



Meopham Players

Newsletter

www.meophamplayers.co.uk

e: MeophamPlayers@aol.com

January 2018/ Issue 38

Farewell to back stage impresario Les Peters



It was with much regret that we - at Meopham Players - learned of the death over the Christmas period of Les, our friend and former member. At the time of going to press we have little in the way of details, but we would like to offer our condolences to the family for their loss. Les, together with Dave Micklethwaite, joined Players from Swanley Light Opera Group at the beginning of the decade bringing with them a wealth of knowledge and experience from their days in professional theatre, which they energetically applied to our productions, the first of which was *Jungle Book* in 2011. Sadly, the partnership was broken when Dave died on 23rd December, 2014, but Les soldiered on for a while before finally retiring. However, though we saw less of him he didn't forget us and contributed many

fascinating stories of his life experiences in the professional theatre to the newsletter series: *Bijou Tales of Theatre Folk*.

This is one of them:-

"This is a tale of people who always think they can do your job better than you! The year if memory serves is 1977 and I am working at the Victoria Palace in London. It is the festive season and we have an ice spectacular playing. The staging of this kind of show basically involves covering the stage with a very large but very shallow pool with freezing elements in the bottom and filling it with water.

As soon as we started rehearsing we were getting constant complaints from the skaters about the ice being too soft or too hard. This got to such a level that tempers on both sides were starting to fray. At this point my mate Bobby had a brilliant idea.

He came in very early the next morning and found an old electrical cabinet. he then ripped the knob of an old rheostat and glued it to

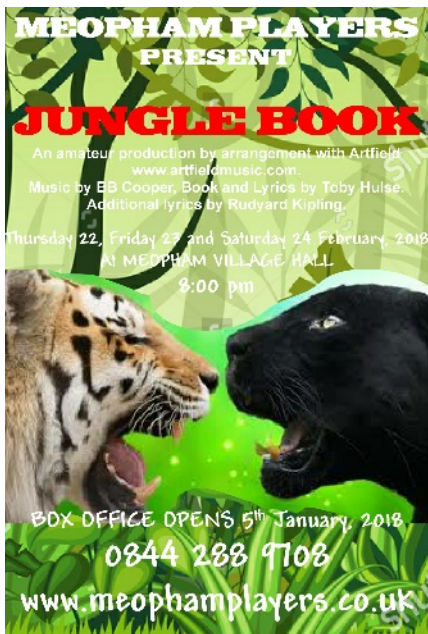
the front. Then he affixed it to the back wall of the stage and put a sign on it that said "Ice Temperature Control". It was actually an empty box, connected to nothing.

When they came in the skaters were told that in future they could set the ice conditions for themselves, they were over the moon. We of course continued to control everything from under the stage, but all the complaints stopped. For the next eight weeks they dutifully came in every day and set the knob as required. They even took turns in coming in the mornings for the sole purpose of setting the temperature for that evening.

So peace ensued for the rest of the run until the second half of the last night when Bobby unlocked the box and left it open to display it's completely empty interior.

Nothing was ever said, BUT IF LOOKS COULD KILL!!!!"

Rest in Peace old friend



Jungle Book is coming back to Meopham. As you will have seen in the tribute to Les on page 1, it was the first production in which he and Dave Mickelthwaite were involved. This one though is the new version with music by BB Cooper and book and lyrics by Toby Hulse. It will be directed by John Winson who brings great enthusiasm and gusto to all the productions with which he is involved. So, look forward to a great evening's (or matinee's) entertainment and book early. The Box Office

is open and you can reserve tickets on:

0844 288 9708

or the web site

www.meophamplayers.co.uk

Performance days are **Thursday, Friday and Saturday 22, 23 and 24 January**. And remember, there will be a matinee as well as an evening performance on the Saturday with curtain-up at 2.30.

For the evening performances we will as usual be offering our **Theatre Experience** which allows you to have a two-course meal before the show at one of the following restaurants:-

The George Meopham,

The Cricketers Meopham Green

The Railway Inn Sole Street

Ask at the Box Office for details and to book.

Poppy Cock's Column



Hello Darlings!

Lots going on and lots to tell you about, so let's get started. The next production after *Jungle Book* will be on 24th, 25th & 26th May and will be under the direction of our great friend and speaker on all things theatrical, **Paul Doust**. The play in question is **Flare Path** by Terence Rattigan on which the screen play for the film **The Way to the Stars** was based. More on this on Page 3 (No! **Not** that page 3).

But before all that we will have our usual Monthly Meeting on the first Wednesday in the month which in this case will be **7 February** and do we have a treat in store for we will be honoured by a visit from Bishop Gondolf Morris to give a demonstration of Morris Dancing. Please join us - it should be fun.

Pottham Regional Amateur Theatre Society





The auditions for **FLARE PATH** took place at Meopham Village Hall on 03 January. Players little treasure, **Brenda Ogden** was there to report.

These were auditions but not as we know them in Meopham Players. The director is Paul Doust, who has run a number of helpful and thought-provoking workshops for us and many other groups and he has a highly individual take on both auditions and directing. He has many contacts in the amateur dramatic world in Kent and it was a delight to see many new faces who had turned up to audition as well as familiar faces from our own society.

Rather than simply having individuals reading for the parts they wanted, Paul had us working in groups to discuss, rehearse and then present short extracts from the play. This was an effective way to encourage people to work with

strangers, get to know each other and familiarize themselves with different parts of the text. There was a short break for coffee which afforded a further opportunity to meet and talk with others. The whole evening had an optimistic and energetic feel about it and it should lead to an outstanding production. The play has a big cast but, with a little help from our friends, we have been able to make the following selections:-

- Mrs Oakes - Brenda Ogden
- Peter Kyle - Patrick Carty
- Teddy Graham - Simon Webb
- Patricia Graham - Natalie Davies
- Dusty Miller - Simon Kirkham
- The Count - S Sangha
- "Wiggy Jones" - David Alexander
- Swanson - John Winson
- Maudie - Emily Stickels
- Doris Stephanie Anderson



The people where I work

The people where I work
 Are all odd
 I don't mean to be rude
 And most definitely not crude
 But there is something most assuredly
 Wrong
 We begin at eight
 Heh! Those emails won't wait!
 Our desks are identical
 Which doesn't make sense at all
 As we value free thought, discourse and
 chat
 We're known to be flexible
 Creative and sensible
 But where in the manual is that?
 Vacant stares they abound
 And slights and jibes
 Follow me around this strangest
 Of strange menageries
 Going home
 I conclude
 Is the end to today's crazy interlude
 And plan my flight
 Alone
 But some
 Stay on
 Whether from fear
 It's just not clear
 But tenacious in their stares they
 remain

David Alexander

January 2018

"A day without laughter is a day wasted"
 Charlie Chaplin

AND FINALLY our renowned Art Critic, Salvador Dalek, returns to tell us how Billy Bragg's Red Wedge got its name.

Art Attack!

Salvador Dalek

...an illustration of using art to manipulate the feelings and attitudes of the general public, or as it came to be known, Agitprop.



El Lissitzky

Beat the Whites with the Red Wedge 1919



Often regarded as one of the most iconic posters ever produced, *Beat the Whites with the Red Wedge* is an early attempt by El Lissitzky of art propaganda. He was a professor at an art school, aged 29, when he produced the work in support of the Red Army, following the Bolshevik uprising in 1917.

It is as an illustration of using the arts to manipulate the feelings and attitudes of the general public, or as it came to be known, Agitprop. Agitprop - a Russian blend of Agitation and Propaganda - was heavily championed by Lenin through his newly appointed Commissar of Education.

This was the moment in Russia when the unsullied promise of Communism bonded with the newness of abstract art. A time when advanced art served the power of the left to fire a generation of artists with a missionary zeal to demystify, and make their work accessible to the masses. Manifestos declaring 'death to art' were published stating it to be 'bourgeois' and henceforth artists were to be known as 'Productivists.' Although the period was short-lived, fizzling out by the end of the 1920's, it produced some amazing results.

Only against the fervour of the Russian Revolution is it possible to

grasp the meaning of the design. The print is divided in two with a diagonal line, one half black the other white, the positive and negative contrasted with the concomitant subliminal message of good and evil.

The red wedge symbolised the collective power of revolutionaries, its sharp point thrust into the scattered units of the White Russians, with red shards sent splintering.

Shapes and colours are given a direct symbolic significance, the smooth rounded walls of the white circle are penetrated by the spikey solid red triangle representing the Red Army piercing the defences of the White.

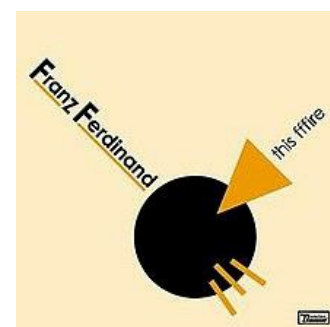
Our modern eyes are well versed with deciphering abstract art and it is not too difficult for us to grasp Lissitzky's use of conceptual art to portray events that were being witnessed every day on the streets.

But you cannot help but wonder what the people of a backward 1919 Tsarist Russia - overwhelmingly illiterate and starving - made of the abstract geometric symbols printed on cheap paper, flung out by the bucket loads from the backs of the Agitprop trains that trundled up and down the country. The visual language was too new and ahead of the times, maybe.

Lissitzky Legacy



A simplified design was used by the Peacekeepers in the TV series *Farscape*



The Glasgow based rock group have used Lissitzky pastiches for their album covers



Fronted by Billy Bragg, **Red Wedge** was a musician's collective formed to engage young people with politics, particularly the policies of the Labour Party.