



NEWS LETTER



AUGUST 2001

It is a pity that the weather in this country is so unpredictable. With hindsight we now know that July 23-28 would have been the perfect week for *Hamlet*, but who could have forecast that back in January!



Hamlet

Success is perhaps an insufficiently strong word to describe Mark Freestone's production of *Hamlet*, which, in addition to being artistically brilliant, broke several records. In spite of the cold and wet a larger total audience than we had for previous summer productions produced a total income of over £3000, augmented by record coffee sales--which were, of course, actually due to the inclement weather. The production team managed to keep the expenses of this large production down to a very reasonable level in the circumstances, giving a record profit of over £1000.

The production received rave reviews in both the BVM and the Western Gazette. This did not actually come as much of a surprise to those of us who were involved, as we already knew that we had an amazingly strong cast, all of whom had worked extremely hard on their parts. Deservedly good notices were given to all of the leading actors and particularly to Mark himself for his sensitive and illuminating portrayal of Hamlet.

The Rose Bowl adjudication was more mixed. Although the adjudicator clearly en-



A dramatic moment from the summer production. Hamlet (Mark Freestone) threatens his mother the Queen (Fiz Lewis) a few moments before killing Polonius.

Photo by Des Armour.

joyed the production overall, her comments contain a number of criticisms. However, when reading her comments it is worth remembering that this particular adjudicator has a reputation for having a somewhat individual view of how Shakespeare should be interpreted. Readers may feel that, while some of her criticisms may have merit, others, from our point of view at least, are wide of the mark. A copy of the adjudication can be found on the clubroom noticeboard.

All in all, therefore we have much to be proud of. Mark put on a superb production, aided by his redoubtable Production Manager, Gill Manns. From my own experience, I know that the production side of an outdoor production generates countless problems that never even arise in the Digby Hall and Gill surmounted all of these, even managing to silence the Abbey clock for a whole week!

Gill supervised a large production team, all of whom beavered away very efficiently in the background (largely unnoticed; but that is the way it should be). I know it is invidious to name names, but two people did stand out among the backstage team. Jan Bridgman, in her first attempt at this exacting job, was an efficient and unflappable stage manager and the speed and coolness with which she and her team achieved the move into the BSR on two occasions was commented upon by both cast and audience, deserving the round of applause that greeted the restart on the Friday night. Jan contributed greatly to the success of the play, as did Adrian Hole, who worked tirelessly, on occasions late into the night, on two completely separate sets of lighting equipment, one inside and one outside.

AGM

The AGM passed uncontroversially and speedily with the President in the chair; this

new arrangement makes things much easier in years where the chairmanship of The Players changes hands halfway through the proceedings. The retiring Chairman, Gill Manns, reviewed a very busy and successful year and thanked everyone, both on and off the committee for their support, mentioning

Prompt Corner

All events at 7.30 pm in the Clubroom, unless otherwise indicated.

Friday 21st September
Chairman's Opening Night

Tuesday 2nd October (Provisional)
An evening on make-up and wigs

Thursday 11th October
Face The Music
Hosted by Peter Thomas

Wednesday 24th October
A rehearsed play reading
Arranged by Jessica Colson

Thursday 8th November
An unrehearsed play reading
Arranged by Kevin Beer

Saturday 25th November
Setting up for Ring Round The Moon
Digby Hall, am

Mon 27th - Wed 29th November
Technical and dress rehearsals

Thur 30th Nov - Sat 1st Dec
Performances of Ring Round The Moon
directed by Margaret Field
Digby Hall, 7.30 pm

Officers and Committee

2001-2002

President

Tony Field

Chairman

Jason Hepple

Secretary

Jenny Peet

Treasurer

Janet Vincent

Membership Secretary

Mark Lambert

Committee Members

Kevin Beer, Tony Birks-Hay,

Margaret Dixon, Jill Hudson

Kathy Messinger,

John Sutherland Smith

particularly her long-suffering husband Tony and, very kindly, your Membership Secretary. As past Chairmen will agree, the Chairmanship of The Players is a time-consuming and exacting task and Gill has skillfully steered The Players through two very busy and innovative years. Our thanks go to her for all her hard work and patience.

Elections were also held speedily, aided by Jim Schofield's excellent ploy of using a photocopier to produce proper ballot papers on the spot. Jason Hepple was elected to replace Gill as Chairman, and Jenny Peet was elected Secretary, replacing Jim Schofield, who had decided not to stand for re-election. Janet Vincent and Mark Lambert were re-elected as Treasurer and Membership Secretary respectively.

Among the remaining committee members Michael Baatz had completed his three years. During this time Michael worked particularly hard to try and find a new permanent home for The Players, and if the result had depended on effort alone, he would undoubtedly have been successful. Sadly, his hard work did not bear fruit, due to insurmountable logistical and/or financial difficulties.

John Sutherland-Smith (he who finally negotiated our current deal with Sherborne House) had come to the end of the two-year term for which he had been elected and sadly, Amanda McEvoy and David Smith had decided to retire early from the committee. With Jason's elevation to Chairman, this left no less than five vacancies. Kevin Beer, Margaret Dixon, Jill Hudson and Kathy Messinger were elected to fill four of these, and John Sutherland-Smith was re-elected to serve a third year. For those of you who are now as confused as I am there is a complete list of officers and committee members on the previous page.

The Constitution

One of the matters that the new committee is looking at is a revision of the constitution, in which several anomalies have recently come

to light. Our deliberations may take a month or two, but when we have finished, we plan to call an Extraordinary General Meeting at which members will have the opportunity of examining and voting for or against our proposals. The reason for calling an EGM will be to finalise any amendments before the next AGM, for one thing making it possible to hold the AGM legitimately in July, after Sherborne School's Commem., in which so many of our members are involved.

Suggestions

As always, the committee is open to suggestions, preferably constructive ones, from members at any time. In fact we would really like to hear what members think. To make matters easier there will be from now on a suggestion box in the clubroom. Suggestions can be anonymous if you wish, but it is always good to know where ideas come from, so do feel free to sign your name to any comments you may have. Suggestions can be about productions (remembering that ideas for plays, musicals, etc almost invariably have to come from someone willing to direct), Players evenings, fund-raising, improving the way we do things or anything else you can dream up.

Forthcoming events

The Chairman's Opening Night will take place at 7.30 pm on Friday 21st September at The Clubroom. Jason plans that this will be a convivial evening, with a guest appearance by someone from outside The Players and a sparkling cabaret-style entertainment. His aim is to encourage potential new members to come and meet us, and be so impressed that they join. To this end all those attending are asked to bring friends who they think might like to become members. Two other Chairman's evenings, with the same purpose, are planned for later in the season.

As always membership subscriptions, which remain at £10 (students £2) are due on or before the Chairman's Opening Night. How about everyone giving the Treasurer and

tions, such as wardrobe, stage management, set-building, lighting, and sound. Given a degree of interest all of the backstage tasks can be learned, usually by assisting or observing in the first instance. Perhaps you would like to be involved in one of these tasks but never get asked; if that is the case, please do let me know. If you want to know more, talk to those who currently undertake them (I can let you have names of people to approach if you don't know them already).

I am also trying to bring up to date the information contained in the membership database; hence the enclosed profile. Please take a moment to go through this and let me have it back. ML

Forthcoming productions

2002

SPRING

Hotel Paradiso

By Georges Feydeau
and Maurice Desvallieres
Directed by John Sutherland-Smith

SUMMER

Twelfth Night

By William Shakespeare
Directed by Jason Hepple

AUTUMN

One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest

By Dale Wasserman
Directed by Tony Birks-Hay

Membership Secretary a nice surprise by paying promptly--most years we are still chasing subs in November!

At the time of writing the programme is not finalised, but it is hoped that The Chairman's Opening Night will be followed on Tuesday 2nd October by an **evening on make-up and wigs**. On Thursday 11th October there will be another edition of **Face the Music**, this time with Peter Thomas in the chair. On Wednesday 24th October Jessica Colson will present a **rehearsed play reading**, which will be followed on Thursday 8th November by an **unrehearsed play reading** led by Kevin Beer. Production week for our autumn production, **Ring Round The Moon** starts on Saturday 25th November. Further dates will be given in the coveted Membership Card issued on payment of your subscription.

Mailing List

The mailing list currently contains 359 names and addresses. I try to keep it up to date by including a return address on the labels, but the occasional check by those who supplied the names in the first place is also necessary. The last of these was in September 1999, so, for those of you who have been a source of mailing list names, a list accompanies this Newsletter. If anyone else has any friends or acquaintances they think should be on our mailing list, do let me know. ML

Wanted

Key Production Personnel

Looking back at last September's Newsletter, I see that I appealed for more people to volunteer for the main production team jobs. The response was not exactly overwhelming, but nothing daunted I shall try again.

As the membership increases, it has been suggested on more than one occasion that we could put on more productions. All well and good, but although we might well find a sufficient number of actors and people willing to *help* backstage, we still lack enough people with the interest and expertise to actually take total charge of key func-

Ridge Farm Lamb

Please forgive this little commercial, but this year, shortly after *Arms and The Man*, we had an exceptionally good lambing at Ridge Farm, and thus we have more lambs than usual to sell. Prices are negotiable this year, due to the F & M situation. Anyone interested in a lamb or half lamb please contact me (01258 817270). ML

STOP PRESS

Rose Bowl Nominations

I am pleased to report that APS has received no less than three nominations in the 2000-2001 Rose Bowl Awards. Two of these are for Best Supporting Performance Drama; **Charlotte Colson** for her performance as Celia in *As You Like It* (August 2000) and **Jo Freestone** for her performance as Lynette Lawson in Jason Hepple's APS Modern production of *Lost and Found* (January 2001). Mark Freestone's recent production of *Hamlet* has been nominated for the Best Shakespeare Production Award. Many congratulations to Charlotte, Jo and Mark.

The Rose Bowl Award ceremony takes place in Bristol on Sunday 14th October. A strong contingent from APS to support our three nominations would be nice; if you would like to go, please inform The Secretary, Jenny Peet (01963 220333) as soon as possible, as tickets have to be booked.