

# NOISES OFF

## TABLE MANNERS

**Our next production will be Alan Ayckbourn's classic comedy**

### TABLE MANNERS

**The play will be directed by John Crabtree**

Performances will take place in the Sherborne Studio Theatre from 24<sup>th</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup> February 2020.

There will be a **read-through** of the play in the theatre on Monday 4<sup>th</sup> November at 7.30. **Auditions** will follow on Monday 11<sup>th</sup> and Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> also in the theatre at 7.30.

**Rehearsals** are scheduled to begin the week beginning 18<sup>th</sup> November. If you are interested in getting involved in this production please make a note of these important dates.

**TABLE MANNERS** is part of a trilogy of plays known under the title **THE NORMAN CONQUESTS**. It was first produced in 1973 and featured a star cast including Penelope Keith, Felicity Kendal, Tom Courtenay and Michael Gambon.

It is set in the dining room of a run-down, Home Counties country house over a summer weekend. The house belongs to an unseen but tyrannical invalid woman whose unattached daughter, Annie, cares for her. On the Saturday evening, when the play starts, Annie's brother Reg and his wife

Sarah have just arrived to take over nursing duties so that Annie can go to Hastings for the weekend. But Annie ends up staying. Their brother-in-law Norman shows up unexpectedly, and shortly after Norman's wife Ruth, Annie's sister, appears. Sarah does her best to organise a cosy family dinner for the five of them plus Tom, the slow but well-meaning local vet, whom everyone expects to propose to Annie. Sarah doesn't get much co-operation and doesn't realise that Annie had planned to sneak off with Norman, an unconventional bearded, free spirit and Annie is caught between her feeling for Tom and having what appears to be a dirty weekend with Norman. **TABLE MANNERS** has one of Ayckbourn's greatest comic set-pieces, a dinner party at which Sarah obsessively labours to get the seating plan to her satisfaction in spite of a shortage of chairs and food, the family meanwhile becoming dangerously fuelled with dandelion wine.

Although this is very much a comedy, like all the best comedies it is always a knife-edge away from tragedy.

The **CHARACTERS** in the play are:

**Norman** – A bearded, off-the-wall, unconventional assistant librarian. He has a reputation for causing trouble, though the problems he causes are never caused by malice. He sees people's weaknesses and plays on them. He winds people up. However, he can be charming, witty and attentive.

**Ruth** – Norman's wife. Her business career takes precedence over everything else. She has genuine affection for Norman and the rest of her family but when pushed too far, her temper can flare with caustic wit.

**Reg** – Ruth's estate agent brother. Temperamentally, he is the opposite of Ruth. Very laid back, he takes life lightly believing himself to be a tolerant man-of-the-world. He seems very much under the thumb of his wife Sarah to the extent of appearing hen-pecked.

**Sarah** – Reg's critical and generally disapproving wife. She is a woman on the verge of a nervous breakdown and her desire to control every situation often leads to the opposite and prompts her overbearing side to take over. She is very vulnerable, a fact that when things don't work out as planned often ends in floods of tears.

**Annie** – She is the younger put-upon sister of Reg and Ruth. Although she does try to make herself attractive, Annie is the type who doesn't think it's worth the effort. She is growing tired of her mundane life and is tired of waiting for someone to take her away from it.

**Tom** – Annie's neighbour. He is a vet and while being sympathetic to animals he is completely out of touch with humans. Dim and slow but charming.

There are no specified age ranges for any of the characters but Norman and Ruth should be roughly the same age. Otherwise, everyone could be anywhere between 40 and 55 (and maybe beyond).

If you would like to be considered for any of the roles or would like to join our talented backstage crew come along on **4<sup>th</sup> November** for the **reading** and/or the **auditions** on **11<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> November at 7.30** each night.

## WAITING FOR GODOT

This is a final reminder that auditions (males only, I'm afraid) for those interested in participating in our April production of *Waiting for Godot* will take place on Wednesday November 6th at 7.30pm, and Saturday November 9th at 10.00am. Performances are on April 9th - 11th, and will also take place the previous week at Shaftesbury Arts Centre. There will be opportunities also for members to join the Production Team for Beckett's intriguing masterpiece...."a curiosity, a four-leaved clover, a black tulip....something that will securely lodge in a corner of your mind for as long as you live..." (Harold Hobson).

## APS MEMBERS' AWARDS

Whilst our talented cast and crew were performing "The Day After the Fair" to a Friday night audience at the Sherborne Studio Theatre, over the border in Taunton, the Somerset Fellowship of Drama (SFD) were holding their "Phoebe Rees" Awards Ceremony. This annual gala ceremony recognises great achievement by actors, directors and set designers in the 2018/2019 Somerset amateur theatrical season.

We are delighted to report that the following talented and versatile members of APS, all of whom had played roles in our recent autumn production, had been nominated by critics for their outstanding contributions to the following Somerset productions over the past year:

**Patrick Knox** - for "Best Actor" in the Ilminster production of "David Copperfield"

**John Crabtree** (two nominations) - for "Best Supporting Actor" and "Best

Featured Actor" in the Swan Theatre productions of "The Tempest" and "School for Scandal" respectively.

**Sarah Easterbrook** - for "Best Actress" in the Swan Theatre production of "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf"

**Rachael Alexander** - for "Best Supporting Actress" in the Swan Theatre production of "The Tempest"

**Adrian Hole** - for "Best Lighting" in the Civic Players production of "Sleuth".

With 20 amateur theatrical groups submitting work for critical review, and 33 excellent candidate productions being judged, you will see that it is a major accolade indeed to receive a nomination for outstanding achievement from a jury of one's peers.

But our biggest cheer must go to Rachael Alexander who won the "Best Supporting Actress" award for her astonishing and uniquely captivating portrayal of the fish-smelling, cave-dwelling monster, "Caliban", in "The Tempest". What a huge contrast to her recent APS roles as the truculent Puck in last year's "Dream", bubbly "Lulu" in our spring production of the "Birthday Party", and the delicate and unlucky ingenue, "Anna" in "The Day After the Fair". This, we think you will agree, ably demonstrates her talent and capability to handle a wide range of disparate roles with confidence and flair. We at APS send Rachael the heartiest of congratulations, and look forward to working with her again in the near future.



**Rachael as Caliban in the Swan's "The Tempest"**

## A NEW HOME!

*The storage of scenery, flats, assorted equipment, timber and other set-building materials has been a problem for APS for as long as anyone can remember. We are extremely lucky to have benefited from the generosity of both Eve Simmonds and Malcolm Cockburn who have kindly been loaning us their private garage space. Now, finally, we have been able to secure a permanent rented garage of our own for the foreseeable future, in Harbour Way - conveniently situated not far from the Theatre.*

*We are putting together a working party to bring about the Grand Move on Sunday November 10th, when we shall transfer items from Malcolm's and Eve's garages, and the dismantled set still in the Theatre, to store in the new garage. This will be a considerable task, and, as always, all help would be appreciated. Please come along to the Theatre to lend a hand. (We realise you may wish to be involved in Remembrance activities in the morning, but we are quite sure there will still be plenty to do if you were to come along later.)*

## QUIZ-TIME!

It was marvellous to see so many people supporting our first Quiz Night of the season on October 16th- just the perfect number to fill the theatre without having people so close that the temptation to cheat might have become irresistible! Some fiendish quizzing took place (how many of you can claim you knew that a collection of snails is known as a "Walk"?); the winners, by a narrow margin, being **Paxman's Pedagogues** (aka Geoffrey & Daphne Martyn, Andy & Robyn Sumpter), who claimed the magnificent prize.

We conducted a short survey of those present to see if there was an appetite for further quiz nights, and if so in what format. As a result, we are pressing ahead with our plans to hold a quiz on the third Wednesday of every month (except December), with the opportunity to enjoy a Fish & Chip supper as part of the evening. PLEASE get in touch if you would be willing to host a quiz evening! See below for information regarding the November quiz.

## NEXT QUIZ

The next quiz, hosted by Roy and Linda Catchpole, will be held in the theatre at **7.30pm on Wednesday November 20th**.

Entry will be £2.50 per person; we do not have an alcohol licence for this event, so please bring your own drinks (tea and coffee will be on sale).

At the start of the evening you will be invited to place an order for a fish & chip supper, which will be delivered at the interval. If you wish to take advantage of this offer, please make sure you bring enough cash to cover the costs, or a cheque ( we are unable to take cards).

Do please come and support this evening, which is sure to be great fun, so that we can get the APS Quiz Evening firmly established as a regular event.

It helps to know numbers, so please email [newsletter@aps-sherborne.co.uk](mailto:newsletter@aps-sherborne.co.uk) if you expect to come along. See you there!

## SOCIAL CALENDAR

These dates have been provisionally booked, but depend upon members offering to contribute, and turning up in support! Please let us know if you would like to run one of these events.

**Wed November 20th** Quiz Night  
**Tue November 26th** Play reading  
**Wed January 15th** Quiz Night  
**Tue January 28th** Drama event  
**Wed February 19th** Quiz night  
**February 24th - 29th** *Table Manners*  
**Wed March 18th** Quiz night  
**Tue March 31st** Drama event  
**April 9th - 11th** *Waiting for Godot*  
**Wed April 15th** Quiz night  
**Tue April 28th** Drama event  
**Wed May 25th** Quiz night  
**Tue May 26th** Drama event  
**Wed June 17th** Quiz night  
**Tue June 30th** Drama event  
**Wed July 15th** Quiz night  
 Summer production - tbc

## PLAY READING - "PASSION PLAY" - NOVEMBER 26TH

**The next of our very popular informal play-readings will take place on Tuesday November 26th, hosted by Jessica Colson.**

*Passion Play*, by Peter Nichols, is a comedy of modern manners, but also a play which deals seriously with at least two important questions. The first is the problem of alternative possibilities: we are what we are partly by accident, but also because of a series of choices which we freely made. Going back on those choices or changing direction may demonstrate open-mindedness and flexibility, but it can also upset a balance achieved with difficulty over many years. The

play starts with a familiar but not easy question, if a man deceives his wife, is he showing a healthy openness to new experience, or is he destroying something valuable constructed with difficulty over many years, or even both? And since every decision has consequences, what will the consequences be for himself and for all other concerned? The second question is the problem of constructing acceptable codes of behaviour in an irreligious world.

***Make a date in your diary to come and join in the reading, or just listen if you prefer.***