

Leading Ladies

by

Ken Ludwig



Study Guide Compiled by K. Georgia Geverding

stc
sudbury **theatre** centre

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

American playwright and theatre director Ken Ludwig was born in 1950 in York, Pennsylvania. As a young man, he attended Haverford College, then Harvard Law School and Trinity College at Cambridge University. He won a Tony Award for his first Broadway play, ***Lend Me a Tenor*** (1989) and a second Tony for ***Crazy For You*** (1992) which also won a Drama Desk, Outer Critics Circle, LA Drama Critics Circle, the Helen Hayes and Laurence Olivier Awards as best musical.

Mr. Ludwig also wrote ***Moon Over Buffalo*** (1995), the book for the ***Adventures of Tom Sawyer*** (2001) and a new adaptation of the classic Ben Hecht – Charles MacArthur play, ***Twentieth Century*** (2004), starring Alec Baldwin and Anne Heche. In 2003, his ***Shakespeare in Hollywood*** won the Helen Hayes Award for best play of the year. ***Leading Ladies*** premiered at the Cleveland Playhouse in 2004. Ken has just finished a new comedy titled ***A Fox on the Fairway***, a play about "golf and sex". As Ken says, "*I love golf. I'm horrible at it and only get to play about five times a year. I have no comment about sex.*" This latest play is a six character comedy in the style of ***Lend Me a Tenor***, and written as a tribute to the great English farces of the 30's and 40's that Ludwig clearly loves. One critic wrote of its first reading at the Signature Theatre in Arlington that the play provided a "*riotously fun evening ... a terrific way to launch the play – [a play] soon to be launched into the world.*"

Ken Ludwig has been crowned "*Broadway's reigning comic writer*" by the Cleveland Plain Dealer and described as "*the purveyor of light comedy to Middle America*". He has been recognized as a master of contemporary farce. His work has been performed in over 25 countries, with translations into at least 16 languages. A practicing lawyer as well as a renowned playwright, Ken has lectured in drama at many American universities.

Ken can be reached through the '***Ask Ken a Question***' link on his blog @ <http://www.kenludwig.com/blog/>.



ABOUT THE PLAY

A Synopsis -

In this hilarious comedy, two English actors are down on their luck ... so down on their luck, in fact, that they end up performing **Scenes From Shakespeare** on the Moose Lodge Circuit in Pennsylvania's Amish Country. Leo Clark and his friend and partner Jack Gable (Clark Gable!) have been on tour with their show, playing to increasingly disinterested audiences and earning increasingly meagre revenues, when unexpected circumstances inspire a way for them to use their acting skills to put a million dollars into their non-existent bank accounts. Having discounted the option of trying to inveigle themselves into a Hollywood version of **Julius Caesar**, they hit upon a better idea when they see a newspaper headline which announces that a dying woman is searching for two long lost relatives, Max and Steve, whom she has not seen since they left for England many years earlier. Should these two turn up before their millionaire aunt, Florence Snider dies, they will share a three million dollar legacy with her niece, Meg. As Leo asserts, all he and Jack have to do is impersonate the two missing relatives and "'wait for [Florence] to kick the bucket' and their futures will be secure!

But complications ensue when Audrey, the curvaceous roller-skating waitress at the Tastee Bite, informs them that Max is in the theatre (fortuitous coincidence) but Steve, the younger one, has been deaf and dumb since birth. Moreover, Max turns out to be a short form for Maxine and Steve for Stephanie! Ever up to an acting challenge, our two players decide that, just as in Shakespeare's day, when men played all the female roles, each of them can don a dress and use his thespian skills to make himself a fortune. But just as in Shakespeare's comedies, the gender-bending confusions multiply, romance blossoms, and laughs increase as confusion runs amok before the ultimately happy ending where, in the tradition of comedy, *'all's well that ends well'*.



REVIEWS OF **LEADING LADIES**

- *Ken Ludwig's script is fairly groaning with giggles ... **Leading Ladies** is about as much fun as you would expect, and then a little more.*
Venue Magazine
- *Ludwig's newest comedy is so funny, it will make sophisticated and reasonable men and women of the 21st century cackle till their faces hurt.*
The Houston Press
- ***Leading Ladies** is consistently funny; indeed, increasingly hilarious as it progresses.*
The Houston Chronicle
- *... a 'laugh-a-second farce ...'*
The San Diego Union Tribune
- *Ken Ludwig has hit it out of the park, or theatre rather, again.*
- *In the third of his trilogy of broad comedies, **Leading Ladies**, again actors are the main butt of the jokes; however, this time in the tradition of **Some Like It Hot** or **Tootsie**, characters disguise themselves as women in order to inherit millions of dollars. Men in drag is nothing new to theatre, yet Ludwig makes the humour and the high-jinks funny and fresh.*
Wade Bradford, About.com Guide To Plays, April 26/09
- *Quick changes off stage and hilarious entrances on stage as Leo/Maxine and Jack/ Stephanie dash back and forth in their various personas...*
said of a John Wood directed performance at Tyler Civic Theatre Centre, 2009
- *Look for **Leading Ladies** to become a staple of summer stock.*

Fun Fact:

'Leading Lady' is an informal term for the actress who plays a secondary lead or supporting role, usually a love interest, to the leading actor in a film or play.
[Wikipedia].

ABOUT THIS STC PRODUCTION

the actors – and their alter egos

- **Laura Caswell** as **Meg Snider** – a girl in her early 30's, vivacious, warm, and gifted with a great sense of humour, and about to be married to a man substantially older than herself. Meg knows that there is a big world beyond York, Pennsylvania, but she hasn't seen much of it. She harbours a world of dreams. They keep her alive though she doesn't know it.
- **Michael Rawley** as **Duncan**, Meg's intended, but a man bound by his clerical collar, a good man but set in his ways, resistant to change, a little fussy and sometimes scatterbrained, and cheap – except when it comes to finding funds for his charitable foundation.
- **William Vickers** as **Doc Myers**, Chief Moose, a crusty likeable curmudgeon, a country doctor who takes no guff from anyone. Charged with the care of the millionaire aunt, his medical skills (or lack of them) make for many laughs.
- **Jeff Miller** as **Leo Clark**, English actor and schemer extraordinaire, a man in his early 40's who loves acting, loves his Shakespeare, writes his own good reviews, and laments the fact that he and his acting partner are "*still at rock bottom*". Leo has spent three years at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art and dreams of something better. Against all odds, he is an incurable optimist and a hilarious **Maxine**.
- **Mark McGrinder** as **Jack Gable**, a man who questions Leo's mad ideas but goes along with them, with unexpected positive results. Though he claims that he is "*not a very good actor*", his performance as **Stephanie** totally disproves that!
- **Ashley Magwood** as **Audrey**, the young woman whose attempts to broaden her vocabulary are really symbolic of her attempts to broaden her world, and whose revelations inspire the plotting of Leo and Jack.
- **Mark Agostinucci** who, as **Butch**, an aspiring but not very talented young actor who describes himself in self-deprecatory terms as looking like "*a broom with shoes on*", who tends to rush his lines, and admits to stage fright, and so provides Leo an opportunity to remind the audience of the requirements of acting. Butch is in love with Audrey.
- **Linda Goranson** who plays **Florence Snider**, the millionaire at the centre of Jack and Leo's get-rich-quick scheme and whose multiple near death experiences add to the humour of the plot and the audience's anticipation of its ending.

the creative team

- **David Savoy** is the Artistic Director of STC and director of the play.

Formerly the Artistic Director of Showboat Theatre in Port Colburne, this is his first full season in Sudbury, and he is excited to be presenting ***Leading Ladies*** as this year's opening production.

- **Josephine Ho** is STC's stage manager for ***Leading Ladies***, coming to us with seven years of experience in stage management. She is ably assisted by **Stephanie Woolger**, apprentice stage manager.
- **Doug Robinson** returns to Sudbury after a 38 year absence to create the impressive set for ***Leading Ladies***, and meet the challenge of creating a flexible set allowing multiple scene changes in a fast-paced production.
- **Travis Hatt** returns for another STC production as the lighting designer for ***Leading Ladies***. He last worked on STC's 2008 – 2009 finale of ***Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street***.
- **Joanne Kelemen** is the costume designer whose vision has been put together with the help of seamstresses **Sheila Proulx** and **Leslie Mahar**. This is her fifth STC show and proof that dreams deferred can be achieved.

Looking at the Design of ***Leading Ladies***

The Music

The play is set in 1952, a simpler and more optimistic time. The musical hits of the era reflected that relative innocence: The big hits that year were the upbeat "*Singing in the Rain*" and "*I Saw Mommy Kissing Santa Claus*". In this production, listen for other music of that era, including songs by Percy Faith, Leroy Anderson, and other 50's stars.

The Set Design

The play opens, according to the stage directions, in the handsome, spacious living room of a beautiful, well-appointed house in York, Pennsylvania, a quiet town set amid rolling hills in what is familiarly known as Amish country. Accordingly, set designer Doug Robinson has created on the stage a grand house, featuring a sweeping circular staircase with a generous second story landing, reminiscent of a balcony on a Shakespearean thrust stage. Tall French doors on both sides of the great room allow exits and entrances. The stairs themselves provide another playing area, a particular challenge to male actors posing as women and wearing unaccustomed long gowns and shoes with heels.

This gender-bending is magnified by the fact that the main decorative element in the room is a number of portraits of women, so that women are seen in triplicate on stage: the women who gaze out at us from the portraits; the female actors who appear as their designated characters on stage; and the men who feign their womanhood in their roles as Maxine and Stephanie. The room itself is a kind of uniform backdrop painted in a neutral tan, better to showcase the colourful costumes. There is not a lot of furniture: a couch, a chair, some varied end tables, deliberately limited, in part to accommodate the sometimes frenetic movement of the actors on the stage, whose many entrances and exits in various identities, made quickly and through varied doors, make of the furniture a potential barrier to movement. A pair of tall windows is visible at the rear of the stage.

As scenes move from the great room, drops and curtains will cleverly alter the space. The train on which Leo and Jack travel from town to town will be suggested by a drop, as will the set for their scenes from Shakespeare, that drop suitably tattered and well worn, suggestive of the wear and tear imposed on the sets of any travelling troupe of actors. The phone scene in act 2 will take place either at the front corners of the playing area or right down in the house, a decision to be made in the process of rehearsal. [Note how it is done in performance and have your students suggest the effectiveness of the director's choice.] Butch's fight with Audrey will occur right down in front of the stage – a suggestion of the action literally spilling out.

The Costumes

Leading Ladies presents some unique costuming challenges. Not only does the play require the costume designer to dress men as women but she must also design costumes appropriate to the Shakespearean plays they perform, as well as the mid twentieth century in which the play is set. Moreover, the farcical nature of the play means many quick changes, and much fast movement. The costumes must allow that. Jack and Leo, in their guises as Stephanie and Maxine must also shift from male attire to female attire – sometimes at lightning speed – a situation which requires both ingenuity and a lot of Velcro! The two men must walk in women's shoes, sometimes with heels, another challenge for the actors who are already concentrating on the shift between the male and the female voices that they use – not to mention the British accents they adopt. In an effort to make this as natural as possible, rehearsals from the very beginning will utilize robes with Velcro closures to facilitate the actors' familiarity and ease with the quick changes they must master. Mark, as Stephanie, will have five dresses to get in and out of, and Jeff as Maxine will have three; clearly, the facility with which they manage all these changes will attest to their genuine comic and acting skills! The members of the Moose Lodge will be distinctive in fez and horns while the colour and variety of all the costuming will be deliberately highlighted against the contrast of the relatively neutral colours of the set.

Notes From the Director – David Savoy

Most of Ken Ludwig's work exists with little reference to the world outside it; yet it is instructive to remember what was going on in the world in 1952.

- the Korean War (1950 -1953) was at its mid-point
- 2 out of 3 houses in the United States had a telephone
- 1 out of 3 had a black and white television
- the average age that women married was 20
- a new home could be bought for \$950.00
- an apartment could be rented for \$80.00 a month
- the average salary was just over \$3000.00 a year
- gasoline cost 20 cents a gallon
- the classic toy, Mister Potato Head, was introduced
- the first Kentucky Fried Chicken franchise opened
- '**Pal Joey**' was a hit on Broadway
- Queen Elizabeth ascended the British throne on the death of her father, though her coronation would not take place until 1953
- the first polio vaccine was distributed
- the first H-bomb was tested
- the first bar code appeared on a product
- General Eisenhower was elected president and the political shift in the country veered towards the Republican party
- and, a bit of trivia for confirmed theatre lovers – the play **The Mousetrap** opened in London, England, where it is still playing in an uninterrupted run of 57 years and counting!

Ludwig clearly writes about the world he would like to live in – rather than the one in which he actually exists. His plays reflect his passions: his own love of theatre, ignited when he was six years old and taken to his first New York play; his love of opera, and of actors and their craft, his love of humour, particularly farce. As someone once defined it:

*"... comedy is unusual people in real situations;
farce is real people in unusual situations."*

In farce, credible people fall unwittingly into a world that is askew ... until the people that fall into that world become a bit askew themselves.

Ludwig explains himself this way:

"The way my producers tend to say it is my shows have a lot of heart. I write what I care about. I know that right now it is very hip to be edgy, very hip to be mean-spirited. We live in difficult times. I don't write about those things. They're not part of my world. I write plays I would want to see, write about worlds I love and would want to live in. Sometimes that's in fashion and sometimes it's not, but you can't worry about that. [You have to] write what's important to you."

"Leading Ladies", he adds, "draws heavily from the comedic legacy [I have] studied and enjoyed all [my] life. I love this play and I'm delighted it's being done more and more all over the world. It's very much in the tradition of **"Lend Me a Tenor"** and **"Moon Over Buffalo"** - a tradition that began with Shakespeare's **'Twelfth Night'**. "

"Nothing can duplicate the experience of being in a live theatre with live actors, sitting in an audience and enjoying the performance together. It's a tribal rite, a community experience."

Such a philosophy dovetails with STC's 2009-2010 theme of **'theatre within reach'** making **Leading Ladies** a perfect choice for the season opener.

Nor is it surprising that Ludwig's plays are full of very re-affirming positive people; however, beneath the comedy lurk some serious ideas for an audience to reflect upon. Nearly everyone in this play is seeking something better for his or her life, trying to grab at something, achieve some measure of success. Underneath the laughter is the clear demonstration of the lengths to which people will go to achieve their dreams, whether great or humble. Though Leo's scheme to get his million results in hilarity, it rests upon his genuine acting skill and his expressed desire to reach the apex of his art. Along the way, he will grab at his chance for love, another dream he has before deferred.

Indeed, what we see in the play is a whole group of people who are desperately trying to achieve something – very genuine longing expressed light-heartedly in farce.

(Consider the idea that *'farce is tragedy played at 1000 rpm!'*)

Every character in this play seeks something:

- the actors desperate for their millions – but even more desperate for an audience appreciative of their talents;
- a minister eager for the share that will be his by marriage;
- the millionaire herself, longing to be reunited with the nieces she has not seen since their adolescence, a longing made more poignant by the seeming threat of her own imminent death;
- Meg, seemingly destined to marry a man whose parsimonious nature seems to thwart her spontaneity and minimize her dreams;
- Audrey, whose amusing exercises in expanding her vocabulary are inspired by a serious wish to go to college and in the meantime, make every opportunity of her brief stint as a roller-skating waitress;
- a father who gives the advice NOT to marry for love;
- a young man inept at acting and at love who wishes for success in both.

These are characters to whom we can relate, through whom we see reflected our own long-forgotten dreams – and the youthful optimism which made them all seem possible. By the end of the play, we are rooting for these people – as ridiculous as they have sometimes seemed throughout the hours we have spent with them. We grow to care about them and exult in their eventual happy endings.

The Technical Challenges of the Play

The light and frothy comedy of ***Leading Ladies*** disguises some real technical challenges posed in its successful production. In addition to the particular challenges presented the costumer and set designer, let alone the actors who must master both language and movement, there are other specific technically tricky spots that must be overcome.

- this play includes a staged sword fight, which requires the expertise of a fight captain; moreover, the fight must take place on a very narrow strip of stage;
- the physical demands on the actors necessitated by the action are such that actors are required to sign an 'extraordinary risk' clause in their contracts - serious business for a comic play;
- there are choreography requirements, including the climactic tango, both a visual and aural treat, but also a necessary 'stall' to provide time for the actors to change from their Shakespearean garb into their regular evening clothes.
The tango scene may be manipulated by any given director to achieve a number of purposes in the play. Watch for the particular gimmicks that this production uses to make the most of the comic possibilities of this scene;
- this play has a very unique curtain call which in effect summarizes, in a three minute and twenty second time frame, the entire play – in itself a demanding technical element. (Note: there have been no changes to the curtain call or script since 2007, when the curtain call was re-written, incorporating Ken Ludwig's ideas with Brad Carroll's and Adrian Balbontin's)

Ken Ludwig describes the curtain call this way:

“Essentially, it’s a speeded-up version of the play to another wild piece of music (Leroy Anderson’s ‘Fiddle Faddle’), but it tells the story of the play backwards. And the clever thing is that this makes sense since the last line of the play is “And the play begins!”

- and, always, the constant challenge is the need to invest the play with as much comic energy as possible.

Leading Ladies* and *Twelfth Night

As a dramatist brought to a love of writing by, among other influences, his own early exposure to Shakespeare on stage, it is not surprising to see the echo of Shakespeare in Ken Ludwig's work. As Meg says in scene 5, explaining her enduring love of theatre, "*My happiest memory in the world is when my father took me to Philadelphia to see my first Shakespeare. It was *Twelfth Night*, my favorite.*" ***Leading Ladies*** is particularly connected to Shakespeare's ***Twelfth Night***, but reflects also many of the general tenets of Elizabethan comedy.

Some Key Ideas About Elizabethan Comedy:

In his extensive series of lectures on the growth and development of Shakespeare's comic plays, H.B Charlton suggests that comedy rouses and appeals to those emotions which best express themselves most simply in laughter, emotions which in most of us are most readily excited by the casual, multiple and inevitable accidents of life. He goes on to suggest that comedy is cathartic in that way, just as tragedy is in arousing our sense of pity and fear.

Shakespeare's comedy is poetic, sentimental and romantic. Love lies at its center. The comedies concern tales of "*wooers and their wooing*" and reflect the new emergence of the heroine, giving us heroines who have the gift of inspiring and returning affection and have the good will of all who know them. Characters are drawn to love as a way to lift themselves to a richer life. When love enters, the world enlarges, and the men and women who inhabit that world become finer and richer representatives of human nature.

The characters in Shakespeare's comedies, like those in Ludwig's ***Leading Ladies***, do not invite scorn; rather they inspire us to be happy with them, not merely laugh at them. Shakespeare's comedy speculates imaginatively on ways, not of preserving a good already reached, but of enlarging and extending the very possibilities of good. His heroes are voyagers in pursuit of a happiness not yet attained, where life may be fuller, sensations more exquisite, and joys more widespread.

In the ripest of Shakespeare's comedies, the comic play is seeking its own artistic way to illustrate the '*moral art*' of securing happiness by translating the stubbornness of fortune into a quiet and sweet existence. Characters such as ***Twelfth Night***'s Malvolio (as perhaps ***Leading Ladies***' joyless Duncan) have lost the art of life, planning only for their material gain. In Shakespeare's comedy, living well lies in the setting up of harmonious and beneficent relationships with human beings – an active membership in the society of man. Characters seek what they want for themselves; but securing it, they give joy to others. It is clear that love is the one way to supreme happiness.

But beyond such 'lessons' as comedy may provide is this:

"... above all, comedy is a thing of joy, all for our delight."

Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*:

The ideals of Elizabethan comedy briefly indicated in the preceding summary are realized most fully in Shakespeare's crowning comic achievement, *Twelfth Night*, a play universally judged by critics as "*a supreme comic triumph*". It is a play which is technically the best example of Elizabethan romantic comedy, one which most fully realizes comedy in its perfect form – expressing Shakespeare's vision of the reach of human happiness in a world of men and women.

As romantic comedy, its first scene is devoted to the idea of love, beginning with the famous line: "*If music be the food of love, play on ...*". Indeed, music is an essential component of fully realized comedy. Man is drawn to it, responding to its beauty (just as Meg has responded to the beautiful rhythms in the language of Shakespeare which she describes as "*rolling over her in wave after wave*").

But, like all good theatre, *Twelfth Night* is more than 'just' a comedy. If it is true that "*life, as most men come to know it, is a frayed and tattered thing of unexpressed desires and disappointed hopes, rarely free of tumult*", in this comedy, unlike in life, it would seem that confusion leads to calm, and all conflicts are resolved. Thus, by happy if implausible coincidence, virtue is rewarded, folly exposed, and understanding transformed into knowledge. The same might be said of Ken Ludwig's *Leading Ladies*.

The title of *Twelfth Night* refers to the time of its first performance, January 6th, the 12th night after Christmas. In the play, we find ourselves in the mythical Illyria by the shores of the Mediterranean, where a shipwreck separates twin children, a girl and a boy named Viola and Sebastian, whose presence in the play, unknown to each other, leads to much confusion. The main plot is complicated and comically compressed, and centers on the mistaken identity of the brother–sister twins, and their romantic pursuits of Olivia and Orsino. Typical of Shakespeare's mistaken identity comedies, in this one too, a forlorn lady, disguised as a page, serves the man she loves in the courtship of another woman, only to find her rival falling in love with her disguised self! The lovers' ultimate triumph is delayed, not by the customary barriers of parental disapproval, politics, or class, but by their own deceits and self-deceptions. The humour thus depends on the stock devices of comedy: disguise, mistaken identity, gender reversal, and coincidence – devices Ludwig also uses to hilarious effect to drive the plot of *Leading Ladies*.

In *Twelfth Night*, we see how men and women act – and why. The sub-plots provide variety and laughs, especially that involving the character of Malvolio, who though Olivia's steward, dreams of becoming her husband, as a means of improving his fortunes by becoming lord of her house. Also providing comic relief are Sir Toy Belch and the hapless Sir Andrew Aguecheek, who will duel an unrecognized Viola in the play.

Viola is a charmer - warm, sensible, light and virtuous. Her character has depth and her effect on Orsino is a pleasing one. He is transformed into a sincere and understanding lover.

The comic characters magnify the laughter: Malvolio by his impossible aspirations and his yellow-stockinged humiliation; Sir Andrew Aguecheek by his incompetence; and Sir Toby Belch and Feste - the clowns - by the clown's traditional role in Shakespeare.

Twelfth Night, written more than four centuries ago, is still topical because it concerns a basic human problem as it records and comments on a mode of human action that that all men everywhere exhibit; that is, our native inclination to self-deception and our resulting difficulty in achieving self-awareness. Is it possible, Shakespeare's play makes us wonder, to know the truth about ourselves?

Leading Ladies and the Art of Acting

As did Shakespeare in many of his plays, Ken Ludwig incorporates into the dialogue and action many bits of commentary alluding to both the art of acting and the attitudes, beliefs and misconceptions that surround the theatre and its practitioners.

In the very first scene, while Meg waxes eloquent about her love of theatre, Duncan interjects:

"Meg. Theatre can be wonderful of course. At times. When it's something like the York County Bell-Ringers Annual Easter Pageant. Or the Messiah when they bring real sheep on stage. Bu there's something rather ... troubling about professional theatre. The people in it are so ... theatrical."

This narrow attitude to things outside his sphere of experience and understanding is a prelude to the rejection of Jack and Leo's attempt to present Shakespeare to the members of the Moose Lodge, a rejection which leaves the actors bemoaning the general lack of a theatre culture in America.

Reminded by Jack that that he went to drama school to meet women, Leo concedes, *"I did, but then I got interested."* And later, at the end of scene 3, he reminds Jack of the good old days when they still had passion and confidence. *"We said we could do anything. And we believed it! You played Richard the Third with that big hump on your back, and you hobbled around the stage like some deranged homunculus. You played Romeo and bounded gracefully on to Juliet's balcony. You brought the house down."*

Later, Meg suggests that no professional actor would play a scene with her because she's not *"a real actress"*. Still later, she echoes this idea to Leo, humiliating herself when she says to him: *"I am so thrilled about being in a play with you ... and if you want to back out of it, I understand. I mean, you're an actor. A real actor. You have a body ... I mean your body is trained. It's an instrument. A treasure."*

Near the end of act 2, scene 1, Duncan augments his distrust of Jack and Leo, reminding Meg, *"They are actors. They lie for a living! That's their profession."* And Leo's direction of the rehearsal for the performance of scenes from ***Twelfth Night*** is full of advice on acting, culminating in the tip that there are two rules for every actor: *"Remember your lines and don't bump into the furniture."*

Suggestions for Classroom Study and Discussion – Junior and Intermediate Level

1. In your drama class, discuss the validity and effectiveness of the directions that Leo and others provide in the rehearsal for ***Twelfth Night***, and, using material that you are studying, demonstrate the importance of each to your classmates.

For example -

- the suggestion that Doc Myers, because he is playing the roles of both Sir Toby Belch and the sea captain, “*might want to create a different physical presence for each one.*”
 - Leo’s advice to Butch to “*Don’t rush your lines so much*” and to “*relax*”.
 - Audrey’s assertion that “*playing somebody of the opposite sex is ... nuts*” but one way to address the challenge is to “*imitate*” another actor. As she states - “*I do this great Marlon Brando imitation.*”
2. Before you attend the play, research the following people and things that the play references. Explain each to your classmates.
 - Lucille Ball
 - the play, “Charlie’s Aunt”
 - the painting, “The Scream”
 - Doctor Crippen
 - Leroy Anderson
 3. Discuss how classic Shakespearean gambits are utilized in ***Leading Ladies***; for example –
 - the idea that Meg and Leo “*will be hiding behind [a] screen, watching everything*”
 - the mix up in the delivery of the letter meant for Duncan
 - the resolution of confused identities to insure the ‘happy ending’ of the play
 - the desire for ‘revenge’
 - the use of humour of language, especially in reference to Audrey’s character.
 4. Define “*slapstick comedy*” and debate whether ***Leading Ladies*** qualifies.
 5. With the help of your teacher’s synopsis of Shakespeare’s play, match up as many characters in ***Leading Ladies*** as you can to their counterparts in ***Twelfth Night***, and defend your matches as specifically as you can.

Suggestions for Classroom Study and Discussion – Senior Level

1. Early in the play, Meg, secretly an aspiring actor, says of the actors she once saw on tour, "*Oh, they were so wonderful! And to hear that language just ... rolling over you in wave after wave.*"

Find and study one of the famous passages from Shakespeare that Jack and Leo give us only a taste of – recite it for your classmates with a brief analysis of the beauty of the writer's imagery and language.

Suggested speeches:

- "*Once more into the breach ...*" from Henry V

- "*Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow ...*" from MacBeth

- "*To be or not to be ...*" from Hamlet

and/or any particularly lyrical speech from the last Shakespearean play you have studied, or an excerpt from an author you are currently reading, or a song writer of similar gifts [Leonard Cohen, k.d. lang, Rufus Wainwright, etc.]

2. Many of Shakespeare's **comic conventions** are borrowed and used to great effect in this play. Write an essay in which you compare the use of such conventions as disguise, mistaken identity, men playing women, love lost and found, and the idea of the 'happy ending' where all confusions are resolved, in Ken Ludwig's *Leading Ladies* and Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*.
3. Watching his audience leave the performance at the Moose Lodge, Leo cries out in frustration, "*What's the matter with you people?! Haven't you ever heard of culture?! Huh?! Or civilization?!?*" and not long after, discussing the idea that he and Jack might easily find work in a filmed version of *Julius Caesar*, he adds, "*I mean, how many Shakespearean actors do they have in America? Six?*"

In small group format, debate the validity of Leo's implied argument that 'culture' and 'civility' are indeed dying. Support your point of view with clear and specific references to current events, literature, film, videos, etc.

4. In act 1, scene 3, while Leo is still consumed by the idea of the two of them 'making it' as actors, Jack makes this personal declaration:

"Do you know what I want? I mean really want? Neighbours.

A house. People who care if I open the front door in the morning."

In a personal piece of writing, express as candidly and thoughtfully as you can, what you 'really want' in your future, and what you are doing – or could do – to facilitate the fruition of those dreams. Share your writing with a partner.

5. Ken Ludwig has been quoted in this guide as stating that “*we live in difficult times, times in which it is hip to be edgy, hip to be mean-spirited.*” Using popular culture and your own experience of the world as your reference, present an argument supporting or refuting this assessment by the playwright.
6. View a classic gender-bending film in class – for example, “***Some Like It Hot***” with Marilyn Monroe, Tony Curtis and Jack Lemmon, or the more recent “***Tootsie***” with Dustin Hoffman in the title role, and point out the similarities between play and film.
 [Note: In a senior class you might choose to show a film in which the gender confusion has an impact more tragic than comic; for example, 'M. Butterfly' which also takes place in the world of actors and opera.]
7. Work in small groups to write and present a farcical scene drawn from the daily concerns of adolescents everywhere!
8. Research a negative review of a performance of ***Leading Ladies***, such as that written by Peter Marks in the Washington Post, September 30, 2005, a review which reads in part:

“Like one of those flea market purveys of mock antiques, the playwright Ken Ludwig possesses an uncanny ability to make new things seem old. It is an odd sort of theatrical specialty he practices, one that capitalizes on an audience's appetite for what it already knows.

The laughs in Ludwig's popular Broadway comedies...almost always count on nostalgia, and an appreciation of the hoarier tricks of the trade, flimsy stock characters, transparent coincidences and slap-stick complications you see coming from miles away. That his plays are usually set a half-century or so ago – and in snoozy precincts of places such as Ohio and Upstate New York – means we're headed back not only to more innocent times but also to the timeless comforts of untroubled Middle America.

*What he traffics in, then, are not so much instant classics as something even rarer – instant revivals – and their impact can be both consoling for an audience and hell on a reviewer. The latest case in point is ***Leading Ladies***, an undemanding, knee-jerk comedy making its regional debut at Ford's Theatre. As staged, the production exhibits the mechanical efficiency of a well-staffed hotel – it's eager to please – but the show presupposes so little sophistication on the part of the audience that it turns the yucks into something cheaper than cheap. Even for old hat, this is old.”*

Compare this scathing review to the glowing excerpts cited earlier in this guide, and from your own perspective as an audience member watching this performance, write a thoughtful review of this STC production.

And finally – meet the new Artistic Director of the Sudbury Theatre Centre, David Savoy



David comes to us originally from Vancouver, was schooled in Edmonton, and like Ken Ludwig, was himself initially drawn to the theatre as a very young boy thrilled by his first exposure to live theatre. He has worked as an actor all across Canada, in the early part of his career working as a part of a touring troupe of actors. David was part of thirteen such tours, in the process visiting many provinces, and, on one memorable occasion, driving from Toronto to the Alberta border. Indeed, another of those tours brought him to Sudbury and points north, including Moosonee and Moose Factory in a play called "***The Dreamburger Dilemma***". Such tours sometimes involved flying into a remote venue in small twelve seater airplanes, or traveling ice roads to a makeshift theatre. This was, as David put it, '*theatre as education*'.

Preceding his current appointment at STC, David was Artistic Director of the Showboat Theatre in Port Colborne, and just recently fulfilled a goal of his own when he returned to school at the University of British Columbia, where he earned his Master of Fine Arts in Directing. He was inspired by personal reasons to get his Masters and considered his study time a kind of professional sabbatical in which he was able to tackle challenging material, adapt his own script, and be invited, along with other representatives from all over Europe, to take part in The International Festival of Theatre Schools, held in Brno in the Czech Republic.

Coming to Sudbury, David was impressed with the physical plant of STC, and pleased to find such a well equipped and professional plant and organization. In his first year of an initial three year contract, David faced an immediate challenge – putting the 2009 - 2010 season together in the space of two weeks! Quick consideration of a list of favourite plays with great audience appeal resulted in the season: plays bound together by a unifying theme - '**theatre within reach**' – plays that are good but also accessible to a general audience. David's goals are to share the joy and the magic of something that he loves with the Sudbury audiences, and to forge a personal connection in the theatre, in the schools, and in his new community. We welcome him warmly to his new home.

Note: teachers of English and of art will be pleased to learn more about Heather Brown whose work will be featured in the STC lobby from September 8th - October 31st. Please see next page for this artist's biography.

Heather Brown – STC Lobby Artist

Artist Heather Brown will be displaying a new collection of her nature-inspired oil paintings and sketches in the STC lobby until October 21. She last exhibited her wildlife and nature images at STC in November of 2006. We are pleased to have her back.

As a retired elementary school teacher, Heather sought peace of mind in her artistic endeavors. A woman of multiple talents, a music lover since childhood, Heather studied piano, mellophone, French horn, recorder, clarinet, and cello. She has volunteered at the Canadian Opera School, Has taught music, has played with the Kampana Handbell group and has been a valued member of many choirs. Heather's extensive musical training eventually led her to become both a composer and an arranger of music.

Her focus on music, Heather was not aware until retirement that within her was a visual artist, longing for expression. She began to nurture this new passion by participating in art workshops with various artists, including, among others, Sue Lampinen, Monica Swan, and Cheryl Batistelli. Only recently, Heather has discovered her talent in yet another art form – photography.

Active in the local art community, Heather is a member of the Rayside-Balfour Whitewater Paint & Palette Club, and both the Sudbury and Onaping Art Clubs. She has shown her work at various venues throughout the city, including the Sudbury Studio Tour (2008), the Cavalcade of Colours Competition (2007), the Sudbury Studio Tour (2003) and the Azilda Art Show (2003).

The mediums in which Heather likes to work have expanded to include oils, watercolours, pastels, pencil and charcoal. She is currently exhibiting several of her prints at Berkshire/Manulife Securities and Duplicators Printing and Copy Centre in Sudbury.

Heather's STC exhibit can be viewed in our lobby any day until October 21st during office hours, as well as during show evenings and weekends.

Note:

Please visit the STC box office to inquire about purchasing any of the work featured in the STC lobby.

“Art is a lie which makes us realize the truth.” - Pablo Picasso