



ST LUKE'S PLAYERS

NEWSLETTER May 2008

“RUMORS” - a final word from Director Neville Owen

If you missed seeing "Rumors" during April then you missed a treat. This Neil Simon farce was very well received by the audiences. Amongst the comments overheard was "What a wonderful entertaining play and so well done". Approximately 650 people saw the show. My personal thanks to a great cast and crew, so many good people that it is impossible to pick out anyone in particular. However I should mention Sharon Sutherland, the Producer, and Bronwyn Taylor, the Stage Manager, who contributed so much effort. For two of the cast it was their first time on stage, but I'm sure it won't be their last!

UPCOMING PRODUCTION - "AND THEN THERE WERE NONE"

St Luke's Players' next production "And Then There Were None", directed by Stan & Nancy Davis, is well into rehearsal.



Cast members Margaret Kirk and Jo Barnes

Other cast members include: Elaine Lewis, Jesse Setka, Brenda Bowcott, Robert Knudson, Patrick Alexander, Neville Owen, Timothy Coon and Andrew Sutherland.

In this superlative mystery/comedy, eight guests who have never met each other or their apparently absent host and hostess, are lured to an island off the coast of Devon and marooned. Statuettes of little soldier boys on the mantel fall to the floor and break one by one, as those in the house succumb to a diabolical avenger. A nursery rhyme tells how each of the ten "soldiers" met his death until there were none. A mysterious voice accuses each of having got away with murder and then one drops dead - poisoned. One down and nine to go!

This popular Agatha Christie classic will be presented at St Luke's Hall (3821 Cedar Hill X Road) at the following performances:

June 4 - 7 & 11 - 14 at 8.00 pm, and June 7 at 2.00 pm.

Tickets (Adults \$12, Seniors & Students \$10) can be obtained in advance at:

Petals Plus Florist, #201 - 3749 Shelbourne Street, and Ivy's Bookshop, 2188 Oak Bay Avenue, or at the door.

Remember it is general/rush seating and the performance on June 4 is 2 for 1. For more information please call 884 5484.

So how much do you know about Agatha Christie? Frank McGilly did some research not long ago and came up with the following interesting information:

- Her 66 mystery novels (plus numerous collections of short stories) made her the best-selling novelist of all time. During her lifetime and even after, year after year, her books outsold all others in English except the Bible. An estimated one *billion* copies have been sold in English. She has been translated into over 100 languages. Astonishingly, she is the all-time best-selling author in France, with over 40 million copies sold - 31 years after her death - her books are still best sellers.
- Besides mysteries, she wrote approximately 40 other novels, six using the pen name 'Mary Westmacott'.
- She is credited with 23 plays written by her or adapted by others from her stories.
- Her play, *The Mousetrap*, has run in London for over 20,000 consecutive performances, a phenomenon without parallel. (Nearest known competitor: *A Perfect Murder*, about 8000 performances, in New York.)
- In 1955, her *Witness for the Prosecution* was judged Best Foreign Play of the year by the New York Drama Critics Circle. The Hollywood version was nominated for six Academy Awards in 1957, including Best Picture (*The Bridge on the River Kwai* took the Oscar).
- About 100 movies have been based on her writings; a precise count is difficult, because (1) they keep coming and (2) dozens have been made for television, and may be separately listed.
- Her two best-known characters, Miss Marple and Hercule Poirot, still appear regularly in TV series that are among the most popular in the medium.

In 1955, her success had reached such proportions that she became, in effect, a corporation, Agatha Christie Limited, created to manage the world-wide distribution of her works.

The stream of mystery novels began in 1920 with *The Affair at Styles*, in which Hercule Poirot made his first appearance; thereafter, for over fifty years, hardly a year went by without one or two new Agatha Christies. Her first big best seller was *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*, in 1926. *Postern of Fate*, the last novel she wrote, appeared in 1975, the year before her death. But death did not stem the flow. Two novels written earlier were published after her death, and new collections of short stories continued to appear well into the 1990s. No wonder a corporation was required to manage such assets!

Despite the fame that accompanied such success, Agatha Christie succeeded throughout her life in guarding her privacy, with one notable lapse. Born in 1890, she had a conventional upper-middle-class upbringing, including finishing school in France. Along the way, she became an accomplished pianist.

In 1914 she married Archibald Christie, an artillery officer, breaking an earlier engagement. During World War 1, Agatha worked in military hospitals, and is said to have learned a good deal about poisons, knowledge that she put to good use.

The Christies had one daughter, but by 1926 the marriage had deteriorated; her husband bluntly asked for a divorce, his affections having strayed. Also in 1926, her mother died. In December, Agatha disappeared for ten days, taking the family car. She was eventually found registered at a hotel, under the name - a nice touch -- of the Other Woman. While there she had not exactly hidden herself; she even played the piano with the hotel orchestra. Since she was now a celebrity, the press feasted on the story. Was it a nervous breakdown, as her doctors suggested? Was Agatha poking an angry thumb in her husband's wandering eye? Many suspected a publicity stunt. (If so, it was a flop; the publicity was unfavorable, and humiliating for her.) In the course of this, Colonel Christie concisely exposed his scale of values: 'I would give five hundred pounds to know the whereabouts of my wife.' In Agatha's autobiography, there is not one word about this escape.

Whatever Agatha's mental state in 1926, by 1930 she had recovered sufficiently to marry the (much younger) archaeologist Sir Max Mallowan. Their travels in the Middle East contributed background to such later novels as *Murder on the Nile*. Their marriage was happy in the early years, and endured despite Mallowan's affairs in later life. Agatha evidently was better at choosing plot lines than husbands, although she once said 'An archaeologist is the best husband any woman can have; the older she gets, the more interested he is in her.'

In 1971, Agatha Christie was named a Dame of the British Empire. She died in 1976, but lives on vigorously in print, on the screen, and - as now at St Luke's Players -- on stage.

NEXT SEASON

The directors have been selected for the plays in our (60th) 2008/2009 Season and are as follows:

Play	Performance Dates	Directors
"The Heiress" by Ruth & Augustus Goetz	October 15 - 25, 2008	Wendy Merk & Rita Humphreys
"Sleeping Beauty - the Panto"	December 26, 2008 - January 4, 2009	Dave & Helena Hitchcock
"Random Acts" (an evening of one-act plays): "Ways & Means" by Noel Coward (from "Tonight at 8.30") "Exploding Love" by Joseph Coyne	March 4 - 14, 2009	Brian Wyvill Antoinette Church
"Nightmare" by Norman Robbins	May 20 - 30, 2009	Geoffrey Davidson

Thank you to everyone who submitted their name to direct, and congratulations to those who were successful.

"THE HEIRESS"

"The Heiress" is based on the novel "Washington Square" by Henry James. Dr Austin Roper, a rich widower, lives in Washington Square, New York in 1850 with his only surviving child Catherine, a sweet-natured, but physically plain young woman. Catherine is swept off her feet by the charming Morris Townsend. Dr. Sloper strongly disapproves, believing him to be after Catherine's money alone, and threatens to cut off her inheritance. Morris breaks off the relationship because of this. After Dr. Sloper dies, Townsend comes back in her life. However, now Catherine has learned how to deal with him.

The cast comprises 6 women (ages 20's to 60's) and 3 men (ages 20's to 60's). Auditions will be held on Friday June 27 from 7.30 - 9.30 pm and Saturday June 28 from 3.00 - 5.00 pm at St Luke's Hall (3821 Cedar Hill X Road) For further information - please call the directors: Wendy Merk (250) 598 5288, or Rita Humphries (250) 995 6480 & prhumphreys@shaw.ca.

"SLEEPING BEAUTY - THE PANTO"

The script is being written, and directors Dave & Helena Hitchcock are starting to think about preparations for this year's Christmas panto. There's nothing like early planning! Auditions will be held in early September, so stay tuned for dates and times.

SEASON TICKETS

With talk of the upcoming season, it is the time of year when many people buy (or renew) their Season Tickets. St Luke's Players' Season Tickets offer some great benefits, including savings off individual ticket prices and reserved seating. For the coming season, the Season Ticket will allow you to see 4 plays (including the Christmas panto) at a cost of only \$40 for regular adults and \$32 for seniors & students. A Season Ticket Subscription Form is attached to this newsletter.

PLAYERS BARBEQUE & AGM

Everyone is warmly invited to a potluck barbeque on Saturday June 21. It will take place at Dave & Helena Hitchcock's at 262 Plowright Road, in View Royal. If you need directions, please call 370 1291. The afternoon will start at 3.00 pm and the barbeque will be preceded by a short AGM. Please come for both, participate in a treasure hunt with a theatrical theme and a prize! You can also enjoy watching model trains as they run around the garden! Kids are welcome! It is BYOB. We will provide the salad and soft drinks. You just need to bring yourself and your meat to barbeque. If you are interested in standing for a committee position or want to find out more about what this entails, please call Neville Owen at 592 4285.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS

This issue of the newsletter is being sent to everyone on the Players' extensive mailing list. Some of you are currently members, some have been members in the past and some may be potential new members! Most current memberships run out at the end of June 2008. We hope that you will renew your membership or consider joining St Luke's Players. This can

be done simply by completing the attached form and mailing it to the treasurer, along with the (very reasonable!) annual dues of \$5.00.

Membership of St Luke's Players entitles you to a number of benefits, including:

- The "right" to appear in a St Luke's Players' production.
- Newsletters (by email or regular mail) that contain information on upcoming auditions, performance dates and other information about the club.
- Opportunity to provide input to the club, as a member of the Executive, member of an affiliated committee (such as the Play Selection Committee) or simply a club member.
- Invitation to attend the Annual General Meeting (with accompanying barbeque).
- Early notification about ticket sales for St Luke's Players' productions.
- Entitled to attend workshops when offered.
- Satisfaction of knowing that you are helping to support the club in presenting live theatre to Victoria audiences.

BEQUEST

We were sad to learn earlier this year of the passing of long-time St Luke's Players' member - Dr Alec Cumming. However, we were surprised and delighted to learn that Alec had made a bequest to the Players of \$1,000. The executive is currently considering ways in which this generous donation can best be used in Alec's memory.

GRANT APPLICATION

As you may have heard or read in a previous newsletter, St Luke's Players was very fortunate to receive a grant from the provincial government last year, that enabled us to buy additional lighting equipment. This year we will be applying for another grant. If successful, the money will be spent on replacing our ageing stock of scenery flats, replacing the flooring in the dressing rooms and building a storage cupboard for tools and set building material in the stage right wings.

NEWS OF OUR MEMBERS

As many of you will know, there is an ongoing movement of actors and production crew amongst the relatively few community theatre groups in Victoria and the Saanich Peninsula. Members of St Luke's Players are no exception. We have heard of some of these:

Evan Roberts overcame his loss of hearing in "Rumors" in time to play a cleric in "Shadowlands" at Langham Court. **Justin Guthrie** from "Rumors" split the role in "Shadowlands" with Evan. **Owen Searle**, one of our regulars, played a Cambridge don. **Rita Humphreys** worked behind the stage as Props Mistress for "Shadowlands". **Brenda Bowcott** assisted the director and help paint the set and **Dave Hitchcock** also helped with the set painting. Dave also worked on the sets for Gilbert & Sullivan's "Patience" in April. **Jo Barnes** played Aunt Josephine in the Mountain Dream Productions' "Ann Shirley" at the Charlie White Theatre in Sidney at the beginning of May, while husband **Mitch Barnes**, after his role in "A Shot in the Dark" with Peninsula Players, is currently appearing in their production of "Under the Yum-Yum Tree" at the Charlie White Theatre. **Tony Gilsean's** talents have, once again, been sought by Langham Court and he has designed the set for the upcoming production of "The Cemetery Club".

"YOU KNOW YOU WORK IN COMMUNITY THEATRE, WHEN."

- You say, "Don't worry - we'll just hot glue it!"
- You appear in a show and the tech. rehearsal is devoted to getting the running time of the show under four and a half hours!
- You think Neil Simon is a misunderstood genius!
- You appear in a show where the cast outnumbers the audience!

FUTURE NEWSLETTERS

If you have material, news of our members or other information that you would like to appear in a future newsletter, please email it to Frank McGilly at fjmcgilly@shaw.ca or send it to the Players mail box at PO Box 50044, 1594 Fairfield Road, Victoria V8S 1G0.