

Taunton Thespians present:



Deathtrap



by
Ira Levin

A thriller to die for ...

**The Brewhouse Theatre, Taunton
March 2020**

Directed by Jane Leakey

Programme £2

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Taunton Thespians present:
Deathtrap by Ira Levin

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Directed by
Jane Leakey

The action takes place in expat Sidney Bruhl's
study in Westport, Connecticut.

Act 1

Scene 1 - Afternoon

Scene 2 - That evening

Scene 3 - Two hours later

Interval - 20 minutes

Act 2

Scene 1 - Two weeks later, morning

Scene 2 - A week later, night

Scene 3 - A week later, afternoon

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the United Kingdom Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 and an actionable offence.

This amateur production of "Deathtrap" is presented
by special arrangement with SAMUEL FRENCH LTD.

Ira Levin 1929 - 2007

You may know more about Ira Levin than you think...

A Kiss Before Dying - Novel, 1953

Levin's first novel. The writer Stephen King described it as "a gritty suspense story told with great élan" whose "real screeching bombshell is neatly tucked away about one hundred pages into the story." It won him the Edgar Award in 1954 and has been adapted for the big screen several times.

"Better to live in doubt than to die in certainty."

Rosemary's Baby - Novel, 1967

Described as one of the most perfectly crafted thrillers ever written. Regarded as a classic, particularly following the 1968 film starring Mia Farrow. Levin was reported as being upset by the interest in satanism which followed this novel, but not enough to send back the royalties.

This Perfect Day - Novel, 1970

Won the Prometheus Award for best science fiction novel in 1992. Its setting of a technocratic dystopia has humans controlled by a single computer named Unicom and kept in a state of cooperation. It is one of two of his novels not made into a movie (the other is *Son of Rosemary*), but its influences can be seen in many modern films such as *Gattaca*, *The Glass Fortress* and *The Matrix*.

The Stepford Wives - Novel, 1975

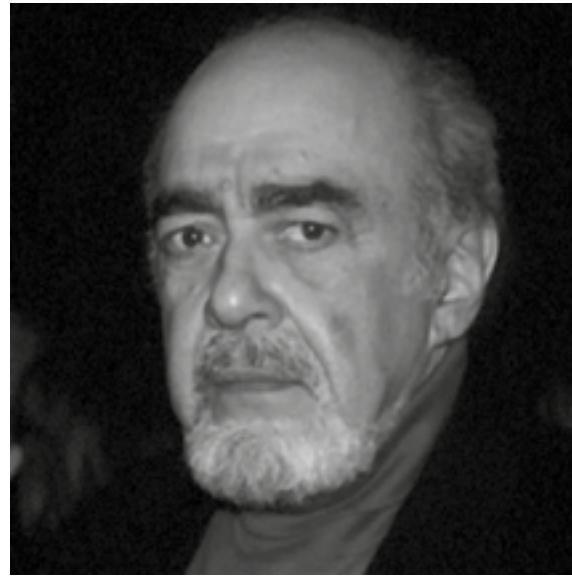
This novel has had many film remakes and is probably his most famous work. Indeed, the phrase "Stepford Wife" meaning a submissive, docile, youthful and beautiful woman who subordinates her life purpose to the desires of her husband and children is part of our vocabulary.

The Boys From Brazil - Novel, 1976

Made into a successful film. Its subject matter of Nazi hunters spoke of obsessions with war crimes and their perpetrators, but the ideas of cloning humans (which seemed far-fetched at the time of publication) has a more chilling resonance in today's technological climate.

Deathtrap - Play, 1978

This successful play holds the record for the longest-running comedy-thriller on Broadway. Marian Seldes, who played Myra Bruhl, appeared in every one of the play's 1,793 performances. *Deathtrap* won Levin his second Edgar Award, for Best Play, after his 1968 award for best novel. It was adapted into a film starring Christopher Reeve and Michael Caine in 1982.



Jane Leakey

From the Director

It is a real privilege to direct *Deathtrap* for the Taunton Thespians. When I was little, my Mum used to take me to see plays performed by the group at the old Corfield Hall in Taunton. Later, when the Thespians moved to the Brewhouse, so did we. I was absolutely smitten, watching the actors work their magic. Thrillers, comedies, tragedies, et al. I was also extremely fortunate to be immersed in a wide range of theatre - ballet, opera, musicals, dance, etc - on a regular basis. I grew up watching some of the greats live: Hinge and Bracket, David Jason, Max Wall, Jimmy Edwards, Dora Bryan, Frankie Howerd, George Melly, Joan Bakewell and many more. It was so exciting, it inspired me to "tread the boards" myself. I was extremely shy back then and it took much bravery to take to the stage. Once I did, I never looked back. It's hard to describe the absolute thrill of performing to those who would rather undertake, say, root canal work without anaesthetic.

I have been performing now for more than forty years. Professionally, too. During this time I also discovered a love of directing. I am passionate when it comes to bringing the printed page alive. My aim is to delight, thrill and entertain audiences. I absolutely love working with actors and getting the best out of them. I strive to push them (gently but firmly) to go beyond their abilities. I am extremely fortunate to be working with a very talented cast and just as fortunate that they are open and willing to my suggestions and direction. I am also grateful for the fact that, when I have Director's Block*, the cast come up with some great solutions.

Equally impressive are the teams who work tirelessly behind the scenes, who don't get the public glory and single red roses thrown at them at the end of the night. Sound, lighting, set, posters, props, producer, etc: they are worth their weight in gold.

When directing, I have two criteria for choice of play: one - a good script. And two - it has to be a challenge. *Deathtrap* certainly meets both my requirements - in spades. I played the part of Helga ten Dorp myself some years ago; it is fascinating to view the play from the director's point of view this time. *Deathtrap* has many technical challenges which will become apparent as the play unfolds.

Oh, the joy of stage fights, "real" weapons and fake blood! At the time of writing, I cannot wait to witness the finished set and see it lit. All the actors are working really hard to bring this thrilling piece of theatre to life.

I do hope that you will have a wonderful time as we share with you this highly exciting, witty and timeless edge-of-your-seat play. My aim, as always, is to direct to a very high standard indeed. And we have all the pieces in place to ensure that *Deathtrap* will be a production that stays in people's hearts and minds long after the final curtain has swept across our beautiful, magnificent set.

*similar to writer's block, without the loneliness.



Jane Leakey

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Useful Script References

ESP

Extra sensory perception. Sometimes referred to as the "sixth sense". ESP refers to the ability to receive information directly with the mind rather than through the other five senses. It's a controversial debate, to this day, as to whether ESP has been proven to exist.

Peter Hurkos (1911-1988)

Allegedly manifested ESP during recovery from a coma after falling off a ladder. He sought clues in the Manson Family Murders and Boston Strangler case. Hurkos became a popular entertainer known for performing psychic feats before live and TV audiences.

The Merv Griffin Show

US talk show that ran from 1962 to 1986.

David Merrick (1911-200)

Prolific Tony Award-winning American theatrical producer, whose successes included *Look Back in Anger*, *Gypsy*, *A Taste of Honey*, *Oliver!* and *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*.

Hal Prince (1928-2019)

American theatrical producer and director associated with many of the best known Broadway musical productions of the 20th century. Including *West Side Story*, *Cabaret*, *Fiddler on the Roof*, *Evita* and *Phantom of the Opera*.

Vassar

Vassar College is a private, liberal arts college in Poughkeepsie, New York. The current average cost per student per year is \$67,740.

Jean Lafitte

Jean was a French pirate in the Gulf of Mexico in the early 19th century.

1978

The Year *Deathtrap* takes place

Events

Jimmy Carter was President of the United States

Evita opened in the West End

Louise Brown, the world's first "test tube baby", was born

Rod Stewart asked *Do Ya Think I'm Sexy?*

Grease was a huge film hit grossing \$396,169,103

Christopher Reeve wowed audiences in the film *Superman*. It grossed \$300 million. (Equivalent to \$1.1 billion today)

Argentina won the Football World Cup

Georgi Markov was murdered in London with an umbrella that carried a poison pellet

Smallpox was eradicated

Garfield, the cartoon cat, made his debut

The Incredible Hulk and Dallas made their TV début

Laserdisc players were launched

Transparent plastic trousers were briefly in vogue

Number One hits in the USA included:

- * *Stayin' Alive* - Bee Gees
- * *Baby Come Back* - Player
- * *Night Fever* - Bee Gees
- * *You're the One that I Want* - Newton-John/Travolta
- * *Three Times a Lady* - Commodores
- * *Grease* - Frankie Vali
- * *MacArthur Park* - Donna Summer
- * *Le Freak* - Chic

1978 Cost of Living (UK)

Average house price: £13,820

Pint of milk: 11p

Loaf of bread: 28p

20 cigarettes: 58p

Pint of beer: 43p

Average annual salary: £3,269

£100 in 1978 is equivalent in purchasing power to about £577.50 in 2020

Rehearsals Are Dangerous Places



The Cast (in order of appearance)

Sidney Bruhl	Alan Coles
Myra Bruhl	Lindsey Cran
Clifford Anderson	maat ward
Helga Ten Dorp	Lee-Ann Drew
Porter Milgrim	Neil Morgan

The Crew

Director	Jane Leakey
Producer	Vin Cunningham
Stage Manager	Lizzie Knighton
DSM	Lorna Evans
ASMs	Claire Knighton, Torie Meredith, Sarah Reilly
Lighting	John Cunningham, Conor Gilbert
Sound Design & Operation	Peter Chidzey
Sound Assistant	Karen Bolton

Set Design	John Cunningham
Set Build	Ray Court, John Cunningham, Mark Dawson, Michael Gilbert, Richard Lathwood
Set painting & décor	Dona Bullion
Costumes	Dona Bullion
Wardrobe Assistant	Nikki Court
Properties	Karen Downes, Ben Jordan
Hair & Make-up	Jane Leakey, Omar Samara
Fight direction	Neil Eddiford
Continuity	Liz Coombes
Poster design	Jane Leakey, Peter McGuire
Programme design	Peter McGuire
Publicity	Rebecca Beard, Rene Kilner
Photography	Kallum Sinclair
FOH Managers	Andy Busby, Jane Edwards
Van driver	Andy Busby

Who are the Cast?

Alan Coles as Sidney Bruhl

Alan's acting career curiously began with an advert in the paper for basses to join Taunton Choral Society. From there he joined Somerset Opera and Taunton Operatic Society and, finding himself on the Brewhouse stage in front of an audience, was bitten by the bug. After his apprenticeship in choruses he went on to play principal roles for many local societies. It was only when he failed to get a part he particularly wanted in Yeovil's *South Pacific* that he turned to straight acting and joined the Thespians. His first play was *Outside Edge* in 2012. This was followed by *Round and Round the Garden*, *Not Now Darling*, *Dial M for Murder*, *Oh What a Lovely War*, *Quartet* and, most recently, *When We Are Married*.



Lindsey Cran as Myra Bruhl

Variety is the spice of life, so they say. Lindsey first joined the Taunton Thespians in 2017 for the Summer Tour *Telling Canterbury Tales*, and was thrilled to receive a Rose Bowl nomination for her role as the Wife of Bath. She was also delighted to play Lily Pepper in *Red Peppers* last year, and was proud that the production was awarded The Hope Cup at the SFD County Drama Festival. Over the years, there isn't much that Lindsey hasn't turned her hand to; whether it's musicals, panto, straight plays or comedy. She is also a member of Blake Drama Club and has performed with the Bridgwater Operatic Society. Lindsey is very much looking forward to playing Myra in this deliciously dark comedy thriller, and hopes that you're ready to expect the unexpected - sleep well!



maat ward as Clifford Anderson

maat has appeared in many productions, and only regrets about half of them. maat first appeared onstage during Aristophanes' *Gerytades* somewhat abruptly and to the surprise of everyone concerned, not least Aristophanes, who promptly burned every copy of the text ... and most recently enjoyed a small but pivotal role as a fast-talking window washer in *I'm Sorry, I Honestly Can't Remember If These Are Your Underpants Or Mine*, a musical farce based on the satirical movie *I Can't Take This Any More* based on the terrifying novel *Please Send Help* based on the erotic short story *There Is No Punchline To This Joke*. Away from the stage, maat's hobbies include general chicanery, making stuff up, not writing autobiographies, and oranges.



Lee-Ann Drew as Helga Ten Dorp

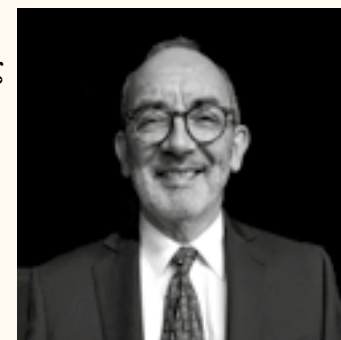
This is Lee-Ann's first appearance on stage with the Taunton Thespians and she is extremely proud to be joining the cast. She has previously performed on stage with the Bradford Players playing various roles including Nurse Jane Tate in *It Runs in the Family* and Nellie the Maid in *Lord Arthur Savile's Crime*.

Lee-Ann also directed and performed in the musical show *I love the 80s* in October last year, singing songs from her favourite decade. She loves all aspects of amateur dramatics which has included being Stage Manager in Agatha Christie's *Black Coffee* and Producer for *Brani Musicale*.



Neil Morgan as Porter Milgrim

Neil's first acting experience was when cast as non-speaking third shepherd in an infant school nativity play when, obviously, by rights he should have been Joseph! Overcoming that setback, he returned to the stage aged thirty, since when he has taken many roles in innumerable plays for various groups, principally in Taunton, Bridgwater, Ilminster and his home village of Stoke St Gregory. He has been absent from the Thespians for several years, though in the past has taken lead roles in *Arsenic and Old Lace* and *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*. More recently he was nominated in the Best Actor category by the Somerset Fellowship of Drama in 2019 for his role in *Dangerous Corner* for Ilminster Entertainments Society.



Jane Leakey as Director - First one ever to get her own biog - and a plug!

Jane performs with her puppets in theatres, schools and people's front rooms with Fat Cat Theatre Company. She also runs workshops in puppetry, drama and special FX makeup. She loves acting and regularly appears on many local stages in Somerset. She adores performing comedy, in particular, as she has excellent comic timing and a natural flair for making people laugh. Jane has also performed stand up comedy and lived to tell the tale. She has acted and directed professionally. Once *Deathtrap* has finished, she is looking forward to a well-earned week of scuba diving and underwater photography in the Red Sea. Upon returning, she will start work on directing *The Flint Street Nativity* for Bradford Players. Jane is very excited to be writing and performing a one-woman show, entitled *Fire*: an inspiring, hopeful story of recovery from childhood trauma. *Fire* premieres at the Red Brick Building in Glastonbury on 14 May, then transfers to the Cockpit Theatre, London, in June and July. For more details please contact Jane: jane@fatcat-theatre.co.uk





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The National Operatic and Dramatic Association (NODA), founded in 1899, is the leading representative body for amateur theatre in the UK and has a membership of approximately 2400 amateur theatre groups and over 2000 individual members staging musicals, operas, plays, concerts and pantomimes in a wide variety of venues from professional theatres to village halls. NODA member societies meet the needs of all ages and all levels of both performers and those involved backstage, front of house or in society administration.

NODA aims:

- To give a shared voice to amateur theatre
- To help societies and individuals achieve the highest standards of best practice and performance.
- To provide leadership and advice to enable amateur theatre to tackle the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century.

Membership of NODA provides theatre groups and individuals with a wide range of benefits including access to NODA's advice service, access to funding agencies, direct access to rights holders and the media, regional and national conferences, workshops and seminars. Members also benefit from the annual NODA residential Summer School.



This production is entered for:

The Rose Bowl Awards



Founded by the families of Walter Hawkins and John Coë, this is now funded through the Quartet Community Foundation, with individual awards sponsored by the Bristol Evening Post. Amateur operatic and dramatic productions throughout former Avon, Gloucester and Somerset are assessed by qualified adjudicators.

The Phoebe Rees Awards

Founded by Phoebe Rees and run by the Somerset Fellowship of Drama, the competition is open to amateur drama societies and groups in Somerset. Plays are adjudicated by members of the Fellowship's committee who also run an annual Original Playwriting Festival and the county's first round of the All England Theatre Festival, and organise drama training.



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Up Soon From Taunton Thespians

July 2020 at stunning outdoor locations across Somerset

Twelfth Night by William Shakespeare

Twelfth Night is a tale of unrequited love – hilarious and heartbreaking. Twins are separated in a shipwreck, and forced to fend for themselves in a strange land. The first twin, Viola, falls in love with Orsino, who dotes on Olivia, who falls for Viola when she is disguised as a boy, calling himself Cesario. Enter Sebastian, who is the spitting image of his twin sister...

2020 sees the twentieth summer outdoor tour by the Thespians. To mark the occasion, we are returning to the first play that we took on tour, back at the start of the millennium.

November 2020 at the Brewhouse Theatre, Taunton



When Did You Last See Your Trousers by John Antrobus & Ray Galton

Written in the true tradition of British farce by John Antrobus and the incredible Ray Galton (who was half of that remarkable writing partnership that gave the world Hancock and, of course, Steptoe & Son). *When Did You Last See Your Trousers?* has everything you might expect. The hilarious action centres on Harold who loses his clothes to a burglar, whilst sleeping with his long suffering bit on the side Penny, in her Knightsbridge flat. Harold's ridiculous attempts to secure some clothes, any clothes in fact, so he can return unnoticed to his wife in Esher requires the help of many, including his old chum Captain Webber. There's the Danish au pair, a colourful punk, a hot and bothered constable, a corrupt police inspector and a cultured neighbour suffering from memory loss. Just some of the characters giving you all the ingredients for a rib-tickling, mad-cap night of outrageous fun!

Wednesday 11th to Saturday 14th November 2020

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Twelfth Night

by William Shakespeare



Our summer tour in stunning outdoor venues across Somerset
Tuesday 7th to Saturday 18th July 2020

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Wed 25th March - at 7:30pm

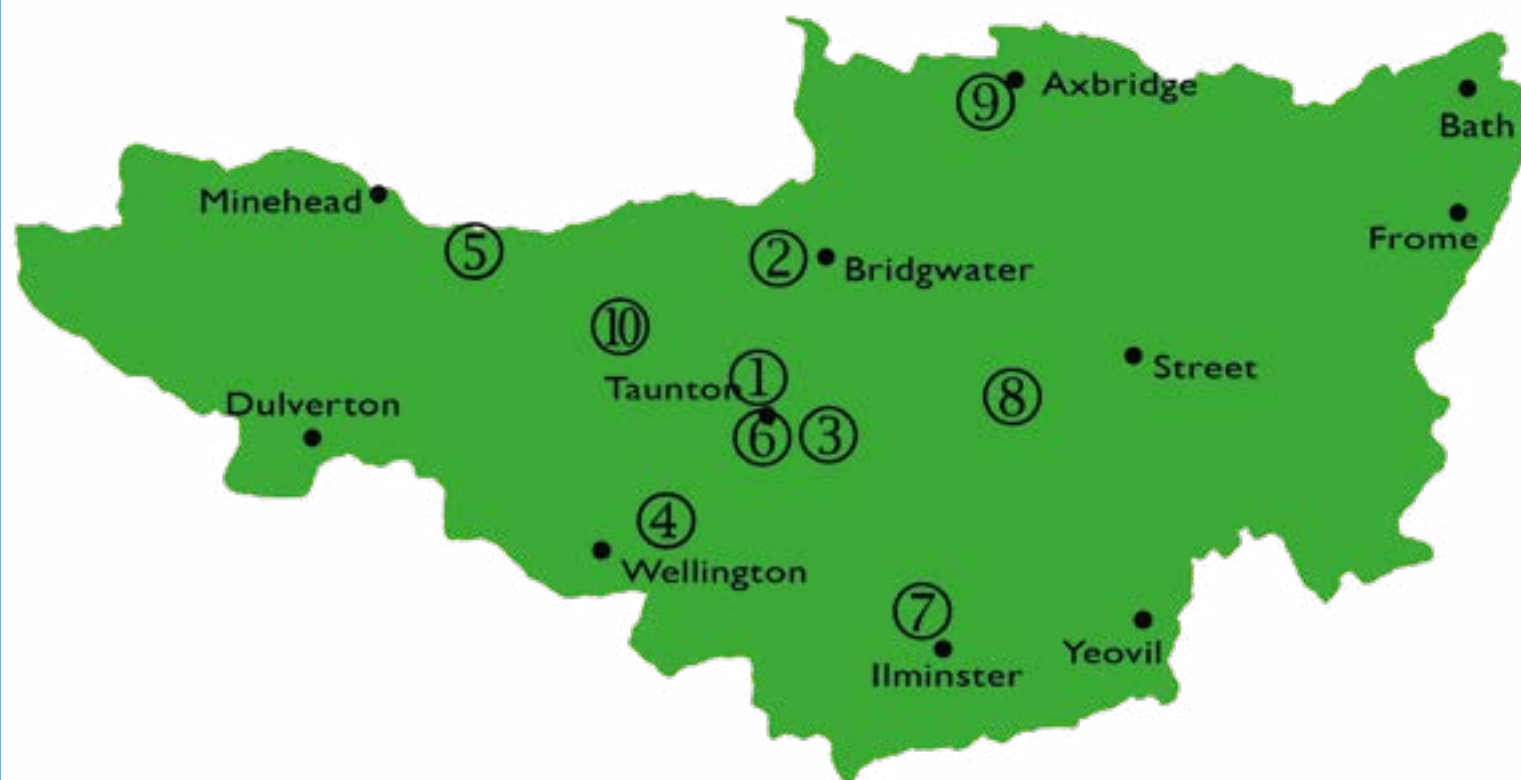
Auditions:
Tue 31st March, Thur 2nd & Wed 8th April (all 7:30 – 9:30pm)



Summer Tour Venues 2020

Taunton Thespians' Shakespeare on tour outdoors

- | | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| ① Tue 7 th July | Milligan, Netherclay, Bishops Hull, Taunton, TA1 5EE |
| ② Wed 8 th July | Blackmore Farm, Cannington, Bridgwater, TA5 2NE |
| ③ Thu 9 th July | Woodlands Castle, Ruishton, Taunton, TA3 5LU |
| ④ Fri 10 th July | Sheppy's Cider, Bradford-on-Tone, Taunton TA4 1ER |
| ⑤ Sat 11 th July | Cleeve Abbey, Washford, Watchet TA23 0PS |
| ⑥ Tue 14 th July | Museum of Somerset, Castle Green, Taunton TA1 4AA |
| ⑦ Wed 15 th July | Dillington House, Ilminster, TA19 9DT |
| ⑧ Thu 16 th July | Muchelney Abbey, Muchelney, Langport, TA10 0DQ |
| ⑨ Fri 17 th July | Compton House Hotel, Axbridge, BS26 2AJ |
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