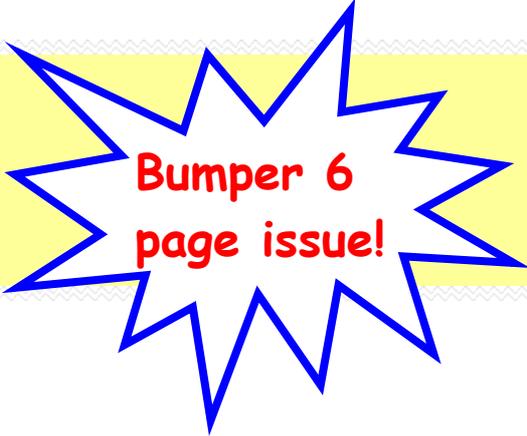


The Linford Luvvie

Newsletter of the Bradgate Drama Society
Winter 2010



**Bumper 6
page issue!**

Editorial

Welcome to our Winter edition of the Luvvie. Here we go again with a heady mixture of fact, innuendo and downright falsehood to inform and, hopefully, entertain you through the long dark winter nights – well at least for ten minutes or so. As I write we've endured one Arctic spell of weather but seem destined for yet another in the near future. So don't forget that, once you've read it, your copy of the Luvvie can always be used to stop the icy gales blowing through those awkward cracks around the door.

Since the last issue we've had our Christmas production of 'Aladdin' and are now deep into rehearsals for the Spring production, 'Love Begins at Fifty' – a concept which brings renewed hope and a twinkle in the eye to a large percentage of the membership.

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Christmas Production – Aladdin

Wasn't until I sat down in front of a blank sheet of paper that I realised how difficult it is to review your own production. Do you tell everyone how wonderful it was, even though you're gruesomely aware of those bits that never quite turned out as well as you'd hoped, or do you do a 'warts and all' review which exposes all the grotty bits to the cruel light of day, even though a lot of people hardly noticed them?

As usual I'll do a total cop-out and concentrate mainly on the people whose hard work and (mostly) unquestioning support of a rookie director at least enabled us to get the show on the road. A quick count up reveals that over thirty members contributed in some way to the production so the chances are that I'll miss quite a few out in the following couple of paragraphs. In case I do, thanks to everyone who helped, whether it was poncing around on stage or just washing up the glasses behind the bar (or both)

Starting with the cast, I think the most exciting aspect of the show was that we gave debuts to four new members of the Society. First Ketura (Koo) Butler-Bourke (yes I know it's not much of a name but it's a cracking Scrabble hand) became our Princess, bringing to the part not only a fair bit of acting skill but also a remarkable singing voice which had the rest of us floundering in her wake. Her maid, Jasmine, was played by our youngest recruit, Chloe Dickinson, who as well as becoming a teenager during the production also consumed her body weight in biscuits during rehearsals. Geoff Bourne as the Emperor's evil Prime Minister seemed quite reserved at first but then turned out to be a bit of a rocker when he serenaded us with a spirited version of the Kings of Leon's 'Sex on Fire'. Finally Karen Griffiths swapped the drudgery of the Anstey branch of Nationwide for the bright lights of Newtown Linford Village Hall (although fame hasn't changed her, you can still find her behind the counter most days), to give us a Chinese policeman with a decided Northern accent.

The rest of the cast was divided between old stagers and not so old stagers. Discretion prevents me from saying who was in which category but special mentions to Anita Gillingham's narrator with her Chinese accent, Peter Warlow's remarkably evil Abanazer and John Rolinson's suitably over-the-top Dame. Also coming into the more experienced category were Rob Willson, rolling back the years in the title role, Tracey Hastie as the other half of the Chinese police duo and Sally Cook being anything but wishy-washy as Wishy Washy. Finally John Williams, in what he insists is his swan song on the stage, gave a fine performance as the Emperor of China with a subtle mix of megalomania and amnesia as well as doing a fine job as Assistant Director, again with a subtle mix of megalomania and amnesia.

And last of all, a special mention to Holly Warlow, another product of our youth academy, who had her first significant speaking role, most of it solo, and managed to get more laughs than most of the rest of us put together.

Moving to the backstage crew, particular recognition should go to our sound crew of 'Wally' Walton and Fern Warlow. Wally is, as most of you know, is a professional in the area of stage production so has all the skills at his fingertips. Nevertheless the extensive sound script pushed his talents to (and occasionally over) the limit. Fern, unlike her dad and sister, has no particular ambition to go on stage, but is incredibly keen on theatrical sound and has already worked at Curve in addition to her work with us. Wally, delighted to find someone else he can talk to about woofers and tweeters and duckers without them falling asleep, was happy to mentor her and between them they were able to produce some great sounds.

As usual, our scenery was the best around with John Nixon, our resident designer, producing yet another excellent set which the heavy gang, led by Paul Johnson and Brian Anderson put together. Special thanks the Newtown Linford Art Group for painting the scenery under John's direction.

Lots more people, too many to mention, also contributed backstage, all under the direction of Hannah Johnson, our Producer, without whom the whole production would have spiralled into chaos. Hannah has an ability to get things done in an organised way, usually involving buttonholing a big wuss of a Director and getting him to actually make a decision rather than just drifting along in his usual fashion.

Hope you all enjoyed it as much as I did!

What the critics said about 'Aladdin'

"An inspirational example of the people's triumph over the running dogs of capitalism. Thought the Princess, victim of the imperialist lackeys of a degenerate regime, had a nice singing voice" – *Peking Daily*

"I thought Peter Warlow's Abanazer touched dramatic heights of which the rest of the cast could only dream" – *Mrs. Warlow*

"Wasn't convinced by the laundry scenes; clearly Widow Twankey had never done any real clothes washing in his/her life. Nice to see Aladdin had a clean hanky though" - *Washing Weekly and Launderers' Gazette*

"The Genie was a sad example of how body shape can degenerate without proper attention to diet and exercise – see page 32 for our New Year Get into Shape programme" – *Men's Health*

The Spring Production

As has become almost traditional with our Spring productions, the greatest challenge of this year's show was finding a director and a script before rehearsals began. Andi Hastie, fresh from his triumphant directorial debut in Spring 2009, had again pencilled his name in to direct but was then informed by his daughter, with a fine disregard for the Society's interests, that she was getting married on the weekend of the production. All possible ways of getting round this, including the first live wedding on the Village Hall stage, were considered and rejected, particularly by the female side of the Hastie clan, before Andi finally admitted defeat. Cometh the hour, cometh the man when Bob Rankin offered to step into the breach. Unfortunately Bob had to step smartly out of the breach when other commitments intruded, at which point the Committee sat on its collective hands in despair and indecision.

It was then that Anita Gillingham, Woodhouse Eaves' answer to Boudicca (think that's how you spell it – the spellchecker's just shrugged its shoulders), swept into view in her war chariot with those sword thingies sticking out of the wheels, scattering aside the feeble male contingent (nearly wrote 'feeble male members' but thought that might be open to misinterpretation) to take up the directorial challenge. With her gritty Yorkshire background and a theatrical repertoire ranging from Lady Macbeth to the Pantomime Fairy (though all played in pretty much the same style) it was clear that this was not a lady to be meddled with – except by Mr. Gillingham on occasion. When we heard that she was to be joined as producer by Hannah Johnson, another formidable presence reputed to have, with a single glance, turned milk sour through a fridge door, the rest of us sighed a sigh of relief, knowing the production was in safe hands – a bit like a maximum security prisoner.

A frantic week of script reading and auditions left us with a production, 'Life Begins at Fifty', and a strong cast comprising a heady mix of (relative) youth and experience and one newcomer to the Society, John Rolinson's wife Ruth, who apparently wasn't particularly interested in acting but just wanted to know where he got to for two nights a week.

Having had a sneak preview of an early rehearsal, the Luvvie's drama correspondent can report that the play, by Raymond Hopkins, is an extremely funny comedy which the cast show every sign of doing full justice to. Unusually the author donates all the performing rights from the play to charity which means that we can enjoy producing it, you can enjoy watching it, and someone else gets an unexpected windfall – what's not to like.

Social events

It's been unusually quiet on the social front over the last few months with most of our efforts being concentrated on the pantomime and preparations for the Spring production. We do, however, have a skittles evening coming up on **Wednesday 24 March** when we will be joining the Latimer Players for a night at the Wheatsheaf in Thurcaston. This has been postponed from the original date in February so there's still time to sign up if you'd like to go. Cost is £8.50 a head, payment by cheque made payable to B.Hooper sent to –

Brian Hooper
173, Leicester Road
Thurcaston
Leicester
LE7 7JL tel. 0116 2203046

Please make sure your cheque reaches Brian by Monday 15 March so he can confirm numbers.

Given the intense rivalry likely to be generated by this local derby, first aid facilities will be available should the evening get out of hand – apparently the faggots are lethal at close range.

And another exciting social event coming up -

We have an evening on **Friday 19 March** which was organised as a reunion for the Aladdin cast and crew but is open to all members. There will be BDS archives and memorabilia on display, wine and nibbles available and a surprise cabaret performance! It all starts at 7.30p.m. in the Small Hall. If you'd like to come please contact me or Gill Bates (gillian.bates@tesco.net, 01530 242375) so we can cater accordingly.

Nothing else definite in the calendar yet but it's likely we'll be repeating last year's successful Summer barbeque (minus the rain). More details to follow soon.

Jack Lennon

Those of you who were involved with the Society back in 2007 will recall our production of the Winslow Boy. The production was memorable not only for Des Bates directorial debut (which, for some reason, he's never been tempted to repeat!) but also for a fine performance in the leading role of Ronnie Winslow by Jack Lennon, Des and Gill's grandson. Jack who was 14 at the time of the production, moved to Switzerland with his family shortly afterwards. About eighteen months ago he developed a bone cancer in his arm and had to embark on a long and gruelling course of treatment involving a number of operations interspersed with chemotherapy. During his treatment Jack remained resolutely upbeat despite becoming exceedingly bored during the long periods when he was laid up in bed. Over this period Des and Gill spent a great deal of time in Switzerland supporting the family, so much so that they are now rumoured to receive frequent flier Toblerones on every trip.

Jack and his family were back in Newtown Linford over Christmas and were spotted at a performance of Aladdin when Jack looked remarkably well considering the length and severity of his treatment.

Since then Jack has had a final operation to remove all the sundry metalwork which had been inserted to hold his arm together – slightly disappointed that the Swiss couldn't use it to make a commemorative watch – and has so far been given the all-clear by the medics.

Obviously Des and Gill have been extremely concerned about Jack's condition during his illness and it's great news, particularly for them, but also for the rest of us, that Jack now seems to have made it through his ordeal.

Linford Song Club

As members of the Society, you are obviously discerning sophisticates, appreciative of the performing arts in all their forms. In which case, if you haven't already discovered it, you'll love the Linford Song Club. The club is the brainchild of 'Wally' Walton, no mean musician himself who has shared the stage with some of the legends of the business – Eric Clapham, Elton Jones, Paul McCarthy. He wanted to provide a showcase for talented musical acts who otherwise spend most of their time playing in the back rooms of seedy pubs trying to make themselves heard over the hubbub of people with no interest in them. So far the standard has been very high with excellent bands and singers playing original songs in a mainly acoustic style.

The club holds its sessions every six weeks or so in the function room at the back of the Linford and tickets cost just £2.50 per person – plus whatever you decide to spend at the bar! A number of BDS members are already regular attenders so you won't be short of people to sit and chat to.

The next two sessions will be on **Friday 16 April** and **Friday 7 May**, starting at 8.00p.m. Tickets available from the Linford or from Wally at songclub@logicalevent.com

The Next Newsletter

Our Summer edition will appear, as the title suggests, some time over the Summer whenever I can tear myself away from a bottle of Pinot Grigio on the sundrenched patio to put fingers to keyboard. Read our review of 'Love Begins at Fifty' and see if it agrees with what the critics from the Times and the Guardian thought. Look out for our report from the BDS barbeque – better still, come along yourself and see if what we write bears any relationship to the truth!

Any comments on the newsletter or any other aspect of the Society are always welcome, preferably praise but we're big enough to take criticism too if it's justified. Any titbits of salacious gossip also welcome - as ever, we'll print all the news that's fit to print and probably a bit more besides!

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