

NOISES OFF



"THE BIRTHDAY PARTY"

Our Spring production ran for six performances last week, the last four of them completely sold out. Directed by Bev Taylor-Wade, the play was very warmly received and helped to cement APS's reputation as providers of high quality local drama in our intimate new home. For those unfamiliar with the play, there is little point in summarising the story, as it really acts only as a framework for the exploration of certain themes, and in all likelihood, no two people would agree on what those themes are!

It is probably fair to say, however, that the world created in the play is one in which little can be taken to actually be true or dependable, and that lives of bland complacency can quickly unravel into confusion and chaos. Past misdemeanours (whatever they were) must be atoned for, but the process inevitably involves violence and interrogation. The reactions and comments of the audience suggested that these were successfully brought to the surface, whilst retaining the

humorous moments within this "comedy of menace". The cast was uniformly strong - it was great to welcome three actors new to APS, and we look forward to a long-lasting collaboration with them. John's set was stunning, no detail too small to be overlooked, and the lighting and sound (Adrian and Mark) as complementary as always. The props and costumes were perfectly authentic, and the music appropriately chosen. Bev's direction ensured that, following

the opening banalities, the dramatic tension increased and increased through each Act, leading to the powerful dramatic climaxes which Pinter must surely have intended. Many congratulations to all involved! (Have a look at the website to see many more photos of the production.)

FROM THE AUDIENCE:

Some comments about "The Birthday Party" posted on social media:

What an amazing production. Incredible set, great direction, and very realistic and haunting acting! Certainly left me with lots to think about! Congratulations to everyone concerned and thank you for a great evening.

I've just watched your amazing production of Pinter's The Birthday Party - fantastic performances and brilliant staging. I was so impressed with the whole thing with special mention to Gary for a truly spine chilling turn as Stanley. Not a moment when you weren't in character... fabulous! Well done to all of you and hope your last two performances go as well as tonight's did. You are all stars!

What a great venue & such a high quality of acting.

AND THE CAST:

About 4 weeks from the production date, after quite a serious operation, I had a real crisis of confidence, and felt genuine panic at the prospect of being on the stage in front of an audience. However, after a firm talk to myself, I carried on. I realised that Meg, my role, was an absolute gift and it's not often that ladies get to play

someone of their own age, particularly when one is older and that's a real bugbear for professional film and stage actresses too. When practising the lines with my daughter she used to laugh because she kept pointing out similarities to Meg and myself, maybe that was the appeal of the role to me. The play was also a window into the genius of Pinter that I had not appreciated before. However the most important thing I learnt from this production was friendship. A cast becomes "very tight" and it was lovely to work for the first time with Richard & Rachael as well as the entire production team, and meet and act with Gary, David & Jo. We had lots of fun rehearsing, and even more during the week of the play. For anyone thinking of getting involved in future APS business, I'd certainly say "go for it".

Gilly Savage (Meg)

TICKETS

It is very sad that around 20 people who wanted to attend "The Birthday Party" towards the end of the run were too late to get tickets, while there were plenty of available seats on the first two nights. We ask again - PLEASE get your tickets as soon as they go on sale. The Theatre only seats 45, and, going on our record over our first three productions here, THEY WILL SELL OUT! It is upsetting to everyone to have to turn people away.

THE COUNCILLOR'S CHOICE

As reported in the last "Noises Off", last year's production of "A Midsummer Night's Dream", already the recipient of two Rose Bowl awards, was also nominated for a NODA award. Adrian Harding attended the ceremony, and here is his account:

NODA is a national organisation, with 11 regions, each of which elects a Councillor to the national Council. In

the South West, the elected Councillor is Graham Liverton, the de facto top man in NODA for our geographic region, which covers Gloucestershire, Wiltshire, Dorset, Devon, Cornwall and the Channel Islands. This means that amateur operatic and drama groups from Salisbury, Bristol, Bath, Exeter, Gloucester, Plymouth etc, all fall in the catchment. Big groups. Well-established ones. Well-connected ones. Groups with access to talent and funds beyond our imagination and wildest dreams.

There are numerous awards given for best musical, best opera, best comedy, best youth production, best drama, best pantomime and so on. Graham saw most of these throughout 2018 (he reckons 40+) and must have seen some astonishing productions, including Chitty Chitty Bang Bang, (which cost £23,000 to stage), Les Miserables, Spamalot, Oh What a Lovely War, La Traviata, and all the rest.

It is in his gift to select the production which, in his opinion, was the most outstanding of all the year, for all reasons (acting, set, costumes, music, lighting, props, mood, tone, interpretation) irrespective of size, budget, category or location. And for 2018, the play which absolutely blew him away was.....

"A Midsummer Night's Dream" by Amateur Players of Sherborne.

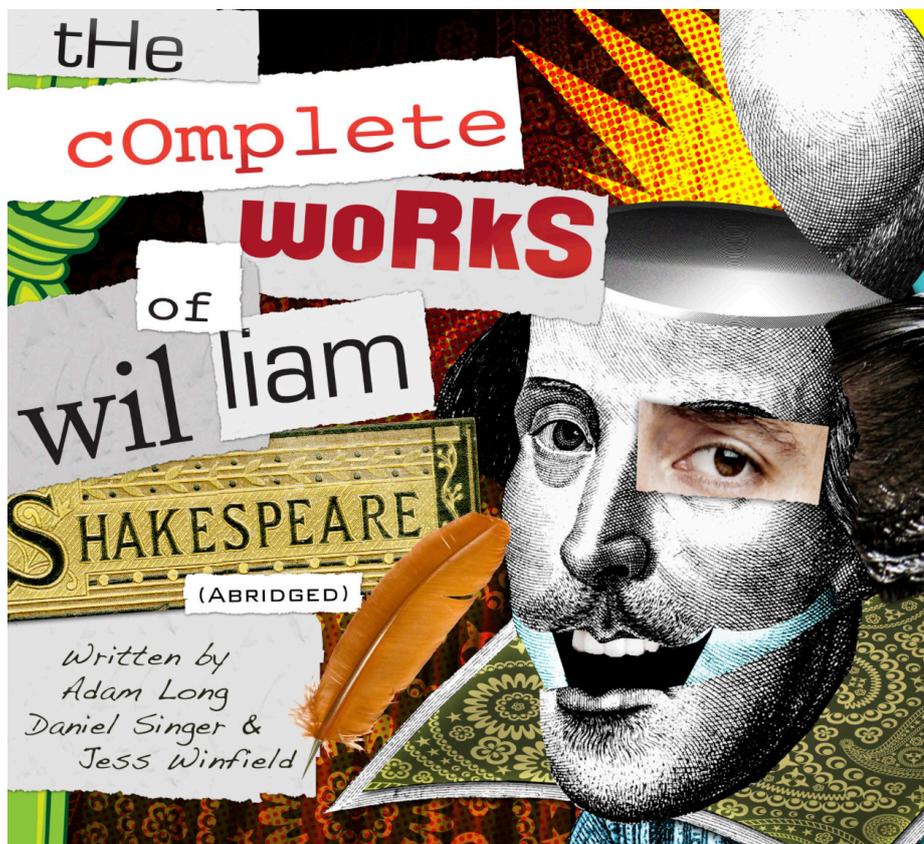
A mighty accolade indeed, and one to be cherished, relished and enjoyed for its significance.

Adrian Harding (Bottom)



Adrian, with the trophy for what we can justifiably call our "Multi-award-winning" production

OUR NEXT PROJECTS...



Early planning has begun for a very “different” show in the summer. “The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Abridged)” was first performed at the Edinburgh Fringe in 1987, before becoming a long-running West End hit with The Reduced Shakespeare Company. It could be described as an affectionate, though not terribly respectful, gallop through the Bard’s works, focusing on speed and fun, embracing multiple theatrical genres. It holds the current world record for a performance of “Hamlet” (42 seconds) - we will, of course, be aiming to improve on that!

After our run in the Sherborne Studio Theatre, we are exploring the possibility of also performing at the Shaftesbury Fringe in early July.

An Interest Meeting is to be held at the Theatre on Monday March 25th at 7.30. Do come along and find out more. There are many parts available, as big or small as you like, and there are more details on the website. All that’s needed is enthusiasm and a sense of fun!

“ROLEPLAY”

RolePlay, finds Alan Ayckbourn at his classic best, with the action set, as on so many previous occasions, at a disastrous dinner party. Julie-Ann and Justin are preparing a family dinner at their apartment to announce their engagement. It will be the first time they meet their potential in-laws.

It’s obvious that Justin and Julie-Ann are rushing into things, although devoted to one another they are not particularly well matched. As they warn each other about their parents, it’s also clear that marriage is an escape for both of them. They don’t really communicate that well. Julie-Ann announces that she wants them to stop living together until the wedding, and describes her honeymoon fantasy to Justin. It’s clear that she wants fairy-tale romance, not reality - she’s deluding herself if she thinks he can fulfil her dreams. Their different priorities are soon clear enough: a missing dinner fork is a major disaster for Julie-Ann and when she rushes out to find one, an unexpected guest drops in -- literally. Justin finds Paige dangling from the balcony trying to escape her corrupt and violent boxing promoter boyfriend. His bodyguard Micky comes after her, but she won’t return to the apartment, and he can’t force her. So they stay for dinner. The invited guests finally come too, with Justin’s mother nicely drunk and Julie-Ann’s parents who are intolerably cheery.

Our reading of *RolePlay* will take place in the Sherborne Studio Theatre at 7.00pm on Wednesday 27th March, hosted by Sarah Webster.

Do please come along and support, and bring your friends, whether or not members of APS. Everyone has a chance to read, but there is no pressure to participate if you just prefer to listen.

**"A PENNY FOR A
SONG" BY JOHN
WHITING**

It is the summer of 1804, and England is bracing itself for invasion by the armies of Napoleon. On the Dorset coast, the eccentric Bellboys family prepare to confront the tyrant in their own individual and bizarre ways - recruiting a force of rustic simpletons (Dad's Army, anyone?), wearing armour, hi-jacking an air-balloon and going down a well. Meanwhile, the daughter of the house falls for a young mercenary with real experience of the horrors of war; after he leaves, the essence of Englishness re-establishes itself through the essential priority of playing cricket. Conceived - unsurprisingly - in 1940, the play affectionately mocks all these eccentric activities, whilst providing a very gentle satire on the futility of war.

Our reading of *A Penny for a Song* will take place in the Sherborne Studio Theatre at 7.00pm on Wednesday 8th May, hosted by Martin Williams.

Do please come along and support, and bring your friends, whether or not members of APS. Everyone has a chance to read, but there is no pressure to participate if you just prefer to listen.

TWO ADVERTISEMENTS:

Adult drama classes

Rural Redemption Theatre Company presents:

Drama training for adults in Sturminster Newton.

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Whether it's to improve your existing skills or to try out something new, these classes are suitable for anyone with an interest in 'treading the boards'.

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For full details please get in touch:

ruralredemptiontheatre@gmail.com
07814 876254.
<https://www.facebook.com/northdorsetplayers>

Shaftesbury Arts Centre

APS has forged a link with Shaftesbury Arts Centre, many members of whom have supported our work. Please support their next venture - a double bill of "Audience" by Michael Frayn, and "The Real Inspector Hound" by Tom Stoppard. 9th - 13th April at 7.30.

Tickets available at shaftesburyartscentre.org.uk



Shaftesbury Arts Centre Music and Drama Group presents:
Audience and The Real Inspector Hound
Tuesday to Saturday 9-13 April.
All tickets £6.50 on Tuesday
"Not high culture. Just good fun."

Book tickets Shaftesbury Arts Centre
Box Office: 01747 854321
www.shaftesburyartscentre.org.uk
11-13 Bell St, Shaftesbury, Dorset SP7 8AR
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DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

- Mon March 25th 7.30pm** Interest Meeting (*The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Abridged)*)
- Weds March 27th 7.00pm** Play reading: (*RolePlay*)
- Weds May 8th 7.00pm** Play reading (*A Penny for a Song*)
- June 26th - 29th** Proposed summer production (*CWWSA*)
- Fri July 12th 7.00pm** AGM and Summer Party