

Keeley Plate 2022

The Keeley Plate Committee are very happy to be awarding the salver this year especially as it has now been 3 years since it was last presented.

Since the 2019 AGM the award has been plagued with – well, plague. The 2019/20 season was cut in half and the AGM was held over Zoom, so we decided to amalgamate that season with the one that followed. However, there were no youth plays in 2020/21 so tonight's award will cover everything since it was last awarded until now. This is not unprecedented, as there have been a couple of years in the past when it was not awarded at all. A lot can happen in three years. We had hoped that our 'young' 2019 winner, Simon Perry, could be here to present the award with us, but he's now busy at *university*, so it's just me I'm afraid.

So, what have Sue Wheeler, Michael Rahman and I been meeting up to discuss over the past three years? There's quite a list:

Blue Stockings, Anne of Green Gables, Treasure Island, On Golden Pond, Goodnight Mister Tom, The Last of the Haussmans and Our Day Out.

We didn't include **The Nether** because the youth theatre member involved was a previous Keeley Plate winner.

Blue Stockings was such a surprising play. Tara Baker and Sofia Nicodemo gave memorable performances. Emily Foster was polished and mature, while Edie Nelson's clear speaking voice and good projection were much appreciated by the audiences.

Olivia Thynne as **Anne of Green Gables** was a strong presence on stage, anchoring many aspects of the play on a firm foundation. How we loved to hear Charlie McCarthy calling her 'Carrots' provoking her to explode!

Then nearly two years went by and **Treasure Island** made up for lost time. Amar Hammond-Reid really got into his character. Sam Gower had real stage presence. Charlie McCarthy was well cast as a character in stark contrast with everyone else due to his long isolation; and of course, being deprived of cheese. Ella Yeloff had good diction, and Ronan O'Leary was always right where he should be, holding the whole thing together.

When we thought back to **Goodnight Mister Tom** we saw further development of Ella Yeloff's great delivery, so lively and characterful. Young Sam Green was a real find as the vulnerable William Beech. We felt his character grow throughout the play and he was perfect in that role, while Jack Randall was a boisterous contrast, having lots of fun on the Courtyard stage.

There were so many highlights in **Our Day Out** but we just wanted to mention Louis Higham's convincing swagger, and how Charlie McCarthy showed that he'd put a lot of thought into his two characters.

We've mentioned Ronan O'Leary in **Treasure Island**, Sam Green in **Goodnight Mister Tom** and Olivia Thynne in **Anne of Green Gables**, but wanted to draw particular attention to how effectively they held each show together.

We also want to mention Oliver Horle and Sam Norris who've both had busy seasons, but were particularly notable as the lone youths in the adult shows **On Golden Pond** and **The Last of the Hausmans**.

Since 1963 on seven separate occasions the award has been presented to two or more recipients. This year the committee felt it was appropriate to do that again because the award in 2022 covers more than the usual number of plays and more than one season; and also three years represents a sizable chunk of a youth member's career.

Warm congratulations to everyone I have already mentioned; but we have chosen just two winners.

I am delighted therefore to announce the two actors who particularly stood out to us and are therefore awarded the Keeley Plate for the most promising performance, are:

Ella Yeloff & Charlie McCarthy