SP news

Incorporating Millgate Arts Centre Bulletin

Volume 14, Issue 8th January 2018

Special points of interest:

- Focus on our next production "Murder at Checkmate Manor"
- Review of Great Expectations
- Millgate Arts Centre Bulletin

Inside this issue:

Stagey Bits	1
Great Expectations Review	2
From Ken to Ken	3
Appeal for new Company Secretary	3
Farndale Blogs	4
Spotlight on Props Manager's role	5
Editor's note	5

MILLGATE ARTS CENTRE PLAYS HOST TO SADDLEWORTH PLAYERS PRODUCTION OF THE FARNDALE AVENUE HOUSING ESTATE TOWNSWOMEN'S GUILD DRAMATIC SOCIETY MURDER MYSTERY

By David McGillivray and Walter Zerlin Jnr.

Sponsored by Roy Carey Bespoke Windows & Doors: 01457 875047

Jan 27th—February 3rd

Every drama group has experienced the horrors of what can go wrong on the night and the ladies of the F.A.H.E.T.G Dramatic Society are no different, with the possible exception that almost everything that could happen does. The scenery collapses, cues are missed, lines forgotten, and the sound effects take on a strange note at times, as the ladies present their ambitious evening's entertainment with the cunning whodunit, "Murder At Checkmate Manor" And just in case the audience should get bored there's a Fashion Show and a Murder Mystery Quiz complete with Prize. The crunch comes in the denouement when the "murderer", about to be revealed, has to rush home to bandage up an injured daughter. But Mrs Reece, doyenne of the group, rises above the slings and arrows of outrageous dramatics to provide the final, inventive twist and save the day.

Cast and Crew

Felicity	Lorraine Reynolds
Audrey	Verity Mann
Mrs Reece	Alayne Whitworth
Thelma	June Holmes
Gordon	John Tanner
Director	Eileen Southard
Prod Assistant	Kate Deam
Stage Manager	Anne Tunnicliffe
Props	Siobhan Ebden
	Olwen Stevenson
Technical	Brent Andrews
Set Design	Sally McKee
Set Building	David McKee
	Mandy Thackray
	Richard Thackray
Costumes	Verity Mann

Stagey Bits

The Set Designer and Set Builders' task is to create a perfect background to the drama, creating context and atmosphere. The set also needs to function effectively and safely with no wobbling and malfunctioning that will break the magic and put the actors off their stride. For the Farndale "Murder at Checkmate Manor", quite the opposite is true; scenery flats fall down, handrails wobble, and the furniture disintegrates. Sally McKee and her team have had the challenging task of creating a gothic manor that mal-functions on cue and looks every bit as if it were con-ceived by an ambitious but wholly amateur dramatic society. In it, the paintbrush is king, with every possible detail painstakingly painted on from the trompe l'oeil fireplace and bookcase to pictures and doors.

It's been great fun watching the set progress and we look forward to 'inhabiting' it in a few weeks time as we bring you the Farndale farce.

Verity

REVIEW OF GREAT EXPECTATIONS

Adapted by Neil Bartlett from the Novel by Charles Dickens

Charles Dickens' Great Expectations is a sprawling coming-of-age story, a a tale of poverty and wealth, rejection and love, sin and forgiveness, full of colourful scenes and colourful characters that have entered popular culture, and the tale has been translated into many languages and adapted into many media.

One such adaptation, a play by the highly celebrated British author Neil Bartlett, OBE, has been taken up by the talented Karen Barton. But how to tell a tale that spans years and the globe itself and not lose the essential themes that Dickens depicted? A film or television director would give us every detail of the story in glorious colour with special effects and a cast of hundreds.

Karen, however, uses her venue at the Millgate Arts Centre and her resources to her advantage, and successfully so, by giving us 'close-up magic'. Dickens wrote a novel from the perspective of Pip, and Karen has done one better, by making Pip the literal storyteller, and the stage his mindscape, the ensemble cast acting as both avatars of his memory and a Greek chorus, reflecting his state of mind as well as his inner thoughts.

Thus, through this method we can move from the windswept, haunted marshes where the escaped convict Abel Magwitch hides, to the dark, bleak house of the mad, forlorn Miss Havisham, to the crooked, unfriendly streets of London with the speed of memory and just a few props and special effects. Even the cast, many of whom portray multiple roles throughout the story, do so with a fluid grace and just a quick shift in costume and characters.

The result is unlike anything I have seen onstage before. Pip becomes our guide into his thoughts, his life, relating the events as the cast brings them to life around him. And the cast and venue ensures it becomes a very personal, intimate affair, eschewing spectacular set-pieces without losing any of the potency or pathos of our protagonist.

The cast is superlative: Sam Reid is our hero Pip, beaten down by life from the very start, driven by unrequited love and brutal circumstance into wanting to rise above his station and become a gentleman. As Pip is telling us his story directly, and we are privy to his thoughts, he is onstage for nearly the entire play, giving him little relief. Fortunately, his shoulders are more than strong enough to shoulder the burden.

Kate Davies plays Estella, raised to be a cold and calculating heartbreaker; Kate brings a vulnerability and sympathy to the role. Patricia Redshaw makes the iconic role of Miss Havisham her own, turning one of Dickens' most well-known characters into something more than a caricature. Phil Clegg's sympathetic blacksmith Joe Gargery is a standout, as is John Hankin's dynamic, menacing portrayal of the predatory, scheming convict Magwitch, but really, all the cast perform so well together it is almost criminal to single anyone out.

It had been ages since I was last at the remarkable Millgate Arts Centre, a striking venue in the heart of Delph, its layout unique, its age and character vibrant and unmistakeable. It lends itself to be as vital a part of the theatre experience as the script, the cast, the direction and the crew. No event can be ordinary when held here.

Your own great expectations will be more than fulfilled by coming to see this marvellous experience.

Deb Connelly, Nov 27, 2017

MILLGATE ARTS CENTRE

Millgate Arts Centre is a registered charity no. 1119394

A warm Saddleworth Players welcome to New Member:

Olwen Stevenson

Great to have you join us!

Millgate Arts Center
Stoneswod Road
Delph
OL3 5DY

As we wish everyone of our Members a very Happy New Year, we can look forward to a full calendar of events at the Millgate Arts Centre.

Looking back, however, at the previous 2016/2017 Season, we can confidently say that the MAC is in great shape under great leadership.

Work to the basement area in 2016 has left the building drier and more secure, as well as vastly improving facilities for the performers with the newly created dressing rooms and Green room. A successful season of productions and events has given us a healthy bank balance too which allows us to plan for future improvements. We have more Subscribers than ever before and our Membership continues to grow.

The AGM was also the time to thank retiring Chair person Edwina Rigby and to appoint Ian Shepherd as Chair and Verity Mann as Vice Chair.

There were many thanks for outstanding contributions, not least for Ken Deighton who has stood down from his role as President (to be replaced by Edwina) after many years of valued contribution. Following is Ken Wright's vote of thanks.

KEN DEIGHTON, M.B.E.

It's always difficult to know where to start, so how about the beginning? Unfortunately, I don't know when that was. I seem to have been close to Ken for so long that the early days are a blur, but the after show parties for the musical society in Ken's garage are a wonderful lasting memory. We set out as a group of couples, with young(ish) families, who liked eating but couldn't afford the time or cost to go out regularly. So we formed the Saddleworth Gourmets, moving to a different house every time, taking a course with us. That group was mainly centred around Saddleworth Musical Society, but we all had connections with the Players.

Ken never aspired to being on the stage but he worked his socks off elsewhere, mainly in the foyer, doing anything that was necessary to help.

He was held in sufficient regard that when our former long-standing President, Wing Commander Harold Jagger, retired Ken was the obvious choice to succeed. God knows when that was, but he's been there ever since.

One of Ken's outstanding contributions was looking after the community spirit in the Society and he did this by organising a series of 'walks'. I use the term loosely – to most of us it was bloody hard graft. Carefully researched, and tried out in advance, these walks took us over every public right of way in the area, and, believe me, there are dozens of them. I remember one occasion (not the only one) when the walk took place on a Saturday during production week. Half the gathered company suddenly decided it was time to leave to get to the theatre in time. No surprise to learn that we were at the foot of a steep incline at the time. Happy Days.

Ken has always been a master at taking on jobs that nobody else really wanted – I know the feeling. The first that I can think of was the newsletter which he took over in 2009, mainly because he was good at the computer stuff. In fact he was one of the first to bring the Society into the 21st Century, along with Sam Al Hamdani, and Ian Shepherd on the technical side.

Ken never wanted to be an editor, though, and relied on some of us to make regular contributions. His job was to make them look pretty – and to get them sent out. I had edited "Wright on Cue" some years before so I could sympathise. He must have been mightily relieved when Verity took over. Holding down a somewhat thankless task, with no immediate relief forthcoming, can be pretty soul destroying.

In a similar vein Ken took over the Membership List. What a job, trying to keep tabs on the thick end of 200 people! I'm trying to do it with 40 people on the bar staff list at present and it's driving me half crackers. I must get away for a change of air!

I have always looked upon Ken as something of a father figure – after all he is a year older than me until January – but mainly as a great pal and hard-working colleague.

Who can possibly replace him?

Cheers,

Ken Wright

Wanted: Company Secretary for the Millgate Arts Centre

Millgate Arts Centre is a thriving centre for the arts with plays, films, concerts, art exhibitions and live One Night shows. The building also houses Delph Library. We are a company limited by guarantee and a registered charity.

Vernon Cressey, who has been our Company Secretary for 10 years, is now standing down and we need to replace him.

Would you be interested in taking on this role?

Our board of directors usually meets twice a year. Our Annual General Meeting is in September each year. Our Company Secretary liaises with Companies House and The Charity Commission, prepares the agenda and minutes for Board Meetings and the AGM and puts together the Annual Report.

For an informal chat about this vital role please ring the Chairman, Colin Smith on 01457 873055 or the Treasurer, David Shipp on 01457 875171

From the Website: An introduction to the Farndale Stars

Phoebe's Blog

Hello dear friends.

My name is Mrs Phoebe Reece and I am the doyenne and Chairwoman of the Farndale Avenue Housing Estate Townswomen's Guild Dramatic Society.

Isn't it a mouthful!

My role(s) within our Dramatic Society are that of Actor, Director, Producer and Writer. Quite the 'busy bee' aren't I?

Before I tell you a little bit more about myself, I should mention, just so there is no confusion, we are an Amateur company but because we have been performing our plays for more years than I care to remember, our experience and professionalism can often distort this.

I started performing as a child and was often compared to Shirley Temple – minus the curls, dimples and cute singing & dancing talent. This said, I was always destined to be a leader and when the opportunity arose to join The Farndale Townswomen's Guild; I saw this as my true vocation. It wasn't long before I reached the dizzy heights of Chairwoman for the Society and the rest, as they say, is history.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank my Husband Mr Reece for his constant support. He encourages my involvement wholeheartedly and with great enthusiasm. It is so selfless of him because we spend very little time together as I am rarely at home.

My thanks also go to this year's cast; Gordon, Felicity and Audrey ..... oops, I almost forgot one, Thelma. They have worked tirelessly along with our backstage crew.

I do hope you enjoy our latest production as much as we have enjoyed putting it together for you.

Gordon's Blog

My name is Gordon and I am Stage Manager for the forthcoming 'Farndale Murder Mystery'

I have been asked to write this 'bog' as apparently it helps bookings and is cheap advertising; and to give some background information about myself (although why anybody would want to know about me is beyond comprehension).

I got involved (actually dragged in kicking and screaming) with the 'Farndale Avenue Womens Guild' as they thought it would widen my social circle (currently limited to my two Persians 'Kit' and 'Kat').

Although I do have other hobbies (active member of the local 'Origami' group and 'Hot Yoga and Hot Pilates)' I know that's a surprise!

My role as Stage Manager is to do as I am told; understandable as all the other members are female.

Please join us at 'The Millgate Arts Centre', Delph; the show is running from Saturday 27th January until Saturday 3rd February, 2018.

I believe it is extremely good and the acting superb! – but what do I know – I have never been to see a play!

Audrey's Blog

Hello there. I'm Audrey and I'm pleased to announce that 'Murder at Checkmate Manor' marks my stage debut with the Farndale Avenue Estate Town's Women's Guild. I have, of course had bags of experience with equally reputable companies (my Gigi is still remarked upon in some circles) and I think I can stake a claim to stardom having listened to each of my children practice their LAMDA grade one test pieces ad infinitum!

It may have taken a while to go from making the tea to treading the boards, with the Farndale TWG, but I have thrown myself wholeheartedly into this lovely production, mastering no less than 4 different characters (let's hope you can recognise me – little hint, I'm younger than most of the other ladies). I've also been on hand to add a little culinary sparkle, providing the recipes for Lady Bishop's sumptuous dinner parties. Cooking is rather my forte, as anyone who has sunk their teeth into my plum duff could testify! Well, that's it from me. If you make it through to the end, mine's a gin and tonic!

Love Audrey

PS: A double, by preference. Ice and a slice.

Note: Blogs from cast and crew (real and imaginary) can be found in the News section of the website at: http://saddleworthplayers.org.uk/posts/all-news

Spotlight on the Properties Manager's Role

If you're creative, practical, organised and love team work, you may love being a properties manager.

Following is a recap of the various and varied tasks that make up the Properties Manager role. We're always looking for more volunteers, so if you'd like to take on this valuable role, or would like to be involved in productions in any other way, do please get in touch with the Production Team (John Hankin, Anne Wright, Verity Mann or email Verityjmann@gmail.com

REMEMBER— Most Properties managers work in pairs to share ideas and the work load. You'll be given lots of help and training to take on the role.

WORD TO THE WISE—
Nothing is "Actor Proof"

If they can use it, touch it, or can reach it, it will be destroyed!

"IS THAT YOUR PROP?"

"YEAH"

"I DIDN'T THINK SO"

THE PROPERTIES MANAGER

ONE MONTH BEFORE REHEARSALS BEGIN

Attend production meeting to determine the requirements of the play, in consultation with the Director.

FOR THE PRODUCTION

Provide the Director/PA with an approximate estimate of the cost of any large or unusual properties during the first week of rehearsal.

Buy, borrow, make or hire the following items for a production.
Furniture (in conjunction with Director and Stage Designer)
Carpets (in conjunction with Director and Stage Designer)
Soft furnishings and/or curtains (in conjunction with wardrobe department)
Small properties
Personal/hand properties
Food and drink required on stage.

Provide rehearsal properties as required, and to have the substantive properties available for the Sunday preceding the opening night. The Director has a key for the Props cupboard attached to their Director's keyring.

Kitchen utensils should not be used as practice props.

Attend enough rehearsals as stipulated by the Director to acquire an adequate knowledge of the play and performance pattern.

Provide assistance, in liaison with the stage manager, with any complex set and furniture changes.

Remove, replace, return or dispose of all items at the set strike at the end of the production week

Notes from the Editor

Dear Saddleworth Players,

Happy New Year to you all!
Now that the last tinsel has been put away, we can look forward to the rest of the Season with more great productions, films, concerts, art exhibitions and the fabulous Saddleworth Live shows.
We're also feeling love for the Saddleworth Community at large, having been nominated Community Charity of the year status from the Delph Co-op. Not only will we receive a valuble boost to our funds, but the Co-op staff are getting on board by displaying our posters and coming to the shows!
To help, go online at coop.co.uk/membership and nominate Millgate Arts as your chosen charity and remember to swipe your Co-op membership card when you buy Co-op Own Brand.
But, of course, the Play's the Thing, and if it's been a while since you were involved, do please get in touch; we'd love to have you on board.

Verity

Contributions to SP News all gratefully received and printed in full, space permitting. Email Verityjmann@gmail.com

Submission date 1st March 2018