

The Thrill of Love - Directors Notes

I was just 10 years old when Ruth Ellis was hanged, the same age as her son Andre. I remember it vaguely, and caught a glimpse of the "Daily Mirror" front page, but in those days I would not have been allowed to read its contents, so had no real idea of the controversy surrounding her execution.

Ruth Ellis shot dead her lover, David Blakely, and following a trial that lasted less than two days, she was found guilty and sentenced to death. She was hanged on July 13th 1955 at Holloway prison by Albert Pierrepoint, the hangman credited with over two hundred hangings. Of Ruth, he later reported she was "the bravest woman I ever hanged".

There has been continued interest over the years and many books, including one by her sister Muriel Jakubait, and several documentaries made. The reality behind the headlines was hidden by hearsay and speculation.

From the day I read this play by Amanda Whittington, the life story of Ruth Ellis has become almost an obsession. There is no doubt that Ruth Ellis should not have hanged. From April 1955 there were four reprieves, three of which were men. In July, one week before Ruth died Mrs Sarah Lloyd was sentenced to death for the murder of her 86 year old neighbour, with whom she had a long running feud. "She stove in the woman's head with a spade, after pouring a pan of boiling carrots and onions over her head. Her execution date was set for 7th July 1955, but two days before her hanging she was reprieved, and served just seven years of her life sentence". Today there would have been a reprieve for Ruth on the grounds of "diminished responsibility" or "crime of passion", neither of which was in place in the fifties.

This has been an incredible journey, for myself, cast and crew. We started by visiting the 'Magdala Tavern' in Hampstead where Ruth had shot her lover. Lucy Hayton (who plays Ruth) actually worked as a waitress at the Magdala whilst at university in London.

I would like to thank my wonderful, committed cast for all their hard work, and a special "Thank you" to the backstage crew. Please check out the credits, as I have only limited space to mention all of them. They have 'pulled out all the stops' to get this show on the road and have been with me every step of the journey. A special mention to Pete Kendall for his enthusiasm and hard work in this, his first role as stage manager, and Harry Leonard who has assisted me throughout, and was responsible for the website trailer. I hope he has learned as much from me, as I have from him.

"IN THE CONDEMNED CELL THE OVERHEAD BULB WAS EXTINGUISHED FOR THE FIRST TIME IN THREE WEEKS.

IT WOULD NEVER BE LIT AGAIN."

IN DECEMBER 1969 CAPITAL PUNISHMENT WAS PERMANENTLY ABOLISHED IN BRITAIN.

Doreen Belton - Director

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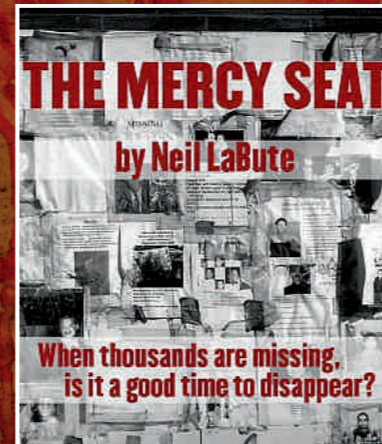
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**CRITERION**
THEATRE

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The Mercy Seat
May 28th - 31st 2014

A play by Neil La Bute, directed by Richard Warren

"...a fascinating, searingly truthful and, yes, at times bleakly funny play, which dissects with steely precision the lies we tell our loved ones, not only at moments of stress but in everyday life."

The world has changed overnight. On September 12, 2001, Ben Harcourt finds himself in the New York downtown apartment of his lover and boss, Abby Prescott. His endlessly ringing mobile phone haunts their conversation as Ben and Abby explore the choices now available to them in an existence different from the one they knew just the day before. Will Ben let his family know he's alive, or will he and Abby take this chance to create a new life for themselves?

BOX OFFICE (Direct)

024 7667 5175

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If you have any comments about your experience at The Criterion Theatre, please email us at comments@criteriontheatre.co.uk

No photography or videoing allowed.
The Criterion is a non-smoking theatre.



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www.jonharrisondesign.co.uk

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THE THRILL OF Love

A gripping drama about
Ruth Ellis, the last woman
to be hanged in Britain.

A play by Amanda Whittington

Programme

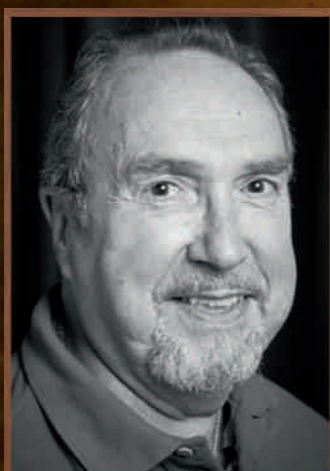
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Lucy Hayton

Character: Ruth Ellis

Lucy was involved in amateur theatre for 10 years before going to university. After completing her degree in Theatre Arts at Goldsmiths she spent several years in London pursuing her career and a Master's in Gender Studies at the LSE. In 2011 she returned to Coventry and continues to work on issues of gender-based violence balanced by a healthy addiction to amateur theatre. Since returning to Coventry she has performed in a number of plays at the Loft and the Criterion including Plough and the Stars, Foxfinder, Anne Boleyn and Gypsy.



John Fenner

Character: Jack Gale

John was last seen on the Criterion stage playing Gaston Lemare in "My Three Angels". Other Criterion roles include Nicely-Nicely Johnson in "Guys and Dolls", Mr Mushnik in "Little Shop of Horrors", Andrew Crocker-Harris in "The Browning Version", Roberto Miranda in "Death and the Maiden" and Magwitch in "Great Expectations". John also appears regularly at the Talisman Theatre, where he was last seen as the PM in "Pardon Me, Prime Minister". He is excited to be involved in this absorbing piece of theatre and with working with such a great cast.



Karen Brooks

Character: Doris Judd

This is Karen's first production at the Criterion Theatre and hopefully not her last! She has worked in the local theatres in the Warwickshire area over the last three years and has wonderful time being part of this amazing production and cast. From the moment she heard about the synopsis of the play she knew she had to be part of it one way or another and feels blest to be starring within it. To see her in any future productions she will be appearing in "Privates on Parade" at the Loft Theatre in Leamington Spa July 2014.

THE THRILL OF Love

A play by Amanda Whittington

There will be a 15 minute interval.
There will be smoking on stage under the Smoke – Free (Exemptions and Vehicles) Regulations 2007.
The production contains lighting effects that resemble flash photography.

Cast	
Ruth Ellis	Lucy Hayton
Jack Gale	John Fenner
Doris Judd	Karen Brooks
Sylvia Shaw	Deb Relton-Elves
Vicki Martin	Nicol Cortese
Director	Doreen Belton
Assistant Director	Harry Leonard
Set Designer	Pete Bagley
Set Builders	Dave Holmes, Simon Sharpe Kev Woods, Lukas Nowacki Terry Rahilly, Mike Tooley
Scene Painters	Judy Talbot, Pam Coleman Doreen Belton
Props	Les Rahilly, Nikki Gabriel Frances Kendall, Steph Othen George Rippon, Alex Martis
Wardrobe	Pam Coleman, Maureen Liggins
Lighting Design	Karl Stafford
Sound Design	Dave Cornish, Clair Henrywood
Prompt	Jonathan Rees
Stage Manager	Pete Kendall



Deb Relton-Elves

Character: Sylvia Shaw

Deb has been a member of the Theatre for more years than she cares to remember. After retiring from her professional dancing career and returning to Coventry she has performed in numerous shows here. Last year she also co-choreographed / co-directed 'Gypsy' and made her solo directing debut with the well-received 'Foxfinder'. Deb is currently Customer Experience Director on the Criterion Theatre Board.



Nicol Cortese

Character: Vicki Martin

Nicol made her debut at the Criterion in 2001 playing her dream part of Juliet in Romeo and Juliet. She then went on to study drama at St. Mary's University Twickenham. After graduating she played Tyra in Channel 4's Sugar Rush and played various characters for Fisher Price Toys as voice over artist. Since returning to the Criterion, Nicol has enjoyed playing the roles of Sarah Brown in "Guys and Dolls", Anne Boleyn in "Anne Boleyn" and young David and Agnes in "David Copperfield". She is now thrilled to be part of "The Thrill of Love".