



MASK
in the
Park



The Tempest

As part of the Peterborough Festival in 2012 Mask are to perform *The Tempest* by William Shakespeare.

Dates

The precise dates are yet to be confirmed with the Festival organisers. We have proposed Saturday 30th June to Thursday July 5th in Central Park (including Sunday 1st July)

There is the possibility of two further performances in The Quaker Meeting House Garden on Friday 6th and Saturday 7th July.

The Play

The Tempest is thought to be Shakespeare's last play before his retirement to Stratford. It is a tale of love, betrayal, revenge, reconciliation and forgiveness.

We set our last three plays in the park in the late Elizabethan and early Jacobean period, but for *The Tempest* the setting and costumes will be non-specific.

Our aim is to create a clear contrast between the idealised utopia of the life on the island and the materialistic world of the shipwrecked interlopers.

The Preparation

Work has already started. Helen McCay is creating the dances for the island nymphs, Paul Richardson is devising electronic incidental music and sound, and Jonni Hilton's crochet hook is working overtime on the costumes for Caliban, Ariel and the nymphs.

Auditions

These will take place on Tuesday 6th December and Thursday 8th December at The Lindens, commencing at 7.30 pm.

The adapted scripts will cost £5.00 and are available from John Crisp (01733 566468).

Details of audition pieces and 'thumb nail' sketches of the characters are included with this Mask Newsletter mail out.

Play Readings

In 2011 we have put on three *Rehearsed Play Readings* directed by members who want to establish themselves as directors with MASK. In October we had an *informal play reading* to look at Calendar Girls as a possible play for production.

As part of the organization for all four events and from audience sizes at the rehearsed play readings it feels as if our membership may be unclear as to the change of purpose and emphasis the committee have decided to give to these events. So in an attempt to clear up any accidental confusion we may have created:

- Informal play readings are now intended to be part of the social calendar, though they will still give us the opportunity to look at potential plays. (Established directors may choose to use this format as Cheryl did for Calendar Girls)
- Rehearsed play readings however are now primarily for aspiring MASK directors to have the opportunity to try out directing. Directors of a RPR can choose whatever play they like and have complete freedom as to how they produce the play; including inviting MASK members to be in the cast. It may/may not mean this play will be taken forward by them.

It is the opportunity for MASK members and committee to say if they think the director has reached a standard that MASK would be happy to see go forward to a public performance and comment on the play. This means that RPR are as important to the director as a public performance would be. They have quite a lot at stake!

We do not obtain performing rights for RPR so we cannot have a public audience and I think we, your committee, have failed to make it clear this doesn't mean members cannot attend. In fact just the opposite; we very much want you to attend and in future we will be asking for immediate feedback on what you think of the play, the directing and what you thought was particularly good etc.

If there is overall positive feedback about a new director then they, the director, can put a proposal to committee for a future production and the details will then be discussed in the normal way.

Any play going out to the public, from either process will have the usual formal auditions for the cast.

An example of the new process is-

Tom directed Abigail's Party as a RPR.

This was judged a success.

Tom asked if he could proceed with a public performance.

Committee agreed.

However the performing rights were not available so committee asked Tom to look at another play.

Tom chose The Birthday Party

Committee agreed this play and it is going to be presented to the public in March 2012 just before we start the Shakespeare.

I hope this makes it clear to all and that we will see many more of you at future readings.

from your chairman - Jill

Crucible rehearsed play reading

Audience member review by Summer Moeed

On the 17th September I had the pleasure of taking part in and watching 'The Crucible' as a rehearsed play reading directed by Emma Goldberg.

Before that day I was vaguely familiar with the story, but not with the play in any detail. What I saw unfold before my eyes was not only mesmerising and truly impressive, but also heart-wrenchingly sad. The directorial choice made by Emma to do the play in the round with a minimalistic set really made me realise that when you have something that is so incredibly well written, even in the most simplistic surroundings of the Brewery Tap function room, you can end up in tears at the end.

The Crucible has such a large cast that it would be almost impossible to pick out individual actors to praise their performances without this review taking up the whole Mask newsletter. But I can say that there was some really fabulous acting and some very intelligent directing using the minimal time that was available to work the play. This resulted in some incredibly strong scenes, and considering the actors had only had one chance to actually run the entire play before the performance, it just goes to show what a great bank of actors Mask has. It was also nice to see new faces and non-Mask members chipping in to help Emma fill the huge ensemble that's required for The Crucible.

An incredible evening ...

thank you Emma.

Mask Christmas Social

We will be holding a Mask Christmas social at the Lindens (86 Lincoln Road, PE1 2SN). At this festive event we will have an informal reading of 'The Importance of Being Ernest' by Oscar Wilde as well as mince pies, mulled wine and other festive treats. Come along to the Lindens for a 7:30 start and join in the reading, or just listen and enjoy the festivities on the 15th December. Catering will be provided by anyone kind enough to bake / buy and share with the rest of us ... so all are welcome to contribute. Do come along ... a merry evening is guaranteed!

Drama on Tap

Hoorah! Hooray! Yippee! and Huzzah! ... this is what they are shouting in the streets ... and why? I shall tell you why: Drama on Tap is back on the 30th November!

So come along to the Brewery Tap on the 30th November, if you like the combination of beer and having fun. We guarantee to make you laugh, cry and perhaps feel a little uncomfortable (but in a good way ...)

Rehearsed Play Readings...

My experience with The Crucible

By Emma Goldberg

Last month saw our third attempt at a Rehearsed Play Reading... a chance for keen would-be directors to have a go at "bossing" with the friendly reassurance of Mask members as their guinea-pig audience. The floor has been left open, with minimal amount of instructions from the Committee about what you should or shouldn't do, as a wannabe-director. It's up to you if you do scenes from a play, or the whole thing; whether you use props and costumes; whether you have everyone physically acting or not. The mistakes you make are yours, and yours alone. Here's some of the ones I made...

Choose a play because it's your favourite and you know it really well, ignoring the fact that it has 20 people in it, and is quite long. **WRONG.** Intimate knowledge of a play from the Director is great, but be careful what play you choose. Having a big cast leads to all sorts of problems, not least getting them all in one place at one time. And then, if your **audience** are exclusively Mask members, it helps if the majority of them aren't on stage...

Cut down on rehearsal time, because after all, it's a rehearsed play reading, not a production. **WRONG.** If it's a challenging play, your actors need to feel comfortable with what they are doing, even if you already know the play inside out. You need to give them time to get their heads around it. Having a one-day workshop and then putting on the play seemed like a good idea, keeping it fresh and alive. Actually, quite a few people couldn't commit to the daytime, and it also ended up being a really long day, and quite tiring, and in hindsight, spacing out rehearsals would have given actors more time to become familiar with the play.

Giving plenty of slack and being relaxed about who could make it to rehearsal. **WRONG.** It's good to be considerate and flexible, but at the end of the day, you need commitment from people to be there when your rehearsal is. If they can't give it, choose someone else to be in the role. It's not just about whether they can pull it off on the night, it's about the rest of the cast too. Not having people at rehearsal meant that for our performance, sometimes actors didn't know who actually was supposed to be in the role, because other people had been reading it in.

It wasn't all bad news though, because some things went really well...

Mask has a wealth of great actors, and I swapped people around a bit, and made casting decisions that I think worked really well. It lent the play the energy it needed, to make up for the polish that an RPR isn't going to get. **TICK.**

The workshop I ran, where I borrowed some ideas from the Open Stages workshop, and some from theatre improv websites, worked well with the people who were there. Some of the exercises I did could have been developed further, but we did some work about being small-minded, pious religious community, accusing, suspicious, which developed the atmosphere I needed. We did some work based around inner-turmoil, especially for John Proctor, and a lot around building

up energy in a scene. That lent itself really well, and the energy stayed for the production. **TICK.**

Finding out on the day that you don't have the quill, or bible, or glass that you need is frustrating. So some careful examination of the text, and a visit to John Crisp's garage and the costume container, is essential. I was really pleased with the various elements I pulled off, and thought that, without going into a full production, we had the essence of everything we needed, including weighty books for the Reverend Hale, and chains for the prisoners. **TICK.**

As a director, I had in my head some ideas I wanted to try out, like doing the play in the round. This meant a certain amount of preparing the scenes, and thinking through how things would work, in advance. I had to think on my feet, though, because the third scene, in the courtroom, there were a lot of people on stage, so I had to be sure that the audience weren't blocked. It was something that needed more work, but we pulled it off well enough for the evening, after I cunningly inserted some tables into the audience to give the actors extra "free space" to use. **TICK.**

The big thing that can go wrong with the Crucible is that the hysterical girls in the courtroom scene don't look "possessed" and fall a bit flat... the play can lose all momentum and just turn into ridicule. The importance of the first scene, where we first meet Abigail, to impress upon the audience that she is really evil, and to carry that into the courtroom so that they are almost dreading what she'll do next, was really important. While the hysteria wasn't perfectly choreographed, we certainly had the emotion, which carried everything. **TICK.**

Taking on a Rehearsed Play Reading is about finding your feet as a director.

I picked a challenging play to direct, and I certainly had moments where I didn't know if it would work (especially the moment where no one had shown up to my workshop for the first half hour). I worked everyone really hard for the time I had them, and that might have been unreasonable. But if you don't take risks, you don't find out what will happen. It worked: maybe on a wing and a prayer, but it worked. We put on a powerful and amazing performance, and it was everything I wanted the play to be. I'd love to take the performance to the stage one day. Although I'm not sure where I'll find an Elizabeth like that again.

Thanks everyone – for being involved, and for being our very much-needed audience.

The Crucible *An actors view*

by Dave Slinger

You know, our Emma never does anything by halves, so it was no surprise that when she offered to direct a rehearsed play reading it would be a notoriously difficult play with a large cast; add to that the lack of rehearsal space, the unavailability of many of her actors for an already very limited rehearsal time and her task becomes that much harder.

Oh, and one of her lead actors fell ill on the week of the reading so Emma had to become a cast member herself – Now it gets a whole lot difficultererer; even impossible you might say.

Continued>>>

Mask Diary 2011

November	17th	Thursday	Funding Fair, The Old Still?
	24th	Thursday	Auditions, The Birthday Party, The Lindens, 7.30 pm
December	1st	Thursday	Committee, 38 Granville Street, 7.30 pm
	6th and 8th	Tuesday and Thursday	Auditions, The Tempest, The Lindens, 7.30 pm
	15th	Thursday	Reading and Social, The Importance of Being Earnest, The Lindens, 7.30 pm
2012 March	5th to 10th	Tuesday to Saturday	The Birthday Party, Key Theatre Rehearsal Room
June July	30th July 1st - 5th	Saturday to Thursday	Peterborough Festival, The Tempest, in Central Park
	6th and 7th	Friday, Saturday	Peterborough Festival, The Tempest, at another venue—QMH?

An actors view –continued

“Ha ha ha ha ha” says Emms, laughing in the face of impossibleness; while many of the cast fear we have a car crash on our hands.

The funny thing is, after a few hours in a room exposed to Emma’s positive vibes and clear direction there were no negative feelings in the cast by the time we began the reading.

There were many good performances on the night –I won’t bother mentioning them all, after all this isn’t a NODA crit, but it can’t go unmentioned how Helen McCay gave such a disturbingly convincing performance as antagonist, Abigail Williams.

Highlights for me were the return of many actors we haven’t seen for a while: Nick Gibbs gave us a controlled and sinister Judge Hathorne and it was good to see Mary Crerar, who I’ve never seen act before, playing Rebecca Nurse. I’m sure she hasn’t had a great many ‘old woman’ parts before and she gave a lovely combination of strength and tenderness to the role. Lowlight? Well, that has to be the dumb duffer who managed to call at the top of his voice off-stage to a character who happened to be standing right next to him at the time.

Emma’s direction was clear and full of vision while, at the same time, she allowed the cast plenty of freedom to explore their own characters stepping in only when needed. This style has proved to give some less experienced actors the confidence to shine in both this RPR and in her production of ‘The Lesson’ a couple of years ago.

If this was a full production and we had put in a performance like that after about 3 evenings of rehearsal (which is equivalent to what we had) then no-one would be in any doubt we were on to a winning show. I thought even the audience was surprisingly large considering most of our usual punters were in the cast!

I’ve now had the real pleasure of working with all of our ‘new’ directors in either one act plays or rehearsed play readings and I’m in no doubt that they are all very capable of producing full plays in the future – the problem for The Mask right now is to keep them all interested and learning and to gain the experience they need in an already full calendar.

Edited and produced by John Crisp

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