

Issue 92

February 2007



THE GRAYSHOTT STAGERS'

Newsletter

Chairman's Note

Well, it's been quite eventful since our last newsletter. *Night Watch* proved to be a very atmospheric thriller, ably directed by Peter Budd and skilfully performed on a superb set. The first night was beset by a real life drama when our leading lady's husband was involved in a serious car accident an hour or two before curtain up and taken to hospital, followed by an anxious June. Fortunately, he was discharged later in the evening with no serious injury.

Sadly, we had to cancel the performance, although we managed to re-book most of the audience on the other two nights. However, audience numbers were generally down and we did make a loss on the production.

Carousel resembled an old car on a frosty morning - slow to start, lurched along, ground to a brief halt, two major components were replaced, an essential ingredient was injected, and is now hopefully well back on the road! After an initial low turnout of men for the chorus and no sign of a Billy Bigelow (the big lead), both Sally Wooding and Milva Sandison, our directors, felt that there was not enough time to stage the show to a standard they would be happy with, and reluctantly withdrew. Happily, Doreen Wylde and Tony McIntee have stepped into the breach and we managed to find Gavin Ebsworth to take the part of Billy, a role he played only a few months ago for Gosport AOS. I would like to thank those members whose unfailing enthusiasm helped to rescue the show.

I am delighted to report that both nights of the February One Act Plays have sold out, with waiting lists now in place! All three plays are coming along well, and the social committee are honing their culinary skills with the usual army of helpers.

The Autumn Play will be a comedy directed by Betty Penny, the final choice of which will be announced shortly. As always you can keep up to speed with events on our web site, which is updated regularly by webmeister Tony Legat.

John

Membership News

Since the last newsletter we have welcomed new members Susie Dean, Ellis Nicholls, Emma Pelly, Thérèse Robinson and Kristina Seviour, who joined us for *Carousel*.

We wish patron member George Streeter well in his new role as a Chelsea Pensioner. George has moved to The Royal Hospital, Chelsea. His address, should you wish to write or visit him is : No.63, I/P G. Streeter, Ward 5, Berth 18, Royal Hospital Chelsea, Royal Hospital Road, Chelsea, London SW3 4SR (www.chelsea-pensioners.co.uk).

If we have overlooked anybody or any event, apologies, please let us know.

Melanie

Social Committee

On 17th November an intrepid team of Grayshott Stagers set out to do battle at the inter-society quiz in Haslemere. The team was - Jo Blakeborough, Mike Lee, Lynne Mitchison, Jane Sargeant, Melanie Tyrrell and Richard White. Each round of questions was followed by bonus questions on a "first to buzz in" basis. Our buzzer was a hastily borrowed kudzu (courtesy of Andy Boughton) and ably manned by Richard White. Jo Blakeborough shone in the cryptic clues to names of famous theatres. Mike Lee came into his own in the famous catch phrases round (in which we played our joker and got a perfect score - the only team to do so!) However, it has to be said that the younger members of the team were disadvantaged as the phrases all originated before their time. Richard White stepped to the fore in the opening lines of novels and plays. Richard and Melanie seemed psychically linked in charades and everyone added something to the general knowledge round. The music round (for which a number of teams chose to play their jokers) turned out to be television theme music.

The scores were close and hard fought but in the end Haslemere won by a few bonus points. Still everyone, including those who came to support, had a great time.

It was raised at the quiz that CADS would like to join in too, and we say the more the merrier. Remember that it is our turn to host this year and if anyone has an idea for a round, please contact a member of the committee.

Other social events to come this year, a trip to London to see a show, a fund raising and recruitment Casino Night and an outdoor festival. Details to follow.

Social Committee

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ *Carousel* ★ ★ ★ ★ ★



After a slow start, our production of this beautiful, yet tragic musical is now underway with Doreen Wylde and Tony McIntee at the helm.

Rodgers & Hammerstein adapted the book from the famous Hungarian play by Ferenc Molnar, *Liliom*, but made Maine, New England the setting for the poignant story of the faithful Julie and her brutish husband Billy. One of the most powerful books of the musical theatre and an extraordinary score from Rodgers make *Carousel* one of the greatest of all musicals (Time magazine voted it the greatest of the twentieth century; it was also Rodgers' & Hammerstein's favourite of their own shows). *Carousel* was an opportunity for Oscar Hammerstein II, a liberal, to explore attitudes of society and prejudice in a musical play. The storyline tackles social class and conduct as main themes, with the conclusion that anybody can succeed, whatever their background. Having first opened in 1945, *Carousel* remains a timeless and starbright piece.

Billy Bigelow - Gavin Ebsworth
Julie Jordan - Susie Dean
Mrs Mullin - Laura Musco
Starkeeper - Margot Tringham

Jigger Craigin - Kevin Sampson
Carrie Pipperidge - Rachel Perkins
Louise - Thérèse Robinson
Enoch Snow, Jr. - Adam Coyte

Enoch Snow - Richard White
Nettie Fowler - Mary Coyte
Heavenly Friend - Ellis Nichols
Army - Emma Pelly

Tony Legat is Production Secretary for this show, please contact him if you would like to help backstage, front of house etc. (01428 606501 tony.legat@grayshottstagers.co.uk).



Tickets are already proving popular - get yours now!

Dates for your Diary

2007

23-24 February, Grayshott Village Hall

09-10 March, Haslemere Hall

27-31 March, Haslemere Hall

03-05 May, Haslemere Hall

10-12 May, Grayshott Village Hall

17-19 May, Haslemere Hall

31 May-02 June, Haslemere Hall
Hall

12-16 June, Farnham Maltings

11 July, Grayshott Hall Common Room

21 July, Grayshott Village Hall

12 September, Grayshott Small Hall

19 September, Grayshott Hall Common Room

29 September, Grayshott Village Hall

03-05 October, Haslemere Hall

23-27 October, Haslemere Hall

22-24 November, Grayshott Village Hall

February One Act Plays

Haslemere Thespians' One Act Evening

Haslemere Players' *Titanic the Musical*

Haslemere Thespians' *Habeas Corpus*

Carousel

Carousel

Haslemere Players' *Music*

FAOS's *Anything Goes*

November Play Readthrough

November Play Auditions

AGM

February Plays Readthrough

February Plays Auditions

Haslemere Thespians' *A Month of Sundays*

Haslemere Players' *My One and Only*

November Play



2008

22-23 February, Grayshott Village Hall

April/May, Grayshott Village Hall

February One Act Plays

Cowardy Custard

*** Night Watch ***

The critique published by the *Bordon & Petersfield Times*, and by the *Haslemere Herald*

Audiences arrived at Grayshott Village Hall on Friday evening to learn that the performance of 'Night Watch' would be the first rather than the expected second. In the absence of their leading lady on the opening night it was decided to cancel the performance. This action, a precedent within living memory for the Stagers, was no doubt a disappointment for the assembled audience. However, as the play unfolded, the required presence of the leading role on stage almost throughout the play made consideration of using a stand-in, albeit with script, a non-starter.

Night Watch, written by playwright, Lucille Fletcher, opened on Broadway in 1972 and was quickly followed by a film version in 1973 starring Elizabeth Taylor. The play, a psychological thriller, is an American version of the British speciality of incorporating sneaky goings-on in a houseful of suspects and retained shades of plots more commonly associated with Agatha Christie and Daphne du Maurier.

Set in a fancy New York apartment from which one can see into an abandoned tenement the play opens with heiress, Elaine Wheeler, pacing the living room troubled by unsettling memories and vague fears. As her second husband, John, tries to comfort her Elaine screams as she fleetingly glimpses the body of a dead man in the tenement opposite. The police are called but find nothing but an empty chair. Elaine's terror grows when she later sees a second body, this time a woman's. From this point on the plot moves quickly and grippingly. Did Elaine really see a body or two or is she, as John and best friend Blanche believe, going cuckoo? Can John and Blanche, who are having an affair, trying to spirit Elaine off to a clinic in Switzerland so they can commit hanky-panky on her money? Can we trust the maid with an improbable accent, and the flamboyant neighbour with a very English sounding name?

June Hegarty did splendidly well in the part of Elaine; lots of words and lots of emotion which she accomplished with great assurance. John, played with great verve by Michael Clarke, and ably aided and abetted by Jane Clayton as the alluring Blanche, provided the perfect pair of foils for the neurotic Elaine. Peter Gardner brought his usual enthusiasm and freshness to the part of the irritatingly nerdy neighbour, Curtis Appleby. John Hilder cut the right stance as the cynical gum-chewing police lieutenant Walker and Brezetta Thonger, in the role of Walker's side-kick, Vanelli, brought back fond memories of Sharon Gless in the 70s television detective series, *Cagney and Lacey*. Shirley Jellis and John Preskett respectively played the cameo roles of the psychiatrist and delicatessen owner. Trudy Hathaway as the Germanic housemaid, Helga, was an instant hit. Always lurking and listening around corners she provided the only, and much needed, comedy element to the play.

Peter Budd, as director, used his considerable experience to ensure that this play, with a script that could have lapsed into plodding boredom, not only kept pace, but kept the audience's interest. The Stagers can feel well pleased with their latest production in the knowledge that their usual high standards of stage-craft were maintained. The quality of the set was excellent and at curtain-up the audiences were immediately transported to downtown New York.

I left at the end wondering whether the psychiatrist was for real or if she was having an affair with the delicatessen owner from Peckham? But, perhaps the greatest mystery of the play is why neighbour Curtis Appleby, the suspected quintessential Englishman, spoke in hushed tones with the curious pseudo-Hungarian accent? I suspect that he had secret designs on Helga and, having acquired Elaine's apartment key as she sped off to Switzerland for a better life, leaving behind the dead bodies of John and Blanche in the tenement, he intended to live out his days in ill-gotten luxury. Well good luck to him!

AJDB.