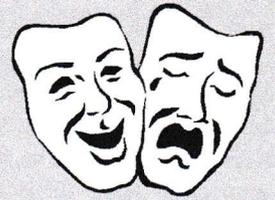




NEWSLETTER



JUNE 2003



This Newsletter is arriving on your doorstep a little earlier than planned due to the fact that the Committee has had to alter the date of the **AGM to July 4th** and we are obliged by the Constitution to provide



two weeks notice of such a change. Another important piece of information is that the **auditions** for the autumn production, due to take place on July 7th and 9th have been **postponed**. Details of these changes later, but first back to what has been happening.

Recent Events

The Chairman's Evening in April went with a swing, with a short but polished entertainment, opened by Mark Freestone with a fine rendition of *Don't put your daughter on the stage Mrs Worthington* and an interestingly read version of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. He was followed by the first surprise of the evening when Daphne Clapperton sang two songs, *History Repeating Itself* and *That Old Devil Called Love*, demonstrating in the process an extremely fine cabaret singing voice hitherto unheard by most of us. Daphne and Jo Freestone then began a rendition of *Hey, Big Spender*, during which the second surprise of the evening appeared--Jason Hepple in full drag (a first for him, he tells me)--a sight that had to be witnessed to be fully appreciated.

Jason, still attired as a blonde vamp, then completed the entertainment with a rendering of *I left my Heart in San Francisco*.

Jason's innovative entertainments will be missed when he is no longer Chairman and it is to be hoped that Committees will be able to persuade him to stage similar occasions in the future.

The following evening was the Directors' Meeting. For the 2004 productions we now

have a selection of plays to choose from, although it would have been good to see more than just three potential directors present. At present I am unable to say what the 2004 productions are going to be, as the results of the meeting are still a matter of some debate among the Committee. The programme for 2004 will be announced as soon as possible.

A few days later Margaret Dixon hosted a very well-attended play reading of *The Anastasia File*. Twenty-eight people turned up for this and it was good to see such a large contingent of girls from the Gryphon School. It is unfortunate that it is no longer possible to make this play our autumn production.

In May Janet Vincent, aided by a small cast, presented an evening of monologues and one duologue, which was much appreciated by an audience of around twenty members.

Finally, in early June yours truly, ably assisted by Hrolf Trump, presented an evening on Sound. To the six of you who came, thanks for coming.

Autumn production

It is with much regret that I have to tell you that Margaret Dixon has had to withdraw and therefore, as I have indicated before, we will not be presenting *The Anastasia File* this autumn. For medical reasons, Margaret has very reluctantly, but realistically, come to the conclusion that she cannot now commit herself to an autumn production, and this decision has the full support, agreement and sympathy of the Committee.

The auditions that were due to take place on July 7th and 9th have accordingly been postponed until a replacement production has been arranged. The Committee is currently working on this and will with luck find such a replacement in the very near future. When details have been finalised, new dates for auditions will be announced via the telephone and e-mail 'grapevine' system.

Annual General Meeting

As I mentioned before, we have had to change the date of the **AGM to Friday July 4th**. We are sorry if this now conflicts with engagements you have already made, but the fact is that the current Chairman's schedule means that he is unable to attend on the 11th. Details of the agenda are enclosed; there are no controversial items as yet, but who knows what will come up under AOB.

Prompt Corner

All events at 7.30 pm in the Clubroom unless otherwise indicated

Tuesday 17th June
An Unrehearsed Play Reading
Arranged by Jennie Ward

DATE CHANGED
Friday 4th July
AGM and Summer Party

Note that the **Auditions** planned for Monday 7th and Wednesday 9th July have been postponed.

As announced previously there is no summer production this year

Now I know the AGM sounds unexciting, and it very often is, but it is one of those occasions that are necessary to the running of this organisation and I do urge you to attend if you can. APS is your society and as such needs your input. At the AGM you have your chance to elect people of your choice onto the Committee and under AOB you can air your views on what the society is doing. Don't leave it all to just a few dedicated people; they need your help and encouragement!

Regarding the elections, we need to elect or re-elect a **President**, as Tony Field has come to the end of his three year term of office. Under the rules Tony is eligible to stand for a further three year term and he has informed me that he is willing to stand again. We also need to elect a new **Chairman**, as Jason Hepple has come to the end of his two-year term of office and is not eligible to stand for re-election. The remaining officers also have to be elected or re-elected. Janet Vincent has indicated that she will not be standing for re-election as **Treasurer** and thus we certainly need a new person to fill this post. Pauline Tillett has indicated her willingness to stand for re-election as **Secretary**.

I too am willing to continue as **Membership Secretary** for another year, although I have now reached the stage at which I would really like to take a rest. If anyone else would like to take on the role this year, I would be more than willing not to stand for re-election. In any event I have

Life Member

I omitted to mention in the last Newsletter that Daisy Mangnall has been offered and has accepted Life Membership of APS. Daisy joined in 1957 and over the years has contributed much to The Players; her Life Membership is actually long overdue. As yet I don't have details of her past work, but I hope to be able to publish these in August. ML

APS Questionnaire results

Just 39 of you replied to the questionnaire. That still leaves over 70 adult members who for one reason or another did not respond. Those who did not reply presumably fall into one of the following categories: a) those who now live too far away to attend Players evenings, b) those who saw the form, meant to reply, but forgot all about it, c) those who are keeping their heads down, afraid that they might be asked to do something, or d) those who couldn't be bothered. My assumption is (and please correct me if I am wrong), that those who did not reply are not really interested in Players evenings, except perhaps for the odd party. This is born out by the fact that most of those who sent back their questionnaires are people we see quite regularly and who for the most part indicated that they attend APS evenings whenever they can.

A request, however, to those who did not reply. One of the reasons for producing the questionnaire was the theory that one or more aspects of the Clubroom or the Society as a whole might be discouraging some people from attending club evenings. If you agree or disagree with this thought, I would still like to hear from you.

For those of you who did reply the second section of the questionnaire was not perhaps entirely satisfactory; compiled in too much of a hurry, I'm afraid. Some rightly pointed out that sometimes they *have* to attend other events. A box for 'too tired at the end of a long day's work' might also have been appropriate, although it has to be said that most people will raise the effort to go to an evening event that they really *want* to attend.

For the majority of respondents factors such as the weather and clubroom facilities were not influential. Ten of you are somewhat influenced by the weather, four by the size of the clubroom, seven by the ambience, seven by the kitchen facilities, one by the location, eight by the loo facilities and five by a good evening on TV (clearly people who do not possess video recorders).

As to the evenings people like to attend, the top five were, predictably, play-readings (both rehearsed and unrehearsed), quiz evenings, musical evenings, and poetry/prose evenings. Improvisation and workshops scored less well, with more 'maybe's' than 'definitely's' and a few 'never's'. Given that acting is the main reason for the existence of the Society, it was perhaps surprising that acting workshops and improvisation were not more popular, but the results do only reflect the answers of the minority of members who replied and many of the respondents were people who for one reason or another we do not see on stage a great deal.

A few of you responded at some length with some interesting comments. The point was made by one correspondent that we are a drama group and we should therefore concentrate on events that "have a strong dramatic component". The correspondent went on to say that "successful evenings in the past have included one-act plays that are rehearsed and *learned* by the cast, and themed evenings, such as Dickens, Cockney, Ayckbourn and Coward". The principle behind this idea sounds fine, but it does seem to have been more difficult in recent years to find people who have the time and energy a) to organise and b) to take part in such evenings. Any volunteers?

Suggestions for other evenings included visits to shows produced by other amateur groups and professional companies, visits to professional workshops and backstage tours. Again, such events, although a good idea, will require a considerable amount of

organisation. Those who have made these suggestions might like to contact me with more concrete ideas for next season--in other words, you might like to 'put your money where your mouth is'! If you don't contact me, I shall probably contact you, in any case.

Perhaps today's members are generally busier than the members of 20 years ago, which brings me to the next point. The same correspondent who asked for the strong dramatic component also commented on changes that occur in the programme, appearing to imply that poor planning sometimes results in productions and other outside events clashing with APS evenings. I have to say that this is not true. When the programme is compiled before the start of the season, it is sometimes difficult for busy people to predict their precise availability 6--9 months in advance. The result is that dates do sometimes have to be changed. But such changes are always due to circumstances that cannot be predicted at the time of planning and they are always clearly noted in the Newsletter.

Over the years there have been occasional comments that some newcomers find APS members elitist or unfriendly, and as Membership Secretary for the last eight of those years this has always been a matter of some concern to me. On the whole, however, I don't think its true. It is, of course, a little daunting for a perhaps shy or diffident newcomer to come into a room where everyone appears to know everyone else, and I do ask that all members bear this in mind when they see a new or relatively new face at a club evening or during a show. But on the whole, I think, we do try to make people feel welcome (c.f. that horrendous amateur group of 12 people who appeared recently on the TV programme *The Good, The Bad and The Ugly!*). There are on occasions people who find fault with our society and leave as result, but I believe that this usually says at least as much, if not more, about them as it does about APS.

It is, of course, also true that within an organisation of over 100 members there will be groups of people who find they have things in common and who thus form separate circles of friends, and this occasionally leads to accusations of cliqueness. This is probably an inevitable consequence of human nature and I have been aware of some fairly obvious cliques on occasions in the past. But as long as it does not affect the workings of the society (and at present it doesn't) it is not a major problem. Any form of elitism should, of course be avoided at all costs; everyone should have plenty of opportunity to show what they can do and be given the chance to develop potential. At present I do not believe that either cliqueness or elitism are a problem in APS, but it is worth keeping in mind at all times.

One correspondent said that they were initially quite discouraged by people getting grumpy during a production, commenting that "v do this for fun". Well, yes, but I suppose it depends on how you define fun. When you are feeling worn out at the end of a long, perhaps gruelling, rehearsal, or when you have spent 8 stressful hours in the Digby Hall building a set or setting up lights, you do not say to yourself "Golly, I *am* having fun!". On the contrary, under those circumstances you are much more likely to exclaim "*Why* am I doing this?!" At such times some people may well become a bit grumpy--I'm sure I'm guilty myself! Perhaps it would be more accurate to say that most of us do what we do for the sense of achievement and satisfaction. Teamwork is the key and cheerfulness at all times should undoubtedly be the aim. But perhaps tolerance of those under stress could also be included in the wish list?

ML

already made it clear to the Committee that in 2004, having completed nine years in the post (and ten years on the Committee), I shall definitely not stand for re-election again.

Finally, of course we need to elect two new Committee members, each of whom will be elected to serve for three years.

Summer Party

As always, the AGM will be followed immediately by a summer party, partly to encourage you to attend the AGM. Family and friends will of course be welcome at the party. Please bring a contribution of food and your own crockery and cutlery. You can also bring

your own beverages if you wish, although wine, beer and soft drinks will be available from the APS bar at a very modest cost.

Don't forget to keep an eye/ear open for messages about the autumn production.

Next Newsletter in August. Until then, have a good summer.

ML