



AMATEUR PLAYERS OF SHERBORNE

Newsletter

DECEMBER
1996



Dear Member,

A rose by any other name would smell as sweet.....as the sweet smell of success! I hope Messrs Shakespeare and Lehman will forgive me for this link, but such are the thoughts that come to mind when looking back on *Trelawny of the "Wells"*. So here we are again, some of us feeling a little flat after yet another successful production, with only memories and a few photographs left after weeks of effort. However, once again we are entitled to feel pleased with ourselves. Our audiences appear to have thoroughly enjoyed themselves and financially we have again come out on top; some 380 tickets were sold and we have made a (provisional) profit of £450-£500. Another bonus was the number of people involved. A large cast and crew involved 41 members on or behind the stage, plus the 15 stalwart members who helped front of house. I have received more than one comment to the effect that not many groups



Some scenes from Trelawny of the "Wells".

Above: Mr and Mrs Telfer (David Smith and Fizz Lewis).

Above right: Rose Trelawny (Holly Burbage) and Arthur Gower (Andrew Helson).

Right: Sir William Gower (Vivian Vale) and Miss Trafalgar Gower (Joy Saunders).

Below right: Avonia Bunn (Stephanie Green) and Tom Wrench (David Bowen).

Below left: Avonia Bunn, Ferdinand Gadd (Mark Lambert), Augustus Colpoys (Stuart McCreadie) and Imogen Parrott (Kathy Messinger).

Above left: O'Dwyer (Colin Mayes), Imogen Parrott and Tom Wrench.

Photos by Jennie Harvey-Hull.

could put on a show of this size, which made me feel rather proud to belong to one that can! Incidentally, seven members of SNADS came to see the Saturday performance and I have been asked to pass on their congratulations to all concerned.

Trelawny of the "Wells" was also, of course, a success theatrically speaking. To begin with it was great fun to do, which always helps. **Jennie Harvey-Hull**, with the wealth of experience she brings to *The Players*, made an outstanding director. She clearly knew exactly what she wanted and her instructions were very easy to follow. At the same time we hardly noticed her coaxing the assorted and disparate characters out of each and every one of us. Under Jennie's direction rehearsals were businesslike but relaxed and by the end we had become a very happy team. Thank you Jennie, it was a lot of fun.

Without exception, everyone in the cast performed their best, so it seems a little invidious to single out anyone in particular. Even so, there are two performers whom I would like to mention. For **Holly Burbage** this was her very first non-musical production (we won't count "Ever of thee I'm fondly dreaming", even though she did sing it very nicely) and so all credit to her for a lovely performance as Rose Trelawny. In her we have a really excellent young actress who, I'm happy to report, is keen to remain with us. **David Bowen** joined the players a couple of years ago, largely to give one of his young daughters something to do. However, he has discovered in himself a liking for the stage and, having developed a delightfully natural acting style of his own, his performance as Tom Wrench had great charm.

With four different settings, the play was a particularly difficult one from a technical point of view. However, **Jim Schofield** came up trumps with his complex and ingenious set and the speed with which he and the rest of the backstage team managed to change the scenes was quite amazing. Thanks to all of you, we couldn't have done it without you.

STOP PRESS

Jakki won't be gardening in January. This, of course is rivetting news in itself, but the real point is that she intends taking time to sort out the remaining wardrobe accessories. She would like some volunteers, please, to help her, two at a time, on the occasional afternoon. If you can spare a little of your time, please contact Jakki (01935-850708).

Two pink towels, used for doing make-up, went missing after *Trelawny of the "Wells"*. If anyone has them or knows where they are, please tell Jakki.

I'm told that there is another cheque due to come after wardrobe sales, so we have made even more than I thought!

THE DIRECTORS

This month's contribution comes from Stuart McCreadie. Stuart joined The Players 5 years ago, since when he has performed a number of roles, notably Morris Townsend in The Heiress, Mark Driscoll in Dangerous Obsession, Captain Lombard in And Then There Were None, and Augustus Colpoys in Trelawny of the "Wells". As yet he has not directed a production for The Players, but he will be directing Lunch Hour, one of the three plays chosen for next year's spring production.

As an actor first and foremost I never really considered direction until someone suggested I directed a play for Gillingham Arts Workshop some fourteen years ago. After a lean period of neither acting nor directing, I found myself completing an RSA drama and theatre arts course, which required me to direct. From that point on I considered myself both actor and director, with much of my direction involving young people and very large casts.

The thrill for an actor is to 'survive' each performance. For a director the pleasures are different, as are the stresses. Once the final dress rehearsal is over then there is nothing one can do, apart from encourage, during the actual 'run' of the production, as in my opinion interference at this stage is counter-productive. As an actor you know your own moves and

lines and can ad-lib and improvise if problems arise, and you *may* also know *some* of the moves and lines of your fellow actors. But as a director you know every nuance of the play and can enjoy what goes right or 'die a thousand deaths' each time something goes wrong! A momentary slip on stage by the actors seems like a lifetime for a director until order is restored. Yet these stresses are a vital part (perversely you might say) of the sheer enjoyment you get from seeing your creative energy brought to life.

As a director the ability to be creative is the most rewarding element of the role. I enjoy working with a production team who take responsibility for their own areas, but with whom I have discussed my ideas. As the director I try to concentrate my energies on the actual 'stage reality' and how that is created. I believe that the views and feelings of the cast are crucial to a play's success, and so during rehearsals I encourage reflection concerning line delivery and moves. Some actors like to be 'directed' with a firm hand--i.e. given moves cast in stone with specific instructions as to line delivery. I do work this way sometimes, but I prefer a more democratic and exploratory way, whilst always retaining full responsibility for the integrity and creativity of the production. Unlike many directors I tend as far as possible to ignore instructions given in the script unless they relate to entrances, exits or vital moves.

One particular idiosyncrasy noted in rehearsals as I direct is my passion for moving around the room. This allows me to focus on the actors' stage positions and so avoid masking. I try out as many seats as possible during final rehearsals because a production is for all audience members, not just for those who arrive early and obtain the 'best' seats.

For anyone thinking of directing I would have to say "Go for it!" However, whilst one can adopt planning strategies learnt or borrowed from the experience of others, the key to success, in my opinion, is to have a creative eye and to be prepared at times to throw caution to the wind. Things will go wrong both during rehearsals and during production week--my own experiences include actors dropping out at dress rehearsal and major disagreements between the actors and the backstage crew. Under such circumstances you, the director, have to be the most tactful and diplomatic of referees.

Finally, there is always a point during rehearsals, usually a week before the opening night, when nothing goes right and the prospect of putting on a viable production seems doomed. But amateur dramatics is a funny old business and in the end the problems are resolved and the show goes on. When the show is over, because you have 'lived' the play for so long, there are often severe withdrawal symptoms--until you begin the process of creation leading to the birth of your next production.

Spring Production 1997

Knightsbridge (by John Mortimer)

Director: Jessica Colson

CAST

Henry Bulstrode, a successful television interviewer (late30s-40s)

Francesca, his fiancée (19-25)

Muriel Stokes, Francesca's mother (40s-50s)

Man in raincoat (middle-aged)--a small but telling part

Francesca brings Henry to her mother's flat to announce their engagement. Mother is out, but a series of strange telephone calls lead Henry and Francesca to the conclusion that she is a practitioner of the world's oldest profession. Mother returns, unaware of what Henry and Francesca now believe, and their theory is reinforced by the visit of a man in a raincoat, with whom she disappears into the bedroom. A hilarious conversation takes place between mother and Henry until it transpires that her advertisements for 'double-fronted chest' and 'French polishing' do, in fact, relate to her business as an antique dealer. But after Henry and Francesca have left there is another phone call and as the curtain falls the audience is left wondering just exactly what the antique business involves.

Lunch Hour (by John Mortimer)

Director: Stuart McCreadie

CAST

The man (late30s-40s)

The girl (20s-early 30s)--the main part

The hotel manageress (40s-60s)--a cameo role

The man and the girl arrive at a hotel for a lovers' rendezvous during their lunch hour. Prior to their arrival, in order to preserve a facade of respectability, the man has told the hotel manageress that he is bringing his wife, the mother of their three children, a story that he has embellished for effect. Not knowing this, the girl is somewhat surprised at the sympathy she receives from the manageress, but as the man tells her the story he has concocted, she begins to identify with the character he has created and becomes so involved with the fiction that she forgets all about the lovers' tryst. Eventually, still 'living' the fictional person in the story, she storms out and the lunch hour is over without the intended lovemaking ever taking place.

The Third Play

has not yet been decided upon, but a decision is about to be made and will certainly have been made before the read-through on January 8th. Plays under consideration include:

Edwin, by John Mortimer (Director: Tony Field. Cast: 2 men, 1 woman)

We never meet Edwin, but we start to wonder which of the men is his father.

A Cut in The Rates, by Alan Ayckbourn (Director: Mark Lambert. Cast: 2 women, 1 man)

A ghostly illusionist confesses to a rates inspector that he has, in a tragic accident, cut his wife in half. But is there more to this than meets the eye?

Mother Figure, by Alan Ayckbourn (Director: Mark Lambert. Cast: 2 women, 1 man)

What *do* you do when your neighbour starts treating you like one of her children?

From Here to the Library, by Jimmy Chinn (Director: ?? Cast: 2 men, 1 woman)

A poignant tale. Old Dad is deaf, or is this just a ploy to interfere with the budding relationship between his daughter and her boss at the library?

If you want to know before the read-through which play has been chosen you can telephone me on 01258-817270.

DATES AND TIMES

Read-through of all three plays Wednesday 8th January, 7.30 p.m. Age Concern Hall

Auditions Tuesday 21st January. Age Concern Hall.

Knightsbridge 7.00-8.00 ----- Lunch Hour 8.00-9.00 ----- The Third Play 9.00-10.00

Please feel free to audition for more than one play.

A production like this, of course, does not rest on individuals and the result is the sum of all its parts. Thanks are due to everyone involved, but I should like to make special mention of **Adam Birks-Hay, Sally Chapman, Rebecca Hill, Simon Manaton** and **James Ovenden**, all of whom had minute parts in the play but turned up faithfully for rehearsals and performances to say their few lines or merely wander about the stage. Rest assured, your dedication as 'general utility actors' has been noticed.

Incidentally, once again many thanks to all those who turned up to help set up the production on Saturday 23rd. A good turn out like that makes the task so much easier. On the Sunday after the show the usual people were there, and the task was completed in good time. However, it would have been nice, after such an enjoyable show, to see more than just three members of the 23 strong cast.

Finally, on this subject, the Treasurer has asked me to make an appeal. Only a few people involved in the play have paid for their copies of the script. It would be much appreciated if all those who have not paid would either do so (£5.50) or return their scripts.

Since I last wrote, we have had just one club evening, a musical evening entitled 'The Entertainers' arranged by Jakki Gregory. Jakki, together with Ann Brooks, Margaret and Tony Field, Sue Francis, Tony Gregory and Patricia Stewart--aided by Joan Freeland at the Piano--performed 26 songs from a number of shows, some of which the audience were allowed to join in with. Space does not allow a review of all of the excellent performances, but for me--and I hope the others will forgive me for saying so--the highlights of the evening were Patricia Stewart's rendition of 'My Heart belongs to Daddy' (in which Tony Gregory played 'Daddy') and Tony Field singing 'There is Nothing Like a Dame'. All in all an entertaining evening and it was a pity that more people didn't come to see it. Of the 20 or so in the audience several were members of the performers' own families. For future evenings, please see 'Prompt Corner'. Do come if you can, it's nice to see people and the entertainments are invariably great fun; quite apart from the fact that the entertainers work very hard beforehand and appreciate having a good audience!

Another minor success was achieved on November 22nd. A team of six members--Graham Baker, Jessica Colson, Mally Lambert, Jill Service, Bob Service and yours truly--represented APS at the annual SNADS Fish and Chip Quiz Night held in Sturminster Newton Hall. By half time, we had accumulated a score of 88--a commanding lead of 22 points. During the second half it may have been the effect of the enormous quantity of fish and chips or the wine, but another team whittled our lead down somewhat. Even so we won by 8 points with a final score of 155 out of a potential 220. For this we were awarded six bottles of wine; Jill and Bob managed to add to their winnings by carrying off two raffle prizes, including the first prize. A highly successful evening, and one that we all much enjoyed. We heartily recommend it to members next year.

As many of you know, before each production we send out details to the some 400 people on our mailing list. This mailing list was compiled a few years ago by asking members to supply the names and addresses of those who might be interested in receiving such information. However, in recent times the response has not been particularly good and the mail shot we did for *Trelawny of the "Wells"* has demonstrated that the mailing list is now hopelessly out of date; we have had an embarrassing number of people complaining that addresses are wrong, people have moved or have even died!

Accordingly, we have put in hand a major revision of the mailing list. The committee members are checking all the entries that they can, but any that we cannot verify will have to be removed. We are therefore asking all of you to submit, or in many cases resubmit, names and addresses for the mailing list. Remember, the fact that you have given us names before is no guarantee that they will remain there. As a check for the future, your name will be associated in the new database with the names and addresses that you provide, so that we can come back to you at a later date to check that nothing has changed. At the same time, please keep a record yourself of those you supply and let us know immediately of any changes you become aware of. Please send names and addresses for the mailing list, as soon as possible, to me, Mark Lambert, at the address on your membership card.

You may recall that it was our intention to move the wardrobe to a room in the Castle Stables. Unfortunately, difficulties have arisen and this may no longer be an option. Negotiations are in hand for other possibilities, so watch this space. Meanwhile, you will be pleased to hear that the sales of wardrobe items have raised the excellent sum of £2123, over £1000 more than the entire wardrobe was 'worth' in last years accounts!--and we still have a substantial part of it! Another interesting piece of news that the small round table that sat in the clubroom for many years and was used and probably abused by all, has turned out to be of some value. It was Tony and Margaret Field that spotted its potential and suggested that it be valued and if possible sold. In the event it made £260 at auction, of which we received, after Auctioneer's Commission, Vicious Added Tax, et al, the sum of £199.36, which was quite pleasing.

Finally, please see overleaf for details of plays, directors, a preliminary read-through and auditions for the Spring Production. Preparations for this will start in the New Year, and in the meantime I take this opportunity of wishing you all a very Happy Christmas.

Prompt Corner

Dates for your diaries

All evenings in the Cheap St Church Hall except for those indicated.

Wednesday 8th January

Read-through of plays for Spring Production (see page 4)
Age Concern Hall

Tuesday 14th January

Give Us A Clue
conducted by Meg Whittingdale
Invariably one of the most popular evenings of the year!

Tuesday 21st January

Auditions for Spring Production
Age Concern Hall

Thursday 30th January

Remember Shakespeare
with Tony and Gill Manns

Monday 17th February

A Drama Workshop
conducted by Jennie Harvey-Hull