



Faringdon Dramatic Society

Minutes of FDS AGM

6/6/2023 7.30pm in The Barber Rooms All Saints Church Faringdon

Present: Helen Thrower (Chair), Helen Tate (Treasurer), Alan Merrick, Jo Webster, Peter Webster, Jeni Summerfield, Debbie Lock, Alan Taylor, Richard Lock, Lynda Bates, Gary Bates, Bex Hutchings, Vicky Edmonds, Ian Lee, Joan Lee, Sarah Couzens, Jacob Bayliss, Heather Kent, Julie Kent, Bob Kent, Lu Waywell, Johnny Waywell, Duncan Sinclair, Verity Roberts, Jayne Isham, Kate Allen and Carolyn Taylor (Sec.).

Apologies from: Gary Field, Shela Field, Jan Crowdson, Debra Warner, Sarah Varnom, and Carole Tappenden

Minutes of the last AGM were approved as a correct record and will be signed by the Chair.

Matters Arising All matters arising from the last AGM had been dealt with, except ordering new FDS Polo Shirts and Sweatshirts, which is still in progress and will be continued by the new Committee.

Chairman's Report from Helen Thrower

Here is my Chairman's Report from May 2022 to June 23. What a fantastic productive year we have had with three very successful productions that brought back the FDS sparkle and magic of amateur dramatics to the Faringdon Community and beyond.

We started our year with a win in June for Sarah Couzens as the District 12 winner for the Sybil Conway Award for Best Female in a Play for her performance as Pearl in 'Ladies' Day!' A huge congratulations for being recognised as the brilliant actress that she is.

This was followed by our performance of one-act play by Alan Ayckbourne's, 'Gosforth's Fete' which went down beautifully with the audience at Folly Fest in July.

In early September, the FSD BBQ that was excellently hosted by Jo and Peter on a lovely late summer afternoon and allowed us all to get excited about the year ahead. Thank you both.

FDS Christmas Party was also a huge success on the 17th December 2022 at the Corn Exchange. Great food, great company – a great evening was had by all. Thank you for Gary and Debbie for organising everything.

After the decision was taken to not go ahead with a November production, we leapt into the read-through, auditions, and rehearsals in September 22 for the 2023 Pantomime 'The Sleeping Beauty' directed by myself (Helen Thrower) and of course musically directed by Duncan Sinclair and produced by Debbie Lock. And oh wow! What a comeback for everyone involved as well as a real treat for those of who had the pleasure of coming to watch sell-out performance nights that included an abundance of glitter and glam from our Wardrobe Department as well as superb cast of talented actors who sang their hearts out and left our audiences 'crying' with laughter - we sure know how to put on a show which went seamlessly due to our expert Stage Manager, Peter and Backstage Crew and Lighting and Sound department. Personally, I could not have wished for anything more and to top it off, a fantastic Noda Review that followed and I must mention, a deserved Noda win for our great

King (I will come back to this later in our agenda) andin FDS style, as soon as the last curtain came down, our next production was in motion.

'Be My Baby' directed by Debbie Lock, went into production by the end of February and was ready for our eager audience for the middle of May. Set in the beautiful setting of Buscot Park Theatre, 'Be My Baby' made us laugh, cry, and reflect. A very gritty and moving production was expertly delivered by an outstanding cast under the direction of Debbie. I echo the well-deserved Noda Review that says,

"It's a difficult and emotive subject, but Debbie and her talented cast of six actors treated it with sensitivity and skill. They used the space wonderfully well, and the understated performances made the anguish and trauma these women went through so much more real and affecting."

Huge congratulations to all cast and crew for a production that will stay in FDS memories for a long time.

Unfortunately, it is with great sadness and shock that Martin Waymark died last month. Martin was not only a valuable Committee Member and expert Band Member: he also further supported me as Musical Director for 'Wishing on a Star' in 2019 as well as treading the boards on stage. Martin's memorable performance as Salvador Dali in 'Faringdon Follies' in 2018 was just brilliant. Martin will be sorely missed, and my thoughts and prayers are with his wife Pam and his family.

This leads me onto further shocking news that Jo and Peter Webster will be leaving us for pastures new. Jo and Peter joined Faringdon Dramatic Society in 1987 and first appeared in a programme 'Jack and the Beanstalk' in Jan 1988

Peter first wrote a panto for FDS in 1992 'Babes in the Wood' and since then we have had the pleasure of performing 10 pantomimes and 3 one act plays of Peter's master pieces. Peter also directed numerous productions over the years (I could not count them all) as well as treading the boards in countless productions with characters ranging from Lord Berners to Mr Wolf to name but a few. And not forgetting his skill as Back Stage Manager (his no-nonsense approach has left an imprint on many a child!) Phew..

Jo is not only a fantastic actress she further became involved in set design from Jan 1990 for Aladdin (I think) and designed numerous sets for the next 30 years with Peter helping her make and paint some legendary sets at the 'Store'. For me, Jo has created my dreams on a set in each of the productions that I have personally directed. Although my personal favourite was the set for 'Steel Magnolias' where Jo re-created my time as an apprentice hairdresser in the 1980's or is it the gingerbread house in 'Happily Ever After' or the spooky castle in 'The Scarlet Pumpernickel' – so many of my personal favourites to choose from! Jo has acted in many plays over her time with FDS but to me she will always be 'Ouiser' from Steel Magnolias.

Although this is not at all your farewell speech (as I am looking forward to the leaving party) and on behalf of everyone in this room, you can't imagine how much you will be truly missed - you have both made such an impression on so many lives but we wish you both all the very best with your '2nd retirement' in your new home and with your family.

Looking forward, it is great that rehearsals have already started our contribution to Folly Fest this July which Duncan will be enlightening us on further on in our agenda as well as our November production and Panto 23 both of which are to be introduced shortly.

Finally, as I am stepping down as Chairman, I would like to personally thank Ian Lee for his expert skills and time for not only being a brilliant 'child catcher' but for running our website, online ticket sales, membership as well as being an email co-ordinator. I would like to thank Gary, Sheila and Alan for running the bar during performances, and all the Wardrobe Ladies for their time given up over the past few months for sorting out costume store. I would further like to thank all the members of the Committee for their support and hard work throughout my time as Chair.

Noda Awards: It is always such an honour to receive adulation for a performance and to receive two in one year is fantastic (and so well deserved) so it gives me great pleasure to announce the following District 12 winners for Noda 22/23.

The Harvey Kesselman Comedy Award - District 12 winner: Richard Lock as Gordon Gosforth in 'Confusions' from May 22. A quote from Andrew Walter in his Noda Review. 'Richard Lock captured the essence of this self-important pillar of the community, doing all the jobs that nobody else can be trusted to do, which it turns out includes sleeping with one of the girls in the village' and 'Richard brought a lot of energy to his portrayal of Gordon, a character lacking in emotional intelligence who presses on regardless as everything goes wrong around him.'

I am sure that you will all join me in congratulating Richard for being recognised for his part in this production.

Next .. The Nigel Gravette Award for Best Performance in a Pantomime - District 12 winner: Bex Hutchins as King Norbert in 'The Sleeping Beauty.' Panto 23.

Again, another worthy winner who not only won the heart of Andrew Walter from Noda but made a memorable impression. In his review he said, "Bex's King owned the stage with the confidence of power." And "Above all, Bex moved really well – her fluid dancing was so at odds with her character you couldn't help but laugh, and her performance of "The Chain" by Fleetwood Mac on an inflatable guitar will stay with me for a while."

I could not agree more with his sentiments and once again ask you to join me with congratulating Bex for being recognised and winning this award.

Treasurer's Report

Helen Tate first wished to offer her thanks to Richard Lock for his help and support went through the Accounts, (copy available) which showed a profit had been made on all productions and a total profit over the year of £2886.93.. We have approximately £15,000 in the bank so our financial situation is very stable, after the years of inactivity during the pandemic which depleted funds somewhat.

Lynda Bates asked about the entry in expenses marked Band and HT explained this referred to the cost of the venue for the monthly meetings of the band for rehearsal, which had been agreed by the Committee.

Future Productions

Bex Hutchings has written and will direct the Panto 2024 "The Ruby Slippers", which is based on the Wizard of Oz. Bex gave a presentation of her ideas and outlined the story, characters and Steam Punk vibe that she plans. Duncan Sinclair will again be Musical Director. Bex added the dates of read-through casting which are 26th September for the read through and 3rd October for Auditions.

Lu Waywell will direct the November Production which will be 'Act Naturally' by Giles Scott. Lu gave a presentation of her ideas for this production which will take place in the Elms Junior School. It is a comedy in two parts. (Or is it two comedies?) Act One is a chaotic committee meeting of the village's Historical Sites Preservation Society who urgently need to raise funds. The committee decide to write and stage a play. "It will be fun", they agree. And "how hard can it be?". Act Two is their play: "A Shot in the Park". The cast comprises three men and four women of varying ages. The format is a play within a play. The setting is the village community hall, just one set. Read through will be on 10th July and casting on the 13th July. The play will be on the 9th 10th and 11th November 2023.

Duncan Sinclair told the meeting that the first rehearsal for the Folly Fest production, Songs From Our Shows, took place yesterday and went very well. There will be further rehearsals through June on Monday evenings in the United Church and the songs will be performed on Sunday at 2.30pm in the Corn Exchange.

Membership

Membership fees of £20.00 per person are due now members are requested to pay by Bank transfer or the website.

Richard Lock raised the issue that we have to agree at the AGM whether to increase the Membership fee. It was agreed by all that due to the stable financial situation it could remain the same. Bex Hutchings pointed out that FDS is the least expensive society to join anywhere in the district.

Debbie Lock raised the issue of children (under 18's) membership. Since Family Membership was abolished, the situation now is that children of members can be treated as members free of charge, others have to pay a £10 fee to be in a production.

John Taylor Award

Debbie Lock explained what the award was and that we had not given the John Taylor prize for commitment to FDS since before the pandemic. This year's award therefore covers the past 3 years. Members had voted online.

The nominees are:

Sarah Couzens for her acting in Ladies Day and Confusions

Gary Field for Seeing the Society through the Pandemic and staying on as Chair for several extra years.

Dave Headey as our longest service member and for always producing the programmes for productions to a high standard.

Helen Thrower for her work as current Chair and as Director of the pantomime Sleeping Beauty.

The winner of the John Taylor Award is Gary Field.

Election of Officers

Carolyn Taylor took the meeting through this procedure, explaining that four of the Committee are staying on so could be re-elected as a group. They are Debbie Lock, Helen Tate, Gary Field and herself. They were jointly proposed by Alan Merrick and Seconded by Jeni Summerfield.

New members of the Committee proposed are:

Lu Waywell; proposed by Debbie Lock and seconded by Helen Thrower. Sarah Couzens nominated by Verity Roberts and seconded by Helen Tate. Bex Hutchings nominated by Helen Thrower and seconded by Richard Lock..

As Helen Thrower is standing down as Chair, she nominated her successor as Debbie Lock, who was seconded by Helen Tate. This completed the election of officers.

Any Other Business.

The Barbecue will be held by Gary and Shela Field, date to be confirmed. There will also be a leaving party to say goodbye to Peter and Jo Webster before the leave

Alan Merrick stated that younger members were needed to help with set building. Johnny Waywell volunteered. Lynda Bates mentioned that Jeff Barry was keen to be involved again, but could only help at weekends. RL pointed out this was true of all non- retired helpers..

Sarah Couzens asked about the situation regarding another exchange with Garrison Theatre in Fort Erie Canada. DL reported that Canada had only opened up after Covid much later than the UK and GLT had a much depleted membership and were not in a position to engage in an exchange yet.

There was a suggestion that we could try to arrange an exchange with Le Mele as part of the Town Twinning.

Kate Allen asked when rehearsals were held and it was confirmed that they were usually on Mondays and Thursdays, twice a week for each production.

Peter Webster asked if someone could take custody of the Boards he had been looking after and which need updating, detailing the history of the Society. Lu Waywell agreed to take these into her care.

DL Asked if anyone could produce and A5 leaflet for Folly Fest, advertising our next productions. Johnny Waywell took this on.

Helen Tate said she has set up accounts for the purchase of material and printing so that if members had any requirements for those things they could be brought by her at good rates and thus avoid expenses for members.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 8.30pm.

Addendum to minutes

This item was unfortunately omitted from the agenda, and we forgot to do it:

Long-Service Awards

The awards for 25 years long-service goes to Gary and Lynda Bates. We therefore aim to give them at the Christmas Dinner later this year.