



Meopham Players Newsletter

e: MeophamPlayers@gmail.com

March 2017/ issue 30



Sylvia Stickings

It is with a heavy heart that we are having to cancel our next production, something we are doing with great reluctance and has only previously happened in very rare circumstances, writes the Chairman of the Meopham Players

March Production Shelved

I am afraid that we have had to cancel our May production. Eileen Bush had chosen the thriller, "Dead Guilty" with a small cast, but unfortunately, the audition proved to be unsuccessful. The number of active actors in the Players have dwindled in the past year, in spite of the sterling efforts of your Committee and especially of the editor of this newsletter, "S". Sangha. We absolutely hate cancelling a production, I can only remember having to cancel three productions in all the years that I have been a member!

We have joined forces with New Ash Green group, Act One, to produce the successful panto. This is probably the way forward in the future for all small groups, BUT, to keep our own identity, we need new members! Please consider joining us to help continue with our long tradition of producing plays in our lovely village hall for over seventy years.

So PLEASE, come and try your hand at "treading the boards, or just as importantly, helping to build sets, prompting, working back stage, making costumes, selling programmes, making teas and coffees. If you think you would like to join our happy band, we would be delighted to hear from you, please reply to: MeophamPlayers@gmail.com

The Meopham Players



Recent productions have included [l to r]: 'Quartet' (Ronald Harwood), 'Peggy for You' (Alan Plater) and 'Going Green' (David Tristram)

The long running amateur dramatics group began its life in the 1940's and has a illustrious history entertaining audiences at Meopham Village Hall for over seventy years.

There are up to three main productions each year with a full cast auditioned for each show. Anyone is welcome to come along to these auditions,

dates of which are announced well in advance in the Newsletter and on the website.

Meopham Players welcomes not only budding actors, but also directors, and those with an interest in stage management, lighting and sound production.

The society is a friendly group, with plenty of opportunities to socialise

throughout the year.

There is a regular, monthly programme of meeting/workshops which are drama related as well as a variety of outings including theatre trips and social events.

If you would like to join us, or to find out more, please email: MeophamPlayers@gmail.com

EDNA BELL - an impossible act to follow

1926-2017



To her friends, she was affectionately known as 'little ed'. A small person with a big personality. She had her own way of admonishing badly behaved adults and children alike in a subtle gentle manner and you were in no doubt that you had been truly told off!

My first encounter with Edna began when we were introduced by a mutual friend. One of the first things she did was to join the Meopham Players! She had been a driving force in the drama group where she had previously lived.

She also joined the Wi and quickly formed a drama group. I was persuaded to take part and we soon became a force to be reckoned with by entering festivals and travelling around the Kent countryside with various plays. I remember that once we were to perform in a Methodist hall and the pastor told us that we could not use a certain swear word. Edna replied that it was necessary to the plot, it was a play about homeless people living in a derelict building and in the end we pulled out of the festival! Such was Edna's determination to be true to her convictions!! I might add at this point, because we did not attend WI meetings, we were all asked to leave! We were probably the only people who have ever been evicted from the WI!

Her passion for the Players was tantamount. She quickly established herself

Edna had a real talent for costume design



The consummate perfectionist with shaven head

as a wonderful character actress and cornered the market in playing maids and servants. She always stole any scene she was in with a very understated performance.

Her real talent however, was designing costumes and directing pantomimes. She managed a big cast with a great deal of diplomacy, commenting on the fact that if by the last dress rehearsal, we still didn't know the words to the songs, it wouldn't be her that looked ridiculous on stage!. Joy Roberts reminded me that she always trained the several children on a Saturday morning. She made each child feel important and after perhaps two rehearsals, they always knew the words to all the songs and they sang with gusto and confidence!

Which was often more than the adults could achieve!

She designed and made all the costumes with a little help from a few sewing ladies. Each panto had a dress theme, may it be Tudor, eastern for

Aladdin, Jungle, Chinese or just comical costumes, children's costumes such as birds, and fish, many for special Ultra Violet scenes. She would take sleeves out of dresses and jackets and transform them into completely different garments. We managed to hire these out and make a small income for the Players. She was very unrelenting about the space in the hut for rails of costumes that grew by the year and cut down any space for flats and such! She refused to throw anything away, saying that it would always come in handy!

Her piece de resistance as an actor, was when she shaved her head for a role in a play about a cancer ward, she swept off her wig to reveal a bald head and there were gasps from the audience, she didn't even tell Jenny, her daughter, what she was going to do. I know, because I was sitting close to Jenny at the time and I think Jenny nearly fell off her chair with an expression oh my God!!

Edna was Chairman several times, always very calm and collected during many fraught occasions, dealing with the acquisition of our first hut.

Edna was much in demand as a drama teacher. Sonia Williams had formed a drama group at RTZ at the time in London and Edna helped them to produce light hearted one act plays.

She was also involved in classes for adults with Eileen Bush in the Medway area. She organised many fun drama exercises at our monthly meetings, making us all improvise and help the shy ones come out of their shells and prove to be useful actors.

Edna WAS the Players and we shall miss her no nonsense common sense and wicked sense of humour. Rest in peace, my dear, dear friend.

Sylvia Stickings
Chairman, Meopham Players

The Music is the Massage

Terry Fairhead



Music serves a fundamental human need but when did muzak become an unstoppable force, asks a our roving Arts Correspondent

There can't be many people around who don't like music of some sort for it serves a fundamental human need. Of course we don't all like all music, even those of us with what we like to think of as an eclectic taste, but however strange or discordant a particular piece may sound to some ears you may be sure someone somewhere else will be inspired by it. Whether we need it in as great a profusion as it is bestowed today is another matter.

I can remember a time – back in the early 1950s I think – when the only sounds you heard in areas where the public went about its business were those associated with the movement of people and traffic, together with the babble of human voices. It could be quite overwhelming if you weren't used to it. But then one Christmas as I entered Waterloo Station to catch a train to visit my parents in South Devon, I heard music playing from the station's loudspeakers. I can't remember now what it was, though I think it was an orchestral piece, but I do recall the delight it brought; I think most people felt the same... at the time.

Oh those halcyon days; so quickly deadened by the clatter of almost every retail outlet and eating place rushing to latch on to what had seemed to be such an inspired idea. In no time at all there was music coming at you from everywhere and walking down the high street became a frustrating assault on auditory



senses as Mozart, emanating from a perfumery, clashed with the cut-price boutique next door from which Elvis Presley bellowed: *You Ain't Nothing but a Hound Dog*.

It became unstoppable as the world moved on to ever bigger places to shop. The malls and supermarkets and Do-it-Yourself stores filled their halls with music of indifferent quality that became known as *elevator music*. And at Christmas time, which retailers appear to think starts in late August, there is no escape from the deluge of tired old dirges extolling the mythical virtues of a grossly exaggerated few days of good-will (Bah! Humbug!).

But why does it have to be like this; why do we have to live our lives with this constant sound track following us everywhere?

Even TV seems unable to provide a programme that doesn't use music to influence how we should be thinking; and I'm not just talking about drama here because many a documentary will not only have a dramatic introductory theme it will also be sprinkled with subliminal musical signposts. For instance have you ever been conscious of the

deep base note playing in the background of some sinister investigative piece?

And how about drama?

Drama on the stage has always managed very well without music manipulating the way the director would like you to feel because, by and large, the theatre expects the audience make up its own mind; just as it expects it to believe (or at least imagine) that an obviously painted back-drop scene is real.

Not so with cinema and TV audiences. Dramatic scenes, however realistically they are portrayed, always have suitable music to help you feel: uplifted; scared; tearful; joyful or whatever else the film maker wants you to feel. Sometimes it even prepares you for what is to come as when the scared girl goes in to the deserted house looking for her friend. Without the music, the scene is innocuous; with it, the hair on the back of your neck stands up.

And so, with all the facilities the modern day production team has at its disposal to make a serious and *realistic* film, it still seems incapable of doing it without the orchestral accompaniment. But why is this; is the writing or the acting alone not good enough to convince a cinema audience? Unlikely I think, for even someone as universally admired as Laurence Olivier speaking lines written by William Shakespeare still had a musical score by William Walton accompanying him throughout the 1945 film, *Henry V*.

No, I think the real reason is that we – the audience – have become addicted to the sound of music which has been with us ever since the first talking film was screened in Warner Brothers New York Theatre in 1927. Indeed, no silent film played without an accompanying pianist in the theatre so the concept actually goes back even further in time.

Detox anyone?

News from other groups

Hartley Players

For their Spring production the Hartley Players will be staging *After September*

by Jimmie Chinn – a warm and touching depiction of female relationships. The staff of the Gwendolen Kyte School for Girls are an odd assortment of social misfits and eccentric types. Returning for a new term the teachers face a catalogue of catastrophe, and tension reaches breaking point when a government inspector arrives with anonymous let-

ters defaming the school as outmoded, old-fashioned and unsafe, and the staff as unqualified. Who could have betrayed them? And if the school is closed down, where will they go?

8pm from 22 to 25 March, Hartley Village Hall, Ash Road, Hartley DA3 8EL
Box Office 0845 260 2545. or boxoffice@hartleyplayers.org.uk

Ima Starstruck



Our Showbiz Correspondent with her ear to the keyhole & pulse to her iPhone

What to do, what to see

March 2017

Brick Lane Visit . SOLD OUT Please make payments to Lesley Boycott if you have not already done so:
lboycott@btinternet.com

5 April 2017

'Techniques for Truthful Acting' - monthly meeting workshop

May 2017

3 May - 'Dead Guilty' - Auditions. It has a cast of 1male & 3 females and scripts are available from Eileen Bush, email:
eileenbushq@gmail.com

13 May - Annual Treasure Hunt - a time

to tax the little grey cells and learn something about London, arranged by Lesley Boycott: lboycott@btinternet.com

June 2017

7 June - 'Playing Coward' - monthly meeting workshop led by Paul Doust

Brick Lane Visit - the second visit from Lesley Boycott to the music hall is for its 25th Anniversary Event, cost is £49.50 incl. coach travel, numbers are limited to 16. if interested email: lboycott@btinternet.com

The Magic Doll DVD's - if you would like a copy, price is £1 to cover costs, email: mattdallas@fsmail.net

POST CARD

To: Meopham Players, Village Hall, Meopham

Greetings from Birchinton!

What's the saying - Time flies when you're having fun? it's true, nearly a year since I moved, love it here but miss you guys! Been in panto, Robinson Crusoe (as a sailor! & villager) with local group & seen several local productions so Am Dram is flourishing in Thanet.

Village life is easy to get involved in with summer fair face painting (oh yes I did), ringing at church & live music events.

Lots of seaside walks, sunsets and drinks on my balcony - roll on summer - come and enjoy a glass or two with me.

Oh yes well um, yes it does rain sometimes but at the moment even the stormy sea and cartwheeling seagulls are a novelty.

Wish you were here!

Terri Horton x



Meopham Players

CONTACTS

PRESIDENT: Henry Roberts
CHAIRMAN: Sylvie Stickings
SECRETARY: Emma Hawkins
TREASURER: Ann Horrocks

BOX OFFICE

MANAGER: Terry Fairhead
PHONE: 0844 288 9708
e: meophamplayers@aol.com

NEWSLETTER

EDITOR: S Sangha
e: meophamPlayers@gmail.com

Pottham Regional Amateur Theatre Society



Matt Dallas 2017