



June 2017

Newsletter

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Hello dear members,

Wow, Whoopee and A-Maz-Ing! That was the start to our special 50th anniversary year with a truly wonderful



production of *The Vicar of Dibley*. We played to packed houses and the feedback from our audience members was really good, but best of all was an independent review by Eastbourne

theatre critic Kevin Anderson. He not only praised the production but also the whole Polegate Drama Group and what we stand for. We should all feel very proud. Just in case you haven't already read the review, here it is:

*Polegate Drama Group is an institution. Formed in 1967, it has never lost its breezy sense of community, or the roll-your-sleeves-up belief that nothing is impossible. No egos and no pretensions. Many of the old stagers from the early days are still around – and some are still on stage. The company will mark the big anniversary on Sunday May 21st, with a celebratory lunch at the Hydro, and Eastbourne should be raising a glass to them. And last week they packed out the Polegate Community Centre with a smashing *Vicar of Dibley*. Polegate is more than – spare us the phrase – mere "am-dram". This production is actually their 100th stage play, not counting the forty-plus legendary pantomimes, and the quality of drama has never flagged. From *Jane Eyre* and *An Inspector Calls*, to *Stepping Out* and 'Allo 'Allo, the company has consistently entertained and delighted its audiences. And this new *Dibley* production steps out in new directions. Much like its parent TV series, it builds in outside sequences, expertly filmed on locations from here to Alfriston and played on large screens in the auditorium. They are absolutely brilliant, both technically and artistically. Remember Geraldine and the waist-deep puddle? It's in, and so is she. And a dashing Sean Bean in the back of the wedding? Yep, I swear I glimpsed him. David Buck's set, split neatly between the parish hall and Geraldine's little cottage, is authentic and lovingly detailed: it actually draws spontaneous applause at the opening curtain. On a compact stage, some of the action is a little bit shoulder-to-shoulder, although that becomes a positive, bringing a lovable intimacy to the cosy village community.*

Key Dates

Summer Comedy Party

3rd – 5th August

Box Office 4th July

Cheshire Cats

25th - 28th October

Read Through 22nd August

Rehearsals start 5th Sept

Box Office 18th September

Beauty & the Beast

13th-21st January 2018

Casting 6th & 13th July

Box Office 14th November

Coffee Morning

Saturday 9th September

Dibley, as we all know, is a bizarre mix of humanity and insanity, and every single screen character is brought to life with astonishing faithfulness. All your favourite eccentrics are there, from a gloriously dotty Mrs Cropley (Mary Carrier) through disgustingly earthy Owen (Trevor Fuggle) to very precious Frank (Geoff Shorman). Jim Dobell – one of the group's founding fathers – has no-no-no difficulty with the cringingly funny Jim Trott role. An outstanding Sue Talmage plays Alice with just a touch less loopiness than her TV counterpart, Ian Parratt dotes endearingly as Hugo, while David Buck is a perfectly exasperated David Horton. Sue and David, in fact, must take great credit for expertly adapting three Dibley stories into one play. The Dawn French role is wonderfully and enchantingly captured by Mandy Brown. Re-creating the role for the third time at Polegate, Mandy just gets better and better, capturing every gesture, inflection and giggle. Like all the cast, she is word-perfect and not a single cue is missed in a lengthy show. Supporting cast – and all enjoyably played in their own right – include Peter Tucknott, Laura Buck, Helen Griffin and Hannah Buck. The two final mentions go to the superb pair of dashing suitors: David Anderson as Simon almost sweeps Geraldine off her feet, before suave and engaging Steve Edwards does so – and wait, there is a real life romance hiding behind the stage roles! No wonder the pair have chemistry, for Mandy and Steve are indeed engaged and currently planning their marriage for 2018. I trust they will draw up their guest list with care, or else the ceremony could turn out thoroughly Dibley-esque. Congratulations to the happy couple, and to the entire Polegate Drama Group. Never mind elections, economic crises or anything else – this lot dispel it all with pure happiness.

50TH ANNIVERSARY LUNCHEON



Our special celebratory 50th Anniversary Luncheon was held at the Hydro Hotel on Saturday 21st May. Over 80 members past and present turned out for a splendid meal and a perfect way to spend a Sunday afternoon.

In speeches by Jim Dobell, David Buck and Ryan Tate we reminisced about the past, laughed at our most memorable moments, and looked forward to a very bright future.

Ryan got the proceedings off to a great start, making everyone feel welcome. Introducing himself, Ryan told us how he joined as a precocious teenager who thought he could teach Aid Leach a thing or two about lighting. Little did he know then that he would become Chairman of the Drama Group.

Launching into his speech with the time-honoured welcome: "Hello Boys and Girls", David took us on a joyous trip down memory lane from our first pantomime, Little Red Riding Hood in 1972 (25p per ticket!) through rain, snow, waterfalls, a 25-foot dragon and an 18-foot submarine.



Through all the pantos, variety shows, olde tyme music halls and carnival floats, David said we had never lost the community spirit. His closing line struck a chord with us all: "Memories, yes many; hard work, yes but fun; friendships, yes never to be forgotten."

Jim had us laughing and crying with tales from the past fifty years, from our first ever play in 1967 to our most recent productions. We heard about the time David's pants were pulled down along with his trousers "and his shortcomings were exposed", the amazing piano built by Ron Randall with black and white keys that fell apart as the stool collapsed and Jim's bottom fell through. ("It was a very large stool!").



Joking apart, Jim thanked everyone who has been involved in the productions in whichever way, from our founding members to the present day, including our special guests: our magnificent box office manager Graeme Archer and his wife Angela. Jim said he was truly proud of us all. His final words were to Ryan, our new Chairman: "Tread softly because you tread on my dreams."

The cake deserves a special mention: Lovingly created by Diane Brooks with a backcloth by Ian Parratt, it was a triumphant production of rich fruit cake and feather light sponge, with hand-crafted sugar icing figurines depicting our acting and backstage teams.



Thank you to everyone who came and made this such a lovely and special occasion.

A special commemorative book to celebrate our 50th anniversary, with photos from all our productions, has been produced. This is a fantastic souvenir and a moving trip down memory lane. Copies are available to purchase at just £3 from Archer & Partners. This is a limited edition so don't delay - pick up a copy today.

OUR NEXT PRODUCTION



Our Golden Year of Comedy continues and rehearsals are now underway for our Summer Comedy Party.

This will be theatre at its most sociable: Come and enjoy two one-act comedy plays with a light-hearted, fun quiz in between. Seated around tables, you may bring in anything you'd like to eat and drink, and teas and coffees will be served as usual.

The first one-act play is **The Tram Track Tragedy**, a music hall favourite complete with dastardly villain and tragic heroine. Weep, laugh, boo and hiss with this hilarious take on a Victorian melodrama.



Directed by David Buck, the cast is as follows:

Chairman	Jim Dobell	Claude	Ian Parratt
Sir Putrid	Trevor Fuggle	Belle	Sue Talmadge
Lemuel	Steve Edwards	Nellie	Kathy Long



Our second one-act comedy, **Gosforth Fete**, brings us back to modern times. Written by the master of comic drama, Alan Ayckbourn, this is a fast-moving comedy of errors: a disastrous village fete where disorganisation descends into chaos and eventual catastrophe.

Directed by Sylvia Dobell, the cast is as follows:

Gosforth	Ian Parratt	Vicar	Jim Dobell
Milly	Jane Parratt	Stewart	Trevor Fuggle
Cllr Emma Pearce	Alison Attwood		

You are promised an evening of great entertainment so come and join the Summer Comedy Party. Tables are available in different sizes up to a maximum of six so why not bring along a group of your pals? Or you can book individual seats and join in with other audience members – a great way to make new friends! Tickets cost £8 and will be on sale from Tuesday 4th July at Archer & Partners and online.

Urgent request: We need front of house people for the Summer Comedy Party. If you are able to help, please contact Maria at admin@polegatedramagroup.com as soon as possible.

AUTUMN PRODUCTION

As the 'Comedy Golds' theme continues throughout our anniversary year, this autumn heralds a charming new production for Polegate.



From October 25th to 28th we will be back on stage with **Cheshire Cats**, a lively comedy directed by Cris Haniver.

Played at the Edinburgh Fringe in 2006, this modern play tackles a very real subject, Breast Cancer, in a funny and endearing way.

Follow the Cheshire Cats team as they speedwalk their way to fundraising success in the London Moonwalk. Hilary, Siobhan, Yvonne, Vicky and Maggie are attempting to walk 13 miles across the capital in record time in their decorated bras and posh new trainers, but the sixth member of the team doesn't seem to meet the physical criteria! Cheshire Cats is Calendar Girls meets Stepping out, a cross between a girl's night out and a real mission to support a cause close to many hearts, with plenty of laughs and a few tears along the way.

"A genuinely funny and even touching ensemble piece" - Edinburgh Fringe Review, *The Scotsman*

"Moving, emotional, poignant, and best of all it makes you laugh..." - *Chester Chronicle*

The read-through and casting will be on Tuesday 22nd August and there are several delicious parts – some speaking, others not - for all the ladies in the group who wish to appear on stage. Script and cast info will be available prior to the read-through; please contact Cris Haniver at crishaniver@googlemail.com, tel 07710 078027. Rehearsals will start on Tuesday 5th September.

Priority tickets for this production will be available to members from 18th September. The ticket price is £10, children £6.50, and £1 for each ticket sold will be donated to Breast Cancer UK.

THE PANTOMIME



Our 2018 pantomime will be **Beauty and the Beast**. We were presented with two excellent options and had a tough decision to make, but eventually settled on a very funny script by Alan Frayne.

The play will be directed and choreographed by that lovely double act: Cris Haniver and Sue Wood.

The panto will be on stage 13th-20th January and tickets go on sale on Tuesday 14th November. Casting will be held on two Thursdays 6th and 13th July. We aim to provide details of the cast list and possibly some of the songs in advance, so watch out for an email to members coming out shortly.

PLAY TIMES

As many of you may now know, for our spring, summer and autumn productions the curtain now goes up at 7.30pm (instead of 7.45pm), and at 2.30pm on Saturday matinees, which is what many people said they would prefer.

We have also reviewed performance times for the next panto, and thank everyone who responded to the survey. There was a strong consensus of opinion, both on dates and start times, and the decision has been taken to go with the following panto performances:



Saturday 13 th	2pm and 7pm
Sunday 14 th	2pm and 6pm
Wednesday 17 th	7.30pm
Thursday 18 th	7.30pm
Friday 19 th	7.30pm
Saturday 20 th	2pm and 7pm
Sunday 21 st	2pm

TICKETS

Tickets can be booked in person or by telephone at Archer & Partners, 48 High Street, Polegate, tel 01323 483348. Payment either by cash or cheque only, no cards. Tickets can also be booked online at www.polegatedramagroup.com. A booking fee of 75p per ticket applies to online bookings only, a charge set by TicketSource for providing this service.

For our spring and autumn productions, members can book tickets a day in advance of the general release to the public.

HANDYMEN AND WOMEN WANTED!

As well as great acting, we strive to produce lovely looking sets, which come about with the support of a few volunteers who are handy with a screwdriver, drill or paintbrush – and we always welcome new helpers.



Set building and painting usually takes place on a few Sundays in the run-up to the play. We meet at 9.30am and finish by early afternoon but, if you can only stay for a couple of hours, that would be welcome. In return for your help, you will receive good-humoured conversation washed down with copious quantities of free tea, coffee and biscuits.

If you might be interested in joining the scenery team, know 'a man who can' or would just like to know more, we would love to hear from you.

COFFEE MORNING

Many thanks to Sylvia who organised the last coffee morning. Our next one is on Saturday 9th September and we appreciate all offers of help and cakes.

That's all from me this time. I hope you have enjoyed reading this newsletter and look forward to the next one, which will be issued in September. I welcome any contributions or suggestions for other information that you would like to see included.

Meanwhile I hope to see you all at the Summer Comedy Party, if not before!

Very best wishes,
Alison

Contact us at:

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