



NEWSLETTER



APRIL 2003



Those of you who were involved with *Alice* will now no doubt be taking advantage of this amazing warm, dry weather to catch up with your gardening or other ploys; the rest of you no doubt already have smart, tidy gardens!



Alice

It is a long time since The Players put on a production with so many young people. Of the 26-strong cast, 14 were under the age of 18, and a number of the adults involved have been heard to say how much they have enjoyed working with them.

It is probably fair to say that with such a large cast more rehearsal time would have been an advantage, but all the cast worked very hard in the time available and the production came together very well, with some excellent performances.

Fiona Stewart, with her lovely clear voice, gave us a delightful Alice and it was very bad luck when her voice started to give out during the Thursday performance. However, her misfortune gave her understudy the chance to metamorphose from a caterpillar into Alice and, after one brief on-stage rehearsal on the Friday morning, Kirstie Stone acquitted herself well in two performances, with a determined Fiona returning to the role on the Saturday night.

The heroines of Tony Field's production team were, of course, the wardrobe ladies, Pauline Tillet and Kathy Messinger, who both slaved for weeks making the 38 intricate and colourful costumes. Not forgetting, of course, all the other members of the very strong and hard-working backstage team, all of whom put in many hours of work, sometimes late into the night, setting up and eventually taking down the stage, props, set, lights and sound.

Five performances were hard work for all concerned, but were necessary because of the seating limitations. Predictably, the matinée proved to be the most popular of all, and for obvious reasons a higher proportion than usual of the 430 or so people who came to see the show were children. As a result the gross amount taken for tickets sales was probably a bit lower than one would normally expect for the number of people. But expenses were not excessive and although the

income and expenditure figures have not yet been finalised I guess that we have probably made a profit. Congratulations to Margaret Field and all her cast and production team.

Recent Events

There were only six people (about which more later) at Jason Hepple's unrehearsed pantomime readings, but even so we had great fun reading through several short pantomimes that Jason had written for hospital events in Bournemouth.

The Annual Dinner, immaculately organised once again by Tony Birks-Hay, took place at the Eastbury Hotel. Opinions varied as to the quality of the food, but all agreed that the ambiance of the Eastbury was far pleasanter than the Sherborne Hotel and it was a very enjoyable evening. Roderick Taylor, the guest speaker, provided us with an entertaining and, at the end, quite emotional, account of his involvement with theatre around the world. Our thanks to him and to Tony.

Finally, at the beginning of March, Dod Pearson and Jean Harrap organised an entertaining unrehearsed play reading of two one-act plays. Some 15 members had a very enjoyable read.

Forthcoming events

The next event on the Calendar is the **Director's Meeting on Thursday 24th April**. If you have any ambitions to direct a play, please read on.

The aim of this meeting is to provide the Committee with a list of plays (and directors) from which to choose next year's productions. Our choice of productions is always 'director-led', by which I mean that it is no use the Committee thinking up plays that we would like to see performed and then trying to find directors for them. On the contrary, it is essential that the ideas for plays come from potential directors themselves. In this way we can be sure that a director has the necessary enthusiasm for the play from the start.

The title of the meeting may seem a little imposing (OK, so you think of a better one!), but please do not let it deter you. The proceedings are actually very informal and all we are seeking are your ideas and enthusiasm. So whatever your age or experience, do please come and talk to us if you think you might like to direct a play for

Prompt Corner

All events at 7.30 pm in the Clubroom unless otherwise indicated

Thursday 24th April

Directors' Meeting

Any member who would like to direct a production during 2004 is invited to come present their ideas to the committee.

Friday 25th April

DATE CHANGED from your programme Chairman's Evening

A purely social evening, with entertainment. All are welcome, including potential new members wishing to meet us.

Wednesday 30th April

An Unrehearsed Reading of

The Anastasia File (Autumn production)

Arranged by Margaret Dixon

Friday 16th May

Monologues and Duologues

Presented by Janet Vincent

Thursday 5th June

CHANGE OF EVENT

Sounds Interesting

An 'illustrated' talk on sound in theatre, with an opportunity to 'play' with sound equipment. Arranged by Mark Lambert

Tuesday 17th June

An Unrehearsed Play Reading

Arranged by Jennie Ward

APS. We really do need new, younger directors.

If you are coming with a play to present to the Committee, it might be helpful to us to know in advance that you are coming and what play you are bringing. But come anyway even if you haven't managed to tell us beforehand. And if you just want to come and see how it works, you will be most welcome.

As I mentioned in the last Newsletter the date of the **Chairman's Evening** had to be altered to **Friday 25th April** and so by chance it has worked out that it is now the night after the Director's Meeting. As always, the Chairman's Evening will be a convivial get-together with no other purpose than to have a chat and a good time. Jason Hepple has planned an entertainment about which I am sworn to secrecy, but I can tell you that you will probably be in for a surprise.

Marathon Man

Jason Hepple completed the London Marathon in 4 hours 45 minutes. He would have liked to have done it at least 15 minutes faster, but when you are running with 31,000 other runners it is actually quite difficult to keep up your own steady pace (so he tells me; I have no first hand experience of this myself, nor any intention of acquiring any!). Congratulations to Jason, who as I write is enjoying a well-earned rest in Cornwall. ML

The following week, on **Wednesday 30th April**, Margaret Dixon will host an **unrehearsed reading of *The Anastasia File***, the play we intend presenting as our autumn production this year. Do come and find out what the play is about and see if there are any parts you would like to audition for in July.

Next, on **Friday 16th May**, Janet Vincent will present an evening of **Monologues and Duologues**. Knowing Janet, this is likely to be a highly entertaining evening!

The next evening listed in your Membership Card/Programme has been changed. Sue Francis is no longer able to arrange the World War I evening she had planned and instead on **Thursday 5th June** I will present an evening entitled (perhaps optimistically) **Sounds Interesting**. This will basically be an evening on theatre sound that I had originally planned for next year. It will be more of a talk than a workshop, although there will be an opportunity at the end of the session for anyone interested to get some hands-on experience with sound equipment.

I intend covering the history of sound in theatre from the days of mechanically-produced effects to the sophisticated minidisc and computer technology available today. It will by its very nature be a little bit technical, but I hope to make the subject accessible to all and to use sound effects to make the evening as entertaining as possible. If you

Missing DVD

A special edition double DVD of *One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest* was circulated among the cast during the run-up to the autumn production, but I have no idea who was the last person to borrow it. I would very much like to have it back, and, as it must be in the possession of one of you who will receive this Newsletter, I would appreciate a response to this plea. Please call me on 01935 850511.

Tony Birks-Hay

APS Club Evenings

Club evenings are a long-standing institution, dating back to the 1950s, shortly after the first APS Constitution was drawn up and the first official Committee was formed. The purpose behind these evenings was then, and remains today, to provide members with events that combine both social and educational elements. Most evenings, it is hoped, are entertaining and some help to teach us more about acting or drama in general. Others are purely social; they provide occasions when members can meet without necessarily having to take part in a rehearsal, thus helping to make APS a more cohesive society.

Having said that, low attendance at players evenings has always been a matter of some comment. There are statements in past committee minutes as far back as the 1950s that refer to the fact that a disappointingly small number of members attend. In recent years, apart from social evenings, which normally attract about half the membership, an attendance of 20 or so members at APS evenings has been regarded as normal, if sometimes a little discouraging. However, in the past two years attendances seem to have declined even further and the presence of just 6 people at Jason's pantomime play readings in January this year was an all-time low.

There is, at present, no intention of abandoning the idea of club evenings; the principles outlined above apply just as much today as they did 50 years ago. But the Committee would like to try and discover why the decline has taken place. Is the idea of a Players' evening simply too boring to contemplate? Are the competing interests of TV, cinema, bingo or other outside social events too strong? Do members find the clubroom too unattractive? Should we be trying to find different ideas for evenings and, if so, what would appeal most to members?

Hence the enclosed questionnaire. I know that long-standing members will recall surveys in the past. But time has moved on and the membership has changed. This survey has been designed to attempt to answer the questions outlined above and we would appreciate it if all members, new and old, could spare a few minutes to fill it in and return it. As an incentive, our Chairman, Jason Hepple, is donating a **bottle of champagne**, the winner of which will be the person named on the first completed survey form drawn from the box at the Chairman's evening on April 25th. ML

know of any members of other groups who might be interested, or who could even make a useful contribution, they will be most welcome.

With reference to the panel above, I don't actually mind how many of you turn up; I think I can make the evening worthwhile for even a few interested people. However, if the audience is going to be of any size it would be useful to be able to project computer images onto a large screen. So if anyone has access to a computer video projector that I could borrow for a few days at around this time, I would be very grateful.

After this, on **Tuesday June 17th**, Jennie Ward will arrange another **unrehearsed play reading**.

In July there will be auditions for the autumn production and the AGM. It is early days yet, but it is worth bearing in mind that at the AGM we must elect a new Chairman, as Jason Hepple will reach the end of his term of office. There will also be at least two new Committee Members and the remaining Officers to elect (not all of the current Officers will necessarily stand for re-election). But I will write more about all this in the next Newsletter, which will appear in June. Meanwhile enjoy the spring and the forthcoming APS events. ML

Lost Property

The following items were found in the Digby Hall after the end of *Alice*.

- ◆ Pair of blue and white trainers.
- ◆ Black, long-sleeved roll neck top. Primark. Size 10-12.
- ◆ Pair of cord trousers. Pale cream. Size 8.
- ◆ Hand towel. White(ish) with green lines.
- ◆ Black velvet/velveteen headband
- ◆ One black sock with grey 77 and stripes round top.
- ◆ Pack magic colour change pens. Incomplete, 8 pens of 12
- ◆ Pack of playing cards; German Shepherd dog /Alsatian on backs
- ◆ 2 purple hairbands
- ◆ Small gold-coloured plastic device. Sliders marked A, B, C, D.
- ◆ Small white semi-opaque food container. Food has been removed!
- ◆ Various cards to cast members.

The above items are currently in the clubroom and can be claimed at any players evening. Call me if you need more information (01258 817270) ML