



The Prompter

The Theatre Royal & Workington Playgoers' newsletter – October 2019



Workington Playgoers

Present

'Comedians'

Written by Trevor Griffiths
Directed by Stewart Grant

October 15th – 19th
7.30 pm

*'Trevor Griffiths has not shown his brilliance as a writer more clearly than in 'Comedians'.
(Daily Telegraph)*

Tickets are £11.50 (£10.50 concessions). Book online at <http://www.theatre-royal-workington.co.uk> or leave a message for the Theatre Royal Box Office on 01900 603161.

Please note: This entertaining and thought-provoking play does contain swearing and offensive language.

‘Comedians’: the tears of laughter

What is comedy? What is laughter? Where do they come from, and why?

As one philosopher suggested at the start of the last century, in a totally caring society, a society in which everyone was wholly attuned to the feelings of others, laughter would be almost impossible – for laughter generally demands a ‘victim’. Remember all those silent slapstick comedies? What about the downfall and pain of the man who slips up on the banana skin? Or the violence in a Tom and Jerry cartoon? Consider the humiliations suffered by the likes of Tony Hancock, Harold Steptoe, Inspector Clouseau, David Brent and (more recently) ‘Fleabag’. The truth is that we are often laughing at the real or imagined hurt or failure of another when we react to comedy.

Society has gained in sensitivity over the decades where the feelings of others are concerned; and our attitude to what is acceptable in the field of humour has changed markedly. Most of us are no longer tolerant of the sexist or racist ‘joke’. What was considered suitable subject matter for humour 40 years ago – mothers-in-law, homosexuality, disabled people, Irishmen, buxom blondes – is now largely deemed unacceptable and inappropriate. The new buzzword is ‘woke’, an adjective which describes a state of awareness of sensitive issues and injustices in society. Our present-day society has become ‘woke’ to the feelings of others.

Trevor Griffiths’ most famous play, *Comedians*, makes its audience think deeply about the nature of comedy and its power to sustain and reinforce cultural stereotypes and prejudice by its choice of ‘victim’. It was written and first performed in the mid-1970s, long before the rise of ‘Alternative Comedy’ in the 1980s ousted the type of material which was a staple of stand-up performance in the old Variety Shows and

working men's clubs. (Indeed, some speculate that this play actually helped bring about 'Alternative Comedy'.)

Comedians exposes what lay beneath the repertoire of many comics at the time of its writing:

'A joke that feeds on ignorance starves its audience. We have the choice... Most comics feed prejudice and fear and blinkered vision, but the best ones, the best ones...illuminate them, make them clearer to see, easier to deal with. We've got to make people laugh till they cry. Cry. Till they find their pain and their beauty. Comedy is medicine. Not coloured sweets to rot their teeth with.'

Griffiths' play remains a brilliant and searching critique of humour in society and culture, and raises the possibility of a new comic awareness, cleverly drawing attention to the prejudices which often lurk, hidden and unquestioned, under the guise of a joke. Comedy is not just a laughing matter, you see, but food for some serious thought.

Geoffrey Hall

Christmas!



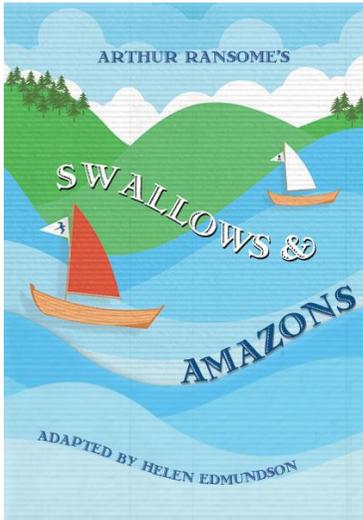
Yes, I know it's only October but diaries get crammed in November and December so we want to get our dates in there first.

Book now for

'The Vicar of Dibley.'

December 3rd – 7th.

Great fun for all the family and sure to be popular so book as soon as you can.



Theatre Royal Youth

Present

Arthur Ransome's

Swallows and Amazons

Adapted by Helen Edmundson

Oct. 31st – Nov. 2nd **7 00pm**

Tickets £7 and £5 (children)

Presented by kind permission
of Nick Hern Books

'Arthur Ransome's much-loved children's classic, set in the Lake District, is brought thrillingly to life in Helen Edmundson's wonderful theatrical adaptation.

When John, Susan, Titty and Roger are granted their wish to set sail on their beloved boat *Swallow*, they know it will be the summer holiday of a lifetime. But their adventures truly begin when they encounter Nancy and Peggy (the self-proclaimed Amazon Pirates) and the dastardly Captain Flint.'

'Genuinely inventive and encourages the audience to use their imagination' *Telegraph*

Ticket Prices: After much thought, Council have decided to increase our ticket prices from 1st January 2020 to help cover the ever-increasing costs of running and maintaining our theatre. Adult performances will now be priced at £12 per ticket (with concessions at £11). TRY productions will be £8 for adults (with concessions at £6).

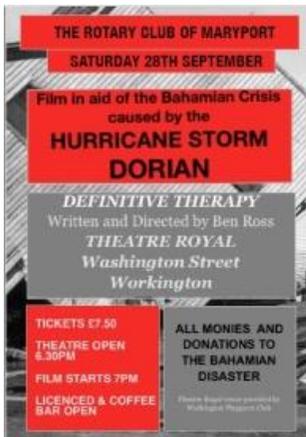


Connections Drama Festival

Each year the National Theatre commissions ten new plays for young people to perform, bringing together some of the UK's most exciting writers with the theatre-makers of tomorrow.

TRY have been selected to take part in this festival for young people aged 13-19.

They will perform the play 'Tuesday' by Alison Carr in the Theatre Royal before taking it to Keswick's Theatre by the Lake. Further details in the Christmas Prompter.



The Bahamian Crisis

The Board of Directors (Council) very kindly donated the use of the Theatre on Saturday 28th September to enable Maryport Rotary Club to hold a fund-raising evening in aid of the crisis in The Bahamas caused by Hurricane Dorian. The event took the form of a film show with a short clip of the devastation in the islands, followed by a second showing of "Definitive Therapy", the feature film written, directed and produced by Ben Brinicombe,

starring many members of Playgoers and using recognisable parts of the theatre and elsewhere.

Many thanks,

Geoff Brinicombe, President, Maryport Rotary

Workington Playgoers' AGM – September 3rd

The recent AGM was well attended – 43 members. The meeting was chaired by Morgan Sweeney. Reports were received from all departments.

The following Officers were elected for 2019–2020.

President	Geoffrey Hall
Chair	Morgan Sweeney
Treasurer	Gilda Wells
Secretary	Grace Walker
Company Secretary	Geoffrey Hall
Technical Director	Scott Ashton
Productions Director	Brian Young
Publicity and Marketing Director	Kelly Davis
Chair of Safeguarding	James Last

Other Positions – election not required

Assistant Treasurer	Anne Hindmoor
Company Auditor	William Moore
Membership Secretary	Lorna Wilson
Wardrobe Manager	Helen Earl
Maintenance Manager	Tony Magorrian
Props Manager	Viv Young
FOH Co-ordinator	Pam Hayes
Licensed Bar Manager	Heather Scholey
The Prompter Editor	Gillian Scholey
Box Office Manager	Vacant

Congratulations to the new post holders and many thanks to those who have relinquished their posts. Your hard work is much appreciated. – Ed.

AGM Report Snippets.

Full reports can be accessed via our Secretary or the relevant Dept. leads.



Morgan Sweeney. Chair – now have better sound system ... flying grid replaced ... lighting - rolling programme of improvements planned including LEDs... 10 plays since last AGM ... remarkable ... increased number of directors ... stage crew wonderful ... we are no longer afraid of large cast plays ... thanks to all on FOH and stage crew for extra work ... Youth Group built on their reputation ... making good progress on last year's mandate.



Tony Parker. Productions – ‘*Dinner*’ a controversial choice but something had to be chosen quickly after cancellation of *The Crucible* ... our purpose is to put on good drama and stretch ourselves ... *Midsummer Night's Dream* regarded by some as our best Shakespeare yet ... audiences down for it due to timing of other professional and amateur productions ... costumes for all productions are marvellous ... Viv overseeing props now ... forthcoming season has five comedies. They are *Di and Viv and Rose* – funny and poignant; *Whodunnit* – clever comedy thriller; *The Merchant of Venice*; *Rules for Living* – a modern black comedy; *Blackadder the Regency Years* ... an even split of male and female parts over the year ... three new directors next year



Pat Brinicombe. Film – (report given by Pat as Ben Brinicombe not available.) Film Group run same way as Playgoers – actors, crew and directors ... shortage of scripts ... Ben written two ... professionals have helped with the loan of equipment, skills and advice ... Ben away working next year ... Some doubt over how the group will function in the future.



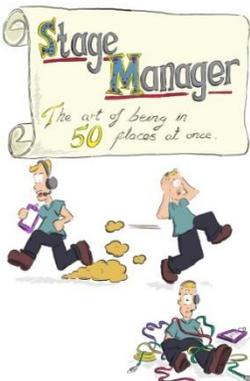
Georgia Douglas-Brown. TRY – over 600 tickets sold last year ... 35 members ... waiting list ... James Last, Morgan Sweeney and Helen Earl running Safeguarding.



Gilda Wells. TMG – responsible for the Diary and the running of the theatre ... this subcommittee make decisions which go to Council to be ratified ... FOH and Box Office – thanks to Glynn Scurr, Heather Scholey and Anne Bowmer ... thanks to Pat Brinicombe and Joy Bowmer for their work ... a FOH co-ordinator needed as Glynn Scurr just going to look after stock now ... Box Office co-ordinator needed ... teams there but co-ordinators needed.



Kelly Davis. Publicity – *Times and Star*, *Cumbria Crack* and *Cumbria Guide* very supportive ... greater use being made of Facebook ... thanks to Pat Brinicombe, Emma Morgan, Brian and Viv Young, Chris Jackson, Geoff Brinicombe, Anne Bowmer, Lorna Wilson, Gillian Scholey, Peter Nicholson and Jenni Rushton for their help.



Geoff Brinicombe. Technical – thanks to stage crew who have worked tirelessly over the last year... new flying grid ... new loudspeakers... some new LEDs ... old projector restored. One of only two in the country. Very rare. Will be placed on the balcony... outside lamp also restored. Found to have a working 1000w bulb. This will be replaced by LED and lamp repositioned outside ... Geoff's last report as Tech Director as retiring but will still be part of stage crew.

Elections – Tony Parker and Brian Young contested the Productions Director post. Brian Young was appointed.

AOB @ The AGM



A number of items were discussed. Decisions will be made at the most appropriate meetings.

- 1) Notification of meetings. Not enough given. Use of events calendar/ Prompter. (See Council notes – Ed)
- 2) Do all members receive Mailchimp? – check to be made on records.
- 3) Members without email wish to be kept abreast of events and have difficulty in obtaining tickets.
- 4) Difficulty in hearing actors/speakers on stage. Induction loop to be checked again for efficiency.
- 5) Consideration to be given to use of voice coaches/workshops to improve diction, volume and projection. Interest to be canvassed.
- 6) A request that members are canvassed to see if there is any interest in theatre trips.
- 7) Complimentary tickets for FOH staff. (See Council notes. Ed)
- 8) Duties of Theatre Managers.
- 9) Problems with transportation to see plays. Lift sharing mooted.



Meeting Dates

Following requests at the AGM, Council has set the following dates for meetings:-

Council Meetings – all starting at 7.35pm. 19th November 2019, 7th January, 10th March, 12th May, 7th July 2020.

Theatre Management Group – Gilda would like to start these at 6.30pm. 9th October, 17th December 2019. 25th February, 21st April, 23rd June, 11th August 2020

If you are a member of Workington Playgoers, then you are welcome to attend these meetings. Only the directors of the club may VOTE at Council meetings. (Gilda Wells)

Productions



Hello everyone. As you may or may not know I have taken on the role of Productions Director. I would like to thank Tony Parker for the excellent position he has left the club in with next season sorted.

Following discussions at Council, the committee is being revamped and I would like to offer anyone with an interest in how we choose plays for future productions to come along and be part of the committee. The meetings are informal, and your views can be expressed in an easy and relaxed way. There is no maximum number of attendees so please come and see how these meetings are conducted.

The number of meetings is around 6 per year. This is variable as we near the casting of plays. The dates of the meetings will be advertised on the website for anyone to come along. Meetings usually start at 7.30pm. They may be subject to change so keep an eye on them.

Next year's season (i.e. 2020) has already been agreed with Council and the directors chosen. The committee is now busy working with the directors to get the casts organised for each play. This is ongoing.

We are now looking forward to the 2021 season and reading plays for selection. This is well advanced, so we are in a good position for that year. Despite this can I ask you to suggest plays that you may have seen and enjoyed or heard about that we could put forward for production? Obviously not all choices can be chosen as there is a limit in the number of plays we can put on in one year and we need to offer variety to our audiences. If you could submit ideas as soon as possible it would help the selection process and would give us a great advantage to be in a position where we have plays in hand for future years.

I would like to promote the idea that we “read” plays (including ones not chosen for main house productions) on a regular basis. This would happen by asking members to come to the theatre and sit round a table and “act” out the play. This would be open to all members and not just actors. You may find that doing this would encourage you to have a go at acting. Acting out the play could promote it to a full rehearsed Main House production, or we may find it’s just not suitable for any number of reasons. In addition, rehearsed readings, where actors use the script and physically act out the play on stage for our own members would be another way to promote a play. This is a useful way, particularly, for new members to show their skills. Feedback on these ideas would be useful for the committee to consider. I feel it would also help people to feel more included, especially if they are not involved in public performances.



The manner in which the club puts on plays means that a lot of people are required to help in areas other than stage. Can you help with any of these? Props, prompting, lighting, sound, costumes, coffee bar etc. I am trying to encourage members to be available and to get some training on these duties if they haven’t done it before, as they are necessary for a successful production. You will find it quite rewarding once you get over the initial challenge of “having a go”. There is help out there and you wouldn’t be left on your own. I would like to compile a list of helpers which directors can contact so that the plays we produce are the best they can be. You can contact me through the club or at bj.young2119@gmail.com although you may find I will be asking you verbally when we meet.

As this report has gone on long enough, please remember that we belong to a club and need to get to know each other which enhances closer working and the feeling that we belong and are of one voice.

Thanks for reading this.

Brian Young (Productions Director)



Well Done and Thanks

To Tony Magorrian and Geoff Brinicombe who have been very busy over the last few weeks (whilst not set building) on maintenance. Please take time to look at the new lights on the stairs to the balcony which have certainly made a difference. The stairs are currently being repainted as have the tables in the green room. Emergency lights have been replaced where needed and the dressing rooms are in the process of being repainted. **Thanks to all those who assisted with clearing some of the props store** which now has a dehumidifier installed which we hope will ensure that the props are kept in good condition in the future Theatre Management Group



A Plea Regarding Keys for the Theatre

As Chair of The Theatre Management Group, I have a list of members who should have keys but I am sure that this has altered over time and keys have been passed on to others. Could I ask all key holders to please drop me an email (wellsgilda63@googlemail.com) to confirm that you have a key and say whether it is for the front or the back of the building? This information will enable me to compile a definitive list of key holders. Many thanks for your co-operation. (Gilda Wells)



"The Magnificent Seven"

Grateful thanks are due to Brian, Viv, Sarah, Jane, David B. and David F. who turned up on a recent Sunday morning to fill the skip (in record time!) The workshop is accessible again and some of the mouldy items from the cellar have finally gone (masks and gloves were worn). We still will need another work party to remove the rest of the unneeded props etc. so watch this space. Elsewhere the crew (still magnificent but different names) are beavering away installing new lights, cables etc. helping Tony to maintain our lovely theatre. (Geoff Brinicombe)

Front of House Manager

You may have already realised that I have recently taken on the role of Front of House co-ordinator. This innocuous-sounding title entrusts me to sort out various aspects of making sure the Front of House runs smoothly when an event is being held in the Theatre – be it a play by the Playgoers, by TRY or a theatre hire by an outside group.

Each event requires people to man the coffee bar, the bar and sell raffle tickets, and generally there will be a Theatre Manager on duty as well.

I hope to be able to fill all these roles in good time with volunteers and willing helpers, and will email or telephone people regularly about each show. It will be extremely helpful if you can offer to take on one (or more!) of these jobs and let me know, but equally it will help if you reply promptly if you can't.

I understand a free ticket to the show will be offered to those who help out, but in the absence of willing volunteers, I may have to resort to more strong-arm tactics – you have been warned!

Seriously though, I have quickly realised how hard Glynn and his team have worked over the years to keep the Front of House going, and would like to thank them very much – they will be a difficult act to follow.

(Pam Hayes)

FOH Volunteer Tickets: FOH volunteers are valuable members of Workington Playgoers drama group and a vital part of the play's team. Council have therefore decided to trial a system whereby if you are working a FOH duty (raffle, box office or bar), you can also watch the show for free that night OR you can have one complimentary ticket for another night of that show's run. (Theatre Managers **MUST remain FOH** and can have a comp. for another night)



Volunteer needed!

We are very grateful that Pam Hayes has stepped in as our new Bar Rota Organiser. Thank you so much, Pam!

However, we still need a new **Box Office**

Coordinator. Anne Bowmer will be stepping down in

October and has kindly offered to train a new person to do this vital job. The role involves arranging for people to man the box office for each play, as well as reconciling ticket sales, and you will also need reasonable computer skills.

Please email Gilda Wells on finance@theatre-royal-workington.co.uk if you are interested in becoming our new Box Office Coordinator. Many thanks.

Box Office Training

There will be two sessions of Box Office training on Saturday 5th October – 10.30am and then again at 1pm at the theatre. It would be a great help and essential that we find people to man the Box office during performances. If you are interested, please come down on Saturday. If Saturday isn't a good day for you training can be arranged on an alternate day. Please email Anne Bowmer (annebowmer@googlemail.com) for further information.

Plea for Help

The theatre has been booked for Saturday 26th October from 11.00 am to 4.30 pm by "Imagination Parties" for disabled children so volunteers are needed to "babysit" the building **from 1pm** onwards. Pat & Geoff. are away for the weekend so can't be in attendance. Please contact Gilda if you can help. Also, the Theatre will need to be locked up once the group leaves, so a keyholding volunteer would be needed for this.

Bits and Bobs



Something to look forward to – a summer BBQ at the home of Morgan Sweeney. Mmmmm. Details later ... the Christmas Prompter will have details of up and coming events including Dramarama (Dec 12th), WADAMS tots (Dec 10th), Soundwave Christmas Concert, and a visiting psychic, Gareth Lewis (Feb 21st) ... Are you into your gins? We will now be stocking pink gin and Parma Violet gin. An alcoholic blast reviving memories from your childhood! ... also commencing before Christmas – Dancing Lights Cinema nights. Watch for a Mailchimp posting detailing the films... ... good to see Geoffrey Hall looking fit and well AND having well-earned jaunts away from work.



Theatre's Costumes Showcased

Helen Earl's talent for producing magnificent costumes was showcased at St Paul's Church, Seaton, during September. The church held a 'Festival of Talents' and a number of Seaton resident Helen's fantastic creations were on display. Theatre goers viewing the costumes from a distance often can't appreciate the workmanship and detail on her costumes and this was a wonderful opportunity to view them close-up



Photo: Chris Lewis.



A Round of Applause, Please

Well done to James Last for achieving his MA this summer. A super achievement ... Best of luck to Jodie Pearce who is embarking on her Masters at the University of Cambridge ... Well done Viv Young on becoming Vice President of Ennerdale Show and achieving excellent results in the produce/baking section this year ... Congratulations to Alison Shutt and Stewart Grant and *The Fit and Active Theatre Group* (Cockermouth). Their production won Best Play, Best Actress and Best Supporting Actress (Alison) at Lytham's recent One Act Play Festival. Excellent.



Books

Whilst the theatre cannot boast as many books as this, we do have a good selection of second-hand books – most in immaculate condition – for you to browse and, hopefully, purchase. Our bookshelves are now downstairs in the bar/foyer area and so much easier to access. Please do visit them.

Donations of books are VERY welcome and they can be left in the front office or just by the bookshelves. Fiction and non-fiction both welcome. Thank you to those who have donated so far.

Have Your Say

Contributions to The Prompter are always welcome. Please send them to news@theatre-royal-workington.co.uk or mail them to me at The Theatre Royal. The next edition will be prior to the Christmas show. Gillian Scholey (Editor)