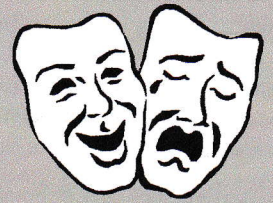




NEWSLETTER



SEPTEMBER 2000

Being British, it is our custom to complain about the weather—and we have had much to complain about this summer. However, the gods appeared to be on our side during the six night run of *As You Like It*. Having been driven indoors for two fairly crucial rehearsals, we managed two dress rehearsals outside and then, apart from a smattering of rain on the Monday night the weather turned fair and we remained miraculously dry throughout the rest of the week, albeit a little chilly sometimes as the evenings progressed.



Prompt Corner

Mon 18th September

APS Modern

First of the regular Monday meetings of the new experimental drama group.

Led by Jason Hepple

Barrington House, Coldharbour, 7.30 p.m.

Thur 21 September

ACT IV US II

Open evening for potential new members. An introduction to APS and a chance to take part in some rehearsed play-reading. Existing members welcome, especially if they bring along one or more potential new members.

Digby Hall, Hound St, 7.30 p.m.

Fri 9th September

Chairman's Opening Night

With an entertainment entitled 'Couples' Membership Subscriptions will be collected. 'Nibbles' will be provided.

The Crown Inn, 7.30 p.m.

Thur 19th October

Face the Music

Our version of the well-known television panel game, hosted by Jason Hepple

The Crown Inn, 7.30 p.m.

Tuesday 7th November

Speed The Plow by David Mamet

A rehearsed play reading.

Presented by Steve Evans

The Crown Inn, 7.30 p.m.

Saturday 23rd Nov - Sunday 3rd Dec

Country Life

Autumn Production week

Without question, *As You Like It* was a tremendous success. Jason's visionary and imaginative direction, together with his haunting music, a beautiful setting, talented acting from the cast and, of course, the weather, combined to create a show that was later described by our President, Tony Field, as "magical", adding that his scepticism about amateur companies taking on Shakespeare had been severely dented.

Audiences left feeling as though they had had a very entertaining evening and some people returned for a second viewing. Good reports by word of mouth, combined with a positive review in the Blackmore Vale Magazine helped to build audiences to 86 and 120 on the Friday and Saturday nights, giving us a total audience of over 400 and an overall profit of over £800, more than double the amount we have made on any recent production in the Digby Hall.

There were, as always, some criticisms, mostly in this case from the Rose Bowl Adjudicator, who found it difficult to get to grips with Jason's concept of a Rainbow Alliance and disagreed with some aspects of the direction and character interpretation. But in the end these were the opinions of just one person and overall the adjudication was reasonably positive, particularly with regard to the acting and general presentation.

Praise has also come from a number of other sources. The BVM review described the show as "fascinating, beautiful and thought-provoking". Sue Eagles, Develop-

".....a Greek invocation to call fools into a circle". Digital photo by Jim Schofield.

ment Director at St Antony's-Leweston School thought that the show was wonderful and said that the school was proud to have us there. Henry MacDonald, the Headmaster has written a very appreciative letter in which he remarks upon the sense of fun and enjoyment that came over strongly in the performance and hopes that we will return with another production sometime. Our former President, Joy Saunders, tells me that, having had reservations about Shakespeare being performed in modern dress, she was entranced and thought it was one of the best APS productions in many years.

Space does not allow me to give everyone the credit they deserve for this success. Suffice it to say that all those concerned, from the Director to the parking attendants, contributed to a brilliant, professional and smooth running production. The atmosphere backstage, while remaining disciplined, was always relaxed and happy, and we all had a very good time. What more can one ask for?

AGM

The 2000 AGM was held at Lyon House, by kind permission of Patrick and Sue Francis. The minutes of the previous year's AGM having been read, the Chairman reviewed the year's activities. She congratulated Jason Hepple, Tony Field and Jessica Colson on their highly successful productions of *The Tempest*, *Arcadia* and *The Constant Wife* and

What's On

Macready! Sunday September 10th, 7.30 p.m.
Powell Theatre, Sherborne. In support of the restoration of Sherborne House.

One performance only of Frank Barrie's critically-acclaimed one-man show, already performed in 41 countries and filmed for television, recounting the life and times of the famous Victorian actor Macready. Macready, who lived at Sherborne House, was one of the first to move towards a more naturalistic style of acting. He led a colourful life, and as a result of rivalry with the American actor Edwin Forrest he became involved in a riot at the Aster Palace Theatre in which 22 people were killed.

"A marvellous and highly-accomplished performance which ought not to be missed"

The Stage

"Macready! is illuminating and entertaining: well out of the usual one-man shows"

The Observer

Tickets £5.00 available from:

Booklore, Hound Street, Sherborne;
Tourist Information Centre, Digby Rd;
Jeremy Barker, St Andrews, Westbury,
Sherborne DT9 4 RU (Tel: 01935 816764).

Artsreach Theatre Lighting Workshop

Sat. 28th October, 10.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m.
Village Hall, Lytchett Matravers
£10.00 per person if booked before 30th Sept.
Thereafter £12.00.

Led by David Goodman (Projects Manager, AJS, Ringwood) and Sophie Scarborough (Company Stage Manager, Forest Forge). The day's programme includes a technical session (equipment, rigging, focusing and safety) and an artistic session (use of lights, colour, equipment and special effects). Anyone interested, please contact Mark Lambert (01258 817270) by 25th September.

thanked the retiring members of the committee for all the hard work they had put in during their terms of office, in particular Joy Saunders who has been President of The Players for the past six years.

Elections for Officers and Committee were held. In addition to the President, Those standing down were Anthony Stephens (Secretary), Jessica Colson (Treasurer) and two committee members, Sue Francis and Patricia Stewart. In their place Tony Field was elected President, Jim Schofield as Secretary and Janet Vincent as Treasurer. Three new committee members, Tony Birks-Hay, Amanda McEvoy and David Smith, were also elected.

Make-up Appeal

The make-up department is a bit short on eye-shadows and blushers. I'm told that it is quite possible that some members may have unwanted items of this type lying around. If so could they please contact Sylvia Smith (01935 817439) with any offers. Towels, too, are in short supply, if anyone has any to spare.

Rosebowl Nomination

I am pleased to report that Mark Freestone has been nominated for the award for Best Actor Drama in the 1999-2000 Rosebowl Awards for his performance as Septimus Hodge in *Arcadia*. A richly-deserved nomination. Congratulations, Mark.

Forthcoming events

This season's opening night is a little later than usual, partly because there has been so much going on and partly so that our Chairman, who as I write is in Australia, can attend. The Treasurer will be collecting subscriptions (£10 adults, £2.00 students), upon receipt of which I shall be handing out the usual Membership Cards/Programmes. If you cannot attend please send in your subscription beforehand. Nibbles will be provided on this occasion (Regrettably, a meal is too expensive for the society to subsidise every year) and drinks can, of course, be bought at the bar. Several couples have been invited to contribute towards an entertainment—hence the title.

Prior to the Chairman's Opening Night, however, there are two events. The first of these will be the inaugural meeting of the experimental drama group, which the committee has decided shall be known as APS Modern (there are, I know, arguments for and against this name, and believe me we have discussed them all!).

The purpose of this new group is to provide an opportunity for members to rehearse and perform experimental theatre styles and works that are not normally part of the traditional APS format. By meeting regularly it is hoped to create a more ensemble approach to acting and provide a greater cohesion and more sustained creative development than is normally possible when rehearsing for a particular production. New approaches to acting will be encouraged and there will be opportunities for new writers to try out their work. Possibilities include local tours and one-night shows, ventures to larger festivals and major productions of experimental work.

The first meeting will take place at Jason's home on Monday 18th September and the intention is that subsequent meetings will be held regularly on Mondays—holidays, productions, etc excepted. By attending this first meeting you will not be committing yourself to anything, so do come, even if only to find out what it is all about. It is intended that the first venture for the new group will be a radio play to be broadcast on Mirage FM, a local radio station covering Yeovil, Sherborne and Crewkerne. The title of the play and the date of the broadcast have yet to be decided.

Members should note that if they are taking part in a separate production whose rehearsal dates coincide with APS Modern

Country Life

Alexander	Tony Field
Helen	Amanda McEvoy
Sonia	Jan Bridgman
Julia	Elsie Lombard
Jack	John Sutherland-Smith
Max	to be cast
Horace	Tony Manns
Maria	Madeline Lambert
Farm worker	to be cast

Directed by Geoff Lewis

meetings, the production rehearsals must take priority. By the same token members who choose to try and take part in both a major production and an APS Modern production would be wise to check that they are not overcommitting themselves.

On the following Thursday we are once again holding an ACT IV US evening, this time earlier in the season. The main purpose is to recruit new members, so if you know of anyone who might like to join, do encourage them to come. As last year, the evening will begin with a brief introduction to The Players, followed by a warm up to help people relax. Those present will then be divided into four groups and spend 20 minutes or so rehearsing a short play reading, which each group will then present in turn. This gives potential new members a chance both to find out if they enjoy doing this sort of thing and to show us what they can do. Existing members are welcome to come; last year we had about the same number of members as newcomers, which seemed to be the right ratio to encourage the newcomers without intimidating or overwhelming them.

Production Schedule 2000-2001

AUTUMN 2000

Country Life

An adaptation by Geoff Lewis
of *Uncle Vanya* by Anton Chekhov
Directed by Geoff Lewis

SPRING 2001

Arms and The Man

by George Bernard Shaw
Directed by Jennie Ward

SUMMER 2001

Hamlet

By William Shakespeare
Directed by Mark Freestone

AUTUMN 2001

Ring Round The Moon

By Jean Anouilh
Directed by Margaret Field

rganisation of Productions

oservant members will have noticed that the production team has altered slightly in recent productions. Until recently it was the task of the Director to recruit and oversee his or her own production team, but in the past year or two it has become the practice of some Directors to recruit a Production Manager to take on much of this work and the committee has now made this position a regular one.

The role of Production Manager is based on the former position known as the Business Manager (largely concerned with ticket sales), but with added tasks of recruiting the rest of the production team and making sure that everything runs smoothly, thus leaving the Director free to concentrate on casting and re-

hearsals. The committee has prepared a written brief for the Production Manager, and the same time has revised and updated the briefs for other members of the production team.

Without going into too much detail, the Production Manager recruits the Stage Manager, Properties Manager, Lighting Director, Sound Director, Wardrobe Mistress (or Master), Publicity Manager and Front of House Manager, each of whom in turn can recruit any assistants they require. The Production Manager is in constant liaison with the Director (of necessity a two-way process) and is also responsible for ensuring that tickets are printed and placed on sale, and for arranging the preparation and printing of a pro-

gramme. Copies of the Production Manager's brief, and those for other members of the team are available.

This all sounds good, and indeed it works very well. But there is at present one major problem—a distinct shortage of people willing to take on some of these tasks. Although the membership is growing very satisfactorily, it is becoming increasingly difficult to find members willing to undertake the 'behind-the-scenes' work that is so essential to every production. It has to be said that while most members are happy to take part in a production as an actor, when it comes to finding people to do such things as stage management, props, costumes, publicity and front of house management, volunteers are few. As a result

these jobs tend to be filled by just a few dedicated people.

With an increasing membership, it should be possible to share the load a bit and give those who do these tasks regularly a rest occasionally. So if you have enjoyed acting in a production and have thereby benefited from the hard work of others, please do give a thought to what you might contribute as a member of a production team another time. Previous experience of these jobs is not essential, as it is always possible to find someone to give advice and a bit of help, and one of the best ways of learning is to actually do the job. All that you really need is the willingness to devote some time, energy and enthusiasm. I look forward to seeing queues of volunteers in the future! ML

Thursday 19th October sees a repeat of **Face The Music** hosted by Jason Hepple, aided and abetted by yours truly. A chance for two teams of panellists to pit their musical wits against one another for little more than the kudos of winning, and for the audience to see if they can come up with the answers when the panellists cannot; this year we may even introduce a section in which the audience can compete. Last year the score was kept by The Lovely Louise, and this time it will be the turn of her sister, The Tantalising Tamsin.

On Tuesday 7th November Steve Evans will present a rehearsed play reading of *Speed-the-Plow* by David Mamet. Members should note that this is a fast-moving play containing strong language. The play was premiered on Broadway and The National Theatre, since when it has enjoyed two further London runs and a national tour. Steve writes: "Mamet's text is written in an archetypal modern urban American pattern of speech - all the hesitations, repetitions and changes of tack which occur in conversation are written in, leaving less room for embellishment by the actor. Mamet's views on the technique of acting are set out in no uncertain terms in his book *True and False, Heresy and Common Sense for the Actor*, which I would recommend to anyone willing to read it with an open mind and ready to have some of their cherished notions swept away."

The autumn production, *Country Life*, is now largely cast (see previous page) and rehearsals are under way; the very small part of the farm worker is likely to be filled by a member of the backstage team. As I write, Geoff is still seeking a Production Manager.

Lighting and sound

Those who attended the AGM will recall the suggestion that we might hold lighting and sound evenings during the coming season. However, we have a very full programme ahead, and as there did not seem to be much more than an academic interest in what would inevitably be talks or seminars, the idea of such evenings has been abandoned.

If anyone is seriously interested in learning more about these subjects, it is certainly possible to do so. Adrian Hole, who currently lights all our productions, will always welcome offers of assistance, and acting as lighting assistant during a show is probably one of the best ways of learning how to do it. Interested members might like to offer assistance during the next production, as there will be a lot to do. They might also like to attend the Artsreach Lighting Workshop (see 'What's On'), which will take place only if there are enough advance bookings.

Sound is slightly different, in that by the time production week comes round, all the work in creating the sound tracks has usually been completed. All that is necessary dur-

ing production week is to set up the sound system required and then concentrate on operating the correct buttons and faders at the right time during the performances.

With the advent of computers and minidisks the ways in which high quality sound effects and music for stage productions can be created and mixed have improved dramatically in the past few years. If anyone is interested in learning more about the processes I use to create sound tracks and build sound systems, I will be happy to demonstrate here at Ridge Farm. ML

Officers and Committee 2000-2001

President
Tony Field

Chairman
Gill Manns

Secretary
Jim Schofield

Treasurer
Janet Vincent

Membership Secretary
Mark Lambert

Committee
Michael Baatz, Tony Birks-Hay,
Jason Hepple, Amanda McEvoy,
David Smith,
John Sutherland-Smith

Bats!

In order to help protect our costumes from bat droppings and damp, we propose to put up a plasterboard ceiling in the costume store. For this we need half a dozen volunteers to form a working party, probably at a weekend. Contact Jim Schofield (01935 812051). Please volunteer, otherwise we will have to telephone you to ask you to help!