

Stagers'

Spotlight



May 2021

Chair's Message

Welcome to the May edition of Spotlight. There is no other possible place to start this month than with the recent Cornucopia which saw Stagers' old and very new coming together to share in the joy of performance. Whilst we might not have been able to meet in person it was wonderful to see so many familiar faces joining together on Zoom and hearing such a wide range of poetry, prose and songs.

Thank you to everyone who performed and to the enthusiastic audience, laughing in all the right places. A huge thank you must also go out to Barry Levy who helped bring the Cornucopia to life again and ensured everything ran smoothly from a technical point of view. It was especially enthralling, if a little chilling to hear from Ann Penfold, who gave an unforgettably 'spooktacular' Stagers debut. It was also a lovely treat to hear Rachel Perkins singing again for us all and hopefully her recovery will continue apace and it won't be long until she is back on stage again.

I am convinced the Cornucopia is something that the society should look to take forward, even when we are back performing on stage. And that is, despite having heard the vicar who married Abi & me, talk about a dog's erection preventing it from getting up the stairs; and my mother-in-law describe Red Riding Hood pulling a pistol from her knickers (thanks David and Jennifer) - not what I had expected at the start of the evening.

Plans are progressing for the first live Stagers shows coming out of lockdown. I am really looking forward to working with Tilbourne Players and bringing a pair of plays to both our stages across two nights. Then, in November, we will be looking to come back with a bang with "There's No Business Like Show Business". I have heard the ideas for this and all I can say is that if the vision comes to life then we will all be in for an absolute treat! You can hear more about both later in

this *Spotlight*.

Finally, if restrictions continue to lift then we would love to get members back together in a social setting and are hoping that we may be able to organise a BBQ. Ruth and David Wilbraham have offered their garden on Sunday 1st of August so pencil it in your diary and watch this space.

It is really exciting to see live theatre coming back in Chichester and beyond. Hopefully we will soon be able to join them.

Go well,
Joe

Dates for your Diary



Wed 30 June – Presentation of November celebration in the Small Hall and via Zoom

Sat 17 July - Auditions for the November celebration in the Studio

23rd and 24th July - Plays with Tilbourne Players

1st August - Summer Barbecue

15th September - Stagers' AGM

26-27th November - November Celebration

"There's no Business Like Show Business"

May 2022 – Honk!

Secretary's Profile

Who are you?

I am Jennifer Charters, Mother-in-Law to Joe White. I live on the ridge of another hill in Hindhead from Heather, with a selection of ornamental penguins.

What is your history with the theatre?

I was brought up near Hull in Yorkshire and started dancing lessons at the age of 3. As well as teaching ballet my teacher specialised in musical theatre and mime. It was a real treat to come down to London for the national finals of competitions.

Due to a foot injury in my early teens I was unable to continue my lessons, so satisfied my love of performing by acting in plays at high school in Beverley, occasionally helping to provide a female presence on stage at the boys' school. I joined the local youth theatre and can recall our excitement when visited by the playwright, Alan Plater, who lived nearby.

Whilst in the school choir I had the wonderful experience of singing Handel's 'Messiah' in Beverley Minster. I have continued to love singing in choirs when possible.



At Newcastle University I joined the Gilbert and Sullivan Society, clutching a treasured book I was given when I was 12; the complete text of 'The Savoy Operas'. Then followed years of early career, marriage, having children and moving around the country, with little opportunity to take part in amateur theatre.

What is your history with the Stagers specifically?

I have two daughters, Rachel and Abigail. Our family moved to this area in 1984 and the girls began dancing lessons. In 1989, Abi, like Heather's daughter Alex, was cast as one of the orphans in 'Annie'.

We were so impressed with the encouragement and friendliness of the society and the standard of the production, that we all joined, both girls becoming members of the Young Stagers in the days of 'Smike' and 'Dracula Spectacula'.

I first trod the Grayshott stage in 1990, as a streetwalker ??; Hot Box girl in 'Guys and Dolls', also helping to make the set of costumes for the number 'Take Back Your Mink'. I loved being on stage with Rachel later that year as schoolgirls in 'Daisy Pulls it Off' and as Cagelles in 'La Cage Aux Folles' in 2000. More recently I've had the pleasure of sharing the stage with Abi on several occasions since she re-joined the Stagers for the 'Grayshott 24' of 2010. I have many happy memories of times spent as a member of the chorus in our musicals, especially being able to put on my tap shoes again after over 25 years! I have been fortunate to play many interesting characters in our dramatic productions, including Edith in 'The Day after the Fair', Andy in 'Stepping Out' and most recently Dora in 'A Tomb With a View'. I've usually been involved with the One Act Plays and have directed a few.

Over the years I have helped with most of the various tasks involved with staging a production.

This is my second term as Secretary of the Committee and I had the honour and challenge of being Chair between 2013 and 2016.

Apart from Stagers what else do you do with your free time?

I was employed by Surrey County Council from 1985 until my retirement 8 years ago. As a specialist in Speech and Language Development and a teacher, I worked as an Advisory Teacher, later also helping to organise and monitor the county-wide support for children and young people with Special Educational Needs.

In my free time, I have always been an active member of the local church, spending nearly 12 years as a warden, helping with holiday clubs and singing in the choir. Over this past year I've been able to take part in online services!

I have loved literature from childhood, enjoying reading and learning poems. My copy of "The Complete Works of Shakespeare" was a school prize in 1965! Nowadays I appreciate having books read to me and have a large collection of audiobooks. Classic FM and music from the theatre provides a background to my routines at home and when doing a crossword or other puzzle. How I long to be back in a live theatre though!

Unlike Heather I don't do much sewing now, having made clothes and stage costumes for the girls and myself for many years! I love working and relaxing in my garden. Last but by no means least, I am so fortunate to have 3 lovely granddaughters. Sadly, two live in Devon so I have not been able to see them in person since 2019. However, I've had the pleasure of regularly spending time with Freya (Abi and Joe's almost 5-year-old) since she was born and this has continued within our 'bubble'. I think the future of the Performing Arts will be safe in hands such as hers!!!

There's No Business Like Show Business!



As mentioned in the last "Spotlight" the committee are looking at an exciting and fun way to return to the Stage in November.

Lizzie Hales and Mary Coyte are delighted to have been asked to M.D. and direct the show.

As this year marks 70 years of Grayshott Stagers productions, we thought it would be great to reprise some of the fantastic music from past productions (we have around 65 to choose from !!!)

Lizzie will also be choreographing as well as preparing the music. We will be looking to perform ensemble pieces as well as solo and duets.

Stagers are well known for performing plays as well as musicals. Heather Legat has been tasked with creating something to represent the plays that have been performed over the years, there will be a selection of snippets from some of these plays performed by a group of actors who will multi-rôle their way through this section of the evening.

Ellis is looking at an extract from Blithe Spirit by Noel Coward, which the Stagers did in 1981 or a one-act play which represents the Stagers' efforts.

We would like to involve as many members as possible and look forward to seeing you all at the presentation on June 30th when you will hear more of what we have in mind.

Plays with Tilbourne Players

23rd and 24th July

We will come back on to the stage with two shared evenings with the Tilbourne Players on 23 July at Grayshott and 24 July at Tilford – yes, two different halls. We intend to present a play called *Afterplay* by Brian Friel, who imagines a meeting between two characters from plays by Anton Chekov, Sonya from *Uncle Vanya* and Andrey from *The Three Sisters*. They meet by chance in a Moscow café twenty years after the events in their original plays and still carry with them baggage from their original characters. The play will be directed by Ellis Nicholls but at the time of writing, has not been cast.

Alongside that will be *Two Purple Gloves*, directed by Sara Wilson-Soppitt and featuring Ian W-S and Helen Phillips. We had intended to present this play at our one-act plays evening in February 2021, but we know that did not take place. Better luck next time.

The usual help is needed for front-of-house, ushering, etc for the Grayshott village hall evening. More about that anon (as they say)

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Play of the Week can be found on the website at www.boxofficeradio.co.uk “

Chichester Theatre reopening [Click here to book](#)

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Membership News.

We have just heard, with great sadness, of the recent death of Richard Tytler. Our tribute will follow in the next issue of Spotlight.