

Another Fun Year for HAODS - AGM Report

Contributed by Julie Huntington

A glass of wine and lots of cheery chat preceded the Annual General Meeting held on Monday 28th September in the Green Room at the Kenton Theatre, Henley. The meeting was chaired by Vice President and Life Member, Nansi Diamond, ably standing in for President Simon Williams, who had unfortunately been detained on stage at the National Theatre!

Reports on a fun filled year were given by Secretary Martin Jarvis and retiring chairman, Terry Rymer. The season had consisted of Titanic – The Musical, which had been such a financial and artistic success that the author, Mauray Yeston had telephoned from his New York apartment to personally congratulate the director, Julia Rymer. July saw an outstanding outdoor production of Shakespeare’s Taming of the Shrew directed by Michael Huntington, in the garden of Peel Fold, the beautiful riverside home of chairman of the Kenton Theatre, Mr Alan Pontin. In Spring 2009 Fiddler on the Roof, directed by Diane Haylor wowed audiences with an outstanding cast. Terry thanked all those who helped to make all three productions such a success.

The Society also had a very successful result when they entered Happy Birthday Me, a special adaptation of Laying the Ghost written by Simon Williams at the Kenton Theatre Drama Festival in May. Geoffrey Atkinson won the Henley Standard Award for the Best Actor, and Leah Corlett received the award for Best Supporting Actress. Jan Beyts, who played opposite Geoffrey, was also nominated for Best Actress.

Along with many other social events and regular club room lunches, the secretary reported on a great record for entertaining on stage and off. He thanked all those who had put so much work into the social side, especially Rosalie Raymond, who had opened her home up for social events on more than one occasion.

The membership heard tributes to two members of the Society who had passed away during the year. Mary Dickinson gave tribute to ex-professional actress Margot Thomas, who had been a great supporter of the Society and Nansi Diamond shared some heartwarming stories about Sir John Mortimer.

It was reported that some great shows are planned for the coming year, including November’s production of Return to the Forbidden Planet, and

the delightful *The Boyfriend* in Spring 2009, however the most exciting news was of the production planned for November 2010, when HAODS will be staging the UK premier of a new musical *Raffles of Singapore*, which tells the story of the life of the visionary Sir Stamford Raffles. First performed professionally in Singapore and Hong Kong in 1979, when it starred Kevin Whately. However a planned UK tour was shelved because half the theatres in London went 'dark' in the recession of early 1980's. Talks are already underway to hold a gala evening in aid of the Alzheimer's Society to which celebrities including Kevin Whately and John and David Suchet have already pledged their support.

The incoming committee heard suggestions from the membership about what they would like to see happening with the Society in the coming year, including New Directors' Workshops and smaller productions in the intimate atmosphere of the Green Room.

Sincere thanks were given to Terry Rymer, stepping down as chairman of the Society after a record eight years in the hot seat. He offered words of encouragement to the new, young committee members elected for the coming year and promised that he would always be available to give advise. Taking over the reigns from Terry is long standing committee member, Julie Huntington
Nansi Diamond thanked everyone for coming and supporting such a vibrant society, and the meeting closed at 9.45