

19-05-22 Marlow players committee meeting

Summer programme: Picnic, social in someone's back garden, excursions, play readings or workshops etc.

You'll see on the website that we have updated the programme of activities for our most social season - summertime. Lots of lovely get-togethers to stick in your diaries, as well as the usual Tuesday evening studio nights.

Work on studio

Andrew, Andy, Brian & Alison have done an amazing job of making some space in the studio by having a bit of a clear-out of rarely used flats etc that we have used for stage sets. We've kept the essentials – the trusty old toblerones, stairs and platforms, and smaller flats which provide convenient screens. These days, given the uncertainty of performance venues, it seems more sensible to have a stash of portable and easily assembled stage set paraphernalia to reduce set-up time and increase reusability. Sustainable low-wastage us, eh?

November production: venue, dates, hiring, play to be done

For our November performance we are planning to put on 'a bunch of amateurs' by Ian Hislop. You can find the synopsis of the film version [here](#). We have also read 'Local Affairs' by Richard Harris, which is really witty. However, as we ease our way back into live performances after a couple of years away from the boards, we considered it a bit complex to stage set-wise, and a bit scary for rusty thespians to learn with its continuous quick-fire dialogue.

In terms of venue, we will be using Liston Hall for our November production. It looks like the Shelley Theatre is no longer an option. We're open to consider any other potential performance venues in Marlow. The main considerations are cost and whether a venue can be available for us to set up and then use over 2-3 days.

Even with Liston Hall we are restricted to only performing on a single Saturday due to other regular bookings that they have on weeknights. We're planning on two performances – matinee and evening on Saturday 26th November.

Publicity of events

Local newspapers seem completely disinterested in promoting local theatre these days. Andrew tried to get them to mention our last 'radio play' performance of murder at Greensleeves, but they didn't even bother to reply to him.

We eventually concurred that the most effective way to publicise events in Marlow is via social media – more specifically, via Facebook. There are a number of active Facebook groups that are Marlow-Centric. Andy has kindly agreed to take on the role of Marlow Players Chief Facebook Publicist. Our job is to let him know which Facebook Groups we think would be our best targets for spreading the news about upcoming productions.

Internal Communication

We know it: In the absence of a society secretary, our communication has been a bit hit and miss of late. This can be frustrating for those who feel like they are not being kept informed. We really want all members (and potential members) to know that everyone who wishes to participate in our year-round activities is welcomed with open arms. (We promise to open our arms to you in a socially

distanced manner if that is your preference). We recognise that the committee has a duty to the members to ensure that everyone has visibility of what's going on to enable you to get involved.

The committee talked about lots of things that we need to tidy up around our comms.

First principle has always been: If you want to know what's going on, check the latest newsletter on the website. But human nature also means that a lot of us need a bit of a nudge to remind us that there is something cool happening this week that we will want to attend.

So here's the plan.

We will keep the website as the central repository of information on what's going on and key dates for your diaries. Brian will maintain this. If you have anything that you want to share with the Players, pop a note to Brian and ask him to post it on the Marlow Players website.

Jossy will be our WhatsApp queen, providing timely reminders of the events which are posted on the website. We looked at our WhatsApp group and it seems that all of the actively involved players have signed up to it. Apart from Andrew who continues to resist the evils of most modern digital communication channels; not a problem - Sally kindly keeps him updated on Marlow Players WhatsApp posts. So we decided to use WhatsApp as our more real-time communication channel.

If you're reading this, and you're not on the WhatsApp group but want to be, please pop a note to Jossy and she'll make sure you're added.

AGM date

This is set for Tuesday 28th June, starting at 8:15pm. Please come. It would be lovely to get as many of us as possible. We'll finish off with a bit of a social – at minimum I can assure you some of us will bring some wine and plastic cups (oops – what happened to sustainable us? Maybe we should err towards paper cups or BYO reusable drink vessels)

AOB

Marly le Roi visit?

Our lovely friends from Les Balladins told us that they would like to come over with a play in November. Much as we miss them and would love to have them come over to perform, we felt that we might fail to look after them with the care and attention that they deserve at that time. We will be in the throes of final preparation for our production, and felt that we may not have the time to look after our guests as we would wish to.

Rising energy bills

The cost of our electricity bill for the studio has gone up significantly. This is not helped by our energy provider, SSE, deciding to cease offering us a charity tariff and putting us on their standard business tariff. And it's not that we use a lot of leccy. It's the standing charge - the cost of being connected - that is huge – at about £1 per day.

We discussed what other options we might have. Could we install solar and go off-grid? Not for heating – it would use more power than we could generate. Could we go off-grid and revert to gas heaters? Not a great idea to have gas heater in a wooden building with no ventilation when the door is shut.

Jennifer is going to have a search around to see where we might be able to find a better tariff.

Any other ideas welcome!

Bringing down the average age of members of the Marlow Players.

None of us are as young as we were when we first joined the Marlow Players. And we can only push our audiences so far in suspending their disbelief while we cast 50+ year-olds as young adults....

So what we really need are some honest-to-goodness young adults. Or at least some people who still get asked to show their ID when buying alcohol.

It's a bit tricky to recruit some youth into our group when none of us have obvious connections to potential sources of young talent. In the past we had members with kids or connections to schools. More recently we've relied on other theatre groups sharing their young talent with us.

We haven't really come up with a definitive plan to ensure that there is a next generation to take Marlow players to its 100th anniversary and beyond. All we can think of at the moment is to try to pick plays that have parts that would appeal to younger actors, and to keep our eyes and ears open for any young talent who might be persuaded to join our merry band.

In discussing this topic, we did all agree that the most effective means of recruitment to date has seemed to be the Marlow Carnival. Without our presence there, we would not have benefited from the likes of Alison Edwards and Caroline Law. So we definitely intend to be there again this year. In thinking about what we could offer to get people onto our stall, we discussed previous successes. These include massage, masterclasses in theatrical make-up, and costumes to be photographed in.

Alison shared something that she had seen work well elsewhere: a human fruit machine. Check out her video post on WhatsApp – it's both funny and attention grabbing.