

CHESHIRE THEATRE GUILD

December 2009 Newsletter

www.ctguild.org.uk

E-MAIL OR SNAIL-MAIL?

The newsletter posted (before the disruption) in early September asked for a form to be completed and returned with a response to a simple question - are you happy to receive newsletters by email and the details or would you prefer them posted?

Sadly, only one-third of CTG members returned this form. Thank you if you were one of those and a slap on the wrist if you were one of those who failed to do so. As your Chairman it makes me feel disheartened, frustrated and annoyed. Can I have this information asap please if you fall into this category.

ADJUDICATIONS

Despite the higher fees for GODA adjudicators Jeff Brailsford and Robert Meadows, the number of requests has been high - around 26 - with only one turned down due to unavailability. The section covered by Evette Harper is expected to be 8 or 9 - mainly Christmas Shows and pantomimes - so Evette has quite a busy time over the next few weeks.

Note; Jeff and Robert are both very busy men and adjudications may sometimes take longer to come through - please be patient.

If you have a production up to June 2010 that you have not entered for adjudication there is a possibility (but no guarantee) that one of the adjudicators may be available - it is worth asking.

NEW AWARDS

Because the Festival has been split, CTG were of the view that we needed to have three new awards to cover this situation.

These are;

- an award for a young person (male or female up to 18 years of age) who, in the opinion of the adjudicators, gives an outstanding performance in a senior production. Both Jeff and Robert are delighted that they will now have the opportunity to acknowledge a performance in this category
- the other two new awards will be decided by Evette for Best Costume and Best Lighting/Sound. In the past these have usually gone to plays, so now the work of those ladies - and possibly a few fellas - who create panto frocks

and the like, and the people who make a little bit of magic through sound and light will be acknowledged.

All of these awards will be in the form of cups - donated to us and very welcome when Treasurer Gerry Card has to watch the pennies.

STAGE FURTHER WORKSHOPS

The good news is that there will be a further series for 2010.

These will cover;

- **DIRECTING** - with a new Leader
- **COSTUME** - a new workshop
- **SET DESIGN** - again with Judith Croft
- **STAGE LIGHTING**
- **VOCAL TECHNIQUES**

Look out for details in the leaflet that is due out in the early part of 2010.

And still with 2010 in mind ...

AWARDS EVENING

Wednesday July 7th at Frodsham Community Centre.

AGM

Sunday July 18th - venue to be confirmed.

TICKETSOURCE

www.ticketsource.co.uk/toolkit claims to be a free online box office system with a facility to accept credit cards. If you are interested you can obtain more information from their website.

NEWS FROM THE GROUPS

CLUB THEATRE

The work behind the scenes and front of house never stops. During the summer a new carpet was fitted on the stairway, a rich burgundy shade with a small pattern, and it looks very good - a great improvement. There are also some smart new frames for the play posters that are on the walls of the staircase.

KNUTSFORD LITTLE THEATRE

When I called during late summer, paint brushes were very much in evidence - what more can they do in a foyer and bar that always looks so spick and span? On a visit to the town I have noticed the large banner fixed to the railings near the main busy roundabout - a good position as traffic can be slow-moving, so instead of drooling over the posh Rolls Royce cars in Sytners, look for the KLT banners instead.

NANTWICH PLAYERS

For the second time the Players have won the South Cheshire Visitors Choice Award, and on the same evening, at a different venue, the Scottish Power Trinity Mirror Award for "Champion Team". The new building to extend and improve facilities has been "knocked through" backstage - phase 1 - to give proper dressing rooms, better toilet facilities and a green room. NP now have a backstage shower room - very useful for the "Neville's island" cast.

TARPORLEY ADS

It was a nice touch to donate the proceeds of the raffle on the Friday performance to "Children in Need" - around £120 being raised. The play was "Our Day Out" and those of you who know the play will recall it tells the story of some underprivileged children on a day's outing and very much in need of lots of TLC: therefore a very appropriate connection with "Children in Need".

What's happening in your group? Let me know for the next newsletter.

PANTO TIME

The Churchill dog is to appear in 22 pantomimes this Christmas as part of a sponsorship deal with producers. The puppet, which advertises an insurance firm, will only speak its pre-recorded catchphrases: "Oh yes" and "Oh no".

OUT OF CONTROL IN LONDON

Sex, violence, drunken high jinks: they're all coming to a West End theatre near you, says Chris Hastings in the Sunday Times; but not on stage- in the audience. Standards of decorum among London's theatre-going public have fallen so low that a number of West End theatres are now employing bouncers to keep the audience in check. Examples of bad behaviour are legion. One recent performance had to be briefly halted after a woman was caught "pleasuring" her partner in the stalls. An audience member at a performance of Stephen Sondheim's *A Little Night Music* was so drunk he urinated by the side of the stage. "We were performing the song *Every Day a Little Death*," said leading actress Hannah Waddington, "when the man almost peed on (her co-star) Lyndon Edwards." Greta Scaachi, who appeared last year in Terence Rattigan's *The Deep Blue Sea*, recalls how, "someone in the audience called out 'It's on the table' at a particularly dramatic moment. Everyone told him to 'Shush'. But he just shouted back, 'Chill out, I'm only having a bit of fun.'" Theatre managers think reduced ticket prices are partly to blame: they attract younger, more raucous punters who often turn up drunk. Others blame the tendency to allow alcohol to be consumed in the auditorium. Playwright Ronald Harwood, whose recent play *Collaboration* was recently interrupted by the shouts of a drunken patron, wants the practice banned. "It's an insult to actors," he told Hastings. "The audience should be in the play, not the pub."

DAME JUDI DENCH

Dame Judi Dench won't stand for any rudeness, says the Sunday Express. The legendary actress almost got run over recently when she absentmindedly walked into the path of a black cab in London's theatreland. After screeching to a halt, the cabbie leaned out of the window and shouted: "Look where you're going, you stupid bitch." Quick as a flash, Dench fired back: "It's Dame Bitch to you," and stalked regally to the other side of the road.

THE BOOM IN "THESPIAN FINANCE".

Don't put your daughter on the stage, Mrs Worthington: consider investing your savings instead. Record low interest rates and turmoil in the City have sparked an unexpected boom in "thespian finance", report Jonathan Prynn and Emma Rowley in the London Evening Standard. Indeed, West End producers have been astonished by the strength of backing. "We were very nervous after Lehman Brothers went down. But last autumn we got backing for two productions, *Piaf* and *Three Days of Rain*," says Tobias Round of production company CMP. Both have proved profitable, especially the latter - believed to have delivered investors a 50% return. That's rather better than the 9% loss they'd have taken from the stock market over the past year.

How to invest: Most shows are set up as limited companies with backers "owning" a percentage of rights to the profits. A typical play needs around £500,000 to launch; a musical costs at least £2m. But individual investments can start from £2,500. It's a risky business, with a one-in-three chance of a complete wipe-out. But a third of productions will at least recoup their cost and the top third will pay a return to backers averaging 20-30% a year. If investors strike gold with a *Cats* or a *Mamma Mia!*, the profits can be astounding. The original backers of *Cats* are said to have made a 17,000% profit.

MAKING A DRAMA OUT OF A CRISIS

You've read the books, now see the shows. But what are the audiences and critics making of the rash of sub-prime and other financial sagas?

THE POWER OF YES

David Hare's dramatised seminar on the crisis, which has opened at the Lyttleton, has attracted some carping about accuracy, notes the London Evening Standard. There were "gasps of horror" from City grandees at some of the solecisms, and the FSA chairman Lord Turner complains his portrayal is "too plummy". But these are minor quibbles in an excellent production, says the Guardian. Hare asks "the questions to which we all want to know the answers".

ENRON

A musical about corporate finance might seem a bizarre idea, but Lucy Prebble's "dramatically exhilarating" take on the Texan energy giant's catastrophic fall had taken audiences at the Royal Court by storm, says FT.com. As Jeffrey Archer remarks, it is "a play of its time ...as much a comment on modern society as it on the rise and fall of Enron". Sam West, as the greedy CEO, Jeffrey Skilling, is "quite brilliant".

CAPITALISM: A LOVE STORY

Corporate America's most feared documentary-maker has produced "his most vigorous, rollicking" movie yet, says Time. But Michael Moore's film lacks the clean punch of past work - perhaps because the crime scene is so vast.

Revenue Protection

Well, that's what it says on the yellow sticker on a script underpaid by 16p with a £1.00 handling fee - not to mention a drive to the local sorting office. This was for a script that came to me recently to be passed on to an adjudicator. I often ask you to post scripts direct to an adjudicator so please ensure they are correctly paid. The local postmaster tells me the Post Office are now less tolerant of under-stamped mail - so be warned.

And finally.....

'I NEVER KNEW THAT ABOUT ENGLAND'

- Kenneth Tynan 1927-1980 was the first person ever to mouth an obscenity on television in 1965. He also devised the nude musical *Oh Calcutta!* for the West End.
- At Worthing, a plaque on the Esplanade marks the site of the house where Oscar Wilde wrote *The Importance of being Earnest*. He was staying in the summer of 1894 to escape his creditors in London, and was inspired to write the play by an article in the *Worthing Gazette* about a baby in a hamper that had been found at King's Cross Station. It took him just 21 days to write the play, which he described as "the best I have ever written". He named his hero Jack Worthing in honour of the town.