



**Faringdon Dramatic Society
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

Monday 3rd June 2024
7.30pm Barber Rooms Faringdon

Present: Debbie Lock, (Chair), Nell Tate (Treasurer), Gary Field, Shela Field, Richard Lock, Alan Taylor, Ian Lee, Joan Lee, Bex Hutchings, Vixz Edmonds, Jayne Hoyland, Mike Fraser, Jacob Bayliss, Lu Waywell, Jonny Waywell, Julie Kent, Heather Kent, Bob Kent, Carole Tappenden, Lynda Bates, Gary Bates, Jeni Summerfield, Duncan Sinclair, Alan Merrick, Jan Crowdson, Derek Crowdson, Sarah Varnom, Jane Cadoggan, Amanda Linstead, Sue Ashforth Smith, Verity Roberts, Helen Thrower, Sarah Couzens and Carolyn Taylor(Sec).

Apologies: Debra Warner, Matthew Warner, Fiona Merrick, Jo Webster, Peter Webster.

Minutes of the last AGM were approved, with the following corrections:
Sarah Varnom's apologies had not been recorded and Jayne Hoyland was written as Jayne Isham, her maiden name. With these amendments, Derek Crowdson proposed, and Verity Roberts seconded that the minutes should be signed as a correct record by Chair Debbie Lock.

Matters Arising: None.

Chair's Report Added to end of minutes

Treasurer's Report Nell Tate went through the accounts, copy attached. Sarah Varnom commented that they were very clear and proposed they be accepted. Seconded Carolyn Taylor. *Nell please add anything else you wish.*

Membership Subs Debbie Lock (DL) proposed that the subs remain the same at £20.00 per person for adults. Children whose parents are not members pay £10.00 to be in the pantomime. Members who joined very recently for Enchanted April do not need to pay again for the coming year. Sue Ashforth Smith had already paid, so a refund will be arranged for her. (*Action Nell Tate*). The proposal re subs was seconded by Alan Merrick and was therefore carried.

Reforming the Committee

DL went through the list of people who were standing down and those happy to remain on the Committee. Lu Waywell, Sarah Couzens and Carolyn Taylor are standing down. DL thanked them for their service. Sarah Varnom asked if any other nominations could be made and was told, yes this could be done.

Debbie Lock was proposed by Carolyn Taylor to remain as Chair for another Year and Seconded by Helen Thrower.

Vixz Edmonds was proposed as Secretary by Bex Hutchings, seconded by Carolyn Taylor.

Shela Rowan was proposed as Treasurer by Debbie Lock, seconded by Nell Tate.

Bex Hutchings was nominated as a committee member by Sarah Varnom and Seconded by Lu Waywell.

Nell Tate was proposed as a committee Member by Jayne Hoyland and seconded by Lynda Bates

Gary Field was proposed as a committee member by Jeni Summerfield and seconded by Alan Merrick

Julie Kent was proposed as a committee member by Nell Tate and Seconded by Bex Hutchings

Alan Merrick was proposed as a committee member by Carolyn Taylor seconded by Gary Field.

The meeting was asked if there were any other nominations and there were not. The new Committee was therefore confirmed.

Autumn Productions

A Night at the Musicals is set for 28th September. It is a one-day Charity Performance in aid of Helen and Douglas House and singers will be members of the Society and other friends. Verity Roberts is organising the event.

Pantomime read through, auditions and rehearsals will start immediately afterwards in October. Read through 7th October Auditions 10th October. Debbie Lock is directing a traditional version of Cinderella by Alan Frayn performances to be staged on 24th 25th and 26th January and 31st January and 1st February. This schedule leaves little time for a November play, but Bex Hutchings has suggested that we could stage The Vagina Monologues in the Crown Ballroom for the November slot this year.

DL explained that in this past year we had managed to overlap rehearsals for the Pantomime and Act Naturally, the November production, but that this had posed certain challenges. She expressed the Committee's concern that there was a danger we would lose the November plays and the difficulties of staging a big play such as Lark Rise, which had been considered, in the School in November with a big cast and crew also needed for pantomime. She asked the meeting for their views about how we could address this.

Helen Thrower said she would like to direct something in November next year 2025, to mark the 80th Anniversary of the end of the Second World War, as we had done with Reflections for the 100th Anniversary of 1914/18. This would have to be in November near Armistice Day.

Duncan Sinclair suggested we alternate doing a big November Production or a big Pantomime and did not try to attempt both in one season.

Lu Waywell acknowledged that the overlapping rehearsals was difficult particularly for people who were very involved in both the November show and the pantomime.

Jayne Hoyland said she had found being in both shows very stressful and suggested casting November plays in July. She suggested the early pantomime rehearsals could

just concentrate on songs, then move on to more general rehearsals when the November cast joined.

DL said that the difficulties were not just for actors but impacted the production side too.

Julie Kent suggested involving more of the younger people and their parents in backstage for the pantomime. Younger people could also take on roles such as choreography or directing.

Nell Tate pointed out how important it is for Costumes to know who is cast early on in any production so they can begin planning and fitting.

Richard Lock said that the dates for pantomime in the school would be very hard to alter in any substantial way.

Bex Hutchings said that last year the Production Meeting for the Pantomime was rather late. It is very difficult all round when people are double committed to both shows.

Carole Tappenden said that people should choose to be in either the Pantomime or the November play.

Duncan Sinclair also suggested we could run acting workshops as an alternative.

DL summed up by saying that early planning was the key, and anyone interested in being in the Vagina Monologues should contact Bex. We could in future also work on a One Act play for drama festivals, which we have not done for some time. Anyone who has a play and would be interested in directing should contact DL by the end of June.

Folly Fest 2024

Duncan Sinclair explained we would be doing a workshop this year on trying out what it is like being in a panto. This will be all day on Sunday with a performance of songs and dances from 2pm to 2.30pm in the Corn Exchange. This is much less of a commitment than last year.

John Taylor Award

DL then presented this award. The Nominations made by the Committee and voted on by 38 of the members, were in alphabetical order: -

Bex Hutching for writing and Directing the Ruby Slippers and taking on a big role in Enchanted April.

Ian Lee for all his work on the website and ticketing.

Duncan Sinclair for his work as Musical Director and with the Band

Lu Waywell For directing Act Naturally and her acting and singing roles in The Ruby Slippers and Enchanted April.

The winner was Bex Hutchings. DL said the result was very close and congratulated all the nominees

Any Other Business

Gary and Shela Field agreed to host the Summer Barbecue again, date to be decided, probably August.

Meeting closed at 8.20pm and was followed by a social gathering.

Signed(Chair)

Dated.....

FDS report from the Chair 2023- 2024

Another fantastic year for Faringdon Dramatic Society with a packed schedule and the first time since the pandemic when we had decided to put on three full shows.

Firstly, I want to thank the committee who have been so brilliant this year supporting me and happily taking on the jobs that needed doing.

With the help of Sarah Varnom Nell and I updated the safeguarding policy ready for pantomime and with the help of Alan Merrick Gary Field updated the risk assessments templates making it easier for future producers to complete.

Lu and Bex led the way with our online presence and show publicity meaning we sold more tickets for panto before Christmas than we have ever done and completely sold out Buscot three weeks before the show. Ian has really had to keep an eye on resales and battered us into making sure we only resell through the website after we were targeted by scam ticket sellers on our Facebook page. Thank you, Ian, for all the work you do with the website and ticketing.

I would also like to thank Carolyn for her support and work as secretary over so many years and Sarah C for always offering her help with anything that needs doing in committee and in productions

Our first show of the year was a very successful event for Folly fest with songs from the shows.

Thank you to Duncan for organizing the rehearsals and putting together a great concert. We performed on the Sunday afternoon to a packed audience in the corn exchange and it went down a storm

This was closely followed by auditions for Act Naturally

And after a short summer break which included our annual barbecue on a lovely sunny day, thank you to Gary and Shela for hosting this, rehearsals began

Lu had said she would like to try directing after last year's panto when we put out a plea for new directors. She found a play she liked, and I think she really enjoyed her debut role as director

Soon after rehearsals began for Act Naturally, we had the auditions for the pantomime – this year for the first time we overlapped two shows which although caused some logistical problems with rehearsal venues I think overall was a success.

Several people were in both the play and the pantomime, but we seemed to manage and those who had to join the panto cast rehearsals a little late were able to catch up.

Act Naturally was a success with lots of laughs in the audience and the cast, especially when we had to try and lift Dave Headey on a stretcher! I would especially like to thank Johnny and Alan for spending time before the show organizing the store and making a great box set that we can now use for future productions in the school.

Following Act Naturally we hit panto full on.

Bex had also offered to direct after Sleeping Beauty and wanted to put on the Wizard of Oz. Having looked at many pantos she couldn't find one she liked so embarked on writing her own- A mammoth task. This was an alternative take on the original story and required a steam punk Emerald city!!

The Ruby Slippers was born

We were very pleased that the auditions attracted several new members who joined some panto stalwarts in making up the cast.

Everything about this panto was big and at times we became overwhelmed with the enormous task we had undertaken with costumes, scenery especially cog making and the new rules we were following regarding safeguarding children.

Our audiences proved that overall, we did a great job.

Our NODA reviewer really wasn't sure what he thought of The Ruby Slipper although he felt we had been very brave putting on something so different and I am very pleased to say that he recently decided to give us the NODA regional award for Innovation. Here is his explanation as to why he did this:

'I nominated you as the District Winner for the London Region Innovation Award for "The Ruby Slippers". You know from my report that I had some reservations about the show, but nevertheless I felt that it was a brave and innovative production - drawing as it did on traditional pantomime elements within a musical theatre framework. It would have been so much easier for you to have bought in a script, or even penned your own version of a popular favourite, but you didn't - and I think this is worthy of wider recognition.'

As a society we have always wanted to push the boundaries with our shows rather than always playing safe and an award for innovation seems to be very fitting. So, thank you to Bex for pushing us with your quirky version of this well-known tale.

Following our successful pantomime, we auditioned for Enchanted April and this play was put on at Buscot House theatre a few weeks ago. The reviews said it all 'A perfect play in the perfect setting'. Thank you to Carolyn for finding this play and finishing off a hugely varied year of theatre in a very special way.

As I come to the end of my report, and we look forward to next year, there are some things I want you all to think about.

Timings of shows – we have seen that having those extra weeks for panto over the last couple of years has made a big difference to the finished performance, but has it come at a cost to our autumn production? Although we found we could direct and cast a play alongside the panto it is the set building and costumes that have struggled with this. If we want to put on a big production in November as we have done in the past, how do we manage this? There is a chance to discuss this later this evening

Directors – it was lovely to know I had two shows sorted for the following year before I became chairman. We need people to come forward and offer to direct plays. Is there a play or panto you love and have always wanted to put on. We will support you but please chat to me if this is something you are interested in.

Backstage – we were very grateful that Gary Field stepped in as stage manager for the panto and that Bex and Vix dads came to the rescue as backstage help. It's great having an all singing all dancing panto but we have to have the people offstage to support it. If you think you would like to take a turn backstage doing scene shifting stage manager or props or before the show building and painting sets, please let us know. If these jobs aren't filled, then we cannot put on a show.

Following on from that is Chaperoning. As we updated our safeguarding policy, we realized we were not following guidelines regarding chaperoning our children.

We do 7 days of panto which means we have to have a license for all the children in the show. To get the license we need licensed chaperones. A minimum of one for every 12 children. If we want to continue to have children in the panto we will need more licensed chaperones – it is not a hard process to go through but does take time. Last year we had three licensed chaperones, but Julie was

in the show. This meant that I couldn't see the show and Kirsty only had one night off when Julie covered for her. If you are a licensed chaperone, you are unable to do any other jobs so again, we struggled to fill other backstage and front of house jobs. Please consider taking on these roles occasionally rather than being on stage.

I feel we have all worked really hard this year, but it has been a great year full of memorable productions. I look forward to what we do next year brings.
