

*What would a visit to the theatre be without a preshow and interval drink? At The Venture Theatre, we are very lucky to have a fully stocked, professional standard bar. It doesn't all happen by magic however! All our staff are unpaid volunteers and we are always looking for more.*

Bar manager, David Joyce, gave us some insight into what's involved in his (entirely unpaid) job. "Twenty five years ago, when I took over the bar, we offered a small selection of bottled soft drinks, one type of (unchilled) white wine, bottled beer and lager and a few select spirits. Then it was considered perfectly acceptable, but today much more is needed. We now offer a full range of draught beer and lagers including cask-conditioned ales, a choice of white wines, red and rose wines, and full range of spirits and soft drinks."

The bar is currently being upgraded with the installation of new chillers so that theatre-goers can enjoy even better quality service but there is a lot of work to be done behind the scenes. David said "A lot of preparation time and care is needed before customers arrive. "We have to take careful consideration of stock control. The bar is not open every day. Some weeks it may only be open for one day, but some drinks, in particular cask ales, have a limited shelf-life. So the timing of venting and tapping the barrels is critical requiring daily attention. All this means that for every hour the bar is open to the public, there are at least two hours preparation, add to this cleaning, deliveries, trips to the wholesalers, organising orders and banking, it all adds to many hours each week - and all in my spare time!"

Whenever there is a play, a jazz club or a visiting company, volunteer bar staff have to found and it can get very busy when a theatre full of people expect to be able to get their drinks during the interval. Assistant bar manager Nigel Freer said "In a busy theatre like ours it can be quite a struggle to find enough bar staff to cover. That is why we are really keen to find more volunteers. Past experience is not necessary as full training is given but bar staff do need to be members of Ashby Dramatic Society".

So if you've always fancied learning how to pull the perfect pint or fancy yourself as "mine host" behind the bar, come down to The Venture Theatre on a Monday night and you will be made very welcome.