

JANUARY 2017

Diary of Events for January - April

- Wed 11th Jan **Auditions** for “All Things Considered” 7.30pm
- Sun 5th Feb **“I, Daniel Blake”** (Screen at the Phoenix) 7.00pm
- Thurs 9th -
Sat 11th March **Hereford Drama Festival** entry “Can Malone Die?”
- Sat 27th March -
Sat 1st April **“Ruddigore”** by G&S (Phoenix Theatre Company) 7.30pm
- Sun 9th April **“The Songs of Leonard Cohen”** (Keith James) 7.30pm

(please see the Members calendars for January & February 2017 at the end of this Newsletter)

New Year Greetings

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

Sue Edwards

Gerry Ward

An obituary for Gerry, who passed away last month, appears in a later section of the Newsletter.

Sarah O’Neill

Water Leak

On the last night of the Singers’ Christmas Concert, water leaked into the theatre above the auditorium, although the spirits of the audience were not dampened! It has been concluded that the leak was caused by heavy rainfall (19mm) that day and the integrity of the roof is otherwise sound. Howard Owen informs us that the current pitched roof, made of Welsh slate, was installed in the late 80s. Slate roofs have a lifetime of over 100 years, so our roof should be good for a few more years!

Jennifer Wood

Production Co-ordinator's Column

Happy New Year!

Our production of '**A Doll's House**' by Henrik Ibsen, which ran in November, was very well received. Excellent performances by all, with a tour de force from the leading lady, Di Hughes. Di is a member of the Phoenix Theatre Singers and this is Di's first dramatic role on our stage. This production ran for 5 nights and achieved 71% seat occupancy. Congratulations to Gordon Brigg, his cast and crew.

The **Phoenix Theatre Singer's Xmas Show** ran for 3 nights in December and achieved full houses. Audiences always comment on the variety and sheer entertainment our shows contain. Congratulations to Mary Brigg and the Singers for a lovely start to the Xmas season.

The **Phoenix Theatre Xmas Party** was held on 16th December and was a huge success. Amanda and Mary organised the food, Catriona ran the bar and Trevor found a great DJ who enabled us to sing karaoke and dance. A great evening.

Brian Jackson and Mary Brigg will be directing '**Ruddigore**', by Gilbert and Sullivan, from **Monday 27th March to Saturday 1st April 2017**. Auditions have been held and the principal roles have been cast. The cast comprises Jane Bovell, Michelle Cooper, Andrew Doyle, Gareth Wigg, Sandy McNeill, Roger Williams, Gordon Brigg and Ray Smith. The male and female choruses will be members of the Phoenix Theatre Singers and others who were not cast in principal roles. **Rehearsals will begin on Tuesday 3rd January with chorus rehearsals starting on Thursday 5th January.**

Keith James will be reprising his show, '**The Songs of Leonard Cohen**' on **Sunday 9th April 2017**. Details to follow.

The **2017 Herefordshire One Act Drama Festival** will take place at the Courtyard Theatre in Hereford from 9th to 11th March. Our entry will be '**Can Malone Die?**', written and directed by David Pollard.

There was a reading of '**All Things Considered**' by Ben Brown on 28th November. There were 20 members present. Everyone thought it a very funny black comedy, and it will be our June 2017 production which will be directed by Renée Field, assisted by Tom Lee-Hynes. Production dates are **Saturday 24th June to Saturday 1st July. Auditions will be held on Wednesday 11th January at 7.30pm.** The cast comprises 4 men and 3 women. Please contact Renée Field on 01600 750488 for more details.

Suzanne Hill

Committee meeting minutes

If you want to follow what the committee has been up to, you can view the minutes of past committee meetings in the Members Area of the theatre website. The latest minutes are for the meeting on 19th September 2016. Minutes are only posted on the website once they have been approved by the committee at the subsequent meeting. Minutes are archived back to December 2014. The next committee meeting is on 9th January.

Trevor Jones

Review of A Doll's House



'A Doll's House' by Henrik Ibsen is acknowledged as a masterpiece. In challenging the 19th C status quo it must have shaken patriarchal playgoers to the core.

The 'doll' in question is Nora, wife of Torvald Helmer, a banker who keeps his wife in a state of perpetual submission, denying her any responsibilities beyond domestic duty, constantly criticising and addressing her in childish baby-talk ("my little 'spendswift' etc"). As if this weren't enough there is also a strong undercurrent, not of love, but of her sexual submission. Nora longs to rebel but she harbours a deadly secret, she has forged a signature in an illegal financial transaction, a scandal that would destroy her husband. The

complex character of the overwrought, conflicted Nora is superbly played by Di Hughes (a Phoenix newcomer) playing against the icy, overbearing dominance of David Pollard's Scandinavian banker.



Into this comes Nils Krogstad (Tim Betts), demanding repayment of overdue loans under threat of exposing Nora. But who should appear on the scene but Nora's neglected friend Kristine, (Amanda Smith, vulnerable and compassionate) seeking friendship and offering support. She has known Krogstad and intervenes but too late, an incriminating letter comes to light. Helmer is appalled but in the final scene the tables are turned; Nora asserts her independence and walks out, deserting her children and leaving him alone in his 'doll's house'.

This was an accomplished production of a complex play with some beautiful characterisation. Ray Smith's sensitive portrayal of Helmer's friend Dr Rank, in love with Nora and dying of syphilis inherited from his father. Tim Betts initially sinister as 'Krogstad', reveals a deeply complex character who finds redemption with Kristine. And one must not forget the servants; the children's nursemaid Anne-Marie (Diana Tubb) winning the audience's approval with her insidious disapproval of Nora, and Housemaid Helene, (Jacky Bedford), polite and obedient, but giving lip service to her mistress.

Good all-round performances in a challenging play under the direction of Gordon Brigg (with assistant director Michelle Cooper); a challenge that the Phoenix Theatre Company succeeded in.

Brian Jackson

Review of the Singers Xmas Concert



The Phoenix Theatre Singers concerts never disappoint, a truism is borne out by the fact that all three nights were completely sold out in advance. And this year some new voices were on display. The concert opened with the traditional promise that 'Santa Claus is Coming to Town', moving smoothly through seasonal songs, skits, a panto and some notable performances. Throughout it all the audience laughed, cheered and applauded in a party atmosphere made all the more pertinent by the presence of Musical Director Mary Brigg, nine days after a hip replacement sitting alongside the choir to sing with them. We need not have worried for the Singers were in the safe hands of conductor Angela Williams. And so the music was delivered with nuances of pace, light and shade and from the first item onward, smiles and excellent diction. The first of the night's solos was Graham Nicholson's beautifully sensitive 'Scarlet Ribbons'. That was followed shortly afterwards by the first 'new voice', young soprano Ellie Riggs in a delightful duet of 'Walking in the Air' with Jacky Bedford. The second half showed off the versatility of accompanist Richard Watson who deserted the keyboard to deliver a hilarious take-off of Peter Cook, teaming up with Gareth Wigg in a 'Pete and Dud' sketch largely of their own devising. And then another 'new voice', contralto Amber Prosser-Jones who enchanted us all with a song simply entitled 'Believe.'

Two major Christmas classics were included in the programme; John Tavener's 'Carol of the Lamb' in the first half and Adolphe Adam's 'O Holy Night', both awaited with anticipation but it was 'The Carol of the Lamb' which took the evening's honours as the carefully constructed disharmonies, supported by a strong bass line made us tingle.

The evening was compered by Gordon Brigg (who had plundered various boxes of Christmas crackers and other comic sources to keep the humour flowing; I shall now view Black Forest Gateau in a different light!). And so to the end where our involvement was triggered by participation in Noddy Holder's 'Merry Christmas Everybody' followed by Christmas carols. Once again, a good time was had by all.

Nicholas Malbre

To see a short video of the concert, please follow this link: <https://vimeo.com/195117212>

Gerry Ward

Gerry volunteered as a member of The Phoenix Youth Theatre group for over three years during 2011-2014 and contributed so much to our youth group here at the theatre. He shared his passion and love for live theatre from the tech box and designed, rigged and worked the lights for our shows during this very creative and successful period for the group. He spent many long hours building and creating sets and props for our shows, which were of an amazing quality and still feature in many of our shows today.



He also regularly rigged and led the tech on the adult drama productions too on occasions when his health allowed him to. He also led the tech team in our first PYT One Act play entry as the PYT group in its current form, entitled "The Coat" alongside director Brian Jackson, which was a huge success and award winning. Gerry was heavily involved in the productions of "Wizard of Oz" and "Raid" during his time with PYT and both of those shows would not have been the raving success that they were without his immeasurable contribution. He lived and breathed for his weekly sessions at The Phoenix and it was a time where he could be with all of his friends and watch his super talented daughter thrive and flourish as she performed.

Unfortunately, from 2014 onwards, Gerry was forced to take more of a back seat on the production front due to his ill health and ongoing battle with a heart condition. It was a difficult time for all of us and the youth group very much missed not only his company and sense of humour but also his technical expertise and talent in set building and creating.

Gerry was extremely proud of his daughter and we wish her every success in her performing arts career in the future. She is currently enjoying her experience at Tring Performing Arts School and she will continue her education until July 2017 and the completion of her GCSEs.

We would all like to pay tribute to Gerry and all his creative talents at our beautiful theatre... there was no one who loved whiling away his hours more than Gerry.... at our precious theatre and I am in no doubt that he will pay us regular visits and watch over the success of our shows in the future.

We are glad that you are at peace now Gerry and with your loved ones, but you are so greatly missed by all of us.

Sarah O'Neill

Phoenix Youth Theatre News

The Phoenix Youth Theatre group have been very busy and are currently preparing for their review showcase in March 2017. The group has been divided up and they are currently working in five smaller performance groups. Julie Church is making her debut as a director for a studio theatre piece, as is Katie Potheary (former PYT member and now a group leader). Sam Callen directs a piece he has co-written again this season and Chantal Poole is also co-directing a piece alongside Sarah O'Neill.

Our showcase is an in-house event for parents and families and provides the perfect opportunity for our new look group to gain some experience before we launch our main showpiece later in the year.

The PYT group will put on a performance of "Wendy and Peter Pan" in October 2017. We have lots of new and younger members in our company this season who are already greatly benefiting from the experience of our older members and the rapport amongst the group is so positive and energising. We look forward to sharing more news with you later in the year.

Sarah O'Neill

Review of 2016 in pictures



Monkey's Paw (March)



Anastasia (April)



**Summer of the 17th Doll
(June)**

Preview of Ruddigore – or ‘The Witch’s Curse’

Synopsis

Act 1: Rederring, a Cornish fishing village

The village is under the Lordship of bad baronet Sir Despard Murgatroyd where Rose Maybud lives with old Dame Hannah. The village corps of Bridesmaids are anxious for Rose to marry but she has rejected every suitor, even Robin Oakapple, who is too bashful to declare his love. Now Old Adam, Robin’s faithful retainer divulges the fateful secret; Robin is really the cursed baronet, not his brother Despard. When Robin’s foster-brother Dick returns from sea Robin confesses his bashfulness and Dick promises to plead Robin’s suit with Rose but Rose falls for Dick. Then Sir Despard appears and Rose declares her passion for him instead. The bridesmaids are overjoyed but in a fit of pique Dick betrays Robin’s secret; he is the true Baronet Murgatroyd. Despard is overjoyed; free of the curse he spurns Rose in favour of his true love, Mad Margaret. Rose returns her affections to Dick leaving Robin broken hearted.

End of Act 1 – everybody with me so far?

Act 2: The ancestral picture gallery of Ruddigore castle

Robin is now Baronet Murgatroyd. When Dick and Rose ask Robin’s consent to their marriage Robin attempts (and fails) to win back Rose’s affection. Turning to the pictures he prays to have the curse lifted but – horror of horrors – the ancestral ghosts step from their frames and begin inflicting agonies on him. So Robin orders Old Adam to go to the village and kidnap an innocent maiden. Old Adam returns with Dame Hannah! She recognizes the ancestor Roderick as her long lost love and they are reunited. Robin decides to deny his ancestors; by devious means the curse is lifted, he wins Rose and everyone lives happily ever after.

PHEW!

With Gilbert at his whimsical best and Sullivan’s lyrical music this show is a corker!

Brian Jackson

Gilbert & Sullivan’s

RUDDIGORE

27th March - 1st April

Members Calendar for January 2017

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
26	27	28	29	30	31	1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
	Rehearsal for Ruddigore in auditorium 7:30 pm		Chorus rehearsals for Ruddigore in auditorium 7:30 pm			PYT in auditorium 3:00 pm – 6:00 pm
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
The Drama Company 4:00 pm – 5:45 pm Committee meeting 7:30 pm	The Drama Company in auditorium 4:00 pm – 7:15 pm Rehearsal for Ruddigore in auditorium 7:30 pm	Herefordshire Carers in foyer 10:30 am – 12:30 pm Auditions for 'All Things Considered' by Ben Brown in auditorium 7:30 pm	Chorus rehearsals for Ruddigore in auditorium 7:30 pm			PYT in auditorium 3:00 pm – 6:00 pm
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
Herefordshire Carers, Parent Carer's Group in foyer 11:00 am – 1:00 pm The Drama Company 4:00 pm – 5:45 pm	The Drama Company in auditorium 4:00 pm – 7:15 pm Rehearsal for Ruddigore in auditorium 7:30 pm		Chorus rehearsals for Ruddigore in auditorium 7:30 pm			PYT in auditorium 3:00 pm – 6:00 pm
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
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30	31	1	2	3	4	5
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January 2017

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