittington

Amanda Whittington (born 1968 in Nottingham) is an English dramatist who has written over 30 plays for theatre and radio. Her work is widely performed by companies across the UK, with recent productions at Hull Truck, Oldham Coliseum, New Vic Theatre and Nottingham Playhouse. *Be My Baby* is a popular GCSE and 'A' level choice in English Literature and Theatre Studies. In 2017, she was awarded a Doctor of Philosophy by Publication at the University of Huddersfield.

Whittington began her writing career as a freelance journalist for titles including Nottingham Evening Post, New Statesman and Society and The Face. In 2016, her radio drama *D for Dexter* won Best Series/Serial in the BBC Audio Drama Awards, and the fourth series was broadcast in November 2017. In 2001, she jointly won the Dennis Potter Screenwriting Award for *Bollywood Jane*, a work she later adapted for stage.

Her play *The Thrill of Love*, about Ruth Ellis, was performed by Proscenium in 2019.

Ladies Unleashed

Playwright Amanda Whittington on her Ladies Trilogy

When Amanda Whittington's play *Ladies' Day* premiered at Hull Truck Theatre in 2005, it introduced the world to Pearl, Jan, Shelley and Linda – four likely lasses from the Hull fish docks on a day at the races. The play and its sequel, *Ladies Down Under*, have since been performed around the world, including thousands of performances by amateur and community theatre groups. Now there is a third play in the sequence, *Ladies Unleashed*, just premiered at Hull Truck, which brings the story of the Ladies bang up to date. Here, the playwright reflects on the enduring popularity of her beloved Ladies, and why amateur performances of her work are so important to her...

“It's hard to believe it's almost twenty years since Hull Truck asked me to write *Ladies' Day*, a play inspired by Royal Ascot coming to York Racecourse for one year only. It was a huge event in the Yorkshire calendar and a pretty big deal for me, too. A youngish playwright, it was my first commission for a company I'd long admired.

Ladies' Day opened in June 2005 and ran for three weeks to full houses. I was knocked out by the response but had no expectation it had a future beyond its first production. It was written for a specific place and time; that was part of its success, or so I thought. The characters had other ideas.

The play dramatises a day at the races with four friends who work side-by-side at a Hull fish plant. Swapping overalls for Sunday best, Pearl, Jan, Shelley and Linda set out for Royal Ascot and get lucky on the Tote.

A year later, Hull Truck took *Ladies' Day* on a UK tour. I'd hoped the Ladies would be recognisable to a Hull audience but we soon found they were just as relatable across the country. There was also a growing curiosity about the next chapter.

As a playwright, you learn to let go of your stories. At the end of a run, there's no guarantee you'll see your characters again. Yet thanks to amateur and community theatre, these ladies – and the gents in their world – are very much alive. Pearl, Jan, Shelley and Linda have been played by hundreds of actors in thousands of performances.

Words can't express how grateful I am to each and every company that programmes my work. I read every licence that comes in, and note all the villages, towns and cities the Ladies are heading to next. I love to hear from you, see your photos and answer your questions on the plays. It's always a joy to meet you and and talk Ladies. By programming new work, the amateur sector not only keeps plays alive but sustains careers. Every ticket sold in a local theatre, church hall or school is an investment in a writer's future work, as well as our past"

November 24th 2022

Nick Hern Books (www.nickhernbooksblog.com)

Royal Ascot comes to York

"They came in their tens of thousands – in a magnificent array of hats and headpieces, top hats and top designer outfits. Mixing with the fashionistas, high society and the best of Yorkshire style, more than 35,000 found their new home for the week at York Racecourse. The going was good, the weather wasn't – grey, overcast skies which constantly threatened rain, but failed to cloud the mood. The champagne flutes were full, the top hats mingled with their grandstand compatriots. And then Her Majesty arrived, her Ascot landaus sailing past the grandstand and royal enclosure in a blur of colour. The

horsemen led the way as the Queen, resplendent in pink, waved to a cheering public. Royal Ascot at York had finally arrived.

The first three days were affected by heavy rain. Finally, the weather turned. “The downpours had not dampened an excellent three days of Royal Ascot at York, but the sight of the sun peeping through the clouds saw the glamorous meeting taking an even better turn.” The following day, the Saturday – the last of the five-day event – the weather was even better. “Sales of champagne were surely matched by sales of factor 20, as Royal Ascot’s swansong brought the kind of day to match the mood.” The Royal Processional was an emotional occasion. “The Queen was the only Royal participant in the carriages, but the crowd did not mind. They roared their approval all the same. Her Majesty seemed touched, taking the warm welcome of her northern subjects to her heart,” *The Press* reported. “We waved, so did she, each saying our goodbyes. It had been a tremendous week on the course.”

The Press (York), June 2005

Director’s Note

It is with great pleasure that we open our Centenary Season (1924 – 2024) with this production of *Ladies’ Day*. First performed by Hull Truck Theatre in 2005, we follow the fortunes of our four main characters - Pearl, Jan, Shelley and Linda - as they attend *Ladies’ Day* at Royal Ascot, which in 2005 transferred to York due to refurbishment of Ascot Racecourse. The play is popular with amateur groups and we can see why; it’s a fun piece, but all the characters are well conceived and in them we recognise what we have no doubt all experienced: hopes, dreams, love, disappointments. But at the heart of the play is the importance of friendships that see us through the highs and lows of life.

The original production and its subsequent tour were so successful that Amanda Whittington went on to write a second play, *Ladies Down Under* followed by a third – *Ladies Unleashed*. Clearly the women have struck a chord with audiences.

This opening production of our Centenary Season is tinged with sadness as in August 2023 we lost our dearly loved friend, fellow actor and Chair of Proscenium, David Pearson. David was very excited about Proscenium entering its 100th year and it is fitting that we have dedicated this season to his memory.

Izzie Cartwright

David Pearson

March 5th 1941 – August 9th 2023



David's association with Proscenium goes back to the mid-1970s. He acted, directed and stage managed and was a key member of the team running Proscenium for more than 20 years. He took on the formal roles of Treasurer in 2000 and became Chair in 2012. He was so diligent in these roles, feeling a great responsibility to managing the company's affairs and continuing its long traditions. He was the beating heart of the group. It was his skills and strengths that got us through many difficult times, including the recent pandemic.

First and foremost, David was an excellent actor.

He appeared in nearly 70 productions for Proscenium over 50 years, starting with *The Beaux Stratagem* in 1975, and directed five plays. His range was vast. He acted in all the classics, including Chekhov, Ibsen, Pinter and Miller. He could play tragedy. He could play comedy. He could play farce.

His Shakespearean roles including Bottom and Theseus (in different decades) in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, title roles in *Macbeth* and *Julius Caesar*, Claudius in *Hamlet*, Leontes in *The Winter's Tale*, and Feste in *Twelfth Night*. In other plays he played leads in *All My Sons*, *Good, The Sea*, *The Caretaker*, *Three Sisters*, *The Madness of George III*, *John Gabriel Borkman*, and played the part of God in *The Mysteries* and *The Creation of the World*. His final part in *A Month of Sundays* earlier this year provided a master class in comic timing and intelligent stagecraft.

To act with David was a joy. He was a safe pair of hands. And who will ever forget that wonderful speaking voice? That slight Welsh lilt. The flowing cadences. Earlier this year at a verse speaking afternoon David read us some Dylan Thomas prose beautifully. (Though he would be the first to admit that he didn't have the best singing voice).

He was a very special person and we, as Proscenium, were so privileged to have known him. We shall miss him very much.

(Adapted from a Proscenium newsletter article by Crystal Anthony)

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www.eastlanetheatre.co.uk

Our Next Production

(NB: To be performed at Harrow Arts Centre)

Julius Caesar

By William Shakespeare

Political leaders overreaching themselves, believing they are infallible. Losing touch with the people who elected them, the real world and who they are. Difficult questions and situations. How far would you go? All it takes for evil to triumph is for good people to do nothing. The story of Julius Caesar is as relevant today as when Shakespeare wrote it in 1599. Proscenium presents this classic play in a version for our times.

This production is part of our Centenary Season, celebrating 100 years of Proscenium - and is in fact our 350th production! For it, we return to Harrow Arts Centre, where we performed between 1990 and 2005.

Directed by Mike Williams

Wednesday 13 to Saturday 16 March 2024 7.45 pm

The Boiler House, Harrow Arts Centre,
Uxbridge Road, Hatch End, HA5 4EA
Box Office : 020 3773 7161

About Proscenium

Proscenium was founded in 1924. Since then, the aim of this experienced group has been to present classic and contemporary plays to as wide an audience as possible. Since 1990, performances have taken place at the Harrow Arts Centre and, more recently, at the Compass Theatre, Ickenham.

The company meets three times a week in Harrow for rehearsals, so that four plays are presented in each season. Social, fund-raising activities and play readings take place throughout the year.

Secretary : Marion Chamberlain
Chair : Mike Williams

Contact us at www.proscenium.org.uk