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Letter from the Chair

I've just returned from a lunch party with friends. We all took food and the meal was delicious as everyone had, of course, brought an example of a tried and tested recipe or favourite treat. The house was beautifully decorated and the host and hostess had planned the occasion to perfection, even including a quiz, which promoted friendly banter and rivalry. It was a very successful event, much enjoyed by all involved.

Thinking now of what to write in this letter I keep reflecting upon the similarities between that party and a Stagers' production, when everyone brings their talents together to create something all can enjoy. On that theme I'd just like to quote what I said at the party after our recent play:

"Three cheers for the Society because, without the existence of The Grayshott Stagers, no-one would have been able to look after the audience, perform on the stage, to build sets, to provide technical support, or to dress the bodies, hair and the set for 'A Laughing Matter' over the past few nights. Therefore, my first thanks must go to all who contribute in any way to the functioning of the Stagers, working quietly back scenes throughout the year to keep the Society alive.

As most of you know, because of the success of productions over the past year or so we were in a position to be able to treat ourselves to a more lavish play than usual. However, all the money in the world wouldn't produce success if we didn't have an enormous bank of talent in all fields.

When I joined the Stagers, what struck me most was that it doesn't matter what people do during the rest of their daily lives but that a group such as ours gives so much opportunity to exercise creativity of all kinds, to show skills in entertaining, welcoming, P.R., business, carpentry, art, technology – the list goes on...."

So "Hip, hip, hooray!" for all of you and for all you do to make the Stagers a happy and successful society.

I need say no more about the performances of "A Laughing Matter" than was written in its review, which we've included in this newsletter. Stagers have never been frightened of a challenge and this was another which we pulled off with great aplomb.

I'm now looking forward to the challenges of 2014. Preparation for the One-Act Plays (see our website for the cast list) is well underway and a lovely supper planned. Tickets for the evenings will be available to members of the Society from 1st January and the general public from 14th January. Please contact Marian Walker on 01428 605046 for these.

Brezetta has written an update on "The Shakespeare Revue" elsewhere in this newsletter and I recently announced that our November Play will be "The 39 Steps", directed by Andy Boughton.

So now I wish you all peace and joy over the Christmas season and a healthy and happy New Year.

Jennifer

The Grayshott Stagers

Newsletter

More Than Just A Laughing Matter

Well done The Grayshott Stagers for having the ambition and confidence to take on, and stage successfully, yet another challenging production. Their latest play *A Laughing Matter*, an irreverent comedy set in 18th century Georgian London, was a diversion from their more usual choice of comedy. The play, written by April De Angelis, not only required a large cast with considerable acting talent, but also a director of sufficient sensitivity and inspiration to extract the eloquence and humour from a well-written script. The Stagers provided both in good measure. The outcome was a thoroughly interesting and enjoyable evening of theatre.

De Angelis' play provides an insight into why David Garrick, one of the most influential and innovative theatrical directors of English theatre, rejected Goldsmith's new satirical comedy, *She Stoops to Conquer*, with disastrous financial consequences, in favour of Cumberland's inferior play *The Fashionable Lover*. Through her semi-fictional account De Angelis suggests that Garrick was, perhaps, more concerned with upholding moral propriety than remaining true to dramatic genius.

The Stagers are indeed fortunate to be able to call upon so many experienced and talented actors from its own ranks which, together with several newcomers formed a strong cast of 16 which excelled. The play was well cast with actors complementing each other's styles and roles to provide congruency and empathy with timings and inter-changes, both delicate and clumsy, being expertly directed to achieve a rich mixture of comedy and pathos. With frequent use of bawd, ribaldry and humour this was not a play for those with delicate sensibilities, but coarseness notwithstanding, this was a very humorous and entertaining production.

Many fine performances were led by Richard White who was outstanding as Garrick. He used his considerable acting talents to the full to portray the many changes of mood, temperament and dynamism demanded by the role. John Hilder was equally excellent playing the fumbling and socially inept Goldsmith and switching seamlessly to the quite different role of the philandering Duke of Kingston. They were more than well supported by Bernard Whelan as Dr Johnson/Rev Cumberland, Adrian Warner as James Boswell/Spranger Barry, Nigel Dams as Joshua Reynolds/Charles Macklin, undertaking duality of roles with much accomplishment. They combined well and played strongly, providing pace, energy and authority to bring to life some of the greatest characters in the history of English theatre. Michael Thonger, playing his first major roles for The Stagers can be very proud of his performances, as most notably Edmund Burke/Sam Catherley. As the aspiring young actor and Garrick's protégé Sam, he succeeded in bringing to the stage freshness and naivety in stark contrast to that of the life-worn characters around him. David Laudau gave an amusing and sympathetic performance as Cedric Bounce, displaced by Garrick from actor to stagehand after 30 years in Drury Lane!

The strength and depth of The Stagers' female on-stage contingent has almost passed into legend and this play drew heavily on this. With such talent abounding a high quality production was assured. Jane Clayton as Mrs Garrick, Angie Hilder as Mrs Cibber, Brezetta Thonger as Peg Woffington, Melanie Tyrrell as Lady Kingston and Lynne Mitchinson as Hannah More, provided excellent characterisation, encompassing sentiments and behaviours from the puritanical to the downright bawdy and lustful! Brezetta's portrayal of the wanton Peg Woffington, with her fondness for coarse language and men in equal measures, was particularly memorable. Trudy Hathaway as Mrs Butler, Valerie Shears as Mrs Barry/Miss Stevens, Margot Tringham as Miss Kemble and Jennifer Charters as Mr Larpent, added admirably to the dramatic illusion sustained throughout.

The production was well staged in all aspects. The challenges of providing contemporary costumes and wigs were fully met by Sylvia Boddington and Pauleen Dowsett and their supporting teams. Costuming and wiggling of the cast added considerably to the enjoyment of the evening and no doubt inspired the actors in their roles. Particular mention must be given to James Thonger's creation of Garrick's hilarious 'mechanical' wig, with its ability to rise up akin to a dog's ears!

Ellis Nicholls in his debut as a director for The Stagers can feel justly proud and satisfied with the end result. This was a challenging play in many respects and one which could have fallen 'flat' or degenerated into farce. However, under his direction, the actors were well prepared and carefully guided to achieve a well-balanced production which was thoroughly enjoyable and highly entertaining.

April 2014 – The Shakespeare Revue

After exciting auditions, all having made a wonderful effort, I do believe we have a ‘dream cast’ (although don’t tell them that!!). With Robert Gillman and Laura Musco on ‘the bridge’ too we will have some seriously fun times ahead. It will be a Revue unlike any other and with wonderful sketches and songs written by legends Cole Porter, Stephen Fry, Maureen Lipman and Victoria Wood to name but a few, it will be a colourful, exciting and hilarious show! Please keep an eye on the website where we will regularly keep you up to date!

Brezetta

Membership News

We were sad to learn of Peter Gardner’s recent death. Peter performed in several productions with the Stagers, including ‘Cabaret’, ‘Holiday Snap’ and ‘Cowardy Custard’. He was always fun to work with and a real ‘gentleman’. We send our condolences to Pam.

On a much happier note, Shirley Jelliss is now a great-grandmother and Barbie and Ian Badger have become grandparents for the first time. Freya and Elizabeth Grace are fortunate little girls.

Finally, if you want to enjoy a traditional pantomime this Christmas, why not go to the Richmond Theatre to see the ever-youthful Jeremy Legat as “Peter Pan”, duelling with Henry Winkler as Hook. Go for it, Jeremy!

Dates for your Diary

21 – 25 January	FAOS	Jane Eyre	Farnham Maltings
21 – 22 February	Grayshott Stagers	The One Acts	Grayshott Village Hall
25 – 29 March	Haslemere Players	South Pacific	Haslemere Hall
21 – 24 May	Grayshott Stagers	The Shakespeare Revue	Grayshott Village Hall
12 September	Grayshott Stagers	AGM	Grayshott Village Hall
21 – 25 October	Haslemere Players	The Producers	Haslemere Hall
20 – 22 November	Grayshott Stagers	The 39 Steps	Grayshott Village Hall

A Laughing Matter – Financial Report

A Laughing Matter

Income & Expenditure Summary

	Original Budget	Final Budget	Actual Outturn
Acting Fees	153.00	153.00	144.00
Tickets Sales - Shows	3,000.00	3,000.00	2,739.00
Refreshments - Nett Profit	36.00	36.00	90.42
Bar - Nett Profit	270.00	270.00	326.87
Raffle - Nett Profit	150.00	150.00	209.00
Programme - Nett Profit	150.00	150.00	423.55
Rehearsal Material - Sales	35.00	35.00	20.00
Total Income	4,144.00	4,144.00	3,952.84
Royalties	249.00	249.00	249.00
Premises License - EHDC	21.00	21.00	16.80
Printing - Tickets	90.00	90.00	82.69
Publicity	120.00	120.00	149.00
Rehearsal Material Hire/Purchase	87.00	87.00	113.51
Hall Hire - Grayshott Village Hall	1,250.00	1,250.00	1,123.20
Hall Hire - Other Venues	0.00	0.00	31.00
Set Construction	50.00	50.00	0.00
Properties	100.00	100.00	57.11
Lighting	20.00	20.00	0.00
Sound & Effects	20.00	20.00	0.00
Wardrobe	700.00	700.00	382.21
Make-Up	30.00	30.00	26.50
Hair & Wigs	700.00	700.00	571.52
Gratuities	70.00	70.00	6.38
Miscellaneous / Contingency	48.00	48.00	0.00
Pay Pall Fees	45.00	45.00	32.58
Total Expenditure	3,900.00	3,900.00	2,841.50
Profit/(Loss)	244.00	244.00	1,111.34

Attendance:-	No	
Thursday	59	34%
Friday	130	75%
Saturday	92	53%
Total	281	54%