

THE SETTLEMENT PLAYERS

NEWSLETTER FEBRUARY 2018

Hello everyone and welcome to another newsletter.

Well, here we are in 2018. This is the Settlement Players 95th year and it's perhaps a time when we can be very conscious of our history. We are not planning anything to celebrate this anniversary, but we are starting to make plans for our centenary in five years' time.

As always, things are very busy at the Settlement. There is plenty going on. The spring production is taking shape, Pat Baskerville is getting ready for the Sawston Drama Festival, we'll soon be holding auditions for our summer Production and another Murder Mystery is going to be committed this year.

Details of all of this and more in this Newsletter.

With all this activity, I hope to see you at the Settlement soon.

Jim Anderson

Do you want to become more involved with the Settlement Players?

Do you want to have more direct control over what the Players do?

Have you got ideas or skills that you think will benefit the Players?

If you can answer yes to one or more of the questions above, then we need you.

There is space on the Committee and we are looking for people to join us. It doesn't matter how long you've been with the Players or what you've done in the past. All we are looking for is enthusiasm.

If you've got any questions, then please contact me or speak to any of the existing members of the Committee. We will be happy to tell you anything that you need to know.



8th – 10th March 2018

The Little Theatre, Letchworth Settlement
Nevells Road, Letchworth, SG6 4UB

'DIAL M FOR MURDER'

Written by Frederick Knott

Directed by Jim Anderson

Curtain up 7.45pm, tickets £8

available from David's Music, Eastcheap, Letchworth
or online at www.settlement-players.co.uk/box-office



Dial M for Murder

Rehearsals are well under way for our Spring production, *Dial M for Murder*. Everyone is working hard to bring this superb thriller to our stage.



The set is taking shape and the technical crew are coming on board to add the magic that will bring our drama to life.

We've even had the time to make a trailer. You can see the promotional video for our play on the Settlement Players website and the Settlement Players Facebook page.

Tickets are available now at David's Music in Letchworth and at <http://settlement-players.co.uk/box-office/>.

As always at the Settlement, we're having great fun bringing this play to the stage. We're working hard but it seems as if we're hardly working.

I hope that you come along in March to see the fruits of our labours.



June 2018 Audition Notice
The Ghost Train by Arnold Ridley
Directed by Cliff Francis

Performance Dates 14 – 16 June 2018

Audition Dates Sunday 18th February at 10:30am and
Wednesday 21st February 2018 at 8.00pm

Rehearsals will be on Monday, Wednesday and some Sundays starting Monday 19th March 2018. Monday & Wednesday rehearsals will start at 8.00pm, Sunday's will be advised.

A Synopsis

An apparently stupid man accidentally strands himself and 5 passengers at a remote Cornish Railway station, late one autumnal evening. With no more trains, no buses, no taxis or hotels, the 6 of them are forced to spend the night in the station waiting room. This being much to the chagrin of the stationmaster who encourages them to leave and recounts the local yarn of "The Ghost Train" to scare them into leaving.

Into this mix arrives a disturbed woman, seemingly escaping from the clutches of her brother and a Doctor. Both of whom soon arrive searching for her. All against the backdrop of the soon to arrive Ghost Train and the pretentious warnings of tragedy that fall to all who see it.

A classic thriller, we gradually get to know the characters and their reasons and motives for being there. Are all who they say they are, or is something more sinister afoot?

Great fun to play, it has laughs and surprises, and ghostly goings on, loud bangs and doors opening and closing by themselves and not to mention a ghost train.

A real ensemble piece, it's all set in one room on one night, so the cast stay on set for the whole play.

The play was originally written in 1925 but remains a classic of its genre, only recently the Guardian called it the second scariest play ever written, second only to The Woman in Black.

The play requires a cast of 8 men and 4 women. I am not necessarily looking for particular ages for the majority of the parts, it will be building a cast that looks right together. So please come along and audition, and be part of another classic play, to follow Dial M for Murder.

We will be using the Samuel French Acting Edition of the play.

The Roles:

SAUL HODGKIN: stationmaster at Fal Vale Station – *a great character part, ideally played by an older actor, appears principally in the first act and dramatically tells the story of the Ghost Train. Makes a reappearance at the end.*

RICHARD WINTHROP: - *a business man, outspoken, a natural leader, a calm head, takes control and sees common sense prevail.*

ELSIE WINTHROP: *Richard's wife, not so easily frightened and in a marriage that is falling apart, with neither particularly interested in each other.*

CHARLES MURDOCK: *Junior partner and expert engineer, in a failing family business. Part for a younger actor, as it's his wedding night, on his way for a brief honeymoon before moving abroad to seek his fortune*

PEGGY MURDOCK: *Newly married wife of Charles, very timid, easily spooked and seeking protection and reassurance.*

MISS BOURNE: *Another fabulous character part, a mature Scottish spinster travelling with her budgie. Gets accidentally drunk, fabulous comedy scene.*

TEDDIE DEAKIN: *The buffoon will strands everyone at the station, seemingly a harmless if annoying twerp. Or is there more to Teddie, is he really the twit he likes to seem?*

JULIA PRICE: *a seemingly disturbed woman, terrified and haunted by The Ghost Train that she witnessed the previous year, or did she and is she. Is there more to Julia than it first seems?*

HERBERT PRICE: *declares himself to be Julia's brother and concerned for her health and welfare, or again is there more to him than it first appears. A smaller part, makes 2 brief but dramatic appearances.*

JOHN STERLING: *a sinister character, claims to be Julia's Doctor but it soon becomes clear his medical knowledge is very limited, so who is he, where does he fit in?*

JACKSON and SMITH: *both detectives who only appear at the climax of the play, with a few lines each.*

Murder Mystery evening 2018

For the last two years, Jim has kindly organised and planned the Murder Mystery evenings at Howgills for the Inner Wheel. Last year the event was also held at the Settlement to raise funds for the group. I have offered to take over the event, which will be around September / October, and invite you to participate if you wish. The evening will require some impromptu acting and ad-libbing, together with an understanding of your character to answer questions put to you by the audience and 'police'. I plan to hold two or three short rehearsals, two to three weeks beforehand, to allow you to learn the scene order as well as develop your character.

We have previously used the setting of a 1930s country house, and a ship transporting various passengers to 1940s Buenos Aires. My idea for this year is that the 'crime' takes place in a 1960s London nightclub. The nightclub can also have a restaurant and illicit casino (not seen but referred to). The audience could be treated as nightclub patrons and be interviewed by the police after the murder has been committed – 'Did they see anyone or anything suspicious...?'

To assist those that may be interested, I have come up with some characters which could be portrayed - nothing below is definitive and it can be modified accordingly.

Characters

- Club Owner - victim
- General Manager - stealing from owner
- Wife / girlfriend of owner - having an affair with General Manager (relative of Bar Manager)
- Rival to owner - wants to takeover club (easier with a dead owner)
- Star at club - Head of Security's lover, but likes Bar Manager
- Star's partner - jealousy (thinks Gen Manager or Owner her lover)
- Head of Security IOUs held by Owner for gambling debts (+ other criminal history?)
- Bar Manager wants to leave, but blackmailed to stay – homosexual – still a crime
- Maitre D (restaurant) - wants General Manager's job – implicates him in Owner's death
- Casino croupier (casino) - interested in star (or star's boyfriend).

(after murder has been committed)

- Detective Inspector - to act as MC and interview the suspects & audience
- Police Constable - and to arrest murderer(s)

If you would like to help me with organising or planning this (you can also participate in it if you wish), then please let me know. I believe that those who have done this before have thoroughly enjoyed themselves.

David Smith

Members evenings.

Wednesday 7th February, Pat Baskerville will be leading a reading of *Hayfever*.

A very light comedy by Noel Coward. Cast of 9, 5 women and 4 men. A play I am looking to possibly direct in June 2019!

The Bliss family, Mum, Dad and two grown up children, all, unbeknownst to each other, invite friends down for the weekend in the summer of 1925. Predictably, very witty chaos ensues. There is also Clara the maid who comments on every aspect of everyone's goings on and they are all completely bonkers in their own way. Everything is very theatrical and overblown.

Look forward to seeing you there, it should be fun.

Pat

Wednesday 7th March, Details to follow.

I am very pleased to announce that the Settlement Players will be taking part in the 53rd Sawston Drama Festival this year.

The Festival takes place at the Marven Centre in Sawston from 22nd to the 24th March 2018.

Our Entry will be *Three Tables* by Dan Remmes, Directed by Pat Baskerville.

The Players will be performing their entry on the evening of 23rd March. If you can get along on the night, I know that Pat and the rest of the Players there will appreciate your support.

Christmas quiz

Here are the answers to the Pantomime quiz in the last Newsletter.

1. What is the name of the father of Cinderella and the Ugly Sisters? **Baron Hard-up**
2. In which pantomime do Robin Hood and Maid Marion appear? **Babes in the Wood**
3. What is the name of Aladdin's brother? **Wishee Washee**
4. What phrase does the Giant in "Jack and the Beanstalk" use when he can smell Jack? **Fe Fi Fo Fum I Smell the Blood of an Englishman**
5. In pantomime who is Princess Marcella? **Sleeping Beauty**
6. What is the name of Prince Charming's assistant? **Dandini**
7. In which panto does Buttons appear? **Cinderella**
8. What is Aladdin's mother called? **Widow Twankey**
9. Who had appeared in panto for 38 consecutive years until 2007 when he won TV's "I'm a Celebrity....."? **Christopher Biggins**
10. What told Dick Whittington to "turn again"? **The Bells of London**
11. In Jack & the Beanstalk what does Jack get in exchange for his cow? **Magic Beans**
12. In Disney's Aladdin the villain was known as JAFFAR but by what name is he traditionally known in panto? **Abanazar**
13. What is the most popular panto? **Cinderella**
14. Which panto was created in 1902 for the comedian Dan Leno? **Mother Goose**
15. From what set of stories does the tale of Aladdin originate? **The Arabian Nights**
16. From what does the Fairy Godmother create Cinderella's footmen? **Mice**
17. What is Jack's mother normally known as in Jack & the Beanstalk? **Dame Trott**
18. What name is given to the leading man in a panto, usually played by a woman? **Principal Boy**
19. In which panto would you find the character King Rat? **Dick Whittington**
20. From which side of the stage do the "goodies" in a panto normally appear? **Stage Right**

How many of them did you know?

Committee report 12th December 2017 and 23rd January 2018

The committee met on Tuesday 12th December 2017 and Tuesday 23rd January 2018. We discussed the following:

Unfortunately, Helen Faulkner has had to step down from the Committee due to outside commitments.

We had a report from our new Treasurer. Jenny Gosling is now in full control of our finances, having completed the handover from Rob Evans. She is a signatory on our cheques. Jenny is changing the way that we keep track of our money. She has instituted a running account of our finances through the year. So far, this year, after our opening night, our murder mystery evening and our Autumn production we are about £1500 in the red. This is deceptive though as we've paid our rent which is by far the largest of our expenses and we have two more major productions to go. So far, we are on course to do well this year.

We looked back at the Autumn production, *Bronte*. It was judged to be a very successful production on every level. We made just under a thousand pounds profit which will go towards paying our rent at the Settlement. We decided to make one important change to the way that we work out the finances on each production. We are taking the bar out of the equation. In the past we have included the bar sales in the production finances, but this is very difficult to do accurately because stock bought for one production is often held over and sold at others. We are now going to calculate the bar sales separately over the whole year to get a more accurate picture. Since we have changed to a simpler black and white programme, programme sales have shown a small profit.

We looked ahead to the Spring production, *Dial M for Murder*. Rehearsals are going well. The cast are starting to come off book now and we have a prompt at rehearsals. The set is taking shape. Costumes and props are being gathered. The technical crew are starting to get involved now. Tickets have now been ordered and delivered to David's music. They have been on sale on-line for some while. We have a poster and are taking promotional pictures. We also hope to make a short promotional video for sharing on Facebook.

We are taking a play to the Sawston drama festival this year. We are reprising our Opening night play, *Three Tables*. Sam Powell, who directed it in September is unavailable again, so Pat Baskerville is taking up the reins this time. Unfortunately, though, we have no other one act plays to put on in April, so we are cancelling, once again, our one act play night. We didn't want to stage *Three Tables* again at the Settlement because we had it on there so recently.

We looked at publicity and promotion which is a constant issue with us. Sarah did some very interesting research into the way that our Facebook pages are interacted with. Simple messages provoke the least interaction, but when they are accompanied by a picture, or better yet a video, this interaction goes up a lot. I was also interested to see that only one person from Baldock visited our pages and this is the same amount as we had from Brisbane, Australia and Warsaw, Poland. We are changing the status on our Facebook pages, keeping one as a public one and making the other a closed group. We shall use what we have learned in the future.

We are doing all the usual things to promote our Spring production

We talked about our Social events. The Christmas party was an enormous success. Everyone who came along enjoyed themselves immensely. There was no members evening in January because it was so close to the New Year. The next Members evenings will be led by Pat Baskerville. She will be

leading a reading of Noel Coward's Hayfever on the evening of Wednesday 7th February. There will also be a members evening on the first Wednesday evening of March.

We have been advised by our technical people that our lighting desk needs to be replaced. The one that we have now is simply no longer up to the job. The committee agreed that we would buy a new one. John Baskerville is now looking for the right one for us to buy. We also agreed to buy new batteries for our drills backstage as the ones that we have no longer hold a charge for very long. These are crucial for set building.

Our website is still being constantly updated. Pictures and news are being added all the time. On-line tickets for *Dial M for Murder* have started to sell.

We are going to be doing another murder mystery this year. David Smith will be organising it. We haven't been invited to Howgills again because of the change of Chairperson. However, we have been asked to do one for LALG. We shall get more details before agreeing to this. We shall probably be running our own murder mystery evening in October again.

Roger Newman Turner very kindly donated two bags of scripts and theatrical books along with some moustaches and other bits and pieces to the Players. The committee is very grateful.

Our next meeting will be on Tuesday 27th February 2018. If there is anything that you would like us to discuss then please get in touch with any member of the committee.

The Committee is:

Jim Anderson – Chair

Stephen Charles – Vice-Chair

Jenny Gosling – Treasurer

Sarah Rice – Secretary

Graeme Bussey

Tracy Rudeforth

Alison Muir

James Barnard

Pat Baskerville – Theatre Club Secretary



In this newsletter, we always let you know which Settlement Players productions are coming up. It is a fact, however, that our members are so talented that they often spread themselves and work with other groups. It is very easy to miss these shows if we don't know that they're on and then we miss seeing our friends shine in other arenas. So, I'd like to promote any play that any of our members is involved in in any way in this newsletter. To do this I need your help. If you're reading this, you're a member of the Settlement Players. If you're involved in anything anywhere, please let me know so that I can put it in here.

My e-mail address is

james.anderson@ntlworld.com

Some dates for your diary:

Spring 2018 production	8-10 March 2018 (Dial M for Murder)
Summer 2018 production	14-16 June 2018 (Ghost Train)
Opening Night	1 September 2018
Autumn 2018 production	15-17 November 2018

If there is anything that you would like to share with your fellow players in this newsletter, please send it to me at james.anderson@ntlworld.com

The next newsletter will come out on April 1st 2018. If there is anything you want included, please let me have it before then.

I hope to see you soon at the Settlement.

Jim

