

Stagers' Spotlight



March 2023

Chair's Message

What a wonderful time we have just had. The One Acts Supper Evenings are always one of my high points in the Stagers' year and this February's extravaganza did not disappoint.

I was thrilled that Ann Bartholomew with Stake Out and June Hegarty with Rude Awakenings both took the chance to direct a play for Stagers and they did a wonderful job,

All of the actors were brilliant, embodying their roles and giving us well defined characters. From the lights, the sound, the props, the sets – everything really brought us into the world of each play.

You can find some of the feedback we received later in this issue but I for one had a brilliant time and thought it showcased the society really well.

Whilst it is true that I am biased, as one of the directors of Return to the Forbidden Planet, I have to say I was so proud of the excerpt which we were able to include, to give everyone a taster for what to expect. It is the first time that we have tried this but I don't think it will be the last, even though it was a lot of work in a short amount of time – especially so early in the rehearsal period for our May Musical. Everyone involved should be very proud.

We also took the opportunity launch the box office for Return to the Forbidden Planet, so you can get your tickets today for this fun filled Rock and Roll, Sci-fi, Shakespearean Spectacular and ensure you don't miss out as seats have already started selling for this show. Click below

[Box Office](#)

Coming back to the supper evening the food was really tasty and a special thank you must go out to Ruth Wilbraham and Heather Legat for



working so hard to plan the menu, source the ingredients (especially those sausages!) and, of course, cook everything ready for service. I don't think I saw any leftovers when our table was cleared! A big thank you as well to everyone who helped front of house – it takes a lot to put on an evening like this – serving the food, working the bar, ushering, manning the raffle and lots of other jobs that make everything run smoothly. We are really lucky to be part of a society with so many people who are willing to step up and help out, as it really is vital and we would not be able to put on shows without all of you.

Finally, as is tradition, we used the One Acts evening as an opportunity to pay the rent for the ground that the Scenery shed sits on – one red rose.



Return to the Forbidden Planet



I am writing this having just come home from the latest rehearsal for Return to the Forbidden Planet and am still very much on a high from the effort everyone is putting in. We are just one rehearsal away from having gone through the whole musical for the first time and it is really exciting to see things

starting to take shape. The songs are already sounding powerful, with the ensemble bringing the energy and already hitting the harmonies. Everyone is starting to find their characters, as well as the humour and the drama in the script.

Behind the scenes work goes on to plan how we can build the working bridge of a Starship. We are getting uniforms to outfit the crew and our next big challenges are making the tentacles of the monster (yes, there is a monster) and creating the robot costume for Ariel.

The box office is already open and we hope you will be excited to join us on board the GSS Albatross this May as we Return to the Forbidden Planet. You can find more information and a link to the box office on the Stagers' website. <http://www.grayshottstagers.co.uk/fp/fp.html>

Membership News

It's always good to welcome back to membership friends from productions of recent years and we've done that for *Return to the Forbidden Planet*.

However we now welcome back someone who worked with Stagers between 1965 and 1997 and is returning to us!

We look forward to catching up with Bryan Buck and hearing his memories of the productions he was involved with at that time. Perhaps he'll write an item for *Spotlight*?

Please help us to continue to make this a regular part of our calendar of events and to entertain our community.

NODA Accolade for "Come On, Jeeves"



Our November 2022 production "Come On, Jeeves" has been awarded an Accolade of Excellence for Drama by NODA (National Operatic and Dramatic Association), the organisation that supports amateur theatre throughout the UK and to which over 2000 societies are affiliated.

"Come On, Jeeves" was written by Guy Bolton and PG Wodehouse, and directed by Sara Wilson-Soppitt, with a cast comprising Ellis Nicholls in the title rôle, Piers Husband, Caroline Thompson, David Gow, Helen Wigram, Susie Gow, Ian Wilson-Soppitt, John Hilder and Ruth Wilbraham.

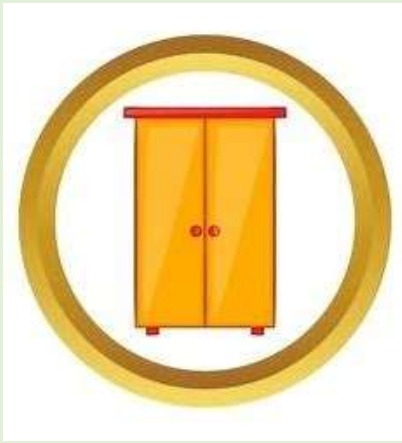
"When you have a great writer, talented cast, terrific production team and crew, you have the perfect recipe for success" said Sara. "'Come On, Jeeves' had all of them wrapped up in the special sauce that is Grayshott Stagers' commitment to excellence." She forgot to mention the superb director!



The production was reviewed by Pauline Surrey, our NODA regional representative, who wrote "What a joy this production was. ... A great evening's entertainment, theatre at its best". (You can read the full review on our website.)

The Accolade will be presented at NODA South East Region's annual Celebration Day on 11 June at the Electric Theatre, Guildford.

Wardrobe



As you know our costumes are stored in the shed. What you might not know is that Mary Coyte and I are in the (long) process of going through everything in there. We've

split it into three 'projects'. The high-level boxes, hanging rails and the far end of the costume area which used to house props.

We found that some of the labelled high-level boxes (blouses, petticoats, waistcoats, shirts, etc. etc.) had items in them that didn't belong there. We also discovered some items were in a very poor state of repair, so weren't worth keeping.

These I take to a local charity shop, where I volunteer, for them to get 'rags money' for them. But there have also been fabulous finds that we had no idea we had. We've now been through all the high-level boxes. They've all been numbered and we have a schedule of what's in each box. Hopefully this will make it easier to find what we need when it comes to costuming shows.

We will soon be moving on to the old props area, which currently has lots of hats and 'stuff' that badly needs reorganising. After that the hanging rails, where we are aiming to be quite

ruthless in order to give us a bit more space for donated items. For instance, we have a set of men's morning suits which are all quite small, and it's been a very long time since Stagers has had such a big men's chorus, all of whom need morning suits and measure no more than about a 38" chest. We are also given items by the same charity shop that they think won't sell.

When we are given or come across items which are more appropriate for the use of Haslemere Players or Thespians, we pass them on.



We are grateful to the committee for giving us funds to buy more storage boxes. We even have a small drawer unit for the costume jewellery – much nicer than the various boxes and bags it was in. Anything in costumes for which we feel we don't have a use, but is in good condition, we will aim to sell for the funds to go into the costume coffers.

To do all of this, at the moment, we're spending about an hour a week there. (It's a bit chilly to spend too much longer 😊). In the warmer weather we were spending 2-3 hours there, and hope to revert to that soon. We do go well prepared - one brings coffee, the other biscuits, and if we're there over lunchtime, we've even been known to take sandwiches.

We do, of course, also need to costume our shows - so spaceship crew uniforms and a robot here we come!

One Act Plays and Supper Evening.

The One Act Plays and Supper Evenings took place on Friday and Saturday 17th and 18th February in Grayshott Village Hall. As usual there was a mixture of food and entertainment. This year instead of a short sketch, there was a taster of Stagers' next musical – *Return To The Forbidden Planet*. A high energy mega mix of some of the songs included 'Wipe Out', 'Great Balls of Fire', 'She's Not There', to name just three! This was a great introduction to the official opening of the Box Office on Friday night. There were even QR codes on the tables which enabled the audience to book their tickets for the Spring Musical straightaway.

Grayshott Stagers' One Act play evenings have become something of an institution and, on this latest showing, it is easy to see why. The Stagers have a good understanding of what the format requires. A one-act play places particular demands on both playwright and performer. There is limited space in which to tell the story and economy is key; a well-chosen one act play builds suspense, makes its impact with precision and often has a sting in the tail, offering a well-presented and neatly-wrapped package that satisfies audiences and performers alike. The evening comprised two excellent choices. Each play built to a surprise, a big reveal, that was delivered with clarity and punch. The performers

demonstrated a good understanding of where the play was going and how the action should unfold. For the choice of two excellent scripts and for the coherence and pace with which they were delivered, the directors, Ann Bartholomew and June Hegarty, are to be congratulated.

The first play, "Stake-Out", is a two-hander, a format that can be challenging. It goes without saying that two capable actors are essential, but it is also important that the two performers should be well-matched. Here, we were in good hands. Eric Collins and Helen Wigram are familiar and respected presences on our local stage and they both looked and sounded convincing and engaging in their roles, the experienced "seen it all before" copper, whose career has plateaued, and the knowledgeable, slightly chippy, female officer who feels held back and patronised. The match-up was also good, as the two characters sparred in an apparently friendly fashion, cleverly feeding us necessary information while growing our sense of their relationship. As things got darker, the menacing atmosphere grew and suspense was skillfully built

After the interval, we were treated to "Rude Awakenings", a nicely written and performed story of infidelity uncovered, where ostensibly weak characters show strength, while the apparently strong are shown to be ineffectual and pathetic. In its portrayal of a classic slice of English life, the local art exhibition, its apparent timeless calm belying dark undercurrents, the play seemed to show the influence of Alan Ayckbourn, the master of middle class angst. The gradual unfolding of what is really going on behind the genteel veneer was well understood and presented at an appropriately leisurely, but purposeful, pace. A mood of undefined unease was established and maintained throughout.

The four characters were all well-drawn and competently performed. Pauline, the hard-working but faintly ridiculous queen bee was acted by Melanie Tyrell with an appropriately strong presence, tinged with harassed and brittle desperation.

Astrid, the dogsbody with hidden depths, as portrayed by Laura Musco, moved effectively from passive humility to quiet triumph as we realised

that there was more to her than met the eye. Ingrid Collins, as Olivia, the art expert roped in to judge the competition and who finds out the truth about her partner, handled the transition from initial superiority through affecting tears to controlled icy anger with considerable skill. Three excellent performances.

I must, however, make special mention of Brezetta Thonger, who gave a beautifully nuanced and affecting performance as the ditzy but wise Harriet. This was acting as it should be, with movement, gesture and voice all integrated to portray a believable human being. When describing an actor's performance, I can think of no better compliment than to say that the acting was not visible, that we saw something real and moving. Well done, indeed.

Having found crudités and dips on the tables as they arrived, the audience were treated, in the interval, to a supper of sausage and mash. These were very special sausages which were made especially for the Grayshott

Stagers. Sourced from a local farmer by Ruth Wilbraham, who masterminded the food this year, they were, indeed, very tasty. These



were provided by Streetcroft Farm. Some have been ordered for this year's Stagers' barbeque – so watch out for the announcement and put the date in your diary. A 'cheffy' dessert of fruit kebabs drizzled with chocolate concluded the meal.

So . . . I'll leave it to the audience to complete this round up of the February One Act Plays and Supper Evening.

Congratulations to all at Grayshott Stagers' for a thoroughly enjoyable evening.

Great evening, thoroughly enjoyed it.

Well done to all - a really entertaining evening.

Thanks to David Greenwood for allowing me to quote from his review of the plays.

Heather Legat

If you enjoyed the sausages and would like to purchase any, please see the advert below. The ones served were "Gluten Free Traditional"

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What Our Friends Are Doing

Grayshott Panto: "A-ladd-in A Cave" 10 and 11 March (matinée on the 11th) at Grayshott Village Hall, featuring our own Buff Cooper.
www.ticketsource.co.uk/grayshott-panto or from Warren Powell Richards or Trusted PC Man

Haslemere Players: "Kinky Boots" 21-25 March at Haslemere Hall, winner of Tony awards for Best Musical and for Cyndi Lauper's score.
www.haslemereplayers.com

Tilbourne Players: "The Heiress" 30 March - 1 April at Tilford Institute, adapted from the Henry James novel "Washington Square".
www.tilbourneplayers.org.uk

Headley Theatre Club: "Bard's Night " 21-22 April at Headley Village Hall, an Elizabethan banquet with Shakespearean overtones.
www.johnowensmith.co.uk/htc

Haslemere Thespians: "Around The World In 80 Days" 28-29 April (matinée on the 29th) at Haslemere Hall, a dramatised version of the Jules Verne novel.
www.haslemerethespians.com
And further ahead ...

Farnham Amateur Operatic Society (FAOS): "Young Frankenstein", the musical adaptation of the Mel Brooks film, will be their July production.
www.faos.org.uk



24th-27th May Return to the Forbidden Planet
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23rd to 25th Nov 2023 The School for Influencing Scandal,

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