



Players Patter No 194 - August 2020

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Chairman's AGM Report

Who would have thought that we would not have been able to stage a production for twelve months, nor that we would be holding the AGM on Zoom, rather than in a garden combined with the summer barbecue and a musical accompaniment.

The Society's year started with Show Stoppers "An Evening of Love", a collection of classic and modern smash hits encapsulating romantic love, the challenges we all face in life and losses we experience – all stitched together with a generous amount of comedy. This was Lucy Loveland's directorial first before she and her family returned to the United States of America. The programme included famous songs from La La Land, Oklahoma, Into the Woods, Rent, Hamilton, Phantom of the Opera, The Greatest Showman and Evita.

In October we saw a second directorial debut with Adrian Stent and Evita. Evita is acclaimed as one of the greatest musicals of all time. Adrian, Lizzie, the production team and all the cast did the most fabulous job in producing what has got to be one the Haslemere Players' most spectacular and successful shows. Productions like this demonstrate the high standard of amateur shows and help to attract audiences.

Straight after Evita we started rehearsing Legally Blonde with our third new director in a row, Fiona McGregor, supported by Justin Luke as musical director. Fiona had roped in family and friends to help both on stage and behind the scenes designing, building and painting the set. Rehearsals were going well and we were preparing for the get-in and dress rehearsals. Then came the COVID-19 lock down. A real blow to everyone involved, especially with the high energy levels.

Our intention was to defer Legally Blonde until October. However, with the uncertainty of when we would be allowed to put on a live show, combined with restricted audience numbers resulting from social distancing we took the difficult decision to further defer the production until March 2021. We will be back with a bang and a lot of pink!

Shortly prior to lockdown, the committee had decided that our October show will be Kipps, The New Half a Sixpence and we have secured the licence. Kim Seymour will be directing with Justin Luke as the musical director. With "Legally Blonde" and "Kipps, The New Half a Sixpence" we have a fabulous line-up of shows for 2021. The committee will make a decision about the summer slot once there is certainty about what is possible; fingers crossed that we will be able to put on a full programme.

As you know, I am standing down as chairman. I always said that I would only hold the post for three to four years and it is

now four years. At the start of my tenure, I was reminded yesterday, I was faced with number of challenges, including the loss of the school as our rehearsal space and finding a director for Wizard of Oz, the challenge of which Vicki took on and smashed on her first time directing a show.

I am very pleased that we rekindled the show selection sub-committee, which Alex Boughton agreed to chair. The members have been a real support in working with potential directors in selecting shows. The depth of knowledge and analysis which they have demonstrated has really helped in the committee's decision making.

COVID-19 has prevented the work on the Studio and the school from being completed, however I hope that the determination and momentum that has developed will see this complete within twelve months.

We have also demonstrated that we can successfully put on a varied range of shows, not least "The Full Monty". I remember at least one committee member saying "over my dead body". I am still looking for the corpse!

As many of you know, I believe that the need to preserve the historic knowledge of an organisation, especially what does and doesn't work, is balanced by the need to keep ideas fresh and to avoid stagnation. Therefore, any committee membership should refresh on an ongoing basis. Members standing down, recharging their batteries and having the opportunity to see things from a different perspective, fulfil that need; so I was very excited when Vicki agreed to stand for the committee again last year and to take on the role of Treasurer. In this perspective I am also very happy that another returning member is standing this year, together with two new young members who will bring fresh ideas and energy.

I want to thank this year's committee for their all their hard work and support. It has been a real team effort with everyone doing their part to ensure the smooth running of the Society. In particular, I want thank Adrian, who is also standing down. He has devoted many hours to the Studio and to set design and construction. He has also represented the Society on the Hall committee. Whilst he is standing down from the committee, Adrian has agreed to continue supporting the Society in these tasks so we will continue to see him playing an active role in the Society.

Next year's committee is going to be a strong one with Vicki standing as the new chair and three new members standing for election. The combination of fresh ideas and energy, experience and in-depth knowledge of the Society, and Hamish as President, means that the society will be in very good hands next year and I look forward to supporting them from the side-lines.

Chris Lloyd

Editor's Note

The AGM was held on Tuesday, 18th August and for the first time ever it was on Zoom due to the corona virus. Twenty-five members attended which was a great tribute to modern technology!

The Chairman's AGM Report is on the first page and the Treasurer's is below. Chris Lloyd is retiring as Chairman and we would like to thank him for all his hard work over the last four years. He will be handing over to Vicki Gavin and we wish her the best of luck for taking over at such a difficult time!

Treasurers AGM Report

Well, this year has certainly been an interesting one... for reasons that nobody could ever have predicted!

As this is a zoom meeting, I'll keep my report brief but I'm obviously happy to answer any questions relating to the accounts.

Let's start by looking at the overall result for the year which is a surplus of £8,407 which was, in part, due to a grant of £10,000 received from Waverley Borough Council to mitigate the effects of COVID-19.

Our financial year runs from 1 May to 30 April so the first show in the year under review was Show Stoppers, An Evening of Love, directed by Lucinda Loveland. The show was a good start to the year financially, making a surplus of £935. We sold 16 fewer tickets than the previous year but at a slightly higher average price and managed to reduce programme and audience supper costs.

Our October production was Evita, directed by Adrian Stent. I'm sure that Chris will have much to say in his speech about the ground breaking nature of the show so I won't labour the point. Suffice it to say, it was on another level in almost every way. We had excellent ticket sales, generating revenue of £21,470 but the nature of the show, meant we had significant costs to absorb. Adrian as director and Sally as production manager had their work cut out managing the extensive lighting and, in particular, sound requirements and particular thanks must go to Gerry Franke for supplying the additional AV and sound equipment which enabled us to deliver such an outstanding production. To put this in perspective, the value of the equipment supplied was over £54,000 and would have cost around £10,000 to hire. Thanks to everyone's hard work, the show generated a surplus of £482. A great result when just a couple of months before the show, we thought we'd be looking at a loss of three times that.

Thanks must also go to Mary-Lou and all those that help out at the studio. Your contribution, not only helps to control the wardrobe costs for our shows but also, despite the pandemic, generated revenue of £1,525 this year.

As everyone is aware, we took the tough, but necessary, decision, to postpone our March production of Legally Blonde and this is currently due to take place at the end of March 2021. We could have moved all costs to the next financial year when the associated revenue will be received

however, it was felt that the prudent approach was to include those costs which are likely to be repeated in the current year's accounts. These include rehearsal venue costs and accompanist's fees, marketing costs as material will need to be reprinted, and some scenery costs as a precaution in case items already built, deteriorate over the winter. Let's remember, these things are usually built to last a few weeks, not a year! A total of £4,064 of costs has gone in to this year's accounts.

Looking at general income and expenditure we received £2,957 in patron and member subs and gift aid. Whilst my view is that being a member of a society is about more than being on stage and the society certainly welcomes your support, we also understand that this has been a very difficult time for many so we understand if members want to take a membership holiday until things are back to "normal".

You'll also see that we generated £1,760 from the hire of props and scenery. This is predominantly for the hire of our microphones to local schools and other societies. Our investment in this equipment is over £8,500 so it's great to be able to recoup some of this.

I've already mentioned costume hire and the other large entry is £10,265 in donations. £10,000 of this is the grant from Waverley Borough Council which isn't strictly speaking a donation but our independent examiner is happy with how this has been treated.

Looking at costs, insurance is higher than last year due to a correction in the allocation of costs between years. The same applies to Sundries which include our Independent Examiner's fee for both last year and this and a couple of late invoices for the Gondoliers.

Depreciation is substantially lower than last year because the sound equipment has now mostly been written off from an accounting perspective and most of the depreciation relates to the studio lease.

With a £10,000 grant contributing to us having over £49,000 in the bank at the year end, it might sound like we have nothing to worry about financially but it's worth talking a little bit about future commitments.

We're all hoping that it will be possible to stage Legally Blonde at the end of March 2021 and that we will be playing to a full house every night. However, we don't know at this stage what rules may be in place as regards social distancing and, irrespective of those rules, when our audiences will feel safe to return to live theatre. With shows costing up to £22,000, it would be quite easy to make a substantial loss.

We also have a commitment, under our lease at the studio, to undertake work to fully separate our scenery and costume store from the nursery school. We'd started to look at what's required last year but with lockdown, any activity was put on hold. However, the work is becoming more urgent and is likely to cost in the region of £20,000.

As you know, I've taken the decision to step down as treasurer and stand as chairman and, assuming we're both voted in, I'll be handing over the reins to the very capable Mike Byrne.

Vicki Gavin



Editor's Note

It was a great pleasure to 'see' Howard Bicknell at the AGM and he has kindly written an article for us on the difficulties and set-backs the Haslemere Hall has encountered over the pandemic and how they are envisaging that shows will manage in the future. It makes fascinating reading. Thank you, Howard.

Haslemere Hall Update

Sadly, the Hall's last event was back in March just a day ahead of the Players Get-In for Legally Blonde. We were wearing coats and had the heating on. Whilst the Hall has been closed and all our favourite groups, clubs and societies have had to stay away, we have had some weekly activity and we are the home of The Haslemere Community Store which has been operating since Covid and continues every Wednesday in the Annexe. This was been set up to help people who have been thrown into financial difficulty due to coronavirus. This initiative was set up and operated entirely by volunteers and recognises social distancing. If you, or you know anyone who needs any help with supplying groceries at this time please do not hesitate to contact the Haslemere Community Store on 07873 383954 or email haslemerehelp@gmail.com

Our monthly supporters were the NHS team of doctors and nurses, who continue with their much needed blood donating sessions and we were delighted to have had the Surrey Theatre Academy, who normally use the Hall 6 times per week during term time. They managed to produce two weeks of sensational workshops with a limited amount of children who were able to produce some magnificent film work and created trailers for promotions. Well done to them and thank you for your support.

Whilst cinemas can now reopen, the issue that picture houses have all had, was that there were no new films available as most of the films were held back from release until later on this year, although these are now slowly coming through. Haslemere Hall couldn't reopen within the realms of a two metre social distancing rule as we just could not supply sufficient seats to make the screening viable. With the new social distancing rules in place however, we can now reveal what our seating plan will look like:

Downstairs in the auditorium we will have 120 stalled seating. These will consist of 10 rows, each with 12 seats in. Each row will consist of a block of 3 seats followed by 3 pairs of seats and then another block of 3 seats on the far side. There will be no tiered seating until the social distancing becomes a thing of the past. There will also be 30 seats available in the balcony.

Our plan and subject to availability is to start showing films again from the week commencing 15th September and we

have a small but great programme for the last weeks of September showing some of the films and satellites we had planned for April.

We will be able to open our bar and serve sweets and ice creams from there. We will no longer be serving coffees and teas until further notice. We would plan to open 30 minutes prior to the start of each performance to allow everyone to come in and order their drinks for the interval and pay by card and then all drinks will need to be consumed sitting in the seats rather than in the Annexe. We will restrict numbers in the Annexe to ensure everyone is social distanced and at the end of each performance, customers will be guided row by row to ensure a safe and uncrowded exit.

Most of the staff have been furloughed during this time and with very little income we have had to cancel many of the services and take care of that ourselves. We will not have the whole team back for September and will work on a skeleton team and Saturday morning Box Office will remain closed for the time being. I have been working full time and whilst it seems there isn't a lot going on, we have taken the opportunity to have major filing and sorting out old paperwork, have dealt with architects to submit drawings for the building to submit to Waverley for the signage and dealing with the daily enquiries regarding the Hall and it's events. Every single customer who had booked for shows and

cinemas has been contacted and dealt with by moving them to another performance or new date. The cost of this has been borne by the Hall so no customer, including those for Legally Blonde, has had any cost to themselves. The website is constantly being updated and all in all we have been working well and kept extremely busy. We are applying for funding wherever we can to make up for the extensive loss we have had and so far, we have spent many hours filling in detailed forms (not my favourite activity) to hopefully get a successful result.

We have applied to Waverley Council for planning permission to allow us to replace our old signage with new ones featuring our new logo. They are non-illuminated signs and will certainly brighten and kick the Hall into the 21st century. We look forward to having them very soon and also it will help to 're-launch' Haslemere Hall this Autumn. We have also replaced all the damaged tiered seating seats which we ordered back in January and these all look fantastic and new.

The diary for the Hall looks something like a code system reminiscent of Bletchley Park. We don't know when we can show Nell Gwynn and Jack and the Beanstalk could quite easily happen in April rather than its traditional slot after Christmas. Many of our regular societies are unsure or unable to start in September, so we are hoping to take on a number of new users where possible. However, we do want to remain loyal to all our faithful followers too.

We look forward to a positive future – it may be slow – it may be fast – but that's entertainment!

Take care

Howard



Editor's Note

A few Newsletters ago, I instituted a Desert Island Discs where members who had been involved in so many productions would choose their favourite songs from the shows. So far Andy Boughton and Doreen Wylde have been victims. This time I asked Anne Manning. With her great experience, not only of playing leads, but also of producing, I was very intrigued to find out her choices. I was not disappointed as she has chosen some wonderful numbers, and the reasons for choosing them make fascinating reading. Thank you Anne!

Desert Island Discs

When Linda asked me if I would be her next Players castaway, I replied with alacrity that it would be a privilege. I joined Players in 1970 between then and 2007 I directed three shows and appeared in several others as did all my children. I had many shows to choose from but where to start? Little did I know that imagining being on a desert island was to be enhanced by lock down. Choosing just eight discs from a lifetime of musical memories has not been an easy task, but those I have chosen mean a great deal to me and hearing them repeatedly will be a pleasure..

1. PINEAPPLE POLL OVERTURE

Having sung in most of the G & S operettas, I could not choose one particular song. This overture however contains music from several of my favourite operettas of which I never grow tired. Trying to remember the words to the various tunes and which opera they came from will be a good exercise on my island.

2. THE MOON IN MY POCKET

From the musical *Robert and Elizabeth*. This is in tribute to a dear friend who played the role of Robert in my first operatic society he sadly became an early victim of Covid 19. The uplifting lyrics and music still bring a smile and many happy memories of a delightful well written show.

3 SABBATH PRAYER

Fiddler on the Roof has to be one of the most memorable of shows for me. Having played the role of Golde four times I have chosen the Sabbath Prayer. As the mother of four and grandmother of eight I feel that the lyrics convey what all parents wish for their children as they are growing up.



Anne as Golde with Graham Maguire as Teve in the Players 1976 production of *Fiddler on the Roof*

4. BROTHER MINE

In 1989 I was rehearsing the role of Rosalinde in *Die Fledermaus* and Ruth in *Pirates* at the same time. Two very different roles both in character and vocally but what a wonderful opportunity. I have chosen Brother mine from *Fledermaus* because it encompasses the whole company. The music is a joy to sing and the harmonies are beautiful.

5. I COULD HAVE DANCED ALL NIGHT

In 1976 I was privileged to play the role of Eliza in *My Fair Lady*. I must say I had no trouble at all with the cockney libretto having spent my early childhood in the East End of London. This song would encourage me to sing along on my desert island, without anyone being able to hear whether my pronunciation of the Queen's English was correct !

6. SOUND OF MUSIC

When I first saw this musical based on a true-life story of the Von Trapp Family, I never dreamt that I would one day be fortunate enough to play the role of Maria. There are so many lovely tunes in the show choosing one was difficult, but this conjures up for me optimism, hope and many happy memories. My one regret with this show was that I never was able to get the hang of playing the guitar so I had to mime, whilst a musician played the instrument from the pit. Shame on me!!

7. SUMMERTIME

This beautiful aria from the opera *Porgy and Bess* had to be included. Summertime evokes for me memories of many very happy family holidays, when I would burst into this song at any opportunity, much to the embarrassment of my family. (Would that I had that confidence now!)

8. STILL

Players production of *Titanic the Musical* in 2007 was a bittersweet, wonderful show to be part of. The duet *Still* was a personal challenge, but I am so pleased that I was awarded the role of Ida. Ida was to be my last role on stage after 51 years of singing in musical societies. I think the public had had more than enough by then.

Thanks for so many good memories.

Anne

Wardrobe News

For obvious reasons, there has been little activity in the wardrobe for several months. Sadly I felt I had to turn down requests for VE Day costume hire in May from various care homes because I had to put the health and safety of our team (and our costumes) first. Given that these homes all had confirmed Covid cases, I know you will agree that I did the right thing. Added to this is the fact that, like us, no societies are putting on shows and therefore don't require our services, so our hire income has temporarily disappeared.

We did, however, make some money earlier in the year and should any members now require an outfit for an upcoming socially-distanced party, they are welcome to contact me and I'm sure I can help out.

Since the rules have been relaxed there has been activity in the wardrobe in the form of 'culling sessions'. We aim to reduce our stock by assessing whether something can be used in one of our shows, by another society or by a member of the public. We currently have 10 bags ready to take to the charity shop. Herewith lies another problem because charity shops are awash with donations as the whole of Haslemere and its environs seems to have had a massive clear out during lock down!!!

However, Grayshott/ Haslemere Care have agreed to take our things once they have managed to shift their summer stock. This brings us no income of course, but the charity does well as I gift aid it all in my name and I think it's important that we, as a society are seen to be giving back to the community.

One aspect of this 'job' which I don't enjoy, is chasing individuals or societies who have not returned things in a reasonable time. Societies are generally good about this but the worst offenders are OUR members.

I know Covid delayed returns but I really should not have had to send out 8 emails last week asking for outstanding props/costumes to be returned. 7 of these are to our members. If you know you have something lurking in a cupboard which you forgot to bring back, please be reassured that you will not be unduly punished if you contact me to arrange its return!!!!!!! We have no regular opening times so it's best to email me to arrange a time.

So until we all meet again, you can be sure that your wardrobe is being well looked after and will be up and running as soon as we are all allowed to be up and running.

Mary-Lou Knox <coopermarylou@aol.com>

Editor's note.

Thank you, Jonathan. What a wonderful achievement, but it makes me feel exhausted to read all you are doing, and whatever is Fuggan?!

Please could you ask Peter/Christine for one or two recipes so that we can print them in the next Newsletter. I can't wait to get baking!

Linda Donaldson

Linda@haslemere.com



Jonathan Foster writes from Cornwall:

Here is an update on life here so far:

The builders had literally one day's work to complete when the country was ordered into lockdown. Thankfully as a food producer we were deemed to be an "essential business" so they were allowed to return and finish the job, and we duly opened at the end of March.

Polperro relies heavily on tourist trade, but for the first three months, with restrictions on movement and all visitors banned, all our customers were residents. This was actually a blessing in disguise. We became part of the close-knit community very quickly and were overwhelmed by their kindness and support.

Everything sold in the Bake House is made daily on the premises by Peter, and the range of bread, cakes and pastries he produces is constantly growing. Every day he bakes French baguettes and three different types of farmhouse loaf, together with twice-weekly specials, such as Beetroot & Goats' Cheese, Bavarian Donker, Spelt & Honey, Focaccia, Fougasse and Sourdough.

Also available daily are traditionally made Belgian buns, cheese straws and Eccles cakes, and demand always outstrips supply. Our Wednesday quiches (Davidstow Cheddar & Bacon or Broccoli & Cornish Blue) also have a cult following!

We are keen to "Keep it Cornish" so use local produce, including eggs, milk, butter, cheese, bacon, soft fruit and vegetables, wherever possible.

The village reopened to visitors on 4th July and demand increased significantly, with several local businesses ordering their bread from Peter. More often than not, we have a long queue of customers outside the door waiting for us to open at 9:00am. The visitors are very enthusiastic and particularly like our Cornish range – D'reckly bread, saffron buns, seedy cake and fuggan.

Chris and Jon work alongside Peter in the Bake House, Chris busy making delicious gingerbread, Florentines, cranberry and coconut flapjack, cherry turnovers, and cheese & bacon melts, and Jon dealing with suppliers and paperwork.

At the end of a busy day we like to unwind with a walk along the coast path, or fish from the harbour arm, or a swim in the natural swimming pool. Life is good in Polperro!