

JANUARY 2015

Diary of Events for January

Thurs 8th	Phoenix Singers restart 7.30pm
Wed 14th	Reading of "Day of Reckoning" 7.30pm
Wed 21st	Auditions for "Day of Reckoning" 7.30pm
Sat 24th	Loft Tidy 10am

Screen at the Phoenix

At the moment there is a problem with obtaining licences for the January and February films so please check the www.rosscinema.com website for future screenings.

Damp in the auditorium

Starting on Wed 7th January, we have hired a contractor to work on the damp in the auditorium. This action is the result of a survey by an independent surveyor. He recommended that we address the damp problem initially by means of a low cost option together with further external remedial work. The work in the auditorium will involve applying a bitumastic paint/cement layer to the walls by the stage and to the rear wall. The work should take around 5 days.

Loft tidy

A long overdue tidy and clear out of the loft is planned for **Sat 24th January**. If you are available to help, please let me know. We are hiring a skip so we plan to be ruthless!

Season's Greetings

On behalf of the committee, may I wish you all a happy New Year.

Graham Russell (editor)

e-mail: manchester.house@btinternet.com tel: 01981 540749

Production Co-ordinator's column

The May production in 2015 is to be "**Day of Reckoning**" by Pam Valentine, and will be directed by Renee Field. The production will run from 23rd to 30th May. There will be a reading on **Wednesday 14th January at 7.30 p.m** and auditions on **Wednesday 21st January at 7.30 p.m**. The cast comprise 7 women and 1 man. In the village hall, the fete committee includes nosey Ethel, middle aged country woman; Pauline, in her 50s, the long suffering wife of the vicar; horsey Marjorie, in her 30s; elderly Mavis, deaf when it suits her; middle aged exhausted Gloria, who cares for her mother; brisk army wife Sally, in her 40s, always looking immaculate, and the shy new teacher, Angela, who is in her 20s. Also, there is the vicar, Geoffrey, in his 50s, likes a drink, a forbidding man, but capable of great charm. Six months later the hall becomes the command centre for the fete. Much has changed revealing a world of gossip, innuendo, secrets and a hidden agenda. If you have ever seen a committee in action you cannot fail to enjoy Pam Valentine's comedy of life in a village. PLEASE COME ALONG TO THE READING AND AUDITIONS!!

"**No Naughty Bits**" by Steve Thompson, which took place in November, was much enjoyed by our audiences. We did not get as many full houses as usual but this was an ambitious play with strong language which may not have appealed to all our followers. Congratulations to Roger Spragg, his cast and crew for an excellent production.

Rehearsals for "**The Beggar's Opera**" by John Gay, which will take place from **14th to 21st March**, start on Tuesday 6th January. Brian Jackson will direct the acting and Mary Brigg will direct the singing. The cast comprise Les Davis, Gordon Brigg, Gareth Wigg, Roger Williams, Philip Field, Sam Callen, Ray Smith, Kevin Passey, George Tait, Ruth Woodliffe, Michelle Cooper, Tanya Jacobs, Amanda Smith, Jacky Bedford, Penny Field, Chantal Poole, Lynn Tait, Suzanne Hill, Jenniffer Wood, Anne Palmer, Ellen McManus, Diana Tubb and Jane Bovell. Set construction starts on Monday 2nd February.

The evening, entitled **Dress to Impress for Less**, which took place in November, raised approx. £130 towards new storage boxes for the theatre wardrobe. Thanks to Lynn Tait, Jenniffer Wood, Suzanne Hill and Mary Brigg for organising the event.

"**Christmas With The Phoenix Theatre Singers**", which ran for two nights in December, was a sell out. We even had an audience at the dress rehearsal of people unable to get tickets. Next year we may have to run a three night show. Congratulations to Mary Brigg and her team for a great show.

The **Phoenix Theatre Xmas Party** on 19th December was great fun. The Jivaholics were excellent and the 45 guests danced with great enthusiasm to their music. Thanks to Sue Nicholson for masterminding the event.

Suzanne Hill tel: 01989 770428

Review of No Naughty Bits

“It is great to see something different!”, this was a comment made by an audience member after a performance of “No Naughty Bits” by Steve Thompson. This play is based on the actual outcome in 1975, when the Monty Python team set out to conquer the USA and take their series, Monty Python’s Flying Circus, to America. They sold the series to the ABC network who then cut some of the “naughty bits”. The play tells of how they tried to stop the rest of the series being shown on television in the States, as it was not so funny.



Robin Haig plays Michael Palin and Murray Tremellen plays Terry Gilliam, the Pythons in the story. Both actors show great ability in portraying the different characters of the two men. Michelle Cooper, as the young PR executive helping the Pythons, was a perfect foil for the Pythons, bringing energy and enthusiasm to the role. All the cast with the exception of Michael Palin, had American accents and this they carried out

with no problems. The American network execs played by Alison Clarke and Tom Lee-Hynes were exactly as we would expect money driven television personnel to behave. The court scenes were full of energy and tension and this raised the production to a new level. The judge, played by Les Davis, brought amusement to the court scenes and the advocates, played by David Pollard and Lucy Davies, were reminiscent of episodes of Perry Mason which some of you may remember.

The set is minimal with selective lighting and sound effects to portray the different locations, and the costumes are all spot on for the mid 1970s.

Suzanne Hill

Review of Christmas with the Phoenix Theatre Singers

The Phoenix Theatre Singers' Christmas concert has become a "not to be missed" annual event and this year's show was no exception. There was not a seat to be had (unless you were lucky enough to grab a preview at the public dress rehearsal) for Christmas with the Phoenix Theatre Singers is not so much a show as a Christmas party.

Of course the programme contained the expected seasonal favourites sung by the full choir including Winter Wonderland, White Christmas, Jingle Bell Rock and there were some lovely examples of choral singing, the men's and ladies voices blending to perfection in 'Bethlehem' and the opening of Faure's "Shepherds Farewell". But the evening was peppered with items which added to the informality and fun. Thus we were treated to an original take on Good King Wenceslas with Martin Hudson's solo rendering of the carol enacted by a King, his Page and a Poor Man with his meagre bundle of sticks. With mounting excitement it was announced "Elvis is in the House" and sure enough "The King" (John Haines in white tuxedo accompanied by The Jordanares) gave us "Blue Christmas" with all Elvis's vocal inflections. And among the ladies Julianne Reeves shone with her "Christmas Lullaby" and Jacky Bedford, accompanied by Chris Larvin on guitar, delivered a divine "Coventry Carol".



(George Tait and Angela Williams singing "Fairytale of New York" by the Pogues)

With over thirty performers onstage there was such sheer variety in a programme that ran seamlessly from "Cheap Flights" (the expurgated version, with apologies to Fascinating Aida) to Dylan Thomas's Childhood Christmas, to The Two Ronnies (the talented Richard Watson, temporarily released from keyboard duties bringing the house down with Gordon Brigg). But one cannot mention everyone and with apologies to those omitted by considerations of space, suffice to say that once again Musical Director Mary Brigg, assisted by deputy conductor Angela Williams, put together another cracking evening's entertainment. More a revue than a concert, the evening ended with the audience joining the Singers in "We Three Kings" and "Hark the Herald Angels". As an audience member was reported as saying, "Now the Christmas season has begun".

Brian Jackson

Antarctica - a holiday of a lifetime

I have just returned from the holiday of a lifetime - a three week cruise to the Falklands, South Georgia Island and the Antarctic Peninsular. 139 of us embarked from Ushuaia in Tierra del Fuego, the most southerly city in the world at the tip of Argentina.



During two days at sea we saw many birds following the ship including petrels and albatrosses. We glimpsed Commerson's dolphins, orcas and minke whales. We visited two islands in the West Falklands and went ashore by zodiacs- a large dinghy holding 12 people. A myriad of wildlife awaited us: Magellanic, Gentoo and Rock Hopper Penguins, and colonies of black browed albatrosses plus other bird species. Next day Port Stanley was like a magical bit of England with Victorian villas, a post office, church, pub, museum and shops. It was 12 degrees and sunny but with a permanent strong wind. Sailing south we entered the Antarctic Convergence where the warmer Indian, Pacific, Atlantic and colder Antarctic Oceans meet creating an abundance of krill and marine life that attracts whales and seals. South Georgia was a very mountainous long island with snowy peaks and an inhospitable south coast.



We landed on the North coast and saw rookeries with a hundred thousand pairs of king penguins waddling on the beach. There were also many fur seals and elephant seals. The pups were being born as we watched and the seal lions were very aggressive defending their harems and newborn. We visited several old whaling stations and the highlight was Grytviken where Ernest

Shackleton is buried. His Irish cousin Jonathan was on board and we all had a toast in Jamieson's Whiskey to "The Boss".

Then we headed to the highlight of the voyage –the Antarctic Peninsular.Landing depended on the weather but we had clear blue skies and landed three times to see Adelie penguins.We cruised past tabular icebergs and huge blocks of pack ice –all unbelievably blue due to refraction of the light. They say Antarctica changes you for life – when you see the majestic scenery you realise how insignificant we are.



Here is a link to a video of my son Patrick kayaking in the icy waters.

<http://youtu.be/P53WQsneEow>

Sue Edwards