

## TWELFTH NIGHT

### Have you got your tickets yet?

Twelfth Night directed by Calum Grant will be starting next week. It runs from Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> November to Saturday 15<sup>th</sup>. In this production the action takes place in the swinging sixties of Soho. Don't miss it – get your tickets £7.50 (£6) from the Merlin Box Office 01373 465949

### Phoebe Rees Awards Evening

Six of us dressed up and tootled down again this year to the Cleeve Hotel in Wellington – the other side of Taunton – for the Somerset "Oscars". Quite a nice venue and the food was pretty good considering they were feeding 120 odd, but the queue for the bar went right round the block...

We were representing FDC's *Stepping Out* (Nov 07) which had received six nominations in a field of 176, so we had few expectations of carrying off any of the glittering prizes, especially after last year's slightly embarrassing haul of eight awards in total for *The Crucible*.

In the event we took away only one, but we all agreed it was richly deserved; Leslie Swinburn won Best Female Cameo for her delicious performance as *Mrs Fraser*.

The winners of the Phoebe Rees Trophy were Swan Theatre Company for their production of *Democracy*, by Michael



Frayn (very much NOT a comedy!) which also won Best Director, Best Set Construction and Best Special Effects. The remaining 15 awards were shared fairly evenly amongst seven other Societies.  
**P de G**

## Noises Off - Auditions

FDC's Spring Production will be Michael Frayn's *NOISES OFF* – a bit of a treat for all of us after what is likely to be a long gloomy winter.

*NOISES OFF* is quite a challenge though, not so much because of the set (which is hard enough – two acting levels, three staircases, six doors and a practical French window, and the whole thing has to revolve - TWICE!) but more because it has the reputation of being “the funniest play ever written” – and that's not easy to live up to...!

### The Plot:

Otstar Productions are touring a truly awful bedroom farce called “Nothing On” by someone called Robin Housemonger, with an ill-assorted cast of six professional actors, their director Lloyd Dallas (who is having affairs with at least two of them), an exhausted stage manager, Tim, who not only puts the set up single-handed but also understudies all the males, and Poppy – the very inexperienced ASM who is ‘on the book’.

In the first act of *NOISES OFF* we meet this dysfunctional team at the dress rehearsal of the play-within-the play, the night before it opens at the Grand Theatre, Weston-super-Mare. Things are not going well; it is already nearly 1am, Dotty Otley – star of TV's long-running *On The Zebras* who put up the money for the tour – is making it up as she goes along, Garry Lejeune, the young male lead, is over-acting as usual, Brooke Ashton, his seriously underdressed co-star, has lost her contact lens somewhere, Frederick Fellowes has had one of his nose-bleeds and keep fainting at the sight of his own blood, Belinda Blair is struggling, and failing, to hold them all together and no one can find Selsdon Mowbray, the elderly and rather deaf actor who plays the burglar but who hasn't yet learnt his lines. Tim has fallen asleep, Poppy is in tears (again) and Lloyd has pulled out most of what little hair he has left. They still haven't got to the end of Act One.

We see the same section of “Nothing On” again in the second act, but this time from backstage - at the Theatre Royal, Ashton-under-Lyne, a month into the tour. Friction between the members of the cast, and the director, has reached almost murderous intensity as love triangles implode, but most of the act is played in ferociously silent slapstick bedlam as the show out front goes on, more or less regardless.

The third act sees them at the end of the tour, in the Municipal Theatre, Stockton-on-Tees, once again from the front but now exhausted, demoralised and desperately trying to get to the end of the scene despite every possible on-stage mishap. It is truly hilarious!

### Casting:

We will need an exceptionally strong ensemble cast for this exciting and challenging production which will require books down very early and a lot of work on the timing and ‘business’ on which it relies for its comedy. I hope to cast it by the first week of December and will start rehearsals first week of January. Rehearsal days to be decided with cast.

Performance week is April 19<sup>th</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup> at the Merlin.

First ‘crack’ at any of the roles will, of course, go to current Club members and I would like to hear from anyone and everyone who might be interested (by phone 07980 010997 or email: [pmdeglanville@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:pmdeglanville@blueyonder.co.uk)) before Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> November please. Reading copies are available for anyone who needs one.

There will be an audition evening towards the end of November – date & venue to be announced soon by email circular. Anyone unable to attend should get in touch with me so alternative arrangements can be made.

If any roles remain uncast after this process I will advertise widely and hold open auditions.

## **Noises Off Characters:**

**Lloyd Dallas:** (*Director of 'Nothing On'*). Pretentious, temperamental, love-rat. Has already got Poppy pregnant and has designs on Brooke. Would much rather be directing Shakespeare in the Park. Probably mid-40s.

**Dotty Otley** (*Mrs Clackett – the Brent's housekeeper*): Founder of Otstar Productions and making a welcome return to the stage after playing Mrs Hackett, Britain's most famous lollipop lady in over 320 episodes of "On The Zebras". Experienced, hard-bitten and well past her best. Probably early 60's, but still glamorous under the charlady's get up, and having a late fling with Garry.

**Garry Lejeune** (*Roger Tramplemain – Estate agent, seeking to let the Brent's house*): Self-consciously handsome, conceited, jealous. A high-energy performance required with lots of physical comedy, including a now-famous fall down the stairs. Probably mid-30s.

**Brooke Ashton** (*Vicki – Roger's newest intended conquest, works for the Inland Revenue*): Young, inexperienced, self-absorbed. Spends most of the time in her underwear. Probably early 20's.

**Frederick Fellows** (*Philip Trent- author, tax exile, home unexpectedly*): An experienced but very insecure actor who cannot bear violence and blood. Gets nosebleeds easily. Unrequited love for Dotty. Probably mid-50's.

**Belinda Blair** (*Flavia Brent, Philip's wife, looking forward to some uninterrupted nookie*): Cheerful and sensible, a reliable experienced actress, but capable of raging frustration. She may have feelings for Frederick. Probably early 40's.

**Selsdon Mowbray** (*Burglar*): An elderly alcoholic who hides his bottles of whisky onstage. He has acted all his life, with a lovely sonorous voice, but has become rather deaf, and has great difficulty with lines nowadays. Probably late 60's.

**Tim Allgood** (*Stage Manager for Otstar*). Conscientious, weary, put-upon. Understudies Selsdon and Frederick but no apparent acting ability in these roles. Probably early 30's.

**Poppy Norton-Taylor:** (*ASM for Otstar*). Her first job, arranged by Daddy no doubt, who is Chairman of European Breweries. Emotional and oversensitive, and very jealous of Brooke, whom she understudies. Probably late teens.

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CAN YOU BELIEVE IT?! 364 days have whizzed by and it's FDC Christmas Party time AGAIN! So, get those wings out for a little dust and polish because our theme this year will be **Angels**. Be as discreet or outrageous as you want - come along wearing some delicate angel wing earrings or dressed tramp-like as Clarence the angel in "It's A Wonderful Life". What really matters is getting together and enjoying the evening. There'll be nibbles, games, the now infamous caption competition and prizes galore!



## ***It's All Bobs Fault!***

**By Denise Gibbons**

I met Bob Gooding in the school playground; he asked me if I would like a small part in a play he was directing called *Allo Allo*. A member of the cast couldn't continue. They were well into rehearsals and he was desperately seeking Issy. Issy Uplecreque was a young naive French girl with a German boyfriend called Willy Wangle. So with no audition and thrown in at the deep end I thoroughly enjoyed myself. The show was very funny and every one remembers the wiglet, the blow-up lady and the strange cockatoos. I was in awe of Gillie Richardson who did the costumes and very quickly, with no hesitation, jumped into bed with an old man to save the day. I have to thank Ally for pulling faces at me behind the curtains and putting me at ease.

The next production I was involved in was *Of Mice and Men*. I had watched Ally, Trixie and Alan Woolley back stage on *Allo Allo* and thought I wouldn't mind a go at that. I helped with construction, back stage crew and scatterer of straw. A fantastic production with an incredibly imaginative set and outstanding acting, directed by Philip de Glanville.

*It Runs in the Family* was the next production. I helped with painting and crew again and I got to push Geoff Hunt on stage in his wheel chair 'I say'. Bill Jacques painted the London sky line and it was Alan Woolley's last roll as stage manager with FDC. The play was very funny with some new faces to me. Directed by P d G.

Another serious play - *The Crucible* directed by P d G. A very dark play. The set reminded me of those old masters paintings with their cold accusing eyes not moving but watching you. I helped with painting black of course, back stage crew wearing black and finding the odd prop for Trixie. Oh and more straw and cleaning up fake wee. He never did wee in the same place twice.

*Stepping Out*. A comedy (blood, sweat, tears, weak knees, cramp and torn ligaments.) It was great fun, I loved the dancing it was

something I always wanted to do as a child but never had the chance. It's amazing how learning to dance, learning lines and rehearsals become a way of life and somehow you manage to fit it all in. There was one point when we thought it wasn't going to happen because we lost our Rose, but Sally Langley stepped in after not long having a baby and saved much disappointment. Philip did a wonderful job of keeping his head especially as he was surrounded by so many women who have opinions of there own. (How dare they?!) Felix was fab, he never said no and did the hardest dance of all. He found muscles he never knew he had. Dorothy was a dippy character and I enjoyed playing her. I was on and off stage in every scene and I have to thank Susan Gatward for helping me in and out of costumes. Though I did forget to take the Kleenex off stage with me a few times, sorry Trixie -I wonder if anyone noticed? It was great fun working with so many characters and thanks to Jade for her patience and going over stuff with me. I still go to tap classes with Debbie when I can, it is great exercise.

*Street Car Named Desire*. I helped with set painting on this production. It all started in Claudia's garage with me, Steve Hooper and Robert and 3 pots of base paint. Geoff Hunt had a vision of a hot sexy sultry set. It was quite hard to visualise in a dark cold garage but once the set had been built and on stage thanks to Bill Jacques and a whole team of helpers, the real painting began. I thought it looked every bit sexy and sultry. It was the first time that I've painted shadows on shadows, thanks for that Bill. I helped find a few props for Trixie and got a bargain bed from the auctions. I didn't get to help crew this time as I was away but I did sit in the audience one night and watch. I was transported to the heat and passion of Orleans it was just Amazing.

Next stop *Twelfth Night* - watch this space.

There are some real talents in FDC It takes a lot of people to put on a show and no matter how much or how little you do every bit counts. Cheers Bob. Denise.



## ***Play Readings at the Packhorse***

### **All My Sons by Arthur Miller – September's play reading**

There was an excellent turn out on Monday 15<sup>th</sup> September for the restart of our monthly play readings. A contributing factor was the choice of play with some attendees coming along to read their favourite Miller play (despite the acknowledgement that it has too many characters).

I have only ever read the play so I chose it in order to hear the voices aloud. For me it is far from his best yet it still manages to be exceptional! As ever, Miller works around a difficult subject – war profiteering – and delivers it to us through everyday people in crisis. Moreover, he does the extraordinary thing of making them sound ordinary even when he imbues them with dialogue of pure poetry.

At some point during the play reading I heard the word “dast” as in “dares” and I remembered the opening of “Death of a Salesman” and the requiem for Willy Loman:-

*Nobody dast blame this man. For a salesman, there is no rock bottom to the life. He don't put a bolt to a nut, he don't tell you the law or give you medicine. He's a man way out there in the blue, riding on a smile and a shoeshine. And when they start not smiling back -- that's an earthquake. And then you get yourself a couple of spots on your hat, and you're finished. Nobody dast blame this man. A salesman is got to dream, boy. It comes with the territory.*

MH

### **Monday 13<sup>th</sup> October - Popcorn by Ben Elton**

Thanks to everyone who attended. We had great fun with the script which was both funny and gripping at the same time. It is odd what makes something funny and what a difference it is when a script is read out as opposed to just reading it yourself. We had a good discussion

afterwards about the language and the general opinion I got was that while some would be happy to be in the play that maybe some of the more conservative members of our "audience" might be offended and cause our reputation some damage. I am all for enlarging our repertoire and for me the play holds no problems but I can appreciate that if we were to market this as a main house slot then some damage could be done but I don't think the play in itself is offensive and it would be hard to gauge what form any "damage" might take. I was glad to hear that no one suggested toning it down as the comedy did arise from the language. A suggestion made was to maybe market it as a late night fringe performance in the festival which would give a pointer to our departure from safer ground. I wanted to read the play to find more modern scripts to keep the group relevant to modern audiences and to open up the debate on "suitability" as I don't think there necessarily is "a Frome Drama Club" audience. I do recognise though that some plays have an uncanny knack of blowing reputations out of the water but I also believe a group can do that all by itself by simply presenting a badly produced "safe" play. Drama is a broad church and I don't think we should be afraid to look at all avenues and I would welcome people's views.

I would like some feed back on another choice for a comedy I have in mind which is Fawlty Towers. I remember how the audience lapped up 'Allo 'Allo and I think we could have massive fun bringing this classic to the stage. All of the episode scripts are available and I know some groups have presented 3 episodes in an evening and encouraged people to dress in Fawlty Towers costume. I think FDC is up for it. What do you think? **Geoff Hunt**

Send your comments to  
[fromedramaclub@hotmail.com](mailto:fromedramaclub@hotmail.com)  
Marked for attention of Geoff

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

**Monday, November 17<sup>th</sup> The Picture of Dorian Grey by Oscar Wilde**

The novel tells of a young man named Dorian Gray, the subject of a painting by artist Basil Hallward. Basil is greatly impressed by Dorian's physical beauty and becomes strongly infatuated with him, believing that his beauty is responsible for a new mode in his art. Talking in Basil's garden, Dorian meets Lord Henry Wotton, a friend of Basil's, and becomes enthralled by Lord Henry's world view. Espousing a new kind of hedonism, Lord Henry suggests that the only thing worth pursuing in life is beauty, and the fulfilment of the senses. Realising that one day his beauty will fade, Dorian cries out, wishing that the portrait Basil has painted of him would age rather than him. Dorian's wish is fulfilled, subsequently plunging him into a series of debauched acts. The portrait serves as a reminder of the effect each act has upon his soul, with each sin being displayed as a disfigurement of his form, or through a sign of aging.

*The Picture of Dorian Gray* is considered one of the last works of classic gothic horror fiction with a strong Faustian theme. It deals with the artistic movement of the decadents, and homosexuality, both of which caused some controversy when the book was first published.

Cast includes:

Dorian Gray	Sir Thomas Burden - Radical MP
Basil Hallwood - artist	Mr Erskin
Lord Henry Wooton – Basil's Friend	Sibyl Vane Actress - Dorian's love interest
Lord Fermor - Lord Henry's Uncle	James Vane - Sibyl's brother
Lady Agatha - Lord Fermor's wife	Mrs Vane - Sybil's Mother
Duchess of Harley - Lady Agatha's friend	Alan Campbell - Chemist.

**There will be no play reading in December but we'll be returning in the New Year with the extraordinary "Equus" by Peter Shaffer on 12th January and the classic "Uncle Vanya" by Anton Chekhov on 9th February.**

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