

FOOTLIGHTS

The Newsletter for Barton Theatre Company

Issue 15: July 2012

CONTENTS

1. Editorial
2. Macbeth
3. Review: AfterWords – Smith's Bite Size Theatre
4. Quiz
5. Monton Festival
6. Dates for your Diary
7. The Curtain Falls

1. EDITORIAL

This is your July issue of Footlights and this me writing it.

As with last month's issue, I'm writing it slightly late because there was something happening slightly after the usual deadline that I wanted to include.

This was Barton's appearance at the annual Monton Festival. A report on that is below.

Also in this issue a final report on Macbeth, a theatre review, and of course the usual quiz and dates for your diary.

Andrew Nevill (Editor
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2. MACBETH

You thought it was all over. Well, it is now!

The Post Mortem meeting on 11 June was well attended with almost of the cast at St Mike's. It was wonderful to see everyone back together.

There was a lively round robin with universal acclaim for how well it had all gone. Most encouragingly, we had good audience figures and disregarding rehearsal room hire had even made a small profit.

If you insist on including the room hire then we'd broken even. But that is a very good result. As I said last month, it's the Christmas play that we expect to pull in the numbers and thus the cash. Throughout the rest of the year we are used to making a loss.

At that point there was no news about the possible performance in Stratford. However, after a seemingly endless wait we finally received news that Macbeth had not been selected to be performed at the Royal Shakespeare Company

It was a disappointment as I think many of us believed that our production would not have been out of place on the stage at Stratford-upon-Avon (I certainly did).

Getting to act at the RSC is something most, probably any all actors would love to do. Macbeth had gone so well, it felt like that dream was one you could almost reach out and touch... Sadly it wasn't to be

I think it's worth saying that this is not a reflection on us. Macbeth was an excellent production of which we should all be proud.

The RSC most likely had an idea of certain types of play they wanted to showcase. It would have been a case of picking the plays that matched their criteria. We *were* more than good enough but we weren't what they needed.

Put it this way. Alien is considered one of the best sci-fi films ever made. But if you want a romantic comedy, you don't stick Alien in the DVD player. We were Alien but the RSC probably wanted Pretty Woman.

3. REVIEW: AFTERWORDS – SMITHS BITE SIZE THEATRE

I had read the synopsis for Smiths' latest Bite Size Theatre production on the website and to be honest did not intend to go as it didn't really pique my interest. It sounded a bit heavy, a little too sombre.

However, the Saturday before the show, I happened to be in Smiths and was speaking to Elaine McCann who asked me if I would be there on Thursday. It's hard to say no to a friend

I'm glad I didn't

AfterWords follows Julie, a recent arrival in the afterlife. All she wants to do is to be reunited with her late husband. The important thing in the afterlife is that physically you appear as you did when you were most happy. Which it turns out, complicates things. A lot

It sounds simple but think about it. Many people believe that in the afterlife, you return to the state in which you were most happy. They also believe that you will be reunited with those you love. But most people would not realise – indeed, I never thought about it until I saw this play - that these two concepts may not always be compatible. What if your mother was most

happy in her schooldays? In that case, your mum might turn out to be a ten year old child, not the woman you remember at all.

This production explores that idea wonderfully with moments that are poignant and moving followed by laugh out loud hilarity. This is not per-se a comedy but nor is it the heavy sombre piece that I expected. Rather the humour creates contrast and counterpoint heightening both the serious and the funny ensuring the play, despite its subject, never becomes depressing

Set and costume were effective, with everything white – a white backcloth, white furniture and props and everyone dressed in that same colour. It may be a cliché but it's one that works, instantly establishing where we are and creating a consistent feel throughout the piece.

The acting was top notch with an excellent cast. It may sound disingenuous but everyone was so good that I don't really want to pick anyone out as I'd have to give special praise to everyone. It was a genuine ensemble performance. That said, particular mention, must be made to the actor playing Derek. He was actually the

tech guy, forced to stand in at short notice. Had the deviation from the program not been announced, I would never have known.

AfterWords was a brilliant well-written, well-acted piece of entertainment. It was

also something more, provoking much thought and conversation amongst its audience. Can you remember when *you* were happiest? Would you *really* like to be that way forever?

4. QUIZ

For reasons that will become clear, this month's quiz is about radio plays.

- 1) Which early superhero, who had his own 1930's radio serial, was played by Alec Baldwin in the 1994 movie
 - a) The Spectre
 - b) The Spirit
 - c) The Shadow
 - d) The Phantom
- 2) At its peak, what audience listened to Dick Barton – Special Agent
 - a) 10 million
 - b) 15 million
 - c) 20 million
 - d) 25 million
- 3) When did the Archer's begin broadcasting
 - a) 1951
 - b) 1952
 - c) 1953
 - d) 1954
- 4) Orson Welles' radio adaptation of H G Wells' War of the Worlds is notorious because listeners believed Martians really were invading. However on which notable date was it broadcast?
 - a) Easter
 - b) Thanksgiving
 - c) Independence Day
 - d) Halloween
- 5) The radio series Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy famously spun off into a 'trilogy of five books'. Name the third.
 - a) The Restaurant at the End of the Universe
 - b) Life, the Universe and Everything
 - c) Mostly Harmless
 - d) And Another Thing...

5. MONTON FESTIVAL

Following the success of Barton's appearance at last year's Monton Festival, where we actually asked to do an encore, we were really pleased to be asked back again this year.

Elaine McCann agreed to write a piece especially for the Festival. Early indications were that it would be done as a radio play. But Elaine had a little bit more in store for us.

For one afternoon only Barton Theatre Company stepped back in time to the 1930's becoming the Barton Bridge Broadcasting Corporation (yes the **BBBC**) presenting the conclusion to their thrilling drama Murder At Barton Grange. Not only did the audience get to enjoy a thrilling audio drama but also a peek behind the scenes. And not everything is going to plan.

The sound effect guy has disappeared and one of the actors is missing. Time for the

caretaker and tea lady to literally step up to the mike.

In a brilliant twist, Elaine had our actors play both the characters in the titular radio play *and* the actors portraying them, desperately trying to cope as it all goes wrong.

And because, in the Thirties, you dressed up even for radio, everyone was suitably attired with jacket and bow ties for the gentlemen and elegant ensembles for the ladies.



L – R Standing: Cathy Warburton, Brian Cogswell, David Milne, John Orr, Elly Hayton, Sue Gorvett, John Gorvett.
L-R Seated: Val Ridings, Joan Breen, Iris Sharples

Add to this the suitably cheesy sponsor's jingle (which we were all exhorted to sing along to) and what sounded like (and knowing Elaine, probably were) some genuine period commercials and what you got was a farce that charmingly evoked a bygone age.

Unfortunately, as in the play, not everything went to plan. We were supposed to perform this in the marquee on Monton Green. However, due to the recent terrible weather Salford City Council decided the marquee could not be used and so the entertainments were transferred to a small room in the Monton House Hotel. (Ironically it has been a beautiful summer's day).

This did seem to cause us problems as there was a bar in the room which was serving throughout the play and the noise from the patrons around the bar only added to the generally noisy atmosphere in the room

This atmosphere was sadly due to our audience. Many of them seemed to be parents of the children in dance troupe (admittedly very good) that had been on before us and were on again next. They were there, understandably, to support their kids so during our section, they weren't being as quiet or attentive to the play as they could have been.

At times the cast struggled to make themselves heard. The prop microphones really could have done with being real!

However, they struggled on manfully and the cast deserve praise for that alone. That they also managed under the circumstances to deliver a decent performance is equally praiseworthy.

One of the nicest things to see, personally, was the mix of actors involved. We had the 'Usual Suspects' – including Elly, Val, Dave Mile but also Brian acting without the aid of a dress. Best of all we also had some new faces on the stage, in the shapes of David and Sue Gorvett. Welcome. I promise it isn't always this hard.

I really hope we get to do this again in nicer venue, properly amplified, and with an attentive (hopefully paying) audience who will appreciate just how good it is.

NB. I took several photos of the show (although they're not that great). I've put them up on Barton's Facebook page.
<https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=oa.10151739445816996&type=1>



6. DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Barton Theatre Company Dates:

Committee Meeting:

11 July 201 – 8pm – Elly's House

Pantomime

Set Build: Sunday 2 December 2012,

Salford Arts Theatre

Performance: 6 – 9 December 2012.

Matinees 8 – 9 December, Salford Arts Theatre

Smiths Bite Size Theatre

Organised Chaos presents **Bottled Wasps**

October 2012

Details to Follow

<http://www.smithsrestaurant.net>

Salford Arts Theatre:

A Changing World

Salford Arts Theatre young performers company presents An Evening of Devised Work

Friday 20th July & Saturday 21st July

Bookings: Salford Arts Theatre

Kemsing Walk

off Liverpool Road

Salford

M5 4BS

Bookings: Phone: 0161 925 0111

E-mail: boxoffice@salfordartstheatre.co.uk

<http://salfordartstheatre.com>

7. THE FINAL CURTAIN

Well, that's it for this month. Again sorry for the delay but I hope you'll agree it was worth it to be able to include our wonderful radio play!

One thing this month that was particularly nice was that some of you lot who joined us for Macbeth hadn't realise that it was 'lil ole me' writing this. When the penny dropped I ended up receiving many compliments both at the post-mortem meeting and Smith's Dinner theatre.

Thank you for being so nice. It makes all the hard work worthwhile. Believe me it is hard work. These six pages took the equivalent of a workday to produce!

You can share some of the load however, If you've anything - articles, reviews, anecdotes or quizzes – that could be used in Footlights, I'd be thrilled to get them. A report on Edgefold Player's 'Habeas Corpus' would be great. I was unable to see it so would love to hear about it.

Any contributions you send would be fully credited – unless you asked not to be blamed.

The email address for either feedback or contributions is below.

If you know someone who you think might like to receive this newsletter, please email me with their email address (Please ask their permission first).

Equally, if you're getting this and don't want to, please email me and I will remove you from the mailing list.

That's all for now. Footlights will return next month.

Quiz Answers:

1. c
2. b
3. a
4. d
5. b

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Barton Theatre Company Committee
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Hayton, Secretary: Andrew Nevill
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Greenhalgh, David Milne, Janet Johnston,
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