



THE CLUB THEATRE,
SUPPORTING LIVE LOCAL THEATRE!

The Club News

In Memoriam

The Club Theatre came to the end of an era last month, when after a short illness, Vicki Lane died in hospital on Thursday xxx October.



Vicki Lane, our ticket secretary and always knew which night anyone was coming to see the play; and she made the coffee for the intervals innumerable times.

Vicki Lane joined The Club Theatre in 194x, and soon became one of its leading lights. She had been our Productions Director for over 50 years, during which she produced many plays on The Club Theatre stage, both before and after the move to 17 Oxford Road. She was our wardrobe mistress, both altering and making new costumes which have won awards in the two guilds, she was

our ticket secretary and always knew which night anyone was coming to see the play; and she made the coffee for the intervals innumerable times.

Vicki was involved in every aspect of the theatre. But she was more than a worker. She was a friend. Once through the peremptory, brusque, sometimes demanding exterior, one encountered a heart of gold, which was not always recognised. I remember when I had to withdraw from a play at short notice due to illness. I was extremely nervous about telling Vicki, thinking that she would be exasperated to say the least. The moment she knew I was ill, her only concern was my welfare: sad that I could not perform, but determined that anything that could be done to help me would be done. I know I will never forget the kindness and understanding she showed me then.

I am sure you all have

your memories of Vicki. She was a strong character, immensely determined; often this brought out both frustration and admiration in those who knew her. In her last weeks this determination showed itself all the more, as she continued working at The Club Theatre until just three weeks before she died, despite the pain she was experiencing. If she was frightened, or depressed, we never saw it. She kept smiling and kept working and kept caring right until the end.

Our thoughts now are with Victoria and Gill, as they come to terms with Vicki's death. WE know from our own feelings that Vicki will be greatly missed by all who knew her.

Other articles within this newsletter include details from the funeral, and plans for a Theatre memorial.

Treasure Island – The Pantomime!!

After the first play, which was dedicated nightly to Vicki Lane's memory, we come to the second play, and something of a first for the Club Theatre. Director Val Harris will be taking us to the world of pirates and gentlemen, of danger, treasure, love and a rather loveable parrot!

This version of the well-known story has been written by Richard Lloyd, and has all the ingredients of a hilarious Christmas pantomime. In addition, Val Harris and John Banks have been working hard to write the vast majority of the songs that you will be hearing – due to a sneak preview, I am in a

position to tell you that you will be singing these all Christmas!

There is already a lot of public interest in the pantomime, so you are strongly advised to book early to ensure your seats. Booking forms should now be sent to Stella Blackburn, at 2 Whitegates Close, Timperley, WA15 7PD..

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Special points of interest:

- Read the tribute given at Vicki Lane's funeral by Ian Bowden, our Chairman.
- Here about how the cast and director of Double Cut nearly gave up—and why?
- Chaos on stage—or A Cock-up in Three Acts—real life theatrical disaster stories!
- Get an update on how the ret of the season is shaping up – understandably rather differently to what we had initially planned.
- Volunteer for Front of House and / or Stage Crew.

Calling all willing hands!

During the run of the last play, every time the curtains opened, the set was greeted with the audience applause (Maid Maria likes to think it was all for her tidying-up skills, of course!).

Club Theatre sets are indeed all worthy of applause – an immense amount of work goes on to ensure that we meet the highest possible standard that could be demanded, both by our audiences, and by our pride.

I wonder what you would think if you realised that the set for the last play was built by an average of four people; sometimes we had more, sometimes we had less, but one thing was certain – we never had enough.

Because those four or so people not only build the sets, but do the lights, the sound, the maintenance of the



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building etc etc. And that's on top of full-time day jobs.

Stage crew, it should be stressed, are not experts, they have no formal training, and are not expected to give up every night of the week. Indeed, the more stage crew we have, the less work for each member, and the quicker sets get built.

So yes, this is a plea for help—I know there's an awful lot of them, but I'm

afraid that's because we get very little response. We do understand that many of you are not as fit as you were or as you would wish to be, and that you are therefore not able to help us. But to those of you who are, please consider helping us, even if it's just once a week or once a fortnight, whatever time you can spare. And it doesn't have to be permanent either—giver you

support to build one set a season, for example. Every little helps, and although it probably sounds like too much hard work, it's actually great fun too.

If you're interested, either just turn up one work night (Monday, Wednesday or Friday at 7.30 pm) or call Steve Smith (Stage Director) on 07970 154 338 or Mike Jarvis (Deputy Stage Director) on 0161 941 2116.

A tribute to Vicki Lane

This was Ian Bowden's thanksgiving for Vicki's life, spoken at her funeral in front of well over one hundred people in St Mary's church, Bowdon, on Wednesday 18th October.

"To catch the reader's attention, place an interesting sentence or quote from the story here."

What should Vicki's memorial be?

Following the death of Vicki Lane, Victoria and Gill very kindly requested that well-wishers either send flowers, or make donations to The Club Theatre. The Club Theatre would like to record our very grateful thanks to all who have sent donations either to Victoria and Gill, ourselves or Kenneth Dewey and Sons.

We would like to use the money donated to create some form of lasting

memorial to Vicki, so that future generations of Club Theatre members can recognize and appreciate all her hard work and dedication. Our problem is deciding what form this memorial should take, as there are so many things that we would like to do and that Vicki would have wanted to see.



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If you have any ideas as to an appropriate memorial to Vicki, please write in to Anna Dutson at The Club Theatre, and all suggestions will be considered by the committee before a decision is made.

Help us doing something really special to celebrate Vicki's lifelong dedication to The Club Theatre.

Double Cut – the successful nightmare that was!

If only you realised just how close you had been to not having a first play. There was the obvious and very sad dilemma of Vicki's illness, whether or not she would be able to direct, and then, when it was clear she would not be well enough, who on earth could we find to step in at such short notice.

We were lucky, and Noel Bowes was arguably unlucky – anyway, Noel came to be our director, which meant we next had to find a cast. Most of our actors were involved in rehearsing for the Pantomime, or otherwise engaged, making this a decidedly difficult task. I took the part of Olivia, taking the risk of putting my college work on the back burner for a month, Christine cancelled a holiday in Abersoch for the challenge of Elaine Whitman (who soon became known as Miss Whiplash – ask no questions, I advise!), Ken Currah sighed heavily and became Uncle Charles, and Bob Homer agreed to combine his

Knutsford drama with the role of Senor Comisario Vargas!

We were still a policeman, a butler and a maid short (sounds like an Agatha Christie murder mystery, doesn't it, with all those missing bodies!). Then an angel, passed by the house of Carole Scott and Mark Brown, and suddenly we were just a butler away from the play! David Eastwood (read his article below) came to our aid, but we had a rather dire effect on him, as he was taken ill the next night. We're so sorry, David, and we hope you're getting better.



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Two weeks away from the first night, and we're all getting desperate. I say my prayers, and go to ask the pantomime gang if one of their men would be willing to save a rapidly sinking ship – any man, just give us a man! And thank heavens for Ian Fensome. I can no longer count the number of plays he has saved at the last minute – and he's only been with us a year. After

the treatment he's had, I'm surprised (but delighted) that he's still with us.

Thank goodness, we're cast, the play will go on – but wait, what's this I see? Yet more disaster! Noel, who has been increasingly friendly towards red wine as the weeks go on, loses the last bit of luck he had. A drunk in charge of a rather nice Ferrari decides to go on a smashing spree down Oxford Road: a wing mirror of the first car, a wheel of the second, the Ferrari's nose stuck under poor Keith Spavin's car which is then shunted into the back of – you guessed it, our dear director's car.

Thankfully, there is but one more hurdle – Ian Fensome can only do six nights, not seven. This, after everything else we've come through, is easy – the guard will become the butler and the butler will become the guard and Mark Brown makes a wonderful start to his acting career.

The play went on, as we believe Vicki would have wanted it to. We knew she was watching, and we hope we made her proud.

It was a nightmare, in very sad circumstances, but it was, I believe, a

Chaos on Stage, or A Cock-up in Three Acts, by David Eastwood

Act I

You've all sat in the audience and heard the odd prompt from time to time, or been vaguely aware that maybe something wasn't quite right. In any case it usually doesn't matter too much, the occasional little slip is excusable and understandable, and these things sometimes happen in spite of all the hard work. So let's be thankful, you think, that nothing serious ever really goes wrong.

But sometimes – rarely – it does! Imagine for instance an ambitious production of the "Duchess of Malfi", a Jacobean tragedy, all blood and gore. In Act IV, Duke Ferdinand has a nasty sequence of entrances and exits, with only a few lines each time. It's very difficult and he's always glad to get it finished. One night he leaves the stage with a sigh of relief and is standing relaxed in the wings,

knowing that he has several pages before his next scene. Then a horrible silence is(n't) heard. It goes on – and on.

"Someone dried?" he says, wandering casually over to the Prompt. "Who is it? Let's have a look."

"To catch the reader's attention, place an interesting sentence or quote from the story here."

Glances at script, realizes his relief was a bit premature.

"Oh dear, it's me!" and steams onto the stage from the nearest en-

trance.

Meanwhile, Bosola, (the baddy) is tapping his foot nervously, waiting for Duke to enter Stage Right, and wondering where the hell he's got to. When the Duke suddenly enters Stage Left behind him ("Ah, Bosola!") the poor man jumps two feet in the air and drops his sword, his dagger and his flask of poison. Always travels well equipped, does Bosola.

So while the Duke is giving him the terrible murderous orders, the whole effect of evil being plotted is ruined by Bosola having to scrabble around on hands and knees having to pick up all his props! But it all happened. I was Duke Ferdinand!

More Chaos in the next Club News!

Thanks to David Eastwood for this, and watch out for the next two Acts, bringing more tragedy



The Club Theatre

**THE CLUB THEATRE,
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Altrincham's best kept secret!

Mailing Address Line 1
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Mailing Address Line 4
Mailing Address Line 5

We're on the web!
www.clubtheatre.org.uk

We're desperate for coffee makers!

Coffee makers of the human variety, that is. And not just any old coffee makers, either, but ones who can help us greet the public, sell them programmes, raffle tickets and coffee tokens, show them where their seats are and generally make them feel welcome.

Yep, that's right, it's the good old Front of House staff. The pantomime is going to be particularly difficult, as

many of our regular front of house staff are actually on the stage this time round, plus we have the extra responsibility of a Saturday afternoon matinee.

All we're asking is for one evening, or the Saturday afternoon, when you will be willing to be at the Theatre from 7pm during the evening, and 1.30pm on the Saturday afternoon, until the end of the show, which is

expected to be about 2 ½ to 3 hours. It's light work, the only main responsibility being a fire steward, to guide people out if there is an emergency, but you are fully supported throughout if this should occur.

Want to come and have a go, and have a laugh with the rest of us at the same time? Phone Val Harris on 0161 928 2277 soon!

The rest of the season—now you see it, now you don't!

Don't worry, we're not calling the rest of the season off—we've just had to re-arrange it slightly!

Obviously the pantomime is continuing as planned—and a right rip-roaring laugh it's going to be, judging by the raucous noise coming from the rehearsal room as I type this!

The January play has had to be changed—the actual play has not yet been decided as we go to print, but it will be directed by John Powell, always a welcome face here—remember *Woman in Mind* from last season?

The March play is Peter Harrison's trilogy, which would have been in January, except Peter is away on

holiday during the whole production, which we decided was a bit unfair, so we moved it to when he was here! He's a local author who has written three one-act plays, all with a mysterious tale to tell. Come and

support him!

The final play was to have been *Woman in Black*, a wonderful drama that has been an enormous hit in the West End for a long time. However, we received the unfortunate news that the license would not be released. We are therefore in the process of organizing a replacement play, plus a director.

We are very sorry for all the uncertainty at the moment, but I'm sure you understand that the start of this season has been very difficult for all concerned. We look forward to telling you more about what's going on. So watch this space!



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