

On the Fringe



An occasional newsletter from the Spring Grove Fringe ~ June 2019

Registered Charity Number 1150982

Dates for your Diary

Wednesday July 3rd, 8.00pm – Play Reading evening.

October 4th/5th – Spring Grove's got talent! Daisy and Suzanne will be polishing their golden buzzers!

Wednesday October 9th – Spring Grove Fringe Annual General Meeting. Subs are due end of September. Further details to follow.

November 29th/30th – a one-act play, sketches and monologues ... more than the sum of the parts!

Vicky

Vicky Maunder, former Vicar of St John's, has moved to a new parish in Southampton.

She has written to send her love and thanks to the SGF for all the fun she has had over the last few years. She and the girls have loved being involved and will miss the panto very much.

We wish her well in her new job.



Thanks from Jacqui



Jacqui and Jonathan thank everybody in the SGF for the huge contribution made to the Stroke Association. They are incredibly thankful. It is over a year since Jacqui's stroke and she is making huge strides forward and is incredibly determined. It is a slow process, but it is happening.

A lot of the improvement is a direct result of the friendship and kindness shown by members of the Fringe. They would like their thanks passed on to everyone.

Play Readings



Don't miss out on the action – you don't even need to learn lines!

The first of this Summer's play reading evenings will be Wednesday July 3rd at 8.00pm in the Hall. Nigel will be leading readings of a number of Michael Frayn short sketches and monologues, from his *Matchbox Theatre* and *Pocket Playhouse*, testing them out for possible SGF performance in November this year.

Do come along, if that sounds interesting. Even if it doesn't, there will be the usual 'refreshments' to simulate the wildly enthusiastic standing ovation, requiring attendance of St John Ambulance.

There will be a further play reading in August – an email to follow later.

Donations

SGF continues its tradition of supporting charities with donations from the profits of our shows.

Last Autumn we gave £500 to Pets as Therapy, £1000 to The Salvation Army and £500 to Kingston Churches Action on Homelessness.

After the pantomime, we gave £750 to the Stroke Association.

When the accounts for Lady Windermere's Fan are finalised, we anticipate being able to give £250 to Kingston Food Bank and £250 to Shelter.

So – for everyone who comes to see our shows, every bottle of wine drunk and dinner devoured help to share our good fortune.

A Bunch of Amateurs

From our Arts Correspondent Sarky Grovel ...

For a couple of miserable days in November Kingston upon Thames was brought some Los Angeles sunshine by the arrival of the Hollywood star and Trump impersonator David Hamilton, wooed over the pond to the Spring Grove shores by the celebrated theatrical director, Roger Chown.



This much anticipated event was a short run of the comedy classic, *A Bunch of Amateurs*, penned by Nick Newman and Ian Hislop in his break from being the scourge of politicians.

Chown used his immense theatrical reputation (and a little bribery) to persuade a stellar cast, drawn from the renowned Royal Spring Grove Company, to perform alongside Hamilton. The critics were wowed by the clever casting and consequent ensemble's ability to accurately portray the required amateur nature of the acting in the *King Lear* excerpts. Hamilton provided exactly the star quality expected of the role: petulant, insensitive, lecherous and demanding as the posterously named Jefferson Steel.



The home grown cast was led by a tour-de-force performance by Sandie Glenny as Dorothy, perfectly combining the desperation and determination of the character to save her beloved theatre troupe with one last ditch effort. It was a truly inspiring effort and there were tears.

The stalwarts of many a SGF triumph, Scott Milligan and Laurie South were perfectly cast as Nigel the pompous thespian and Dennis the have-a-go hero respectively.



There was never such a harrowing depiction of the 'putting out' of Gloucester's eyes as we witnessed on this stage.

The rising young star of SGF, Olivia Hamilton, was a delight and breath of fresh air as Steel's neglected but forceful daughter, stepping naturally into the role of Cordelia, and we shall watch her dramatic progress with great interest.



Janice Smith gave a beautifully nuanced performance as star-struck, flamenco-dancing Mary ...



and we shall not easily forget Sarah Richardson's interesting massage technique in the role of Lauren; nor will Mr. Hamilton.



As always with this company's productions no expense was spared on the set which managed to create in great detail the barn/ church hall atmosphere brilliantly for the audience, right down to the rather basic 'facilities'. Much credit goes to the set/ stage management team of Mark Springthorpe, Adrian Treloar, Tony Tresigne, Jo Need and Jenny Robson.

As the self-effacing director himself put it: 'the bar was raised' with this production and we have to concur and look forward to the future efforts of the Royal Spring Grove Company, with or without Hollywood talent.



The self-effacing Director of *A Bunch of Amateurs* would like to correct our Reviewer over an important matter. What he actually said said was "Thank God for the bar."



Ad libs

For when you've lost your place in the script at the latest SGF Checkhov production.

Two neighbours in Stratford have a dispute about whose house is the authentic birthplace of William Shakespeare. Officials kept the peace by putting a plaque on both their houses.

A Stage Manager's View of the World:

The tech crew trips over clearly marked ledges. Actors trip over tape on the floor.

Dancers trip over tape that was pulled up yesterday.

How do you drown the leading lady?
Place a mirror at the bottom of a pool.

How many actors does it take to change a light bulb?

100! One to screw the bulb in and 99 to stand around, saying, "It should be me up there!"

How many producers does it take to change a light bulb?

Sorry, a new light bulb isn't in the budget.

A sound technician, a lighting designer and a stage manager find an old lamp, backstage at the theatre. One of them gives it a rub, and out wafts a genie!

"Since you all found me," he says, "You each get one wish!" The sound technician steps up and says, "I wish to be sitting poolside in my own multi-million-pound mansion!" And POOF, he is gone.

The lighting director takes his turn and says, "Well, I wish to be sitting on the beach on my own multi-billion-pound private island!" And POOF, he is gone.

Then stage manager turns to the genie and says, "I wish to have them both back in 10 minutes."

A friend of mine got sacked as a set designer for not getting the work done. He didn't make a scene.

Tried acting on a farm once. It went terribly; I got moored off the stage.

Planning to open a new shadow puppet show. Business plan says we'll make a fortune, but those are just projected figures.



Lady Windermere's Fan

The Spring Grove Fringe 'dream team' of Sandy Gavshon and Nigel Duffin have curated a thoroughly excellent and enjoyable performance from the ever improving ensemble of talent that is the membership of the group and which to a very pleasing degree brought out the wit and humour of Oscar Wilde's writing.



Lady Windermere's Fan was the first total commercial success for Oscar Wilde earning him both the fame and fortune, subsequently to be enhanced by *The Importance of Being Earnest*.

The cast was led by Karina Ramnarain who brought a genteel innocence and muted glamour to the role of the eponymous Lady Windermere, allowing her emotions to be twisted one way by her putative lover, Lord Darlington, played by the always dependable David Hamilton, declaring his intense love for her with a restraint redolent of the era but turned the other way by her husband (John Hackett) with a display of paternalistic anger that reached well into the audience.

the action of the play and her relatively small part in it. More and bigger roles to come for Olivia I think.



Lady Stutfield was portrayed by a suitably doleful Sandie Glenny, all too aware of the probable reasons for her husbands' absence. Did he subsequently make a guest non-appearance as Bunbury in *The Importance of Being Earnest*?



Sarah Richardson as the Duchess of Berwick brought to the stage an exuberance of character that matched her hat and which brought (at the Saturday performance) a thoroughly merited round of applause on her exit after a faultless lengthy monologue.

Nigel Bellwood adopted a very authentic Australian accent in wooing Lady Agatha (Olivia Boulton) the daughter of the Duchess and selflessly threw himself into the courtship routine. For her part Olivia displayed a very persuasive notion that whilst on stage and despite not having many lines, she was at all times alert to

The third Act, set in Lord Darlington's rooms, was a triumph of choreography by the directors where the male participants (including Laurie South as a wonderfully simpering Lord Augustus and Matt Sexton bumbling through life as Cecil Graham) all moved with a graceful ease around the stage, belying the cramped dimensions of the set.





Their grandiose declarations on life and love set the scene for the arrival, nay entrance, of Mrs Erlynne, the alleged femme fatale of the piece.

Daisy Jones once again proved her immense worth to SGF with a glamorous portrayal of the ultimately wronged vamp.

Jo Need and Lynn Charlton as the Ladies Plymdale and Jedburgh skilfully supplied the acidic commentary on the deeds and misdeeds of the menfolk, ...



... whilst Scott Milligan as Parker the butler looked magnificent in tails.

Veronica Birley as Rosalie the maid followed the dialogue intently, whilst wisely keeping her counsel.

iMake what you will of the rather silly story that comprises the play, there are intervals of igentle amusement not always connected to the plot.



Cecil Graham "It's no business of yours." Reply "No, that's why it interests me."

"In this world there are only two tragedies. One is not getting what one wants, and the other is getting it." Mr. Dumby, (a suitably camp Allan Lloyd) perhaps reflecting that life imitates art, or is it the other way around?



"We are all in the gutter, but some of us are looking at the stars."

"I can resist everything, except temptation."

Mention must be made of the quirky Musical Interlude. Although home-spun, it was authentically 'Oscar' in its saucy titillation. The three performers, eschewing SGF's usual chamber orchestra, settled, surprisingly, for a solo triangle as accompaniment.



The Wildean sagacity wears well despite the hundred years and more since its composition and has perhaps become all the more apposite in the light of recent world events.

The production was ably helped by the magnificent costumes and by a versatile set design by Gavin Dawson. The lovely supper complete with fruit trifle (yum) made for a real value for money night out, not least aided by Rod Gavshon who ensured that the vino collapso was delivered just so.

The Spring Grove Fringe has for too long entertained its loyal audiences with displays of sins of omission as well as commission but the am-dramish notion that multiple prompts are all part of the fun has been replaced by a discipline of preparation and performance that has shone through with this production. Congratulations to everybody who had a hand in this production, particularly Sandy and Nigel - indeed the Dream Team.

Michael Biliious (Bibulous?)



Spring Grove Fringe ...

Jenny's guide to how it works

Some people like to escape the hum-drum of life. Some people don't know what to do when they retire. Some people feel the need to escape to another world and play dressy-up on stage, hoping to achieve a moment or two: being a king, a fairy, the back end of camel, or even a very important person, like the prime minister or the Statue of Liberty.



All these things can be achieved by joining a drama group called the Spring Grove Fringe. This is where you can go into therapy at no extra cost. You may have a tantrum and shout very loud or you can wander about in a see-through 1970s negligée without a care in the world.

Here is an example of dressing up and having a tantrum with the added enjoyment of dressing up in a silly frock and wig and being stabbed at the same time.



Sometimes it's necessary for the wig to fall off ... all part of the fun.

Learning lines

People sometimes like to find somewhere quiet to sit down and concentrate, which is very difficult in our busy world. Sitting down is good for the mind to store up positive energy. Allan sometimes wonders what comes next.

Sometimes you can walk or sit in your car listening to lines to be learnt from a recording and repeat



them many many many times. Best to be alone for this as you may create disorder in society and be considered insane.

Be warned that people may resort to swearing when they just can't remember a certain phrase or two, ... or three or four. Naughty words may slip out at any time during rehearsals, but no one should be offended and should be accepted as part of the fun. Laurie can lose the plot at times.



Concentration is key and you will no longer worry about money, work, family, STDs, or whether you've left the gas on.

You will wake up in the middle of the night with lines sprouting out of your brain. This is good as you can be reassured your brain is awake at night and who wants to waste time sleeping. Be aware however that you may not perform well in your job the next day especially if you're a brain surgeon.



Jennifer resorts to a sneaky cigarette, due to the stress of achieving her full potential in a Greek tragedy.

And Scott can't avoid the odd glass of wine or two whilst performing.



You can take your character role wherever you want ... to the beach, shopping, gym or to your mother in law's ... especially if you've got an evil part in the Panto ... you can let rip in a very loud cross voice and just say you're practising your character role. You can get away with murder ... well perhaps not as that would be taking it too far.



But Vicky the Vicar can take on an evil role ... not like her at all.

Stage craft

Some people may get confused as to where they have to stand or even where the audience is but there is no worry as the audience expect the odd mistake or two ... or three or four ... and generally like the added humour. Entrances and exits can be tricky if you lack attention to scripts but there'll be someone shouting at you hopefully to get you on at the right time.



Pantomimes tend to be scary at times when there is a multitude of cast including little ones and their dancing. Some just can't keep up but not to worry there's always a place backstage for a little snooze.

And make up, of course ... some of which may become a little exaggerated ... King Rat, for example.



So there it is ... The Spring Grove Fringe and how it works.

Jenny

It's behind you!

And there was a pantomime (OH YES THERE WAS!) which was a mash up of two totally unrelated folk tales of Robin Hood and The Babes in the Wood. The Babes (!) with their pantomime dame nurse were a robust funny knockabout turn.

Robin and his dashing merry men were gallant and bold (cheer cheer), ...



Maid Marion was sweet and charming and the Sherriff and his henchmen sinister and evil (boo hiss).

There was sound supporting work from Prince John and King Richard, Maisie the maid, the Seer and the Herald. And, as ever, the Spirit of the Forest and her wood nymphs danced delightfully.



I am not quite sure why but there was a group of anti tax protestors and a wolf to keep things moving along.

There were some staging difficulties in trying to shoot six arrows safely across this little stage but they were overcome. The SGF maintained its reputation for singing in all of the solos and chorus pieces.

This was a big cast which appeared to be having a much fun as the audience. A lot of credit must go to Jacqui Rollason and Lynn Charlton for directing and keeping the cast under control. No doubt now they can look back on it with some relief and consider IT'S BEHIND YOU.