

The Oxted Players

Much Ado About Nothing brought our 2008/9 season to an end with a resounding success both critically and financially. If you didn't manage to see the play you missed a real treat. Tony Flook ended his glowing review for the Surrey Mirror saying "Early in the play, Leonato summarises the relationship between Beatrice and Benedick as a "skirmish of wit". It's an epithet that equally well fits the play and is what Oxted Players gave us, to perfection". Our thanks go to Paul Longhurst and everyone involved in the production whether on stage, on the production side or helping front of house. It was a true team effort and everyone should congratulate themselves.



Beatles are Bard from Bluehouse Lane

At the recent AGM we retained all but one of our Committee and said a fond farewell to Mike Rourke and welcomed Peter Shore. In these difficult times the Society has managed to thrive and with careful planning and management has been able to maintain its financial stability. As a result we have been able to introduce a February half term week long workshop for the Young Players with David Rowan and to continue to support both an adult and youth entry to the Southern Counties Drama Festival. Our Young Players go from strength to strength and we look forward to their March production to be directed by our Chairman, June Brown. Our young members are the Society's future and we aim to encourage their theatrical development as much as we can.

We now have a busy season ahead with two youth workshops, two plays, a panto, two Festival entries and our biannual Young Players' production in March. Our August week-long workshop will see our Young Players rehearsing and performing an adaptation of *Grimms Fairy Tales* with David Rowan.

Rehearsals have already begun for our Autumn play, *Communicating Doors*. Coincidentally, Alan Ayckbourn was 70 earlier this year and this will be a fitting tribute to mark his birthday. The play opens in 2014, in a 5* suite of a London hotel, with *Julian* having found a prostitute (*Poopay*) for his ailing business associate *Reece*. *Reece* actually wants *Poopay* to witness a document confessing to the murders by *Julian*, of his first and second wives (*Jessica* and *Ruella*). *Reece* collapses; *Poopay* is frightened by *Julian* and escapes through a communicating door and finds herself back in 1994. Thus begins her time travelling adventure in this very clever comedy thriller. Chris Bassett is the evil *Julian*, with Sarah Bell as *Poopay*, Nicky Gill as *Ruella*, Rhian Lally as *Jessica*, Duncan Browne as *Howard* and Alan Webber as *Reece*. The play runs between 14 and 17 October 2009 and tickets are now available on 01883 724852 (adults £9 and students £7).

From 8 - 16 January 2010 we mark the 60th anniversary of our annual family pantomime at The Barn with the classic tale of *Dick Whittington* which this year is directed by Janette White. We welcome to the team Ieuan Rees as Musical Director and Sarah Gillender as Choreographer. Please note that the read through date has been changed to Friday 11 September 2009 and will take place at Hurst Green Community Centre at 7.30 pm. This is instead of 13 September as previously stated. The audition date remains at 20 September 2009 from 2.30 pm. Please note that you will have to be a paid up member to audition and there is still a waiting list to join our Young Players. Pantomime is great fun for the performers as well as the audiences so if you are interested in being involved and would like further information in advance of the read through please contact Pat on 01342 893217 or email her at: Publicity@oxtedplayers.co.uk. To become a member please contact us on 01883 716566 or you can email the membership secretary at Membership@oxtedplayers.co.uk. Alternatively, visit the Barn Theatre website and click on the link to the Oxted Players to download an application form. The website is www.barntheatreoxted.co.uk

Music to My Ears

I read recently that the Lowery Theatre in Salford had to refund money to an audience member who sued the venue under the Trades Description Act because its Christmas Show did not feature live music.

This ruling will give theatres across the country "food for thought" especially as we will be shortly approaching the pantomime season in which the 'trio in the pit' used to be the backbone of many a Christmas show, but so often regarded as the Cinderellas in the professional productions. In recent years we had seen the advent of taped music and Click track. I saw a pantomime last Christmas where a "behind you" routine song had to be 'choreographed' to fit the recorded music so that any spontaneity with the audience was thrown out with the bath water.

In true panto tradition the band were expected to follow the entire plot (or lack of one) providing sound effects for the comics, evil music for the villains and play "on and off" music for the principal characters as well as cover scene changes – very often without any score at all.

Some of the best times I have had in panto have been the exchanges I have had with the band and I have to say that some of those exchanges with those musicians (and I use the term musicians lightly) have been priceless. Who can forget Rick Hein, a native American, who, when he first started to play for the Barn Pantomimes hadn't a clue of this very English medium, but soon became hooked and became very inventive in a great many successful pantos. Then there is Drew Brooke-Mellor who was born into a theatrical family; he went down so well his mother kept it in the Act... drum cue: "Boom Boom"! Drew grew up backing every major artist in Pantomime and his drumming skills and theatrical knowledge have enhanced many a show.

So, as you audition this year for Dame, Villain, Principal Boy or Girl, be thankful that you are not auditioning to a backing track and don't just hand the Musical Director a dog-eared piece of sheet music and subject him or her with the line "I'll start the number – you just follow", but embrace the talents that only live musicians can bring to any musical production.

Thanks for the Sunshine

The Friends of Oxted Health Centre and Community would like to take this opportunity to thank all who receive this newsletter for the wonderful support for their fund raising "Instant Sunshine" show on 20th June... The final figure is not available at the time of writing but should top £3,500.