

GUILD NEWS



THE NEWSLETTER OF OXFORD THEATRE GUILD

March 2005
60p (.90 Euro) where sold



the seagull

by **Anton Chekhov**

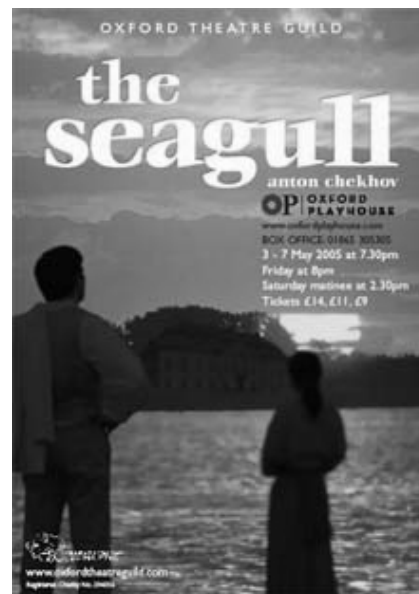
(Translated by Michael Frayn)

OXFORD PLAYHOUSE

3 - 7 May 2005

Polly writes:

We had the most terrific response to our 'Seagull' auditions, and saw about 60 people. There was a lot of talent there and I began to wish that I had had chosen a play with a much larger cast - like 'Ben Hur'!



I do want to thank everyone who came, and to say how very sorry I am that I wasn't able to cast more of you. However, please don't disappear, because there will be more auditions in March for the Guild Summer Production of 'The Merry Wives of Windsor' and I'm sure the Director would like to see you all.

In the mean time if you would like to help in other ways, backstage etc, please do contact the Production Manager, Tim Eyres at timeyres@hotmail.com.

So here, after a fair amount of heartache, is the final casting. We have a good mixture of familiar and unfamiliar faces, and we are pleased to welcome 4 newcomers to the group.

Arkadina	Cathy Oakes	Masha	Jamie Gaw
Konstantin	Kane Sharpe	Trigorin	Simon Vail
Sorin	Colin Burnie	Dorn	Nick Quartley
Nina	Nina Wylde	Medvedenko	Oliver Baird
Shamrayev	David Guthrie	Yakov	Michael Ward
Polina	Helen Wilson		

Our stalwart and invaluable crew will be listed next time!

Booking is now open at the Oxford Playhouse
Box Office: 01865 305305 or www.oxfordplayhouse.com

Please make good use of the enclosed flyers to publicise *The Seagull* amongst your friends, family and neighbours. If you could put up an A3 poster or two, please let Tim know.

Time and the Thames

September 1st-3rd 2005



A spectacular riverside event will take place this summer at Henley-on-Thames, to celebrate the history of the river. The director, Avril Lethbridge (an Events Organiser *Extraordinaire*) has arranged many such large-scale events in the past, at venues like Blenheim Palace, Hatfield House, the Guildhall in the City of London, Hampton Court, etc, and many Theatre Guild members have enjoyed taking part.

The Thames event promises to be no less impressive. It will be a spectacle of sound, light, water, boats and performers, from Roman times, through the Viking invasion, Magna Carta, the Civil War, the Victorian and Edwardian eras, and up to the present day. There will be flotillas of boats, an international set designer, specially composed music, a narration by Judi Dench, an expected audience of 4,000 nightly (!), and, I hope, many Guild members to enact a variety of scenes from the Thames' history. There will be no words to learn.

The organisers cannot offer any payment to performers, but transport by coach from Oxford, food, costumes and a lot of fun are guaranteed. The commitment required is:

- 2 or 3 rehearsals in Oxford during the summer
- Daytime rehearsals in Henley on Sunday/Bank Holiday Monday, August 28/29
- Evening rehearsals in Henley on Tuesday/Wednesday, August 30/31
- Evening performances on Thursday-Saturday, September 1-3 (starting at 9pm)

I should like to give Avril a rough idea of how many Guild members are interested in participating, though we are not asking for a firm commitment at this stage. If you would like to be entered on a provisional list of performers, please e-mail me, with your name, postal address, e-mail address, and contact phone number. I will then get in touch with you again when more details are available.

Hoping to hear from you.

Nick Quartley
NRQ@stedwards.oxon.sch.uk

OXFORD THEATRE GUILD
50th ANNIVERSARY PRODUCTION
**THE MERRY WIVES OF
WINDSOR**
19 - 30 JULY 2005,
MERTON COLLEGE FELLOWS' GARDEN
AUDITIONS



Audition time is approaching fast and the excitement is building. I am really looking forward to meeting as many people as possible at the auditions and putting together a really talented cast. Merry Wives is a great play (often under-rated) it contains enormous humour, memorable characters of all ages and some superb dialogue.

The audition details are below - there is no need to prepare anything. Come along with an open mind and I promise to make it as painless as possible!

Roles available

Sir John Falstaff - *playing age: late 50s, early 60s*
Fenton, *a young gentleman - playing age: early 20s*
Shallow, *a country justice - playing age: 70+*
Slender, *nephew to Shallow - playing age: late 20s*
Ford, *a citizen of Windsor - playing age: 30s*
Page, *a citizen of Windsor - playing age: 40s*
William Page, *a boy, son to Page - playing age: 14 to 16*
Sir Hugh Evans, *a Welsh parson - playing age: 50s*
Doctor Caius, *a French physician - playing age: 40s*
Host of the Garter Inn - *playing age: 40s*
Bardolph)
Pistol) *followers of Falstaff -*
Nym) *playing age:- 30 to 60*

Robin, *page to Falstaff - playing age: 15 to 25*
Simple, *servant to Slender - playing age: 15 to 25*
Rugby, *servant to Doctor Caius - playing age: 15 to 25*
Mistress Ford - *playing age: late 20s, early 30s*
Mistress Page - *playing age: 40s*
Anne Page, *her daughter - playing age: late teens*
Mistress Quickly, *housekeeper to Doctor Caius - playing age: 40s*

Servant to Page - *playing age: any*
Servant to Ford - *playing age: any*

These ages are approximate and in most cases allow for some flexibility.

If anyone is interested in helping in the production team with backstage, technical, wardrobe, props, set building or painting etc. also to come along to the auditions and make themselves known to me.

For further information, I can be contacted by email at simon.tavener@gmail.com.

See you all at the auditions.
Simon Tavener, Director

AUDITION DETAILS

Thursday 17 March *and* Wednesday 23 March

8pm

St Aldate's Parish Centre (basement room), Pembroke Street (off St Aldate's)
Use Westgate multi-storey car park

Monday 21 March

7.30pm

Brookes University Drama Studio, Headington Hill campus
(50yds down drive, on right, next to car park)

Alice Through the Looking Glass

Reviews and Production Pictures

Daily Information

The play version of this classic Lewis Carroll story is full of seeming contradictions. It's from the perspective of a young girl, but is probably most fully appreciated by an adult. Logical conundrums are somehow emphasized and resolved by poetry, song and dance. And everything that you took for granted, can't be, in a way that both reaffirms and calls it all into question.

Before being sent to bed, we see young Alice in the dilettante world of adults that she lives in. Everything is big, loud and strange, as it would be to a child. She asks to play a game of chess, but is instead sent off to bed, and told by her governess not to eat the sweets given to her by "Uncle Lewis." Before going, Uncle Lewis describes how the pieces are set up on the board and says that, from the Queen's perspective, it's like seeing into a "looking glass". Then Alice falls asleep.

The logical chess-board background turns into ethereal trees, emphasized by dreamy lighting and glow-in-the-dark reflections. And a band of absurd creatures and chess-pieces appear and disappear rapidly on stage and lead Alice through a series of adventures, impossibilities, and witty but confused word-play, as Alice (the pawn) makes her way across the upside-down, inside-out chessboard land to become queen.

The mood of the play is set by the wistful, dreamy, wonder of Alice (Rachel Johnson). Just as in dream, she hardly acts, but her emotions seem to rise and fall with whatever approaches. She smiles enchantedly one minute and covers her face in tears the next. The sheer wonder is played with a dreamy detachment, so she never really holds onto any of her emotions-they let fall. Her easy manner is always enchanting, but never as engaging as a character in real life.

Because of Alice's smallness, the play relies on big

performances from the characters she runs into. The Red Queen, White Knight and especially Humpty Dumpty deliver, giving us nuanced mannerisms, full emotions and verbal play. Humpty Dumpty translates a Jabberwocky poem

literally for Alice, turning it into complete nonsense - showing how poetic and non-logical our language is. Looking into the distance another time and asked who she sees, Alice

replies "nobody" and is complimented on her amazing eye-sight to see Nobody from such a distance. Then a message-bearer says "nobody is faster than I" and is responded to with "Nobody still hasn't arrived yet from the distance and so Nobody must be slower than you." The logician Carroll seemed to be asking with his cleverness: how can we use words like "nobody" that are, strictly speaking, "nothing"?

Because language and ideas like this are tricky, but pass swiftly on a stage without time to think about them, we can't savour them as fully as we would reading the book. Some of the moments and characters that are undoubtedly enchanting in the book, can't quite capture our attention for the

length of time that some of them appear on stage, despite many very energetic and inspired attempts by the actors, and a truly impressive combination of visual stimuli. Still, although the experience isn't engaging all the way through, it leaves you wanting to curl up in your bed afterwards and fall asleep re-reading the old Carroll classic. And wonder, as Alice does at the end after she's woken up, "Was the sleeping man in my dream, or was I in his?"

Oliver Morrison

BBC Oxford Online

Oxford Theatre Guild, Oxford's largest company of amateur players, made fair and humorous weather of the classic children's fantasy story sequel, 'Alice Through the Looking Glass'.

Traditionally both the 'Alice' stories have presented difficulties for stage companies due to their episodic and pun-heavy nature.

This adaptation however, invigorated Lewis Carroll's original work's wit, demonstrating



resoundingly that his hilarious wordplay stands the test of time.

In a close adaptation (with some elements of Alice in Wonderland such as the Caucus Race, inserted to facilitate the boisterous entrance of characters at various points), the success arose from the strong and energetic characterisation.

Although still slightly disjointed, the audience was deeply engaged in each of the tableau and at no point lost or bored. Particularly brilliant was Alex Nicholls as the White Knight: 'It's my own invention', while Juliet Humphrey made an excellent distracted White Queen and Kevin Elliot brought to large life the pompous but kindly Humpty Dumpty (incidentally Carroll was responsible for the portrayal of Humpty Dumpty as an egg - in reality the nursery-rhyme was about a huge cannon of that name.)

The stage effects were simple, convincing and fairly smooth, and careful organisation meant that the nine actors were able to portray a total of 47 characters, familiar faces merging in and out of surreal, dreamlike sequences. With the stage on two levels, Alice (Sarah Wilkinson) stood on the lower and appeared very little girl-like.

Although a little lifeless, her balletic training was evident in her excellent body language and movement around the stage, and admittedly Alice herself is not the most inspiring of characters.

Next year sees the fiftieth anniversary of the Guild and to celebrate they will be doing 'The Merry Wives of Windsor' in Merton College gardens, their first ever production in 1955. But don't wait till then - go and celebrate their 49th year by going to see 'Alice' now and have a good laugh.

Alison Ireland

Theatreworld Internet Magazine

Notwithstanding some fearsomely intimidating Directors notes, I kept an open mind on this piece of whimsy, which was almost unknown to me (the whimsy that is - not the open mind!). I'm glad I did. It was fun all the way with each cast member eagerly grasping every opportunity to indulge in

fantasy and take on characterizations way out of the normal run of theatre.

Cleverly set and lit, this attractively costumed production will doubtless please 'Alice' aficionados. The tale being told calls for a young mind to fully appreciate the 'about face' logic employed by Dodgson in entertaining his young friend, the original Alice. There's no doubting the intellectual power of the author or even the sophistication of the subtext, but I doubt that such appeal will put too many bums on seats.

The cast of nine take on forty seven parts, a massive challenge, but they all turn in good entertaining performances. Newcomer Olivia Darby must surely have the Gnat and Fish role tied up for the future, Kevin Elliot was most impressive as Humpty-Dumpty, shining through his voluminous polystyrene swaddling.

Sheila McKean was surely a governess in an earlier life whilst Juliet Humphrey (who might have given us a little more volume) adopted fresh and amusing postures time and again.

A terrific input of energy and 'fight' skills from Estelle Buckridge kept things moving a'pace, and Felicity McCormack showed that her time at the Ministry of Funny Walks was not wasted. Her elegant and measured 'mugging' was a joy.

Power and Gravititas came courtesy of Alex Nichols and Tim Eyres respectively; I loved the rocking horse sequence. Tim's mock dignity can be a winner with a young audience.

Sarah Wilkinson took the title role and her extensive ballet training showed in her every graceful move. The production is sharing the role on alternate nights between two young ladies, so rich is the Guild store of talents.

The show is a wonderful opportunity for Oxford parents to introduce their offspring to a piece of truly imaginative theatre. I hope the marketing endeavours are aimed at the age level for which the writing was lovingly created.

Don Fathers



Oxford Theatre Guild 50th Anniversary Events



Book your tickets for the 50th anniversary GALA DINNER...

SATURDAY 21 May 2005 at Brookes Restaurant, Gipsy Lane, Headington at 7.30pm

Champagne and canapés, 3 course dinner with wine, followed by coffee and sparkling entertainment!

Tickets at £40 each should be reserved NOW by paying a booking fee of £15 per person: send a cheque payable to OTG to Felicity, with the enclosed booking form, by 31 March. Balance will be payable by 3 May.

Members and former members are welcome to come with or without a partner. Black tie optional. Numbers limited, so please book EARLY to avoid disappointment.

Please include with your booking fee a note of when you joined the Guild, and a list of all the Guild plays you have been connected with (if you can remember!). A Gala Dinner Programme is planned to include relevant information about those attending.

Also planned for the 50th anniversary celebrations:

WEDNESDAY 20 April: Annual General Meeting, Summertown URC, 7:30pm

TUESDAY 3 May: Opening Night Launch Party for THE SEAGULL at Oxford Playhouse, 6.30pm

SATURDAY 23 July: Birthday Tea Party after matinee of THE MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR at Merton College.

ANNIVERSARY PUBLICATION containing a wealth of archive material, plus an interactive DVD!



Down Memory Lane - Guild Archive

Much of the Guild's history will soon be available on a DVD that is being prepared as part of our 50th Anniversary celebrations. The many posters, flyers, theatre programmes, cast lists, reviews and photos that form our paper archive have been scanned in electronic format so that members will be able to browse back through time, bringing back memories of past productions. But there are still some gaps that need to be filled - especially from the early years. We have staged over 200 productions so the 40 or so productions listed below for which we have no information in the archive at present only represent about 20 per cent of the total. If you have any material relating to these please contact David Long (see back page for email address) so that he can arrange for it to be included - for some reason there is not much about the 1980s. There are also other productions for which we only have a partial record in the archive so please get in touch to see if we can use any material that you might have. Otherwise we would be pleased to receive any personal reminiscences about any production from Guild members past and present to be included on the DVD.

Productions currently missing from the archive:

1956 Twelfth Night	1972 Mixed Doubles	1982 The Promise (?)
1957 Much Ado About Nothing	1973 After Magritte/The Real	1983 Epsom Downs
1959 Love's Labour's Lost	Inspector Hound	1983 Mad Women of Chaillot
1960 The Clandestine Marriage	1975 Macbeth	1984 Black Comedy
1962 The Caretaker	1976 The Comedy of Errors	1985 All's Well That Ends Well
1963 Blood Wedding	1976 The Birthday Party	1985 Hyacinth Harvey
1964 The Pinedus Affair	1978 Coriolanus	1985 Miss Julie
1964 The Taming of the Shrew	1979 Love the Only Solution	1985 Late Night Revue
1965 Electra	1979 Incredible Vanishing	1985 Lark Rise
1967 Cecile	1979 Pleasure and Repentance	1986 Hamlet
1969 Andorra	1980 The Promise	1986 Hard Times
1970 Rattle of a Simple Man	1980 Sorry	1987 Commedia
1970 Hobson's Choice	1981 Home	
1971 The Children's Hour	1981 Snow Queen	

WOT - Workshops on Theatre

Oxford Theatre Guild 50th Anniversary Programme



To mark the 50th Anniversary of the Oxford Theatre Guild, the Guild will be sponsoring workshops on Acting and Directing from March through to the Summer of 2005 which will be open to all members of the Oxford Drama Network. These include an acting workshop led by Mike Hadley, an experienced professional actor, who has appeared in leading roles with the RSC, a workshop on speaking Shakespeare and other text with voice specialist Alexander Massey, and a workshop on directing with David Tudor, Principal of the Rep College, Reading.

DATE	LEADER	TITLE	VENUE	WOT ORGANISER
Sunday 3 April	Alexander Massey	From page to voice: bring a script to life	St Margaret's institute, Polstead Road, Oxford	Elizabeth Kirkham assisted on the day by Tim Eyres
Sunday 17 April (postponed from 13 March)	Mike Hadley <i>Fully booked</i>	Acting not demonstrating	Chadlington Village Hall	Sue Haffenden sue.haffenden@tiscali.co.uk
Sunday 8 May	Dot Burroughs	Playwriting	Masonic Hall, Wantage	Terry Gallager terrygallager@aol.com
Sunday 29 May	David Tudor	Directing	Holton Village Hall	Felicity Peacock felicity.peacock@which.net
Sunday 3 July	Peepolykus	Eccentric characters through physical states	tba	tba
September	tba		tba	
Saturday 8 October	David Thomas	Acting for beginners	tba	Susi Dalton susietal@tesco.net
Sunday 27 November	Sue Haffenden	From page to stage	Chadlington Village Hall	Sue Haffenden As above

Further information on any of these events can be obtained from the relevant organiser

WOT workshops are supported by Oxfordshire Drama Network and Oxford Theatre Guild.



Guild People - Betty Mottley

Many Guild members will remember Betty Mottley, who died on 22 January 2005, aged 96. She was an audience regular for many years, and always donated one of her famous bread puddings to the cast and crew on the opening night of a Guild Playhouse show.

Peter Mottley

Oxford Operatic Society present
Anything Goes
by Cole Porter

New Theatre, Oxford
17 - 21 May 2005

Featuring our very own Tim Younger

NOTICE

Oxford Theatre Guild Annual General Meeting

Wednesday 20 April
United Reformed Church Hall, Summertown, Oxford
7:30pm

Please make a special effort to come to this year's AGM. It is your opportunity to have a say in how the Guild is run. It is also our 50th Anniversary year and the AGM is part of our programme of celebrations for members.

GUILD GRANTS FOR WORKSHOPS

If you want to improve your skills in a particular technical area you can apply for a grant to cover the cost of the workshop fee.

It would be particularly useful to extend the number of members able to help with lighting, sound or make-up, so if you are interested please contact Felicity Peacock.

GUILD BURSARIES

Guild bursaries are open to mature students who have a place at an accredited drama school which will qualify them to work in the professional theatre. To be eligible for an OTG Bursary, you should already have been involved in theatre in Oxfordshire and be able to demonstrate your ongoing commitment to helping others in the area via drama workshops or activities with local drama groups. The Bursary Panel is independent of the Guild. For further details contact Felicity Peacock.

DIRECTORS ARE INVITED

to put forward proposals for the Guild's autumn/winter production/s.

A December week at the OFS has been reserved, and if any Director has ideas for a more experimental production in a small venue, this may be possible too. Please contact David Long or Felicity Peacock by 12 April.

The Committee will meet potential Directors at the May meeting to make a decision.



Oxford Theatre Guild Committee 2004-2005

Chair: David Long,
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Vice-chair: Janet Bolam,
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Secretary: Felicity Peacock,
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Treasurer & Membership Secretary: Bill Moulford,
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Minutes Secretary / Hall Bookings: Diana Kilburn,
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Guild News Update

The editor would like to apologise to all keen readers for the delays in getting this edition ready for publication. Suggestions, articles for inclusion in future editions, praise or abuse should be directed to simon.tavener@gmail.com.

www.oxfordtheatreguild.com The Oxford Theatre Guild is a registered charity, number 294056.