

## Oxted Players

Our Spring play, *Alphabetical Order*, by Michael Frayn was well received both by audiences and critics. Tony Flook who reviewed the play for *The Guide* wrote as follows:

"Were newspaper offices ever as disorganised as the one depicted in Michael Frayn's comedy *Alphabetical Order*, even in the days before computers and databases? The writer should know – he worked as a journalist for some years. OK, he may have overstated the chaos and slightly overdrawn the offbeat characters but there just might be a hint of reality.

Oxted Players' recent production directed by Ken Nicholson at The Barn showed how a new recruit, the humourlessly-efficient Lesley gets to grips with the paper's library and those who work in it and the staff who treat it as a home-from-home.

Mike Sutton's design set the scene perfectly – disorganised files and cuttings litter the place, probably contravening every health and safety regulation going. The stage team must have worked hard in the interval to transform it to neatness for the second act.

*Alphabetical Order* isn't easy on the actors, either. Much of the dialogue consists of short exchanges, sometimes involving five or six characters. The cast achieved the essential conversational style and sharp responses with very few lapses and they all kept their own idiosyncratic characteristics even in the frenzy when they learned that the paper had closed.

Lucy, of the Oxfam fur coat, oversized earrings and quicksilver movements was played by Amanda Ryan as if she truly was out of her depths in charge of the library and only too pleased to let her assistant take over. Joanne Saville built her performance well to show Lesley's growing confidence as she surreptitiously assumed control. The other characters were all intentionally irritating in their own ways. Geoffrey, Mike Rourke, was irrepressibly cheerful, whatever the situation whilst, at the other end of the scale, Arnold, Wilf Berger, was the morose, monosyllabic refugee from the newsroom who spent his spare time in the pub. Guy Hudson spouted long, rambling monologues as John, the vacillating leader-writer and Deirdre Walker made the most of her less-rewarding role as the well-meaning but over-effusive features editor. The unnamed newspaper office may have been an interesting place to work but it certainly employed some strange people!"

Our thanks to Tony Flook and also to Donald Madgwick for their favourable reviews. We would also like to send our best wishes for a speedy recovery to Tony Flook who is presently hospitalised. We hope to see him back in action very soon.

We are now embarking on a very busy season, beginning with our Young Players Workshop which runs from 17<sup>th</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2003, and culminates in the performance of their play *Robin Hood and the Children of Sherwood* at 7.00 p.m. Tickets are £4.00 obtainable from the Ticket Secretary on 01883 724852. At the time of going to print, we have a couple of places on the Workshop still available. Please ring Muriel on 01883 717754 for further details. The workshop runs from 10.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m. each day from Monday through to Friday with a read through on Sunday afternoon, 17<sup>th</sup> August. The Saturday is spent putting the finishing touches to the play and the dress rehearsal in the afternoon. David Rowan is in charge of the youngsters who will greatly benefit from his direction.

Our Autumn production 15 to 18 October 2003 at 7.45 p.m. is *The Weekend* written by Michael Palin (ex Monty Python). Chris Hepher takes on the role of Stephen Febble, the grumpy father faced with an unwanted weekend visit from his daughter and her family. June Brown is his long suffering wife, Virginia. Lynne Lloyd and Mike

O'Rourke are their neighbours. We are also very pleased to welcome new members, Julie Hogg and David Fanthorpe as the daughter and son in law and Ash Thakar as the chiropodist. To complete the cast we have Jackie Barrett as the Marxist cleaning lady and young Abigail Thomas-Verweij is the teenage granddaughter. Full details can be found in the handbill enclosed. Please come and support us.

Finally, we have now chosen our Pantomime for January 2004 which is the old favourite, *Jack and the Beanstalk* (see handbill). Ken Nicholson directs and a read through will take place on Friday 5<sup>th</sup> September 2003 at the Little Barn at 7.30 p.m. with auditions on 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> September from 7.30 p.m. in the Theatre. The cast includes Jack, Princess Melissa, King, Simple Simon, Ransid, Fairy Thistledown, Giant Blunderbuss and Daisy the Cow plus a strong adult and junior chorus. For further information please contact June on 01883 714460 or Ken on 01883 627496.

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## The Pepper Band Returns to The Barn

Following their fantastic reception and sell-out show at The Barn in December 2001, Sgt Pepper's Only Dart Board Band will return to The Barn on Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> December 2003.

The in-demand Beatles tribute band has been as busy as ever over the intervening two years. The Fab Five, who just love to entertain, have toured Germany twice in the last two years as well as attempting to perform in Prague last summer, but the floods proved too powerful even for the Peppers. In fact the second week of their tour there was a complete wash-out. Not to be outdone, the Peppers returned to Germany this summer and despite some thunderous downpours managed to perform brilliantly at the Homberg Stadtfest in front of an enthusiastic 6,000 people. The summer festival season is always a busy time for the band. This summer has also seen the band perform at the Salisbury, Kettering and Bristol Ashton Court festivals, as well as for the National Trust at an outdoor evening concert, all of which were extremely well attended.

This year's highlight so far, though, just had to be performing again at Liverpool! But this time at the famous Cavern Club! The band took over the venue for the whole of the late May bank holiday weekend – and what a weekend it was! Five days later, it transpired, one Sir Paul McCartney performed a 'secret' gig on the same stage – how spooky was that? This was before his big King's Dock gig on 1<sup>st</sup> June. The Pepper Band performed quite brilliantly at the Cavern in an amazing atmosphere – they have been invited back by the management, so must have done 'something' well!

With a huge repertoire to select songs from, the band is always looking to do something fresh in their shows while still performing the old favourites from 1962 – 1970, and their forthcoming show at The Barn will be no exception in this regard. And, those of you who saw their show in 2001 will recall, all the tongue in cheek humour is still there! In fact, their shows these days just get better and better!

Tickets at £10 each are available from the Churchill Gallery, Westersham by post or by telephone from now until 17<sup>th</sup> November. Credit card bookings are welcomed indeed encouraged, ring now 01959 561811. After 23<sup>rd</sup> November the tickets will be available from Ibbetts in Station Road East.

"Possibly the best Beatles tribute band in the country" - Salisbury Journal (reviewing their 2003 Salisbury Festival show).

Check out the band's web site on [www.sgtpeppertribute.co.uk](http://www.sgtpeppertribute.co.uk)