

# Stagers' Spotlight



September 2021

## Chair's Message

It is September and after taking a small summer break Spotlight is back and there is no better place to start than with the November show, 'There's No Business Like Showbusiness.' You will see more from Mary later in this edition but as Chair I just wanted to say thank you and congratulations to everyone involved in the auditions. They may well have been our most ambitious ever as we endeavoured to give as many people as possible the chance to get back on stage. This included accepting a number of recorded auditions and remotely linking-in one of the directors from Canada. All this effort from both the panel and the participants has resulted in a company of more than 30 people and rehearsals are already underway.

I also want to say thank you to Ruth and David Wilbraham for welcoming the Stagers into their home and hosting us for the summer BBQ. Despite the weather doing its best to 'rain on our parade' everyone had a wonderful time and the spread of food put on for us all was truly impressive and very delicious!

And a final thank you (for this edition) to John Hilder for all his work as the NODA rep for the society. You can read more about NODA later in Spotlight but I want him to know, from all of us, that his time supporting the society in this way is very much appreciated.

Just around the corner we have the AGM. I hope you will be able to join us. You should find that copies of the accounts have been distributed with this copy of Spotlight and this is the last call for nominees to join us on the committee – we would love to have you.

Finally, Grayshott Primary School has its 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary this year and Stagers are going to help in some small ways to make it memorable for all involved, so watch this space.

Stay safe and hopefully we will see you all on stage or in the audience very soon.

Go well, Joe



**15th September** 8.00pm - Stagers AGM

*(refreshments served)*

**26-27th November** - November Celebration

*"There's no Business Like Show Business"*

**18th and 19th Feb 2022** - One Act Plays: Keep reading Spotlight for further details.

**26th to 28th May 2022** – Honk!

## MY EXPERIENCE OF FILMING WITH THE UNIVERSITY OF CREATIVE ARTS

by *Kathy Le Fanu*

In early June 2021 Grayshott Stagers circulated an URGENT email from UCA in Farnham:

“We are looking for someone to play JO, FEMALE, 70+. Lockdown has essentially not affected Jo’s life in the slightest. She spends her days creating her own vibrant eye-catching outfits, and enjoys the attention she gets whilst out walking her dog. She is completely and utterly content with being alone, and her self-assurance is magnetic.”

The name of the film was “Four Grey Towers”. The Director was a student called Aislinn Ward who was studying Filmmaking, and the film would be the final submission for her MA. Filming was to be the very next day.

“Hmm,” I thought, “sounds fun ... very short notice though ... eye-catching outfits ... MA project ... hmm ... that means it’s got to be the best it can be ... would I be up to it though ... strutting confidently along road with dog ... just when I can hardly even walk ... ” (in early June I was hobbling along with two sticks, booked for a hip replacement operation within two weeks!) ... “I could offer,” I concluded, “but better be honest about current state of mobility.”

So I sent off an email. The reply: filming would now be in two days’ time, from 4pm until 11pm, would I be available and, very importantly, was I allergic to dogs? I replied I would be available and was not allergic to dogs.



At 3pm on the filming day, having not heard anything further, I sent an email saying that if they needed my help then I would need to know where and when to arrive and whether I needed to bring anything, otherwise good luck with the project. No reply until 6pm when I had a telephone call: could I please arrive in 15 minutes’ time and bring 6 sets of brightly coloured clothes? Feeling suddenly rather excited, I said I would come as soon as I could,

Centre of operations was a recently vacated student house with a small pleasant garden to relax in when not required. On arrival, I was warmly greeted and any slight annoyance I had felt evaporated as the students looked through the contents of my suitcase with cries of delight as if I were Santa bringing presents; they even seemed thrilled with my spotted walking stick!

The students had already been round the charity shops and purchased brightly coloured jackets and blouses (some a bit tight for me: “We had to guess your size”). All the clothes were laid out together, the Director very quickly decided on three different outfits and I was most solicitously shown to my dressing room upstairs (“Are you sure you can manage the stairs?”). No make-up: I obviously looked at least 70 without.

The filming was done from an upstairs window overlooking the street. At first sight the cameraman behind the tripod could have been mistaken for a sniper, but fortunately none of the pedestrians who were walking past seemed fazed; in fact they were keen to stop and ask what we were all doing. This caused delays, as did passing cars.



I was introduced to Jasmine, The dog (a smallish Schnauzer, I think) and her owner Phil, and was then filmed three times walking a short distance along the pavement with Jasmine on a lead. I had to wear a different outfit each time, and Jasmine wore a bright red jumper in the last scene. She was a nice friendly little character, but did rather pull me along, sometimes darting right across in front of me, in her eagerness to get back to Phil and receive her treat! And so I found it quite challenging, trying to keep up the appearance of walking along in a self-assured, confident and somewhat showy manner whilst also relying on my walking stick for support and ensuring I didn’t fall over and break something before my operation! (“I’m so sorry, Doctor”).

A number of takes were therefore needed but we managed to complete the task, and pose for a few stills, just in time before the light faded. Then it was time for a rest and some refreshment back in the house.

It felt as if a team of handmaidens had been appointed to look after me tenderly; I particularly remember three delightful young women from China, Japan and Bulgaria. The whole film crew team of eleven or so was very international, and everyone worked quietly and intently; they seemed very well prepared, all knowing exactly what they were supposed to be doing. Dismay at my having to decline the offered sandwiches (I am coeliac) was swiftly resolved by the despatch of a handmaid to make me an enormous omelette, and I was comfortably placed at a little table whilst everyone else had their food on their laps.



The second lot of filming that evening was done through the window of a ground floor flat in the Student Village just beyond Waitrose. I was provided with a lovely light blue embroidered kaftan to wear, which fitted me perfectly and which they sweetly gave me afterwards to keep (I wore it at my husband's recent 70th). In one scene I had to read a letter and make an indifferent sort of face, and in another I had to sit at a sewing machine, sense that I was being watched, stop working and look up impassively out of the window. And suddenly that was it!

The time was 25 minutes past midnight and everyone was exhausted. I was asked if I wanted a hotel; I said, "Thank You Very Much. but would prefer to drive home".

I don't yet know the full story; I never saw a script, copyright applies and the film is still being worked on. I do know that the central character is a student, closed off from the rest of the world by the long months of lockdown, and suffering (like the hapless Lady of Shalott imprisoned by a curse within "Four Grey Towers" in Tennyson's poem?), who becomes obsessed with the elderly woman whose part I played. It was only a small, silent, walk-on role and I was only involved for those few hours, but it was quite an experience!

A few days later I received a warm email of thanks from Sona Ryang, the Producer, an apology for my having been called at such short notice, a request for me to put in a claim for expenses, and some photos. I made a small claim for petrol. A little later I received some more gifts: a pretty Thank You card, a lovely handmade tote bag and a box of delicious chocs, on the cover of which was a picture of The Dog, her Owner, the Director – and Myself in Bright Costume! (as in the photo.)



FOUR GREY TOWERS 07/05/2021

# noda

Be inspired by amateur theatre

by John Hilder

NODA (National Operatic and Dramatic Association) was formed in 1899 and is now the principal organisation representing amateur theatre in the U.K. The Stagers have been members for many years and I have been the society representative for several of them.

NODA have regional and district Councillors and we are situated in the South East region with Kay Rowan as our Councillor. Kay's area extends to the whole of Kent, Sussex, Surrey and East Hampshire, but as she lives in nearby Alton she is often able to attend our performances. In addition to Kay, Pauline Surrey is our local Councillor for East Hampshire and NW Surrey (District 18). Both Councillors are invited to all of our productions (except the February One Act Plays) and one of them usually attends. Awards for productions are given in various categories each year and The Stagers have been proud winners of a number of these over the years, most recently "Oh What a Lovely War" (2018) "The 39 Steps" (2014) "A Laughing Matter" (2013) and "Spend! Spend, Spend!" (2009).

NODA offers useful support to amateur dramatic societies such as legal advice, insurance services, health and safety guidance etc. The local Councillor can also be a helpful source of advice, for example, when we couldn't cast the male lead (Billy Bigelow) in Carousel, I contacted our Councillor who put us in touch with another society that had recently staged the show, resulting in Gavin Ebsworth reprising the role with us very successfully.

NODA also hold regional and central conferences, as well as an annual Summer School comprising a week of residential training courses with industry professionals at competitive fees, which is open to Society members.

Anyone can join NODA as an individual and long service awards are available for continuous membership.

Newsletters are regularly issued and there is a lot more information on [noda.org.uk](http://noda.org.uk).

As from the AGM I will be standing down as Stagers representative and handing over the baton to Barry Levy.

## Membership News

Having welcomed Ann Penfold to Stagers earlier in the year and having had the pleasure of seeing her perform in our One Act Play in July, we now offer her special congratulations. Ann was married to Andrew at the beginning of this month. May they share many happy years together.

We now welcome another three new members; Debbie Bowyer, Nika Piasecka and Clare Singleton.

Some past members have re-joined for the November Production and we hope all will enjoy a long stay with us.

I was very pleased to be able to sit with other Stagers at a performance of 'The Lady Killers', with David and Susie Gow treading the boards of a well-equipped barn in Binsted for the Oakhanger Players. It was a most entertaining evening. You can see the Gows back on the Grayshott stage in November.

Jennifer



## ***There's No Business Like Show Business!***

They say "There's No Business like Show Business" Yes, we are back, busily rehearsing for the return to the stage by the Stagers, with songs from previous shows and not one but two dramatic interludes, and then even more show songs to finish.

Its is lovely to be working with so many performers who are well known to Grayshott Audiences, and to welcome several new members.

All the Production Team are looking forward to having fun with this very enthusiastic company as rehearsals progress.

"Let's go on with the show"

*Mary Coyte*

### **Show dates:**

Friday 26th & Saturday 27th November, three performances including matinee on the Saturday.