BLOCKLEY AMATEUR DRAMATIC COMPANY

 CHAIRMAN’ REPORT TO THE AGM JULY 2020

It is an overused expression but this year has been truly unprecedented due to the COVID 19 pandemic. BAD Co is not the only theatrical company to have been hit by this devastating illness.

Indeed one of our actors Martin Congreve who appeared in Bill Wilkinson’s production of “The Orchestra” died in the early weeks. We remember his excellent portrayal of the pianist. He had just opened in “The Children” at the Loft (another production by Bill) which was cancelled when the lockdown was announced.

We were comparatively fortunate that we had no productions ongoing or in rehearsal during the lockdown although several were planned for later in the year. In view of the difficulty in observing even relaxed social distancing requirements we have taken the decision that no further shows will be staged until we are certain that they can be achieved safely for our performers, technicians and most of all our audience.

I do not intend to dwell on this depressing scenario further but to take a look back at the shows and events that that we were able to perform in 2019/2020. Prior to our enforced suspension it was a busy year with five shows all involving major commitment from all involved.

**Alice**

This was a colourful fantasy production directed by Jo Knight and involving heavy commitment in terms of costumes, props and set. We were fortunate to audition and cast Victoria Olavesen-Stabb an ideal Alice in every way who excelled in the part. Additional amusing dialogue was written by Jo for the linking scenes. It was a great start to the year and was well received.

**The Children**

This was a studio production directed by Bill and staged in Jubilee Hall with a minimal set and using all of the Hall (including the kitchen and toilet) and fading natural light to create the haunting claustrophobic atmosphere of past infidelities and impending disaster. The experienced cast consisting of Sue and Steve Downing and Laura Middleton ably rose to the challenge of this demanding play.

**Cranford**

This was another major production directed by Bill and enabled us to utilise our strengths to the full. The play concerned an episode in the novel by Elizabeth Gaskell. As such the cast were predominantly ladies whose small enclosed society gave ample opportunity for excitement when great events, such as the arrival of a titled lady, her subsequent marriage, the impoverishment of the principal character (Miss Matty) and her redemption were all played out with great aplomb by the cast. The costumes, set and props added lavishly to the staging and the audiences (including a matinee) were duly appreciative. This was an expensive production but well worth it.

**Bazaar and Rummage**

We have been extremely fortunate that Steve and Sue Downing (after many years as temporary residents) have decided to make Blockley their permanent home. Steve agreed to direct Sue Townsend’s extremely funny play about agoraphobic ladies holding a rummage sale. This was a totally female cast and was performed highly competently under Steve’s able direction with Sue in a major role. We certainly look forward to more of the same. The costumes and rummage were sourced with minimal expense so the financial outturn was favourable as evidenced in the accounts.

**Rain or Shine**

For some years we have welcomed Rain or Shine the Gloucester based Travelling Theatre Company the intention being that they would perform in the open air on Churchill Close. We have been unfortunate in past years when the weather has beaten us and it has been necessary to use our alternative venue in St George’s Hall. However in July last year we were able to enjoy “As You Like It” outside albeit having a wet first half. As In previous years the proceeds of this production were donated to the shop fund.

**Future Plans**

The productions last year are evidence that we can aspire to drama in many forms which our loyal audience in Blockley greatly appreciates.

Although our emergence from hibernation depends very much on events outside our control we are giving some thought to what follows. We would like to stage a big cast production if possible and when we are allowed to do so. This would hopefully include some involvement from young people and related entertainment such as singers and dancers. The obvious candidate may be a pantomime but there are other possibilities.

Amongst suitable plays we have Jo’s “Entertaining Angels” which has been cast and is ready to begin rehearsals. Other offerings are limited by our actor demographic which is a shortage of male actors. This is something we need urgently to address when times permit.

Happily Rain or Shine have confirmed that they can visit us next year on Saturday 10thJuly with their production of “She Stoops to Conquer”.

In order that we can undertake some dramatic activity Evie Bowyer and Sue Downing are keen to resurrect our BAD Playmates play readings by Zoom technology. Jenny will be emailing the details shortly to all members.

**Other Matters**

We are pleased to say that our long awaited shed has now been erected adjacent to St George’s Hall and we intend to move into it as soon as we are able to do so. This will hold our seat staging and other items such as scenery and props from previous productions. We have been allowed to leave our costumes in the cupboards in the Robinson Room to avoid damp.

Our website although incomplete is now a reality thanks to the efforts of Erik, Rob and Nikki who have taken this on from Dick Robinson who has left us to live in London. He and Lisa will be sadly missed.

Also we would like to say a sad farewell to Rosie Kjellander one of our established actors who has taken leading roles in several productions over the last few years (latterly “The Allotment”, “Trevor” and “Daisy Pulls It Off”). Her husband Per died earlier this year and she has decided to return to Cyprus where she and Per lived before coming to England and where her children reside.

Jenny has been assiduous as always in organising our periodic BAD Taste lunches generally to celebrate the end of a show run. Many thanks to her as always for all that she does.

**Accounts**

The accounts kept by Legh and prepared by Bill show a healthy surplus for the year with each of our productions showing a profit. Clearly those plays with higher audiences and lower costs such as Alice and “Bazaar and Rummage” produced the highest return but even a studio production running for a few nights like “The Children” produced a positive return. We were able to prime the rejuvenated Film Club by a grant of £500 and are pleased to see that the Film Club that this has proved to be a success and the reserve is now a healthy £1400. Although Legh handles this aspect combined with the BAD Co accounts it is not a part of BAD Co funds.

**Committee**

As will be seen by the agenda we are seeking the approval of members to the election of officers and the committee in an unusual way this year. The existing officers are willing to stand again as are four of the current committee out of a complement of six. However we invite other nominations for all of these roles using the form attached which please return to Jenny Bruce prior to the date set on the agenda namely Monday 10th August 2020. If required an election will be held.

I am sorry this year that we have been unable to stage our AGM in the usual way and have missed the buzz and fun of our meeting in Little Village Hall. Let us hope that this is unique and we can look forward to getting together again next year.

Graham New