

NOISES OFF

"AWFAR" special

"A WIFE FOR ALL REASONS"

This was meant to be – in the Director, Adrian Harding's words – 'a little winter warmer'. Three nights in January for a show that needed the intimacy and close focus only somewhere like the Sherborne Studio Theatre could provide. *A Wife For All Reasons* was written by Stephanie Easton, co-founder of the Torrington Players, and won a NODA Certificate of Excellence when performed by them in 2019. The show deserved a reprise, NODA thought, but where...?

Fast forward to a hot evening last June for the play-reading. A positive advance buzz ensured a good attendance (including no less than seven men for a show that could have

been subtitled 'Six Queens in Search of a Theatre'). By the end of the evening we knew that *A Wife For All*



Stephanie Easton, the author, who attended the matinée performance.

Reasons could work brilliantly at Sherborne. And so it proved. Three shows became seven, and advance ticket sales were strong, helped by a Vermeer-like photo-portrait on Facebook of the dying Jane Seymour cradling a large polystyrene head in lieu of her newborn son. Adrian designed and built a gem of a set in black and dusty red, with wood panelling, a throne and a bench. And on the floor, a chess-board for our Queens.

Wolf Hall, A Man for All Seasons, The Six Wives of Henry VIII, Six the Musical and many others – why the perennial fascination with the love-life of this one man and these six women? The high stakes? The frocks?



Sally Matthews (Anne Boleyn)

politicians who manipulated the Queens around the chess-board. The elephants are not in the room. This time, the women get to speak, uninterrupted.

Each Queen was allowed by Steph Easton to survey the entire field of English verse and return with a poem to serve as a catalyst for her reflections. This could be unbearably poignant – as when Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s ‘How Do I Love Thee?’ prefaces Kathryn Howard’s outpouring of love for young Thomas

Culpepper the night before her execution; or when Christina Rossetti’s ‘Remember Me’ introduces Jane Seymour on her deathbed. Both poems were beautifully recited by Jessica Colson for our two youngest Queens, realised in heart-rending performances by Hazel Perrett and Beth Yates. Tanya Ogden gave us a masterclass in conveying Catherine of Aragon’s conflict of emotions at her impending divorce – outrage, pride, humility – and even then, love for the old brute. We heard Sally Matthews enact Anne

We want to understand why these women queued up, lemming-like, to be married, humiliated, betrayed, and (usually) divorced or executed. Why did Kathryn Howard, who had seen Anne Boleyn – her first cousin – executed for adultery, volunteer for the same role, only to lose her own head for the same crime 18 months later?

A Wife For All Reasons gives us some insight into these questions. It is a show written by, for and about women. The intimate reflections of six women fortunate – or unfortunate – enough to have been chosen to be Queen of England, by the man/child/monster Henry VIII. We never see the King, nor the



Tanya Ogden (Katherine of Aragon)

Anne_Marie Harvey (Lady-in-Waiting)



Boleyn's psychodrama: singing 'Gather ye rosebuds while ye may' up the aisle, unconscious that her time was up; glimpsing reality: 'he is bored of me'; reverting to denial: 'He will have eyes for no one but me...I am indestructible.' Wise, brilliant Bev Taylor-Wade gave us wise, brilliant Anne of Cleves' account of her choices, outliving all other Queens and dying happy and



**Beth Yates
(Jane Seymour)**



**Hazel Perrett
(Kathryn Howard)**



Rosi Castle (Catherine Parr)

as Lady-in-Waiting. Had she, like so many others, been tempted to bed by the bloated king?

*They knew not I knew thee,
who knew thee too well:
Long, long shall I rue thee,
too deeply to tell.*

Some men muscled on to the stage between Queens – Roger Chadbourne as

Narrator, and the odd Poet or two. But this show was all about the women.

A quirky, unusual choice for APS, championed from first to last by Adrian – but by universal acclamation 'A hit! A very palpable hit!'

Robert Brydges

beloved. Rosi Castle's Katherine Parr played many roles: style icon, barren wife (to conceal Henry's impotence), his Regent, his nursemaid; and finally she surprised herself by becoming genuinely fond of him. Last words went to Anne-Marie Harvey



Bev Taylor-Wade (Anne of Cleves)

NEXT PRODUCTION – "THEFT"

After a short break during which we plan to carry out maintenance and development work in the Theatre, we will return in June with our next production, the comedy *Theft*, by Eric Chappell, to be directed by Jessica Colson.

Imagine returning from a pleasant anniversary celebration to find your house has been burgled.

In this witty thriller the culprit is still in the house and, for a while, he convinces the returning couples that he is a policeman. Unmasked as the thief, Spriggs reveals he knows a number of uncomfortable truths that disrupt two seemingly happy marriages and one formerly strong friendship.

The play was introduced last year at one of our

playreading evenings, and went down extremely well. We are looking forward to another popular, sell-out show.

The cast comprises 2 females and 3 males. Details of the auditions process will be announced in due course, and all APS members will receive an email notification of the dates.



THE 100 CLUB

We are delighted to welcome three new members to the 100 Club: **Martin Terry, Frank Jarman** and **Rosemary Clary**. We wish all three of them the best of luck in all future 100 Club draws. As we regularly report, the 100 Club exists to give vital support to our fund-raising efforts on behalf of the Theatre, and in its short existence we have already raised over £3200. This puts us well on our way to our dream of being able to put new seating in the theatre. But there are plenty of tickets remaining, and more than a half of the total of APS members have not yet joined up - **please do so as soon as you can.**

Please see "Support Us" on the website, or email [sst100club@gmail.com](mailto:ssst100club@gmail.com) in order to join.

The next draw will take place on February 10th.

QUIZ NIGHT

Back by popular demand - we are holding another **Quiz Night with Fish 'n Chip Supper at 7.30pm on Friday February 9th.**

This evenings are always very popular - £2.50 to enter, with the opportunity to place an order at the beginning for fish and chips, which will be delivered at the interval.

The bar will be open all evening - cash or card - but please note that payment for the fish and chips must be made in cash.

Further details will be emailed out shortly.

APS SUBSCRIPTIONS

This is a reminder that annual subscriptions were raised to £20 on January 1st. Credit card payments will be adjusted automatically, but please remember, if you pay by Standing Order, you will need to contact your bank to make suitable arrangements. Thank you.

COLIN MAYES

Members of APS who knew him are saddened to hear of the death of Colin Mayes last summer. Colin joined in about 1980, around the time that I and my husband joined. For the next 20 years or more we were very happily involved, both on and offstage, in around 25 productions.

Colin was a versatile and appealing actor, who was first choice for the leading role in the mind of many directors. He also enjoyed set-construction, stage management and our social activities. I remember one adjudicator who said his acting was of professional standard. It is hard to single out the most memorable

roles, but I would suggest his work in *Ten Times Table* - 1986, *A Pack of Lies* - 1987, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* - 2002, but most of all as Reuben Dewey in Gerald Pitman's highly ambitious production of *Under the Greenwood Tree* in 1991. This was a 3 hour show, in the round, in the Digby Hall, with Colin's splendid voice carrying to perfection. We send condolences to his wife, Anthea, and to all his family.

Gill Manns