

## *Sunday Club Spud Lunch*

Following on from this year's tremendous success, we are planning a simple baked potato lunch for the first **Sunday Club of the New Year**, on 2<sup>nd</sup> January. Potatoes will cost £5.00 (all profits to the theatre), with a meat or veggie option ([please specify veggie with order](#)) and you will need to order and pay in advance please. I can collect the money any time I am at the theatre or you can contact me by email or telephone if you haven't seen me. I shall serve at 1.00pm and everyone who has ordered and paid for their meal by 12.45pm will be guaranteed a spud. After that they may be available to anyone who turns up on the day and pays but no guarantee. Please e-mail me ([carolyn.rowley@btinternet.com](mailto:carolyn.rowley@btinternet.com)) or telephone 01883 744810 with orders, as soon as possible (last e-mail orders 30<sup>th</sup> Dec) as numbers will be restricted to 50 on a first come, first served basis.

---

## *Topsy on Stage*

Barrie Ward, director, wanted a real cat on stage for the first scene in *Half a Sixpence*. Various fluffy toys had been used in rehearsal. The cat did not have to learn any words but was required to listen to a song while being carried round by the leading man.

Among my six cats was a really docile and beautiful Colourpoint called Topsy, but I was dubious about the risk to her of being in a strange place for six performances and two dress rehearsals. Whilst she was used to music at home, a 14-piece orchestra was a different matter.

I brought her down to a rehearsal and her audition was purr-fect, but I still hoped Barrie would find another cat. I would be devastated if anything happened to Topsy. She might get stage fright and rush through the theatre and out onto Bluehouse Lane. She would never find her way home.

So I took her to the theatre every afternoon, while it was closed, and let her have a good wander round. I let her sniff and explore the stage. I sang to her on stage so she could get the idea. She seemed perfectly happy with her introduction to thespian life.

The routine for each performance was complicated requiring three people and two cat baskets. We took her to the theatre before curtain up and put her behind the counter of Shalford's Emporium on stage, in basket number one. Charles was crouched behind the counter also, talking and stroking her. She had to be there for the whole of the overture and first scene of dialogue.

When the song began, Topsy was lifted out of the basket and handed over the counter to Mr Kipps. He then carried her round the stage, singing. I think Topsy quite liked this. By the end of the week she was joining in with her own version of the tune.

Then with the words 'go and get your own breakfast' Topsy was handed to me in the wings, where I had been waiting with basket number two. In went Topsy with some Munchie treats for spectacular performance, and she was taken home by our daughter, to a special supper.

Thank goodness there were no mishaps. Topsy became more vocal with each performance. Colourpoints are half Persian, half Siamese. I would never have forgiven myself if anything had happened to her. I spent the whole week worrying, almost forgetting that I had a cameo part in the show. Topsy was the real star. She even had her name in the programme.

Stella Thomas

---

## *Ghosties & Ghoulies*

It was Hallowe'en a week or so ago, a time when Ghosties and Ghoulies came trick or treating at your door. To be caught by the Ghosties is one thing but have you been caught by the..... haunted

wood or haunted Bedroom twice nightly?! Yes, it will soon be Pantomime season and a good time to reflect on some ghost stories that are associated with some of our greatest Pantomime stars. Early 19<sup>th</sup> century panto clown Joseph Grimaldi was such a celebrity he sometimes performed in three theatres on the same evening so it's not surprising his ghost gets about. Grimaldi's last request was to be decapitated before burial and his disembodied head, complete with eerie white clown make-up, has been seen watching the show from behind unaware theatregoers at Sadler's Wells, where he made his debut.

The mischievous Grimaldi is also said to have made his presence felt at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, where countless actors, usherettes and cleaners have received a ghostly boot up the backside from an unseen assailant.

The Theatre Royal boasts quite a company of ghosts, including that of Victorian panto star Dan Leno, who can sometimes still be heard rehearsing his clog-dancing routine in his former dressing room. Many an actor has also reported the whiff of lilac on stage, which was the perfume Leno used to hide his incontinence. I know; too much detail!

Ghostly performances are not confined to the London stage – many regional theatres also boast a resident apparition, including our own theatre. It's a black cat that haunts the Barn, and many people have seen or felt it. There may be other ghosts too: on one occasion I was working on a show with Bruce, when all the stage lights dipped and then restored yet there was no-one in the Lighting Box. When we checked we noticed that one of the bulbs had gone in the 'dancing girls' dressing rooms; was it Bunny passing through with a spare bulb?

---

## *Holly at Christmas*

Saturday, December 4th

Rocking the world for fifteen years, Buddy Holly And The Crickets is the longest consecutively running, and still the greatest, Buddy Holly show on earth. It has delighted audiences at theatres, clubs, open-air festivals and charity events in every corner of the British Isles. This is not a tribute act, but a wonderful mix of music with improvised and scripted comedy hosted by some of the finest actor-musicians in the business whose combined credits include hit West End shows *Buddy*, *Lennon*, *Return To The Forbidden Planet* and *Jailhouse Rock*, amongst others, in a two hour rock'n'roller coaster of Buddy's hits and other rock'n'roll classics. For tickets, telephone 01959561811 now or go online at:-

[www.barntheatreoxford.co.uk](http://www.barntheatreoxford.co.uk)

## *Kenny (Christmas) Ball*

Saturday, December 11th

Kenny Ball is a living jazz legend and he is coming to the Barn during this, his 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary year, so another great evening not to be missed. Probably the greatest test of an artist's success is his durability. Kenny is now a genuine institution and the most successful jazz trumpet player this side of the Atlantic. His landmark recordings of the 1960s such as 'Midnight in Moscow' catapulted him to worldwide fame, and some 50 years later Kenny and his band still endures and thrives on the UK and European concert circuit. For tickets, telephone 01959561811 now or online at:-

[www.barntheatreoxford.co.uk](http://www.barntheatreoxford.co.uk) but don't leave it too long or you will be disappointed.

Kenny is a good friend of Acker Bilk and he says he is really looking

forward to coming to the Barn.  
Editors Martin Patrick & Julia Dalfovo  
email [martindpatrick@btinternet.com](mailto:martindpatrick@btinternet.com)