

# Limelight

DRAMA GROUP  
(THE LEEDS JEWISH DRAMA GROUP)

## SOME FACTS ABOUT US

Limelight Drama Group was founded in 1977 as the dramatic society of the Beth Hamedrash Hagadol Synagogue in Leeds and soon developed into one of the most successful and well-respected drama groups in the city.

Today, Limelight remains essentially a Jewish group, although most of its productions are drawn from the wider repertoire and aimed at the community at large, as befits a member of the Leeds Civic Arts Guild. We put on two plays at The Carriageworks each year, one about February and one about November/December, each one running for three or four nights – Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Saturday. (As a Jewish group, Limelight respects Jewish traditions and religious requirements and so does not perform on Friday evenings; nor do we perform on Saturday evenings between early spring and mid-autumn, for the same reason.)



Our main productions at The Carriageworks have varied from light comedy to serious drama. Our first production there, in February 2006, was Goodrich & Hackett's *The Diary Of Anne Frank*, which played to a total audience of over 1,000, and we followed that later in the same year with J B Priestley's well-loved Yorkshire comedy *When We Are Married*. 2007 saw our first venture into whodunit territory with Francis Durbridge's mystery *Nightcap* and in the autumn a revival of one of our successes of the 1980s – the bittersweet comedy by Bob Larbey, *A Month Of Sundays*. Our most recent main production at the carriageworks was the European premiere of Marvin Chernoff's Brooklyn Jewish comedy – also bittersweet – *Chaim's Love Song*, which was well-received by everyone who saw it, receiving no less than five nominations at the 2008 Wharfedale Festival of Theatre and several awards at the 2008 Leeds Civic Arts Guild Awards Evening.

Earlier presentations, at the old Civic Theatre, included Neil Simon comedies (*Lost in Yonkers*, *The Sunshine Boys* and *The Odd Couple*) and classic English/Irish comedies (*Hobson's Choice*, *Pygmalion*, *The Importance Of Being Earnest*), as well as heavier fare such as Emile Zola's *Thérèse Raquin*, Kate Atkinson's *Abandonment*, Ira Levin's *Veronica's Room*, Arthur Miller's *Broken Glass* and our acclaimed interpretation of Diane Samuels' moving play, *Kindertransport*. Conscious of the large gap in our calendar between February/March and October/November, we introduced for the first time in 1999 a June production focused on our own Jewish Community and staged from Tuesday to Thursday at the Etz Chaim synagogue hall in north Leeds. The success of Ivan Menchell's hilarious comedy, *The Cemetery Club*, encouraged us to see a community production as an annual Limelight event, though since 2001 that plan has been largely put on hold in view of our involvement in the Leeds International Jewish Performing Arts Festival, a major community venture which we have fully supported throughout that period and which since 2007 has made its home in The Carriageworks. We have nevertheless staged a couple of community productions since then, following the building of a new Leeds Jewish community centre in 2005, putting on James Sherman's comedy *Beau Jest* and Edward Belling's *Made In Heaven* which were both great successes. In fact, the success of those two productions, together with *Chaim's Love Song* and our entry in the 2008 Leeds Jewish festival – Neil Simon's *London Suite*, we seem to be establishing a niche for ourselves with New York Jewish comedies.

Limelight's 2000 community presentation, Anthony Melnikoff's *Steinberg's Day of Atonement*, served a dual purpose, for it was also our entry for the 1999/2000 Wharfedale Festival of Theatre, as were *Broken Glass* in 2001, *I Remember Mama* in 2002, *Veronica's Room* in 2003, *Abandonment* in 2004, *The Importance Of Being Earnest* in 2005, *The Diary Of Anne Frank* in 2006, *When We Are Married* in 2007 and *Chaim's Love Song* in 2008, all of which won awards. Theatre festivals have always been a significant feature of Limelight's activity, and we have had our share of success over the years, at both Wharfedale and Harrogate, with a variety of one-act plays.



**With two main productions a year and festivals too, it is a wonder that Limelight finds much time for anything else, but we generally manage to fill the calendar with a variety of play readings, theatre outings, workshops and events of a more social nature. We also support a number of local charities and senior citizen groups with various forms of entertainment, from sketches and readings to murder mystery evenings.**

**The key to Limelight's success is the vibrancy and commitment of its membership, currently numbering around 50. From the hard-working executive to the actors, directors and production teams that put together our main offerings, everyone has a contribution to make to our achievements. Some roles (particularly the more technical ones) inevitably fall to the same people for production after production and we are constantly on the look out for new talent – both on and off the stage. Too many times in recent years we have had to pull back from interesting and challenging plays because the cast list has the wrong age and sex profile for our membership.**

**We welcome new members warmly. Our current specific shortages of talent (to call them vacancies would give the wrong impression) include actors of both sexes between 20 and 40 years old and people with an interest in technical work such as lighting design, sound, costumes and set design and construction.**



**Whether or not you have relevant experience, if you feel you might have something to contribute, do get in touch with the Secretary, Rosemerry Venet, 72 Buckstone Oval, Leeds LS17 5HH (Tel: 0113 225 0651).**