

JULY 2016

Diary of Events for late June, July & August

Weds 29th June - Sat 2nd July	“ All You Need Is Love ” (Phoenix Theatre Singers) 7.30pm
Sun 3rd July	“ Dad’s Army ” (Screen at the Phoenix) 7.00pm
Sat 16th July	“ Joy ” (Screen at the Phoenix) 7.00pm
Thurs 21st & Fri 22nd July	“ Stags & Hens ” (Phoenix Youth Theatre) 7.30pm
Sat 23rd July	“ Stags & Hens ” (Phoenix Youth Theatre) matinee 2pm
Mon 25th	“ Jessie Burton ” (Rossiter Books) 7pm
Tues 2nd Aug	Members’ evening: “Between Mouthfuls” by Alan Ayckbourn (rehearsed play reading) & “ Can Malone Die? ” by David Pollard 7.30pm

(please see the Members calendars for July and Aug at the end of this Newsletter)

Annual General Meeting

The AGM took place on **Weds 8th June**. The Committee for 2016/2017 was elected as follows:

Chairman	Sue Edwards
Secretary	Trevor Jones
Treasurer	Amanda Smith
Production Co-ordinator	Suzanne Hill
Publicity Officer	Graham Russell
Building Manager	Jennifer Wood
Members without portfolio	Alison Clarke Mary Brigg Sarah O’Neill

The report to the AGM by Sue follows.

Graham Russell (Newsletter editor)

Chairman's Report

This is the end of my second year as chairman and I am pleased to report that once again we have had a very productive year. We have had four drama productions in September, November, April and May. Our September production was **"A Way to Mandalay"** comprising two halves both with a World War One theme: firstly a one act play directed by Gordon Brigg, set on the Western Front, and secondly **"Only Remembered"**, a series of song and voice vignettes jointly directed by Mary Brigg and Brian Jackson. The production was brilliant and enjoyable but poignant and thought provoking, demonstrating the brutality and destructiveness of that conflict. In November David Pollard directed **"A Night on the Tiles"** featuring a very impressive stage set by Catriona Pearson, Trevor Jones and Graham Russell. A ménage a trois theme with some very funny scenes and excellent acting. In April Brian Jackson directed **"Anastasia"**. The plot concerned whether one of the Tsar's daughters, Anastasia, had survived the execution of The Russian Royal family in 1918. This was a superb production with some outstanding individual performances. We were fortunate to have a representative of NODA (National Operatic and Dramatic Association) in the audience who was moved to tears at the meeting between Anastasia and the Dowager Empress. In May, David Pollard directed **"Summer of the 17th Doll"** set in Australia which was very well received with some fine acting.

The **Youth Group's** October production was **"Private Peaceful"** based on Michael Morpurgo's novel. Directed by Sarah O'Neill, it continued with the WW1 theme. All the cast deserve congratulations for a superb performance which had a lasting effect on all who watched it with many of the audience in tears at the end. Once again Sarah managed a large cast on a small stage with many scene changes - how does she do it! In March, the Youth Theatre entered a play **"The Monkey's Paw"** written and directed by Brian Jackson in the **Hereford One Act Drama Festival**. They won a hat trick of awards and are through to the Quarter Finals of the All-England Theatre Festival. They won the Stennett Trophy for Best Youth team and Zoe Doughty won the Hereford Players Trophy for Best Individual Youth Performance. This is the third year in a row that the Youth Theatre have won "Best Youth Performance". They were then awarded the County Adult Drama Festival Challenge Cup against all-comers to go forward to the Quarter Finals at the Swan Theatre in Worcester. Many many congratulations to Brian and all the Youth Theatre players. They are a real credit to the Phoenix.

The **Singers summer concert** in June, **"Back to the Movies"** was sold out. They received a standing ovation on the Friday and Saturday and had the audience dancing on the Saturday to Jailhouse Rock. Congratulations to Mary Brigg, her cast and crew. The annual **Performathon** in October organised by Mary with a **Gala concert** in the evening raised over £1100 for Children in Need. A fantastic sum.

The **Christmas concert** in December was 88% sold out and was good fun with lots of comedy sketches and good humour- like a party. Enjoyed by all. The Phoenix Singers have done several shows outside the theatre for charity including Ross Lions, Oxfam, Marie Curie and Riding for the Disabled. Mary and her singers work very hard throughout the year with lots of rehearsals to produce these stunning shows. Well done everybody.

The **Cinema Group** has screened a variety of films over the year including "Brooklyn", "Suffragette" and the "Lady in the Van" starring Maggie Smith. We have a good following of loyal customers and achieved full capacity on several showings. Cinema goers are interested in the drama productions and often pick up leaflets on forthcoming plays.

The **Hereford Carers** continue to meet on a monthly basis. We have had visits from **Ross Explorers** and another visit organised by Sarah from **Ashfield Park School**. **Gorsley Goffs School** Shakespeare Festival staged a show very successfully. **BBC Hereford and Worcester** staged an "Introducing Show" at the theatre and recorded four local bands which was broadcast on the local radio in late March. All good

publicity for the theatre. There was a members evening in August when they read “**Can Malone Die?**” by David Pollard.

A monthly **Drama Club** was established in January for members not currently in a production to have a chance to read and act. The **Christmas Party** was attended by 40 guests who all enjoyed themselves.

Trevor Jones sourced some new LED lights which are low power consumption. They are lightweight, the colour is easily adjusted and the angle can be adjusted remotely controlled by computer (and Trevor of course!) We have a wonderful new sound system which has made a big difference to the sound quality for films. He had also replaced the printer in the foyer. I should like to mention Trevor who, as well as being our secretary, works tirelessly back stage with set construction, lighting and all technical aspects. He has given unstintingly of his time to train some of the Youth members in the intricacies of the technical gallery. Nothing is too much trouble for him and he has rushed to the theatre on several occasions after a panic phone call from me over film projection!

We do need more members to help with backstage jobs - Bar, FOH, Box Office and Set Building. A few people are doing all the jobs - we do need more helpers to spread the load. Please see a committee member if you feel able to help. **Mel Warner runs the Box Office team, Mary Brigg the FOH Rota and Lynn Tait the Bar Rota.**

Sadly we lost three members of the theatre this year. **Brenda Smith**, our President died on Christmas Day. She was an active member of ROADS and the Phoenix for over 40 years. The first play she directed won the County Drama Festival. She ran the Children’s Theatre Workshop and also produced the Newsletter. She was on the Committee and President for many years. Angela Mason was also an active member of ROADS and the Phoenix for over 40 years. She directed and acted and was Membership Secretary. **Sally McConnell** was one of the founding members of the Phoenix Singers in 2008 and helped with FOH and Bar Rotas.

2016 was a difficult year when it came to planning our **programme of events**. Easter was very early and so the spring production of Anastasia took place later than usual in April. The May production of Summer of the 17th Doll and the June Singers show were all moved a week later to account for this. However, this resulted in the May production clashing with half term and a bank holiday, and the cast had to rehearse 3 times a week from the start of rehearsals in order to be ready in time for the performances. Consequently, we are planning a less stressful programme for 2017. There will be a production in March. The Singers Annual show will move to early September and the May production will move to late June. Everything else will stay the same, with the PYT production in October and a drama production in November. This should ease the workload for all concerned, spread our productions out more evenly over the year, and hopefully enable more members to come to see our shows. We, as a committee, are concerned that all our members do not attend productions. We realise we need a varied programme, but feel we must not only perform classics but also try new or less well known writing. If any members have any particular plays they would like to see performed at the Phoenix, do please let a committee member know.

Brenda Smith, our president for many years who died a few months ago, kindly donated £1000 to the theatre, with her wish that if possible it should be used for the Youth Theatre. We are considering how the money will be spent.

I should like to thank all the committee for the support and help they have given me over the past year. Special thanks to **Catriona Pearson** who is stepping down from the committee after six years. She has been Building Manager, Membership Secretary, helps with set construction and checks the bar stocks and balances the till. Thankfully she will continue to look after the bar. Thank you Catriona for all your hard work. I wish you all the best for a successful 2016/2017 year.

Sue Edwards

Production Co-ordinator's Column

“**The Summer of the 17th Doll**” by Ray Lawler which was our **May 2016 production**, was well received but sadly our audiences were light, achieving only 55% seat occupancy. This was in part due to the run being in half term week when many of our supporters were away, and the fact that the play and author were largely unknown. However, the acting, set, lighting, sound and costumes were excellent and our congratulations go to David, his cast and crew.

The Phoenix Theatre Singers summer show entitled, “**All you Need is Love**” will run from **Weds 29th June to Sat 2nd July**. The evening will comprise of a wide variety of songs inspired by the theme of love from West End to MoTown classics. This concert has something for the whole family to enjoy including songs from The Supremes, Elvis, The Beatles, Queen and the Righteous Brothers as well as popular musical medleys from West Side Story, Miss Saigon, The King and I and Chess. The Singers will be showcasing their talents through a range of solos, duets, small group numbers and some stunning chorus medleys. They will be accompanied by the talented Richard Watson and directed and hosted by Mary and Gordon Brigg. For a video preview of the show, please follow the link: <https://vimeo.com/172473908>

The Phoenix Youth Theatre will perform “**Stags and Hens**” by **Willy Russell** from **Thurs 21st to Sat 23rd July**. More details elsewhere in this newsletter.

The Drama Club in May read “**Between Mouthfuls**”, a one act from “**Confusions**” by **Alan Ayckbourn**. **Amanda Smith** will be directing this play as a rehearsed reading at the **Members' evening on Tues 2nd August**. Amanda wishes to direct a full scale production and this will give her the opportunity to direct before taking on a larger undertaking. The play has been cast and rehearsals are underway. The evening will also include “**Can Malone Die?**” by **David Pollard**. Do come along to the Members evening on **Tues 2nd Aug**. **Please let Suzanne Hill know if you plan to attend.**

Masterclass in Directing for the Stage – by Estelle van Warmelo

We are fortunate in acquiring the skills of Estelle an Warmelo, director at the Courtyard Theatre in Hereford to provide directing classes on three Saturday mornings in September and October. **The dates will be Sat. 17th Sept, Sat. 24th Sept and Sat. 1st Oct from 10am to 1pm**. These classes will be **FREE** to members and all are welcome. Please let **Suzanne Hill** know if you wish to attend. This is an opportunity for aspiring directors to learn directing skills and for current directors to update their knowledge. This should be an exciting and informative masterclass.

On **Sat 17th Sept** the **Ukelele Man of Ross**, Matthew Stead, will be performing at the Phoenix Theatre together with the **Ross Uke Troupe**. This will be a charity concert in aid of the Evelina Children's Hospital, who carry out vital living saving work with babies and young children, as well as supporting families who have lost a child. More details to follow.

Keith James who has performed his Leonard Cohen show and “The Music of Yusuf – Cat Stevens” at the Phoenix, will be performing again on **Sun 23rd October** with a concert entitled “**Duende**”. Tickets £12 from our website and Rossiter Books.

The March Drama Club read “**A Doll's House**” by **Henrik Ibsen**. This will be our November production this year, directed by **Gordon Brigg**. Auditions have been held and the cast comprises David Pollard, Di Hughes, Tim Betts, Ray Smith, Amanda Smith, Diana Tubb and Jacky Bedford. **The play will run for 5 nights from Tues 22nd to Sat 26th November.**

Suzanne Hill

Review of Summer of the 17th Doll

The Phoenix Theatre is fortunate in having a strong active membership, both in acting and backstage/technical support. And this shows in the company's ability to produce plays of a consistently high standard, as in their latest production of the Australian classic, "Summer of the 17th Doll". The story seems simple enough; Barney and Roo (two cane cutters) spend their summer lay-offs making whoopee in Melbourne with the ladies. No hang-ups, no responsibilities, just irresponsible fun until the cane-cutting season takes them back to the tropical Northern Territories. Except things aren't what they seem, and haven't been for some years past. And on this 17th summer reunion, all the suppressed angst begins to surface until the idyll is finally shattered.



The play opens with the women awaiting the arrival of Barney and Roo in Emma's rooming-house (Emma, an elderly slattern, earthy, street-wise and beautifully played by Jane Bovell). The character of 'Olive', all dressed up and ready for a good time was safe in the hands of Penny Field whose final scenes with Barney displayed emotional vulnerability with great sincerity. She has brought along 'Pearl' a doubting friend to join them for the summer and Lucy Davies shone in the part. The intimacy of the Phoenix allowed all to enjoy the sheer expressiveness which Lucy was able to call on. A delightful performance! We have all met a 'Barney'; amoral, feckless, selfish. It sounds easy but in reality Barney is extremely manipulative and Phil Field was superb in this complex role. And then we come to 'Roo', (Gareth Wigg), top man in the cane-cutters except he has been usurped, a big man humiliated by 'Dowd' (Tom Lee-Hynes). Two more very strong performances. Finally 'Bubba', a vulnerable young woman (Georgia Gill) aching to be allowed to 'grow up' but in the end resisting the temptation to follow Pearl and Olive's path.

This play has to be delivered with strength by all the characters. It can take the audience some time to attune to the fact that Australian society in the 50's was so different to ours. And there is always the temptation to indulge in 'stage Australian'. Thankfully the cast largely resisted this. But this was a play about the shattering of dreams. The summers in Melbourne had lived on in memory's illusions until the truth finally had to be faced. A challenging play and in the hands of Director David Pollard's fine cast the Phoenix Theatre once again rose to the challenge.

Brian Jackson

Phoenix Youth Theatre News

The Phoenix Youth Group are working very hard in rehearsal for their next stage production..... Willy Russell's very famous "**Stags and Hens**" - the remix version. The play was originally written by Russell in the early 80s and then he modernised it again in 2009 and this is the current version available that we have chosen to perform at The Phoenix in mid July. Those of you familiar with Russell's writing will be all too aware that at times he is direct and bawdy and you can expect some innuendo in this show and mild use of language.... but not too much! We have taken the decision to tone down elements of the script, but not to the detriment of the story, characters or the playwright and we hope you will enjoy our interpretation of it. This is a very popular play that has appeared on the Drama GCSE play list for many years and is a classic favourite of Willy Russell's vast array of plays. The cast comprises of 9 of our PYT members - both past and present and a few faces that are now a little older and who have not performed with us for a couple of years are back with us. It is very much their chance to shine and to show their talents at holding their own and performing what is essentially an adult play. I think everyone that comes to see the show will thoroughly enjoy watching these young adults cut their teeth on this adult themed show and you will not be disappointed.

Please show your support and book your ticket without delay to come and see this wonderful show.



(L-R) Daisy Canham, Hannah Callen, Morgan Harris, Yasmin Poole, Zoe Hutton, Adam Warner, Owen Needham Church, Billy Jones & Sam Callen

Stags & Hens synopsis

Dave and Linda are "gettin' married in the morning".... or are they?

Set in the sticky floored loos of a tacky Cinderford nightclub, "Stags and Hens" is a comical story about complicated love, with plenty of extra wit, bravado and sauce. Set in the vibrant 1980s, lovers Dave and Linda are out to celebrate their last night of freedom before their big day on their Stag and Hen nights. Yet, unbeknown to either of them, this final night of freedom sees them not at all far apart - in fact, their festivities are all taking place under the same roof! Chaos and confusion and mixed emotions from everyone are very much the order of the evening. Who will end up with who and will there be a happy ending?

With Dave out for the count after a few too many, Linda bumps into her ex lover, Peter, who seems to have made a real go of life, away from the doom and gloom of Cinderford. With the bride to be feeling torn, doubts begin to creep in and it's not just the drink talking anymore.

Will she tie the knot and lead the life she thought she would have or will she make a leap for new horizons and leave everything she has ever know behind her?

Other PYT news.....

Spotlight on....

Ben Butler



Ben has secured a place once again at this year's National Youth Festival and has been cast in a play that will appear at a West End theatre for a four week run this Summer - we wish him the best of luck as he hits the lights of the London stage! Ben was also successful in getting down to the last 50 applicants in his recent RADA auditions and although he did not make it through this season, what an amazing and fantastic achievement. We have every confidence that Ben will be successful next year. He is only 18 and it is very rare that a place is awarded to someone so young. Go for it Ben.... you will succeed!

Zoe Hutton - Zoe has just finished her second year at Birmingham University and completed a six week placement at The Phoenix Theatre with The Drama Company. She directed and wrote her first solo show entitled " Playground Games" to a full audience and it was a brilliant success. We wish Zoe every success for her final year.

Billy Jones - Billy has been successful in gaining a teacher training place at Cheltenham College to begin this September and all the experience he has gained from his voluntary work with the youth groups at The Phoenix we are sure will stand him in good stead for the future! Good Luck Billy!

The Phoenix Youth Group would like to take this opportunity to thank Billy Jones, Zoe Hutton and Sam Callen for their continued commitment and support to the theatre. As well as helping every week as volunteers at the group, they help in so many other ways and their support to us all is never ending. They

volunteer regularly to help other theatre group users as well as leading their own projects within the youth group. We are all very proud of you.

Finally.....

Rehearsals are continuing on a weekly basis in preparation for our October show "Alice's Adventure's in Wonderland". Expect a fantastical spectacle before your very eyes. This show is going to very special for so many reasons! More details and photos to follow in our next edition.



Sarah O'Neill

“Can Malone Die?” - theatre dates

In 2015 David Pollard had the opportunity to have his short play “Can Malone Die?” performed as part of the Scratch Night event at the Courtyard’s “Write-On Festival” of new writing. The piece was also performed at a Phoenix Theatre Members’ evening later that year.

As a result of that experience David was encouraged to develop the play into a full one act version and this is now being presented as part of this year’s **“Write-On Festival” on 1st July** with The Phoenix’s Phil Field and Tim Betts in the roles of the eponymous Malone and his creator Max Feeney respectively. In the play, Max Feeney, an author who is about to kill off his fictional creation – “The Ethical Assassin” – is confronted by the character, Malone, who argues to be spared. Is Malone real? Or is he just a figment of Feeney’s overwrought imagination? Is Feeney cracking under the pressure of an imminent deadline? Can Malone die?

To see the latest version of “Can Malone Die?”, come along to the **Members’ evening on 2nd Aug.**

Additionally the play is to be presented as part of the **“For One Night Only Festival” at The Market Theatre, Ledbury on 2nd Sept** (tickets from www.themarkettheatre.com) and **The Melville Centre, Pen-y-Pound, Abergavenny on 9th Sept** (tickets available by phone on 01873-853167).

Members Calendars for July & August

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
27	28	29	30	1	2	3
The Drama Company 4:00 pm – 5:45 pm PYT rehearsals for 'Stags & Hens' in auditorium 6:00 pm – 8:00 pm Can Malone Die - rehearsals in auditorium 8:00 pm	Singers rehearsal in auditorium 7:30 pm	Phoenix Theatre Singers Summer Show 7:30 pm	The Drama Company 4:00 pm – 7:15 pm Phoenix Theatre Singers Summer Show 7:30 pm	Phoenix Theatre Singers Summer Show 7:30 pm	Phoenix Theatre Singers Summer Show 7:30 pm	Phoenix Youth Group 1:00 pm – 6:00 pm Screen at the Phoenix - Dad's Army 7:00 pm
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Stags and Hens Technical rehearsal 9:15 am – 3:00 pm The Drama Company 4:00 pm – 5:45 pm PYT rehearsals for 'Stags & Hens' in auditorium 6:00 pm – 8:00 pm		Stags and Hens Technical rehearsal 9:15 am – 3:00 pm Between Mouthfuls rehearsal in auditorium 7:30 pm – 9:00 pm	The Drama Company 4:00 pm – 7:15 pm	PYT 'Stags & Hens' tech. rehearsal 4:00 pm – 9:00 pm	PYT 'Stags & Hens' full day in auditorium 10:00 am – 4:00 pm	Phoenix Youth Group 1:00 pm – 6:00 pm
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
The Drama Company 4:00 pm – 5:45 pm PYT rehearsals for 'Stags & Hens' in auditorium 6:00 pm – 8:00 pm		Between Mouthfuls rehearsal in auditorium 7:30 pm – 9:00 pm	The Drama Company 4:00 pm – 7:15 pm	PYT 'Stags & Hens' tech. rehearsal 4:00 pm – 9:00 pm	PYT 'Stags & Hens' full day in auditorium 10:00 am – 4:00 pm Screen at the Phoenix - Joy 7:00 pm	Phoenix Youth Group - FULL DAY WORKSHOP 11:00 am – 5:00 pm
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
PYT rehearsal for 'Stags & Hens' in auditorium and rehearsal room 6:00 pm – 8:30 pm	PYT 'Stags & Hens' dress run 6:00 pm – 9:00 pm	Between Mouthfuls rehearsal in auditorium 7:30 pm	PYT 'Stags & Hens' by Willy Russell performance 7:00 pm – 9:00 pm	PYT 'Stags & Hens' performance 7:00 pm – 9:00 pm	PYT 'Stags & Hens' matinee performance 2:00 pm	
25	26	27	28	29	30	31
Jessie Burton book event by Rossiter Books in auditorium 7:00 pm	The Drama Company 2016 Summer Workshops - set up 10:00 am	The Drama Company 2016 Summer Workshops N/A	The Drama Company 2016 Summer Workshops N/A	The Drama Company 2016 Summer Workshops N/A		Between Mouthfuls rehearsal in auditorium 4:30 pm – 6:00 pm

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Members Evening - rehearsed reading of 'Between Mouthfuls', from 'Confusions' by Alan Ayckbourn 7:30 pm					
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31	1	2	3	4
					Screen at the Phoenix regular film night 7:00 pm	Phoenix Youth Group 1:00 pm – 6:00 pm