

MAY 2017

Diary of Events for May - July

- Sat 6th May **“Headhunters”** (Screen at the Phoenix) 7pm
- Sat 20th May **“The Light Between Oceans”** (Screen at the Phoenix) 7pm
- Weds 14th June **Annual General Meeting** 7.30pm
- Sat 24th June -
Sat 1st July **“All Things Considered”** by Ben Brown (Phoenix Theatre Company) 7.30pm
- Mon 3rd July **Reading** for “Arsenic and Old Lace” by Joseph Kesselring 7.30pm
- Mon 12th &
Mon 17th July **Auditions** for “Arsenic and Old Lace” 7.30pm
- Sat 22nd July **“Billy Liar”** (Hand to Mouth Theatre) 7.30pm

(please see the Members’ calendars for May & June 2017 at the end of this Newsletter)

From the President

What a successful year 2017 has been for the Phoenix, and it’s only May! First there were the superb results for "Can Malone Die?" at the County Drama Festival in Hereford, only to be followed up recently by the award of best play in the West Midland area of NODA for our production of "Anastasia". Both of these were magnificent achievements and everybody who contributed in any way is to be heartily congratulated. As far as I am aware, only two musicals have been performed at the Phoenix in its lifetime. In 1988 there was a performance of "The Boyfriend" by Sandy Wilson and in 2002 "Little Shop of Horrors" was the first performance at the newly extended theatre. So our production of the Gilbert & Sullivan operetta "Ruddigore" was a rare event. On such a small stage the production was remarkable and Brian is to be congratulated on bringing it off, as of course are Mary, Richard and all others who participated. It was a pleasure to be part of such a show.

These three events show the depth of talent that lies within our company and make the public, and ourselves, more aware of this. We must remember too that we also have our brilliant Phoenix Theatre Singers and Phoenix Youth Theatre, both of which go from strength to strength. How very lucky we are, and long may it continue !

With very best wishes to you all,

Howard Owen



Annual General Meeting

The AGM will take place on **Weds 14th June at 7.30pm**. There will be an opportunity to elect members to the Committee and raise matters for discussion. If you wish to be nominated, please notify our secretary Trevor Jones by **24th May** at the latest. Trevor should also be notified of matters for discussion by that date. Any other business (AOB) cannot be raised at the AGM. Nominations and matters for discussion will be notified to the membership 2 weeks before the AGM.

Committee posts

To date the following nominations for Committee posts have been received as follows:

President	Howard Owen
Chairman	Alison Clarke
Secretary	Trevor Jones
Treasurer	Amanda Smith
Production Co-ordinator	Suzanne Hill
Publicity Officer	Michelle Cooper
Building Manager	Graham Russell
Members without portfolio	Mary Brigg
	Sarah O'Neill
	Jennifer Wood

Sue Edwards is standing down as Chairman after her statutory three years in the post and Alison Clarke has been put forward to replace Sue. Michelle Cooper has offered to take over as Publicity Officer from Graham who has offered to replace Jennifer Wood as Building Manager. Jennifer has offered to stay on the committee as a member without portfolio and has offered to take over as membership secretary from Alison.

Proposed membership subscription increase

There is a proposal from the committee to increase the membership subscription to £20 for all members. As a consequence associate membership will be abolished and there will be a single membership category. These changes will not apply to student and junior members. This matter will be discussed at the AGM and, if agreed, the Theatre Rules will be amended accordingly.

An agenda of the AGM, including details of any further nominations and matters for discussion, will be notified to members 2 weeks before the AGM. The Committee looks forward to seeing you on **Weds June 14th at 7.30pm**. To contact Trevor Jones, please e-mail: tjones@trevorjones3.wanadoo.co.uk

Graham Russell (Newsletter Editor)

Production Co-ordinator's Column

Our production of “**Ruddigore**”, by Gilbert and Sullivan, was a great success, achieving 84% seat occupancy. Congratulations to Brian, Mary and their cast and crew. Due to a budget overspend on this production, new guidelines have been drawn up for directors.

The Phoenix Youth Theatre Showcase in March was excellent. What young talent we have in our theatre. Congratulations to Sarah and the PYT.

Keith James’ show, “**Solid Air**”, the music of John Martin and Nick Drake, played to a full house. Keith will be returning to the Phoenix Theatre on 22nd October with “**Duende**”, and on 17th December with “**The Songs of Leonard Cohen**”.

Our entry in the **2017 Herefordshire One Act Drama Festival** was “**Can Malone Die?**” written and directed by **David Pollard**. We achieved three awards, winning the **Wye Cup** for coming third in the festival, the **Andrew’s Shield** for Best Original Play, and the **Oswin Cup** for Best Novice. Congratulations to David, his cast and crew.

We were nominated for the 2016 Best Drama Award in NODA District One for our production of “Anastasia”. NODA is the National Operatic and Dramatic Association of which we are members. The awards ceremony was in Stourbridge on Sunday 23rd April. Brian and Judy Jackson, Michelle Cooper and Sam Callen attended. There were three nominations in our section and **WE WON!** We received a certificate for being nominated and a certificate for winning. The certificates will go on show in the foyer. Congratulations to all involved in this exceptional production.

Our next production will be “**All Things Considered**” by **Ben Brown**, directed by **Renée Field** and assisted by **Tom Lee-Hynes**. Production dates are **Saturday 24th June to Saturday 1st July**. The cast comprise Robin Haig, Phil Field, Gareth Wigg, Howard Owen, Michelle Cooper, Lucy Davies and new member, Lizzie Nicholson. Rehearsals are underway on Tuesdays and Fridays. Please contact Renée on 01600 750488 if you would like to help backstage.

There will be a reading of “**Arsenic and Old Lace**” by Joseph Kesselring on **Monday 3rd July**. **Auditions** will take place on **Wednesday 12th July with follow up auditions on Monday 17th July**. It has been agreed by the committee that the auditions will be open to non-members. Production dates will be **Saturday 18th to Saturday 25th November**. The play will be directed by David Pollard.

Hand to Mouth Theatre will perform “**Billy Liar**” on **Saturday 22nd July at 7.30 pm**. This is a venture for our member, David Pollard. Do come and support David and his company.

We will be holding a **Member’s Evening** on **Friday 4th August** when **Lizzie Nicholson** will direct a rehearsed reading. More details to follow.

There will be “**An Evening of Ukulele and Guitar**”, with Steven Sproat and Matt Stead/Robert Ash on **Saturday 12th August**. Tickets from: the-wend.com/tickets or theukulelemanofross@outlook.com.

This year **The Phoenix Theatre Singers Annual Show**, entitled “**Their Greatest Hits**”, will take place from **Wednesday 6th to Saturday 9th September**.

Suzanne Hill

NODA Review of Ruddigore

For such a small theatre (64 seats in total) this was a gigantic success. The comical antics of Director, Brian Jackson, during the overture was a really nice touch. As much as I love G&S overtures, for those not so accustomed can find them a little on the long side and so to have Brian coming and going throughout was very clever. As too was situating the accompanist and prompt on stage throughout, sitting in their own little booth which was very much in keeping with the set. It was amazing how quickly you forgot that they were there as the cast kept the audience captivated throughout. The brilliant use of the space available was amazing and never looked cramped. I particularly liked the costumes that looked so authentic, but were quite simple in design.

Ruddigore has some of the nicest music and is one of the funniest G&S operettas; and the cast certainly did it justice. The strength and purity of sound from the ladies chorus in their opening number set the tone for the evening. Their timing was great too, especially every time they burst into 'Hail the Bridesmaid, Hail the Bride' which was very funny.

Every one of the principal characters had lovely singing voices, which sadly is not always the case. Michelle Cooper playing Rose really understood her character and brought just the right amount of humour to the role especially when referring to her book of etiquette, not to mention her fickleness when choosing a suitable husband. Michelle has a good strong voice with a comfortable range. Andrew Doyle reminded me very much of the modern adaptations of G&S that were recorded in the 1970's, when the principals took a more relaxed approach; but I really liked his style. Andrew and Michelle's duet was truly touching. Richard Dauntless played by Gareth Wigg, is the likeable ladies' man in the show and Gareth did this really well. He is a definitive tenor with a nice tone and can reach the high notes with ease. He also can do a mean horn pipe. Roger Williams was the roguish Baronet who gave a good impression of this character and also has a lovely voice. Jane Bovell had a semi comedy role in the shape of Dame Hannah and would be a great poker player as she kept a perfect straight face. Her duet with Nigel Hughes as Sir Roderick, 'The Great Oak Tree' was beautiful. As for Sandy MacNiell, wow! I think she may be the best Mad Margaret that I have seen in amateur productions. Her portrayal was so good that you could almost feel her fragility of mind. It almost felt wrong to laugh at the Basingstoke reference as it was her safety valve but she was so good and gave a wonderful portrayal of this unusual character and her solo was sung with such pathos.

The ghost scene was nicely done and I thought the use of projection screens ingenious. The supporting cast of Di Hughes, Jackie Bedford, Nigel Hughes, Gordon Brigg and the remaining ensemble made this a terrific evening's entertainment, which I thoroughly enjoyed thank you.

Louise Hickey (National Operatic and Dramatic Association)

To watch a video of the full production, please go to:

Act 1

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_cb9cx9Yy9k&feature=youtu.be

Act 2

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DrOHVuuDQAE&feature=youtu.be>

November Production – Arsenic and Old Lace

For the November production at The Phoenix I am proposing to direct the classic farce “Arsenic and Old Lace” by Joseph Kesselring. The play is often spoken of as a “black farce” or a “black comedy” – I tend to disagree since the themes of murder, madness and mayhem are dealt with in such a light-hearted manner it can only be seen as a farce pure and simple.

Abby and Martha Brewster are two delightful little old ladies renowned for their charitable works in the community. They occupy the family ancestral home in Brooklyn. The time is 1942 and America has just entered the war. Living alongside the two grey-haired spinster ladies is their brother Teddy – who believes he is actually Teddy Roosevelt.

Beneath this picture of urban peace and goodwill there lie many sinister undercurrents. The old ladies have a strange hobby – murdering indigent old men and burying them in the cellar – assisted by Teddy who constructs grave-sized locks for his Panama Canal. Then long-lost nephew Jonathan turns up. He happens to be a psychopathic killer on the run and accompanied by his personal plastic surgeon he purposes to set up business in the old family home.

Against this background Mortimer Brewster – the one ‘normal’ Brewster – well he is a theatre critic who hates the theatre – is wooing the girl next door – the minister’s daughter. When he discovers his aunts’ little secret he is beside himself and comedy mayhem ensues...

An extensive cast of characters offer opportunities for all levels of acting aspiration from the central parts:

Abby and Martha Brewster – the murderous little old ladies

Teddy Brewster – the mad brother

Mortimer Brewster – the ‘sane’ one

Jonathan Brewster – the psychopath

Dr Einstein – the drunken plastic surgeon

Elaine Harper – the girl next door and Mortimer’s fiancée

The Rev. Dr Harper - the Minister next door and Elaine’s father

Officers Brophy, Klein and O’Hara – police patrolmen and in the case of O’Hara playwrighte manqué

Mr Gibbs – a potential victim for the two sisters

Lieutenant Rooney – the head of the police precinct

Mr Witherspoon – Superintendent of the Happy Dale sanatorium

It may be possible to change the gender of some of these characters and also for some doubling. Of course with a play set in Brooklyn, American accents will be required but do not be put off. Experience in putting on an Australian and a Welsh background play has shown that ‘accent light’ is the best approach.

A reading of the play has been arranged for Mon 3rd July at 7.30pm and auditions will be held on Weds 12th July from 7.30pm. As usual if you are interested in taking part in the production but are unable to come along to the reading or the audition please contact me and we’ll make alternative arrangements. You can contact me by email at davidandalexpollard@gmail.com or by phone on 01432 860208.

David Pollard

Phoenix Youth Theatre News

Annual Showcase

The youth group recently performed its annual showcase to a full auditorium and once again showed the wealth of its performing and directing talents within the group and we are very proud of everyone's achievements. There were six mini performance pieces with a very varied programme and selection of humour, drama, intrigue and suspense combined within the pieces. We were treated to the delights of several different performance pieces, both by published playwrights and penned by our very own in-house writers and co-directors. We are a very talented bunch!



October Production

We are now moving forward with our main production piece that we will perform in October 2017. The play we have chosen is a "Wendy and Peter Pan"... a new and up to date version of this classic tale that was originally written and performed by the RSC a few years ago. This is definitely our most challenging production yet and promises to stretch the boundaries of any previous PYT show! There are 27 cast members and a crew of at least half a dozen, so the theatre will be as busy as ever with a buzz of creativity that keeps the place vibrant alive!

News Update.....where are they now?

Rosie Williams (Alice in our production last year) has been successful in gaining a place at drama school from September 2017 at "East 15" and we wish her all the best. What an amazing achievement!

Ben Butler has had several call backs for his drama school auditions and we are waiting with bated breath for some good news!

Billy Jones is currently doing his teacher training at Cheltenham College as a Primary School teacher and regularly returns to assist us in PYT.

Zoe Hutton qualifies as a Drama Practitioner later this month from the University of Birmingham and will be back with us as a full time PYT leader for the youth group and will assist us with the show later in the year. We are very glad she has come back to us!

Katie Potheary will be leaving us in the Summer to take up her university place in Cornwall to do her degree in interior design and she is currently assisting us with costumes for our show.

Drama Workshops and classes for our youth community

The PYT group is a huge commitment for all of those involved and maybe it is not what you are looking for right now. If this is the case, then do not worry as we have lots of other opportunities on offer for all of those who are keen on drama. We have a company who use our venue to run their classes mid-week and on Saturdays (commencing September 2017) called The Drama Company. If you are interested in finding out more, then please visit their website: www.dramacompany.co.uk

Sarah O'Neill

Members Calendar for May 2017

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
1	2 The Drama Company in auditorium 4:00 pm - 7:15 pm Rehearsal for 'All Things Considered' in auditorium 7:30 pm	3 Setting Lights for ATC - Ian Godsave 7:30 pm	4 Phoenix Theatre Singers in auditorium 7:30 pm	5 Rehearsal for 'All Things Considered' in auditorium 7:30 pm	6 Screen at the Phoenix - Headhunters (Norwegian) 7:00 pm	7 PYT in auditorium 2:00 pm - 6:00 pm
8 The Drama Company in auditorium 4:00 pm - 5:45 pm Committee meeting in foyer 7:00 pm	9 The Drama Company in auditorium 4:00 pm - 7:15 pm Rehearsal for 'All Things Considered' in auditorium 7:30 pm	10	11 Phoenix Theatre Singers in auditorium 7:30 pm	12 Rehearsal for 'All Things Considered' in auditorium 7:30 pm	13	14 PYT in auditorium 2:00 pm - 6:00 pm
15 The Drama Company in auditorium 4:00 pm - 5:45 pm	16 The Drama Company in auditorium 4:00 pm - 7:15 pm Rehearsal for 'All Things Considered' in auditorium 7:30 pm	17	18 Phoenix Theatre Singers in auditorium 7:30 pm	19 Rehearsal for 'All Things Considered' in auditorium 7:30 pm	20 PYT in auditorium 2:00 pm - 6:00 pm Screen at the Phoenix - The Light between Oceans 7:00 pm	21 PYT in auditorium 2:00 pm - 6:00 pm
22 The Drama Company in auditorium 4:00 pm - 5:45 pm	23 The Drama Company in auditorium 4:00 pm - 7:15 pm Rehearsal for 'All Things Considered' in auditorium 7:30 pm	24 Production Meeting for 'All Things Considered' 7:30 pm	25 Phoenix Theatre Singers in auditorium 7:30 pm	26 Rehearsal for 'All Things Considered' in auditorium 7:30 pm	27	28 PYT in auditorium 2:00 pm - 6:00 pm
29	30 Rehearsal for 'All Things Considered' in auditorium 7:30 pm	31	1 Phoenix Theatre Singers in auditorium 7:30 pm	2 Rehearsal for 'All Things Considered' in auditorium 7:30 pm	3	4 Screen at the Phoenix 7:00 pm

May 2017

Members Calendar for June 2017

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
29	30	31	1	2	3	4
	Rehearsal for 'All Things Considered' in auditorium 7:30 pm		Phoenix Theatre Singers in auditorium 7:30 pm	Rehearsal for 'All Things Considered' in auditorium 7:30 pm		Screen at the Phoenix 7:00 pm
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
The Drama Company in auditorium 4:00 pm – 5:45 pm	The Drama Company in auditorium 4:00 pm – 7:15 pm		Phoenix Theatre Singers in auditorium 7:30 pm	Rehearsal for 'All Things Considered' in auditorium 7:30 pm		PYT in auditorium 2:00 pm – 6:00 pm
	Rehearsal for 'All Things Considered' in auditorium 7:30 pm					
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
The Drama Company in auditorium 4:00 pm – 5:45 pm	The Drama Company in auditorium 4:00 pm – 7:15 pm	Phoenix Theatre AGM 7:30 pm	Phoenix Theatre Singers in auditorium 7:30 pm	Rehearsal for 'All Things Considered' in auditorium 7:30 pm	Screen at the Phoenix 7:00 pm	PYT in auditorium 2:00 pm – 6:00 pm
	Rehearsal for 'All Things Considered' in auditorium 7:30 pm					
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
The Drama Company in auditorium 4:00 pm – 5:45 pm	The Drama Company in auditorium 4:00 pm – 7:15 pm	Rehearsal for 'All Things Considered' in auditorium 7:30 pm	Phoenix Theatre Singers - out of theatre 7:30 pm	Rehearsal for 'All Things Considered' in auditorium 7:30 pm	'All Things Considered' by Ben Brown, performance 7:30 pm	PYT in foyer 2:00 pm – 6:00 pm
Rehearsal for 'All Things Considered' in auditorium 7:30 pm	Rehearsal for 'All Things Considered' in auditorium 7:30 pm		Rehearsal for 'All Things Considered' in auditorium 7:30 pm			
26	27	28	29	30	1	2
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June 2017