

Twelfth Night Success

I write this a month to the day of the opening night of *Twelfth Night* and what an opening night it was for me. The combined nerves of my first BIG show for FDC and the fact that in a few minutes I had to sit in the front row of the audience and follow in the footsteps of Meg Ryan in *When Harry Met Sally!* Although I was petrified about my own performance and I was a little worried about whether or not people would 'get' the reasons behind setting *Twelfth Night* in a sleazy and hyper-real version of 1960's Soho, I knew that I had a fantastic cast and a great production and that if anyone could pull it off the team I had through FDC were the ones to do it, and boy did they do it!

But I'm getting a little ahead of myself, so let's rewind to July 2008, and like most of last summer it was raining, when a group of intrepid amateur actors met in the upstairs room of The Packhorse. The auditions were held over three nights, which I like to do to give people an opportunity to come along. I also always cast from those people who come along on the night (unless someone contacts me to let me know they can't make auditions but are interested, in which case I will always try to find a time the suits them) and I was incredibly fortunate with the wealth of talent that my auditions brought me. From day one I knew we had a fantastic cast.

So we got started on the rehearsals and everything was going fantastically well. People were on schedule for losing their scripts (in fact about half of the cast were well ahead of the schedule which was great!) and I was in seventh heaven. Then after cruising down the motorway of success we hit a small cul-de-sac with more than a few speed-bumps! Firstly Kelly

Merrit (who was playing Orsino) had to pull out. Kelly did totally the right thing and let me know with plenty of time to get a new Orsino. Unfortunately trying to find an actor in October is mighty difficult, there's this little thing called Panto that everyone's in... most annoying. Anyway eventually (entirely my fault due to stubbornness on my part not to be in the play) I took the advice of Donna and Geoff and took on the role myself. I must now admit (although it was rather stressful) I had a great time. I was also lucky enough to have a great Assistant Director in Donna Matthews who took on even more of the workload to help me with my dual role. Thanks Donna you are a star!



So I thought we would now be back on track, but we had a few poor turnouts and late arrivals and things were starting to look a little bleak. However after a couple of weeks where I was not so happy my cast

pulled their collective socks up and began to fly with the play. In the two weeks leading up to the play I must admit I relaxed a little. I could see the play coming together, and experience told me that this was going to be a blinder of a production. When we got into the theatre and I saw the wonderful set, and went through Chris Samuel's wonderful lighting design along with Simon Bowman's luscious sound (I always think the secret of good sound is that it's unobtrusive to the play, and yet creates the world outside the stage, which Simon's sound always does) the play fell into place with relative ease. Three fantastic performances followed and I would like to finish by thanking everyone who came along to support us... even the guy who fell asleep on the Friday, at least you gave the reviewer in The Fosseyway something to write about!



Calum Grant

Noises Off – Getting Started

We had an amazing turnout for the read-through in November - something like 26 people all crowded around the tables in the gloom upstairs at the Packhorse, and more came to read in the next couple of days. I am delighted to say that we have a great cast as a result - as follows (in order of appearance):

Dotty Otley	<i>playing Mrs Clackett</i>	Heather de Glanville
Lloyd Dallas	<i>playing the Director</i>	Geoff Hunt
Garry Lejeune	<i>playing Roger Tramplemain</i>	Tom Cant
Brooke Ashton	<i>playing Vicki</i>	Donna Matthews
Poppy Norton Taylor	<i>playing the ASM</i>	Sarah Wingrove
Frederick Fellowes	<i>playing Philip Brent</i>	Alan Burgess
Belinda Blair	<i>playing Flavia Brent</i>	Gillie Richardson
Tim Allgood	<i>playing the Stage Manager</i>	Felix Byrne
Selsdon Mowbray	<i>playing the Burglar</i>	Bob Gooding

Rehearsals will start at the beginning of January.

We will need quite a big crew (it's a big complicated set) and lots of help on the Production side but many of those who didn't get a part this time - including four new recruits to the Club - have said they would be happy to get involved and can expect a phone call about this in the next few weeks! We will send an email round inviting people who might like a job - big or small - to come to a Production Meeting at the Packhorse in the second half of January, so don't wait for a phone call... Just keep an eye out for the date.

Production Week is Sunday 19th April - Saturday 25th April inclusive.

PdeG

Frome Talking Newspaper

As you are probably aware, Frome Drama Club has been fielding a team of readers for the blind and partially sighted for many years. The first side of the tape consists of the current edition of the Somerset Standard which, I don't need to tell you, is always a riveting read. We try to concentrate on the positive stories and eliminate the crime and brawling – the sort of behaviour which usually characterises the Drama Club Christmas party.

A lot of actors and other members have read for side two, which is intended to be a short story or other narrative of general interest. We have done a variety of material including comic monologues, miscellanies of poems for Christmas, innumerable short stories and even short plays in the past – so it doesn't have to be a single contributor.

This FDC tradition has been going for decades, since the days of founding members Margaret and Arthur Court, Babs and Mervyn Box and many others with whom Lesley trod the boards in her youth. The central team of readers for side one is David Riley, Hilary Daniel, Meg Oliver and Janet Mills. We have also been glad to welcome Keeley, Ethne and Christine during 2008. Regular contributors to side two are Lesley, Gillie, Val, Michael, Ethne, Den and Geoff.

We are always happy to welcome new people. If you are interested then send an email to fromedramaclub@hotmail.com and mark it for the attention of David Riley/Michael Hoskinson. **DR**

Costumes with FDC

And the 'I'm Not Going To Wear *That!*' Syndrome!

The Drama Club has been very lucky over the years to have had a number of very talented folk in charge of costuming its' productions and who have inadvertently been responsible for educating me along the way.

Mary Kirkman was one of the most talented and knowledgeable people I've known; she had studied the subject at university and her understanding of tailoring was second to none. I remember the feeling of power that Michael had when Mary coveted his pair of Levi jeans: if Mary wanted them they must be good! He didn't let her have them, incidentally.

Sadly, Mary died and we were somewhat adrift for a number of years until Heather de Glanville joined us for *Arsenic and Old Lace* in 2003 and our standard lifted again. Luckily for us her artistic eye – coupled with the fact that Heather had built a very successful costume business - meant that the club once more had a gifted costumier at the helm and started to win nominations for wardrobe again. Indeed, the wonderful costumes for *The Crucible*, hired from the RSC, made an enormous impact on the whole look of the play – reminding the audience of a Rembrandt masterpiece and not surprisingly, she won the county award for Best Costume.

Unfortunately for us, Heather's health meant that she became unable to haul extremely heavy costumes about, so once more we needed someone to take her place. It was at this point that I was approached to take over the task. I didn't have the background or sewing skills that both Mary and Heather had – but I do have a love for the subject and a very critical eye!

One of the first plays that I was responsible for costuming was *It Runs in The Family* – that extremely funny farce that Philip directed. I had to find a number of Matron's uniforms for *very* big busted women - they had to be big as the matrons in question were played by men with balloons stuffed down their fronts. I really struggled to find any until I tried good

old Ebay which solved the problem of uniforms and belts to hold those balloons in place.

One difficulty which faces many wardrobe mistresses of am-dram productions is the 'I'm not going to wear *that*' syndrome. In professional theatre actors tend to accept what they're given with good grace – but not always so in FDC. Trying to get an actor to have a short back and sides, to tie back their gorgeous curls or to wear something that is dreadfully frumpy can be an absolute nightmare. In the end one has to compromise and be prepared to cringe when the public approaches you with comments like 'What were you thinking of, Gillie? She'd never have turned up in those shoes' or whatever - when they see your name under Wardrobe in the programme.

There is no doubt that the relationship between the director and wardrobe mistress is an important and delicate one. After all – where does the responsibility begin and end? For my part, I love it when directors share their vision with you so that Philip might ask for a group to be in greys and brown, or Calum for primary colours to complement his Mondrian set. Geoff, on the other hand, needed colours that were reminiscent of a Hopper painting for his production of *A Streetcar Named Desire* – and all this has to be within the constraints of the play's period and what the costume stores have in stock!

Once-upon-a-time the club was lucky enough to have its own store of costumes but it was never enough. For instance, when asked to find a man's tweed suit with extremely long legs, narrow waist, long back yet in the right colour and style of the Twenties it was never there. Also, no-one really wanted to be responsible for the quantities of stuff – dresses, coats, suits, hats, shoes, gloves and the rest – and to be responsible for washing or dry-cleaning them and stopping the damp or moths getting at them. And who nowadays has the sort of space necessary to store them anyway? So FDC has to hire in costumes and the poor treasurer needs to be aware of the expense of such an undertaking.

I enjoy the buzz of costuming a play – but I'd love to pass over the baton to someone else occasionally. There's a lot to learn and I'm only too happy to show anyone who is interested. **Gillie Richardson**

Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting of Frome Drama Club will be held
on Monday 23rd February 2009

At the Pack Horse, Christchurch Road West at 8 p.m.

Come along and support your club.

Play Readings – these take place every month at 8 pm at The Packhorse in Christchurch Street - all welcome - to read or just listen.

Monday January 12th Equus by Peter Shaffer led by Calum Grant

Psychiatrist MARTIN DYSART is beginning to lose faith in his profession when a young man is brought to him from the courts. ALAN STRANG is seventeen and has recently blinded six horses with a metal spike. The play centres on the relationship between the young man and Psychiatrist, and Dysart's growing obsession with the boy and the motive behind his hideous crime.

The *Longman Literature* version has the following synopsis.

Teenager Alan Strang, fought over by a religious mother and an atheist father, finds release in horses. Then something drives him to blind the horses with a spike. Why? While treating the boy, a psychiatrist discovers his own life is paradoxically in the witness box. A savage, passionate play which pinpoints the modern human spiritual quest.

Cast;

Martin Dysart (35-65)

Alan Strang (16-20)

Frank Strang - *Alan's father* (35-50)

Dora Strang - *Alan's mother, a great part with some brilliant speeches*(35-50)

Hesther Solomon - *A medium sized part, she is close to Dysart*

Jill Mason - *The girl who falls for Alan, confident* (17-25)

Harry Dalton - *Stable owner*

A Nurse

Monday 9th February "Uncle Vanya" by Anton Chekhov led by Robert O'Farrell

Anton Chekhov was born in 1860 and died, from TB, in 1904. His family came from the Black Sea region in the southern Russian Empire; his father had liberated himself from serfdom, joined the 'merchant class' (= small shop keeper), became a bankrupt and then moved his family to Moscow. Here Anton qualified as a doctor and for the rest of his life - when the demands of his literary career and his failing health allowed - he continued to work amongst the peasants who lived around the various country estates where he loved to spend his summers.

He came to literary prominence in Russia first as a writer of short stories, and he is still considered one of the masters of that difficult genre. His four great plays – *The Seagull*, *Uncle Vanya*, *Three Sisters* and *The Cherry Orchard* – are constantly being performed worldwide; *Ivanov*, an earlier, lesser-known work, was a smash hit in London this autumn, with Kenneth Branagh in the title role.

Without going into too much detail, Chekhov's plays tend to portray the frustrations, longings and love affairs of the Russian bourgeoisie, living on their country estates (usually hugely in debt) with little to fill their days. In fact, the Vanya of our play is one of the few Chekhov characters who ever does any work; for years he has run the estate on behalf of a distant relative, Professor Serebrakoff, who has suddenly decided to take up residence. With his place usurped and his routines disrupted, Vanya falls awkwardly in love with Helena, the Professor's beautiful young wife. Words like 'bittersweet', 'tragicomedy' are often used to describe Chekhov's plays. In all them hearts get broken and dreams get shattered, beloved cherry orchards get sold off and nobody ever gets to Moscow. Sometimes, people even get killed (like in *Three Sisters*, though not in *Vanya*). And, in the end, people are always going away and leaving everyone else behind; 'they've gone' is one little expression that *Vanya* and *Three Sisters* share in their final acts.

Come along on February 9th and enjoy this charming taster for *Three Sisters*. Details of the characters will be sent out by email closer to the date.