



Production Report

Stoke Performing Arts Group was formed in 2015 and is a sub group of Stoke sub Hamdon Sports and Recreation Trust.

Following the success of Stoke Performing Arts Group's production of 'And Grandsire went Wrong', performed in July 16, everyone was keen to continue build on the enthusiasm in the village generated through 'Grandsire' and undertake a new project for 2017.



'The Charity Shop', another new play written by local playwright Angela Hodges, once again took themes from village life as its inspiration; those of community, family, friendship and love, but this time illustrated through a contemporary gentle comedy, centering around the comings and goings of the local charity shop.

Under the direction of Sharon Dance, the casting of the play was completed and rehearsals started in earnest in the autumn of 2016.

This production required a very different performance space to 'Grandsire' and the core group decided that Stoke Memorial Hall would be an ideal venue; offering a more traditional stage, audience space and kitchen facilities. The Memorial Hall committee were approached and were keen to help.

However, implementing our plan presented challenges for both groups, including how to identify suitable opportunities for SPAG rehearsal time and the performances themselves, without impacting too greatly on the regular hall users. There was also the concern that the show might disadvantage the Memorial Hall through loss of bookings during the week of the play when the hall needed to remain set up between performances. However, with support from the Memorial Hall committee and the flexibility of its user groups, these difficulties were overcome.





Following some discussion, SPAG decided to approach the Parish Council for a grant to help cover the costs of hiring of the Memorial Hall. Happily our application was accepted and the resulting funds provided a great contribution to supporting our venture, enabling SPAG to cover the hire costs for the rehearsals, performances and periods when other bookings were unable to be taken.

Stoke Working Men's Club; once again, were willing to offer the use of their upper skittle alley as a rehearsal and meeting space, free of charge, during the early period running up to the final month of the play. They also provided a bar for the three evenings of the production and were kind enough to donate the profit from these to the group.

As the play was set in a charity shop, naturally SPAG were very keen to work in partnership with the Stoke Charity Shop to create a real charity shop atmosphere, both on and off stage. The Stoke Charity Shop were invited to set up their own 'pop up' charity shop in the hall on each of the performances, so that the audiences could browse through and purchase their 'bargains' before, during the interval and after each show. This proved to be a great success offering a further dimension to the whole evening



Creating a backdrop to the show was vitally important and Sarah Moore, from the Village Artists was keen to take up this mantle. Together with Maria Eames from the Stoke Charity Shop who sourced many of the wonderful props used on stage, they created a really authentic feel 'The Charity Shop' stage set.



As this was the first time the Memorial Hall has been used for a full theatrical production of this type, SPAG called again on the services of Chesil Theatre Supplies to hire and rig stage lights for the show. The team worked closely with the Producer, Jeanie Augarde to plot the scenes and provide training in operating the lighting system to enable her to

undertake this role for the performance nights. SPAG were very appreciative of the additional support they gave to ensure our production was a success.

The marketing of the production and organisation of the box office was ably undertaken by Moira Hulett, with the Stoke Charity Shop





providing a pick up point for tickets. Thanks must also go to Wincanton Print for kindly printing posters, programmes and tickets with their compliments. Photography and filming of the performance was expertly undertaken by Phil Hodges.

Any Charity Shop event would not be complete without a raffle and Stokes Partners LLP and Paul Dance Limited donated some fabulous prizes to encourage many people to 'try their luck'.

All the planning and hard work from the cast and those behind the scenes, culminated in three performances over the 30th, 31st March and 1st April. Two of the evenings were a sell out and over 90% tickets were sold for the final show. The production proved to

be an immense hit with some wonderful compliments from those who attended. It was clear that as well as being a great evening of entertainment, everyone loved seeing their neighbours, family and friends thoroughly enjoying themselves on stage too!

Building on the knowledge gained through producing 'Grandsire', SPAG was able to once again demonstrate that this group could not only put on a production that was successful creatively, but also financially as well.



The profit generated from 'The Charity Shop' will be providing a sound basis for moving forward with any future plans.

As with 'Grandsire', Stoke Performing Arts Group production of 'The Charity Shop' has been a project that has put our community at its centre. The involvement of so many different groups and commitment from individuals both on stage and behind the scenes provides a great advertisement for Stoke sub Hamdon and all that village life has to offer.



Stoke Performing Arts Group would like to thank everyone for their contribution to its continuing success.

Jeanie Augarde

On behalf of Stoke Performing Arts Group.

