

Settlement Players Annual General Meeting, 2016

Minutes from 13th July 2016

Present: Jim Anderson (Chair), Stephen Charles (Vice Chair), Jeni Gosling (Secretary), Rob Evans (Treasurer), Tracey Rudeforth, Roy Evans, John Baskerville, Rebecca Jones, Graham Frost, Cliff Francis, Jackie Gough, Pat Baskerville, Val Barber.

Apologies: Jo Roskilly, Douglas Harding, Margaret Bachini.

Minutes: The minutes of the AGM 2015 were agreed as accurate.

Matters Arising:

AOB i) There has been an increase in the variety of people taking on back stage roles for different productions.

Chair's Report: Attached below.

Treasurer's Report: 42 members paid subscriptions last year. The productions earned:

Ladies of Spirit (Nov)	784.54
Servant to Two Masters (Feb)	1,258.84
God of Carnage (Jun)	1,144.41
April One Act Evening	507.65

The total surplus for the year is £380.00

31% of tickets were sold on line and relatively consistently across the different shows, with Saturday being the most popular performances for on-line sales.

Theatre Club Report: From Pat Baskerville, attached below.

It was agreed that we would keep the Theatre Club fee the same, at £19.00.

Election of Committee and Officers: Jo Roskilly, Sam Powell and Nicole Ashbrook stepped down from the committee this year.

The existing committee were re-elected – Tracey Rudeforth, Graham Bussey and Claire Hogan with Jim Anderson as Chair, Rob Evans as Treasurer, Stephen Charles as Vice-chair and Jeni Gosling as Secretary.

New members elected to the committee this year are: Helen Faulkner, Alison Muir and James Barnard.

Rent at the Settlement: At the AGM we normally agree the donation we give to the Settlement for the use of rooms, the hall, and other support. However, in Feb the Settlement told us that from this year the Settlement Committee will be charging us rent. The calculation was based on 25-45 weeks at current usage and based on 50% of normal rent (Affiliated Groups receive 10% discount, Associated Groups, which includes Settlement Players, normally receive 25% discount). This will come to £3002.50, £500 more than the current 'donation'.

To raise this we will need to raise more money and increase audience numbers. Any space that is empty (not booked) we can use for free, but are asked to inform the Settlement office.

The calculation is based on current Mon, Wed and Sun usage, any changes will also need to be communicated to the Settlement.

On balance, the committee feels this is potentially a better arrangement as paying rent means that issues we bring to the attention of the Settlement, such as heating, will have to be sorted out. There will be an increase in future years, but probably not next year. Effectively this means that the three major productions each year will be 'charged' £1000 each as contribution to the rent. There are issues with the building, such as not having a fixed bar (this was considered some time ago, but not followed through).

Directors will need to be organised about booking rehearsal times with the office.

It was proposed that as part of the housekeeping associated with needing to raise/save money, Pat Baskerville proposed that actors should be responsible for buying their own scripts. Seconded by Rebecca Jones. Carried by 7 votes to 0.

Rob Evans (Treasurer) proposed that ticket prices remain the same this year. Agreed.

We discussed whether to increase membership subscriptions, but decided to leave as they are for now.

[The committee had previously agreed to raise the cost of programmes to £1. Prices at the bar had been increased from God of Carnage.]

Any Other Business:

- i) John Baskerville commended the printing of the meeting papers in two sides per page format.

The meeting finished at 8.50pm

Chairmans report – Settlement Players AGM 2016

We began our year in September at our Open Evening where Jo Roskilly made her directorial debut with three of the short plays from *Duets*. Jo did a brilliant job, bringing us a very enjoyable evening. They were three very funny stories and the actors made the most of the comedy. As is always the case on our open evening, it was a very successful evening. We weren't to know it at the time but this wasn't going to be the last we would hear of *Duets*.

In November, David Smith brought us *Ladies of Spirit*, a ghostly comedy. This play had an all-female cast, except for the offstage voice of the unfortunate handyman, and showed once again how lucky we are to have so many good actresses amongst us. There were some very funny performances in this play and the audience enjoyed it very much.

In February, Cliff Francis taught us about Commedia Dell'arte when he directed the 200-year-old Italian Comedy *A Servant to Two Masters*. I was lucky enough to have a couple of parts in this play and it was great fun to work on. Cliff even had us dancing. It was bawdy and the audiences enjoyed the performances a great deal.

After February we turned our attention to the festivals and this was where *Duets* was to raise its head again. When we started talking about prospective entries, the actors in *Bride to be* were so keen to perform again, we asked Jo to take it to the festivals. Stephen Charles also found a play that he wanted to make his directorial debut with, *Wetwork*. We entered both plays in several festivals but unfortunately *Wetwork* was turned down, probably because of its content. *Bride to Be* was performed at the Sawston, Cambridge and Welwyn Festivals and although it didn't get any awards, it was nominated several times.

In April, we had our one act play night at the Settlement. Pat Baskerville gave us a lovely little comic piece called *the Chip Van plays Dixie*. After April, Pat also took this play to Henlow with great success. We also gave our home audience another chance to see *Bride to Be*. Stephen then finally made his debut with the very funny *Wetwork*. Despite the controversial content, our home audience seemed to think it was funny.

Finally, in June we had another play from the very hard working Jo Roskilly. *God of Carnage* was a riotous drama of social chaos. Jo put this production in the round and despite the challenges this gave to the backstage people, it worked very well. The audience enjoyed a very intimate evening of drama

which assailed all of the senses. Not only could they see and hear the drama, they could smell it too. It smelt of Kouros. And if they were unlucky enough to be sitting in the splash zone, they felt the full effect of stomachs being emptied and flowers being thrown.

All through the year we have, once again, put on great drama. We have added to the number of very talented actors and actresses that we can call on with quite a few new faces. Our technical people continue to do whatever we ask of them. There is no task too great for them, no magic that they cannot make happen. We can be very proud of what we do.

We've continued to try and bring all of our members together in whatever way we can. As well as keeping everyone up to date with the newsletter and the website, we've held a number of events throughout the year. Last summer, we held a picnic but because of the inclement weather, it was an indoor event. We are planning to hold another picnic later this summer. Hopefully, the weather will be kinder. We held a Christmas party which was well attended and enjoyed by everyone. We held a play reading evening which was a success but would have been easier for people to attend if we didn't plan it whilst we had four separate plays in rehearsal at the same time. We are hoping to organise more play reading evenings in the future. Next week we are holding a workshop, which is another sort of event that we'd like to do more of.

We have also tried to promote the Players and the work that we do in whatever ways that we can. The circulation list for our newsletter is growing all the time. We are continuing to add to our website. We recently had a stand at Letchworth Armed Forces day and we intend to do more of this sort of thing. In September, we are performing a murder mystery for the Chair of The Inner Wheel at a charity fund raising event.

We have started selling out tickets on-line and this has proved to be very successful. We are looking at ways of improving our system and hope to be able to adopt a system soon where all tickets can be made available both online and in person.

The Committee has continued to work hard in whatever ways that it can to help put plays on. This year though, we have lost some very valuable members of the Committee. Cliff Francis stepped down from the committee earlier in the year after many years of hard work. And now, at the end of the Committee year, Sam Powell, Nicole Ashbrook and Jo Roskilly are stepping

down as well. All of these people have made a huge individual contribution to the work of the Committee and the work that we do will be harder without them. I would like to thank them both personally and on behalf of us all for all that they have done.

The good news is that we have new people coming on to the Committee and we are confident that we shall continue to do all that we need to. As always, I'm looking forward to working with all of the members of the Committee both new and old.

Now to the future. We don't yet have a programme for the year because this is something that the new Committee will discuss at their first meeting but I can tell you that Jenn Groves is returning in September and will be working with Helen Faulkner to bring us *The Opposite of Claustrophobia* for our Open evening. We are also hoping to have another short play on as well. Then in November, I shall be directing *Dad's Army*. Auditions have been held and I've managed to put together a large and very talented cast. I'm confident that we'll bring you a good show.

Settlement Players' Theatre Club 2015/16

The Theatre Club consisted of 46 members this past season, compared to 56 the year before. I really hope that this number increases over the next few years as it is always comforting to know that we have this regular audience to rely on. We will keep advertising the Theatre Club and hope that we can encourage even more regular patrons.

This year out of a possible 138 tokens only 117 were actually used. However, this is exactly the same number of vouchers used last year, so although we have fewer members they are making better use of their vouchers.

Vouchers used: 41 vouchers were exchanged for Ladies of Spirit, 38 for A Servant to Two Masters, 24 for God of Carnage and 14 at the April showcase.

The Opening Night continues to be very successful and is important to continue the evening as a means of collecting money, distributing tokens and making the club members feel included in our plans. Along with the April showcase it is a very useful evening for new directors to try their hand, and this is something the Committee is eager to encourage. The three plays performed in September 2015, directed by Jo Roskilly, were very well received and we had a large audience of approximately 80 people.

The Committee have been considering charging non Theatre Club member in future in order to recoup royalty charges etc. It costs at least £100 to put on the Opening Night and more if there is more than one play. The ticket price could depend on the amount of plays being presented, but this will be discussed at the next Committee meeting. Opinions from the membership are welcome tonight.

I do not think it is necessary to add any extra benefits to Club members. At present they receive Newsletters at least twice a year which are delivered

electronically where possible with the rest mainly hand-delivered to keep costs down.

The subscription to the Theatre Club was increased last year so I propose that we keep the subscription for 2016/17 at £19 per person.

Pat Baskerville

Theatre Club Secretary

11.7.16.