



2010 is well and truly upon us and that must mean that The Barnstormers tour to the Minack in Cornwall is now looming on the horizon. 'Jesus Christ Superstar' has a full cast of over 50 performers and rehearsals have recently got off to an encouraging start.

The production team of Neil Reynolds (Director), Ian Skipper (Musical Director) and Fran Reynolds (Choreographer) are overwhelmed by the exceptional talent amongst the principals, dancers and chorus and are delighted finally to get to grips with this iconic show. We've no doubt that JCS will be one of the theatrical highlights of 2010.

The Barnstormers will be performing 'Jesus Christ Superstar' at the Minack Theatre in Porthcurno, Cornwall (www.minack.com) from Monday 31st May to Friday 4th June 2010 and we hope that some of you will be able to travel down and support them. The Minack Theatre box office (01736 810181) opens on 22nd March.

Dress Rehearsals at Laverock School - Sunday 23rd May

For those that won't be able to make the journey down to Cornwall, The Barnstormers are pleased to announce that they will be staging two dress rehearsals in the open-air on the tennis courts at Laverock School, immediately adjacent to the Barn's rear 'cast' car park.

There will be two performances on Sunday 23rd May at 2.00pm and 5.30pm open to all friends, family and Barn supporters that would like to come along. Numbers will be limited, so please call the Barn Theatre Box Office on 01959 561811 to reserve your place.

As these two Dress Rehearsals will be taking place in the open-air on all weather tennis courts, we are asking that everyone bring along their own chairs/rugs etc to sit on and you are also welcome to bring along a picnic to enjoy whilst you are watching the show. Access to the tennis courts will be via the Barn Theatre, so those arriving by car will be able to park in the Barn's car park as usual.

The Barnstormers are very grateful to the governors of Laverock School for allowing them use of their facilities, and we would encourage as many of you as possible to get along and support these two Dress Rehearsals. These will be the final two performances before the cast, crew and helpers head down to Cornwall a week later, so let's make sure we send them off on a high! Once again, spaces will be limited, so book early to avoid disappointment!

For more info on the production, check out the Facebook group 'Jesus Christ Superstar at the Minack Theatre – May 2010' or contact Richard Allen on rpallen@tiscali.co.uk.

Avon Calling

How often do any of us get the chance to share a cigarette break and a chat about theatre with the Artistic Director of The Royal Shakespeare Company? Not often, I hear you say (especially the non-smokers). However, that is precisely what did happen to me during the last weekend in October.

As a result of recently being asked to take over the job of Secretary of the Eastern Area of the All England Theatre Festival, I was also asked to be one of the AETF delegates at a "creative planning weekend" run by the RSC at Stratford Upon Avon in connection with their proposals for a World Shakespeare Festival, to be part of the Cultural Olympiad running alongside the 2012 Olympic Games. As well as their own contribution and those of The National Theatre, The Globe and various regional professional theatres, the RSC are committed to involving the amateur arts movement in the WSF.

The amateur delegates were an intriguing mix – I found myself talking to clog dancers, composers of contemporary music, poets and exponents of religious drama, as well as the expected theatre directors, actors and stage managers. The RSC's partner in running the weekend was The Voluntary Arts Network, an organisation which to my shame I had never heard of before – check out their website at www.voluntaryarts.org – there is some very interesting information there.

The weekend was a fascinating combination of kicking around ideas for amateur involvement in the WSF (watch this space for further details in due course) and workshops run by RSC staff, including interpreting Shakespeare's text, stage management, movement, and marketing and dealing with the press. Unfortunately, the finer details of online marketing via Twitter went rather over my head, as I've never "Twitted"!

The highlight of the weekend was attending a magical performance of Twelfth Night in the Courtyard Theatre on Saturday evening. The RSC had given us top price tickets – I was about 8 feet from the edge of the thrust stage. The star of the show was supposed to be Richard Wilson (of One Foot In The Grave fame) as Malvolio. Excellent though he was, to my mind he was eclipsed by a magnificent performance from Nancy Carroll as Viola/Cesario. This production transfers to the Duke of York's Theatre in the West End from mid-December until the end of February – miss it at your peril!

Apart from the Saturday night performance, two things will stick in my mind from the weekend. Rehearsing a scene from Twelfth Night on the Courtyard stage where the RSC had performed the previous evening was pretty special, but the most remarkable thing was the attitude of the RSC personnel. In the amateur drama movement, we are used to some professionals looking down their noses at us. But with the RSC, from Michael Boyd, the Artistic Director, to the stage managers, we the amateur delegates were listened to with interest and respect. What a breath of fresh air.

Chris Hopher.

Start the Year with a Spud

The first Sunday Club of the year saw almost 50 people sitting down to a baked potato lunch to welcome in the New Year. Tables and chairs were erected in the bar and foyer and it was indeed a most civilised and enjoyable occasion or 'potato party' as some called it. The logistics became somewhat different to planned as only 10 or 12 orders were anticipated and orders just kept coming in right up until the evening before. Another most successful event, with the lunch prepared by Caro, who, by popular demand, promises to repeat the idea later in the year.