

Lots of work and play!



The Club News

And hello again!

It seems but a moment ago I was inviting you to renew your memberships, and now look, I'm introducing the first play of our new season. Time sure flies when you're having fun. Or lots of hard work.

Hard work is what it mainly has been this summer for the Club Theatre team. You'll find more details about all the things that have been going on inside, but as a taster, the office and rehearsal room have been completely redesigned, much of the foyer, outside and auditorium foyer have been repainted, the kitchen has been painted, the lighting desk is in the process of being completely renewed, and our Stage Director is currently in a fair state of collapse. Please read his letter on page 2 and do what you can: I know we always manage to give the appearance that everything is running smoothly, and it generally does on the night, but only at the

expense of the energy and nearly the health of our few key workers. We need more help more than I can possibly describe, and you are the only people it's going to come from. Please please please see what you can do for your theatre. Now, more than ever before, we need you.

On to a different subject: the first play. This is a matter of intense pride for the Club Theatre: we've done an English Premiere before, but now we've gone one better; a World Premiere. Our thanks to Brian Clemens for this, and we hope to 'do him proud'. We also hope you'll be able to join us for this play: it's

certainly not one to miss if you like being on the edge of your seat! See inside as well for details of our gala night with Brian Clemens himself!

Please read on inside: lots of news, lots of things to do and lots of things to enjoy.

Welcome to the beginning of the 2001-2002 season!



Come and celebrate on our gala night with Brian Clemens!

The Devil at Midnight

I've both seen and read some thrillers in my time, but I've never yet read a play that kept me guessing quite as much as this one did.

It deals with a subject matter that is difficult enough to deal with by itself, but the twists that Brian Clemens builds in to his plot reveal just how dangerous and frightening things can get. A serious note is also held by the fact that the situation is far from implausible, and very understandable.

But while it is a difficult and serious subject, this play is still extremely entertaining: the characters are extremely well written, the dialogue captures the interest straight away, and the reader/watcher is quickly drawn in to the situation.

Devil at Midnight is directed by our very own John Banks, who, with his team of four talented actors and our expert stage crew, are sure to do this play justice, and to provide an excellent evening's entertainment.

Book early so you don't miss it!

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Special points of interest:

- *The Club Theatre presents a World Premiere, and has a visit by the famous author himself!*
- *With a Stage Director and crew about to collapse, we're desperately in need of your help.*
- *Go forth and find us new members!*

A Cry for Help by Steve Smith

As Anna has mentioned in her Editorial Piece, the few of us working on the Stage Crew and General Maintenance this Summer have been worked to our absolute limits, and are grudgingly expecting the same workload throughout the rest of the season.

The Reason??? Unfortunately, not enough of our members are helping us out to do the work which is needed throughout the season and beyond. You will not be even close to imagining the amount of work which goes on behind the scenes, not just producing the sets for each play, but keeping the building intact and in a state where it can function as a Theatre. You will all see the excellent (in my opinion anyway) sets that we can produce for each play, but are you aware of the time, effort, sweat and importantly, work, which is required to produce not only these sets, but to maintain the building around the sets.

We currently have in attendance 9 or 10 people who appear regularly 2-3 evenings a week (not all at the same time – often 4 or 5 people only) who not only manage the accounts, produce, reproduce and send countless correspondence, purchase scripts, order materials, pay bills, publicise the theatre, organise the drama schools and GCSE courses, clean the theatre, organise the wardrobe, replace bulbs, fix broken furniture, sort waste, stock bar area, repair the building and fittings when bits break down (often), maintain fire alarm, keep licences up to date, but also manage to manufacture 5 occasional sets per year in under 5 weeks between other activities..... Are you starting to get the picture.

The people who do this work, do it for the good of the Theatre and the benefit of the members. We all feel strongly enough that the Theatre deserves to survive another season. The people who do the work are a mixed

bunch, in terms of age (18 to 80's), abilities, employment or retirement status. We all have several things in common – Determination, Drive, Enthusiasm (most of the time), and a wish to succeed in what we do. We work hard (currently because we have no choice!), we have a good laugh, have good fun, get an immense sense of satisfaction at the end of the day when you realise that you helped to create that as part of a great team effort, and occasionally after 3 hours hard work, venture into the Bar for a glass of pop!



It doesn't have to be hard work – the more people help, the lighter the load.

What I am asking for, **No PLEADING FOR, is some more support from our members.** It doesn't matter if you can only make a cup of tea, sweep the floor, paint a bit of a set, **IT ALL COUNTS.** Our regular team is only as good as the

support we get from our members, and at present I am afraid to say, we do not appear to be getting nearly as much as we need. Even if you could only spare just a couple of hours to help out, it would be such a great boost to the team.

The Saying goes 'Many Hands Make Light Work', we don't have many hands at the present moment in time. If anyone can provide any hands, please call me on either 941 2116 or 07970 154 338 or just drop in to the Theatre on either a Monday, Wednesday or Friday evening after about 7.30, there will always be someone there and something you can do to help out.

Sorry to write this in such a depressing tone, but your help would be valued greatly.

Steve Smith, Stage Director.

Brian Clemens' gala night!

In celebration of the World Premier of The Devil at Midnight, we are lucky enough to be able to welcome Brian Clemens himself to Altrincham on Saturday 20th October for a gala night. So far we have confirmed that he will be with us for the final evening performance and a celebration buffet afterwards, but it is also hoped that we will be able to present an "Interview with Brian Clemens" in the theatre on the Saturday afternoon, hosted by Gill Lane-Young (Vicki Lane's son-in-law), where there will be a chance to hear from the man



Come and see the man in person: Brian Clemens at the Club Theatre!

himself, and to ask any questions you have. Because this is an excellent publicity opportunity for the theatre as well as entertainment for the members, details of this aspect will be found in the SAM newspaper: keep your eyes and ears open for the final bits of information.

Buy your tickets on the booking form for the buffet (£7), and the "Audience with" will be publicised in the local press. We advise that you should come early to both events, as we expect a high attendance!

The Club Theatre sees the light!

From Barry Swithenbank

Following the failure of two dimmers during the first play last season an in depth investigation of our lighting control system was made which provided some rather alarming information.

Fortunately the dimmers that failed could be and were repaired immediately. At the same time the other 10 dimmers in the two packs manufactured by Stand Electric were serviced, and it was ascertained that spares would be available for the foreseeable future. We have a further 15 dimmers, in two packs, manufactured by Thorn. Those two packs and their control desk are now obsolete and in the event of failure they cannot be repaired. To compound the problem the control circuitry is totally different to the Strand system.

Since a failure of either of these two packs or of the desk would leave us seriously short of dimmer circuits we conducted a "what if" exercise which indicated that their replacement together with the conversion of the two Strand dimmer packs to a modern control system would cost upwards of £3500 + VAT at today's prices.

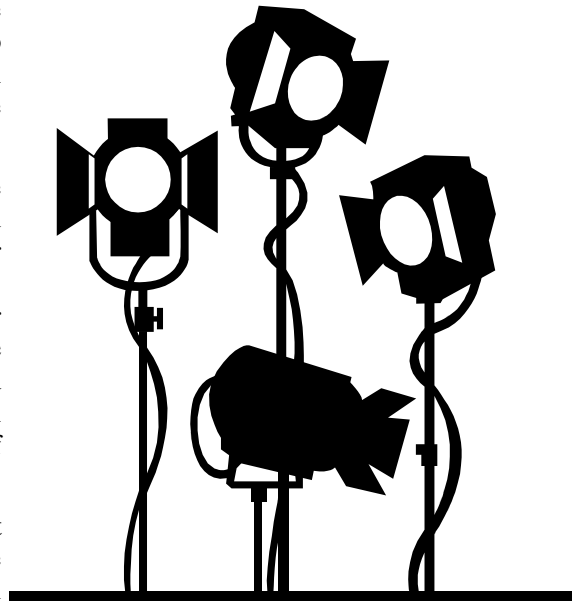
The investigation also showed that the main power supply to the "perch", the area from which lighting and sound is controlled, was very underrated. In view of safety it was decided that it was imperative to upgrade this supply as soon as possible.

This has been done during August at a cost of £2200 + VAT, and in consequence we now have sufficient power to see us forward and indeed some small capacity to expand.

As if all this was not enough, the manufacturers of electric lamps have taken advantage of new developments to reduce the size of the 150w bulbs in use to light the backcloths. This has affected the performance of the light units and in consequence we have been obliged to increase the power to 200w bulbs to obtain the same spread of light. To accommodate this extra load and to increase flexibility six additional circuits have been installed between the dimmers and the stage.

Late news

During the Trafford Youth Theatre play on September 6th, one of the Thorn packs failed irreparably. As a result we have had to purchase a new computerised lighting control desk and 48 electronic dimmers. We were not intending to do this quite yet, but was planned for the next two years. Circumstances have pushed it forward, so with the first play you will be able to see our first run with the new lighting set up. This system will allow a lot more flexibility and a greater consistency and ease of operation during the run of the show.



Because the Club Theatre saw the light, from now on, so will you!

run of the show.

Thanks to Barry and his team for reacting so quickly to this emergency!

GCSE Drama Results

Val Harris has done it again!

As you know, for several years now Val has conducted a GCSE Drama class for local school children aged 15-16. This last year, she has struggled somewhat, with more children than she had planned (all thirty three of them—more than what general school teachers want!). She has received invaluable help, however, from Mike Donohue and Dee Fraser, for which she is extremely grateful.



Three Cheers!

And so, I would imagine, are the students. Because this year, they've had yet another rip-roaring success. Eight students received the ultimate qualification of an A* (A-star), which is the highest accolade at GCSE level. Another FIFTEEN received an A grade, followed by 7 B's, two C's and one D.

We are extremely proud of these students, and wish them all the best for their future career. And we hope to see them acting on our stage soon!

Congratulations all students, and congratulations Val!

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For further details, contact
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We're on the Web:
www.clubtheatre.org.uk

On the hunt for new members

Last year, we had a fantastic total of 664 members by the end of the season – that's right, six hundred and sixty four. So far this year, putting old and new members together, we have only reached 523. That means that we're one hundred and forty one members down. I know that many of those are because people have forgotten to send in their membership forms (they've all got reminder notes in their envelopes while the rest of you can feel smug), but it's also that, sadly, ill-health or old age are catching up with some of our members so that they feel they can no longer come. It is always extremely sad when that happens, as each and every member is important to us, not as a statistic but as a person. You, after all, are why we exist.

What it does mean, however, is that we need to bring new members in. If you know of anyone at all, whether your next door neighbour, someone at church, work or even just a friend of a friend, who you think might be even slightly interested, give me their name and address, and I'll send them a brochure about the theatre, the latest newsletter and hopefully, we'll soon have that membership back up where it belongs.

Either write to me at The Club Theatre address, or call me on 0161 928 1113 or 0161 941 2116. Why not do it now, while you're thinking about it!

The new committee

Most of you will remember that we had to reconvene the AGM because of a slight slip-up on the understanding of the constitution. At the second meeting, we did manage to quickly elect the new committee. I thought I'd introduce the new committee to you now. Some members won't need introducing, but others will.

Chairman – Ian Bowden

Needs no introduction whatsoever. Usually to be found serving behind the bar during plays, or dashing backstage if a fuse has blown.

Hon. Treasurer – Roy Burman

Again, most people will know Roy (and Sophie, his dog). If in doubt, simply say to yourself in a fairly brusque voice, "you can't buy it, because we haven't any money to spend", and you'll know who he is!

Hon. Secretary – Anna Dutson

That do be me! I actually joined the theatre to act, but ended up doing all sorts of things, from props to sound to front of house to the occasional set building. My main role now is administration, but I do still get to act.

Chair of Play Selection – Val Harris (Vice Chair)

Well known as previous House Manager, Val has also directed the Junior and Senior Drama School, managed the GCSE Drama class for several years, acted and directed, and enjoyed the occasional spot of Stage Managing.

Stage Director – Steve Smith

You'll have read his letter on page 2, so you'll know he's getting a bit desperate! He's actually an Environmental

Health Officer, currently in Blackburn, but moving to Salford shortly. If you want a friend for life, just tell him you'll join the stage crew!

Deputy Stage Director – Mike Jarvis

Steve's flat mate, and soon to be my husband! Actually a video film maker (anyone getting married, having important birthdays, or anything else, he's your man!), Mike is unofficially in charge of the sound desk.

Maintenance Officer – John Ross

Otherwise Mr Multi-colour Waistcoat! He's extremely talented at knowing just when the tea is ready, but he's also a fantastic hard-worker.

Publicity Officer – John Banks

John's main role up to now has been acting and directing, and many of you may remember his guest appearance with guitar at the Dunham Massey Singers Concert last year. He'll soon be taking full charge of the theatre's publicity. Watch this space!

Props Manager – Charles Thomas

I think he's only missed one play in over fifteen years! If we don't have something, he's probably able to organise it being made – we're extremely lucky to have him.

Committee member – Christine Heath

She may not have a title, but she's no less important to us! An actor and a front of house helper, we're delighted to have her cool calm mind on the committee.

Please feel free to approach us at any time.