

GASLIGHT

by Patrick Hamilton



7 February ~ 11 February 2023

StokeRepPlayers.co.uk

Welcome to our theatre and to this thrilling performance! Here is some information that may be of interest to you...

The Stoke Repertory Theatre is supported and run by volunteers who regularly donate their valuable time — and without whom we could not deliver the standard of production and customer service our patrons have come to rightfully expect. Some of these people you will meet on your visit today, others fulfil less visible, but no less vital, rôles behind the scenes. We are deeply indebted to our exceptional backstage crews, glorious front-of-house helpers, bar and coffee staff and to all wonderful members and friends who help run the theatre.

- The bar is open from 6-45pm until shortly after the end of the performance. Drinking up time is 20 minutes.
- Coffee, tea and confectionery are available from the coffee bar from 6-45pm.
- Interval refreshments may be ordered before the performance to avoid queuing later.
- The car park is open from 6-30pm until 11pm on performance evenings. Over-spill parking is available in Staffordshire University's car park further along Leek Road, this is free Monday to Friday and £1 Saturday matinée and evening. Neither The Repertory Theatre nor the University can accept any responsibility for damage to, or loss of, vehicles from their car parks.
- The videotaping or making of electronic or other audio and/or visual recordings or streams of this production is strictly prohibited, a violation of United Kingdom Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 and an actionable offense.



GASLIGHT

by Patrick Hamilton

The Players

Jack Manningham ~ James Freeman

Bella Manningham ~ Sian Weedon

Inspector Rough ~ Ian Birkin

Elizabeth ~ Gina Brian

Nancy ~ Kirsty Booth

Policeman ~ Michael Fair

The Scenes

Set in the latter part of the nineteenth century

Act one ~ winter, late afternoon

Act two ~ later the same day

Act three ~ eleven o'clock that night

There will be an interval of twenty minutes.

Please refrain from smoking or vaping in any part of the theatre. Please ensure your phones are turned off. And your neighbours would appreciate your non-noisy confectionery consumption. Thank you.

From The Director

Having played the rôle of Bella Manningham many years ago, and with a keen academic interest in nineteenth century political history after more than 30 years of teaching Historical and Modern Politics, I was delighted to be asked to direct this production of **Gaslight**. I have always found both the period and the play intriguing and was particularly excited to explore how to create the atmosphere and tension needed for the play to be a success, with a small cast and single, intimate set.

Hamilton's play is a dark tale of a marriage based on deceit and trickery. It is important to note that **Gaslight** is set before the Married Woman's Property Act 1882 since on marriage a woman became the chattel of her husband. During this era if a wife separated from her husband, she had no rights of access to her children. A divorced woman had no chance of acceptance in society again; worse, a husband could easily have his wife committed to a mental hospital for the rest of her life, if she were displaying 'hysterical symptoms', which today would be interpreted as pre-menstrual tension. All he would need is the opinion of two doctors, the fee for whom he would pay.

During the nineteenth century a married woman from the middle and upper classes was considered to be the 'Angel of the House', emotionally unsuited to making their own decisions regarding property or politics. There was after all no need for her to do so as her husband, and before marriage, her father, would be looking after her interests (or not!).

The Married Women's Property Act 1882 addressed the grievances felt by many English women. This act altered the law so that a wife gained the right to own, buy and sell her separate property. The courts were forced to recognise a husband and a wife as two separate legal entities, in the same manner as if the wife was unmarried.

It wasn't until 1894 that women gained the vote in local council elections and in 1907 in county council elections too. Women did not attain the parliamentary vote until 1918, and even then only if they were 30, were married or owned property in their own right. They did not gain parity with men until The Equal Representation Act of 1928. I still find it incredible that this was less than 100 years ago.

Sarah Stockdale
Director

This amateur production of Gaslight is presented by arrangement with Concord Theatricals Ltd on behalf of Samuel French Ltd www.concordtheatricals.co.uk

Credits

Director
Assistant Director
Stage Director
Stage Manager
Set Construction

Sarah Stockdale
Michael Fair
Terry Wright
Ray Vernon
Tony Rogerson, Andy Baddeley,
Terry Wright, Ray Vernon, Stuart
Campbell, Bob Flower, Alan
Hulme, Simon Bland, Members &
Friends of Rep Players

Set Design
Lighting Design
Lighting Operation
Sound Design
Sound Operation
Props
Set Décor
Set Dressing
Specialist Props
Costumes

RP Design
Stuart Campbell
Janet Clarke
Tina Campbell
Debbie Morrey
Chris Birks & Rep Members
Ken Mills & Team
Dawn Birks & Team
Tony Rogerson & Ray Vernon
Rep Players, North Staffs Operatic
Society, Lichfield Costume Hire

Wardrobe Co-Ordinator
Front-of-House Manager
Box Office
Social Media
Programme
Company Photographer

Sylvia Wright
Nick Bailey
Sharon Lawton
John Stone
Jayne Blake
Peter Croft

With thanks to North Staffs Operatic Society



**We are indebted to the St John Ambulance Brigade
whose members attend all of our performances.**

The Author Patrick Hamilton

Anthony Walter Patrick Hamilton was born in 1904 in the Sussex village of Hassocks, near Brighton, to writer parents. Due to his father's alcoholism and financial ineptitude, the family spent much of Hamilton's childhood living in boarding houses in Chiswick and Hove.

After a brief career as an actor, he became a novelist with the publication of *Monday Morning* (1925), *Craven House* (1926) and *Twopence Coloured* (1928), but his first real success was the play *Rope* (1929).

The Midnight Bell (1929) is based upon Hamilton's falling in love with a prostitute, and was later published along with *The Siege Of Pleasure* (1932) and *The Plains Of Cement* (1934) as the semi-autobiographical trilogy *Twenty Thousand Streets Under The Sky* (1935).

Hamilton was disfigured badly when he was run over by a car in the late 1920s. His novel *Mr. Stimpson & Mr. Gorse* (1953) (dramatized as *The Charmer* in 1987) ended with a vision of England smothered in metal beetles, reflected his loathing of the

car, and indeed he had a dislike of many things in the modern world. However, despite this hatred for the culture in which he operated, he was a popular contributor to it. His two most successful plays, *Rope* and *Gas Light* (or *Angel Street* in the USA) (1938), made Hamilton wealthy and were also fruitful as films: the British-made *Gaslight* (1940), the 1944 American remake, and Alfred Hitchcock's *Rope* (1948).

Hangover Square (1941) is often judged his most accomplished work. Set in Earls Court where Hamilton himself lived, it deals with both alcohol drinking practices of the time and the underlying political context, such as the rise of fascism and responses to it. Hamilton became an avowed Marxist. During the 1930s he grew increasingly angry with capitalism and felt that the violence and fascism of Europe during the period indicated that capitalism was reaching its end: this encouraged his Marxism and his novel *Impromptu In Moribundia* (1939) was a satirical attack of capitalist culture.

During his later life, Hamilton developed in his writing a

misanthropic authorial voice which became more disillusioned, cynical and bleak as time passed. *The Slaves Of Solitude* (1947), was his only work to deal directly with the Second World War, and he preferred to look back to the pre-war years.

His *Gorse Trilogy* — three novels about a devious sexual predator and conman — are not generally well thought of critically, although Graham Greene said that the first *The West Pier* (1952) was, “the best book written about Brighton” and the second *Mr. Stimpson & Mr. Gorse* (1953), is regarded increasingly as a comic masterpiece. The hostility and negativity of the novels is also attributed to Hamilton’s

disenchantment with the utopianism of Marxism and depression.

In 1955 Hamilton’s last published work, *Unknown Assailant*, a short novel much of which was dictated while Hamilton was drunk.

Hamilton had begun to consume alcohol excessively while still a relatively young man. After a declining career and melancholia, he died in 1962 of cirrhosis of the liver and kidney failure, in Sheringham, Norfolk.

Hamilton was married twice, firstly to Lois Marie Martin in 1930, and a year after divorcing Lois, to Lady Ursula Chetwynd-Talbot in 1954.



Patrick Hamilton

About The Cast



JAMES FREEMAN

Gaslight will mark my 50th Rep production since joining The Rep Players for *Deep Blue Sea* in 1996! Favourite rôles over the years have included Raleigh in Sherriff's *Journey's End* in 1997, Donal in *Days Of Wine & Roses*, Merrick in *The Elephant Man* (Pomerance) and Hannay in *The 39 Steps* (Barlow).

I've also directed Rep Players productions; *Humble Boy* and *My Boy Jack* being personal favourites, as well as directed musical productions for Newcastle Operatic Society, most recently last year with *The Hunchback Of Notre Dame* and *The Wind In The Willows*.



SIAN WEEDON

Sian is a graduate of the Oxford School of Drama, she has worked both on screen and in theatre.

Most recently she won the 2021 Best Female Actor award for her rôle as Margaret in *Live Song* performed at The Nantwich Players and the Adjudicators Award for Best Performance at The All England Drama Finals for her rôle as Anna in Stef Smith's play *Swallow*.

She is relishing the opportunity to play Bella in this fantastic thriller — *Gaslight*.



IAN BIRKIN

I have been performing in local amateur theatre for some 45 years and joined The Stoke Rep over 20 years ago.

I have appeared in a wide variety of genres from Shakespeare (including The Rep Players version of *Much Ado About Nothing* in 2009) to high farce.

Among my favourite plays are the hilarious spoof adaptation of *The 39 Steps* (by Patrick Barlow) in which I played over 20 rôles and also The Rep's production of Martin McDonagh's black comedy *Hangmen* last season in which I played the rôle of Harry Wade.



GINA BRIAN

I have been involved in 'theatrical things' since secondary school — which is a very long time ago! Of course, performing, losing yourself in characterisation is both a challenge and a reward but as I get older the greater reward for me are the friendships I have made both as part of the cast or as a backstage helper.

I have been an active member of the North Staffs Operatic Society since 1981 and that has given me and my whole family much joy. The Rep production I enjoyed being part of is *Waiting In The Wings* by Noël Coward and my favourite as audience is *The 39 Steps*.

If you have time to spare I would urge you to get involved, help is always needed here at The Rep.



KIRSTY BOOTH

Gaslight is my debut with The Stoke Rep Players, having only become a member towards the end of 2022.

I've been trained in both screen and stage acting, but my love for bringing a story to life in front of a live audience is what brought me to theatre.

My favourite play in general is *Things I know To Be True* by Andrew Bovell.

I grew up in Stoke, and some of my greatest memories are coming to watch performances here at The Rep. I believe that there is something special about the escapism, curiosity and joy that being in the theatre audience brings, and I can't wait to be a part of sharing that with *Gaslight's* audience.



MICHAEL FAIR

I am both delighted and excited to be making my debut at The Rep. Not exactly a new boy to local drama, I have over 50 years of acting and directing experience in Chester, the Wirral, Nantwich and now locally since relocating to Stoke-on-Trent a couple of years ago.

Over the years I have been fortunate to play many parts covering all genres of theatre and musical theatre. Stand out moments include Pinocchio, Toad, Mr Bumble, Judas and the wonderful René in *'Allo 'Allo!*

I now enjoy the challenge of character parts — it's an age thing! I've directed a wide range of productions too, but I am most proud of *Diary Of Anne Frank*, which received critical acclaim.



SARAH STOCKDALE

I joined Stoke Rep at the end of 2009 having worked with several theatre groups previously.

My first rôle was in Neil Simon's *Rumors*. Over the years I have gone on to appear in a variety of productions including *'Allo 'Allo!*, *The Merry Wives Of Windsor* and *Indecent Proposal*, my favourite being Patrick Barlow's *The 39 Steps* in which I played all three female characters; enormous fun, but totally exhausting.

I have also directed for The Rep Players on a number of occasions including the ghost story, *Turn Of The Screw* and Noël Coward's *Waiting In The Wings*.



JOIN US

We are always on the lookout for people to join us at The Rep. Actors are, of course, always needed — but there is a warm welcome for aspiring front-of-house representatives, backstage crew and helpers, particularly for props and costumes, but any assistance is always appreciated.

No experience required, we'll show you the ropes, and teach you the deep and dark secrets of the trade. We are a gaslighting-free environment. If you are interested please contact any member of the theatre or email administrator@stokereplayers.co.uk for further information.

Gaslight At The Rep

This is our third production of *Gaslight* here at The Rep. The first was in 1965 and was produced by Ernest Reeves, a very familiar figure of the time.

Thirty years later, we once more ventured into this dark Victorian thriller, under the directorial guidance of Suzanne Davies.

On both these occasions — and also in our latest version — the actors playing Inspector Rough were all leading committee members of the theatre.

In 1965 the rôle was played by Arthur Forester, in 1995 Rough was played by

George Slater. With this production he is played by Ian Birkin.



(Clockwise from left) Ian Birkin, Arthur Forester & George Slater.

From Gaslight To Gaslighting

In November 2022 Merriam-Webster announced that 'gaslighting' was their Word Of The Year — there had been a 1740 percent increase in lookups for gaslighting throughout the year.

The word 'gaslight' was only ever used as a noun in Hamilton's play — literally the lighting in the house produced by gas before electric lighting was readily available. It was only after the event that it was used as a verb, along with its gerund 'gaslighting' — introduced with a whole new meaning.

In its basic form, gaslighting is a type of psychological manipulation; it centres on creating self-doubt by making

someone question their own reality making them think that what they're experiencing isn't real and that no one else will believe them.

In recent years, we have seen the meaning of gaslighting refer also to something simpler and broader — an act or practice of grossly misleading someone, especially for a personal advantage.

In addition to the original domestic scenario — it now appears in many situations — including the work-place and mass-media. Social media in general is a vehicle exploited to gaslight individuals or groups.

25 Years at Leek Road

It seems strange to think that we have been in our current home for 25 years — over one third of the time we were at Beresford Street!

Beresford Street was a wonderful home but, as with all homes, the time came to move on. You could call it fate that lead us to this wonderful, purpose-built theatre. Thirty years ago, last New Year's Eve, we were three days away from signing the contract to buy The Empire Theatre in Longton (a theatre with historic ties to The Rep) when it, and our plans, were destroyed by fire — and our search for a new home was on again.

Ten months later, with the help of the Arts Council, a National Lottery grant, the support of the City Council, funds raised by the membership and the generous sponsorship of numerous

local companies and businesses, plans for our new home at Leek Road were being drawn up by Hulme Upright and Partners.

The first sod was cut the following Spring, at a ceremony attended by Sir Richard Bailey (President), Peter Dutton (Chairman) and other Rep members. The vision slowly but surely was becoming reality.



The Opening Night

Five years later, on November 7 1997, The Rep was proud to open its brand new 250 seat home at Leek Road. A Gala Evening for invited guests was held and the theatre was officially opened by the guest of honour, the Right Honourable Mark Fisher MP, Minister for The Arts.

Our first production in our new home, **Noises Off**, opened two weeks later and was the start of a rapid learning



The First Cut

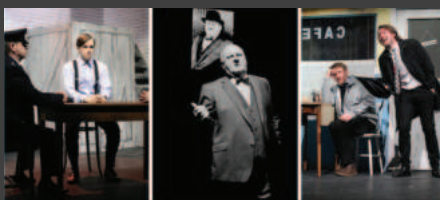


Set Construction

curve. We had always, in the past, built all the sets in situ, with the cast rehearsing on the stage on non-construction evenings in the weeks leading up to production. Suddenly, there were other demands for the stage space — the stage crew had to adapt to working in the workshop and the actors had to find alternative rehearsal space. For **Noises Off** — a massive, trucked set — this was something of a challenge, to say the least!

I doubt, given the time constraints of access to the stage, the later addition of our eight-meter diameter revolving stage would have made life substantially easier. The 'revolve' came about when Maurice Procter, Chairman of Friends Of The Rep,

called our Stage Director, Richard Masters, into their meeting and asked, "what capital project can 'The Friends' provide via fundraising?" Richard's off-the-cuff response was, "a revolve," and when immediately asked for a budget cost he guessed £10,000. The project came in at nearly double that amount, but we are eternally grateful that the project happened. One of our latest uses of the revolve was in our 2022 production of **Hangmen**.



Hangmen 2022

Over 135 productions later, we are continuously developing and improving our working practices and things are finally starting to make sense. Here's to the next 25 years!

25 Years Of Productions

Noises Off | Ring Round The Moon | Just Between Ourselves | A Lady Of Letters | The Browning Version | An Ideal Husband | Murderer | Lost In Yonkers | Winter's Tale | Don't Dress For Dinner | Blithe Spirit | Wind In The Willows | The Cemetery Club | An Enemy Of The People | Whose Life Is It Anyway? | Shadowlands | Habeas Corpus | Dancing At Lughnasa | The Secret Diary Of Adrian Mole Aged Thirteen & Three Quarters | Things We Do For Love | Bouncers | Season's Greetings | Veronica's Room | The Rivals | The (Female) Odd Couple | Hay Fever | Stepping Out | Twelfth Night | Moon Over Buffalo | Communicating Doors | Hobson's Choice | Absurd Person Singular | Dead Guilty | Uncle Vanya | Caught In The Net | Round & Round The Garden | Quartet | The Memory Of Water | The Taming Of The Shrew | Happy As A Sandbag | The Importance Of Being Earnest | Abigail's Party | Corpse! | California Suite | Party Piece | The Lady In The Van | The Murder Of Maria Marten Or The Red Barn | The Beauty Queen Of Leenane | Ghosts | The Hollow | The Killing Of Sister George | Improbable Fiction | Don Carlos | Days Of Wine & Roses | Out Of Order | Separate Tables | Little Voice | Roleplay | Much Ado About Nothing | Death & The Maiden | All In Good Time | The Graduate | Can't Pay? Won't Pay! | See How They Run! | Humble Boy | The Elephant Man | The Glass Menagerie | Lady Windermere's Fan | Rumors | Mort | Once A Catholic | The Merry Wives Of Windsor | Rebecca | Straight & Narrow | Five Blue Haired Ladies Sitting On A Green Park Bench | Wind In The Willows | Fur Coat & No Knickers | Here I Sit All Alone | 'Allo 'Allo! | Dangerous Obsession | Dirty Dusting | Treasure Island | Holmes & The Ripper | 84 Charing Cross Road | The Herbal Bed | Teechers | The Turn Of The Screw | Great Expectations | The 39 Steps | Fawlty Towers | The Accrington Pals | Steel Magnolias | The Haunting | Time Of My Life | Key For Two | My Boy Jack | Blackadder Goes Forth | Comfort & Joy | Waiting In The Wings | Macbeth | The Ladykillers | Snake In The Grass | Silhouette | Entertaining Angels | Arsenic & Old Lace | The House Of Bernarda Alba | Ladies' Day | Breezeblock Park | Lend Me A Tenor | Mrs Warren's Profession | Nell Gwynn | Ben Hur | Rules For Living | Dry Rot | A Bunch Of Amateurs | Ladies In Lavender | When We Are Married | Don't Dress For Dinner | Duets | Funny Money | Spider's Web | Hangmen | Present Laughter | Calendar Girls | Games Afoot | Gaslight

How many did you see?

STOKE Rep Players

Coming next...

TRIVIAL PURSUITS

by Frank Vickery



Tues 13 June ~
Sat 17 June

The Last Of The Haussmans

by Stephen Beresford

Tues 25 Apr ~
Sat 29 Apr

StokeRepPlayers.co.uk