**Wadhurst Dramatic Club Annual General Meeting October 1st 2013:**

**Chairman’s Review of the Year 2012-13**

**October 2012:** We started the year with a successful production of the classic ***‘The Importance of Being Earnest’*** – a directorial debut for Grainne Murphy. The cast melded well together, bringing new faces and old favourites to the Wadhurst stage – new faces like India and Rebecca, brilliant as the young ladies, but also a Wadhurst acting debut for Trish Broadley, Paul Desrosiers and Jay White. Safe ‘old hands’ Adam Lewis-Plant, Merlin and Heather Woodward provided a steadying influence. Heather’s contribution is worthy of note as she had major surgery 6 weeks before the run but carried on regardless – and was presented with her 50 year gold NODA LSA on the final night. Fantastic cucumber sandwiches and home-made cakes completed the Oscar Wilde atmosphere. We rang the changes with a Friday evening, Saturday matinee and Saturday evening run – which proved not as successful as hoped in attracting 3 full houses - we still need to work at getting bums on seats!

This was our first production with ticket sales through Southern Cross Travel, who have proved themselves an excellent Box Office. It works well as they make bookings through Ticket Source so enabling us to have a real online & offline service. So huge thanks are due to Penny & Anneka for their efforts and their welcoming service.

**WYTKidz:** Amanda has done a fantastic job this year, not only for the youngsters, but in recruiting and bringing together a team of helpers to inspire our enthusiastic juniors – Diane & Clarice, Paul & Bex, Charlie & Tom, Dot & Barbara, Jan & Anneka have all brought their own skills and approach to working with the 20+ WYTKidz – undoubtedly rewarding, but not for the faint-hearted!

And we all enjoyed the results – the first term culminating in two clever and comic pantomimes based on television’s *‘Take Me Out’*, performed at our Christmas party, and followed with food and a stimulating quiz (thanks to Jan Lynam and her daughter with mumps!).

Secondly, in the summer lots of us were involved and then enjoyed the ‘***Wizard of Oz’***, master-minded by Amanda, with fantastic costumes and sets helping to bring it alive for the two casts and the audience. In between they’d enjoyed a visit to the BBC offices in Tunbridge Wells and a workshop (based on Wiz of Oz) at the National Theatre. And we now all have a chance to do a National Theatre tour – there are still some spaces for the WDC tour on Sat 19th Oct. Please sign up – it’s only £7.50.

**Christmas 2012** saw our first informal carol singing around Wadhurst, organised by Paul – in the rain.

**January 2013:** many WYT (and other youngsters) were involved in ‘***Sleeping Beauty’***, our January Panto, which also featured the director Jamie Crawford as the Dame. A large cast, choreographed dance to upbeat music and exuberant costumes against an atmospheric set made for a very lively and fun show, whether you were in it or watching it. It was the first time that we used our new (or, rather, newly re-opened) backstairs, direct to the Orchard Room (by then with working loo and sink). All thanks to the hard work and driving force of JB. This proved a godsend given the amount of snow that fell! The cast and backstage/ FoH crew showed amazing commitment – not a soul was missing, despite many having to travel cross country – notably our King Cactus and Props lady (Pat & Margaret Wells). Unfortunately, it did restrict audience attendance, however, although we were able to honour tickets for the following week for those unable to make the first week.

**Losses:** Immediately following the Panto, we were sad to bid goodbye to Tom Lawson, a stalwart supporter of the club, especially through his support for Vera. This year we also lost but celebrated the contribution of Joan Lewis, whose wonderful soprano voice had been relished by so many in Music Halls, Reviews and Charity Shows (to me, she was Queen Victoria) and whose infectious laugher had brightened many WDC comedies. Our sympathies go to Ron Lewis, who we hope to see more of.

**Spring 2013** saw our first WDC film night – with ‘*West Side Story’* screened at St George’s Hall. An idea from the last AGM, suggested by WYT attendees, we used the opportunity to watch the vibrant musical that Paul & Anneka plan to stage this time next year. We also laughed at Peter Bush’s excellent compilation of Panto photos on the big screen. A month later, we were able to enjoy a viewing of the Beedell’s Panto video production – great fun!!

**NODA:** Paulette & I attended NODA’s regional meeting at Bodiam Castle – a great opportunity to meet other societies and share ideas and experiences – how to publicise shows and get good audiences being a key issue for all societies, large and small.

**Celebrations:** Two of our longest serving members have celebrated their 90th birthdays this year – Vera Lawson and Joy Creasy. Both have contributed a huge amount to WDC over the years, in all kinds of capacities, and the club was delighted to give them a token of our thanks. In preparing Vera’s card for club supporters and friends to sign, I was astounded at how many productions she’d appeared in, done props for and sat in the prompt corner for.

**May 2013:** ‘***No Time for Fig Leaves’*** was directed by Wendy Barr and again succeeded in attracting new performers to the stage (and to the club) – Jill (our costume supremo), Jan and Russ all trod the boards with great panache – and we all had a great time, with Russ’s inability to shed his trousers causing increasing hilarity every night.

**Current productions:** ‘***Dead Man’s Hand’***, a thriller, directed by Richard Bruce is our October production, with a young cast. Welcome to Steph and Cath – but great to have Adam & Heather, Merlin and Russ back on stage too. Tickets are now on sale online or from Southern Cross. We need you for this: your props, your help (with food and FoH), your support – please fill a table and tell your friends.

Our January production of ‘***Flapper’*** got off to a flying start, with 4 audition dates organised by Kay and Robin to accommodate all those wanting to be part of the fun. Their impressive organisation and enthusiasm mean that this is one to look forward to. Plus there’s plenty of opportunity for helpers to get involved making interesting props and sets (like an aeroplane, for example!). Plus, any ideas to help promote this show and fill the seats……?

**August 2013,** thanks to John Northover’s efforts, saw the return of the **Rude Mechanicals** with ‘**Harlequin Goes to the Moon**’, on the Primary School field, in front of a much enlarged and very appreciative audience. An inspired and inspiring evening for all who went along.

**September 2013** witnessed our first Cheese & Wine evening - proving a popular social. What’s more, it had a touch of drama, with our panellists and quiz master ‘Calling Our Bluff’ with their alternative descriptions of the 8 wines. Thanks to Dot for the idea, to all the helpers (especially Diane’s celery and carrot cutting) and to Wine Rack and Delicatus for helping us organise this. It was good to see JB there, imbibing a little and smiling, despite feeling not brilliant. We wish him a speedy recovery. And nice to be joined by Lotte too, whose other half, Colin (a past barman for the club) is also fighting illness. We wish him well too.

Looking ahead, the future is bright:
- a fantastic, supportive committee who have come up with ideas and helped carry them through. Mostly they are staying on, but we bid farewell to Peter Bush who is stepping down, but hopefully still willing to be involved.
- hard-working, committed supporters – like Colin & Nance who build our sets so creatively but practically, like Jay who has rebuilt our website (take a look at it), like Merlin and sons who have recorded our thespian efforts, and many others too.
- new supporters on stage and off – up on the lighting platform, backstage, FoH.
- a vibrant junior group, with lots of talent, and (undoubtedly) lots of energy.
- and all of you here tonight – we need your ideas, your feedback, your input.
Please, stay involved, read our emails, tell people about us, tell us what you think (by email, phone, in person).
Most importantly, we’d love you to attend events and shows and get others to come along. More than anything, we need to sell tickets to make the club work.
Plus, please volunteer to help and to learn – you’ll love it and we’ll love you!!!!!