

# The Stonesfield Players

**“To the ends of the earth” -  
What an illusion!**



Like a time traveller I was transported back to a Stonesfield Players production “To the ends of the earth”. There I was in the village hall again only it wasn't me playing Von Flick this time, someone else was saying my lines! What a mystery, what confusion, what an illusion!

“Watch out watch out” we chanted all those years ago. Not this time! No, we had long legged (mostly) dancers brazenly clad in skimpy red things expertly choreographed and beckoning “watch out”. I noticed that the barmen, who had to watch this three times, had positioned themselves to get a better view. This was brilliant, “incroyable” stuff. Where did they find Laura? Such a sophisticated performance and that American accent was held impeccably throughout, none more so than in the difficult duet with Cumberland. Cumberland was an inspired choice. Building on his debut performance in Oliver he was the perfect naïve Englishman.

There was pace in this performance as we charged around the world strung together with a fantastic musical combo who were worth the admission alone. I always thought that Jim Astle's Captain Garcia could not be bettered but here we were screaming with laughter at a Chaplinesque female cop. Von Flick, a Josef Mengele lookalike, put the fear

of death in me; hobbling around (nice dramatic touch if you have short legs), spitting German accent with a dash of Essex, he was the embodiment of evil and ineptitude. Having been left on the subs bench for previous productions

## DIARY DATES

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**Read Through** The School For Scandal, by R.B.Sheridan, on Thursday 13th December at 8pm at Woodland View, Churchfields (Sally & Austin's). *Info* 891133.

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**Christmas Social** Rosemary and Andy's, Wood Green, Church Street, from 8pm on Thursday 20th December. *Info* 891217

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**Scrabble Evening** Monday January 7th, 8.0pm hosted by Jonathan and Liz Roberts at Long Becs Cottage, The Cross. *Info* 891993. If you have a Scrabble board please bring it with you!

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13th January auditions for School for Scandal, 2pm at the St James' Centre.

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Next newsletter will appear in February, Copy by 31 January to nicky.holland@btinternet.com or tel. 891325

(someone said he was flat) he justified his selection with a slick song. The Baroness, Flick's partner, brought together one of the Players' great double acts of the past. It's a bit like picking the football team - who's going to play up front? Natch!

My memory recalls loads of kids charging around but here the maturity of the "Junior Players" belied their age. Well done Fat man! How he managed to make his arms grow longer with each entrance was another illusion. Well done Tefnut, great grovelling. Well done you scribes, porters, ticket collectors, officials...well done. Tricky stuff this mixing of the generations on stage especially those from the same family. You all deserve a long earned rest.

There were so many memories flooding back, bits of script, bits of music, only this time I think I understood what was supposed to be happening, it was that good. The Egyptian hand jive worked! (Never did in my day). The train scene, where I swear there must have been a machine shaking the stage, was excellent. Lights, action, noise, all had the meticulous attention to detail that we come to expect with a Players production. Before I knew it we were into the rocky Horror scene, exhausted, thrilled, entertained. Some illusion! Well done!

**Graham Rutson**

## **Festive Play Reading: The School For Scandal by R.B.Sheridan**

on **Thursday 13th December  
at 8pm at Woodland View,  
Churchfields** (Sally & Austin's).

With an eye to performing The School For Scandal in late April next year, I thought it might be useful/fun to have a read through first. The play is a comedy, first performed in 1777, and contains some hilarious set pieces. For those of you who remember Polly Honeycombe, it's very much in the same style as that. There are sixteen very

colourful characters (plus a maid and two footmen). I imagine rehearsing and performing this would be great fun.

The characters are as follows:

**Joseph Surface.** Everyone thinks he's prudent and good, when in fact he's a slimy hypocrite. He's pursuing Maria (Sir Peter Teazle's ward) for her money, but also tries to seduce Lady Teazle in a side-splitting comic scene that goes disastrously wrong for him. Joseph is finally exposed in his true colours.

**Charles Surface.** A good-natured, reckless spendthrift, and a libertine, "bankrupt in fortune and reputation". He's in love with Maria, and it's mutual, but the lovers have been banned from seeing one another by Sir Peter Teazle. Despite his short-comings, Charles is clearly the romantic lead, and he's the one who gets the girl in the end.

**Lady Sneerwell.** A professional scandalmonger, secretly in love with Charles even though everyone thinks she's attached to Joseph. Wounded by slander in her youth, Lady Sneerwell now takes pleasure in "reducing others to the level of my own reputation". It's her coterie of gossips that comprises the 'school for scandal'.

**Sir Peter Teazle.** This is a wonderful part, a brilliant comic character. Married for only six months to a woman much younger than himself, he says he has regretted it ever since (although he also says he's most excited by his young wife when they're shouting at each other). Sir Peter is Maria's guardian, but has also been guardian to Joseph and Charles. Sir Peter thinks Joseph is wonderful and that Charles is a waste of space, and has forbidden Charles and Maria from seeing one another. So Sir Peter's the one that's going to have his eyes opened.

**Lady Teazle.** Much younger than her husband, but just as wilful, head strong and brilliantly funny. This is a gem of a part. Sir Peter and Lady Teazle are a wonderful

double act. Their spectacular arguments are like firework displays.

**Sir Oliver Surface.** Rich uncle to Joseph and Charles, and an old friend of Sir Peter's, he's been away in the East Indies for sixteen years. He comes back wanting to test the characters of his two nephews, without letting them realise who he is. He disguises himself as a broker (Mr.Premium) to whom Charles sells the family paintings, and as a poor relation (Mr.Stanley) to who Joseph refuses help. Charles ultimately comes out on top however, because the one portrait he refuses to sell is the one of his Uncle Oliver, and because he does help Mr.Stanley.

**Maria.** Sir Peter Teazle's ward, in love with Charles, but banned from seeing him. Maria hates gossip and the gossipmongers. Maria is the girly love interest, but she's not wet; she's tough and principled.

The following three parts are cameos, but they're not small parts, and they'll all be great fun to play:

**Mrs.Candour.** This is very funny part. A nosy woman who does more harm by saying nice things about people and trying not to gossip, than the proper gossips do by being actively vicious.

**Sir Benjamin Backbite.** A self-styled wit and rubbish poet. He's also a vicious gossip. He's another one of Maria's admirers, but she can't stand him.

**Crabtree.** Sir Benjamin Backbite's uncle. Crabtree and Backbite are a kind of double-act, and both of them are definitely fully paid up members of Lady Sneerwell's gossip factory. Crabtree has great faith in his nephew's paltry poetic abilities.

The remaining parts are smaller, but just as well-rounded as the others:

**Mr.Snake.** Lady Sneerwell's assistant, who ultimately proves treacherous to Lady Sneerwell, and is in fact in league with Rowley.

**Rowley.** Former servant to Joseph and

Charles's father, who believes Charles is not as bad as everyone thinks, and is determined to prove it.

**Mr.Moses.** A money lender who helps Sir Oliver conduct his character test on Charles.

**Trip.** Charles's footman, keen to raise a little money for himself, given that he hasn't been paid recently.

**Careless.** One of Charles's drinking buddies.

**Sir Toby Bumper.** Another one of Charles's drinking buddies.

There are also **two footmen**, and a **maid**, all three tiny speaking parts.

I can borrow eleven copies of the play from central library, but given that there are sixteen characters, it'd be helpful if anyone who has a copy of the play could bring it along.

If everyone's keen to go ahead after the read-through (which I hope they will be) the audition session will take place on **Sunday 13th January at the St.James's Centre at 2pm.** What I would like to ask people to do in preparation for that, is to have familiarised themselves with the play, and to have an idea which part(s) they're interested in. They don't have to come with a prepared piece (unless they would like to, in order to show me what they can do). If anyone has inquiries, they can ring me.

Sally Sherlaw-Johnson (891133)

## Christmas is coming ...

So come along to **Rosemary and Andy's, Wood Green, Church Street, from 8pm on Thursday 20th December**, bring something to drink and/or some nibbles, and prepare to enjoy yourself (there is a piano and some people won't be afraid to use it).

## 2008 and beyond

Following the success of the Radio Play and *To the Ends of the Earth* this year, there is a real buzz amongst the Players and several ideas for productions are being talked about. The Committee would like people to come forward to present proposals for productions in 2008 – *The School for Scandal* is planned for April and in addition we aim to put on a small summer production (which could be an outdoor event), a November production (or January panto) and something in spring 2009. A one act play to present at a drama festival would also be welcomed (the Players have been very successful with this in the past). If you have lots of experience, great

– if you're thinking about putting something together for the first time, then bear in mind that you need to allow several months for preparations such as booking the hall, preparing material (especially if it's original) and organising the show. The upcoming production of *The School for Scandal* will give you a not-to-be-missed opportunity to get involved in backstage work and gain experience in planning and production, making your own future productions a breeze - get in touch with Sally if you'd like to be involved.