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## Fort Players will be first to tread boards at revamped Gaiety

**Stephen Houston**

A much-loved amateur dramatics company have been given a special honour... they'll be the first to tread the new boards at Ayr Gaiety.

Ayr Fort Players will be on stage before anyone else to celebrate the re-opening of the grand old theatre.

It is an honour not lost on the Players, kicked out of the long-since demolished Civic Theatre.

They are celebrating their 70th year by returning to the Gaiety stage with classic black comedy "The Ladykillers."

The show will open on Thursday September 15, five days after the official relaunch which sees a £2.4million re-fit including asbestos removal.

Workmen have been on site since February and have transformed the building, while keeping the 1902 B-listed architecture.

Theatre bosses are giving customers a free preview on Saturday September 10, noon till 2pm.

The same day, a street parade will herald the

official launch. Fort Player Jean Hillhouse, who plays Louisa Wilberforce in *The Ladykillers*, said: "We are delighted to be first on stage and hopefully we can get a sell-out."

"Let's face it, Ayr is in dire desperation for some immediate surgery and they say laughter is the best medicine."

"You can support your local theatre and have a knicker-wettingly raucous laugh."

"At last we will have our own theatre back and what better a launch than Ayr's ancient and oldest amateur drama group."

Performances of *The Ladykillers* are on Thursday-Saturday September 17, 7.30pm with a 2pm Saturday matinee. Tickets from £8 to £16.

The cast are Aidan McDowall as Constable Macdonald, Jean Hillhouse as Louisa Wilberforce, Niven Rennie as Professor Marcus, Callum Reid as Harry Robinson, Jack Beresford as One Round, Grant F Kidd as Louis Harvey and the ladies are Anne Roberts and Sheila Dunn.

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