

Hello Everybody,

Welcome to another Woodford Gazette — it's been a while, no excuses other than we have simply been very busy and we do have quite a bit to tell you.

Since our last missive we have staged the wonderful *"The 39 Steps"*, this was a brilliant mad-cap farce which went down a storm. Please visit this page to see the [Dress Rehearsal Photograph Gallery](#) courtesy of Ian M Butterfield.

Following *The 39 Steps* we held our annual Theatre Supper evenings in February during which we staged the very powerful play, *"Two"* by Jim Cartwright. We presented this play in association with our friends The Martyr's Players in New Mills.



**THE
ACTRESS**
24th to 27th APRIL
2024

*'Lovely, spikey comedy
by Peter Quilter'*

WOODFORD
PLAYERS

The Woodford Centre
Chester Rd. SK7 1PS

This Amateur production of *The Actress* is presented
by arrangement with Concord Theatricals on behalf of
Samuel French Ltd. www.concordtheatricals.co.uk

Our next play ["The Actress"](#) is currently in rehearsal. This is a lovely, spikey, theatrical comedy and we will be performing this piece 24th—27th April 2024
[tickets are available here.](#)

Following *The Actress* two of the cast (Monica Wickham and Matt Coath) will be straight into rehearsals for our [GMDF One Act Play Festival entry in June 2024](#). *Sat Love* by Simon Brett

This is the première competitive One Act Play Festival in the North West and this year it will be held at Guide Bridge Theatre M34 5HJ 17th—22nd June. Our performance date won't be allocated until the end of May but we shall let you know as soon as we know it.

We love this Festival, it's very exciting and is always a fantastic week's theatre, a real showcase of talent in the amateur theatre world.



The **GMDF**
One Play
Act Festival
17th - 22nd June 2024
Guide Bridge Theatre Co. Audenshaw, M34 5HJ
Adjudicator: **Martin P Roche**



We have [auditions](#) on Sunday 2nd June 2024 at 3pm in the small hall for two one act plays and our April 2025 play *Stone Cold Murder*. All welcome if you fancy treading the boards, we don't bite and please don't feel you need to have loads of experience.



The High Peak Big Band
featuring talented vocalists Julia Peacock and Jules M Scott
Conductor Brian Lightowler

comes to Woodford

Friday 16th August 2024 7.30pm
Woodford Centre, Chester Rd. SK7 1PS

Tickets
ticketsource.co.uk/woodfordplayers

WOODFORD PLAYERS
Social event

August sees us host [The High Peak Big Band](#) for an evening of contemporary arrangements of music inspired by the golden age of the ballroom and the great showbands with some evergreen tunes of the musical stage.

Tickets are £10 and will be available from 1st May 2024

The poster for 'The High Peak Big Band' features a dark blue background with stylized, colorful silhouettes of musical instruments like a saxophone, trumpet, and piano. The text is in various colors (yellow, pink, white) and fonts. The Woodford Players logo and 'Social event' text are at the bottom.

September brings us to that delightful, Noel Coward play, [Private Lives](#). Tickets for this classic piece of theatre will be on sale for Sunday 28th April 2024



**Saturday 19th
October 2024
7.30pm**
Small Hall Woodford Centre

Join Us

**Italian Wine
Tasting and
Homemade
Lasagne Supper**

October sees us sampling wines at our [Italian Wine Tasting Evening](#) and enjoying a lovely homemade lasagne supper. Good food, lovely wines and good company—what's not to like?

Please email social@woodfordplayers.com for tickets.

WOODFORD PLAYERS

**SHEILA'S
ISLAND**

A comedy
in thick fog
by Tim Firth

27th - 30th NOVEMBER 2024
THE WOODFORD CENTRE SK7 1PS

Our final main play for 2024 will be the excellent comedy [Sheila's Island](#). Four ladies out on a corporate team building exercise in the foggy Lake District — what could possibly go wrong? The answer to that it seems, is most things!

Tickets for this fun play will be on sale from the end of September.

**Woodford Players
Christmas Get Together
Saturday 14th Dec 2024**

We wrap the year up with our much-loved Christmas Get Together. This is always a simply lovely, happy, festive event with a homemade buffet supper, a fun quiz and competition.

Please email social@woodfordplayers.co.uk for tickets.

Please visit www.woodfordplayers.co.uk/whats-on for a full list of our plays and social functions

Who'd be a Director?



As you'll see from the list above we are fortunate in having very talented and creative people for our plays. But our directing team are not restricted to a privileged few! If you've ever fancied taking your place in the Director's chair read on!

I'm often asked by people where I get my ideas from when directing a play. The easiest answer is walking Henry the dog and it is true that I have a reputation for coming up with madcap ideas when walking. Most directing though starts with the script. You read the script and with me the first thought is does it grab me? Can I visualise the play, do I understand it? I remember once been asked to direct a play; I read it a few times but didn't '*understand*' it. It wasn't enthralling me and, speaking to a friend, an experienced director, she said don't do it – you'll be fighting against it all the time. Valuable advice which I've followed ever since!

Additionally, some scripts are quite prescriptive in terms of staging, props, stage directions etc. Others are just a blank canvas of words where you can put your own interpretation on it. Always remember though that is this is your production, so whilst the script is useful, you aren't beholden to it.

So, you've got your play. You've got an idea of how you want to stage it so next you start thinking about props, costumes, lighting, sounds. Is it a play set in a specific era? Does it have to be in that era? So, for example 'The Diary of Anne Frank', the first play I directed, had to be set in the 1940s in Amsterdam. Whereas if you were directing 'The Importance of Being Earnest' it doesn't necessarily have to be turn of the century – Earnest set in the 1980s anyone? (Think Joan Collins as Lady Bracknell with big shoulder pads.....)

Once you've got those ideas in place it's time to gather the production team around you. And without all these wonderful people the play really won't go on! So, set builders, costumier, props, stage manager, lighting and sound engineers, prompt, stagehands etc. Normally, I like to have an initial meeting with all the production team so I can present my ideas to them, and they can (politely) tell me what will and won't work. Generally though agreement is reached without too much argument.

Next is actually casting the play. You may have ideas about who you feel would be suitable for each part and whilst there is no harm in encouraging them to audition you can be pleasantly surprised by who randomly auditions and turns out to be perfect for a part.

So, you've got your production team and your cast and now comes the challenging part – rehearsals. How many rehearsals you have in total is dependent on the play, the cast size etc but I always prefer to err on the side of caution. It is easier to set out a rehearsal schedule at the start of the process so everyone knows when they are needed rather than trying to add in extra dates later on.

In rehearsing you will see your ideas come to fruition but there is no need to rigidly adhere to them. New ideas will come to you and things that you thought would work won't so don't be afraid to reject them. Listen too to your cast and ideas they have. Ultimately they are the ones who'll be on stage but remember you are the final arbiter.

So finally, opening night arrives and in a way this is the hardest part of being a director. You now hand over your baby to the stage manager and technical team. You can't interfere during a performance, you can't stop the play and say 'let's try that again', it is out of your hands and all you can do is sit back, relax and enjoy the results of your labours!

John Lomax

The art of the quick costume change. Jude Craig Wardrobe



From this ↑ ————— → to this in seconds

Quick costume changes are not merely some flashy spectacle; they serve a vital role in the story-telling process of a production. Whether it's to denote a passage of time or a sudden transformation of character, these changes allow the seamless process of the production which in turn enhances the audience's immersion in the world of the play.

Behind the curtain, the process of orchestrating a quick costume change is essentially a choreographed dance involving one and usually more members of the production team. Costume designers work hand in hand with dressers, stage managers, and actors to create costumes that are not only perfect for the character but also conducive to rapid changes. Fabrics are chosen for their durability and ease of movement, while closures such as zips, Velcro, magnets and press studs are strategically placed to facilitate quick dressing and undressing.

Dressers stand by in the wings armed with costumes, accessories, and props ready to catch the actor as they come off the stage. Timing is everything, and every second is accounted for in the well practised schedule. As the actor arrives in the wings dressers swoop in, assisting with the removal of clothing, and the adjustment of wigs and accessories. Meanwhile, other backstage crew work silently behind the scenes, ensuring that props and set pieces are in place for the next scene.

The adrenaline rush of a live performance only adds to the intensity of quick costume changes. No matter how experienced the actor is tension can run high as actor and dresser(s) navigate the rapid costume change. There's no room for error, no margin for hesitation, it is the dresser's job to keep calm and complete the change on time thereby allowing the actor to remain focussed. Every movement must be executed with confidence and precision, otherwise the illusion will be shattered and the seamless flow of the performance disrupted.

Once the actor has successfully stepped back onto the stage the dresser tidies up the pile of clothes and places them where they next need to be. This could be another dressing station, or it may not be needed again, all this is well rehearsed during the run in to the play and it requires the wardrobe team to have a thorough knowledge of all entrances and exits. It's no good dutifully hanging a piece of clothing up where it came off when it is next needed on say the other side of the stage. Needless to say each production is different, some quick changes and placing of costumes is very straight forward and others border on organised chaos, whichever the case that age-old adage applies, practice, practice, practice.

At its core, the art of the quick costume change is a testament to the “wonder” of theatre. So the next time you find yourself swept away by the “magic” of a theatrical production, take a moment to imagine all that is not seen unfolding in the wings or behind the curtain. For in the chaos of the costume change area, amidst the flurry of activity with zips, buttons, props, wig changes, make-up adjustments, stage managers communicating with tech, lies the beating heart of the theatre.

I think, looking back, the fastest and most pressured change we ever had was changing Tom Dawson from rags to finery in no time at all. Tom was playing His Majesty George III in *The Madness of George III* and in the final scene he exited the stage via the centre back doors onto a narrow corridor and had to enter via the same door in full regal finery all in the blink of an eye. The first problem was that space was very tight and therefore only room for two dressers. The second problem was that we had to remove Tom’s tatty shirt (easy), rip off his nappy (easy) but we then we had to remove the bandages from his legs. The bandages were of course on a Tubigrip but because space was so tight there was no room for a chair so Tom had to lean on me whilst Pat Snowden pulled off the Tubigrips, not particularly difficult but it all took vital seconds.

Pat and I then had to dress Tom in a complete array of costumes, stockings, breeches, shirt, stock, coat, sash, wig, jewellery, shoes. We then had to get out of the way to allow the Queen who had been standing patiently further along the corridor so that she was ready to be at her husband’s side as they made their very regal entrance. Pat and I headed straight for the bar! No, we didn’t, we breathed a huge sigh of relief and cleared up the debris but if we practised that change once we did it a million times and Tom was, of course, brilliant.



Another favourite memory was during the play *Crown Matrimonial*. I was once again, in the narrow back corridor dressing the actress playing Queen Mary, at the same time the actress playing the Queen’s daughter entranced the stage with the line “*Mama won’t be long, she’s just dressing for dinner*” and at the precise moment she delivered the line she was literally no more than a foot away from us. All that separated Mama and daughter was a flat, a very beautifully wallpapered flat but a flat all the same and it always amused me, if only the audience could have seen through that flat they would have been privy to the sight of me all but throwing a dress and strings of pearls on the Queen whilst she pulled on her evening gloves and stepped into new shoes. No pressure!

Whilst we are not The National Theatre [their short YouTube video](#) on the art of the quick costume change is an interesting watch.

Have you always fancied treading the boards? Or maybe you are a techie type and would love to have a go with a lighting deck or soundboard?

None of the above? Well how about the challenge of helping to build a stage set or choosing costumes and props for a play?

Is publicity and marketing your bag? Maybe you'd love to do the meet and greet at performances.....



A yellow rectangular graphic with a blue circular area containing text. The text inside the circle reads: "It's fun join in Source props n frox Attend perform - build a set design a lighting or sound plot Front of House - Publicity Direct - Stage Manage". Below the circle, it says "There are so many ways to support your local theatre, it's a valuable community asset". To the right of the circle is the Woodford Players logo (a colorful triangle) with the text "WOODFORD PLAYERS www.woodfordplayers.co.uk" and the hashtag "#livetheatre".

....an amateur theatre group could be just the thing for you. It's all great fun and we are friendly and never shy about putting the kettle on! It's a great opportunity to meet new people, so if it takes your fancy, please have a look around our website and drop us an email. We don't bite and look forward to hearing from you.

www.woodfordplayers.co.uk

admin@woodfordplayers.co.uk

As ever, thank you for reading and all your support, we look forward to seeing you at The Actress.

Best wishes

WOODFORD PLAYERS



"I regard the theatre as the greatest of all art forms, the most immediate way in which a human being can share with another the sense of what it is to be a human being."

Oscar Wilde

