

JULY 2017

Diary of Events for July - September

Fri 7th July	Auditions for Members Evening 7.30pm
Weds 12th July	Auditions for “Arsenic and Old Lace” 7.30pm
Sat 15th July	“ The Girl on the Train ” (Screen at the Phoenix) 7pm
Sat 22nd July	“ Billy Liar ” (Hand to Mouth Theatre) 7.30pm
Mon 24th July	Auditions for “Arsenic and Old Lace” 7.30pm
Fri 4th Aug	Members Evening 7.30pm
Sat 12th Aug	An Evening of Ukulele and Guitar 7.30pm
Weds 6th - Sat 9th Sep	“ Their Greatest Hits ” (Phoenix Theatre Singers) 7.30pm
Weds 20th Sep	Reading of “Murder in Company” by Phillip King and John Boland 7.30pm

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

From the Chair

Thank you for nominating me to be the next Chair of the Phoenix Theatre. It was a great AGM and was lovely to recap on all the wonderful things that have happened at our theatre over the last year. For those members who do not know me, I have been a member of the theatre for the past 11 years. I have been involved in many areas of theatre life, from acting, to backstage, to singing and various roles on the committee over the years. We have a very proactive and dedicated committee and I am looking forward to working with more experienced members and welcoming new faces too. This year looks set to be as dynamic and varied as the past year and I hope that you all enjoy being a part of this wonderful theatre, I know I do!! I look forward to seeing you during the year. Best wishes.



Alison Clarke

Front of House



Every performance on stage needs a great back stage team....technical support and FOH staff. There is a great band of folk who cover FOH duties and their support is much appreciated. BUT I do need more members to come forward to help with in-house productions and outside bookings which bring in much needed funds for the theatre. Please contact me if you would be able to help with FOH as a theatre manager or house steward .. not a difficult job but training is available !!

Many thanks in anticipation of your support.

I need to organise FOH staff for performances at the theatre between now and the end of October . There are a number of outside bookings as well as in-house productions:

Outside Bookings:

Saturday 22nd July - Billy Liar
Saturday 12th August - Ukulele and Guitar
Wednesday 13th September - Rossiter Books
Sunday 22nd October - Keith James
Wednesday 25th October - Rossiter Books

In-house Productions:

Wednesday 6th September - The Phoenix Theatre Singers - 'Their Greatest Hits' 7.30pm
Thursday 7th
Friday 8th
Saturday 9th

Saturday 14th October - PYT "Wendy and Peter Pan" 2pm
Sunday 15th 2pm
Monday 16th 7 pm
Tuesday 17th 7pm
Wednesday 18th 7 pm

PLEASE can you look at these dates and let me know if you are able to help.

Many thanks.

Mary Brigg

wbrigg@btinternet.com

Production Co-ordinator's Column

Our production of, '**All Things Considered**' by **Ben Brown**, directed by **Renée Field**, assisted by **Tom Lee-Hynes** which ran from 24th June to 1st July, was thoroughly enjoyed by our audiences. The acting, set and costumes were flawless. Congratulations to Renée, her cast and crew for an excellent production.

There was 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 24th July**. It is planned that this will be our November production. Production dates will be **Saturday 18th to Saturday 25th November 2017**. The play will be directed by David Pollard. There was a résumé of the play and cast list in the May newsletter. **DO COME ALONG TO READ AND SEE IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO BE PART OF THE TEAM!**

We will be holding a **Member's Evening** on **Friday 4th August**, when **Lizzie Nicholson and Renée Field** will direct **rehearsed readings**. We held readings of the plays on Wednesday 5th July. Lizzie will be directing 'I Bring You Flowers' by William Lang. The play has a cast of one man and one woman. Renée will direct 'Coffee Break' by David Tristram. This play has a cast of two women. **There will be auditions on Friday 7th July**. Once cast, there will be a few rehearsals prior to the Member's Evening on Friday 4th August. Actors will have their scripts in hand as it is a rehearsed reading, so there is no pressure regarding learning lines. This is an opportunity for members who have never walked the boards to try out their skills.

Hand to Mouth Theatre will perform '**Billy Liar**' on **Saturday 22nd July at 7.30 p.m.** This is a venture for our member, David Pollard. Do come and support David and his company. To watch a preview video of the production, please follow this link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZZyTHN_7rsM&t=17s

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**.

There will be a reading of '**Murder in Company**', by Phillip King and John Boland on **Wednesday 20th September with auditions on Wednesday 4th October**. **Brian Jackson** wishes to direct this play in March 2018.

The Phoenix Youth Theatre will perform '**Wendy and Peter Pan**', by Ella Hickson, original author J. M. Barrie, from **14th to 18th October 2017**.

There will be a **Member's Evening** on **Saturday 21st October** when we will hold two rehearsed readings for members. Michelle Cooper will direct 'Aspects of Betrayal', by David Pollard and Tom Lee-Hynes will direct a play yet to be chosen.

Keith James will be returning to the Phoenix Theatre on **22nd October** with '**Duende**', and on **17th December** with '**The Songs of Leonard Cohen**'.

Suzanne Hill

Reviews of All Things Considered



The seven cast members were so right for this production that I got completely immersed in the play from the very beginning. The set, a room in a typical College, was amazing and looked beautifully cosy; so much so that I could quite easily, have sat in the 'room' reading a book, forgetting that 64 people were looking on; and that is exactly how this small cast enacted this deep, sad, funny, cryptic and emotional play. I also liked the use of the working doors at it really gave the impression of space.

The opening of the play sees Robin Haig, playing David, alone in his room looking around with an air of despondency and finality. Robin was superbly cast as the Academic Tutor who finds the real world a confusing place and is devoid of the usual emotional sentiments that some of his friends expect of him. His matter of fact way in which he takes out pills and plastic bag ready to commit suicide, I found deeply uncomfortable, the portrayal so realistic. I was genuinely pleased when he was interrupted by Howard Owen, playing Bob the electrician, which lifted the atmosphere with some humour. Following Bobs exit whilst David tries to resume his suicide attempt he is interrupted yet again by the clever use of a telephone call. The timing and responses when using the telephone throughout the play was seamless; it was so well done that I honestly forgot that it was only a prop.



Enter Michelle Cooper as the visiting American Lecturer Laura; Michelle has an exceptional talent for accents and not once dropped her American accent throughout. Michelle is a very talented actress and has a presence that is a gift and not easily learned. She never slips out of character and her assumed passion for the subject she was supposed to be lecturing on felt very real. Laura's interaction with David was convincing and their ethical debate was fascinating, if not a little tongue in cheek.

Phil Field as Ronnie, the philandering colleague of David, was so good in the role that I wanted him to get his 'just deserts'.

Phil did an excellent job as the womanising leech who had no regard for his wife or family and with no conscience for the way he had used students at the college over the years. I must say that his double take at the end of the show was hilarious and showed just how good the pace was overall in this production. At no time did it feel rushed but the pace was excellent.

Gareth Wigg played the pious college chaplain, Tom. His physical mannerisms were somehow right for the character who seemed more interested in attending the dinner with the Dean than caring for his friend in time of crisis. He came across as a friend who doesn't really want to get involved. Gareth too has that quality where he seems comfortable in whatever role he plays.



Joanna, an ex-college student, having attained a double first, was now a hardnosed journalist. Well that is how Lizzie Nicholson portrayed her on her first appearance. Her total disregard of David's feelings to get her scoop was punchy and quite annoying, so good was her performance. I enjoyed seeing her, following David's failed suicide attempt, remorseful for the way she had steamrolled him; nice change of pace and body language.



Lucy Davies played Margaret, the Librarian who wanted more than just aloof friendship from David and, to prevent him from going through with his intentions, was prepared to lie to him. The closing scene was so sad because of the way she sat staring into space whilst realisation dawned that, not had she lost the person she wanted, but any opportunity to fulfil her longing for motherhood. Lucy was totally absorbed in her role and I found it extremely poignant.

Whilst I have remarked on the emotional effects of this play I must say that above all the subtlety of the humour that was interspersed throughout, was laugh out loud funny. I am so glad the ending finished on such a moment. Thoroughly enjoyable performance from this high calibre cast, well done.

Louise Hickey (National Operatic and Dramatic Association)

The Phoenix theatre is fortunate in those who serve it. Over the past few years the standard of productions has reached a high level and this delightful play does nothing to dispel that continuing healthy situation. Director Renee Field and assistant Director Tom Lee-Hynes have used their combined efforts to good effect and the audience were treated to an intriguing and amusing evening. The theme of suicide that some might have found rather sensitive as a means of entertainment may have caused alarm bells to ring. There are some very profound observations on our mortality. But it is all dealt with in the clever, witty dialogue of Ben Brown, the author, whose dry humour won the day and no one need have worried, things are not allowed to become too heavy. David, a professor of philosophy who is suffering from a bout of world weariness, is set to finish it all. He is the centre of everything and his attempts are unintentionally thwarted by a succession of visitors to his study, each of whom have their own agenda. Bob, the electrician, who comes to rewire the premises. Laura the rather earnest charming American who is to deliver a paper on kidney donation. Tom, the university chaplain, provides the religious input which fires up David's atheism. Ronnie, the college 'ram' whose emotional illiteracy lands him in a mess from which he hopes David will extract him. Joanna, a

pushy ex-student who now writes for the Guardian and has come to interview David about his ex-wife's autobiography. Finally, Margaret, the sad librarian who has had a brief fling with David and undergoes a 'near miss' pregnancy of which she informs David. David's relationship with all of these provide the fascination of the plot, and there are some very humorous moments.

The cyclical nature of the play is revealed when despite one attempt at suicide from which he returns from hospital, David eventually quite unintentionally achieves his wish as he is electrocuted by Bob's efforts to rewire things!!

Howard Owen as Bob the electrician shows his experience as a character actor. Ronnie, the randy lecturer, is played by Phil Field who is a fine actor of farce. Michelle Cooper as Laura the American academic, shows her versatility and adaptability to great effect. In playing Tom, the chaplain, Gareth Wigg achieves the right balance between sincerity and comedy. Joanna, the assertive journalist, is played by Lizzie Nicholson who showed good contrast of mood in her part. Margaret the librarian (I shall never have children) was played sensitively by Lucy Davies.

The star of the show was undoubtedly Robin Haig as David. 'He doesn't have to try does he?' said a fellow audience member. It was his seemingly effortless playing of this demanding role which persuaded me that this was Robin's finest performance to date.

Well done team! Great set, appropriate costumes, good effects- they nearly fused the lights !!

Thank you all.

Gordon Brigg

Phoenix Youth Theatre News

Ben Butler

Ben has successfully gained a place at drama school from this coming September. Ben will be leaving Ross to take up his place at the Drama Centre, London for the foreseeable future and we wish him the very best of luck! We are very proud of him and wish him every success!



Phoenix Youth Group

We have successfully blocked all scenes now for the show "**Wendy and Peter Pan**" and have added the first layer of detail for this epic show! We are costume fitting, prop searching, set and poster designing as we speak... so it is all systems go and very busy for us! We will be taking a well earned break for four weeks over the Summer and then we will return with vigour to finish what we have started!

We are due to hold our own in-house fund raising event in July to help raise funds for our production to help cover costs of tech, props and costumes for the show. We are holding our own talent show and mini BBQ event for PYT members and their parents and we are really looking forward to this event as it is not only a celebration of our talents, but will allow us to have a few extra tech items and special effects which will make all the difference to our show.

Summer Workshops on Offer!

If you are interested in finding out about drama opportunities for children aged 5 - 20 years then please check out the website for The Drama Company. This group operates from The Phoenix Theatre and offers a wide and varied selection of classes in term time and holiday workshops for all youth ages.

Please look at: www.dramacompany.co.uk for more information or contact Sarah O'Neill on: sarhoneill362@btinternet.com

Sarah O'Neill

Members Calendar for July 2017

26 The Drama Company in foyer 4:00 pm – 5:45 pm 'All Things Considered' by Ben Brown, performance 7:30 pm	27 The Drama Company in foyer 4:00 pm – 5:45 pm 'All Things Considered' by Ben Brown, performance 7:30 pm	28 'All Things Considered' by Ben Brown, performance 7:30 pm	29 Phoenix Theatre Singers - out of theatre 7:30 pm 'All Things Considered' by Ben Brown, performance 7:30 pm	30 'All Things Considered' by Ben Brown, performance 7:30 pm	1 'All Things Considered' by Ben Brown, performance 7:30 pm	2 PYT in auditorium 2:00 pm – 6:00 pm Screen at the Phoenix - LaLaLand 7:00 pm
3 The Drama Company in auditorium 4:00 pm – 5:45 pm Reading of 'Arsenic and Old Lace' by Joseph Kesselring 7:30 pm	4 The Drama Company in auditorium 4:00 pm – 7:15 pm Committee Meeting 7:00 pm	5 Play Reading for Rehearsed Reading on 4th August 7:30 pm	6 Phoenix Theatre Singers in auditorium 7:30 pm	7 Auditions for rehearsed readings on 4th August 7:30 pm	8 PYT rehearsal for review 3:00 pm – 6:00 pm	9 PYT in auditorium 11:00 am – 5:00 pm
10 The Drama Company in auditorium 4:00 pm – 5:45 pm	11 The Drama Company in auditorium 4:00 pm – 7:15 pm	12 Auditions for 'Arsenic and Old Lace' by Joseph Kesselring 7:30 pm	13 Phoenix Theatre Singers in auditorium 7:30 pm	14	15 PYT Review Showcase 9:00 am – 5:30 pm Screen at the Phoenix - Girl on the Train 7:00 pm	16 PYT full day workshop in auditorium 11:00 am – 5:00 pm
17 Gorsley Goffs School private booking N/A The Drama Company in auditorium 4:00 pm – 5:45 pm	18 Striking set for ATC 10:00 am – 3:00 pm The Drama Company in auditorium 4:00 pm – 7:15 pm	19	20 Phoenix Theatre Singers in auditorium 7:30 pm	21	22 Billy Liar, visiting company 7:30 pm	23
24 'Arsenic and Old Lace', follow up auditions 7:30 pm	25 Setting up for the Drama Company Summer Workshops 10:00 am – 2:00 pm Phoenix Theatre Singers 7:30 pm	26 The Drama Company Summer Workshops 9:00 am – 5:00 pm	27 The Drama Company Summer Workshops 9:00 am – 5:00 pm Phoenix Theatre Singers in auditorium 7:30 pm	28 The Drama Company Summer Workshops 9:00 am – 5:00 pm	29	30
31	1 Phoenix Theatre Singers 7:30 pm	2	3 Phoenix Theatre Singers in auditorium 7:30 pm	4 Members Evening Rehearsed Reading 7:30 pm	5	6

Members Calendar for August 2017

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
31	1 Phoenix Theatre Singers 7:30 pm	2	3 Phoenix Theatre Singers in auditorium 7:30 pm	4 Members Evening Rehearsed Reading 7:30 pm	5	6
7 Pre-production meeting for Wendy and Peter Pan 7:30 pm	8	9	10 Phoenix Theatre Singers in auditorium 7:30 pm	11	12 Setting up for Ukulele concert 4:00 pm An evening of Ukulele and Guitar with Steven Sproat and Matt Stead/Robert Ash 7:00 pm	13
14	15	16	17 Phoenix Theatre Singers in auditorium 7:30 pm	18	19	20
21	22 Phoenix Theatre Singers 7:30 pm	23	24 Phoenix Theatre Singers in auditorium 7:30 pm	25	26	27
28 The Drama Company, setting up for workshop in auditorium 11:00 am – 2:00 pm	29 The Drama Company, workshop in auditorium 9:00 am – 4:00 pm Phoenix Theatre Singers in auditorium 7:30 pm	30	31 Phoenix Theatre Singers in auditorium 7:30 pm	1	2 The Drama Company, performance to parents in auditorium 10:00 am – 2:00 pm PYT in auditorium 1:00 pm – 6:00 pm Screen at the Phoenix 7:00 pm	3 PYT in auditorium 1:00 pm – 6:00 pm Phoenix Theatre Singers dress rehearsal in auditorium 7:30 pm

August 2017