



NEWSLETTER



APRIL 2004

Oh to be in England now that spring is here. Actually, I think I would prefer to be somewhere further south at present as it still far too cold for my taste. I look forward to some warmer weather.



Spring Production

In spite of a difficult start, due mainly to casting problems, *Nude With Violin* proved to be very successful. It's not perhaps Coward's finest play, but it is amusing and it's comment about modern art is as relevant as it was in the 1950s. The slightly racist elements (by today's standards) were played down and most if not all of the doubters were won over in the end. Audience reaction appears to have been universally positive and we have had many people telling us how much they enjoyed it. The total audience figure of around 300 was respectable for a spring production and the Treasurers's current estimate of the profit is about £400 (although there may be bills to come that he has not yet been informed of).

All due, of course, to a strong, hard-working team. This was Jennie Ward's third play in a row—she has hardly paused for breath since last September—and the second time in seven months that she has produced *Nude With Violin*, but this did not prevent her from getting the very best out of her cast and crew. The highly competent backstage, business management and front-of-house teams designed and built the set, and introduced costumes, wigs, props, lighting, sound, posters, leaflets, tickets and programmes in the efficient manner that has become the hallmark of APS productions. To a newcomer the organisation that goes into our productions is very impressive and I often hear comments to this effect. A special thanks, by the way, to Alice Finch Hatton for her superb set design and striking poster artwork.

On stage Roger Chadbourne in the leading role of the valet Sebastien Lacreole was also impressive, not only for his ability to learn such a huge part but also the manner in which he played every subtlety to the full. And what made his performance all the more admirable was the fact that, due a back problem, a great deal of the time he was in considerable pain. Roger came in for some well-deserved praise

from the BVM critic, who was also kind enough to mention a few others. (I'm not quite sure what "paper-tearing apprehension" means, and as for being an 'expert bouncer'.....well; but I will take these as compliments).

It was a pity though, that he did not mention all the other fine performances. We were very glad to welcome two newcomers, David King (Clinton Preminger Jr) and Michael English (Colin Sorodin), both of whom acquitted themselves extremely well in their first foray onto the boards. Thanks also to newcomers Gilly Savage as the flamboyant Russian tart 'Princess', Stuart Wilson as the deadpan Fabrice and Jack Buckley as the willful child artist Lauderdale. Diane Spencer demonstrated her obvious experience and ability as a light but highly intelligent Jane Sorodin in this her first role (of many we hope) for The Players.

More familiar members of the cast were Jill Hudson as the feisty ex-Jackson girl Cherry May Waterton, Mally Lambert as the delightfully vague Isobel Sorodin, David Winks as the laughing photographer George and Barбора Stieess as the ever-so-English Pamela Sorodin (sadly Barбора will be leaving us soon to study drama at Bristol; we wish her all the best and hope to see her back here soon).

Other Recent Events

The auditions for *Macbeth* proved to be disappointing. Too few people turned up to form even the nucleus of the required cast and thus the summer production will now not take place. Perhaps everyone else is going to be too busy, but I (as putitive PM) and the Committee have a suspicion that the published casting arrangements, involving much doubling, together with a somewhat unusual rehearsal plan, may have put some members off. If anyone would care to provide some feedback on this subject it would be useful.

The annual dinner at The Antelope was a great success. The food was excellent and the ambiance pleasant. Our guest speaker, Felicité Gillham, gave us a fascinating and entertaining account of some of her many experiences working in the theatre, often giving us an insight into the real characters of some very familiar people. I particularly enjoyed the story of when she inadvertently

Prompt Corner

All events at 7.30 pm in the Clubroom unless otherwise indicated

Wednesday 14th April
Unrehearsed play reading
Arranged by Jakki Gregory

Thursday 6th May
Fish and Chip Quiz
Devised by David and Sylvia Smith

Wednesday 26th May
Learnt One-act Play
Directed by Gill Manns

Monday 21st June
An Evening with Jill
Presented by Jill Hudson

Tuesday 29th June
Unrehearsed play reading
Arranged by Jennie Ward

Tue and Fri 6th and 9th July
Auditions for
The Farndale.....A Christmas Carol
By David McGillivray and Walter Zerlin
Directed by Fizz Lewis

Friday 16th July
Annual General Meeting
and
Summer Party

tried to place a wig on the head of the conductor Daniel Barenboim.

Forthcoming events

You will, I hope receive this in time to learn of a change of evening on **Wednesday April 14th**. Jakki Gregory had originally planned to arrange an evening involving a group of our youngest members. Unfortunately, not many of them rejoined this year and there are now not enough of them to make such an evening possible; so there will be an **unrehearsed play reading** instead.

On **Thursday May 6th** David and Sylvia Smith will be hosting another of their **Fish and Chip Quiz** evenings. Their quizzes are always ingenious and well worth attending. As always Fish and Chips will be provided at a cost of a few pounds per head. Wine, beer and other beverages will also be available for a modest donation.

On **Wednesday 26th May** Gill Manns will present for our entertainment a **one-act play** in which the actors will play their parts without books; in other words they will have **learned** their lines. Gill suggested this idea late last season, pointing out that The Players used to put on such plays quite regularly. I suggested to her that she might like to try it again herself and Gill and her team have risen to the challenge with a lively comedy, called *Nellie's Nightlights*. Gill has brought together an interesting cast prepared to put in the time learning and rehearsing, and there will be a song or two beforehand. So do please come and support them; by then the cast will have put in a great deal of work and they will find it so much more rewarding if they have a good audience. Bring friends and family to swell the numbers.

On **Monday 21st June** Jill Hudson will present **An Evening with Jill**. I have no idea what this will contain, and the last time I spoke to her on the subject nor did Jill. But I am confident, knowing Jill, that it will be a most entertaining evening.

The more observant of you will have noticed that your Programme of Events contains an entry indicating that Jennie Ward will present a play reading on Tuesday 17th June. This was clearly a mental aberration on my part when compiling the programme, as no such date exists! In fact this **unrehearsed play reading** will now take place on **Tuesday 29th June**.

Autumn production

In July there will be auditions for the autumn production. More details, including cast requirements will appear in the next Newsletter, but I can tell you now that the autumn production has been changed. Instead

of *The Farndale..... Macbeth*, Fizz Lewis will now direct *The Farndale Avenue Housing Estate Townswomen's Guild Dramatic Society's Production of A Christmas Carol*. This is partly because we are not now presenting Shakespeare's *Macbeth* this summer and *A Christmas Carol* is by far Fizz's favourite Farndale play. It also ties in rather neatly with this our 70th anniversary year. In 1994, 60 years after APS was founded, we presented Margaret Field's adaptation of Charles Dickens's *A Christmas Carol* in the Powell Theatre; so presenting the Farndale version ten years later seems more than appropriate.

AGM

It's quite early to be thinking about this but there are one or two matters concerning next season's Committee that are worth mentioning at this stage. We know for certain, for example, that it will be necessary to elect at least three new Committee Members. You will also have to elect a new Membership Secretary; most of you already know that after eight years in this post I have decided not to stand for re-election at this year's AGM. The Committee are thus urgently seeking someone willing to take on this job. The Membership Secretary's duties include keeping membership records, production of the annual Membership Card/ Programme, attendance at Committee Meetings and production of some form of regular Newsletter (not necessarily like this one). Incidentally, these duties do not include all the other tasks that I have taken on over the years, such as management of the archives, publicity file and library catalogue. I will be happy to continue with most of these, although there are one or two other minor tasks that might be negotiable.

If anyone is willing to consider taking on the role of Membership Secretary and would like more information, do please contact me. I feel I must make it quite clear that in the event that no one comes forward, I will not be persuaded to continue in the role for 'one more year'. However, I will do all I can to make the transfer as smooth and easy as possible.

Festival 2005

APS will not be presenting a summer production in 2005. This was agreed by the Committee some time ago in order not to compete or conflict with another major event that will be taking place in Sherborne. During the summer next year there will be a festival celebrating the 1300th anniversary of St Aldhelm's inauguration as Bishop of Sherborne. As part of this celebration, Margaret Field, aided by Margaret George, Pat Harris and probably many others, will present in June at The Powell Theatre a Mediaeval Mystery play entitled *The Nativity*.

The play is largely based on stories from the Bible, but starts with The Fall of Lucifer. And before you get the wrong idea, this is not as serious or deeply religious as it sounds. Mediaeval Mystery plays were intended to provide roustabout humour and were not intended primarily for religious instruction. There will be much song and dance, together with what is described as 'mischief'. More details will be supplied in a leaflet with the next Newsletter but in the meantime Margaret and her team are looking to hear from anyone who would like to get involved, in any capacity, either in a part (large or small) or backstage. You can telephone Margaret Field (01935 815427), Margaret George (01935 812948) or Pat Harris (01963 210462).

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