

# NewSPAL

New Surrey Performing Arts Library

## Monthly Update

Season's greetings from all at NewSPAL.

We all hope that you are keeping well and that your plans for Christmas are proceeding apace. Hopefully many of you will be taking your seat for the panto (it's behind you!) and supporting our many wonderful theatres and companies.

Thanks go to Epsom Chamber Choir for the carol singing at Ewell Library earlier this month, and to the Ewell Library staff and managers for hosting a number of our volunteers to a Christmas coffee morning earlier this week.

### Premises update

Discussions are continuing with Surrey Libraries as to the possibility of NewSPAL taking over the management of the collection at Bourne Hall; we very much hope to be able to report further on this soon.

### News from Play reading groups

#### Two Groups in Leatherhead

Our informal title is 'The Julias', we run it together, and we are both called Julia. Formally we are known as 'The Leatherhead Play Reading Group.' We hold two sessions every six weeks - one session in the evening and one in the afternoon. Julia and myself alternately do the casting and the biography of the playwright. Our policy is to keep the play a secret till we meet. The surprise is rather like going to the theatre; the lights fade, and out of the darkness comes the magical experience of theatre.

The evening play reading group has been in existence since 2006 with the play 'Communication Cord' by Brian Friel to kick off with. In 2021 we still have the same members - 2 Carols and 2 Julias, and 3 men (sometimes my husband attends too). The afternoon group has been going since 2009 with more changeable members - 8 including 2 men. However, we are happy to read men's parts when required.

Last time the afternoon group read an adaptation of 'The Aspern Papers' by Michael Redgrave based on the original by Henry James - it was a most enjoyable afternoon full of suspense. We usually provide tea for this group. The evening group read Alfred Sangster's play 'The Brontes'.

The evening got better and better, possibly aided and abetted by a glass of wine.

During the pandemic we carried on by using ZOOM having a theme with readings to fit in with it. We did not give up! Our sightreading has improved dramatically over the years. Every member has a turn at hosting us in their house or garden.

We could not offer what we do without the Performing Arts Library.

Julia Jarrett

### **A Group from the Reigate and Redhill area**

The Reigate & Redhill U3A play-reading group has been meeting now for over 22 years. It currently has 8 members who meet twice a month, over coffee and biscuits, in the spacious lounge of one of the members. The group enjoys reading a variety of plays, both older and more modern, across the genres of drama, thrillers and comedy.

Before the recent move to online selection of plays, one of the group would drive over to Ewell library to select plays from the Excel spreadsheet provided by the library service. The selection was made to match the number of members who would be at the next meeting(s) and also to make sure that male and female roles were in the right ratio. Since moving online, there is no need to drive over to Ewell. This speeds up the process, but the selection is now more of a lottery, given the inability to flick through the pages of a prospective play.

However, the process is now firmly established and we have been delighted with a couple of recent choices, although we did finish up with one very short, one-act, play. We supplemented that meeting by each member bringing along a favourite poem to share. We now know to avoid such plays and look forward to many more months of reading plays.

Phillip Wright

### **A Group in Horley**

This play-reading group is part of the Archway Theatre in Horley. We began in 2003, and currently have 14 members. We all have roots in this theatre - as actors, directors, backstage or front of house staff. Before the pandemic we also did a lot of theatre-going – in London, Guildford and more locally too. Gradually these activities are resuming.

Over the years we have tackled many authors – often following the play programme at the theatre, or plays we have been to see, reading both other plays by that playwright, and plays on similar subjects. We have had readings (usually by the term or half term) based on historical time-lines, political references and grouped themes, such as Female authors, or Kitchen sink drama.

We meet every week, in the theatre foyer, where we enjoy coffee and gossip, plan outings and discuss plays seen before settling down to read the current play. Currently we are exploring the

theme of Family, and have read Dodie Smith's *Dear Octopus*, and Ayckbourn's *A Small Family Business*. Next in line is Strindberg's *The Father*, to be followed by Anouilh's *Dinner with the Family* ... and several more! A play (and comment and discussion) usually lasts 2-3 sessions, and all script sets are borrowed from the Performing Arts Library.

Carol Hall

## Upcoming events

HASLEMERE MUSICAL SOCIETY invites you to COME & SING choruses from Haydn's *The Creation*, with orchestra  
on 5 FEBRUARY 2022, from 2pm - 6.30pm.  
With conductor by ONDREJ SOUKUP, at St Christopher's Church, Haslemere GU27 1DD

Tickets £14 (HMS members and groups of 10 £12)

Tickets and information by email from [cfentem@googlemail.com](mailto:cfentem@googlemail.com)

## The Giving Machine

Don't forget that there's another way of supporting NewSPAL when you're doing that last minute Christmas shopping, or booking a holiday for next year.

With [The Giving Machine](#), when you shop online a small percentage of what you spend is donated to the charity of your choice. Of course, we hope you choose the New Surrey Performing Arts Library! It costs you nothing, is entirely secure, and means a great deal to us.

You need to create an account and choose to support us, and then let your device do the rest. Thank you in advance!