

BARN THEATRE

NEWS

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Diamond Jubilee Festival

The Southern Counties Drama Festival is celebrating its Diamond Jubilee this year - sixty glorious years of presenting competitive one-act drama in the South East.

It all began in 1951 as The Betchworth Festival, originally a peripatetic festival, staged in different venues each year. In 1989 it became evident that there was a problem staging the festival because of a lack of local technical expertise. The Barn Theatre then offered the Festival a permanent home and after 22 years of dedicated support from the Barn it is still going strong and, until we manage to find that all important technical expertise, we are indebted to Bruce Reed, our Festival Director, for knowing one end of a screwdriver from the other for all that time!!

The Southern Counties Drama Festival is the preliminary round of the All-England Theatre Festival competition which has a history dating back to 1919 when the British Drama League was formed. It is the only national competitive one-act drama festival in the UK and organises an eliminating series of festivals which lead ultimately to the British Final.

With a mixture of youth and adult teams during the week, this year's Festival promises to be another exciting week of drama from 28th February – 5th March. The adjudicator will be Jill Colby, a member of The Guild of Drama Adjudicators, who will be pressed with the difficult task of deciding who should be declared winner to go forward to the next round.

Do come and support the Festival. Apart from our home teams we



Nicholas Owen

welcome other groups who have given stalwart support for so many years. These include Woldingham Players, Merstham Amateur Dramatic Society, St Paul's Drama Group, Heathfield Drama Club and more recently Tonbridge Theatre and Arts Club, Sevenoaks Players, Glow Theatre Group and Applause Youth Theatre Group. We also welcome some first time entrants this year including The Nomads and Byfleet Players.

There will be platform entertainment each evening before the Festival begins. On the last night the awards will be presented by Nicholas Owen, BBC newsreader, and past winner of the Best Actor award.

Tenacity and perseverance has ensured that this Festival has been a success for the last sixty years and you can support the participating groups by ordering your tickets from 01959 561811 or online from www.barntheatreoxted.co.uk.

Help for Heroes Final Total

£11,000.00 yes, eleven thousand pounds raised from a one-night spectacular. What more is there to say other than thank you to all of you that helped and contributed in any way. We have received a letter of thanks and a certificate which will be displayed in the bar in due course.

New Season at the Barn

In putting this edition together I was astounded when I typed in "15th Volume" at the top of this page. Fifteen years as editor? As long as a life sentence! Reflecting back over those years, it really is encouraging to see the Barn Theatre really playing a dominant position in the world of local drama. Perhaps not so local in more recent years as we have been enjoying visits from groups and productions from further afield.

The balance of the type of production has changed over the years. Of course the backbone for so long has been the two resident societies, The Oxted Players and Oxted Operatic Society, who continue to stage excellent productions. The summer months have seen an influx of youth groups and this year we will see a record number of Youth Productions. Kenley Holiday Workshop have been coming each summer now for thirteen years; Glow Theatre Group, a more recent resident youth group who stage a number of productions throughout the year, and of course, both the resident societies have youth sections who stage youth productions and workshops.

Opera has also been an important part of the Barn programme with Aquarian Opera putting on a number of high class productions, and joined more recently by Bromley based Opera Nova. Opera fans should therefore be delighted with our Opera programme this year. In early June we welcome the Merry Opera Company, new to the Barn, with their production of *Troy Boy*, a new and witty translation of Offenbach's *La Belle Hélène*. In July, West Wickham Operatic Society return to the Barn with a sparkling new shocking version of Gilbert and Sullivan's supernatural opera production of *Ruddigore* by their associated youth section the Courtyard Theatre, runners-up in the inaugural youth section of the world famous Gilbert and Sullivan Festival in Buxton.

In September we are delighted to welcome for the very first time, Surrey Opera, under the direction of our very old friend Jonathan Butcher, one of the most versatile yet sensitive conductors of his generation, with Benjamin Britten's operatic production of *Albert Herring*.

Each year the Barn Theatre offers a diverse selection of entertainment. Bruce Reed, who incidentally completes twenty-five years as Chairman this year, must take much of the credit for his inspirational leadership and drive that has made sure the theatre continues to be the jewel in Oxted's crown.

Oxted Operatic Society

Jekyll & Hyde

Despite disappointing ticket sales, *Jekyll & Hyde*, one of our most vocally challenging shows for a long time, seemed to lived up to its pre-show publicity of being a fantastic modern musical. For those that missed the reports, here are a couple of snippets:

'The overall standard of the production was very high indeed' (Lance Milton - NODA)

'Of the many amateur productions I have seen over recent months, Oxted Operatic's musical offering was by far the most polished and professional.....a highly accomplished and enjoyable show'. (Camille Harding - Surrey Mirror)

Gigi Tues 12th – Sat 16th April

Evenings - 7:45pm

From the same pens that created the hit musicals *My Fair Lady*, *Brigadoon* & *Camelot*, Oxted Operatic Society brings you the classic Lerner & Loewe musical, *GIGI*. Based on Collette's novella of the same name, this bright and breezy show is set in 'turn of the century' Paris, a world of beauty and luxury and sophisticates like Honoré and his handsome nephew Gaston. In this world, love is a work of art and also a business arrangement. Gigi is taught by her Aunt Alicia how to allure, how to recognise the blue flame at the heart of an emerald, how to choose a cigar - but Gigi doesn't want just to be someone's mistress, even Gaston's. To his surprise Gaston discovers that Gigi is the only girl who doesn't bore him. The 1958 Academy Award winning film featured Leslie Caron in the title role with Maurice Chevalier. *Gigi* is a show that bubbles like champagne and flows through its vivid scenes, with a tang of salty French wit. The show is laced with such all-time hits as *Gigi*, *Thank Heavens for Little Girls*, *I Remember It Well*, *The Night They Invented Champagne* & *I'm Glad I'm Not Young Anymore*.

Rehearsals are already well underway with for our Spring production, with Martin Patrick (Director), Sue Rowlinson (MD) and Andrea Green (Choreographer). An excellent principal line-up features Laura Brand in the title role of Gigi, with Peter Calver (Gaston), Bob Wilson (Honore), Dena Watts (Mamita) and Fiona Steel (Aunt Alicia).

Tickets £10 - £13 are available now from the Ticket Secretary 01883 714103 and then from 22nd March 2011 Ibbett Mosely 01883 712241.

Disco Inferno (OJOS) Weds 20th – Sat 23rd July

Evenings - 7:50pm / Sat Mat 2:50pm

This Summer sees the return of the Oxted Juniors under the direction of Janette White, Ian Skipper and Sue Mellor, with what we hope will be another cracking show. Auditions for principals are imminent (Tues 8th Feb), so if you're interested please contact the production secretary Teresa Reed (01883 625731 / teresareed@btopenworld.com).

Set in the summer of 1976, Jack is about to celebrate a 21st birthday he will never forget. Working in a London nightclub 'Disco Inferno' he meets Lady Marmalade, the Devil's right hand woman, with whom he makes a pact, trading his soul to fulfil his dreams of fame and fortune. But success proves hollow, and Jack fears losing his girlfriend, Jane. In desperation, he attempts to turn back time to make one more trade, trading all he has for something far more important – love.

This fantastic high energy musical combines a hilarious script, fantastic characters and an electrifying score of hits from the

unforgettable time of glitter, flares and platform shoes. It'll get your feet tapping and have audiences reminiscing their fondest memories of a sensational era... 'a night to remember'. We intend move to 'On-Line Ticketing' for this production and information regarding bookings will be available very soon.

Future Productions - Looking further into the crystal ball, our future productions include:

Return to the The Forbidden Planet - 22nd - 26th November 2011
Godspell - Spring 2012

For further information regarding any of our productions please contact:

Dena Watts on 01883 723084

or email her at denalynwatts@virginmedia.com

PJR

The New Foxtrot Serenaders

return to the Barn on Friday 18th February with *Back to the Future*,



a celebration of songs from the modern day crooners such as Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin, Matt Monroe, Perry Como, Bobby Darin, Michael Buble, Rod Stewart and many others.

Tickets £12.00. Available from 01959 561811 or book online via the Barn Theatre website: www.barntheatreoxted.co.uk

Troy Boy

Professional touring company, The Merry Opera Company, brings lashings of sunshine to the Barn Theatre in June with its fresh and lively production of *Troy Boy*, Kit Hesketh-Harvey's translation of Offenbach's *La Belle Helene*.

The action has been transported to a Greek taverna in Chislehurst, Kent, where the beautiful Helen is attracted to an equally striking waiter from Troy. Ignoring her boring husband, Helen begins to fantasise about what might have been. In the blink of an eye they find themselves in Faliraki, and the rest, as they say, is history!

Director Kit Hesketh-Harvey's love of opera runs parallel to his life as a cabaret performer, and he has undertaken a dozen or so translations for a number of operatic companies. One of these was *La Belle Helene* for the English National Opera in 2006. When Merry Opera (formerly Unexpected Opera) invited him to direct for them, he saw an opportunity to scale down ENO's lavish production to meet Merry's modest means.

The opera can be seen on 4 June 2011 at 7.30pm and tickets are available from www.barntheatreoxted.co.uk

FOBS

A belated New Year greeting to all those who missed Caro's splendid 'jacket potato lunch' on the 2nd January. Those of us who were able to be there had a most congenial Sunday Club and we very much hope that Caro will be willing to make it a New Year Barn Tradition! Thank you, Caro.

One month of 2011 has passed already and the Barn Calendar is booking up fast so expect to be called for Front of House duties all our valued volunteers. It was good to see more new faces during the pantomime and we hope that they will join the team – as explained in the last issue, the list of volunteers is shared by The Oxted Players, The Oxted Operatic Society and the Friends of the Barn. It is hoped that we'll be able to organise a 'volunteers' session at the Theatre this year to familiarise everyone with the various Front of House tasks. It is important that we make the experience of a visit to The Barn Theatre both enjoyable and safe for our Patrons so we realise that volunteers need to be aware of the routine and necessary regulations. Pippa has the challenging task of staffing six nights for the Southern Counties Drama Festival – it is always particularly difficult to find enough willing folk to help with the car parking so do give her a call if you would be ready to 'brave the elements' for us.

We have our Annual General Meeting booked to take place in the Theatre – by kind permission of Oxted Operatic Society which will have taken up residence in the Theatre in order to start building the set for *Gigi* – on:

Monday 21st March at 7.30pm.

Official notices will be sent out at the end of February but do put the date in your diaries now please. All members of your present committee are willing to stand for re-election but we encourage you to nominate others who you feel would have something to contribute – or, have yourself nominated if you would like to become a more active member. Each committee member has a role:

Pippa Bridges organises our Front of House staffing
Bridgett Carey is our secretary
Sharon and Simon Dawes manage the bar and Simon is Deputy Chairman
Jean Groves is our membership secretary
Janet Magnay manages the sweet shop
Don Mear is our treasurer
Terry Rolph is our actively involved president
Phil Littleford is our permanent representative for the Theatre Directors

A new committee member could 'shadow' any of the tasks which interested them – including, of course, that of your Chairman.

In conclusion I remind all readers of The Barn Theatre News, whether members of The Friends or not, that the Sunday Clubs held from midday to 2pm on the 1st Sunday of each month are a very pleasant way to meet fellow supporters and to find out more about your Theatre - so do come!
Sheila Bennett

Eric Hallson

It is with great sadness that we have to report the death of Eric Hallson in December. Eric and his wife Elsie, who died about 4 years ago, could be described as the resident props team at The Barn for many years, making and supplying props for shows by The Oxted Players and Oxted Operatic. They were a very devoted couple. Their family has asked for those wishing to make a donation in their memory to support The Woodhouse Centre in Hoskins Road, Oxted, where Eric spent much of his time after Elsie's death.

Resurrected



Following his brave and courageous performance, as Jesus, suspended on a cross above the Atlantic ocean in all weathers at the Minack Theatre in Cornwall last year, we are delighted to welcome back Stuart Matthew Price to the Barn. Stuart will perform an outstanding selection of songs from his debut solo album *All Things in Time* and many more West End hits including those from *Les Miserables*, *Miss Saigon*, *Love Never Dies*, *Sweeney*

Todd and, of course, *Jesus Christ Superstar*.

Apart from his role as Jesus that we all know, Stuart has recently been seen in 'The Cradle Will Rock' at the Arcola theatre and is perhaps best known for creating the role of The Young Soldier in the Donmar's acclaimed production of 'Parade' by Jason Robert Brown and Alfred Uhry. Robert Brown says of Stuart, "*People just don't sing like Stuart does, and even great singers don't manage to convey the emotional depth that Stuart effortlessly summons. I spend a lot of my time in the theatre hoping for that kind of experience, that all too rare moment when the actor and the part and the song all merge into one perfect expression.*"

Stuart is no stranger to solo performances and you can look forward to an intimate and informal evening, here at the Barn, celebrating his acclaimed best selling debut album 'All Things in Time'.

Order your tickets now on www.barntheatreoxted.co.uk or by telephoning the box office on 01959 561811

Calendar Girls days are Numbered

Calendar Girls, the story of a Women's Institute group that raised money for charity by posing nude for a calendar, has taken more than £21 million at the box office. The production was first seen at the Chichester Festival Theatre in 2003 and was made into a film in 2008. A new UK-wide tour began in January 2011 and will be the last before the rights to amateur productions are made available in 2012 for one year only. Amateur groups are being invited by Samuel French to apply now for permission to perform the play. So it will be a TOP show to do and I know the very person who could play the month of June...

Oxted District Community Responders

The Oxted District Community Responders was set up in September 2006. Volunteer Community Responders (CRs) are trained to respond to emergency calls through the 999 system, providing vital assistance to people who are ill or injured prior to the arrival of the Emergency Ambulance. They are based in the area where they live or work and can make a real difference in their communities. They can be men or women over 18 years of age with use of a car and while 'on call', be able to immediately attend emergency calls by stopping whatever they are doing at home or in their workplace. CRs must be caring, extremely reliable, physically fit, able to cope well under pressure and remain calm in emergency situations. To ensure safety and clinical standards prospective CRs undergo checks carried out by the South East Coast Ambulance Service and need to pass an interview after which they undergo intensive training/assessment with the Ambulance Service. The Local Responder Group needs at least 3 more volunteers. Would you be prepared to help save lives? For more information contact the website: www.secamb.nhs.uk/jobs-in-secamb/community-first-responders or call local Community Responder Team Leader, John Kempton, on 01883 716616 or e-mail oxted999responders@tiscali.co.uk

THE OXTED PLAYERS

Panto was a Ball

Our January pantomime escaped the snow this year and *Cinderella* played to packed houses, receiving excellent accolades. Despite the doom and gloom of a cold wet winter and the economic climate, we



believe we managed to lift everyone's spirits. In his review for Words & Music Tony Flook said "This excellent production lived up to Oxted Players' reputation for staging top class pantomimes" while Sigrid Sherrell for The Chronicle commented "There's no better way to end the festive season than with a pantomime and the Oxted Players provided exactly the right combination of humour, romance and hilarious costumes in their production of that well-loved favourite *Cinderella* to blow away those January blues. The Players have their pick of the finest actors, singers and dancers in Oxted as well as amazing set builders, which came together in perfect harmony to give the audience a fantastic evening's entertainment." To add to this the Surrey Mirror review described the show as "first class". Our sincere thanks go to Director Chris Bassett, Choreographer Fran Newitt, Musical Director Jamie Cordell, all the cast, production team and everyone who helped in any way with this very happy and profitable production.

At the end of each performance, we held red bucket collections and also a last night raffle in aid of the Children's Heart Federation, a Charity which supports children with heart problems in the UK. Our aim was to raise sufficient funds to purchase at least one more INR blood monitoring machine costing £670 which families of affected children can use in their own homes so as to reduce substantially the number of hospital visits which can cause distress and disruption to family life. We were told by the Charity that the waiting list for these machines is very long. With the proceeds of our Charity Barn Dance in November we were able to fund one such machine and we are thrilled to be able to report that we raised over £1,100 to which the Society has added the balance required for two more machines to be purchased. We are grateful to everyone who donated to this very worthy cause.

Double Drama

We continue this very busy time of our theatre season with our participation in the Southern Counties Drama Festival. We are again supporting the Festival this year by entering two plays. Our adult play is *Mantrap* by Paul Reakes, directed by Tricia Whyte. Petty larceny, manslaughter, policemen and a devilishly elaborate form of blackmail are all ingredients in this taut thriller. The strong cast features Ghislaine Bowden, David Fanthorpe, Rhian Lally, James Kletch and Chris Muscio. *Mantrap* will be performed on Saturday 5 March which is the last night of the Festival and at the end of the evening the Adjudicator will announce the awards. Ten of our Young Players

will be performing *The Press Gang* on Thursday 3 March. The play is directed by our Chairman June Brown assisted by Nick Fanthorpe. Set in a secondary school in the 1990s during a discordant editorial meeting for the school's newspaper, the young editor's plans are disrupted by other pupils who are either disinterested or have their own agendas. For the past four years our Young Players have won the Best Youth Play Award at the Festival and for the past three years they have been Festival Runners-Up. There are therefore great expectations for the youngsters to do well again. We wish both our teams every success.

Important Spring Production

Our spring production (18-21 May) is *The Importance of Being Earnest* by Oscar Wilde directed by Chris Hepher. There are few works of literature, either novels, poems or plays, which most people could identify from simply two words contained within them. However, if you say "A hand-bag?" almost everyone will immediately know that you are referring to possibly the greatest comedy written in the English language in the last two centuries. Despite the auditions being disrupted by the snow in December, Chris has chosen his cast which includes Peter Calver (*Jack*), Cat Longhurst (*Gwendolen*), Laura Brand (Cecily), Daniel Horton (*Algernon*) and Jo Silcox (*Lady Bracknell*). With the added bonus of an authentic set designed by Sarah Cox and period costumes organised by Catherine Webber to transport audiences back to late Victorian England, you are assured of an excellent evening's entertainment. Tickets are available now from our Ticket Secretary on 01883 724852 or on line at www.barntheatreoxted.co.uk* (*booking fee applies).

Expect the Unexpected

Although some months ahead, we would like to mention our Autumn production (19-22 October) which will be Agatha Christie's classic murder mystery *The Unexpected Guest* to be directed by June Brown. A read-through and auditions for the cast of 7 men and 3 ladies will be held in May and details will be circulated to our membership. Anyone who is not already a member and who would like more information should contact June on: j.brown306@btinternet.com. Only paid up members will be eligible to audition.

Your Legacy

By making provision for the Barn Theatre in your will, you would be making a lasting gift for future generations. The theatre, now protected as a charity, has endured for over 80 years (almost 90) and every sum, no matter how small, is welcomed and spent entirely on vital conservation and improvement works that will ensure that the Barn continues to be accessible for everyone to enjoy. Thank you for your interest and support – we would not be the success that we are without it.

Note to Editor

The article about Ghosts and Ghoulies in the last issue refers to dear old Bunny frequently passing through the dancing girls dressing room with a spare bulb. Tut, tut - bulbs grow in the ground - Bunny only ever carried spare lamps – he didn't have time for gardening!

Thank you for pointing this out Bruce. We should have realised it should have been 'new lamps for old'

Ed

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