



Players Patter No 192 - Mar 2020

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Treasurers Report

By now you will all know that the committee have taken the tough decision to postpone Legally Blonde to 20-24 October and move Salad Days to the June slot in a future year. At this time, we're still waiting, with everything crossed, to see if the Chicago license holders will allow us to move the show to March 2021.

None of these have been easy decisions but are the right ones, given everything else that's going on.

Of course, this means that I have a chance to get well ahead with the 2019-20 accounts so, if you have any bills to submit, please can I ask you to get them to me ASAP so I can get on with things.

This also means that I'll be doing our Gift Aid return so will, finally, get round to contacting those of you for whom I don't have a Gift Aid form. I know I've been promising to do this (threatening you with it!) for months but I'm determined to get something positive out of this enforced working from home so I will be looking at it in the next few weeks.

There's very little else to say for now but we're aiming to have plenty of online activity on facebook to keep you all engaged and entertained until we can get back to rehearsals and meeting up in person.

Stay safe and well.

Vicki Gavin

treasurer@haslemereplayers.com

If you receive this newsletter by post and would be happy to receive it by email, please send an email to linda.haslemere@btinternet.com

Chairman's Message

Never in my wildest dreams did I ever imagine that I would be writing to you whilst we are all having to socially isolate. The concept is completely contrary to what we are about both as a society and as a Society. Life will be different for a while, but it is really important that we all follow government advice.

In theatre there is a tradition that a solitary light is left on whenever a theatre is empty. This light is known as the ghost light. There are many stories about its origin, but it's meaning is unmistakable: though the theatre is empty, WE WILL RETURN.

The entire Legally Blonde team are devastated not be performing the show next week. Not only because we like to perform, but because we are a very integrated and social group. It is lovely seeing young members in our productions; they are working hard and have made some new friends in the process. With Fiona McGregor at the helm the generations are integrated. We need to support and encourage our young members; they are the society's future. We were all young once.

We have rescheduled Legally Blonde to 20-24 October 2020. If you have booked tickets, the Haslemere Hall will automatically move your reservation to the corresponding performance during this week. Your original tickets will remain valid for the new date.

Whatever role you have: on stage, in the wings, directing, making sets, crewing, properties, committee (and there is always room for new volunteers and members): here's to us: the Haslemere Players.

As a group, we need to think of new ways to keep in touch and socialise during this difficult times. Social isolation does not mean that we have to be alone; I am open to suggestions as to how we might achieve this and I am always open to a friendly natter on the phone.

Those ghost lights are but temporary place holders. They are a sign. We might be down now, but our passion, our creativity, our drive is still centre stage. We will be unplugging those ghost lights in time.

Until then, stay safe, keep well and, above all, let the world know: **WE WILL BE BACK.**

With all best wishes,

Chris

News from the Studio

Some good news from the wardrobe..... we were recently offered some clothes as the family of a lady who had lived in Hindhead was clearing her house and had found several boxes marked 'original 40s clothes'.

My heart usually sinks when we are offered boxes of unwanted items as, mostly, they end up in our charity bags which we have to deal with, but this time we had a treasure trove of wonderful dresses and hats. I was contacted a second time when another box was discovered and we have the most exquisite 20s dresses. Think Lady Mary in Downton Abbey. There was much oohing and aahing as we emptied the bags! A massive thank you to Steph Ridler for her help and to Mary Coyte for taking things in when I was hors de combat.

This seems an appropriate time to ask that you don't pass on to us anything 'ordinary' or modern because we just don't have the storage space. We were about to embark on another cull but this has been suspended for the time being.

As it is unlikely that anyone will be going to any sort of fancy dress do in the current climate, our income from outside hire will cease.

However; there'll be blue birds over the white cliffs of Dover, I'll be with you in apple blossom time. the lights will go on all over the world and the nightingale will sing in Berkley Square. (some of you are too young to recognise the words but they gave hope in hard times 70 years ago)

So if you are planning a themed party later in the year, remember that you as a member have to pay just £10 to hire an outfit. Please accept though, that I do expect things to be returned within a reasonable time frame already washed or cleaned if necessary.

If for any reason you do want something from the wardrobe, please email me and as one who is not quite 70 yet (no rude comments please) I can dodge Boris's drones and sneak out to help you.

Thanks to those who have enquired about my knee operation. I am making excellent progress but it has been very painful.

Mary-Lou and the wardrobe team

Salad Days

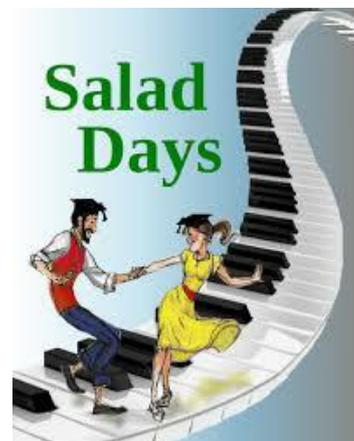
Unsurprisingly, the committee have taken the decision to postpone Salad Days. Even if we are allowed to stage it in June the restrictions on 'gatherings' means we can't even meet to rehearse the show. It might be postponed a year with a different team (Hamish will be tied up with Haslemere Festival next year) or we may delay it to 2020.

It is a great shame as the songs are so tuneful and the lyrics so clever.

It is also a great company show with an astonishing number of principal parts (for both young and older).

Something we can look forward to in the future.

Hamish



Players AGM

The Players AGM is normally held in June (although last year it was combined with our summer BBQ).

The Committee feel it would be unwise to set a date yet, given the unusual circumstances. But we will give you plenty of notice when we can firm up on a date.

Desert Island Discs

Some years ago I instituted Desert Island Discs where a member would choose eight of their favourite numbers from shows. With no current shows to write about, I thought this might be a good time to start this up again. Andy Boughton is my first 'victim' and with his vast knowledge of musicals, I very much looked forward to his list. I was not disappointed as many of the songs he has chosen are my favourites too and bring back many happy memories.

Here they are:-

Being cast away on a desert island is not an unattractive proposal during these challenging times and having access to eight of my favourite songs from musicals would certainly add to my pleasure and relaxation. My choices are based on significance, enjoyment, emotional response and my wanting to listen to them over and over again. Here goes

1. "You'll Never Walk Alone"

This stirring song from Rodgers & Hammerstein's "Carousel" has particular significance for me. As a rather naïve young chap in 1978, with little knowledge of musicals, I was persuaded to take on the lead role of *Billy Bigelow*. My casting was based on necessity rather than talent and the experience set me on a sharp learning curve. I still have vivid memories of laying on my back as a 'dead' *Billy* as all around me gave full voice to this rousing number.

2. "Tarantara"

I must take with me a recording of this thundering chorus number from Gilbert & Sullivan's "The Pirates of Penzance". I have been cast in this operetta five times and each time I looked forward to this number. A brilliant sing for everyone involved. G&S at its best!

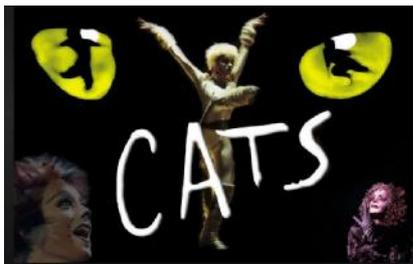
3. "O mio babbino caro"

Many years ago I went to see a one-act comic opera "Gianni Schicchi", written by Giacomo Puccini. The opera itself was not particularly memorable except for this one aria sung by the heroine *Lauretta*; it took my breath away and still does. Tear wrenching.

4. "Memory"

I was fortunate enough to see "Cats" only a few weeks after it opened in the West End in 1981.

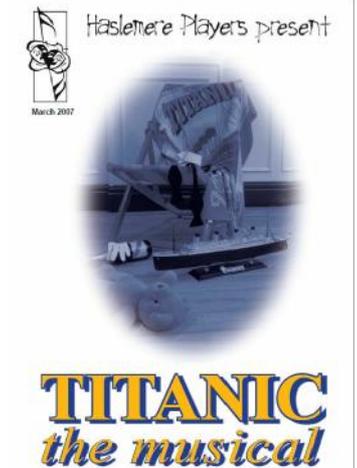
The cast included Elaine Paige, Brian Blessed, Wayne Sleep and Paul Nicholas and it signalled a new era of musicals influenced by Andrew Lloyd Webber. Some twenty or so years later I sat in a packed Princes Theatre in Aldershot and listened to my daughter Alex singing this song to an audience stunned by the clarity and



pureness of her voice. It gave me a treasured memory which will always endure.

5. "God Speed Titanic"

Being involved in the Players' 2007 production "Titanic the musical" gave me immense satisfaction! Everything about this production was large; the set, cast numbers, the songs and the challenges. A truly brilliant production directed by Hamish with my wife Mandy as choreographer. Playing *Chief Steward Henry Etches* remains one of my favourite roles. Singing "God Speed Titanic" as a finale was a deeply emotional experience for all.



6. "I Dreamed A Dream"

Another tear jerker sung by *Fantine* from "Les Miserables". What a brilliant show; it has everything. I could watch this show many times and listen to this song over and over again without ever tiring of it.

7. "The American Dream"



I am old enough to remember the concluding years of the Vietnam War in the 1970s. This human tragedy provided the inspiration for Schonberg & Boublil to pen a truly outstanding musical extravaganza, Miss Saigon, based on Puccini's "Madame Butterfly". This song, sung by *The Engineer*, and its staging will always remain one of my favourites.

8. "All That Jazz"

Sung by *Velma Kelly* from "Chicago". What a fabulously sassy musical/dance number with which to open a show. Incorporating the brilliance of Bob Fosse's choreography it has the potential to completely 'wow' any audience. It has everything and I love it.

Andy.



GRAPEVINE NEWS OF MEMBERS

Sadly I have to begin with the news of the death of two of our members:-

Firstly, Maureen Riley died on 6th March. She had had a severe stroke seven days earlier while doing a Pilates class and never recovered consciousness. Maureen was a long-standing member of the Catholic church choir at Our Lady of Lourdes, a member of HMS and had been in just two of our shows – The Yeoman of the Guard in 1994 and Show Boat in 1996.

On 13th March, Hamish and I went to the funeral of Maureen Cooper (Ranson) in Woking. Maureen had been in seven shows with the Players starting in 1993 with Blitz and taking part until 1999 with Fiddler on the Roof. She followed her daughter to Devon to live but in the last few years she had suffered with Alzheimers.

On a happier note I have received the following message for everyone from Chris Bridge:-

I am writing to mention that Liz and I have completed a long-planned move from Southsea down west to Harcombe, between Lyme Regis and Axminster. Our address is Coombe Cottage, Harcombe, Lyme Regis, Dorset DT7 3RN. My mobile and email have not changed.

It has been a pleasure joining and performing with the Players various and many at Haslemere since Pish Tush in The Mikado performed in March, 1997 with, a personal view, my favourite as Wild Bill Hickock in Calamity Jane performed in March 2013 – such a great time.

I doubt I shall be performing again with the Players, but I will be seeing you all at future performances and look forward to supporting and enjoying the company of the Players once more. Our home is some way down to the South West for many folk. Should you like to drop by for a cuppa en route, do call me up and I'll get the kettle on.

Finally, but by no means least, Jonathan Foster has written to keep us up to date on what is happening in Cornwall with the Foster family.

Jonathan writes: We say a fond farewell to Peter Foster who has left the area in order to open his own bakery in Cornwall.

Peter joined the Players for *Barnum* in 2005 and appeared in a dozen productions, playing Prince Chulalongkorn in *The King and I*, Sabu in *The Producers*, Fyedka in *Fiddler on the Roof*, and T.J. in *Sister Act*. He also memorably played the trumpet in *Show Stoppers: Memories of the Movies Parts II and III*.

A trained pastry chef, it was always Peter's ambition to have his own bakery. After a family holiday in Cornwall in 2016, he declared: "This is where I want to be". A year later he was thrilled to secure premises in the heart of Polperro "the most timeless, picturesque and photogenic of all Cornish fishing villages". The property consists of a shop with a cottage and a garden with a sea view. While converting the shop into a bakery, old wall linings were removed to reveal recesses hewn into the rock and used by smugglers in the 18th century.

Peter has joined the famous Polperro Fishermen's Choir. Nowadays few of the choir members are actual fishermen, but his next-door neighbour has offered to take him out in his lobster fishing boat, so perhaps Peter can be an "honorary fisherman".

An offshoot of the choir is The Wreckers, who sing sea shanties and Cornish folk songs in a local pub each week. They always end their gigs with "Now is the Hour", which brings back happy memories of the Players as this was one of the songs in the opening medley of *Show Stoppers: Memories of the Movies Part II*.

Chris and Jon are going to work alongside Peter in his new venture, baking a delicious range of artisan breads, cakes, pastries and traditional Cornish fare. They will be delighted to welcome any Players to this most enchanting part of the country. Perhaps you too will fall under its spell..."

Thank you so much Jonathan for this fascinating update on your venture. I know we all wish you well and I look forward to coming down and having some of your baked goodies! I must admit to not knowing what the Fosters are going to get up to next! I am full of admiration and no-one can say your life has been boring! Good luck from us all and keep safe and well.

Dates for Your Diary



Tricky one, this.

Not sure we have any dates we can be confident about...

Contributions to the Newsletter to
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