



Whitefield Garrick

Spring Newsletter

2023

Garrick Executive Committee Changes

Our 1st Annual General Meeting since the beginning of Lockdown was held in September 2022 when Janet Leather our extremely hard working Chairman came to the end of her 3 year term of office. Stepping into the role of Chairman is Geoffrey Shindler who has been a member of Whitefield Garrick for many years. He was enthusiastically voted in as the new Chairman and has also accepted the position of Trustee. Our very diligent Membership Secretary, David Tonge, has also retired after many years of superb service. David has been steadfast in monitoring the membership numbers and has ensured that booking forms, renewal forms and News Letters have always been dispatched on time. We thank David for all his loyal and hard work and hope he will continue as a very valued Committee Member. His prestigious position has now been filled by Alfie Howard.

Donation to St Andrew's Food Pantry

St Andrew's Food Pantry on Ribble Drive, Hillock Estate, provides a very important and necessary service for needy causes.

With the Spirit of Goodwill in mind, Whitefield Garrick made a donation which was gratefully received and will help towards providing food, fuel and clothing for those in need.

Support and donations are always welcome. If you feel able to support in any way, they are open for donations and food contributions on Monday and Tuesdays from 10-12 and on Wednesdays from 10-3 .



Whitefield Garrick Production Secretary
Jane Murphy presenting the Cheque to
Marylin Neill and Fran Lawson



Blue Remembered Hills by Dennis Potter

The first play of our 2022/2023 Season, 'Blue Remembered Hills' by Dennis Potter, began rehearsing in July 2022. Rehearsals in the summer months are always a bit difficult because of 'cast' holidays, but director Peter Larkin worked continuously to pull the production together and the outcome was an instant success. With adults playing children, it could hardly miss. It was good to welcome Adam Green back to the theatre playing 'John' and new member Michael Bowers playing 'Raymond'. Martin and Christine Ashton created an impressive set including a field, a barn and a convincing squeaky dolls pram.



The Moderate Soprano by David Hare



Mark Bloomfield, Peter Scofield, Samantha Taylor, John Cunningham, Craig Harris

Geoffrey Shindler directed our November 2022 play, 'The Moderate Soprano' by David Hare and used a wealth of knowledge of Glyndebourne and his passion for the music of Mozart to bring the story to the Garrick stage. The story of the creation of Glyndebourne was told movingly and with deep emotion by all of the cast, Samantha Taylor, Peter Scofield, Mark Bloomfield, Craig Harris and John Cunningham. The Greater Manchester Drama Federation Adjudicator, made the following comments in his report of the play:

'Whitefield Garrick continue to impress. Casting was impeccable. It was an ambitious choice, requiring top-class acting and direction and a seamless flow from start to finish. And this is what we were given: quality throughout, across the board.'

As an addition to the Newsletter this time, we are including a personal review of our January play 'After The Dance' by Terence Rattigan'. The review has been written by Peter Haigh the Editor of All Saints Church Magazine, and who's clever designs now adorn our Programmes and new bookmarks.

After the Dance Rehearsal
by Pete Haigh
Photographer: Steff Walters



Director

John O'Connell

Mindi Leonard-Lockett

**Far Right:
Guy Samuels**



The cast all praised Director, John O'Connell. Throughout the rehearsal, he sat quietly but intently, watching the exploration on stage, guiding and shaping the production. "John has a deep understanding of the play, with all its subtitles and nuances." said Mindi Leonard-Lockett, who plays Helen, the young, serious instigator of the crisis the play explores. "John allows the actors to explore their characters." added Guy Samuels, who plays Cyril Carter, a character to whom Guy gives a rare comic pathos. The theme was picked up by Alfred Howard playing John, the louche sponger who becomes the voice of harsh truths. "Some Directors say, 'Stand there! Say that!', but John O'Connell allows the actors to explore their characters within

the play in an organic way." The cast as a whole agreed with Rachel Hadjigiorgiou, "John encourages the actors to feel their own way to the Director's vision." Rachel clearly appreciated this approach to direction. Playing the destroyed wife, Joan, she embodied these difficult, layered range of feelings of her part, at once dissolving emotionally whilst concealing that destruction from the other characters. The cast all acknowledged that John O'Connell is such an empathetic Director because he himself is also an actor, and this rich understanding of both the art and craft of acting informs his approach when working with the cast.



Rachel Hadjigiorgiou

Alfie Howard



It's striking how the experience of a play can change for the cast as the rehearsal process develops. Early rehearsals see the actors wearing their everyday clothes. The cast agreed, "As soon as you put on costume, you move differently, feel differently and respond to others in the cast differently too". Matt Sheader, playing the businessman Arthur, who had successfully escaped from his London friends to a much maligned Manchester, spoke of how the process of staging and blocking changed as the rehearsals progressed. "At first the furniture is simply indicated on the floor with tape," he said. "As soon as a table or chair actually appears, that space feels dramatically changed and the actor's relationship to the space is changed too."

Acting has cruelly been described as "Saying the words and not bumping into the furniture!" In 'After the Dance' dressing the set and finding exactly the right piece of furniture, gramophone and decanter is the responsibility of Jane Unsworth, the Stage Manager. "We put a lot of work into ensuring that everything on display is appropriate for the period," she says. 'After the Dance' is set in 1938 so nothing on the stage can appear to be later than that date or the spell would be broken. Jane is particularly proud of the sheet music casually scattered on the piano. "Now they," she says, "are exactly right!"



*Jane Unsworth
Stage Manager*

That said, theatre is illusion. The white baby grand piano which is such a prominent part of the set is a hollow shell, put together by set-builders for a previous production many years ago and held in storage ever since. Another part of the magic is the copious amounts of alcohol on display and consumed throughout the play. "The gin is water," Jane confides, but she's very proud of the brandy and whiskey. "It's watered down Cola, the cheapest we could find," she admits. "The cast wouldn't be able to stand up by the end of the play if it was the real thing!"



*Sound and lighting crew,
l-r Phil Cohen, Neil Rider and Peter Hill*

The crew, Peter Hill, Phil Cohen and Neil Rider, focus on the rehearsals minutely, awaiting cues for phones ringing, radios and gramophones playing, as well as complex lighting changes. One sound effect they don't have to worry about is the piano. The crew have rigged the sound of the piano being played to a button on the floor beneath it. When Matt Rigby, who plays the wealthy, hard-drinking husband, sits at the piano and subtly presses the button with his foot, we 'hear' him playing the foxtrot, 'Avalon'. Another press of the button and the music abruptly stops. This, of course, is easier said than done. It takes careful rehearsal for this to become effortlessly convincing.



Prompter
Liz Lever

Every actor is asked the same question... "How do you remember your lines?" Watching the rehearsal the answer becomes very clear. Firstly, it requires a great deal of time and hard work behind the scenes by the actor, reading and remembering. Secondly, the cues given by each actor for another actor's part are rehearsed and rehearsed, refining the interplay of delivery and responses. Thirdly, there is the irrepressible Elizabeth Lever, the Prompter. Liz Lever has worked on more productions than she can remember. Throughout the rehearsals she sits to the side of the stage minutely following the script while waiting for a subtle gesture from an actor or the quietly spoken word, "Line." Liz is ready with the appropriate phrase, allowing the actor to continue almost seamlessly.



All of these people, the cast, crew, director, stage manager and prompt are volunteers. They give their skills, dedication and time to creating a production that engages and delights audiences again and again. 'After the Dance' was no exception. Running from the 21st to 28th of January 2023, the play rightly received incredible reviews and massive support from the audience each night, a tribute to the skill, time and sheer hard work given by each and every person at those rehearsals.

Trust is often a word heard as the cast discuss their working together. Each is very conscious that the success of the play is a shared effort. They confirmed that much of the art of acting is reacting, giving confidence and context to the actor who, at that moment, is the audience's focus. Watching the rehearsal, that organic approach to development becomes clear; performances change subtly, refining a word-stress here, a gesture there. The generosity of the performers to each other as they explore their character is clearly drawn from that complete trust in each other.



If you would be interested in volunteering in any capacity for the Whitefield Garrick Society, (helping with Refreshments, Props, Set Building, Front of House) Please contact them at whitefieldgarrickmail@gmail.com.

If you would like to comment on any items or contribute to this twice yearly Newsletter, please contact Carole Taylor: Contact details: ct@melcar.co.uk

A Memory of 'Lockdown'



During the Lockdown period, Janet Leather was totally committed to keeping all the members involved with the theatre. She introduced a series of member participations, online and by email, regularly posting guessing games and poetry competitions, organising committee members into performing a 'Christmas Choir' with the 'Twelve Days of The Garrick Christmas' and an excerpt from Charles Dickens', 'A Christmas Carol'. Her enthusiasm hasn't wained and she has continued to entertain us with her 'Witty Wednesday' cartoons and theatre related items.

'The Masked Performers', a Janet Leather Creation during 'Lockdown'!



Coming Up in 2023!

Zack

By Harold Brighouse

Directed by Dave Eyre

25th March to 1st April

2023

Evenings: 25th & 27th March to 1st April 2023 - 7:30pm
Matinees: 26th March & 1st April 2023 - 2:30pm



THE
**TITFIELD
THUNDERBOLT**
by Philip Goulding

Directed by
Andrea Parle
20th to 27th May 2023