

September 2008

Spotlight

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The Newsletter of Newport Playgoers Society



Season starts with fast-paced farce!

PREPARE for a challenge as the new season opens with 'Habeas Corpus', a riotous farce that focuses on the once prudish British attitude towards sex.

Alan Bennett's classic play was written in the early '70s but in the hands of director Rosemary Bissex, theatre-goers will be treated to a fresh interpretation.

"I want to reveal the pathos and turmoil of the characters whilst allowing the audience to laugh out loud at what will now be considered politically incorrect jokes," says Rose.



Confused housekeeper Mrs Swabb (Chris Powell) looks on as Dr Wicksteed (Russell Walker) examines Felicity Rumpers (Ellie Pinnell)



Canon Throbbing (Alex Wilson) arrives on his bike to be greeted by his fiancée Connie Wicksteed (Linda Cleak)

"Bennett dramatised the moral hypocrisy of a permissive society but we want to add a 21st century feel to that.

"By celebrating the 'un-PC' we also want our audience to evaluate today's obsession with political correctness."

The play is a clever mix of the comic and the dark but it is the truth of the situations and ultimately whether they will shock or amuse that attracted Rose to the script.

The production has a cast of established Playgoers favourites and some new faces playing the seemingly respectable Wicksteed family who are all undone by their various liaisons, past and present.

A randy vicar, a false breast fitter and a baffled cleaner in drag are just three of the colourful characters aboard what promises to be a roller coaster ride of an evening.



False breast fitter Denzil Shanks (Julian Powell) arrives to examine his handiwork – Muriel Wicksteed (Rosemary Chick) enjoys the attention - until her husband (Russell Walker) finds out



To contact the Dolman Theatre, telephone: 01633 263670

On The Edge...with Noreen Owen



Q. What attracted you to Wardrobe or how did you get involved?

A. I'm very interested in costume but can only do the most basic sewing! However I like organisation, so I'm in my element, though keeping the wardrobe in order is quite a job for the two of us. I enjoy haunting the charity shops and finding a bargain. Last, but not least, it's hugely rewarding when you're responsible for a play and everything goes well, the play looks great and the actors like what they are wearing.

Q. What has given you the greatest sense of achievement in your work at the theatre?

A. Without doubt, setting up and helping the 'Tea for 2' matinee to be such a success.

Q. What has been your strangest or funniest moment in your work?

A. Well, that would be telling! I have written a poem about some of the amusing things that have happened in wardrobe, but that's for my enjoyment only!

Q. What is your all time favourite NPS production and why?

A. Sorry, I can't just name one, but my Top Ten list would start with 'Steel Magnolias', 'Amadeus' and 'Wild Honey' they were all well produced and beautifully acted. The last two had fabulous costumes and who could forget the effect of that train! Amateur theatre at its most professional.

**On The Edge is a new feature in which Neil Chapman quizzes prominent people in NPS.*

The Dolman's role in city's Cultural Quarter



AT a conference exploring the prospect of establishing a cultural quarter for Newport, Chris Hill pointed out the important role that Newport Playgoers Society has played in providing a focus for the arts in the city over the last 85 years. He is pictured chatting to theatre director Vanessa Dodd and Chris O'Malley, Pro Vice-Chancellor at the University of Wales, Newport, who organised the event.

Magical Minack!

IN July, Newport Playgoers Society delighted the crowds of holiday-makers and the good people of Cornwall with their production of 'Under Milk Wood' by Dylan Thomas.

Below is a letter received from NPS members Anne and Brian Smith from Crickhowell, who were lucky enough to watch them.

"Congratulations to Playgoers for a magical production of 'Under Milk Wood' at the Minack Theatre. The open-air amphitheatre made the perfect setting. On a cool, calm evening we watched the dolphins leaping in the water before we were transported to Llareggub. The acting was fresh, humorous and energetic, and the unobtrusive amplification made even the softest singing carry to the far reaches of the theatre.



ABOVE: Adrian Bevan, who directed 'Under Milk Wood' reprised his role as Captain Cat for the highly successful run at the open air Minack Theatre in Cornwall

"The actors changed character and costume with consummate ease and we were thrilled with the well - deserved ovation they received. Thank you for a wonderful evening - we felt very proud to be Playgoers!"

Cutting edge theatre!

THERE'S a Halloween treat for everyone who loves thrills and spills when 'Sweeney Todd, the Demon Barber of Fleet Street' by Christopher Bond is presented in the Studio from 23 - 25 October.

Daniel Bates, who has already been a member of youth theatre, Solo and the wardrobe team, now takes on his first directing role and tackles the role of pie maker too, as he will be baking the many and varied pies for this production.

The dark tale tells how Sweeney Todd, a hard-working man devoted to his wife and daughter, is deported by evil Judge Turpin on a false charge. Todd returns years later determined to avenge his family, and once in London, teams up with Mrs Lovett, a pie maker.

Working together they take revenge on all those who have wronged them and at the same time create the meatiest pies in London!

Playgoers Scoop Drama Prizes

ONCE again, Playgoers enjoyed considerable success in the Gwent Drama League Awards.

'The Odd Couple' was voted the winning production, with director Ray Stone gaining the Adjudicator's Award. Bruce Campbell and Steve Saunders shared the Best Actor Award for their roles in the play and Alex Wilson, playing Murray, was named Best Supporting Actor. 'Proof' came second, with Sian Rees being named Best Actress.

Dolman Solo were praised for their set and costumes and gained the Best Décor Award, with Carwyn Mundy being awarded the Best Newcomer.

In the Junior Section, Daniel Bates won Best Actor Award for 'Peter Pan' and Jack Baggs and Charlie Beddoe won Best Supporting Actor and Actress respectively.



Photo: Lynn Phillips

Eileen Lawless, Secretary of the Gwent Drama League said, "We are delighted to have such input from the Dolman Theatre and very much appreciate the support given to the Festival."

ABOVE: Steve Saunders, Bruce Campbell and Alex Wilson with some of the trophies awarded to Playgoers by the Gwent Drama League


NEXT month's production is set in a provincial theatre where an ageing actor-manager, known to his company as Sir, is struggling to find the strength to make it to the stage for his 227th performance of King Lear.

With thirty minutes to curtain-up, air-raid sirens sounding and the best actors having been 'called up', Sir is crumbling. Devoted dresser Norman must once again rally the unpredictable star whose grip on sanity is becoming increasingly precarious.

Newport Playgoers Society presents

the dresser

by Ronald Harwood



14 -18 October 2008
Dolman Theatre
Kingsway, Newport

Performances start at 7.15pm
(Saturday Matinee 2.30pm)
To Book Tickets
Telephone (01633) 263670 or 656757
www.dolmantheatre.co.uk

Wartime drama in 'The Dresser'



Photo: Betina Skovbro

Ruth Ferguson directs Ronald Harwood's modern classic 'The Dresser'

Directed by NPS stalwart Ruth Ferguson, 'The Dresser' was inspired by playwright Ronald Harwood's memories of his years working as Donald Wolfit's dresser. This evocative, perceptive and hilarious portrait of backstage life is one of the most acclaimed dramas of modern theatre.

Is there a hairdresser in the house?

DURING this season, our plays cover quite a time span - we hop back and forth between most of the decades of the past century, and skip from medieval times to the Restoration.

Finding costumes is challenging enough for Judith and Noreen but getting the hair right can be a real headache!

They are seeking anyone who would enjoy covering the occasional play by coming in to style the hair of some of the cast. If you would like to know more, give them a call - Judith on 01633 421402 or Noreen on 01600 860116. It's a lot of fun to be involved with a production and you're assured of a very warm welcome!

Winning Raffle!

A BIG thank you from Audrey to everyone for supporting the monthly Raffle. A grand total of £2,841 was raised for NPS funds last season! Many thanks also for all the lovely gifts given by our members to be raffled - please keep up the good work.



No Misery for Claudia as she wins the Webley!

CONGRATULATIONS to Claudia Barnes (*left*) whose performance as the psychotic fan Annie Wilkes in Stephen King's chilling 'Misery' won her the Webley Prize, for the best individual acting performance during the Season 2007-08.

feedback

...on your Spotlight newsletter is always welcome. Email the Publicity Team with your suggestions and opinions.

Your Spotlight Newsletter

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Unless otherwise stated all photos by Phil Mansell

If you have comments or information for the October Spotlight, please write c/o the Dolman Theatre, phone or email the the news team by 30 September 2008.

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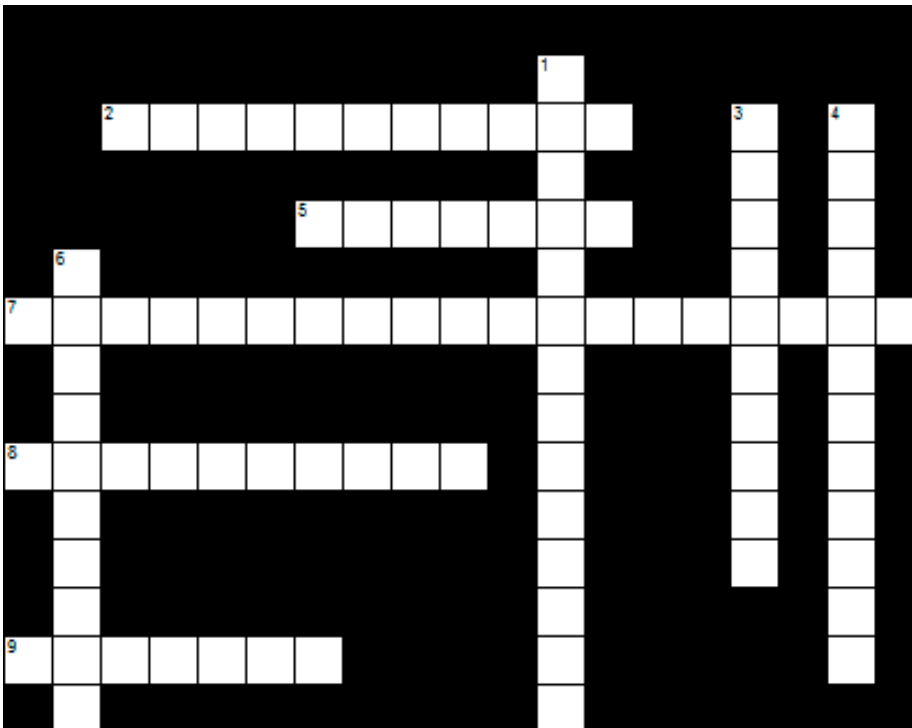
tel: 01633 212068

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All information was correct at time of going to press

WIN a bottle of bubbly in QuizWord Competition

To be in with a chance of winning a bottle of bubbly, study the fiendish clues below and complete the crossword with the names of some of this season's plays and playwrights, then place your entry in one of the boxes in the bar.



Across

2. This play just isn't cricket! Or is it?
5. Not Gordon, but Alan!
7. What the "baddie" gets in a pantomime?
8. Surely not an NPS play that will leave you feeling annoyed?
9. Initially, a perlick playwright!

Down

1. Mystery woman found in English Riviera
3. Deck of cards that didn't deal the truth?
4. Latin for "you have the body"
6. Play about item found in Welsh kitchen?

Name

Tel. No

News From Council & Management

A new carpet has been laid in the Upper Foyer by Jeff Williams Carpets, 350 Chepstow Road, Newport, who very kindly sponsored NPS with this item.

All the Rehearsal Rooms and the Dressing Rooms have been decorated in preparation for the new season. New lighting has been installed in the Main Foyer.

A replacement of the lighting desk and dimmers has been installed, after we were advised that due to the age of the dimmers, servicing was no longer an option. The new system has cost us £13,000 plus VAT.

Welsh Water has suspended our water account until 21 September after it was discovered that they have been charging us for the water used by Wilkinson Store as well as our own usage! Our plumber has ordered a sub meter to be fitted to our supply to monitor our usage.

The Treasurer announced that after NPS' successful performances of 'Under Milk Wood' at the Minack Theatre the Society should clear £16,000 for our funds.