CHESHIRE THEATRE GUILD

www.ctguild.org.uk

March 2010 newsletter

STAGE FURTHER WORKSHOPS.

I may have mentioned before that things do appear to move rather slowly in local government - if any reader disagrees because they are Cheshire East (or in this case Cheshire West) employees, please accept my apologies. I can only speak of my experience in making progress with these workshops. I am told that the leaflet with details of the workshops should be in your hands in the next week or so. Again CTG members will have one week to make a booking before a more general mailing.

What I can do before you get the full details (look out for an orange coloured leaflet) is give you some basic details that may tempt you. This year we have 6 workshops and I think 5 of these will be of particular interest to you - so here goes!

- May 15th. SET DESIGN with Judith Croft.
- May 22nd COSTUME DESIGN with Judith Croft and this is a NEW workshop.
- June 13th WORKING WITH VOICES with Matthew Hopkins. This is a workshop with REVISED content aimed primarily at singers. Judge for yourself if it is for you when you receive full details
- June 19th BEGINNERS LIGHTING WORKSHOP with Angie Berwick (a NEW tutor.)
- June 26th ADVANCED LIGHTING WORKSHOP - again with Angie.
- And finally…… the workshop I advise you not to miss……
- June 27th DIRECTING with Stefan Escreet. Stefan is associate director at "Theatre by the Lake", Keswick and I saw some of his work when I watched 6 plays in 5 days at this superb theatre. Stefan

will be coming up from Keswick on the day to share his knowledge. He has worked with amateur actors on previous occasions when a mix of pro/am large casts was involved in productions. I feel really pleased that Stefan has agreed to take this workshop. Numbers are limited to 15 so enrol early for this one.

You will receive full details of how to book and how to pay. This year we have had to increase the cost per workshop to £20 BUT there are discounts for booking more than one place or additional workshops.

Venues are Knutsford Civic Centre or Harlequin's, Northwich.

And still on the subject of dates...Wednesday July 7th is our AWARDS evening and Sunday July 18th is our AGM.

JOHN MOVES INTO THE 21st CENTURY

At last some are saying... I now have an e-mail address so please use this rather than going through CTG. You can contact me on john.powell485@btinternet.com.

ROMEO and JULIET in 2010

At shortly after 08.00 hours one morning I caught this item (and no I was NOT still in bed and had been up at least an hour!) That evening at the Bristol Old Vic a production of Romeo and Juliet was to open with a new slant. The pair are now elderly and in a retirement home and they fall in love and decide to marry. In the version we know it is the parents who object to the marriage in the NEW version it is the children who object. The big difference between the original Shakespeare and this one is that here the children and parents are transposed and it's the kids who come on heavy, blocking the marriage on snobbish grounds. Romeo is funded by the NHS while Juliet has gone private. Juliet's family would much rather she hitched her wagon, (or maybe that should be mobility scooter) to the star of Paris, a ,fellow private patient who has a suite in the care home, not some elderly bit of rough who is obviously going to work his way through what remains of Juliet's money, which they were all counting on inheriting. Unfortunately, it

is a well-known fact that all children of any age find their toes corrugate with embarrassment at the thought of their parents getting up to any how's-your-father. It's indecent, they cry. It isn't, of course, but neither is it tragic. A tale of star-cross'd lovers being whipped back into line by the young ones? It's always going to work better as comedy, isn't it? For instance, the balcony scene would definitely have to be rewritten to accommodate deficiencies of elderly sight and hearing. "Oh Romeo, Romeo! Wherefore art thou, Romeo?" would have to be tweaked to "Oh Romeo, Romeo? Where are you? I can't see you." "Then switch on the light." "Eh?" "Switch on the light!" "Of course I'm all right!" For some, beguiling those twilight years with romance sure beats dominos and sing-songs. All I'd ask is for all these geriatric Romeos and Juliets to have a happy ending. Any balcony hanky-panky, for instance, should be reworked to allow old Romeo some mechanical assistance so it doesn't take him ages to get up there. Sort of, "With love's light wings, not to mention this fabulous new high-speed stairlift, did I o'er-perch FORBIDDEN LOVE"?

I wonder if the play still worked. I think I will stick with "West Side Story" if I want a new twist to the original.

A CHORUS OF DISAPPROVAL

When Alan Ayckbourn wrote his first play in 1959 (The Square Cat) it was set in the fictional town of PENDON. This was the fictional location he also used in Chorus. You may recall that in the play rehearsals are in progress for a production of "The Beggar's Opera". Originally, Alan Ayckbourn wanted to use the music of "The Vagabond King" with 85 (yes, *eighty five*) local actors as the chorus. He was refused consent on two grounds 1) from the copyright holders of "The Vagabond King" who feared it would make fun of the musical and 2) from Equity who would not allow the use of the 85 amateurs.

I bet you didn't know that!

GOOD TIMES FOR LONDON THEATRES.

Record sales of £500m ticket sales were made in 2009. Box office revenues rose by 7.6% on 2008, and this was despite a recession. Serious theatre

fared particularly well with attendance figures up by 26%, but fell by2% for musicals.

TAKING A BACK SEAT IN BELFAST

No theatre audience has ever got up so close and personal with the cast as that for Two Roads West. The entire play, written by former IRA hunger striker Laurence McKeown. takes place inside a black taxi, which is driven up the Falls Road and Shankill Road (the two routes that mark the Catholic and Protestant areas of Belfast) by actor Vincent Higgins. He plays Bill, a cabbie; the other cast member is Carol Moore as his passenger Rosie, on her first trip back home since the Troubles began, who sits recalling how things used to be. The audience - a maximum of five, sit with Rosie as Bill drives the cab and comments on the city's political landmarks, its murals, watchtowers and so on. It's a tough role for Higgins who has to deal with Belfast traffic while telling his lines. It's even tougher for Moore who is sitting with the audience. "One woman kept interjecting and at the end I said, 'Did you know this was a play?' She replied 'No I thought we were on a normal tour and you were drunk'. The play (tickets were £8.50) was staged as part of Belfast's *Feile an Phobail* festival, but director Paula NcFetridge hopes it will become a permanent fixture on the tourist trail to provide visitors with an insight in Belfast's troubled past.

NEWS FROM THE GROUPS.

Knutsford Little Theatre.

The next production at KLT will be "Life Begins at Seventy". The play is written by David Muncaster a member who has a number of plays to his credit. This is not being billed as a premiere and as the play is published by Jasper Publishing I assume it has been performed elsewhere. It is a first, however, for director Ali Hulford who is well known on stage. You can find out more about David Muncaster by googling David Muncaster, playwright. His web site will tell you more about his writing achievements.

Club Theatre

Those without a permanent "home" must envy those who have one. Well it's not always without its drawbacks. The scaffolding is up again at Altrincham and this time a roof at the rear of the theatre needs replacing. This is over

the back of the stage area and water is getting into the props area. Props master Charles Thomas has to work in a sou-wester and waders to access his wonderful collection of props - you can ask Charles for almost anything and he will know where to find it!.

M.A.D.S.

Formed in 1947, the recent production of "See How They Run" marked a milestone for the group: the 250th production. This was the third time they had presented this evergreen Phillip King farce and in 1948 when presented at the Brocklehurst Memorial Hall in Macclesfield, it was billed as a "hectic" farce! The programme cost three pence in those days. Of course, this special event had to be celebrated and there was a gala performance on Saturday March 6th with an invited audience who were treated to some very nice nibbles and bubbly before the show began. Naturally CTG were represented. I am sure you all wish to offer M.A.D.S congratulations on this very special occasion.

IN THE LIMELIGHT.

Limelight was invented by Sir Goldsworthy Gurney. A mixture of oxygen and hydrogen was forced through a blowpipe to produce a hot flame and then lime was added to create a bright light. Gurney was able to light the whole of Bude Castle with one light, using a series of mirrors to reflect the beams into different rooms. This was known as 'Bude light' and Gurney went on to light the Houses of Parliament using three light sources and an arrangement of prismatic mirrors, saving thousands of candles in the process. He also put this to use in lighthouses, where the single source was placed on a revolving platform to provide a flashing beam. The light was also used in theatres to light the stage, as it was safer and brighter than gas lighting, hence the phrase "to be in the limelight" on centre stage.

From "I never knew that about England" and the pages on Cornwall.

For the special attention of Club Theatre/Sale Nomads and Little Theatre Knutsford: North Cheshire Radio is the station for the above areas although in the case of Knutsford they do say this is transmitter permitting. They promise “a premier source of local news and information" so

why not see if this includes your play dates etc..? You can contact them on www.northcheshireradio.co.uk.

And finally. Some of you may remember Richard Kelsall who has judged our poster competition. Sadly Richard has passed away and a memorial service was held on February 4th. CTG were represented along with two members of the Harlequins. Richard was a real gentleman and I got to know him ('and-his-wife Pat who has also judged for us) through painting and attending his classes - along with CTG secretary Maureen. Richard also had a great interest in the theatre and we would often see each other - usually at the Harlequins or at Theatre Clwyd where he sometimes exhibited his paintings. Richard also wrote reviews of local shows for "The Northwich Guardian" and he was instrumental in starting the Rose Bowl awards for amateur theatre in the paper's circulation area. The number that attended his memorial service was proof of his popularity and the respect in which he was held.