

# The Stonesfield Players

## **The Thwarting of Baron Bolligrew - A comedy by Robert Bolt**

"A long time ago – in the days when dragons were still common – there lived a Duke". So begins this delightful comedy fantasy where you'll meet knights such as Sir Digby Vayne-Trumpington, Sir Percival Smoothely-Smoothie and Sir Oblong fitz Oblong. When Sir Oblong is sent to slay a ravaging dragon, he finds himself against the crooked Baron Bolligrew and an evil wizard. This village presentation of Robert Bolt's great children's classic will appeal to children and adults of all ages.

The Stonesfield Players will be performing this fun-packed play at the Village Hall on Friday 5th February and Saturday 6th February at 7:30pm with a matinee performance on Saturday 6th at 2:30pm. Tickets will be on sale at Amlu's Shop or via the Box Office on 898854 priced at £7 (£5 concessions).

## **Review of All Hayle to the Days**

The Pastime Ensemble brought Stonesfield's seasonal festivities to a fitting close on the evening of Sunday 3 January. Launched in stentorian tones which could have raised the roof (had it not been so recently restored), the evening's entertainment offered a varied programme of instrumental and vocal music delivered, and received, with great enthusiasm.

The versatile and accomplished musicians switched from voice to instrument – to further instruments – with ease, much to our enjoyment. Two pieces by Purcell – The Entrance of Winter and The Frost Scene – involved spectacular costumes as the musicians acted out the parts of Jack Frost, Cupid and others.

As well as being uplifted by the music, the audience was treated to a miscellany of interesting facts about the development of familiar tunes and traditions of festive music through the centuries. We were also invited to join in the most complicated piece (introduced as likely to 'result in a multiple pileup') in which numerous well known songs were superimposed on one another as the singers weaved their voices around each other: A Fantasy of Wassailers. The pileup was skilfully avoided.

The evening, organised by Rachel and Becky Sherlaw-Johnson, was enhanced by the provision of mulled wine and mince pies, elegantly served by The Stonesfield Players. Jeremy White was the musical director and our thanks are due to him and the Hengrave Voices, Stonesfield Consort of Viols and Wilson Recorder Consort for giving freely of their time and talents, generously donating the proceeds of the retiring collection. Together with the profit from the refreshments provided by the Stonesfield Players, this makes a total of £342 which will be donated to St James' Church and Stonesfield Village Hall.

Jonathan & Liz Roberts

## **Spring Production**

### **The Story of Blithe Spirit**

So, what would you do if your first (and dead) wife returned to reclaim you? This is the problem consuming writer, Charles Condomine. For the purposes of researching his new novel, something to do with fake mediums, he and his present wife, Ruth, host a séance with two friends presided over by the famous Madame Arcati, medium to the stars.

How was he to know that he'd end up with his dead wife, Elvira,

## January Newsletter 2010

### **DATES FOR YOUR DIARY**

**Friday 5 & Saturday 6 February** – *The Thwarting of Baron Bolligrew*, Village Hall

**February 18th at 8pm** – *Blithe Spirit* auditions, Malton Croft, Woodlands Rise. tel 891318

**Tuesday 23 February** – Committee Meeting at Nicky Holland's, Stanway, Woodstock Road, tel. 891325

moving back into the marital home? Worse still he is the only one who can see, or hear, her, so Ruth believes that he is going mad. Madame Arcati won't help him get rid of Elvira when she discovers that he thought she was a fake. Then Elvira decides that she would rather have Charles back, dead and therefore with her for all eternity, but it all goes horribly wrong.

Madame Arcati finally succumbs to Charles' pleading, but finds that Elvira simply doesn't want to go and when Elvira's plan to cause Charles' death backfires she ends up sharing the house with the ghost of Ruth while Charles decides to emigrate and leave them to it.

This is *Blithe Spirit*, an improbable farce by Noel Coward, one of his best loved comedies – a play in three short acts with a cast of seven to be directed by Becki Sherlaw-Johnson.

### **The production**

Originally set when it was written, in 1941, I want to bring it into the modern day which involves one or two minor changes to characters. This will be an adult production, because, although the material is suitable for audiences of all ages, I feel that it is time we did a production for the adult members (sorry kids), so auditions for this one are open to members of eighteen and over.

### **Dates**

Auditions will consist of a read through of the play at my house (Malton Croft, Woodlands Rise) on February 18th at 8pm. If you cannot make this and want to be considered for a part then please contact me **as soon as possible**. Being self employed I don't have time to keep chasing people, so would greatly appreciate your taking the trouble to do this.

The performance dates are yet to be confirmed, but we are looking at May 20, 21 and 22 which is the weekend before half term. Rehearsals will begin at the start of March and there will be two a week. Because of the nature of the play, often scenes between two or three people, the rehearsals can be split so that we don't need everyone there all the time.

### **The characters**

In order that you might have some idea of who you would like to audition for (you can audition for more than one part, obviously you will only end up with one) here are descriptions. The play is divided into seven scenes, but no one character is on stage all the time. Please note that although I have given ages I do not necessarily need an actor of that age to play the part – that's what acting is about.

**Charles Condomine** is a moderately successful writer. He is described in the script as a nice-looking man of around forty. He is a complete sceptic where the paranormal and the afterlife are concerned and there is something vaguely indolent about him. This is a large part and Charles appears in all the scenes, but is not on stage all the time.

**Ruth Condomine** is Charles' second wife. She is described in the script as a smart looking woman in her mid-thirties. In bringing her up to date I see her as being a successful and rather chic business woman with a substantial income. She supports her husband. This is a medium to large part, she appears in all the scenes, although in one she is only on at the very end.

**Elvira**, the first and dead Mrs Condomine. She is probably in her late twenties and is described as being entirely grey (ghostly costume and make-up). She is quite a determined character and doesn't take too kindly to Ruth, she is also a little mischievous. She

is in all but the first scene so this is a medium to large part.

**Madame Arcati** is the archetypal medium – trances, voices, ouija boards, crystal balls, the full works. She is described in the script as a striking woman, dressed not too extravagantly but with a decided bias towards the barbaric. In the modern world she falls neatly into the 'New Age' bracket. She takes herself and her skills very seriously. This is a medium sized part, she appears in five of the seven scenes.

**Doctor Bradman** is a medical doctor and an acquaintance of Ruth and Charles. He is described in the script as a pleasant looking middle-aged man. This is a smaller part, he appears in two scenes.

**Violet Bradman** is his wife described in the script as fair and rather faded. This is a small part, she appears in two scenes.

**Note:** If we have enough men I would like to modernise the Bradmans by making them a gay couple which would turn either Violet into Vincent, or Dr. Bradman into a woman.

**Edith** is Ruth and Charles' maid. In updating this I want to make her an Eastern European immigrant with very little English. Ruth is training her, so she is still not very good at being a maid. There is scope with this part because she could also be Ruth's PA rather than a maid. This is a small part, not many lines, but she appears on and off in five of the seven scenes.

Becki Sherlaw-Johnson 891318 rebeccasj@btopenworld.com

## Shakespeare Playlets

The Shakespeare playlets which were proposed for a summer performance are postponed until the autumn as the director, Sally Wainwright, wants to make auditions open to young Players who are currently in rehearsal for Marlborough School's Oliver and will be busy with exams in the summer.

## Safari Supper Impressions from a First Timer

Slight trepidation... then - 'come in, come in!' (What a warm welcome!). Coats off, shoes off, glass in hand, smiling faces (some new, some familiar). 'Wow, Ros! Yummy starters!' More arrivals, 'Hello, I don't think we've met before...' Glass of wine, buzzing conversation. (Hmm, will I have room if I have just a tad more soup?... or perhaps some of that salmon?...) Then - 'time to head off for your main course, everybody!'

Coats on, shoes on, tromp, tromp, tromp through the dark Stonesfield night...

'Welcome! come on in!'. Coats off, shoes off, glass in hand, smiling faces (fewer now we're a group of 8 or so). 'Mike and Linda! This looks fantastic!'. More yummy food, animated conversation, wine, laughter. 'Chocolate Soufflé, Pear Tart, or Fruit Salad? (...with a twist; can you guess what's in this?)'...

Then - 'hey everyone - it's time to go to Raks' for coffee.'  
Coats on, shoes on, tromp, tromp through the dark Stonesfield night...

'Come in and join the party!' Coats off, shoes off, glass in hand - 'What can I get for you?' Everybody together again chatting away, cheese and crackers, more wine, grapes and celery, music, dancing (kind of), singing (sort of), oh yes - and coffee!

Then (eventually, in the wee hours) - 'Goodnight everybody!'

'Thanks very much Bridge, thanks Ferg! Fantastic!'

Coats on, shoes on, tromp, tromp, stumble, through the dark Stonesfield night....

Kerry Burniston

The Safari Supper raised £84 which will be donated to the Village Hall as we and our audiences will benefit from the latest improvements they have planned. Thanks to Ros Mengech for the superb organisation of this event, and to everyone who supported it (both by cooking and eating!) Watch out for news of another Safari Supper in the spring.

## Players' Christmas Party Undercover

Despite the extensive security measures (it must have cost a bomb to freeze all the access roads) I managed to gain access to the annual Players' thrash. Fortunately I didn't stand out as the only member of the paparazzi, such was the glittering array of luvvies pecking at each other. "Darling, those pink shoes were fantastic and such long points on them, just as well the heels were sharp stiletto it gives such a good grip in the ice." "No, I had no idea that one of our trainees was rehearsing to appear in a west End play." "Imagine - London, West End - its a long way from the village hall green room." Talking of the green room, I noticed the make up ladies were out in force, working in pairs to massage everyone's ego. By the colour on the face of the long standing stage manager's husband his ego had been well touched. Then again, maybe it was the mulled wine, piping hot, a rich effervescent concoction that bubbled away ... I could have sworn I heard somebody muttering "When shall we three meet again. on Stonesfield Common there to meet Macbartle" or something like that. I later discovered that it was a production chat about casting for the next production. That's when the real fun started, luvvies jostling to get on the casting couch. Someone dropped a bottle, others swooned. gatecrashers from another do appeared, but not a sign of SS. That's why he will probably be overlooked for that "big Part". I tried singing a carol but it was hijacked by hooligans with air guitars and a rendition of Bohemian rhapsody, to which nobody knew the words after "mamma". "Did you know that ..." "Where did you hear that, I thought she was, but not apparently until next year." "Were you going to ..." "No, I sprained my wrist doing it last year." And there was food, lovely food - I didn't quite get to grips with the pumpkin soufflé that someone had brought back from the colonies. What are they like?

All too soon I was being ushered to the door - pushed more like, my cover blown. Someone had asked me to name the director of the next production. I guessed at Sherlaw-Johnson as there are about 20 of those and it was a good bet that one of them would be it. No, apparently it's David - but the production is on the 5th and 6th of February, get your tickets now. There is a fantastic scene when someone who is in the play who you don't see and doesn't wear makeup does something which you don't see and says something which you can hear because its amplified but you don't see where its coming from.

We had a lovely time Ros and Jebet, thank you for the party.  
Graham Rutson

## ISA – new regulations on working with children

You may be aware that new regulations on working with children are being brought in over the next couple of years. We will be contacting the local authority and NODA to understand what this will mean for organisations like the Stonesfield Players and how we can comply with the regulations.

Please send any contributions for the March newsletter to [nicky.holland@btinternet.com](mailto:nicky.holland@btinternet.com)