

BARN THEATRE

NEWS



Volume 20 Issue 1 February 2016

Charles Thomas, a former Chairman of the Barn and known fondly as Mr Fixit or Mr Makeit dies after a short illness.

The Barn Theatre was Charles' second home and he was a Director of the Oxted and Limpsfield Barn Theatre Co Ltd for many years, then Chairman for two years before he went to the Falklands in 1986. Stella, his widow and current President of Oxted Operatic Society joined the society in 1958 and Charles in 1959, becoming a Life Member in 1993.

The Barn we know today was a progressive work started by Charles and other Barn Directors such as Don Jeal in the 1960's, at a time when funds were short and he, with others but particularly single handed they



gave a lot of the time and completed all the early improvements to the theatre, that set us on the road to making it the stunning place it is today. In those early years, Charles was primarily responsible for the installation of the original central heating, rewiring all the electrical power and lighting and creating the

gallery tiered seating. He was a master set builder, constructing many amazing sets over the years and pieces of his scenery are still in use today. If it needed fixing he would repair it and if it needed making he would make it, no matter what it was. His skills were never ending and are sorely missed. He was a generous, cheerful, articulate man with a great personality and easy to work with.



He was also active with Mitre Players and Surrey Opera, building scenery and sets which had to fit different theatres as the shows moved around Surrey. He spent hundreds of hours renovating Clyde Hall in Croydon, as the new home for Surrey Opera and worked at the Minack Theatre, Cornwall, for all those societies he was associated with. At 80 years of age he was still driving the

scenery lorry to the Minack for Surrey Opera.

In 1986 he flew down to the Falklands, after the conflict, sleeping on sacks on the floor of a Hercules plane. There was no accommodation available so a ferry boat cabin in Port Stanley harbour was home for many months. As Mechanical and Electrical Engineer he constructed the new harbour and new tarmac road to the boggy field, chosen as the only flat site for Mount Pleasant Airport. Another tarmac road was built from the swamp to Port Stanley for essential air supplies. These are now the two

main roads on East Falklands. Charles was in the Falklands for four years and was Regional Director for the last year 1986-87.



This photograph is of Charles handing the Golden Key of Mount Pleasant Airport to Admiral Kit Layman in 1987.

As he wished, Charles has continued being useful to the community. There was no funeral. He is with St George's School of Medical Science at the University of London.

He will be missed by us all and our condolences go to Stella his widow and all his family.

Two defibrillators are being donated by his family to Oxted in memory of Charles. One will be installed at the Barn and the other at Oxted Station from where he commuted daily to London from May 1957 until he retired in 1993. Both the Barn and Southern Rail are absolutely delighted to have the gift of this facility.

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DRIP Phase One works to start after Easter

The Trustees have reviewed tenders for Phase One of this project and have instructed S. M. Atkins from Godstone to proceed with the works. We are obviously excited and delighted that we have a local, well known and respected contractor and look forward to working with Steve Atkins and his team. Depending on weather during the next couple of months we are hopeful of a meaningful start to the works in April with works continuing through the summer. Fundraising for Phase Two will continue during the works with the aim being to follow through into this phase as the initial works come to completion. This will take a lot of doing and we do need our readers help please. Give generously when you see a Little Red Bucket at the end of each show and please consider a donation by monthly standing order if at all possible. For Barn 2000 the bucket collections and monthly standing orders made a considerable difference to our ability to complete those works in a timely manner. Enquiries about donations to Bruce Reed on 01959 561811.

Tribute to Charles Thomas from Surrey Opera

From the moment we met, when Charles helped with the set for *La Bohème*, I realised how lucky I was to be working with such an experienced artisan and generous and patient teacher – all this carried out with such a wicked sense of fun. On one of our first jobs I managed to injure Charles' thumb with a power drill, which he never let me forget, but which made no difference to the trust he had in me. Over the next 13 years and 23 shows later we had lost none of the



fun of working together. I will remember in *Fiddler on the Roof* Charles discharging the smoke machine under the Fruma-Sarah skirt frame, so that I could see nothing, just before I was about to go on stage to wheel the singer around the stage!

Despite Charles' sense of fun he was completely professional in all he did. He was continually looking to see if

changes could be made or items added to improve the look of the show – for instance he brought electric fans from home, as he thought the palm trees in *The Pearl Fishers* would look much more natural if they were gently waving in the breeze.

Over the years I gradually got to hear about Charles' earlier life, his education in the USA, his work in the Falklands, his love of gardening and we exchanged books and magazines, and I always looked forward to his call asking me how many and which variety of tomato plants I would like from the seedlings he had grown.

I feel so privileged to have known and shared some time with such a generous and fun person.

Ray Locke, Surrey Opera

Thomas and Elena fund raise for the Barn



Thomas Muscio and Elena Vinall entertained members of Oxted Rotary at their Annual Dinner in December and brought back a very generous donation from Oxted Rotary of £100 for the DRIP fund.

Well done and thank you to these two talented youngsters for representing the Barn Theatre.

FRIENDS OF THE BARN THEATRE



Although a little late, I would like to wish everyone a very happy and prosperous 2016 and also welcome any new members.

Recent weeks have seen considerable activity at the Barn, much of which has involved FOBs members in 'Front of House duties'. On a number of occasions, the takings from the bar, sweets and ices have been higher than usual.

An example of this was the performance of *Winter Wonderland* when the takings were the highest ever for a single day. Whilst it might seem fairly straightforward to serve drinks, ices and sweets, I can assure you that staff are kept very busy.

The new fire regulations which have been introduced have resulted in an increase in the responsibility of ushers and the weather in recent weeks has seen more rain than normally experienced and in such conditions those on car parking duty have had the worst working environment. Thank you for persevering.

The success of all events depends on the efforts of the members who give their support and I would like to express my thanks to all those who have been involved in the various Front of House functions. Each performance requires 12 members to volunteer their time and undertake the various duties. We are always in need of volunteers to help us function efficiently, so if you fancy a sociable evening and a free glass of something, contact me or any member of the committee for more information.

Your FOBs committee met on 30th November and matters such as membership and job descriptions for Front of House duties were discussed, amongst other matters.

Alan Jackson (alanjackson1911@btinternet.com or 01342894669)

Winter Wonderland breaks all records

Winter Wonderland in December, a Really Happy Company production, was a truly traditional festive production with numerous cast, crew and other helpers, a total of over 250 people.

Playing to two full houses and hosted by a stunning Jessica Muscio and talented Sean Wareing the show was a delight to the senses and very well received by the audiences.

The Really Happy Company formed by Jessica generously donated £2,100 to the Barn Drip fund and also gave a donation to the two participating junior schools, Downs Way and St.Marys in Oxted. The remaining profits raised have been used to fund Jessica's travels to work in an orphanage in Tanzania as planned.



Such was the appreciation of the audiences that the Little Red Buckets collected £549.32 in all, the matinee realising an all time record of £304.69 for one performance. Added to this, the bar took all time record monies during the two performances also.

Well done and thank you to everyone who was part of this production and who came to see it.

Commedia Productions bring Bizet's Carmen to the Barn; Friday 22nd & Saturday 23rd April

Carmen can lay claim to being the most popular opera ever written. It is a perfect blend of drama and pure entertainment and has some of the most memorable melodies in the repertoire. Its extraordinary success has led to its adaptation as a Broadway musical and several Hollywood films and the score has been the inspiration behind innumerable popular songs. The opera relates the story of Carmencita, a gypsy femme fatale, who is murdered in a fit of jealous rage by her lover José. Carmen's blatant sexuality, her readiness to discard men like plucked flowers, the manner of her ultimate demise and the behaviour of the chorus of rowdy women who both fight and smoke on stage, has shocked audiences for almost 50 years.

Southern Counties Drama Festival 2016

The All-England Theatre Festival 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. The Southern Counties Drama Festival, (previously The Betchworth Festival), a preliminary round of this festival has been an important part of local amateur dramatics in Surrey and Kent for over 60 years, celebrating its Diamond Anniversary in 2011.

The result is the return of an exciting week of festival drama in 2016 from February 22nd – 27th at the Barn, with 14 groups competing against each other and Arthur Rochester, GoDA, pressed with the difficult task of deciding who should be declared winner to go forward to the next round of festival, The Eastern Area Semi Final which is being held at the Cecil Hepworth Playhouse, Walton On Thames, in April.

With a mixture of youth and adult teams during the week, most entrants are experienced in festival and several entrants have had recent success in the further rounds that lead to the English and British finals.

Tenacity and perseverance has ensured that this festival endures and you can support the endeavour by ordering your tickets by telephoning 01959 561811 or ordering online from www.barntheatreoxted.co.uk. General enquiries can be answered by telephoning 01959 561811 or by email at scdfatbarn@btinternet.com. More information is also available at www.barntheatreoxted.co.uk/scdf.html

This year's selection of plays is an eclectic and interesting mix of comedy, tragedy and drama and a week not to be missed.



We have emerged triumphant from the exhausting run of our traditional pantomime “Mother Goose”, skilfully directed by David Morgan with support from Jamie Cordell as Musical Director and Kerry Brackpool as Choreographer and our cast of 44 including two teams of juniors. The panto played to packed houses and the feedback has been excellent. Our grateful thanks to everyone involved on stage, backstage, crew or Front of House without whose involvement and commitment the show could not go on. This has been a fantastic start to our 70th anniversary year.



We are also pleased to report that our charity raffle in support of Cardiac Risk in the Young (C.R.Y.) raised £367 and congratulations to Alison and Phillip Langham and Carol and Sophie Moss for their excellent efforts in making and selling cakes at panto rehearsals raising £232.80 for Great Ormond Street Hospital. The Little Red Buckets at the close of the show went to the DRIP fund, a superb total of £808.20.

Southern Counties Drama Festival is fast approaching and we have two entries. Our adult entry to be performed on Wednesday 24th February is “Lions and Donkeys” by Steve Harper directed by Ghislaine Bowden. This is a funny, poignant play about friendship, humanity and survival, set in an Observation Point on the Western Front in the closing weeks of World War I. Chris Bassett and James Thurstan play the British soldiers, Tom Stiles is the German soldier they have befriended and James Atkinson is the British Army Officer who arrives unexpectedly with surprising news.

Our Youth Entry is “What You See” written and directed by Liberty Bliss which will be performed on Friday 26th February. The cast of six includes Megan Saunders, Phoebe Sleeman, Hannah Fox and Nia Griffiths. Everyone has two personalities, the one we let people see and the one we don't. But what would happen if these two sides of a person could talk to each other? The play takes a look into the lives of Gemma, Effie and Lizzie who battle with identity, lost love and self confidence and how they cope with life, both on the face of it and how they really feel underneath. Tickets £8.00 from 01959 561811 or online for card purchases www.barntheatreoxted.co.uk.

Our Young Oxted Players' production of “Alice in Wonderland” directed by Carly Thompson, will come to the Barn stage on 11th and 12th March with a matinee on the Saturday. Alice (played by Sophie Moss) plunges down a rabbit hole and becomes involved in the madcap adventures immortalised by Lewis Carroll. The cast of 26 will be working their way through 14 adventures featuring a kaleidoscope of actions and madness with the necessary elements of suspense and frustration to make it all work. This is wonderful entertainment for both children and adults. Tickets are £9.00 (see below for box office details)

Moving on to May, we bring murder, mystery and suspense to the theatre with Agatha Christie's “Murder on the Nile”. Canon Pennefather is tasked with investigating a murder aboard a paddle steamer cruising on the Nile. The play is based on the author's 1937 novel “Death on the Nile” but in transferring it to the stage, Ms Christie insisted that the title and characters should be changed, hence the Canon replaces Inspector Poirot as the detective. Directed by June Brown and with a talented and experienced cast, we promise an evening of suspense and intrigue right to the end. Performances run from 18 - 21 May 2016 with a matinee on the Saturday. Tickets are £10 (adults) and (students). Box Office facilities at www.barntheatreoxted.co.uk for card payments or 01883 724852 if paying by cheque.



NEW Yoga Classes start in March in the Little Barn, Tuesdays
7.30pm - 8.45pm Mixed Ability and beginners are most welcome!
Contact Gemma@yogaganesha.co.uk or visit www.yogaganesha.co.uk for more information.

ANITA HARRIS

**FEBRUARY 12TH AT
7.45PM**

**NEW
FOXTROT
SERENADERS**

**“BEST LITTLE BAND
IN THE SOUTHEAST”**



The last few months of 2015 were busy for the Society and we closed our year with a magnificent production of 42nd Street. Happily, with over 75% of the available tickets sold, we played to good houses and the show was enjoyed by all. Congratulations to the cast and crew, and especially our production team of Paul Robinson (Director), Fran Newitt (Choreographer) and Andy Payne (Musical Director), who produced an excellent toe-tapping extravaganza.

Jon Fox of NODA wrote in his review: ‘A hugely talented cast who could really dance and sing did full justice to this iconic show’, and ‘The tap routines were stunningly choreographed by the highly talented Francesca Newitt and the dancing simply sizzled’.

Peter Steptoe, another reviewer, also wrote: ‘The feel good factor in this musical extravaganza was maintained at a very high level throughout by the Oxted Operatic Society. The pace was both tremendous and relentless and contrasted excellently with the infrequent quieter moments of this frenetic ménage’.



Full versions of the reviews by Jon Fox and Peter Steptoe are on the Society's website www.oxtedoperatic.co.uk (under: ABOUT US/PAST PRODUCTIONS/The teens/42nd Street)

April 2016 – The King and I

Looking ahead we have started work on our April 2016 production of 'The King and I'. This well loved Rodgers and Hammerstein musical is always a firm favourite, with a score bursting with such famous numbers as *Whistle A Happy Tune, Getting To Know You, Something Wonderful* and *Shall We Dance?*

We are delighted to welcome back the production team of Peter Reed (Director), Kerry Brackpool (Choreographer) and Sue Rowlinson (Musical Director) and amongst the epic cast (we will need a large company including around 20 children) the iconic roles of The King and Anna Leonowens will be played by Sean Eldridge and Jane Gautrey. We could always do with more ladies and also more dancers, so if you are interested in taking part it's not too late! Contact our Secretary, Teresa Reed on 01883 625731 for more information.



Social events

We are pleased to announce our first social event of 2016 will be a Skittles and Ploughman's evening at the Royal British Legion, Limpsfield on Friday 12th February. Tickets cost £12 each (£10 for under 16s) and include a ploughman's supper with ham, cheeses and sausages, plus as many games of skittles as you can handle. We need at least 20 people to make this evening possible, so why not come along and support your society whilst enjoying a bit of competitive fun! To book tickets please contact our Social Secretary, Stephanie Hornett-Johnson, on 07747 022877.



FURTHER into 2016, a reminder of our joint social event with the Oxted Players, celebrating the 70th anniversary of both Societies - a fabulous Dinner Dance to be held on Saturday 24th September 2016 at Bletchingley Golf Club. Tickets are very reasonably priced at £25 – to include a four course meal plus dancing to a great live band, *The Debonairs*. Tickets will go on sale soon and will be limited to around 100 places. Please note that we expect this event to be very popular; therefore priority will be given to paid up members of either The Oxted Players or Oxted Operatic Society. If that's you and you'd like to reserve your place in advance contact Teresa Reed on 01883 625731 or email secretary@oxtedoperatic.co.uk

Annual General Meeting

The Society's AGM will be held on Monday 15th February at the Barn, not Hurst Green Community Centre at 8pm and all are welcome to come along and hear what's going on with your Society, pay your subscription and have your say. We're always looking for more people to help out on our committee and so if you are interested in this please contact our Secretary, Teresa Reed, on 01883 625731. She will be able to tell you more about what's involved and advise you about how our nomination process works. As always, the meeting will be followed by some complimentary refreshments and a few nibbles.

Looking forward

To help your future planning, a brief reminder of our productions at the Barn for 2016/2017

12th - 16th April 2016The King and I
 22nd - 26th November 2016.....Sister Act
 April 2017.....Fiddler On The Roof
 July 2017.....West Side Story (OJOS)
 November 2017.....Our House



Kenley Holiday Workshop Celebrate 21 Amazing Years at the Barn Theatre

Founded in 1989, Kenley Holiday Workshop continues to flourish. Each summer 50 young people spend a fortnight of their summer holiday rehearsing and presenting a show under the guidance of a talented directing team. KHW is an amazing experience for those lucky enough to be a part of the cast; most return year after year. There are some members in their late teens who cannot remember a summer that did not include "Kenley". Several former members have gone on to make the stage their career, both as performers and backstage. Many also return every year to help backstage and to build the wonderful sets that are all designed and produced in-house.

This summer, KHW will celebrate its 21st year at the Barn in fine style with Cole Porter's "De-Licious, De-Lightful and De-Loverly" Anything Goes. This follows the critically acclaimed "Calamity Jane" last year, which Kevin Black of The County Border News described as "polished, smooth, effortless class.... this excellent show which looked and sounded so good, you could taste the dust whipped up by the Deadwood Stage". The directing team of Sarah Morrison, Andrea Atkinson and Michael Burbidge, with producer Sally Dallosso, return to bring the world of 1930's high society travelling in style to life. Look out for a spectacular set; the KHW backstage team are itching to outdo the double decker London bus built for "Summer Holiday" in 2009. "Anything Goes" features some of Cole Porter's best known and loved songs, including "You're the top", "I get a kick out of you" and "All through the night" The talented cast will sing, dance and tap their way across the Atlantic aboard the luxury liner SS American. Among the passengers on the journey from New York to London are the beautiful heiress, Hope Harcourt; Hope's mother (and her dog!); Hope's aristocratic fiancé; a stowaway, Billy, who is also in love with Hope; Billy's boss; a gangster disguised as a vicar and Reno, an evangelist turned nightclub singer who sings the wonderful title song. What could possibly go wrong for this assortment of larger than life and fascinating characters?



The picture above is of cast members from the 2004 KHW production of "Anything Goes" which was directed by Martin Patrick.

This year the show runs from 10th – 13th August at 7.30pm. Tickets, which are always in very high demand, will be available online from the Barn Theatre website on 1st May 2016, but Barn Theatre News readers may make early reservations by calling 01883 331400.

The Editor of the Barn Theatre News is Bruce Reed and contributions are always gratefully received.
barntheatre@btinternet.com
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