



# NEWSLETTER



AUGUST 1999

What a busy summer it has been for some of us! We started rehearsing *The Tempest* in June and finished on August 21st with a final performance and post-production party here at Ridge Farm. And what a great success it has been; I am told that The Players have not had such favourable reviews for many years. We had a lovely setting at Compton House and fortunately we were blessed with a fine evening on Thursday August 5th; it was just a shame that the weather forecast let us down so badly the following night, with the result that both the cast and the extremely loyal and hardy audience got soaked to the skin. However, this was made up for to some extent by another fine evening for our final performance on the 21st.

The success of the production was, of course, due to the efforts of the entire acting and production team, all of whom worked so hard on their individual contributions to make an outstanding whole. However, the lion's share of the plaudits must go to our talented director Jason Hepple, whose skilful adaptation of the script, imaginative choice of music and accomplished direction made the play what it was. I particularly admired his adaptability and daring when during the last week it became clear that his original version of the all important opening scene was not working at all. He immediately sat down to rewrite it, not once but twice—the cast only learning about the second rewrite on the evening of the technical rehearsal! The result was something that worked brilliantly both for cast and audience.

The Préveza performance was just as successful; possibly in some ways more so, as, knowing that our audience's English



*An impromptu performance of Act 5 of The Tempest at the Odeon, Nikopolis.*

was limited, the whole cast put an enormous amount of energy into each and every performance. We performed on a large wooden stage (supported by scaffolding and with entrances via somewhat rickety steps) in a large courtyard within the 16th century Castle Pantokratoras. Lighting and sound equipment appeared at the last moment as if by magic and after a few teething problems worked well. The audience obviously enjoyed themselves and on this occasion, the play ended not with a rocket (rockets having been banned by the government, presumably because everything around is tinder dry) but with a succession of flares on the ramparts above.

Sadly, we only managed to do one performance in Greece. Another one had been semi-arranged for the 16th August in a similar castle setting in Parga, a few miles up the coast. But the people at the other end failed to respond to faxes sent by Kostas, probably because they were all far too involved in the major religious festival that took place on the 15th, and we had to abandon the plan. Nonetheless we were well pleased with what we had achieved.

Quite apart from the production we all had a marvellous time in Préveza. The weather was hot (very hot and humid when we arrived, but after a couple of days the humidity dispersed and the eve-

nings became pleasantly cool) and our hosts were most hospitable. We were taken on several sightseeing trips, but there was plenty of time to sunbathe and swim and the evenings were devoted to savouring the local food and wine and, in the case of the younger members of the party, nightclubs. After only a week few, if any, of us, were ready to come home and it was with much regret that we got onto the aircraft on the



## Officers and Committee 1999-2000

**President**  
Joy Saunders

**Chairman**  
Gill Manns

**Secretary**  
Anthony Stephens

**Treasurer**  
Jessica Colson

**Membership Secretary**  
Mark Lambert

**Committee**  
Michael Baatz, Sue Francis,  
Jason Hepple, Patricia Stuart  
John Sutherland-Smith, Janet Vincent



# ARCADIA

by Tom Stoppard

Thomasina Coverly	Rebecca Hill
Septimus Hedge	Mark Freestone
Jellaby	Michael Baatz
Ezra Chater	Kieran Millar
Richard Noakes	Peter Thomas
Lady Croom	Madeline Lambert
Captain Brice RN	Peter Welby
Augustus Coverly	<i>to be cast</i>
Hannah Jarvis	Amanda McEvoy
Chloë Coverly	Jan Bridgeman
Bernard Nightingale	Steve Evans
Valentine Coverly	<i>to be cast</i>
Gus Coverly	<i>(as Augustus)</i>

**Director** Tony Field  
**Stage Manager** Margaret Field

18th. We left behind many new friends and have renewed and built on the friendships begun last year. We fully intend to return as soon as possible.

## Players' Events

The final evening of last season was an unrehearsed play reading arranged by yours truly, complete with computer-generated sound effects. Some spirited reading from most of the 20 or so members present made for an enjoyable evening, marred (or perhaps improved) by the fact that the Crown's microwave cooker caused two power cuts, which meant that some of the sound effects failed to emerge from the computer and had to be generated verbally!

The AGM took place on 18th June at Nether Compton Village Hall and over 40 members attended. Elections of Officers took place. Joy Saunders was re-elected unopposed as President, and it is very fitting that the daughter of the founder of APS should be President in the millennium year. Gill Manns was elected unopposed as Chairman, Anthony Stephens, Jessica Colson and Mark Lambert were re-elected unopposed as Secretary, Treasurer and Membership Secretary respectively. Five members stood for election to the committee and the result of the ballot was that Jason Hepple, John Sutherland-Smith and Janet Vincent were elected to serve.

Incidentally, I have heard that there was some disquiet among members regarding the cost of last year's visit by The Theatrical Stage of Prévèza. At the time the decision was made in the Spring of 1998, the committee were well aware that there might be a substantial cost involved, but it was felt that it was worth doing in spite of this. The

Players have considerable reserves and it was felt that there was really no reason why we should not spend money on what we considered to be a worthwhile undertaking.

Accordingly we agreed to invite them and set out to ensure that our visitors enjoyed their visit, while at the same time attempting to keep the net costs to a minimum. Here I should point out, as I understand that one or two people may be under a slight misapprehension, that although the overall cost was £1200, we managed to claw back £500 of this (see the annual accounts), leaving a net cost of about £700. In many respects this cost has been well repaid as this year our Greek hosts were equally generous to us, taking all 21 of us on several excursions and providing us with a number of meals, as well as entertaining us in their own homes.

All in all there are many of us who think the project was well worthwhile, particularly in view of the success of our return production, which has done much to increase the standing of The Players, both at home and abroad. However, if members do feel that the committee has erred regarding this or any other matter, they should feel free to make their views known, either by contacting a committee member or, better still, at the AGM. If no one complains then the committee is entitled to believe that they are pursuing policies of which the membership approves.

The AGM was followed by a splendid party at Horn's Hill. Our grateful thanks to Jennie Ward for all her hard work—she had arranged an intriguing 'round-the-garden' quiz that seriously tested our knowledge of quotes from plays. Jennie and others provided an excellent selection of things to eat, and a good time was had by all.

## 1999-2000 Season

The opening night will take place on Wednesday 15th September at the Crown Inn. As is the custom, the Chairman will arrange an entertainment and a meal will be provided; drinks can be bought at the bar.

For the first time in many years subscriptions have been raised. The adult subscription is now £10.00 and students are required to pay a mere £2.00. As always these are due on or before the opening night. Please pay promptly; if you cannot come to the opening night, the Royal Mail provides an excellent and not very expensive service for sending your cheques (made out to APS) to me at Ridge Farm, King's Stag, Sturminster Newton, Dorset DT10 2AU.

Among the early Players' evenings are a Drama Workshop, and a Face the Music evening. See Prompt Corner for details. In November Michael Baatz will lead a work-

shop designed particularly for members thinking of directing. It is hoped that the experienced directors will also contribute their expertise. Later in the year a folk evening is planned as well as another musical evening and of course such perennials as Give Us a Clue. There will also be both rehearsed and unrehearsed play readings. We hope that for play readings, especially rehearsed ones, new members and others we do not see on stage very often can be encouraged to try their hand at reading a part.

The autumn production, *Arcadia*, is now largely cast (see panel), although as I write Tony Field is still seeking two young men to play Valentine (20s) and Augustus/Gus (teens). Rehearsals will start in September and performances will take place on 2nd, 3rd and 4th December.

## Rawson Hall

After the AGM we received the surveyor's report. Unfortunately, it seems that the hall is in an even worse state of repair than we had thought and will require a very substantial amount of money to make it even faintly habitable and safe. Negotiations have not been abandoned entirely, but it seems safe to say that unless Castle Estates are willing to spend a large sum on the place and rent it to us for the sum agreed previously (a situation that seems on the face of it unlikely), then this particular project will, sadly, come to nothing.

Do come to the evenings this season if you can. A great deal of effort goes into arranging them and thus a good turnout is all the more gratifying to the organisers.

Γεια σας

Mark Lambert

## Prompt Corner

7.30 p.m. at The Crown Inn, unless otherwise stated.

Wednesday 15th September  
**Opening Night**, with a short entertainment arranged by The Chairman  
A fork supper will be provided

Wednesday 29th September  
**A Drama Workshop**  
Conducted by John Sutherland-Smith  
Cheap St Church Hall

Wednesday 20th October  
**Face the Music**  
A musical panel game  
Hosted by Jason Hepple

Wednesday 10th November  
**Workshop on directing**  
Led by Michael Baatz  
Griffiths Room,  
Digby Memorial Hall, Digby Rd