

FESPA NEWS

Friends of East Suffolk Performing Arts

31st issue

November 2008



INSIDE THIS ISSUE...

Sidi writes 2

Musical celebration at the Friends party 2

Putting on a show in eight hours flat.
Tony Falkingham tells how 3

Mark Sterling makes a train 4

Spot the set - another memory teaser from Maurice
Rubens 5

**Friends' Forum - A reader remembers the
first first-night of *Salad Days* 6**

We introduce our first FESPA Bursary winners 7

**Profiling Hannah Harvey who finally steps on
stage after seven years in the wings 8**

Jill writes...

Dear Friends

The weather may have been terrible but, for us, nothing could dampen the excitement of our 25th Anniversary Season in Southwold – and there was a similar buzz about Aldeburgh where more people than ever filled the Jubilee Hall.

Tony had chosen a very jolly set of plays, opening with *Salad Days*. Later he included *The Lady Vanishes* – mountains, train and all! We were gratified that Jamie Barber, the Artistic Director of the prestigious Yvonne Arnaud theatre, asked us to take the production on to Guildford. Our master carpenter, Alan Horne, built an extra coach for Maurice's train and we set off. We were well received and had a happy week playing, for once, in a large theatre.

In Southwold, we were delighted to be back to full houses for the Lunchtime Plays at Sutherland House.

The Gala Night on 24th August was one to remember, especially for Tony and the cast who put the whole thing together in one day – Phew! (Tony gives his own account of the day on page 3) Simon Williams did some splendid improvising in the second half and The Actors' Charitable Trust benefited by £1,000.

For me there were other very special moments – starting at the *Friends' Evening* in June when, on behalf of the Company, I was presented with a beautiful piece of engraved crystal to mark the Anniversary and Sidi sang Lionel Bart's *I'm Reviewing the Situation* rewritten by Mark Sterling and incorporating – unbelievably – the title of every one

of the plays we've presented in our first quarter century. A truly virtuoso performance! (More on page 2) Then, later, on our first night, Southwold's Town Mayor, Teresa Baggott, came on stage to present me with an amber 'tree'.

I am so grateful – and both tree and crystal look splendid on my mantelpiece! Thank you to Sidi, Teresa and all the Friends.

Jill Freud



Top: the engraved crystal disc designed and executed by Halesworth glass engraver, Lesley Pyke. Above: Sidi Scott makes the presentation to Jill on behalf of the Friends. Pictures courtesy of Lesley Pyke and Peter Adshead. More pictures (in colour) on www.fespa.co.uk. Click on 'Album'.

FESPA Chairman, Sidi Scott writes

Autumn is with us but I hope that memories of last season will still be giving you pleasure as they do me!

What a feast of great shows were presented at both venues through the summer. Also, the lunch-time shows, children's shows and the Sunday presentations all lived up to expectations and proved popular. Happily, I personally had a great time performing in *Salad Days*, doing a lunch-time musical show and also appearing in the Gala. I feel blessed to have had the privilege of being part of the Anniversary Year.

We have had a good year as *Fespians* too. Our evening at Walberswick was thoroughly enjoyed by the *Friends*, who brought with them their usual great food offerings and enjoyed meeting the young cast, directors and backstage crew. We presented Jill with the glass roundel suitably engraved (See front page) as a token of our love and admiration for her years of dedicated work, and the cast of *Salad Days* performed some songs from the show.

Once again, may I emphasize how important the *Friends' Party* is, for the special reason that it gives us the opportunity to pick up supplies of the all-important theatre publicity cards to distribute in our various towns and villages. It is not an onerous task but it is very necessary in order to get every ticket sold for every performance! Make a note of the date in next year's diary now - Friday 26 June.

Then to the fete. What a happy event this is and, once again, we topped our previous efforts. Well done! This only happens because a group of dedicated *Friends*, now too numerous to mention separately, work extremely hard and very happily to make things better each year. Thank you to the Freud family for allowing us to use the venue each year, we do appreciate your generosity.

I must also mention the 'Sprat Dinner' in Aldeburgh, ably organized for us by Terry Collins and Don Wilson. After a few early worries we finally held the dinner and were marvellously entertained by the well known actor Robert Powell. The meal was excellent and thankfully sprats were not for every course! Some confusion had occurred because, although a well-known event in Aldeburgh, most of us were somewhat ignorant of the history of these dinners. Incidentally the sprats, which I wouldn't normally choose were delicious! Robert Powell answered questions from the floor and opened our eyes to his world, playing such parts as Jesus Christ, a detective with Jasper Carrot and a doctor in *Holby City* and, of course, many more - too many to mention here. A very happy evening was had by all.

Now to our work as a Trust. Firstly, as ever, we continue with our prime aim of helping Jill and the Company but, casting our net more widely, this year our first FESPA Bursaries have been awarded and you will find more details of these on page 7. We wish the applicants all success and look forward to hearing from them as the year goes on.

So let's keep up the good work for theatres in this area and, in these troubled times, remember that the Theatre is even more important to our well-being, taking us out of ourselves if only for a short time.

May I take this opportunity on my own behalf as well as that of my fellow Trustees to wish you all a happy, healthy and peaceful Christmas and New Year.

FOR YOUR 2009 DIARY

Saturday 21 March - 50s / 60s Evening. See page 6

Friday 24 April - AGM. Walberswick Village Hall 6.30 for 7.00

Monday 4 May - Tabletop Sale in aid of FESPA. Walberswick Village Hall. 11am - 3pm. Stallholders: £7 per table.

Friday 26 June - The Gala *Friends' Evening* at Westons,

Sunday 28 June - The FESPA Theatre Fete at Westons,

Thursday 9 July - Theatre season opens in Southwold

Tuesday 21 July - Theatre opens in Aldeburgh

Saturday 29 August - Last night of Aldeburgh Season

Saturday 12 September - Last night of Southwold Season

I'm reviewing all the seasons...



The weather didn't quite match up to customary standards for the FESPA garden party this year, driving most of us into the ample Westons kitchen, but the unexpected entertainment made this 25-year celebration one of the most joyful pre-season gala evenings the *Friends* have ever enjoyed. Above: Sidi gives her virtuoso tribute to the Company. Below: Members of the 2008 Company provide a foretaste of the season ahead with songs from *Salad Days*. Below that - the salad itself provided by the *Friends* themselves. Bottom: Peggy Hurren with Richard Emerson and - the sun finally puts in an appearance for our just desserts. Thanks to Peter Adshead for the pictures. There are more to be found - in colour - on www.fespa.co.uk where you can also hear Sidi in full voice and read the entire libretto. Feel free to sing-a-long!



THE SHOW MUST GO ON

8 hours from now!

Co Artistic Director, Anthony Falkingham, relives the fraught logistics of Gala Night

The idea of presenting a gala to celebrate our 25th year seemed a good one... five months ago when it was first suggested. The rough shape of the evening had been decided; the first half would comprise theatrical bits and pieces, enlivened with songs from the shows and the second would have Jill and Simon Williams reminiscing about the last 25 years.



But the problem of how to produce a show when most of your likely company would be rehearsing other things was a problem that didn't strike me, at least, until a week or so before the advertised date of the evening. This was compounded by the fact that the putative choreographer and musical director, seeking respite from what had already been a hectic season for them, had gone on holiday and were not arriving back until two days before the event.

I devised my plan of action.

I cajoled my five singers and five actors to make themselves available all day on Sunday 24th August, and we would rehearse the show right there.

I had some previous form on this kind of happening: I was once part of a team that organised a commemoration evening at the Theatre Royal in Bristol for Nat Brenner, my old drama school principal and one-time artistic director of the Southwold Summer Theatre Company. On that occasion we had coaxed actors like Annette Crosbie, Jeremy Irons, Greta Scacchi, Miranda Richardson, Alex Jennings, Tim Pigott-Smith etc. to turn up on Sunday morning, rehearse with past and present students of the Old Vic School all day and put on a show at 8 o'clock. So I knew that it could be done.

I had sent the company their scripts and music some two weeks before and at 10 o'clock on that specified Sunday my singers arrived to rehearse, Bob McNeil-Watson had returned from holiday the previous night, Sidi the night before that. Amy Price had travelled from London to be there, Jody Tranter had just finished playing in See How They Run in Aldeburgh and Paul Leonard was in the

middle of playing the demanding lead in The Lady Vanishes.

From 10am to 2pm they learned and rehearsed twelve musical numbers, with Mark Jackson popping in late morning to go through 'We Said We Wouldn't Look Back' with Amy. Then they went for lunch.

At 2 o'clock Richard Emerson, Patience Tomlinson, Michael Shaw, Penelope Rawlins and Caroline Wildi arrived to rehearse the spoken bits of the first half.

Meanwhile back in



Walberswick, Jill and Simon had been rehearsing their stuff for the second half and they were to be augmented by Richard Gibson, Andy Powrie and, of course, Clement Freud.

At 4 o'clock, the singers returned and we put the whole first half together. Simon was now rehearsing with Richard Gibson in the theatre foyer. At 5 o'clock Andy Powrie arrived complete with special effects and lighting and sound plot.

And the show went up on time.

Back on that Old Vic Night I remember being pleased that we had stuck to the two hours allotted to us, because these charity evenings can go on for days, and I am happy to report that we achieved the same on our evening in August and that included Peter Adshead and his team serving 200 glasses of free champagne in the interval!

At the post-gala party... top left: Jill with guest of honour, Simon Williams. (photo, Maurice Rubens) Right: Jill cuts the anniversary cake. Bottom: A few well-chosen words from Tony Falkingham.

From the first discussion we had about producing *The Lady Vanishes* it was clear that the train had to be good – the audience had to be wowed by it, especially since it would be created before their very eyes from the elements of the hotel.

My breakdown of the story led me to decide that the train could consist of three carriages: the dining car; the baggage van and the ‘main carriage’ which required two passenger compartments and a toilet! So, those three carriages would convert easily (easily!) into the three bedrooms required for the hotel scenes: the maid’s room; Iris’s room; and Miss Froy’s room which required little more than a window from which she could listen to the singer who was relaying the coded message to her.

From the first concept, it was clear that each carriage would need two sets of wheels: a large set underneath fixed in line with the direction of travel of the train, and a set of lifting castors which, when set down, would enable the carriage to move in any direction and, when set up, would drop it onto its large wheels. The hotel rooms could thus be set end-on upstage and hide many of the tell-tale train elements but they could then be moved downstage, turned

happen there. The solution became to split the baggage van in half for the first act. Since it wasn’t going to be possible to split the dining car as well, it did mean that for the first part of act two, when the baggage van was required for the fight scene, certain bits of Charters & Caldicott’s dialogue had to happen in the wing! It became a swings-and-roundabouts decision – that part of the audience which couldn’t see Charters & Caldicott had the best view of the baggage van fight, and vice versa. Luckily, this problem did not apply in Aldeburgh or in Guildford where the stages are wider.

The width of the carriages was also crucial – too wide and they wouldn’t be manoeuvrable on the small stages, too narrow and they’d be too cramped to play the scenes. I worked out that a three-foot width would be practical for two people sitting side by side, and that a ‘corridor’ of

two-foot six inches would suffice as that is the width of a standard doorway through which two people can pass. Thus, the carriages became five-foot six in width.

MAKING A TRAIN

Production Manager Mark Sterling reveals some of the pragmatic issues involved in fitting a Trans-Alpine express onto a 32 ft stage.

Height was the next issue – the carriages had to be proportional and equally the walls had to be higher than the people standing in front of them. I settled on seven feet as fulfilling both these requirements since it also allowed us to have standard-height doorways of six feet six. Another problem then reared its head – the walls sat on a truck base that was eight-and-a-half inches high in order to conceal the wheels. This made the overall height a little under eight feet. In Southwold, there is a gallery on stage right that is seven feet above stage level. If the train was to ‘shunt’ off into the stage right wing, the dining car had to be shorter. So this is what we did: the dining car had a separate upper panel that could be removed for Southwold thus dropping the height by a foot. Again, this problem didn’t apply at the other two venues.

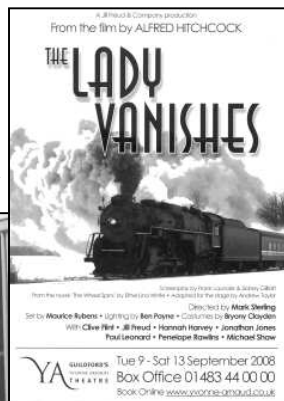
The final pragmatic issue was to do with the compartments of the main carriage. Much of the action would take place in the one shared by Iris, Miss Froy, Doppo and The Baroness. I decided that these scenes wouldn’t work in an enclosed space and so the ‘fourth wall’ of this compartment was removed. The adjacent compartment had the opposite problem – it was going to be necessary to conceal certain goings-on there. The original plan was to gauze the corridor-side windows and its sliding door in the hope that they could be made opaque. In the event, this didn’t work well enough so we added



Assistant Scenic Artist, Isobel Harris, painting the train in the Southwold workshop.

onto the ‘track’ and spend the rest of the play moving back and forth across the stage. This last is important to the decision regarding the size of the carriages. It was always going to be necessary to bring the carriage that was relevant to any particular scene as much into the centre of the stage as possible so as to make the most of sight-lines. The train, therefore, couldn’t be too long otherwise movement wouldn’t be possible. I decided on a carriage length of eight feet which is the size of a sheet of plywood. This would allow for compartments and dining booths of four feet - a size which, though not generous, would be possible for the action and, as it transpired, not far off the space allowed in a modern inter-city carriage.

I then had to debate with myself over the importance of having the toilet compartment. In the end I decided that, apart from the comedy value, I needed somewhere where I could ‘swap’ characters, as well as having a place where the liberated Miss Froy could hide. The minimum workable width of this space was two feet so the main carriage became ten feet long. This now made the train – at 27 feet including the couplings – too long for the width of the Southwold stage which is 32 feet wall to wall. I wouldn’t be able to get the dining car sufficiently into view for the several important scenes which had to



Top and left: High-profile publicity attended the transfer to Guildford.

Above: The Jill Freud Company pantechnicon arrives at the Yvonne Arnaud.



blinds.

So, once all the practical issues of size and viability had been dealt with, we then had to consider the things that make a train look like a train. I say 'we' because now, Maurice Rubens and Alan Horne were closely involved in the project. The most obvious architectural feature that says 'train' is the rounded corners to the windows – especially to those of the dining car. From there we added the 'slam-doors' with the sliding windows; brass light fittings; upholstered seats with antimacassars; small pictures depicting alpine scenes behind the seats; the emergency cord in a brass tube; pedestal tables in the dining car; toilet seat and cistern... oh we had a lot of fun!

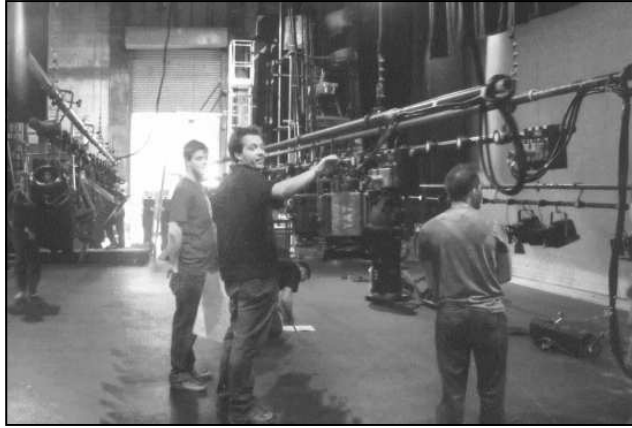
Maurice set to work making the plans into a cardboard model and deciding on colour schemes while Alan literally constructed the whole train from scratch single-handedly!

Finally, when I discussed lighting with Ben Payne, he had misgivings about lighting within the 'blinded' compartment, and also professed a wish to see the practical light fittings illuminate. I was adamant that we shouldn't add to the complications of the moving train by having electric cable trailing from it: "Wouldn't it

be nice," I said. "If there was such a thing as wireless lighting." After a pause Ben said: "Actually, there is!" It was a system Ben had installed in the West End production of *Marguerite*. The lights themselves had to be battery-operated but, using a little gizmo imported from Canada, they could be controlled wirelessly from the lighting desk. It wasn't cheap, but we acquired the device and were able to have the effect of the train's lights coming on as it turned round for the last time into Victoria Station. The second important lighting effect that required kit to be brought in was that of the train going into, and coming out of, tunnels. This required a sweeping blackout – an effect which our own boards were not capable of achieving.

Finally came the addition of smoke to suggest the locomotive and we had a train!

In closing, I would like to thank everyone who participated in creating the train – not least the actors and stage management by whose physical exertions the hotel became a train beautifully at every performance.



Ben Payne and his assistant rig the lights at the Yvonne Arnaud Theatre.



Above: Paul Leonard as Gilbert and Penelope Rawlins as Iris. Right: Jill Freud as the vanishing lady, Miss Froy.



Above from left: Clive Flint and Jonathan Jones as Charters & Caldicott, Paul Leonard, Jill Freud and Penelope Rawlins.

Pictures courtesy of Jim Laws. An album of Jim's 2008 production shots can be seen in colour on our website - www.fespa.co.uk.

SPOT-THE-SET COMPETITION

We have our first winner!

Mrs Wendy Cooper of Southwold is the winner of our June competition. She correctly identified the set as from the Company's production of *Flare Path* which she accurately dated to 1995.

Maurice Rubens offers his congratulations to Mrs Cooper and invites her to collect her bottle of bubbly from the theatre bar next season!

Why not try your luck with Maurice's next teaser. Can you

identify the title of the play from which this set fragment (right) has been taken? As before, if you can also hazard a guess at the year, that would be impressive but won't give you a better chance of winning!

Send your answer on a *picture* postcard of your own choosing (Maurice collects them!) and send to:

**Maurice Rubens, c/o FESPA NEWS,
22 Field Stile Road, Suffolk IP18 6 LD.**

The winner will be the first correct entry selected at random on 30 January 2009 and will win a bottle of bubbly to celebrate the opening of the 2009 Summer Theatre Season.



I read the latest FESPA News (June 2008) with much pleasure. I am sure that the revival of *Salad Days* will be a great success. Unfortunately, I doubt whether my wife and I can get to this. However, I have seen it before – to be exact, on Tuesday 1st June 1954 – the very first night. I enclose a copy of the programme.

It was an enormously good evening – great audience enthusiasm. The usual run at the Bristol Old Vic was three weeks; this had to be extended twice and then it was clearly felt that they had better get on with the current programme!

As a matter of interest, most of my programme collection will shortly be in the hands of the Drama Department of Bristol University where it will be housed for reference purposes. But I shall keep *Salad Days*!

Michael Sladen, Ely, Cambridgeshire



LESSEES: THE ARTS COUNCIL OF GREAT BRITAIN. LICENSEE: T. C. P. HICKSON.

Local Agent: BOLLOMS, THE CLEANERS.

TUESDAY, JUNE 1st, 1954 FOR THREE WEEKS

THE OLD VIC TRUST LTD.
in association with
THE ARTS COUNCIL OF GREAT BRITAIN
presents
THE BRISTOL OLD VIC COMPANY
in
Salad Days
Book and Lyrics by DOROTHY REYNOLDS and JULIAN SLADE
Music by JULIAN SLADE

PART I

The Tramp	ALAN DOBIE
Jane	ELEANOR DREW
Timothy	JOHN WARNER
Mr. Dawes (his father)	BASIL HENSON
Mrs. Dawes (his mother)	DOROTHY REYNOLDS
Aunt Pina	PAT HEYWOOD
Lady Ruchure	YVONNE COULETTE
P.C. Boot	NORMAN ROSSINGTON
Rowena	PAT HEYWOOD
A Curate	ALAN DOBIE
Tropo	BOB HARRIS
Sir Clamsby Williams (Uncle Clam)	ERIC PORTER
Foodyke (his attaché)	MICHAEL MEACHAM
A Police Inspector	BASIL HENSON
Nigel Danvers	MICHAEL MEACHAM

INTERVAL OF FIFTEEN MINUTES

Our thanks to Mr Sladen for letting us see this historical document and for sharing his memories of the very first first-night. The 2008 photo (by Jim Laws) features Amy Price as Jane and Andrew Bone as the tramp - parts played Eleanor Drew and Alan Dobie in 1954.

MAURICE GOES FOR A CHANGE OF SCENE



Not unusual to see Maurice Rubens touching up the scenery, but improving the décor on an already perfect Greek Isle...?

Here he is taking a pre-season month off supposedly recharging his batteries on the tiny, unspoilt island of (name withheld) but finding himself unable to resist helping his landlord, Christos Segalas, paint the backdrop.

Long-standing readers will recall that 'busman's' holidays are something of a Rubens speciality. In 1999 he spent his hols 'resting' at Her Majesty's pleasure in HMP The Wolds, designing the sets and costumes for the rock opera, *Subtopia*, written and performed in public by the inmates.

'DID YOU SWING IN THE 60s? ...OR 50s?' asks Jack Clayton

Do you remember ...

the Glen Miller sound? ... the voices of Matt Munro, Petula Clark, Lonnie Donegan? ... the days of Buddy Holly (and the Crickets), the Beatles and the Rolling Stones? ... the early days of TV when there was one BBC and one Commercial channel and the shows were all live?

All rockers, whether, like Sidi and me (who worked in those heady days of early television) you have fond memories of that era but thought your best partying days were behind you, or whether you are too young to remember the 50s and 60s, you must make a note of this date:

Saturday 21 March 2009.

The joint will be jumping at *Wangford Community Centre* from 7.30. After a substantial supper Sidi will introduce our DJ and some friends from those days. There will be entertainment and dancing until bedtime. Carriages, wheelchairs, buggies and other forms of transport at 11pm. More details about this special evening for *Friends* (and other swingers) in the New Year. *See you later, Alligator!*

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR FIRST THREE FESPA BURSARY AWARD WINNERS

One of our principal objectives in transforming the *Friends* organisation into a Registered Charity (FESPA) was to focus our energies on supporting not only our Summer Theatres but also the future health of the performing arts scene in the East Suffolk area.

That means each year investing some of our hard-won funds into tomorrow's talent, in the form of three student bursaries. These are one-off awards, which this year are of £500 each, awarded to individual applicants selected by a panel appointed by the Trustees.

The inaugural awards were made this summer and the

Award Winners 2008

Francesca Rose Currey, Aldeburgh



Francesca is in her second year at Bristol Old Vic Theatre School, reading for a BA in Stage Management and Technical Theatre. After her all-girl schooling, her first year represented a rude awakening from her dream of uni as a world of freedom, boys and parties. She found herself working solidly 9am to 6pm every weekday while helping to lug sets around at weekends.

In spite of this, Francesca loves it, describing herself as "happy to be doing something that makes me fulfilled and gives me a sense of purpose." But life is a continuous financial struggle. For the past three summers she has been working as part of the stage management team of the Summer Theatres but during term there is simply no time to fit in a part-time job to help pay the bills. Francesca says the bursary "will really help to ease the burden from my parents."

Alun Vaughan, Walberswick

By coincidence, Alun is also on the Bristol Old Vic BA Stage Management Course where he has just begun his first year. He has been actively involved in drama since he was seven and studied it at A level at Mill Hill School. Alun has worked with Julia Sowerbutts' theatre company in Walberswick and with Jim Laws Lighting Company but it was when working as ASM with the Jill Freud Company that he decided that stage management was for him.



Alun has many leisure and sporting interests including fly-fishing, music, tennis, swimming, cricket and rugby in which he played for his school's First 15. He was 'Head of House' at Mill Hill where he also held the rank of Colour Sergeant in the school CCF.

Alun sees his FESPA bursary as a prestigious boost to his career as well as a valuable practical contribution, "enabling me to cut down substantially on my part-time work outside of course hours of which there are 52 a week!"

winners are featured below.

The aim of FESPA Bursaries is to provide encouragement to students of the performing arts who either live in the area or have strong local connections, and who have already obtained a place at a recognised college.

Each of the students was required to submit an application form and CV and specifically to explain how the bursary would be of help to them. References also had to be supplied.

There is no upper or lower age limit: our current 'crop' ranges from eight to 22. We offer our congratulations and best wishes to all three and very much look forward to following – and reporting on – their progress in the future.

Maxim Calver, Gorleston



This exceptionally talented eight-year old cellist who has been a pupil at Corton Primary School, has won a place at the elite Yehudi Menuhin School in Surrey and started his first term there this September. Maxim has been playing the cello since he was four. His mentor, Dr Ioan Davies, Director of Music at the Pro Corda School at Leiston Abbey, says of Maxim: "I have not encountered anyone with such an intense

artistic energy... not only an exceptionally gifted musician, he is blessed with a technique that is so apt for cello playing that leaves one with no other conclusion than to predict an absolutely stunning future for him as a performer. I look forward with immense excitement at following his progress."

Maxim has already won many awards at local and national music events. Although his studies at the Yehudi Menuhin School are part-funded by grants, it is obviously important that a young man of his age should spend weekends at home. The FESPA award will go some way to helping with his considerable travel costs.

MEMBERSHIP GROWS... AND GROWS MORE GENEROUS

Our Hon Treasurer, Peter Gibbs, writes

I am pleased to report a membership figure of 832 for 2008. *Friends* are now spread all around the UK with some in Continental Europe. Special thanks to all those who generously choose to include a donation in addition to their subscription. Our 'roll of honour' of donors of sums in excess of £20 is even longer than usual this year:

• Miss A. Ainscough • Mrs A. Bateley • Mr & Mrs B. Bradnum • Mr & Mrs C. Brynley-Jones • Mr G. Burnett • Baroness Byford • Mr & Mrs K. Carter • Mr & Mrs R. Cramb • Mr P. Catchpole • Mrs P. Cuerden • Mr & Mrs A. Cordy • Mr S. Gibbs • Mr & Mrs N. Graham • Mr J. Girling • Mrs F. Green • Mr & Mrs M. Guest • Mr & Mrs P. Hore • Mr & Mrs M. Jones • Mr C. Newens • Mr & Mrs J. Nottage • Mr & Mrs G. Palmer • Mr & Mrs S. Pears • Mr & Mrs R. Smith • Mr & Mrs J. Symes • Mrs D. Thompson • Mr G. Tinnion

PROFILE

Hannah Harvey, actress



We especially wanted to profile Hannah because, at 26, she has managed to accomplish an impressive career trajectory at the Summer Theatres, from student scene painter in 2000 to fully fledged actress, playing Gladys, The Baroness and the Third Nun in *The Lady Vanishes* in 2008.

The theatre bug struck at the age of just eight when she landed a role in the Olivier Theatre production of the *Wind in the Willows* which she did for three

years. During that time she endured the awfulness of her journalist father succumbing to a virulent form of cancer and dying within months at the age of 41. Harvey Lee was Media Correspondent of *The Daily Telegraph* and, in his memory, the Broadcasting Press Guild inaugurated the Harvey Lee Award for Outstanding Contribution to Broadcasting which is presented at the BPG Awards lunch every year by Hannah's mother, Marilyn. It was at one of these award lunches in 1999 that Hannah found herself sitting next to Nicky Freud, Jill's daughter.

Magical

"I'd just finished my A levels and Nicky asked me what I wanted to do. I said I really wanted to find my way into the theatre and Nicky told me about her mother's company and how their designer was looking for student assistants. She said I'd have to live in a caravan in a field in Suffolk and paint scenery and that there wouldn't be any money to speak of. I was a real London girl; I knew absolutely nothing about Suffolk, I'd never heard of Southwold and I couldn't remotely visualise what the opportunity was all about – if it was one. But I applied and got selected and it was true – I lived for three months on my own in a caravan with no loo at Westons – and it was

magical. It really was."

The first production Hannah worked on was *Mr Cinders* and after that *Jane Eyre*. Working with Maurice Rubens in the Westons barn was an experience she found entrancing. "For the last scene in *Jane Eyre*, the one after the big fire, he decided we actually had to set light to the flats right there in the barn to give them the right charred effect. That's Maurice. He's so inspiring. He just does it!"

It was back again in 2001 and 2002, this time as assistant to Jill's PA and general administrator Carol Carey. In between summer seasons Hannah did a number of short-term jobs. She worked as a junior researcher on *The Daily Express* Features Desk where her father had once worked ("The hubbub and the buzz of breaking news were exciting in the same way as the theatre."). She worked for a time as a runner on *Eastenders*. ("Dogsbody work keeps you grounded and at the same time gives you an insight into what it's really all about")

But all the time Hannah knew that, long-term, she wanted to be an actress. So at the end of the 2002 summer season she applied to and was accepted by Mountview. "Three fabulous years!" But in the holidays, she was back in Suffolk, first as production and front-of-house assistant and then as ASM. "I was one of the masked figures in black cloaks moving the scenery about in *Don't Look Now!*"

Hannah finally graduated in 2005, got herself an agent and started picking up some real acting work. "I was in *Winter's Tale* at the Courtyard Theatre in Stratford; I did some Fringe, I was in *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* at the National... Oh and I did an advert for Minstrels which was brilliant because I got to eat them."

Another not insignificant triumph was Hannah's part in a pilot sitcom called *Sweet As* which reached the finals of the 'Sitcom Trials' and was performed live at the Soho Theatre where it triumphed by winning the award for 'Best Script' while the entire female cast jointly won the 'Best Actress' award. "I played a crazy Brazilian. My looks mean I very rarely play English parts. At Mountview they warned me to get some exotic accents in my toolkit and it was good advice."

What about her first acting job here? "*The Lady Vanishes* has been absolutely brilliant. But I've loved all the jobs I've done here. The Company is such a well oiled machine and the social life is just fabulous. We all live together and there's absolutely no hierarchy. It's just an endless pot of fun really. It's an incredibly special part of my life. I've done a lot of growing up here."

FETE FIGURES JUST KEEP GETTING BETTER AND BETTER

The annual FESPA Summer Theatre Fete at the end of June enjoyed what, in retrospect, was one of the few lovely days of this summer. Attendance was up and so were receipts. We finally cracked the £5000 barrier with a record total take of £5032, exactly £400 more than 2007. The lion's share came, as always, from the prize draw so ably managed once again by Michael & Joy Venn.

Fete organiser, Val Anderson, deserves huge praise for her faultless logistics and her firm but fair management skills. So too do the large number of *Friends* who run stalls and who generously contribute produce, pictures, books, bricabrac and, not least, time and labour. The Fete is FESPA's key fund-raising activity and vitally important to our work as a charity.

Preparations for the 2009 fete are already under way. If you would like to help or contribute please contact Val on 01502 724609.

Joy & Michael write...

Joy and I were absolutely delighted to learn that the draw result topped last year's at £2493 – a really splendid response from and on behalf of FESPA Members and their friends. So many thanks are due to you all for your generosity and continuing support. The various prizes so kindly donated were well received by the winners and the first prize of £300 went to a visitor who lives in Cumbria! Thank you all once again.

PUBLICITY PLANS FOR 2009

Ever since the *Friends* came into being – way back in 1986 - one of the ways we have supported Jill Freud and Company has been by helping to publicise the coming season by distributing programme cards and posters.

Year after year – for a variety of reasons – the end-of-year report has read: "can do better, and plan to do so in future years".

Last year the *Friends* broke new ground by producing leaflets that publicised the productions as well as inviting readers to join our organisation. A number of willing volunteers invited hoteliers, caravan site managers and the like to put a leaflet in with their letters to clients confirming bookings. We also printed another version that *Friend* and furniture-maker Albert Lain sent out with his leaflets publicising the Craft Fair at Aldeburgh. A few of us also had stalls at local events and distributed more leaflets.

All this happened before the Westons evening when the Company's programme cards were available for *Friends* to collect.

In this coming season we intend to repeat our leaflet distribution. Early in the New Year we will gather together our activists to discuss timescales, the design of the leaflets and aspects such as print numbers. If any reader would like to join us, please contact me.

We also have plans to work with the Company to improve the distribution of programme cards. Look in future newsletters for details.

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