

The Chiltern Player

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The end of 2005 and an opportunity to take a trip down Nostalgia Boulevard with the Chiltern Players' own End of Year review.

The spring production, *Barefoot in the Park*, proved to be a veritable tour de force for all concerned. Rosemary, as usual, honed her team, both on and offstage, to fine-tuned perfection, allowing some to reach new heights of creativity. Apart from the first night when the string broke, the inventive device that allowed snow to waft gently from the ceiling in sync with crooner Bing's classic *Let It Snow*, is a true example of how modern technology can be applied to ageing structures

Our next show, *Verdict*, proved that you can't beat a classic Christie caper for drawing the crowds. It made a £600 profit and is the adult group's most financially successful show yet. So well done to us all. Profits will go towards improving technical facilities.

It was a pity that the summer revue was cancelled – I had great plans to showcase the 'world première' of *Miles Away* by our own Di Soden. Maybe this little vignette can be performed at some time in the future?

Peter O'Sullivan took his first foray into professional theatre when he joined the cast of *The Fence* for its week run at the Oxford Playhouse. The play, by Howard Barker, was – and I don't think Peter would mind if I describe it thus – rather unusual. One of its stars was the actress who

played newsreader Sally Smedley in TV's *Drop the Dead Donkey*. Peter's small, but nonetheless very active, role revealed that you don't have to have a speaking part to make an impact. I particularly liked the concentration he demonstrated in his 'man reading a newspaper' cameo. Well done that man!

Helen seduced audiences in Goring as the saucy Greek heroine *Lysistrata*. The cast, adopting the 'Method' approach, visited Athens to get 'the feel' of the play beforehand. Following their lead, perhaps the Chiltern Players could have an outing to Ireland prior to the next production....? See below.

It's panto time and Tiffany will be beguiling audiences in Wargrave as the Rose Fairy in *Beauty and the Beast*. I'm told they have 'cut her song', which I'm sure everyone will agree, is a great shame. We all so enjoyed her contribution to the off-stage chorus of *Little Donkey in Albert*.....! Performances take place between January 18 and 22. Tickets are selling fast so if you want to go, speak to Tiff, pronto.

Pete Smithson is in *Jack and the Beanstalk* in South Stoke. He is Dame Trott, the bossy mum of the eponymous hero, who is being played by Pete's real-life daughter Hannah. The show, which takes place in the village hall behind the Perch and Pike pub, runs from January 25 to 28. Tickets are £5 and go within hours – so see Pete soonest to avoid disappointment.



Pete is also appearing in *Outside Edge*, a cricketing comedy, with (I believe) a Wantage society – dates to be confirmed. In addition, he has a small part in Goring Gap Players' mid-March production *Pack of Lies*, a true-life spy drama about Russian agents Peter and Helen Kroger by Hugh Whitmore.

More congratulations: Both Jill Greenwood and Rosemary have extended their families. Jill has become a double grandma with two grandsons, Nathan and George, appearing during 2005. Rosemary became a mother-in-law in the summer when her daughter Jenny, the former Chiltern Player youth group starlet, married her fiancé, Paul James.

And, lastly, John Evans got to within spitting distance (at least that what it looks like in the pics) of the top of the world on his Everest trek. He tells me that he was positively overwhelmed by the support received from the Chiltern Players in sponsorship. Many thanks to you all.

Back to drama and plays for 2006. The spring production of *Pygmalion* has been postponed till the autumn. To ensure that we have a really classy production befitting this GBS masterpiece, casting will begin in the summer.

The spring show will now be Brian Friel's award-winning *Dancing at Lughnasa*. The play, to be directed by Jill Kendal, is essentially about an Irish family in the late 1930s. Lots of opportunity here for the actors to show their versatility with the Irish brogue – and perhaps draught Guinness alongside the cups of tea at half time? And if anybody wants to do a jig as a pre-show teaser....the opportunity is there. Performances take place March 24/25 and March 31/April 1.

Several people regretted this year's decision to give Wallingford Drama Festival a miss. The 2006 Festival takes place June 11 to 16.

Peter O'Sullivan is organising a trip to the Theatre Royal, Windsor on March 2 to see *Losing Louis* by Simon Mendes da Costa. Its stellar cast includes Alison Steadman and David Horovitz. Tickets are £16 and Peter needs to know numbers by Jan 6.

A treat for later in the year is a proposed trip to Chichester Festival Theatre. More details later.

That's it for now. A Happy New Year.

Carol Evans