



March 2018

Newsletter

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Hello dear members,

Welcome to the first newsletter of 2018. I am delighted to look back on a happy celebratory year for Polegate Drama Group, and excited to think about our forthcoming season.

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST

Beauty and the Beast proved to be one of our most successful and popular pantos, with a great cast, beautiful sets, fantastic music and a wonderful storyline. Thank you to all our members who supported the panto on stage, backstage, front of house or in the audience. We made a well-earned profit and had a lot of fun.



We also received great reviews including some exceptional feedback from the District Representative of NODA, the National Operatic and Dramatic Association. Enjoy!

If anyone needed cheering up on a cold winter's evening my advice would be to go and see a pantomime, so if anyone took my advice they would go home feeling a lot happier after seeing Beauty and the Beast at Polegate! Fun abounded and it was a very good way to end your 50th year celebrations. There is also pathos in the story and this was very well handled.

In true pantomime tradition, Good and Evil were the first to appear on stage represented by Emily Albertella as Flora, the rosy good fairy and Cris Haniver as Belladonna, a wicked sorceress looking evil and ravishing at one and the same time. Great performances from both with Belladonna deserving all the boos!

Belle, young and pretty with a lovely voice was played with grace by Heather Tingley. Her two sisters (not so lovely in character!) were played with vigour by Mandy Brown as Esmeralda and Helen Griffin (who was standing in as Ermengarde at very short notice and was word perfect).

Key Dates

Something to Hide

9th-12th May
Box Office opens
Monday 26th March
for Members & Friends

Murder Mysteries

3rd & 4th August

Coffee Mornings

2nd & 23rd June, 11 August,
8th September

Marcelle and Monique were played by Charisse Goddard and Sue Talmadge in vain endeavours to try to make the aforementioned pair beautiful – lovely characterisations. Hope-Marie Henderson was "God's gift to women Gustave!" – very nicely done.

What can one say about Madame Fifi? Chris Thompson was the ideal Dame with wonderful outfits and wigs (I really loved the Abba costume!) and playing up to the audience at every opportunity in true Dame-like style. Good work from Laura Catchpole as Jacques with Trevor Fuggle giving an excellent performance as Alphonse.

Warren Goddard acted the parts of Prince Danton and The Beast with panache. The Beast's costume was beautiful and scary! Bill Haniver's cameo part as Monsieur Le Fou came over so well and the whole production was enhanced by the ensemble and The Sue Wood Dancers. The whole cast were in good voice.

The costumes were excellent – super colours and fabrics and all was complemented by the lovely set – well done to the set construction and painting teams. Musical Director Michelle Radley led the band who supported the singers so well.

The programme was very well produced with interesting content and if you would like to let me have five copies, it could be entered into the NODA Poster/Programme Competition for next year.

I love panto as I always think that if a young child sees this sort of production they could possibly want to act and sing themselves in the future. You never know!

Well done to all involved, including everyone with those all important jobs backstage and front of house and especially to Director/Choreographer Sue Wood, Co-Director Cris Haniver and Musical Director Michelle Ridley.

Brenda Gower Regional NODA Representative

AWARDS

We had more good news to celebrate in January when we heard that our autumn production, Cheshire Cats, has received an Accolade of Excellence from NODA's District Representative. Furthermore, the play is being entered for a Regional Award later this month.

Those of you who came to see Cheshire Cats will know that this was quite a departure from our usual plays – a contemporary script acted out on a minimalist 'black-box' set with splashes of colour provided by a few chairs and some great costumes. That may sound a little gloomy but it was actually a beautiful play that was both funny and moving, and we are delighted to receive this recognition from NODA.





After a successful end to our special 50th anniversary year of comedy golds, we are kickstarting the new season with a complete change: a dramatic thriller.

Written by Leslie Sands and directed by Sylvia Dobell, *Something to Hide* delivers a new and exciting approach to murder. Suspense mounts in this superbly contrived story, working up to a dramatic climax.

The cast is as follows:

Howard Holt	Stephen Edwards	Mr Purdie	Jim Dobell
Julie Grant	Rebecca Tanner	Stella	Denise Rose
Karen Holt	Helen Griffin	Miss Cunningham	Cris Haniver
Inspector Davies	Geoff Shorman		

Rehearsals are now underway and details are available on the website. The play will be on stage 9th to 12th May and tickets go on sale to members and Friends on Monday 26th March. Play times are as usual, i.e.

Wednesday 9 th	7.30pm
Thursday 10 th	7.30pm
Friday 11 th	7.30pm
Saturday 12 th	2.30pm & 7.30pm

Due to holidays, wedding preparations and family visitors, a number of our regular members are away. We are fortunate to have a strong cast but we do need help with set construction and backstage/front-of-house during the play run. If you are available and can spare some time, even a few hours, please talk to Sylvia Dobell or contact us at admin@polegatedramagroup.org.



mURdER MYSTERY Evenings

SUMMER SHOWS

By popular request from members and friends, this summer will see a welcome return of the Murder Mystery plays. There will be two plays, one each on Friday and Saturday 3rd & 4th August. You can book a table with friends, or just come along and share a table – a great way to meet people and make new friends!

SPOTLIGHT

“It’s a Family Affair” as this month the Spotlight turns onto the Griffin family: mum Sarah, dad John and daughter Helen. If that sounds a bit like the Three Bears, the analogy is not too far-fetched as these three characters have lifetimes of involvement in drama.



The family has always supported Polegate’s pantomimes and, for her 12th birthday, John & Sarah brought Helen to see a play then suggested joining the group. That was nearly twenty years ago!

In the summer of 1999 the group put on three one act plays and Sarah, John and Helen took part, one in each play. Since then, each member of the family has found their own niche:

Sarah quickly became established as a scenic painter, initially under the expert guidance of Bob Wallis. Sarah had always enjoyed art at school and, as daughter Helen says, she is a lovely painter. Nowadays, there is barely a stage wall or scenic backcloth that has not been subjected to Sarah’s artistic magic, in fact her tally of backcloths is not far off thirty. As each one can take several days to paint, that is no mean feat. I asked Sarah if she ever thought of acting on stage again. “If I’m doing scenery I can’t act – there are simply not enough hours in a week!” she replied.

Meanwhile husband John, who started acting at school and university, continued to tread the boards, acting in several of Polegate’s plays and directing two. Unfortunately a minor stroke has made it difficult for John to remember words but it hasn’t stopped

him staying involved with the group. John is the friendly face behind the sweets table at every panto performance and the raffle table at every play.

Helen has a lovely recollection of her dad playing the Strong Man in Goldilocks and singing "Five Gold Rings" in a male soprano voice. His character had a massive set of dumbbells but John's cover was blown when Laura Buck, then a very small child, casually picked them up and carried them off stage.

Helen's own involvement with am-dram has been more varied. Her love of performing arts started in primary school and she has been acting and dancing on stage since the age of five. In her first school play, Jason and the Argonauts, Helen played the Goddess Hera, which started off as a small part but her teacher soon turned it into a bigger role.

When the family joined Polegate, there were very few roles for a young person, and Helen was already busy with dance school competitions, after school clubs and youth theatre. But she was happy to do her bit with Polegate in any way she could. Following the summer one-act plays, Adrian Leach invited Helen to help him in the technical box for the October production of Ann Frank. He thought she was sixteen, though she was only thirteen at the time.

Helen took a break from Polegate to study History & Drama at university, followed by a Masters in History, though performing arts still figured in her life and she won a trophy for an improvised duet at the Eastbourne Music & Arts Festival. Then in 2012, home from university and with many old friends having moved on, Helen was looking for a boost to her social life and rejoined the group, Sadly Adrian died soon after but Ryan Tate was delighted to have her experienced hands in the technical box.



Helen's acting career has also flourished, with roles in various productions including Map of the Heart alongside the much loved Alan Buckingham, Kindly Keep It Covered and, most recently, the award-winning Cheshire Cats. In this year's panto Helen stunned both audiences and cast when, part-way through the run, she stepped out of the chorus into a major comedy role. Helen will be back on stage as the leading lady in our spring play, then this summer she will make her debut as a director for one of the murder mystery plays.

Some members will know that Helen has suffered for a long time with ME, a debilitating illness which has left her in the past bedridden and housebound. I asked Helen how she manage and she told me it was about keeping life balanced. She says it is difficult to explain the illness and how to cope but, after eighteen years, she has worked out ways to deal with it. As Helen says: "After panto I feel really tired, but so does everyone!"

I asked the Griffin family for their thoughts on Polegate Drama Group. They all agreed that it is a friendly, welcoming group that allows members to take part in any way they want to, without putting people into pigeon holes.

What about their hopes for the future? Fifty years is a fantastic achievement and they all want to see Polegate Drama Group continue and thrive. They have witnessed some tough times, particularly losing much-loved members, but they say the group is great at pulling together, whether that's to be ready for opening night or to keep the group alive. They are pleased that new people are joining the group, attracted by what it offers and its open arms. Their final words: "The group's life blood is laughter!"

Well folks, that's all from me this month.

I hope you have enjoyed reading this newsletter and look forward to the next one, which will be issued in the summer. As always, I welcome any feedback, contributions or suggestions on anything you would like to see included.

With best wishes,
Alison

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