

The Oxted Players

We have just put our pantomime to bed for another year. *Robin Hood and His Merry Men* played to full houses on all ten performances and reviews and audience feedback have been excellent. Despite an exhausting two weeks, everyone involved enjoyed the panto experience and can't wait for next year. Jo Silcox, reviewing on behalf of NODA, praised the production as a first rate show and said that it was nice to see a panto with a modern and actually funny script! She particularly commended Neil Reynolds on his slick direction and Fran Reynolds on her lively and well integrated choreography. Jo felt that the cast was universally classy and there was a really good team effort from everybody. Jo ended her review by saying that this was definitely the finest panto she had seen this year. Tony Flook's review in The Guide was equally complimentary adding that the secret of the show's success was that it engaged the audience throughout. In the capable hands of our 2010 panto director, Janette White, we aim to ensure that next year's offering will be prove as popular.

We are now well into our preparations for our entries into the Southern Counties Drama Festival. Our adult entry being performed on Thursday 26 February 2009 is *Late Entry* by David Tristram who also wrote our 2008 entry *Last Tango in Little Titsey*. With biting wit and beautifully observed satire on festival plays generally, the play begins with an actress (Ann Lovell) performing an erratic monologue followed by a cruel and entirely justified lampoon of an adjudicator (Frank Atterbury). Peter Reed directs and we are sure that the audiences, especially those with a knowledge and love of theatre, will find this play very entertaining. Our Youth Entry, *School Belles* by Tony Edwards and directed by June Brown, will be performed on Friday 27 February 2009. A school which was previously only for boys has decided to accept girls into the Sixth Form. The play deals with the trials and tribulations arising from the amalgamation. We have a vibrant cast of Ben Atterbury, Alex Gordon, Hugh Murdoch, Henry Tredinnick, Lotti Davies, Flo O'Mahony and Catriona Simmons who will be looking to repeat the successes of our 2008 entry, *The Edge*, which won five awards. Please come along and support our teams. Please contact June Brown on 01883 714460 to reserve tickets from our allocation.

In the February half term week we are offering our Young Players another workshop experience with David Rowan when two different age groups of children will be preparing two plays to perform on the Friday. We will also be running our usual Summer Workshop in August for the benefit of our young members. Unfortunately our junior members list remains full for the moment but will be reviewed again in August.

Our Spring Production *Much Ado About Nothing* (13 – 16 May 2009) is fully cast apart from two minor roles and rehearsals begin in earnest on 2 March. The play is set in Messina. As the war heroes return triumphantly from battle, *Leonato* is thrilled to be able to play host to them for a few days. But with traitors in their midst, who could possibly know the problems which would follow. Supposed infidelities lead to faked deaths turning friend against friend and lover against lover. Will it end happily? Our cast includes Richard Allen, Chris Bassett, Laura Brand, Peter Calver, Anthony Goddard, Chris Hopher, Guy Hudson, Cat Longhurst, Sophie MacTavish, Carl Morris, Julie Parry, Carly Thompson, Jon Tull and Dave Watkins. Paul Longhurst is directing a traditional version of *Much Ado* and with his experience and enthusiasm we are looking forward to an exciting and colourful production. The Barn Theatre is an ideal setting for this popular Shakespeare comedy so to ensure you do not miss the experience please ensure the dates are in your diaries. Tickets are available now on 01883 724852.

We are always looking for people to help with our productions. In particular we are looking for experienced help with makeup, wigs and hairdressing. If you or anyone you know might be interested in getting involved on this front, please contact June Brown on 01883 714460 or j.brown306@btinternet.com. We will certainly need help with *Much Ado* and panto 2010. Also if there is anyone with theatrical lighting experience or who is willing to train and who could then help with future productions, again please contact June Brown.



Going Up Late

Going to the theatre with someone who is involved in the production side of a show can be an embarrassing experience. If they are involved in lighting they will be gazing upwards at FOH lighting bars, the on stage lights, the top masking; in fact any bits of kit they can see from their seat. They will crane their neck to check the position and colour of the follow spots. All this will get as much if not more attention than the poor actors on stage. Then there are those on the stage management team. You can be certain that they will instinctively look at their watches as soon as the house lights dim to check the curtain goes up on time, and will also time every scene change and interval throughout the evening.

Now, we know the main reason a show will go up late is that everyone backstage is waiting for FOH clearance. It is very rarely due to a backstage technical hitch. We cannot really blame the wonderful job done by the FOH team. They have a tough job checking the toilets and rounding up an ambling audience and enticing them away from the bar, making sure they are in the right seats at the right time, while remaining unflinching polite at all times. Often they are working at the instructions of the Duty Director or Stage Manager. Should the show start on time no matter what? Try telling someone who has got stuck on the M25, has abandoned the car somewhere in Bluehouse Lane and run all the way to the theatre, thrusting crumpled tickets from outstretched sweaty hands to the nearest person dressed in black, only to be told that they are going to have to wait for a suitable break or even worse still miss the whole of the first act. The curtain then rises on a whole new drama!!