



ttc

TEDDINGTON THEATRE CLUB PRESENTS AN AMATEUR PRODUCTION
BY ARRANGEMENT WITH NICK HERN BOOKS

The Thrill of Love

By Amanda Whittington

Directed by Susan Conte

Sun 15 Mar – Sat 21 Mar 2015

£1.50



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IMPORTANT INFORMATION

For reasons of safety, glassware must NOT be taken into any part of the auditorium.

Latecomers will be admitted at the first convenient moment provided that no interruption or distraction to the performers might be caused.

All gangways, passageways and stairways must be kept free from obstruction. Persons are not permitted to sit or stand in any gangway.

The taking of photographs and the making of sound and/or visual recordings in the auditorium are not permitted.

An induction loop system is installed in the Main Auditorium to assist those who use hearing aids with the relevant settings.

Wheelchair positions are available in both Stalls and the Balcony. The Box Office Manager will be happy to discuss your requirements.

TTC Ltd, as managers of the Playhouse, reserves the right to refuse admission and to make alterations to the programme and cast without notice.

THE PLAYWRIGHT

Amanda Whittington

Amanda is a popular and successful dramatist whose work includes *Be My Baby* which was an award winning production at TTC, in the studio, a few years ago. Amanda began her career as a journalist and now also writes for television as well as theatre.

The New Vic Theatre in Newcastle-under-Lyme commissioned Amanda in 2012/13 to write this play about Ruth Ellis. As Theresa Heskins, Artistic Director of the New Vic at that time, writes:

"The provocation at the heart of this play seems to me to be one about our society's perception of women and how this affects the justice meted out to them"



WHO WAS RUTH ELLIS?

1926 – July 13th 1955



Katie Barton in rehearsal as Ruth Ellis.

We are unable to show you a real photograph of Ruth Ellis because they are "owned" by The Daily Mirror/ Getty Images. The Daily Mirror paid for her legal defence and in exchange "owns" her images. They can be viewed online however.

Ruth was born in Rhyl, North Wales, the third of six children. Her father, Arthur Hornby (later Neilson), was a cellist who spent much of his time playing on Atlantic cruise liners away from home. Her mother, Berta, was a Belgian refugee but, despite their difficult relationship, Berta eventually looked after Ruth's son Andy. Ruth's older sister, Muriel Jakubait, in her book *Ruth Ellis: My Sister's Secret Life* claims that Arthur sexually abused both of the girls when they were young which gave both of them the impetus to leave home early.

The family moved to Basingstoke when Ruth was six but she left school at 14 to work as a waitress. In 1941, at the height of the Blitz, the family moved to London. In 1944, the 17-year old Ruth became pregnant by a Canadian soldier, Clare Andrea McCullum, after whom she named their son "Andy". She was only to find out that he was already married when her mother approached his commanding officer and he returned to Canada.

Ruth became a nightclub hostess through nude modelling work at "The Camera Club", which paid significantly more than the various factory and clerical jobs she had held since leaving school. Morrie Conley, the owner of the Court Club in Duke Street and something of an underworld fixer, made sure that his hostesses, especially Ruth, all slept with him. Early in 1950 Ruth became pregnant by one of her regular customers, which was illegally terminated.

On 8 November 1950, Ruth married 41-year-old George Ellis, a divorced dentist with two sons, who had been a customer at the Court Club. He was alcoholic, jealous and possessive and could be extremely violent towards her. The marriage deteriorated rapidly because he was convinced she was having an affair. Ruth left him several times but always returned. A pattern of jealousy, drinking and return was beginning to develop in Ruth. In 1951, while four months pregnant, Ruth appeared, uncredited, as a beauty queen in the Rank film *Lady Godiva Rides Again*. She subsequently gave birth to a daughter Georgina, but George & Ruth separated shortly afterwards.

In 1953, Ruth Ellis became the manageress of The Little Nightclub in Knightsbridge. At this time, she was lavished with expensive gifts by admirers, and had a number of celebrity friends. She met David Blakely, three years her junior, through racing driver Mike Hawthorn. Blakely was a well-mannered former public school boy, but also a hard-drinking racer. Within weeks he moved into her flat above the club, despite being engaged to another woman. Ruth became pregnant for the fourth time but aborted the child.

Ruth was also pursued by Desmond Cussen. He had been an RAF pilot, flying Lancaster bombers during the Second World War, but was not much of a ladies man. He met Ruth at The Court Club and became obsessed with her. When Ruth was sacked as manager of the Little Club because of David's bad behaviour and drunken jealous rages towards her customers, Ruth and her young son Andy moved in with Cussen. The relationship with Blakely continued, however, and became increasingly violent and embittered. Ruth lost another child in January 1955, after a miscarriage induced by a punch to the stomach in an argument with Blakely.

On Easter Sunday, 10 April 1955, Ruth took a taxi from Cussen's home to 29 Tanza Road, Hampstead, the home of Anthony and Carole Findlater where she suspected Blakely might be. As she arrived, Blakely's car drove off, so she walked to the Magdala public house where she found Blakely's car parked outside. At about 9:30 pm David Blakely and his friend Clive Gunnell emerged. Blakely passed Ruth waiting on the pavement when she stepped out of Henshaws Doorway, a newsagent next to the Magdala. He ignored her when she said "*Hello David*" then shouted "*David!*" As Blakely searched for the keys to his car, Ruth took a .38 calibre Smith & Wesson Victory model revolver from her handbag and fired a total of six shots at Blakely. One bullet was fired less than half an inch from Blakely's back and left powder burns on his skin.

Ruth was seen to stand mesmerised over the body and witnesses reported hearing several distinct clicks as she tried to fire the revolver's sixth and final shot, before finally firing into the ground. This bullet ricocheted off the road and injured the wife of a local banker, in the base of her thumb, as she walked to the Magdala.

No solicitor was present during Ruth's interrogation or during the taking of her statement at Hampstead police station, although three police officers were present that night at 11:30pm. Ruth was still without legal representation when she made her first appearance at the magistrates' court next day and was held on remand.

She was twice examined by principal Medical Officer, M. R. Penry Williams, who failed to find evidence of mental illness. While on remand in Holloway, she was examined by psychiatrist Dr D. Whittaker for the defence, and by Dr A. Dalzell on behalf of the Home Office. Neither found evidence of insanity.

On 20 June 1955, Ruth appeared in the Number One Court at the Old Bailey, London, before Mr Justice Havers. She was dressed in a black suit and white silk blouse with freshly bleached and coiffured blonde hair. Her lawyers expressed concern about her appearance and dyed blonde hair, but she did not alter it to appear less striking.

"It's obvious that when I shot him I intended to kill him."

— Ruth Ellis, in the witness box at the Old Bailey, 20 June 1955.

This was her answer to the only question put to her by Christmas Humphreys, counsel for the Prosecution. Her reply to Humphreys's question in open court guaranteed a guilty verdict and therefore the mandatory death sentence which followed. The jury took 20 minutes to convict her.

Having been told that she would not be reprieved, Ruth dismissed her solicitor John Bickford (who had been chosen by Desmond Cussen) and asked to see the solicitor Victor Mishcon. When Mishcon asked for a lead which might help save her, Bickford said "Ask her where she got the gun!". Ruth then revealed that she had been drinking with Desmond Cussen for most of the weekend and that Cussen had given her the gun and some shooting practice. Cussen had also driven her to the murder scene. Following the two hour interview in the condemned cell, Mishcon went to the Home Office seeking a reprieve for Ruth – but to no avail.

"We cannot have people shooting off firearms in the street! As long as I was Home Secretary I was determined to ensure that people could use the streets without fear of a bullet."

In a final letter to David Blakely's parents from her prison cell, Ruth wrote:

"I have always loved your son, and I shall die still loving him."

Public reaction to Ruth's death sentence caused widespread controversy, evoking exceptionally intense press and public interest to the point that it was discussed by the Cabinet. On the day of her execution the Daily Mirror wrote:

"The one thing that brings stature and dignity to mankind and raises us above the beasts will have been denied her – pity and the hope of ultimate redemption."

A petition to the Home Office asking for clemency, and signed by 50,000 people, was rejected. It was openly questioned whether capital punishment - of a female or of anyone - had a place in the 20th century and Raymond Chandler called it:

"the medieval savagery of the law"

The terrible nature of State Execution helped strengthen public support for the abolition of the death penalty, which was suspended in 1965. Within two years of Ruth's death, a further defence against the crime of murder was introduced – that of diminished responsibility:

"while the balance of the mind was disturbed"

CAST

BILLIE HOLIDAY

JAZZ SINGER

Camille Robertson

RUTH ELLIS

NIGHTCLUB HOSTESS

Katie Barton

JACK GALE

DETECTIVE INSPECTOR

Jeremy Gill

SYLVIA SHAW

NIGHTCLUB MANAGERESS

Michèle Warren

VICKIE MARTIN

MODEL & ACTRESS

Fleur de Henrie

DORIS JUDD

CHARWOMAN

Madeleine Gordon



CREW

DIRECTOR/PRODUCER	Susan Conte
LIGHTING DESIGN	Gary Stevenson
WARDROBE	Margaret Wrightson
PRODUCTION ASSOCIATE & PROPS	Penny Heighes
SOUND DESIGN & OPERATOR	John Pyle
MUSIC RECORDINGS	Harry Jacobs
LIGHTING OPERATORS	Gary Stevenson
	Nick Osorio
SET DESIGNERS	Alan Corbett
	Penny Heighes
	Susan Conte
SET BUILD	Alan Corbett
STAGE MANAGER	Miriam Fairbairn
DEPUTY STAGE MANAGER	Meg Hird
ASM/REHEARSAL PROMPT	Jo Harry
CHOREOGRAPHER	Amanda Harker
MUSIC CONSULTANT	Fergus O'Kelly
PIANO	Adam Hope
PHOTOGRAPHER	Marc Pearce
PROMOTIONAL VIDEO TRAILER	Martin Baker
	Nial Brown
TTC ARTISTIC LINK	Graham Titcombe
TTC TECHNICAL LINK	Dave Rumens

SETTINGS

ACT ONE

The play opens very late in the evening at Hampstead Police Station, Easter Sunday, 10th April 1955.

There follows a series of flash backs to Ruth's working life: first to The Court Club in Mayfair and then to the Little Club, in Knightsbridge, where she was the manageress and lived upstairs.

INTERVAL

ACT TWO

The second half resumes with Inspector Gale reading Ruth's letter to David's mother followed by a flashback to January 1955, outside Golders Green crematorium.

There is a further flashback to Ruth's bedsit after she was sacked from The Little.

Thereafter Ruth is in her prison cell in Holloway prison and also in the visitor's room of Holloway.

Thanks to Shepperton Wig Company, to Marc Pearce Photography, Peter McKerrow for music to */// be Seeing You* and to all those at TTC & other talents who have helped enormously with this production.

The production would especially like to thank Alan Corbett's helpers:

Set build - Jack Tidball & Terry Stevens

Set Painting - Megan Hird & Trine Taraldsvik

Stage Turnaround into the round - Terry Stevens, Gary Stevenson, Nick Eliot, Dave Rumens, Jack Tidball, Megan Hird, Trine Taraldsvik & Colin Swinton

This production deals with sexual themes and parental guidance is advised.

THE BAR IS OPEN AFTER THE SHOW

The foyer bar remains open after the show and is well used by cast, crew and members. We extend a very warm welcome to everyone who has been to see the performance - it is an ideal opportunity to meet the actors you have seen performing, find out more about our theatre and our club or simply relax over a drink.



Please
Turn off Your
Mobile Phones

PLEASE DON'T SPOIL THE PERFORMANCE

We respectfully request all members of the audience to make sure that mobile phones are switched off during the performance.

Thank you.

CAST BIOGRAPHIES



Camille Robertson started singing when at school and she has since included studio work in America and singing with a twelve piece cover band - *The Inhibitions*. Now with *Soul Rites*, a soul cover band which performs in and around London and Surrey, Camille also sings with her own pianist at private and corporate parties in wonderful venues such as The Mayfair Casino, The Ivy and Cafe de Paris. Camille stages performances at venues from The OSO in Barnes to The Bluecoat in Liverpool and also finds time to be a guest vocalist with The Elmbridge Big Band. Her most recent theatre work was in *Club Vertigo* at Questors Theatre.



Katie Barton's theatre credits at TTC include Rebecca Foley in *Pravda*, Diana in *All's Well That Ends Well* and Olga in *The Old Country*, for which she was nominated for a Swan Award. She studied drama and scriptwriting at Bristol University and trained as an actor at The Poor School. Katie believes that Ruth's story will ignite as much as discussion amongst the audience as it has for the cast and crew.



CAST BIOGRAPHIES



Jeremy Gill has been acting since 2006 for TTC, St Mary's, OHADS and anyone else who will have him. Lately he has cornered the market in taking over parts at short notice for RSS. He played a policeman once before - for about 3 minutes for St Mary's. Actually his father was a copper in the Met in the 1960's and it was even

more of a cesspool than than it was in the 'fifties. No matter how hair-raising some of the stories one might hear about what it was really like back then, rest assured it was even worse.



Michèle Warren has been acting most of her life, but currently takes part in about three productions a year with different companies. Her first appearance for TTC was in 2012 when she played Annie in *Calendar Girls* and she is thoroughly enjoying being back for her part as Sylvia. Michèle has been directed by Susan in *Top Girls*, *A*

Midsummer Night's Dream, *Mrs Warren's Profession* (when she played Kitty Warren) and in *The Seven Year Twitch*, which was the first time Michèle had performed in the round.



CAST BIOGRAPHIES



Fleur de Henrie attended The Arts Educational Pupils School, where the acting bug first hit her. Fleur is a qualified make-up artist and by day the Group Private Dining and Events Manager for a prestigious restaurant company. Roles to date are many, and with several different companies (including *Seven Year Twitch* directed by Susan), but Fleur is very excited to be making her TTC debut as the glamorous Vickie Martin.



Madeleine Gordon's first role with TTC is playing Doris in this production, and she is thrilled to be cast in this challenging and thought-provoking play. Madeleine trained at Goldsmith's University London in Theatre Arts and has appeared in many productions from Shakespeare to Pinter as well as touring to the Edinburgh Fringe Festival. Her most recent role at the Playhouse was Lady Windermere in October 2014, with SMDG.



CREW BIOGRAPHIES

SUSAN CONTE Director

After being mercilessly ribbed by her children every time she writes a Director's biography, Acting since the age of 10.... etc., Susan has promised to keep this short. She loves working at TTC and having a tip top cast and crew bringing this fascinating play to life. (It is quite a contrast to *Pravda* in 2013 which had a cast of 35 with each playing several roles). This play explores passion, class, gender and politics. There remains the suspicion that Ruth was hanged on moral grounds because she was a 'hostess' and appeared 'common' and therefore undeserving of mercy.

GARY STEVENSON Lighting Designer

Gary has been a member of TTC since 1997 and over the years has lit many shows including *One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest*, *Cabaret*, *Alphabetical Order*, *Stags and Hens*, *Be my Baby*, *Albert Make Us Laugh*, *A Christmas Carol* and *Peter Pan*. More recently he designed the lighting for *Brimstone and Treacle*, *The Linden Tree*, *My Boy Jack* and *The Snow Queen*. For this production, Gary is particularly looking forward to trying out lots of special effects which he hopes will all work and will add to the final version which you are watching tonight!

JOHN PYLE Sound Designer

John loves making authentic, realistic and timely sound effects for plays and shows and hopes you all enjoy this production. John is also a member of several groups where he sings and acts. More than 50 years on stage - at 13 with 2 solo roles at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, he's played most tenor/baritone leads in the G&S repertoire – most recently as Captain Corcoran - *HMS Pinafore*. Other singing roles - the Baker (*Baker's Wife*), Mushnik (*Little Shop of Horrors*), Oliver Warbucks (*Annie*), Mr Beaver (*Lion Witch/Wardrobe*), Dr Neville Craven (*Secret Garden*) and Scrooge (*Christmas Carol*) - all RUT Swan Award-winning shows.

CREW BIOGRAPHIES

PENNY HEIGHERS Props & Production Associate

Penny looks after all the props we keep at TTC and sources new ones for shows as they come along. She has also made a key input into the design of this show. Penny has sourced props and set dressings for Rudyard Kipling's *My Boy Jack*, *Country Wife*, *Pravda* and *Boy on a Swing*. Now, immersed in the 50's for *The Thrill of Love*, she is having a ball and has ended up with a 50's decanter and glasses in her home for herself. There are many challenges when staging a period production but the item she is most proud of in this show are the 1950's vintage condoms that Ruth finds in David's wallet! (Note from Ed: Scene when Ruth rips open David's jacket.)

MARGARET WRIGHTSON Wardrobe

Margaret has created the wardrobe on all of Susan's previous shows at TTC as well as a long list of other director's shows. She is wonderfully creative, professional and resourceful.

ALAN CORBETT Set design & build

Alan is one of those extremely creative people who say "yes" when you ask them to build you a set in the round - which involves changing many seats in the auditorium before even starting on the set build. Alan has worked on many, many productions for TTC and also built and designed *Pravda* for Susan in 2013.

MIRIAM FAIRBAIN Stage Manager

Miriam has worked backstage on many productions including TTC and Richmond Shakespeare Society. Last year Miriam stage managed the RSS summer open air Shakespeare performances so there is very little that can throw her! Susan is delighted to have her fine young mind stage manage *The Thrill of Love* with great assistance from Meg Hird and Jo Harry.

Teddington Theatre Club Ltd

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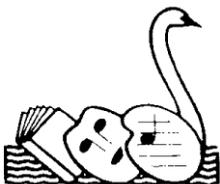
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Teddington Theatre Club acknowledges with grateful thanks the practical and financial support given by local residents, businesses and community groups.



Teddington Theatre Club is affiliated to the Little Theatre Guild of Great Britain and to **artsrichmond**.

This production is entered for the **artsrichmond** Swan Awards for Drama and Musicals.

Coming Soon

at Hampton Hill Playhouse

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Call: 0845 838 7529 (10am - 8pm)

For up-to-date information on TTC and the Playhouse check our website

www.teddingtontheatreclub.org.uk

Teddington Theatre Club is a Club Theatre open to members and their guests. It is easy to join as an audience member, or as a full performing and technical member.

Each month, details of forthcoming productions are mailed to each member together with Theatre, our club magazine and newsletter.

All are encouraged to help with the Front of House, Bar and Marketing activities of the Club and Playhouse. To find out more please visit our website www.teddingtontheatreclub.org.uk, call our Membership Secretary on 020 8287 2663 or complete one of the forms you will find in the Foyer.