



Annual General Meeting 2010

CHAIR'S REPORT ON THE LAST 12 MONTHS

PRODUCTIONS

- March 2009: **Separate Tables**, by Terence Rattigan. Directed by Marie Huggins, produced by John Morgan
- July: **Absent Friends**, by Alan Ayckbourn. Directed by Dean Laccohee, produced by John Morgan
- November: **And then there were none**, by Agatha Christie. Directed by Carol Wadey. The Thursday performance was made over to the Mayor of Huntingdon's Charities.

In all three productions there were actors and backstage people who were new to the Club.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

- January 2009: Burns Night Supper at Ronald Stevenson's
- April: readings of poems and performance of mummings' play, **St George and the Turkish Knight**, at the Royal Society of St George's annual dinner, in the Commemoration Hall
- May: lunch at Ann Monk's
- May: acting workshop, run by Gary Mackay
- May: trip to Norwich to see **Separate Tables**
- August: **St George and the Turkish Knight** performed three times at the Beer Festival at the Black Bull, Brampton
- December: Christmas dinner at the Samuel Pepys, Huntingdon
- January 2010: **Saints and Sinners**, by Michael Black, performed at All Saints' Church, Huntingdon

OTHER NEWS

- Front of house very welcoming – and profitable – under Rebecca Hutchison (March 2009) and John Morgan (July) and Tony Burrin (November)
- New flats

- Improved video link between stage and dressing room
- Online tickets
- Free tickets for live screening of National Theatre's *Phedre* at Cineworld
- As usual, Club members have also been active in other drama groups – Brampton Park, Shakespeare at the George, SIMADS, Panto 89, and others.
- John Morgan is the Club's representative on the Commemoration Hall Trust.
- Spotlight Productions has been very helpful.

COMMUNICATIONS

- Email updates
- John Morgan has also continued to keep the website up to date. It had thousands of hits during the year (1787 unique hits, 25 Jan to 24 Feb 2010), and a lot of people contacted the Club through the website.

COMMITTEE

- Once again, the committee has done a very good job – none of the productions and activities could have taken place without their efforts.

PLANNED ACTIVITIES

- Wednesday evenings at the Black Bull, Brampton
- April: **Characterisation workshop**, run by Caroline Harbord
- June: **St George and the Turkish Knight**, at the Mediaeval Banquet
- July: **Port out, starboard home!** by Richard James
- November: autumn production (to be chosen)

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

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

Separate Tables

Although this Rattigan classic is now something of a period piece, the strength of the writing continues to make it an excellent choice for any drama club and HDC quickly proved that they could bring together a cast fit to do it justice. Visually, the Beauregard Hotel was recreated with fine attention to detail and the permanent residents provided an amusing but convincing backdrop to the serious core of the action. There were some really strong characterisations from Mark Lamberth, Sarah Ward and John Morgan while the complementary

trio of Steph Hamer, Ann Monk and Valerie Gerrard was perfect in every respect. Also a nice cameo from Kelly Mason in the small but rewarding role of Doreen. However, the real strength of the piece falls heavily on the central principals. Michael Black and Carol Wadey brought sensitivity and insight to their unusual relationship in Act 2 while as the troubled Anne Shankland and John Malcolm in Act 1, Caroline Harbord and Dean Laccohee made a superb partnership, creating moments of significant dramatic tension. Linking everything together with quiet efficiency, Christine Marriott was a very sympathetic and utterly believable Pat Cooper, providing the link with reality that brought all the threads together. A very satisfying and enjoyable debut production by Marie Huggins that the society can be very proud of.

Absent Friends

'Absent Friends' is not the best known of Alan Ayckbourn's works but it was an excellent choice for Huntingdon Drama Club's summer production. The small, but very well balanced, cast succeeded in extracting every ounce of humour out of the script while, at the same time, not losing sight of the more serious, underlying issues contained within it. Quite a notable achievement. What particularly impressed me were the facial expressions of the cast which remained consistent, contrasting and totally believable throughout. Warren Laccohee seemed very comfortable in the role of John. His low-key approach was especially effective and his timing was perfect. He was well matched by Kelly Mason as the enigmatic Evelyn. As the womaniser, Paul, Mark Lamberth also gave a very well-considered performance and his silent reactions, as much as his natural dominant stance, added considerably to the comedy. As the cheerful and positive Colin, newcomer, Scott Hutchison was also a perfect choice. However, the two performances of the evening undoubtedly came from Carol Wadey and Jeanette Brown. Jeanette, as Marge, had some wonderful lines but her natural flair for comedy and self reflection made this another very memorable performance. This was a very real interpretation. Carol perhaps had the more difficult task as Diana, faced with portraying a range of emotions stretching from calm competence to hysterical breakdown. She rose to the occasion beautifully and was a joy to watch. These six actors worked very well together as a team and Dean Laccohee, undertaking his directorial debut for HDC, has much to be proud of.

And Then There Were None

I've previously acted in this play and seen it on many occasions under all of its various incarnations and yet, despite being thoroughly aware of the eventual outcome, I was surprised by how much I was able to enjoy and appreciate this particular production. This was largely due to a strong cast, a suitably fast pace in the beginning that became more focussed as the suspects reduced, and some nice directorial touches. The enjoyment of the audience was very evident combining whispered speculation with amused anticipation of the next victim! For the plot to work it is necessary for each member of the company to display suspiciously homicidal tendencies at some point in the proceedings while the audience is always uncomfortably aware

that the eleventh member of the cast, the very small role of Narracot, might not be all he seems and could still be out there. This production worked well in this respect and everybody was kept in an appropriate state of uncertainty right up until the final dénouement. There were some excellent individual performances. I particularly liked the nicely judged interpretation of Emily Brent by Ann Monk and Kirsty Pickering made such excellent work of the small role of Mrs Rogers that her early demise was a great pity. As successive deaths reduced the number of suspects, the leading roles came into their own and we were able to focus on the strange behaviour of Phil Green as an appropriately nervous Dr Armstrong, the suavely logical and judicial mind of Sir Lawrence, played with some style by Michael Black, and the very varied, effective and totally believable characterisation of Scott Hutchison as the mysterious William Blore. Dean Laccohee and Sarah Ward were nicely cast as the central love interest. Dean gave a consistently strong performance while Sarah managed to combine charm and vulnerability with the occasional strong hint of underlying psychotic possibilities. A splendid choice of production for Friday 13th!

Michael Black

Michael Black
Chair, Huntingdon Drama Club
www.huntingdondramaclub.org.uk
01480-454486