



CHAIR'S REPORT ON THE LAST 12 MONTHS

PRODUCTIONS

- April: ***Cold Comfort Farm***, by Paul Doust, adapted from the novel by Stella Gibbons. Directed by Mark Hebert and produced by John Morgan. Performed in the Commemoration Hall. Despite a slow start to ticket sales, this ended with our largest audiences – including a record 130 on the Thursday evening.
- July: ***Hay Fever*** by Noël Coward . Directed by Valerie Gerrard and produced by Ann Monk. A short taster was performed at the Unity in the Community event in Oxmoor in June. Two performances were given at Brampton Park Theatre and one at the BRJ Club in Oxmoor, to raise funds for the Oxmoor Community Action Group's firework display in November.
- November: ***Ghost Writer***, by David Tristram. Directed by Jacquie Spencer, assisted by Phil Cox, and produced by Chris Rogers. Two performances at Brampton Park Theatre and three in the Commemoration Hall. This production made a record profit.

In all three productions there were actors and backstage people who were new to the Club – and well-known local actor Phil Cox as assistant director on *Ghost Writer*.

NATIONAL OPERATIC AND DRAMATIC ASSOCIATION (NODA) REVIEWS OF OUR PRODUCTIONS

All by Michael G. Williamson, Noda Rep : District 1

COLD COMFORT FARM

Director : Mark Hébert

This was an interesting version of a well-loved classic which provided a lot of scope for a large cast. There were some really nice touches such as the original drawing by Deirdre Lee, the film poster in the foyer and the exploding clocks which kept everybody on their toes! In general, a lot of effort had been put into creating exactly the right atmospheric setting and the whole production team deserve congratulation. Individual performances varied a little in quality and pace but perhaps this was to be expected in a piece where there were sure to be pre-conceptions. I particularly liked the light interpretation of Sarah Ward as Elphine, the varied reactions of Carol Wadey as Mrs Hawk-Monitor and the consistent gothic pessimism of Jeanette Brown as Judith. Brian Perrett, Chris Topham and Kevin Webb each created believable characterisations that strengthened the action. Ann Monk was a memorable Aunt Ada Doom and it somehow seemed appropriate that she should also have been credited with the creation of the Sukebind! However, the real success of the

performance rested with Caroline Harbord who created a very intelligent and sympathetic portrayal of Flora, around whom most of the action flowed.

HAY FEVER

Director : Valerie Gerrard Producer : Ann Monk

This was the Club's annual summer touring production at various venues and the light choice of play was ideal. Generally, the opportunities for women within this script are greater than for the men and all the women within this company gave strong, complementary performances which enhanced the production tremendously. The Bliss family itself, at the core of most of the action, was also well cast and worked effectively together as a team. This was one of the best performances that I have seen from Michael Black as David Bliss and the scene with Judith and Myra was particularly well done and a great credit to all three actors. Carol Wadey, as Myra, gave a very enjoyable interpretation of this role with good facial expression and there were also some nicely judged performances from Sarah Ward, Louise Nicholls, Phil Green and Daisy Spencer. This play is nothing, however, without a strong Judith and Jeanette Brown rose to the occasion admirably, creating a very believable character that fulfilled all the requirements of the text. A very pleasing summer entertainment.

GHOST WRITER

Director : Jacquie Spencer Asst. Director : Phil Cox

This 'haunting comedy' by David Tristram, perhaps better known for his excellent one-act plays, was a splendid choice for Huntingdon and the small cast worked well together to create a very effective production. The technical elements were all very good, ensuring that the subtle combination of slick comedy and ghost story, with the occasional Shakespearean quote thrown in, was thoroughly believable and sustainable. Quite a result! All the company provided strong complementary performances and there were no weak links which ensured that a good pace was always maintained. Caroline Harbord was totally convincing as the ghost of Ruby and made the most of all her opportunities while Chris Topham created a strong, sympathetic character in the central role of Edward with good support from Bob Pugh as Alex. Both Christine Marriott and Kat Sexton were perfect in their contrasting roles while Michael Black was hilarious as the be-wigged Hedley. This was a great team effort and a significant achievement on the part of the production team.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

- Theatre trip to see *Midsummer Mink* at Broughton, February
- Michael Burrell on prompting, March
- Poetry evening at Ronald's, April
- Stall and taster of *Hay Fever* at the Unity in the Community event, June
- Theatre trip to see Michael Burrell at Theatre Royal, Bury, Sept
- Lunch party +*Barbecue* directed by Carol Wadey at Ronald's Sept
- DVD evening, *Hamlet*, October
- Gary Mackay, workshop on acting, December
- Christmas dinner at Prima, December
- Burns Night supper at Ronald's, January
- Theatre trip to see *The Tempest* at Stratford, February

OTHER NEWS

- As usual, Club members have also been active in other drama groups, such as Brampton Park Theatre Club, Shakespeare at the George, SIMADS, Panto 89, and several others.
- John Morgan is the Club representative on the Commemoration Hall Trust. Huntingdon Community Liaison Group has collapsed, though hopefully only temporarily.
- Spotlight Productions has very kindly given us space to store costumes and other assets, free of charge.
- The Club contributed material to a history of the Commemoration Hall, published by the Huntingdonshire Local History Society.

COMMUNICATIONS

- John Morgan produced several excellent newsletters during the year, with plenty of photos and varied articles. Several people wrote contributions. In addition, a lot of emails were sent to members and supporters.
- John Morgan has continued to keep the website up to date. It had hundreds of hits during the year, and a lot of people contacted the Club through the website.

COMMITTEE

- Once again, the committee has worked very hard and effectively – none of the productions and activities could have taken place without their efforts. Richard Meredith resigned in January 2009, but is continuing to make a valuable contribution to the Club.

PLANNED ACTIVITIES

- Lunch at Ronald's, 10 May
- Acting workshop with Gary Mackay, May
- Workshop on costumes
- Theatre trip to see *Back to the 80's* – Spotlight Productions, Performing Arts Centre, 8-11 April
- Purchase of new flats for the stage
- Clearing the basement

Michael Black

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