



AMATEUR PLAYERS OF SHERBORNE

Newsletter

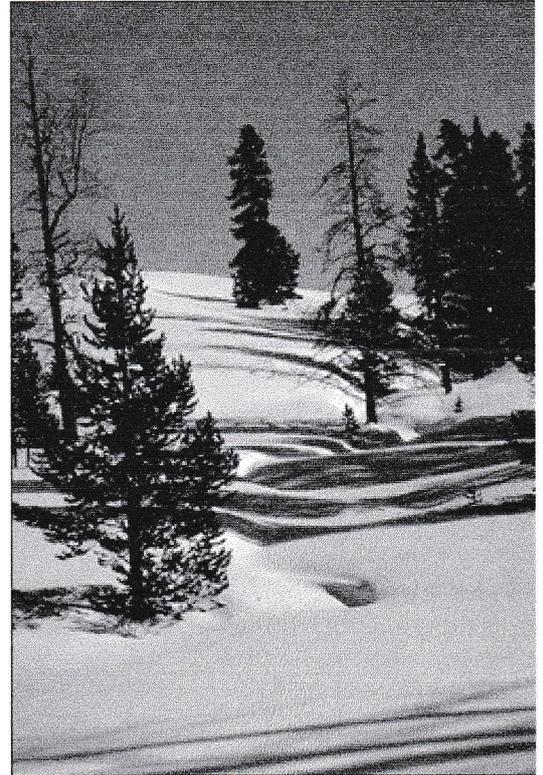
DECEMBER
1997



Another successful production. I overheard someone say that it was nice to see The Players 'in such good heart' and this seems to me to be an appropriate comment. We have had a great deal of very positive feedback from our audiences, who clearly enjoyed the whole thing and the atmosphere backstage was tremendous, which always indicates that things are going well. Around 480 people attended altogether and the box office takings were £2025, a sum that has only been exceeded twice during this decade. Add to this what we made on the coffee morning, raffle, programmes etc, and the income figure reaches £2900. It was a fairly expensive production and the bills are not all in yet, but the Treasurer's guess is that we may make a profit of around £800.



Of the two local reviews, it is true, were not entirely flattering, but it must be remembered that these are the opinions of just two people. Everyone I have spoken to disagrees with them and when the committee met soon afterwards it took the view that any publicity is better than none at all. I remain convinced that our production of *A Woman of No*



These spaces were to have been occupied with two photos of the production, but as yet I have not been able to get my my new scanner working properly (very frustrating!), so instead I have included a couple of seasonal scenes that I found on a CD ROM. More relevant photos next time I hope.



The Director's Postscript

Looking back over the last three months working with those involved in our production of *A Woman of No Importance*, I regret that at the Last Night Party there was no real opportunity for me to say my thank-you's. With the indulgence of the editor of our valuable Newsletter, I would like the chance of doing so now.

I have directed several times for the APS, but never before from the first rehearsal have I been so confident about the

outcome. This was entirely due to the calibre and attitudes of those involved. The actors were committed from the start and they grew into their parts with mutual encouragement, regardless of the size of their parts or the number of lines to be learnt.

We had the difficulties of different venues, one missing boy and costume fittings in confined spaces, but I suppose this added to the rich tapestry of our experiences. At times we really do feel the absence of a place of our own.

On the occasion of the last night, I would have thanked especially several of those present, commending their perseverance and insistence on getting things right,

and I would have tried to drop in various witty quotes. At this distance this is no longer appropriate, but those whom I relied on most will know how I appreciated their support. I insist, however, on a particular thank you to those 'other halves' willing to accept three months solitary.

So for their commitment and professionalism I thank the actors who, with the support of a splendid production team gave our audiences an evening to remember, a Wilde evening of humour and truth and drama. An evening for all of us to be proud of because of the high standards we achieved together--a success that was certainly worth having.

M.H.F.

A Life Backstage

You may have noticed that Hrolf Trump's name has crept quietly into the list of Life Members. This occurred at the start of the season, Hrolf having been proposed as a Life Member during the summer by Jakki Gregory, and now that I have a little more time and space it gives me great pleasure to fill in some of the details.

Hrolf has never actually appeared on stage, but over the years he has devoted his time to making things work for those that do, and he has been one of The Players' most accomplished and loyal backstage crew. A vet by profession but an artist by nature, Hrolf has employed his talents in lighting, sound, set design, set construction and prop-making. He is a stickler for getting things right and the success of countless productions has been due in great part to his attention to detail.

Hrolf began his backstage career at school, where he discovered his penchant for lighting. In 1946 he joined the Clevedon Players (near Bristol), with whom he learned much that was to prove useful later on. Hrolf joined APS in 1958, at a time when all our productions took place in the Digby Memorial Hall, where the equipment was what Hrolf describes as 'rather primitive' and he augmented The Players lighting equipment by constructing a pair of portable dimmer boards that remained in use until the mid-1970s--they can still be found tucked away in the recesses of the Castle room!

Importance should do very well in the Rose Bowl Competition.

Credit for the production's success, of course, goes to everyone involved, but particularly the person with overall responsibility, our director, Margaret Field. From the start, Margaret knew exactly what she wanted from her cast and backstage team and in the end she got it--without ever seeming to be too demanding. One of Margaret's many virtues is patience in adversity. At times during rehearsals it seemed as if we were never going to see the whole cast together in one place and even when the set looked as if it might never be ready in time, she never lost her cool, tempting though it must have been. In the end the production was well-acted and professionally staged. Well done and thank you, Margaret.

Margaret's own personal postscript can be found here, so I will say no more except to add my congratulations to all involved and a really big thank you to my truly professional, calm and efficient backstage team, without whom the whole thing could have fallen apart. Together we made those scene changes work like clockwork (someone likened them to a 'ballet!'), which greatly enhanced the overall effect of the production and I am extremely grateful to them all.

Thank you also all those who helped get into the Digby Hall and build the set. In particular, of course, Mally, who with wallpaper and paint created a set worthy of the production. I know that it has been said that we did not have enough help, but this is not really true. Many people turned up and gave what time they could, doing a variety of very useful jobs. We did fall behind, but this was our fault--in retrospect there were some things that we should have done beforehand. Ah well, it's all a learning experience! Finally, of course, thanks to everyone who helped on the Sunday afterwards. A good team enabled us to get out efficiently and quickly.

Since I last wrote there have been three members evenings, of which the first was the make-up workshop. This was one of those evenings that I suspect will not be repeated, as it was very poorly attended, in spite of exhortations beforehand. One reason for this, of course was that a number of those who might have attended were already rehearsing three nights a week--the committee's theory that such an evening might prove useful just before a production clearly came to grief. Perhaps members feel that they know all they need to know about make-up. If this case, however, I suspect that they may be mistaken as Philip Rowe's talk and demonstration were both interesting and informative. The small audience was swelled slightly by a contingent of three from SNADS.

In contrast, the musical evening organised by Patricia Stewart and Tony Manns was well attended. The evening was held at Patricia's home and the 27 members of the audience were treated to a varied and often amusing repertoire of solo and chorus songs from a company made up of Patricia, Tony, Anthea Watson, Jakki Gregory, Rebecca Hill, Tony Stephens, Colin Mayes, Tony Gregory and Simon Manaton, accompanied most proficiently by Joan Freeland on the piano. Sadly, Sue Francis, who was to have joined them,

Hrolf has lit a staggering 64 productions for the players and for 22 of these he also designed and built the sets. He stopped doing lighting in 1989, since when he has concentrated on sound--to date he has provided auditory accompaniment for some 30 plays. However, he still enjoys employing his talents as an artist by making extremely effective props that work, always brilliantly--notable recent examples include the gas fire and gas meter in *Lunch Hour*, which played an important part in helping us win the award for the best presentation, and the flash at the end of *A Woman of No Importance*, which Margaret tells me was brilliant seen from the front, especially on the last night.

Over the years Hrolf has been ably supported and helped by his wife Iris, who has helped a great deal with his sets, in addition to making a variety of decorative stage items, including two complete sets of full length stage drapes. Clearly, I cannot describe all Hrolf's achievements in detail here, but a glance at our old reviews illustrates a couple of the highlights. In the 1962 production of *Blithe Spirit* he was commended for his orchestration of the mayhem created by the 'spirit' near the end of the play, as things fall off walls or hurtle across the room. One of plays that gave Hrolf himself the most pleasure was the award winning play *The Woodlanders*, directed by Stewart Carter in 1982. A review of this play described Hrolf as an "unseen star" and his lighting and sound effects as "masterly". Need I say more. Many thanks Hrolf for a lifetime of dedication, your Life Member M.L.

STOP PRESS

Photographs of the production were displayed at the Christmas party. Some members have already ordered copies, but if anyone who wasn't there would like to consider doing so, let me know and I will make arrangements for you to see the photos again. M.L.

APS Dinner

Please make cheques out to APS and send them to Tony Field at Nethercoombe House Marston Rd Sherborne Dorset DT9 4BL

Whats On

IMPact
(Iwerne Minster Players and childrens theatre)
present **Aladdin**
at The Peter Burke Memorial Theatre,
Claysmore School, Iwerne Minster
Thur 8th-Sat 10th Jan (incl. Matinée e Sat)
Tickets £4.00/£3.00 01747 811632

was unable to do so as she had temporarily lost her voice through laryngitis. The whole evening was most enjoyable, but perhaps the highlight was Colin Mayes, who, dressed in a quite outrageous costume and wig, brought the house down with his rendition of 'If you're anxious for to shine' from *Patience*.

The Christmas party seems to have passed off happily and I hope that the 40+ of you who came enjoyed our light-hearted offering. Many thanks to Hrolf for his highly effective illuminations and of course to the other eight members of the cast of 'Wenceslas', who after just two rehearsals produced a highly entertaining performance, some aspects of which came as a surprise even to the director! Although Colin Mayes, as King Wenceslas, once again stole the show--this time with his amazing ability to produce a continual stream of burps and hiccoughs on cue--all of the roles were played with great style. My thanks to Colin, Anthea Watson (The Queen), Simon Manaton (Yonder Peasant, complete with variable accent!), David Smith (The Prime Minister), Chris Jessiman (The Royal Doctor) and Mally Lambert (The Royal Astrologer) and a very special thanks to the two youngest members of the cast, Anna Lorimer (The Princess) and Anna Jerzykowski (The Page), whom I suspect found the experience of performing in front of other members rather daunting, but rose to the occasion splendidly.

Forthcoming evenings are as laid out in your membership cards and in 'Prompt Corner'. Don't forget the ever-popular *Give us a Clue* on Jan 14th and Jessica's rehearsed playreading on Feb 5th. This will be followed by a reinstated event, the *Annual APS Dinner*, to be held at the Crown Inn at 7.30 p.m. on Friday 13th February. We hope that superstition will not prevent you from coming; those of you who have eaten a meal at the Crown will already know of the excellence of the food and will be able to recommend this event to others. We need to know numbers and so a booking form is attached to this Newsletter. Dress is black tie and the cost will be £10 per head (excluding wine); you may bring a guest if you would like to do so. Please send payment with your booking to Tony Field. The last date for booking is Feb 5th, but book early, as the maximum capacity is about 40 persons (our membership currently stands at 79).

The spring productions have now been chosen. The main production, which goes on from 26th-28th March is to be Alan Ayckbourn's *Table Manners* and Chris Jessiman will direct. Our entry for the Dorset Drama League Festival of One-Act Plays will this season be directed by Jessica Colson. She has chosen to produce *See If I Care*, a thought-provoking comedy by Cherry Vooght. Brief synopses and cast lists for these plays are given overleaf. Auditions for both plays will be held at The Crown Inn on Tuesday 6th Jan and Thursday 8th Jan, from 7.30 p.m. Contact Chris on 01963-362196 or Jessica on 01747-838807 if you cannot make either of these dates but would like to be considered for a part.

The DDL Festival will take place between 11th and 14th March. This season it is once again being held in Shaftesbury, but please note that the second round, the Southern Division Final, is to be held in Sherborne at the Digby Hall. So whether or not the APS entry gets through to this round we will probably be expected to act as 'hosts' and provide Front of House and perhaps even some backstage support.

All in all, it looks as though we will have more than enough to keep us off the streets during the next few months. For now though, I wish you a very happy Christmas and an extremely prosperous New Year.

M.L.

A Message from Your Chairman

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the committee for their help and support this year, and to extend that thanks to all the members as well. It has been a very successful and busy year and the New Year promises to continue this with the yet again mammoth task of moving wardrobe. Before that can be done, I am sure there will be work to be done at the new store in the stables in preparation for the move.

So with the prospect of an eventful New Year to keep us fit and busy, I wish you all a very happy Christmas.

J.G.

P.S. Don't all go rushing to book on a 2 month cruise in January!!

Well, that puts paid to my plans. Ed.

Prompt Corner

Dates for your diaries

At The Crown Inn, Newell,
Sherborne, 7.30 p.m.,
unless otherwise indicated

Tuesday 6th and Thursday 8th January

Auditions for Spring Productions

Main production: *Table Manners*
directed by Chris Jessiman
DDL entry: *See If I Care*
directed by Jessica Colson

Wednesday 14th January

Give Us A Clue

conducted by Meg Whittingdale

Thursday 5th February

A Rehearsed Playreading
presented by Jessica Colson

Friday 13th February

Annual APS Dinner
Black Tie

Table Manners

by

Alan Ayckbourn

Director: Chris Jessiman (01963-362196)

Cast:

Reg (ebulliant, obliging, but can show temper)

Norman (rafish; both cunning and simple)

Tom (quiet, methodical, slow-thinking, well-meaning; very likeable)

Sarah (meticulous, bossy, conventionally suburban, but not wholly inhuman)

Ruth (commonsensical, not over-patient; hard, but can melt quite suddenly)

Annie (gentle, easy-going, but with plenty of spirit)

Apart from Annie, who is a little younger than the others the cast are all about the same age. The script describes them as in their 30s, but as far as Chris is concerned the ages of the cast are relative, and he is happy for anyone between the ages of about 25 and 55 to audition.

This comedy is the second of Ayckbourn's trilogy known collectively as *The Norman Conquests*. Annie, the Cinderella of the family, lives in the shabby Victorian house where the family was raised and where she looks after her formidable mother. Her brother, Reg, and his wife, Sarah, come to stay for the weekend so that Annie can get away for a 'rest'. The general idea is that Annie should pair off with Tom, but this weekend she has actually planned to go off with Norman, the assistant librarian husband of her sister Ruth. They were to have met secretly away from the house, but Norman springs a shock by turning up in the garden. Ruth is summoned, but Norman continues to cause havoc by making up to all three women. Even as the horrific weekend draws to a close Norman manages to wreck all plans by driving his car into Reg's. He is finally spurned by all three women and is left protesting with injured innocence that he only meant to make everyone happy.

See If I Care

by

Cherry Vooght

Director: Jessica Colson (01747-838807)

Cast:

2 elderly ladies

A young girl (in her teens or early twenties)

Woman (40s-50s)

Two further women (very small parts, possibly to be played by members of the backstage team)

This is a poignant play that attempts to look below the surface lives of two ordinary, elderly people. Bound together by an unsentimental, wearing relationship, which both resent because they depend upon it to make life bearable, they pass the time in a park as best they can.

**Auditions for both plays
at The Crown Inn, Newell, Sherborne
Tuesday 6th Jan and Thursday 8th Jan
from 7.30 p.m.**