

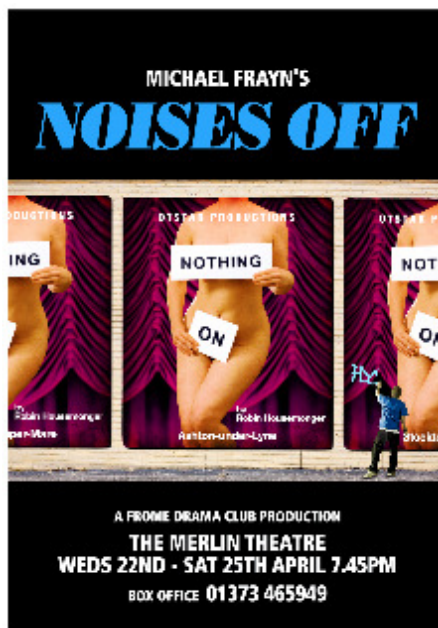
Noises Off is a nightmare!

We are just under halfway through the rehearsal period and most of the way through the script now, but I had no idea what a fiendishly difficult play it would be.

The cast have been smashing – a really committed group of people who turn up night after night to stagger through Michael Frayn’s manic parody with me, dashing upstairs/downstairs/in and out of doors/scripts in one hand and plates of sardines in the other – it is bedlam!

But we are still laughing – when we can get our breath back. And we haven’t even got to the bit yet where Tom Cant (Garry/Roger) falls downstairs.

On the Production side things are moving ahead nicely. Bill Jacques has designed what he describes as “a monster of a set” and he, Jim Boyd and Andrew Bryant have made good progress with the build so far. Whether we can



actually get it to fit on the Merlin stage, and more importantly to rotate, remains to be seen. Bill tells me he regularly wakes up at night in a cold sweat, worrying about it.

Trixie Collins is doing a fine job with producing makeshift props for rehearsals and the real things are beginning to arrive daily as a result of her foraging on E-bay (what a wonderful invention that is!).

Migs’ publicity machine is also gathering momentum. Ed Thomas has designed an eye-popping poster, and has taken

photos of the cast in costume for the back of the postcard which should be back from the printers any day now.

All in all it’s going OK - ish. I just wish I didn’t wake up screaming every night...

Philip de Glanville

Noises Off is at the Merlin Theatre from Wednesday 22nd – Saturday 25th April

How Handy are you?



If you have carpentry or painting and decorating skills we need you!

The set for *Noises Off* is a huge task and there is an opportunity to help. This can be either in the preparation on a regular basis – there are 9 doors to hang, with architraves and skirtings to match! There will also be lots of painting as we get towards the end. Or you could help at the Get-in on 18th /19th April when the whole thing will be built on the stage. For more information – or to offer your services phone Bill Jacques on 01373 467464

Charley's Aunt Auditions

A message from Bob Gooding who will be directing our next production.

Date: Monday 9th March
with possible further auditions on Monday 16th March if required.
Time: 8 p.m.
Venue: Upstairs at the Packhorse, Christchurch Street West, Frome

Production Dates: Frome Festival – performances 3rd, 4th, 8th & 9th July

My last production for FDC was *Allo Allo!*, before that *The Lion In Winter* and *Macbeth* and, many years ago, *Charley's Aunt* with full staging at the Merlin.

For this production we shall move the period a little from the original Victorian to Edwardian. This will give it the boaters, blazers, pretty dresses and concert-party feel I want to achieve. We intend giving performances in two village halls near Frome and then two performances in The Rook Lane venue. This will mean a minimum of theatrical lights and scenery. I want most of the cast to sing a song or two around a piano as the audience enter. We might even get them to join-in, music hall fashion. (Piano permitting!)

I want it to be fun all the way. So for those who don't know this old favourite, here is a run down of all characters. Three young (or not so young!) undergraduate chaps with titled backgrounds, but no cash, enjoying all the fun of Oxford. They are:-

Charley *shy, innocent and hopelessly in love with Amy Spettigue.*

Jack *his friend, more confident, very in love with Kitty Verdun*

Lord Fancourt Babberley *older, friends with both the above, daft as a brush, forced to spend most of the play in drag! Falls in love with Ela Delahay.*

Brassett *wise servant to F.B and the only one with cash and common sense.*

Dona Lucia d'Alvadorez *still a great beauty although middle-aged. A widow and millionaire - willing to play along with the joke of being impersonated.*

Col. Sir Francis Chesny bart .*Jack's father a good sport with money problems. Jolly. (single)*

Stephen Spettigue *solicitor starts dour, mean and disliked. But he does lighten up and becomes quite silly.*

Kitty *Spettigue's ward*

Amy *Spettigue's niece.*

Ela *an orphan girl befriended by Donna Lucia. She is loved from afar by Fancourt-Babberly for her inner goodness.*

Copies of the script are now available. If anyone would like a copy in advance of the audition then please contact me on 01373 301088 or rg007d5770@blueyonder.co.uk

Swiss rolls, fresh tea and a radiator...

After some time on the committee, two years as secretary, Ally Maryon is standing down- she tells us how she got involved in drama.

My first experience of theatre was as Alice, of course, in the junior school's production of Alice in Wonderland. However, I soon discovered that it was more fun being involved in the music and singing and not having to learn the lines, a recurring theme!

My next foray was many years later as a newlywed in an old fashioned bedroom fast with a group in the West End – no, not London's west end but a very small village in Surrey. Very much of the 'village hall' variety, it was great fun. The most memorable night with this group was when someone came on stage with a chocolate cake, which being a swiss roll promptly rolled off the plate and under the sofa causing great hilarity to both cast and audience. During the same run, but different night, a prop mirror fell off the wall, causing some bright spark on stage to say, 'oh, dear, seven years bad luck', which again caused great hilarity amongst the cast and a bit of fumbling with lines to get back to where we were meant to be. I went onto do four productions with them.

About the same time I did a couple of productions with a company called Proteus in Guildford which gave me my first opportunity of working backstage and on a professional stage. After school halls and village halls a real stage can be quite daunting, especially when seen empty for the first time but it is amazing how a set and props soon makes it so small.

Eventually pressure of work made learning lines and attending rehearsal's regularly almost impossible.

At this point I joined a group local to work, Bracknell Drama Group, where if busy at work, I could pop across the road to a rehearsal and then go back into work. By now I had completely given up trying to learn lines and

discovered that props and crewing were much easier as you had the book with you at all times and could write in everything that was expected of you. And of course because actors rely on a backstage crew they think you are quite marvellous which is very good for the ego! My abiding memory of Bracknell was a production of Agatha Christie's 'A Murder is Announced' where for the birthday tea scene, the actors insisted on fresh sandwiches and hot tea each night and of course a fresh 'death by chocolate' cake. This production was in a small hall and with very little space back stage but two of us still managed to come up with a beautifully fresh 'tea' each evening.

After a few productions with Bracknell I was asked to help out with the Quince Players in Sunningdale – and for those of you who are Archer's fans, I didn't come across Lynda! Having had some backup at Bracknell, I found that I was suddenly doing it alone. Although village hall size it was quite a feat to get to know new people, how they reacted to pressure, where things were kept and the idiosyncrasies of the hall – you could not flush the loo during the performance as the rattling pipes could be heard in the hall! I was thrown into the deep end with Terry Pratchett's 'The Wyrds Sisters' which is great fun but quite demanding on the imagination of the props mistress to come up with 'torture instruments'.

At this point I was joined by another 'too busy to learn lines' theatre lover, in organising props and we became quite a team, to such an extent that we were 'poached' by Windlesham Drama Group down the road. For the first time I was introduced to pantomime and was promoted to stage manager, which meant wearing 'cans' and enduring the risqué comments of light and sound!

Windlesham also excelled at bedroom farce and we had many hilarious rehearsals and shows, with quite a lot of bare flesh. On one particular production, an actor has to tie himself to a radiator to stop him falling as he

lowers himself out of a window. Unfortunately the radiator is then pulled from its footings. Not only did we have a very good sash window but an excellent moving radiator and by the end of the run quite a bruised actor! Anything is achievable if you think about it long enough.

Sadly my time with Windlesham came to an end when I moved to the West Country in August of 2004. I found out about Frome Drama Club in the early autumn and found myself doing props in the autumn production of 'Pack of Lies' directed by Philip de Glanville. Anyone who has worked with Philip knows his acute attention to detail and on several performances I was cursing him when trying to get Christmas cards to stand up properly when setting them in a black out or negotiating around a Christmas tree in the dark to set another prop. But when the result is seen on DVD, you realise that all the detail is worth it. The one moan of backstage crew is that they rarely get to see a production from out front and rely heavily on the talents of a camera man.

I then spent the next three years of my life spending a week each spring and autumn in work all day and in the theatre all night!

Because FDC put on such varied productions I have been fortunate enough to be able to crew on the following through the years; Pack of Lies, It Runs in the Family, 'Allo 'Allo, Of Mice and Men, Stepping Out, the Crucible, Street Car Named Desire and Cold Comfort Farm.

In fact, I enjoyed being around the member's of FDC so much, I joined the committee, and later became secretary, a job I was happy to carry out for 2 years.

So, for those of you too shy to step out front but wanting to be involved in theatre, remember that those back stage, from crew to props to costumes are as important to a show as the actors and have just as much fun, although much of it is in the dark!

Ally

The Annual General Meeting of Frome Drama Club was held at The Pack Horse on Monday February 23rd.

The minutes will be circulated to all members shortly but the following decisions were made. (It was recently decided to remove the minutes of the AGM from the website as these are for members only.)

The current officers were all re-elected to their posts and thanked for all their hard work.

Some members of the committee stood down and again were thanked for their input. They were:- Philip de Glanville, Ally Maryon, Val Atkinson, David Riley, and Tom Cant.

The rest of the committee remained and were joined by new members*.

The FDC committee now comprises:

Gillie Richardson, Chair; Michael Hoskinson, Treasurer; and Trixie Collin Secretary;

Calum Grant, Denise Gibbons, Claudia Berry Denise Hunt, Lesley Swinburn, Migs Jacques, Bill Jacques, Mike Witt*, Millie Mitchard*.

Calum Grant was elected Vice-chair.

There was a long discussion about whether auditions should be **closed** (only for members) or **open** to all. The following proposal was adopted.

"The club will hold open auditions with an auditioning panel made up of a minimum of 2 members (nominated by the committee) together with the director in order to ensure fairness in casting and to protect the interests of the club members. Nominated members will not include the director of the next production and, of course, anyone who proposes to audition."

Membership Fees If you have not already made our Treasurer a happy man and set up a standing order for your club fees – then now is the time to send him your dosh.

Cheques to Frome Drama Club.

Full member £7.50

Friend of FDC £5.00

Unwaged/Student/Retired £2.50

To Treasurer, Michael Hoskinson

2 Castle Street, Frome, BA11 3BN.

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

12th January - Equus by Peter Shaffer

On the 12th January a group of very brave FDC members braved the winter weather and met in the upstairs room of the Packhorse to read one of Peter Shaffer's most famous and controversial plays, *Equus*. The play revolves around the relationship between a Psychiatrist (Dysart) and his latest patient, the young and obviously disturbed Alan Strang. Alan has recently been convicted of blinding horses with a metal spike and as Dysart begins to treat Alan, Dysart finds himself questioning everything he believes in and whether he is actually helping the young man or taking away his right to be a free spirit.

As it had just been revealed that my bid for *Equus* had been accepted for our Summer 2010 production it was really exciting to hear the play come to life from such wonderful readings. Although we only managed to get through the first half of the play, many of those who attended expressed regret that we couldn't have read the whole thing, as the plot and carefully constructed characters had captured many imaginations. I hope at some point in the near future we can have the opportunity to read the second half of the play as that's when it gets really exciting!

Thank you once again to those members who braved the weather and made this a really successful night.

Calum Grant

There is no Play reading in March there will be the auditions for Charley's Aunt see page 2

Monday April 6th - What the Butler Saw by Joe Orton

The late and great Joe Orton specialised in writing anarchic, subversive but incredibly funny plays and one such is "WHAT THE BUTLER SAW". Written just a year before his untimely death at the hands of his lover, this play is considered to be the pinnacle of his work. The original performance of the play in 1969 was interrupted by the audience, who considered it too shocking and outrageous. Forty years on its' content is considered relatively tame.

There is a moment near the end of the play when two women lie on the floor in slips and straight-jackets. A short man in nothing but his underpants stands precariously between two psychiatrists, one of whom is pointing two guns at the other. The man with the guns claims that the man in his underpants is merely a psychological delusion of the other psychiatrist's wife's id (i.e. the woman on the floor in a straight jacket, with a bullet wound in her leg and far too much of her undergarments exposed.) And the audience is laughing!

What more can I say except come along to the play's reading on Monday, 6th April at 8 p.m. at the Packhorse – you won't regret it. (And let's face it – both University Challenge and Masterchef will have finished by then so there's nothing to stay in for).

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