

Frant Pantomime and Dramatic Society

Newsletter – June 2010

Welcome

So, 'Off the Hook' has now finished and we're in that strange period after a show where we haven't yet started a new one and we're all wondering how we're going to fill our evenings until September. No? Just me then! The 2 reviews of the show are included at the end of this newsletter.

I have to start with an apology to those of you who receive this by post rather than email. As I'm writing this in the office in India, it will be a little while before I am able to post it!

'Off The Hook'

The play was extremely well received and the general feeling is that Pippa Attwood did a fantastic job of directing her first play.

The set was complimented by several audience members, so well done to the hard working team who put it all together on the weekend before the show. As always, we couldn't have done it without you.

The committee's thanks go to all who were involved with the play – both on stage and off for helping us have a successful show.



The ticket sales went very well and, as is becoming the norm, we sold several on the door.

We had reviews from both the NODA rep, Anne Lawson, and from a certain Mr Jeal who lives in the village who wrote for the Parish Plus. Both of these are included at the end of this newsletter.

Barbecue

Don't forget that the annual barbecue is coming up. It will be in Clive and Linda Moores' garden on Saturday 10 July 2010 starting at 12:30.

As usual, we will provide the barbecue itself, french bread and butter and tomato ketchup. We just ask you to bring whatever items you would like to cook on the barbecue, something to drink and a salad and dessert to share with the throng. You will also need to bring plates, bowls, glasses, etc and cutlery as well as something to sit on.



The Moores' address is Bramble Cottage, Middle Road, Bells Yew Green, TN3 9BA.

We look forward to seeing everyone there.

AGM

Another date for your diary – this year's AGM will be on Tuesday 7 September 2010 at 8pm. We hope to be in the small hall at the Memorial Hall as the Stables will be out of commission at that time but this will be confirmed when we send out the AGM packs in August.

Pantomime

This year is a pantomime year and we intend to put on 'Aladdin'. If you're interested in being in the show, please let me know and I'll pass on the interested parties to Jackie.



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Off the Hook – a farce by Derek Benfield
Frant Memorial Hall
14 May 2010
Director: Pippa Attwood



Undoubtedly, this farce was a big success for Pippa taking on the role of Director. Action takes place in the '70s Hook House Country Hotel owned by Major Catchpole together with his man-eating spouse Norah. A dubious trio check-in looking for a hoard of money, to find not only have they sprung the wrong man from jail, but encounter a formidable lady JP with her charming daughter, girlfriend of the real crook arriving with her elderly father, and the added complication 'don't do kitchen', 'don't do reception' hard-done-by maid has in fact already handed over the money to the police! With all the ins and outs and near misses, clambering up the ivy, in and out of bedroom windows plus of course, the cupboard the plot makes for an hilarious evenings entertainment.

Front of House: Again a warm welcome from the team selling their programmes. Hospitality received by **Roger Bassett** heading the bar team and we found our central seats in theatre style at the front of the hall.

Programme: A colourful cartoon front cover, on the A5 programme. Nicely put together with local ads, Chairman's note, cast and crew, scenes, forthcoming panto details, with the NODA crest in place, together with colour cameo photos and amusing biogs.

Scenery/Set: Well designed and built hotel interior with front entrance leading into lounge area with settee doubling as put-u-up, leather armchair and lit fireplace. A fully equipped reception bar area with beaded door. Side doors one marked 'TV lounge' the other 'Dining Room'. A very good staircase to the bedrooms, and of course the cupboard! All entrances and exits were used with precision. The set was well painted and there was good use of 70's stage dressings – coffee table and china etc.

Properties: Good props produced with attention to detail and use of fresh food. Just a pity paper plates had to be used.

Stage Crew: With **Ray Hodges** assisting **Alan Richardson** and **Sophie Sardar** backstage ran smoothly.

Lighting, Effects & Sound: Well lit and timed with sound cues good and clear.

Costumes: Again coming from **Val Dormady's** 'The Costume Place'. Perfect 70's look with bright kipper ties, Spook's ill fitting suit, Norah's terrific white pvc platform boots with tight sweater and beads, the tweed look for fisherman Mrs Fletcher-Brewer, good lingerie.

Make Up & Hair: A perfect tarty look with blond wig, OTT makeup and enormous earrings gave Norah the desired look. Her hairnet with rollers, night cream and the pink glasses in her feinting

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scene were quite hysterical. The girls and men looked perfectly natural under lights and Mrs Fletcher-Brewer's grey wig gave the JP a good prim look.

The Production: Pippa's passion for farce was an added bonus to her first direction role. She had an excellent script and strong cast to work with and she used the limited stage space to the full. She created a fast pace in both words and movement. With a lot of repetitive script the actors were kept on their toes, and any minor slips were quickly overcome. All ten cast members were extremely well suited to their characters and interacted together easily. In his debut role with Frant, **Steve Hemsley** played a strong tough guy Fred Baxter. I would however, have liked to have seen less of his hat. **Hugh Nightingale** stole the night for me playing brilliantly the wrongly sprung minor criminal Harold Spook with an excellent 'Brummy' accent, wonderful expression of the eyes and hand movements. What fun **Chloe Nightingale** had playing the sex mad Norah playing opposite **Richard Pierce** (Major Catchpole) the blazer clad hubby who married beneath him! **Toby Champneys**, third of the criminal trio – a perfect bumbling Charlie Mullins. After a stint of direction, **Maggi Baxter** executed the perfect Edna, the hard done by, 'I don't do kitchen' maid.

Thank you again members of Frant for an excellent evening's romp and my congratulations to you all. A short review will appear in the NODA SE News in due course.

ANNE LAWSON
Regional Representative
NODA South East
District 3

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Off the Hook – Derek Benfield

Frant Pantomime & Dramatic Society – 15th May 2010

The usual warm welcome was waiting as I entered the memorial hall, the ladies on the door, checking tickets and “persuading” me to donate a few coins in return for a programme. No doubt this contribution to the success of a show is appreciated from a technical basis by those responsible for the production, but I feel it cannot be understated what these first impressions give to the audience anticipating an evening’s entertainment.

Similarly, the two gentlemen ensuring that the audience as well watered do a lot, I’m sure to still the beating heart of the Society Treasurer, but how many of us crave the instant rapport that you get from a familiar local pub.

Now for the “main” attraction; Whilst waiting for the curtain to raise, I am admiring the effort and detail that go into making the set – this backdrop means that when the action gets going, we are instantly transported into a naff 70’s style hotel in the back end of no-where. This gives the audience plenty of space to concentrate on the characters that are to follow. Well done to all those involved, especially people like Mike Rowlands, who is a stalwart of the set-build weekend, and also to Steve Hemsley and Alan Richardson making their debut in this cauldron of insults and criticism! (Apologies from the author – you both passed the initiation with flying colours!!)

The show opened with Chloe Nightingale making one of the most incredible entrances that Frant has witnessed, with white platform boots, short skirt and a wig that made me look twice to check who she was! Chloe was fantastic throughout, constantly throwing herself at anything that moved (and a few things that didn’t).

Next on was Maggi Baxter, looking like a reject from the “dinnerladies” audition. However with Maggi the best was absolutely saved for last, and her entrance as a fully grown tellytubby will live in my ~~nightmares~~ memory for a long time.

For a man making his debut on Frant stage, Steve Hemsley chose a tie that certainly stood out. He was really well polished, and his menacing Fred Baxter was played so well yet not out of context with the farce going on around him.

Richard Pierce was well drilled as Major Catchpole, and whilst his role was not as full of comedy as others, Richard played this well in order to provide room for the others – something that is a really rare gift amongst amateurs.

Toby Champneys had the meatiest of text to learn, and at times I was pleased to see that Toby was able to apply the “one, two - miss a few” philosophy to his words!! Joking aside, Toby did well to keep the plot moving along, and to ensure that the audience were always clear where the plot was. This was a large responsibility with such a fast moving script, and he handled it very well.

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Now for what was described to me as a cross between Larry Grayson and Frank Spencer... Hugh Nightingale. He entered in bonds, but there were certainly no restrictions to the life he brought to his character. A great comedy accent, and physicality he exuded from the word "go". As an audience we got from early on that he was caught up in something that he was really unqualified for, and couldn't help but root for him to get away from this predicament, whether that was the villains, or the amorous advances of Mrs Catchpole!

Ann Darby and Harriet Berwick were as good as we have come to expect, with Harriet gaining many laughs from her coy reactions to the attempts to affront her chastity. Ann was, as ever, so elegant in her delivery of the JP Mrs Fletcher-Brewer, ensuring she was not so aloof as to make us believe that she had regular contact with the "Criminal Classes".

We had to wait until Act 2 to see Lysia and Clive make their entrances, but they were both well worth the wait. For those amateur detectives in the audience, Lysia was able to provide just enough of a clue as to the purpose of her visit to the hotel, whilst Clive was great as her malnourished father.

In all, a fantastic debut for Pippa Attwood in directing, I am sure that better qualified audience members than I will heap great praise for the way in which the dialogue was always clear, the stage well used and pace appropriate – all I know is that it was a great night's entertainment – so thank you to all those that "did" from all that "went".

Nick Jeal