

Riverside Players AGM

Chairman's report on the 2016 year

Welcome everyone to this AGM and the review of the 2016 season which began very successfully with **FAMILY PLANNING** by Frank Vickery. For this production we had a cast made up of new members, members who were stepping up into roles from chorus and more experienced members. Under the directorship of Alex a thoroughly accomplished and enjoyable show was presented – Alex you should be proud. An innovative split level set was designed allowing the bedroom to be raised – good job to all involved in this aspect of the staging and for the set dressing which was complimented in the NODA report; also to the technical team overcoming any issues arising from this innovation. Due to the timing of the show it was eligible for the 2015/2016 NODA awards and **Sue Bell** was awarded Best Actress in a Play for Region 14; at the NODA London Conference Sue was further rewarded with a Highly Commended across all the London Regions. A wonderful achievement for Sue and all involved in Family Planning.

Another of our younger members, Sam Somerville, took over the director's chair for the next show **OLD BOILERS** by Adrian Cale. This production was chosen due to having a larger cast and more female players than male. This piece was unknown to us all but sometimes this can be a positive thing as there are no pre-conceived perceptions and one can take a more flexible approach. The NODA review complimented the diverseness of the characters and we welcomed new and old players to the cast. Putting myself in the mix for this one I can say it was such a great production to be in as each character had a quite defined role to play that you could get your teeth into. Being a short show it was decided to add a musical interlude at the end. The landlady in the script is an ex show girl and so it seemed natural to end on a bit of karaoke – keeping all the cast in character ensured the production was not compromised. I know Sam was delighted with the end result – so congratulations to Sam, the cast and all the team involved.

We ended the year with another Riverside pantomime from Limelight scripts **PINOCCHIO** directed by Susan Pickles (me). The feedback we get is that the public like traditional stories and traditional pantos and while we had never told this particular tale it is one that fitted the bill. Once again we had some sell out shows with nearly 1000 people attending over the run. As the director I was very happy with the overall production; everyone worked really hard – especially the chorus who had a huge number of songs and dances to learn – so well done all.

As usual in June Riverside Players played an active role in the Old Windsor Carnival weekend. Our walking party was led by Trish – the theme was “Europe” and our Venetian Carnival won one of the prizes. On the Sunday we once again threw ourselves into the fray of Old Windsor's Got Talent – the young people did so well

getting up and performing to a large crowd of family and friends. The competition was followed by an open air picnic in the park and a live band – a great day out and thanks to all who got involved.

In the summer break we held our regular Thursday socials where it was good to catch up with people. Plus one of the tasks we set ourselves last year was a clear out of the shed and we did it !! A huge thank you to everyone who helped on the day thanks also to the weather which was kind to us. We hired a very large skip and by the end of the day it was full to the very top – we emptied the shed, cleaned it, took out some racking sorted the props and were ruthless in deciding what went and what stayed. I think everyone will agree it was a job well done and it made preparing for the pantomime so much easier. Not just because we knew what we had and where it was, but because you could actually get into the shed without clambering over stuff and risking life and limb. Thank fully there was only one really nasty pile of rotting stuff in the far corner and no rodents or really huge spiders that I saw anyway.

And this year's task? It really needs to be the wardrobe which is once again bursting at the seams. We have some good costumes but items do get lost, misplaced or separated and it's hard when you come to dress a show and a costume you thought was there isn't. Anyway the job should not be as hard as the shed but there does need to be an element of ruthlessness to ensure we keep our costumes safe and in good condition.

I have mentioned NODA already in respect of Family Planning but we were also the Region 14 winners of The Harvey Kesselman Comedy Award given to Nadeem Valecha for his Norman in ROUND AND ROUND THE GARDEN and "The It's Behind You Award" for the Best Pantomime for SNOW WHITE & THE SEVEN DWARFS. Once again this means that all three shows were recognised as best in Region – well done to everyone involved – and of course to Sue for her highly commended.

I am sure you all know that I am now the NODA representative for our region 14 along with Terry who many of you met at the pantomime. It's been a busy few months and I have seen a lot of shows which has been interesting. The Region 14 awards will be announced in April and the London Area Conference will be held on Saturday 3rd and Sunday 4th June at the Radlett Centre – just off J19 of the M25 - I do hope that some of you will attend as it's a great chance to find out more about NODA, to see other societies showcase their talents, attend workshops and of course to attend the Awards Ceremony which will be held on the Sunday afternoon. More information will be included in the next newsletter.

Old Windsor Carnival will be held on Saturday 10th and Sunday 11th June and the theme this year is Television so get your thinking caps on for a witty entry into the procession. We will as always be looking for someone to co-ordinate the Riverside entry. Like all voluntary organisations the OW Carnival committee are struggling with

volunteers and people to help out in planning and on the day; to this end Riverside Players will run the raffle tent on the Saturday and also run the Talent Show on the Sunday. I do hope that as many of you as possible will help on Saturday and/or Sunday as we all need to help each other to ensure these wonderful traditions survive and to further secure the support of the village for Riverside Players.

So what is happening on stage this year, sadly we had no spring production to offer and while we are looking at a summer production we don't have an announcement as promised. I can say that the pantomime will go ahead – the title is RAPUNZEL and Simon will be in the Director's chair. We are of course also looking further ahead and hope to offer a full season in 2018, however, this does depend on people coming forward to try their hand at Directing and researching the type of shows the membership want. Any offers or ideas maybe we can discuss them later. We are fully committed to accommodate whatever people want to do and if this means moving to a two show programme to ensure longer rehearsal times then we can do it – however we do need to plan in advance to ensure hall bookings for shows and rehearsals are secured.

On the subject of the Memorial Hall, you can all notice the decoration and perhaps other enhancements – the Hall committee continue to work with the users to ensure the viability of the hall for everyone but funds are in short supply and as such our hall hire charges are going to increase by about 30% on April 1st. This will obviously impact our costs in the years ahead and it might mean an increase in show fees, membership and ticket prices in due course. We have had to accept these increases to ensure the hall can continue as we all want to remain here for rehearsals and shows going forward.

As always I would like to take a moment to formally thank everyone for all the work they do on each of the shows especially those that have non acting roles. Our technical team are really excellent and we should all be grateful to Mark and Roger for their contribution. To our President Jock for his support and to our lovely lady VP's Kay and Val – where would front of house be without them.

No society can operate without a hardworking committee and together this year I think we have achieved a great deal so thank you to the whole committee with special thanks to Vicki and Simon for their extra efforts as officers.

As you know I am standing down as chair this year but will still stay on committee if voted on. Of course I hope that we can fill the role although there are no takers at this time so if we have to operate without a chair then so be it. Also this year Gerry and Sam are standing down from committee – thanks for your time and commitment – hopefully we can welcome you back again in the future. There are therefore vacancies on committee and I hope that we will have some volunteers to fill them; as I always say the role and work is not arduous if we all work together and share the load

I have so enjoyed being the chair of this great society – I am not walking away just allowing others to have the opportunity to promote their ideas about the future of Riverside Players going forward. Thank you to everyone for your support, help and commitment over the last 6 years it's been a truly wonderful experience.

So 2017 isn't exactly how we would want it to be but I have every confidence that our panto and our 2018 programme will be fabulous.

Many thanks

Susan Boobyer-Pickles

Thursday 9th March 2017