



NEWSLETTER



JANUARY 2003

Now that Christmas is over and the damp of December is replaced by the rather welcome frosts of January, it is time once again to take stock. There is much to look forward to in the coming months, **but please take note of the changes to the programme, particularly in February.**



One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest

There were those among us—and I freely confess that I was one—who had some doubts about the choice of this play. Few doubted that it was a good play, and to the Committee that made the choice it seemed a worthwhile experiment, but it did seem possible that it was not, given the subject matter and language, 'Sherborne box office' material.

In the event, I am very happy to say, we were proved completely wrong. The audiences (and the press critics) loved it—I don't think I can recall so much cheering at the end of each and every performance—and the box office returns were in excess of usual autumn expectations. It is probably true to say that a number of those who normally come to our shows stayed away on this occasion. But there were many others who flocked in to replace them. Over 400 paying customers passed through the doors and in spite of an expensive set (even at a substantial discount, scaffolding doesn't come cheap) we made a profit of just over £500.

As always, credit for this is due to everyone involved, and it was a large and very happy team, both on and off stage. But no one put in as much hard graft as the director, Tony Birks-Hay, and his loyal wife and supporter, Leslie, who handled the publicity most effectively, making sure that every possible avenue was explored and exploited.

Tony not only directed the play, but was also fully involved with every other aspect of the production. He designed the unusual and extremely effective set, supervised its construction and spent many hours adding the finishing touches. In addition, of course, aided by his excellent team of actors, Tony developed a stunning production—a great achievement when you consider that this was his first attempt at directing for The Players. The cast clearly enjoyed themselves and it was very interesting to watch the play come together. For me the highlight (I missed the

occasion when Harding's pyjama trousers descended slowly to the ground during a curtain call) was the Friday performance of Act II, during which I watched a kind of cyclic process of audience feedback spurring the actors on to rarely seen heights. Congratulations to all of the cast, and particularly to those of you for whom it was your first experience of being on stage.

Other recent events

Not long after the production Michael Baatz, aided by Mally Lambert, presented an evening of poetry and prose as a prelude to Christmas. I was unable to attend, but I am informed that some 20 or more members enjoyed a very pleasant evening.

All went quiet again until January 3rd, when we had a very enjoyable party in the clubroom, at which there were about 50 people. Partly, I understand, as a result of chance conversations during the last production Jennie Ward had created a very funny entertainment. First, and for Tony Birks-Hay's benefit, was a 'ballet' (the quotes are totally necessary) involving chairs and the inmates of obviously the worst kind of mental asylum. This was followed by the party scene from a new version of a well known play, now entitled *One Fell Out of the Cuckoo's Nest*, in which role genders seemed curiously reversed. Mac, it seemed, had become Big Maggie (Wendy Simmonds) and Candy Starr was replaced by Randy Starr (Malcolm Cockburn) who seduced a Billie Mae (Mally Lambert), whose frontage will stick in the mind (and possibly a lot of other places!). The final item was a never-to-be-forgotten scene from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*; the memory of Chris Hutton (formerly aka Warren) dressed as Titania, not to mention Colin Mayes, Tony Manns, David Winks and Malcolm Cockburn attired as the fairies, complete with tutus, will stay with me rather disturbingly for some time to come.

Entertainment complete, we were all treated to a truly sumptuous meal created by Jakki Gregory and Kathy Messenger, to whom we were and are extremely grateful.

Programme Changes and future events

Various circumstances have made it necessary to change most of the dates and even some of the events for January and February, so please note that these are not as shown in your membership card.

Prompt Corner

All events at 7.30 pm in the Clubroom unless otherwise indicated

Thursday 30th January

NEW EVENT

Unrehearsed readings of some short pantomime scripts
Presented by Jason Hepple

Monday 3rd February

Auditions for Summer production
Macbeth

Directed by Jason Hepple

Thursday 6th February

An Rehearsed Play Reading

Presented by Fred Collier

Thursday 13th February

DATE CHANGED

Annual Dinner

Organised by Tony Birks-Hay
The Eastbury Hotel, 7.30 for 8.00 pm

Tickets £17.50

Dress: Jackets and 'posh frocks'

Monday 3rd March

Unrehearsed Play Reading.

Arranged by Dod Pearson and Jean Harrap

Sat 5th April

Spring Production: Alice; Get-in day
Digby Hall, all day. Please offer to help.

Sunday 6th -Wednesday 9th April

Tech and Dress Rehearsals. Digby Hall

Thursday 10th - Saturday 12th April

Alice; Performances. Digby Hall

Sunday 13th April

Get-out day.

Digby Hall. a.m. Please come and help.

Thursday 24th April

Directors' Meeting

Any member who would like to direct a production during 2004 is invited to come present their ideas to the committee.

Friday 25th April

DATE CHANGED

Chairman's Evening

Wednesday 30th April

An unrehearsed reading of

The Anastasia File (Autumn production)

Arranged by Margaret Dixon

Marathon Man for Charity

Jason Hepple is not available to take part in the spring production because he will be taking part in the London Marathon on April 13th. He will not be employing any gimmicks—he says he will find it quite hard enough completing the 26 miles without being dressed as a banana!

In the process Jason is hoping to raise some money for PSP (Progressive Supranuclear Palsy). So if any of you feel like offering a little sponsorship contact him on 01935 817956.

First of all, there is a new date for your diaries. To replace the now cancelled Feb 6th rehearsed play reading there will be an **unrehearsed reading** of some pantomime scripts presented by Jason Hepple on **Thursday January 30th**.

Next, circumstances have arisen that have forced the Committee to reconsider this year's summer production—certain key personnel are not going to be available on the chosen dates. After some discussion it was agreed that perhaps it would not be a bad plan, in view of the work involved, to reduce our summer productions to one every two years, and it has therefore been decided to postpone this year's production of *Macbeth* to summer 2004. The **auditions** that were due to take place on **February 3rd** are accordingly **cancelled**.

Similarly, as mentioned previously, the **rehearsed play reading** due to be presented by Fred Collier on **February 6th** has also been **cancelled**, owing to the fact that Fred is now teaching in Prague.

The date of the **Annual Dinner** has also been changed. It will now take place on **Thursday 13th February** at the **Eastbury Hotel**. Please arrive at about **7.30 for dinner at 8.00 pm**. Dress this year is described as **Jackets and 'Posh Frocks'**—and you would probably be surprised at how long the committee took to decide on this form of words! In case you are still unsure, what it means is wear what you like, as long as it is smart.

The price is a little higher than last year, but we can promise you a better meal and a pleasanter surroundings. The guest speaker will be Roderick Taylor, who although not actually working in our field (he lectures for NADFAS on textiles), nevertheless has a great passion for theatre and, perhaps even more importantly, is known to be an excellent and amusing after dinner speaker. So do please come. Appropriate forms accompany this Newsletter.

On **Monday 3rd March** Dod Pearson and Jean Harrap will be arranging another **unrehearsed play reading**, after which there

will be no more evenings until after the **Spring Production**, which starts with **get in day** on **Saturday 5th April**. Plans are at an early stage at the moment, but if the ideas I have heard of so far go ahead, there will be an enormous amount of stuff to transport and set up in the Digby Hall. Please keep this date free and volunteer to help.

At the time of writing the director proposes three evening performances, with an additional **matinée** on **Saturday 12th April**. However, at the last meeting the Committee was of the opinion that an additional **Wednesday** performance might well be good idea, so this may yet happen. A provisional cast list is shown on this page; I am told that there will probably be some alterations.

After the production on **Thursday 24th April** there will be the annual **Directors' Meeting**. Anyone who has any ideas for a production for 2004 will be very welcome and we would particularly like to see some new directors coming forward. *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* has demonstrated that we need not be afraid of staging something a bit innovative or even controversial.

On the following evening, **Friday 25th April**, Jason Hepple will present another **Chairman's Evening**. Please note that this is another date change, due to the fact that

Jason is now unavailable on the earlier date—one of those things that happens when we have a busy working Chairman. Jason has promised us a 'spectacular entertainment', although he won't tell us what it is yet! Remember, too, that these evenings are intended to be for recruitment as well as entertainment, so do encourage friends (or anyone else) to come along.

At the final April event on **Wednesday April 30th**, Margaret Dixon will host an **unrehearsed reading of *The Anastasia File***, the play that will be our autumn production later this year. Again, this is not an audition, but it is an opportunity for you to discover more about the play and help you decide which part or parts you might audition for in July.

Now that this season's membership has finally settled down—in other words, all of you who have received this Newsletter have paid your subs and those that haven't have been added to the list of lapsed members, I can report that the current membership figure is exactly 100. This number will of course increase when I catch up with the non-members listed below! The next Newsletter will appear after the Spring production. Meanwhile I hope to see you at some or even all of the events in Prompt Corner. ML

Alice

Alice
White Rabbit and Unicorn
Mouse
Lory & 2 of Spades
Dodo, Sheep & Juryman
Young Crab, 5 of Spades & Guinea Pig
Duck & 7 of Spades
Eagle & Frog Footman
Cheshire Cat
Soldier & Tweedledum
Executioner & Fish Footman
Knave of Hearts & Tweedledee
Caterpillar
Duchess
Cook
Queen of Hearts
King of Hearts
Gryphon & White King
Mock Turtle & Red King
March Hare
Mad Hatter
Dormouse
Red Queen
White Queen
Humpty Dumpty
White Knight
Lion

Fiona Stewart
Hannah Jeans
Alice Gardner
Jessica LeQuoc
Natalie Berry
Emma Payne
Bettina Rogerson
Lili Levett
Nicola Bettley
Dominic Adam
Sam Francis
Max Berry
Kirsty Stone
Jakki Gregory
Meg Whittingdale
Natalie LeQuoc
Philip Rogerson
Chris Jessiman
Tony Field
Janet Vincent
Jill Hudson
Emily Billington
Pat Evans
Fizz Lewis
Huw Ridgeway
Tony Stephens
to be cast