



Newsletter

March 2015

Chairman's Message

First and foremost a sincere thanks to all involved in the first part of the season which has yet again been successful selling to excellent houses. The season started with 39 Steps which provided a real show case for Director, cast and crew. Swiftly followed on by Bazaar and Rummage, Studio plays are becoming much more popular and this was no exception, with a cast of both experienced and new actors. Chorus of Disapproval and the Christmas Entertainment gave us a good build up to the holiday period. Murder on the Nile proved a popular start to the new season, tried and tested to suit our audience and cheering everyone up for the New Year.

And now we are on to the second half with a really successful ambitious production of Merchant of Venice in association with the RSC – of which more later! Marika Farr makes her second contribution as Director for “Two” in the Studio while Pygmalion and Noises Off are getting underway.

Everyone works so hard - well done!!

Artistic Director News - from the Chairman

It is with real regret that I have to inform you that Richard Taylor has had to stand aside for six months having been offered a

work contract which places him in London during the week. He advised myself as Chairman as soon as possible and I have with the Committee been determined to find the right temporary solution at this critical time of year, and to allow for Richard to see how work unfolds.

We have agreed that a Production Advisory Group will oversee the choice of plays for the next season and then the casting for the first half. This is allowed for in the constitution. The group will comprise Hugh Meredith, Tori Wakeman, Sue Downing, Chris Clarke, with support and oversight from myself. There will be a strong link with Hilary Thompson, our Membership Manager to ensure that all members old and the many new are considered and valued and we will draw on the experience of our valued members.

Proposed plays will be set at the end of April and then casting will take place after Directors have been identified. We will therefore keep to the usual timetable ready for the next season.

Clear Out Weekend

4th/5th July 2015 and weeks before and after

As usual we need all members to commit to the weekend to help do cleaning out

and essential maintenance. Keith and Mike will have a full list of jobs to be done and as part of the Society this is an essential way of keeping a theatre going in Kidderminster and one of the commitments you need to make.

Please advise Box Office if you can come so we can estimate numbers. There will be food and free beer of course!! 😊

The week before and after there will still be lots of work as Keith and Mike are planning to strip, sand and re-surface the stage on which we have all our fun. Please let us know if you can help either week as we need the stage to be in good fettle for the coming season.

Merchant of Venice – Feedback from the RSC

Wow!! What a Society are we? Jen Eglinton produced and directed for us Merchant of Venice as part of the RSC Open Stages Project. She recently met with Ian Wainwright from the RSC for feedback.....

“OK, a brief breakdown of Ian Wainwright’s comments about our play

Technical: Ian had a lot to say about the setting and concept of the production. He was impressed with the set and congratulated the builders, especially liking the balcony and the fountain! He said the design was effective and easily adaptable for all scenes both inside and out. He remarked how difficult simple or virtually no sets are to pull off as they need more complex design skills than a box set as they only have bare essentials to describe the context. It was well lit and gave clear indication of Mediterranean atmosphere and scenarios. Sound was

effective and he liked very much the Einaudi pieces, especially the garden one, perhaps thinking they could have been used more? Atmosphere collages helped transitions (scene changes) which are always difficult to pull off well. Many of ours worked and actor’s entrances and exits were slick and effective. One or two of the furniture changing bits needed better choreography as they were a fraction too long. (E.g. getting the fountain on... but when it was there... what joy!) Speed is the essence. Perhaps this needs to be addressed at the technical rehearsal more?

Script changes worked extremely well and he commended the cuts and alterations and said he will now always put the casket scenes together if he directs it again! He did notice Old Gobbo had gone but thought it skilfully arranged and it worked.

Costumes were excellent, absolutely right and in keeping with the concept and characterisations. He loved the idea of the masked ball, taking us back into history through Carnevale and contrasting well with the more modern simplicity. (Well done Alix. I mentioned you xd)

He liked the concept and what we were trying to convey very much. A difficult time for such a drama with the political situation being what it is, and he liked that we didn’t go ‘Jewish’ and kept it very pertinent to today’s attitudes and behaviour, steering a line through it all clearly. It was obvious that the characters were actually not pleasant and that Shylock was a victim of the law when trying to follow it himself.

The acting impressed him. The use of language and understanding of the text was good throughout with few weaknesses. He said a few really stood out: Portia owned the stage and was an exceptionally strong driving force throughout. Clear and very well performed. Thought we should have taken Bassanio's mask off earlier to see his face when choosing the caskets. Mea culpa. Shylock excellent, and obviously well experienced and in control of the role. Maybe a fraction more broken at the end? But a strong and commanding performance, again in full ownership of the stage. Joe excellent physicality and roles well devised and executed. Loved the football shirt. A compact and detailed portrayal. He thought the whole cast worked very well together and the production gelled. Liked the use of mobiles etc. It was all very enjoyable and he was pleased to see us using the youth group. He remarked on the direction, saying I was a strong visual director in control of the production, which was also picked up on by the critic from Behind the Arras, who also thought it a well-rounded, inventive and fluently performed production."

Well done everyone. You nailed it and I got an excellent piece of cake and pot of tea!

Ian says he is looking forward to possibly working with us all again in future Open Stages ventures. XX Jen

We have recently been advised that we will be invited to perform cuts at the Swan Theatre in Stratford in June and Jen will be managing this on our behalves and will be in touch. Hooray!!

Last year we had an outing and I hope we can do this again to support our members – it will be June 14th the Sunday after "Noises Off".

And it Doesn't End There....

Dream 16 Project

The next phase of our involvement with the RSC has been to provide directing and acting skills in the "mechanical" roles for assessment as part of the next production of A Midsummer Night's Dream.

What dreams are made of

A report from Sue Downing

Being Bottomless when we arrived at Stratford on Saturday morning, we half expected to be turned round and sent back to Kiddy. But no, those generous professionals embraced our courage to carry on in adversity, and gave us the same opportunity as the rest of those nervous, awe-struck, wet-behind-the-ears, giddy amateur hopefuls.

And what a fabulous weekend we had. Despite dislocated thumbs, torn shirts and grazed arms we fell into that tour bus on Sunday evening exhausted and exhilarated to have had a taste of the secret delights behind the sacred door that is the RSC.

We took part in acting, movement and voice production workshops, doing our best to keep the good name of the Rose Theatre and the Nonentities on everyone's lips. I have to say that at times it was quite a struggle to keep those lovely Mechanicals in one piece – they proved to be very popular.....

We feel honoured to have been given the opportunity to take part in the 2016 Open

Stages project. And, even if we are not chosen to go forward to the next round in June, we have given it our best shot, and thoroughly enjoyed this fantastic experience. Hopefully when the heat dies down we can collate our notes and ideas, using our new knowledge to enhance future performances.

Thanks to everyone for their support.

On behalf of:

Patrick Bentley, Chris Clarke, Andrew Bingham, Simon Hawkins, Alex Powell and myself;

Sue Downing – aka stand-in Bottom

Stop Press

We have just heard from the RSC about our future involvement!

They say:.....

“Dear Nonentities,

Thank you so very much for joining us in Stratford upon Avon for a truly amazing weekend. The RSC team and I were so impressed both by the very high standard of your work but also by your wonderful openness to us and what we asked of you, and to each other. It was a real pleasure to meet you all.

I am delighted to say that we would like to invite you to join us for the next stage in the auditions process. We were really struck by your ensemble spirit, quality of performances and the inventiveness of the scene you had prepared. I thoroughly enjoyed working with you in the audition room.

We would very much like Sue, to join us in a directing capacity as well as an actor in your company, for the next stage.

Looking forward to seeing you again, I very much hope you will be able to join us.

With hearty thanks for your time and generosity of spirit, and all the very best,

Kim

***Kim Sykes
Associate Director***

Midsummer Night’s Dream 2016”

Members Matter

Hi everyone from Hilary. I am delighted to report that we have had upwards of 20 new members join in the last 12 months, all wanting to do a range of production and support work.

I am stressing to all members new and old that membership includes a commitment to helping with bar and FOH when the call comes!

The tricky bit is getting new people involved quickly and so all Managers need to think about training days and weeks when new members can be invited along.

We have agreed that “TWO”, as a Studio play will be a training week for FOH and Bar as the numbers of audience are less.

David Wakeman and others have offered to do training on technical work on either a weekday or evening as we now have a number of new members keen to learn.

I am trying to identify one or two new members who can learn the computer system so that they can do Box Office in the evening – much needed.

But our new members need us oldies to help them along and gain confidence

Vacancy – no, sorry I'm not leaving but am looking for a beautiful Assistant to help with the social side of the role. I hope to get more trips and events going but need some support. Also there may be someone who wants to shadow the role to plan for the future. Applications and bribes welcome – well just a word with me would do!

Member News

Congratulations Alix Abrams who has been given a place at the Bristol Old Vic to study design – we are so proud and pleased for her

Congratulations to the Taylors – Derek and Kerena on their wedding – what more can one say?!

And Hooray – we have a new Nonentity – Verity Rose – daughter of Steph and Nat – we hope she is learning her lines. Well done you two!!

Subscriptions

We have got underway with the new system for payment from 1st July each year. This has meant pro rata payment for those due for renewing before 30th June and will still mean a pro rata system for those due to renew after 1st July.

See message from previous Newsletter below

Membership Subscriptions

To confirm that at the AGM membership subscription rates were increased in line with inflation to Full - £45, Associate - £10, Couple - £75, Concessions - £25 full

The Theatre Manager has indicated that the current system of members paying subs at any repeat time during the year, usually on the anniversary of joining, is causing problems of admin, reminders, emails lost etc. So the Committee have agreed that a new system will be instigated whereby all membership falls due on 1st July of each year. There will be an interim year 2015 when members will pay a manual pro-rata calculation. The full system will be complete then by 2016.

Example – if your current membership fell due on 31st October 2015 – you will pay again on July 1st 2015 as well instead but will have 4 months deducted to reflect what you paid this year.

Example – if your current membership is due in January 2015 you will pay then but pro rata to take you to 1st July 2015 i.e. 7 months.

Bear with us! – Mena in the Box Office is doing a great job and come June 2016 everyone will be on an annual renewal from 1st July. Any queries about membership payment can be resolved by Mena at the Box Office together with myself, we hope.

Hilary xx

Box Office Training

Box Office on the night is a critical role but it requires training on the computer system and shadowing of current experienced members

Please let us know if you are interested – much needed

Dinner Dance – Urgent – you need to sign up

The Dinner Dance will be on Friday 26th June 2015 at the Stone Manor – cost £27.50. A sign-up sheet is in the office. – just ring in to office to book of your place. We have had a number of deposits but time is pressing on. Please please phone the office to log your interest and pay deposit of £10.00 by the end of April 2015.

It will be a great night with the Golden Gnomes Awards – all suggestions welcome

New members and old please join us to celebrate the Society and keeping a theatre going in our community

New Patron – John Challis

It is with pleasure that we announce that John Challis of Only Fools and Horses fame and who used to work as a young actor regularly at the old Play House in his rep days, has agreed to be a Patron of the Rose Theatre.

He appeared at the Rose on 7th February, talking about his life in the theatre and his memories of Only Fools and Horses. We will be following up our link with John.

Members News and Views

Sandy Tudor - she is a member rep on the Committee and a very longstanding and professional actor with the Nonentities. She says:

Just think!

When we commit to a role in a play we commit to well over 200 hours of our time in just over a 7 week period.

(Based on 21 evening rehearsals, 30-60 minutes a day learning, the Sunday dress rehearsal and 6 nights performance.)

This doesn't take onto account travelling to and from the theatre or the fact that most of us have a full-time job and/or family to look after.

The dictionary definition of commitment is 'an engagement or obligation that restricts freedom of action.' !! We are supposed to be doing this for fun but being in a play does mean putting practically everything else in our life on hold or in the background for nearly 2 months.

Every production is a team event and everyone (however small the part played, on or off the stage) must be prepared to make this commitment if they agree to take the part on. When we tick the availability slips we must know we can fulfil that obligation. We all depend on each other.

Rehearsals in particular need all characters to be there when required. It isn't easy to talk to 'a space' and a director can't direct unless everyone attends

and puts in the time to learn lines.

Quoting from the Membership Handbook: 'Your commitment will of course be for the full rehearsal period (usually 7 weeks) and the show week itself.'

BUT THE SHOW!!! Don't we all get a real buzz from performance and then isn't all that time and effort and teamwork worth it?

Sandy xx

Your Front of House Needs You

Congratulations to Amanda who is doing a great job as our new FOH Manager – with new products and yes! new coffee machines.

She says:

“It's a great way to keep in touch as a member and you can plan being on with members who you are in plays with or to meet up with those you haven't seen for a while.”

Amanda will be arranging training times for new FOH volunteers and would welcome any member into the FOH family

Box Office – urgent need for new volunteers. This involves training on the computer system and is a critical role to the smooth running of any production night.

BAR

Bar – with paid staff the call for volunteers has been less but please we still need you. Experienced bar volunteers particularly needed on the predictable busy nights and if Hayley is of sick or needs a booked night off.

We have agreed that we will keep a list of experienced bar volunteers who can step into the breach if there is an emergency gap.

Rehearsal Teas

Hilary keeps a list of people prepared to provide teas for the Sunday double rehearsal before productions. Cast and Crew work hard on the Sunday before production weeks and need a tea between double rehearsal. We charge a fee of about £3.50 per head and those providing teas can manage it as they wish. We are a bit thin on the ground for catering volunteers - it's a great way to support a production.

Phone Hilary on 07500337585 if you think you can help

And Finally

Members Social Night – Friday 8th May

It's our Society – our club

All welcome and a social Play Reading included.

The bar will be open so just come along to meet old and new friends.