

The Scene Painter

Attractive and well-designed scenery can really bring a play to life and so this month we are finding out more about how it is done from Angela Solomon.

Angela joined the Venture Theatre when the first brick of the fly tower was laid over 30 years ago. As a retired college lecturer in Art, she is a well-known artist in Ashby and well qualified for the role. But of course, designing and painting scenery is quite different to painting pictures.

Angela says "Scenery painting gives you a sense of freedom. Due to the scale, small fiddly detail is not required because it is only viewed from a distance. It lends itself to prospective drawing, which is a mathematical approach to drawing."

If maths wasn't your thing at school, don't let that put you off. Angela assures us that this method can be taught quite easily and that, even if you cannot paint or draw very well, you will be able to work from this method. Often sets need to show a room in a house with a "lived in" look so perfection is not the name of the game.

Of course, the pleasure and satisfaction you get from scenery painting comes from seeing it in the play itself. "The whole scene will come to life as soon as the stage is lit and you will be amazed at what you have achieved. I've been doing this for 30 years and it still gives me a buzz." Angela told us.

If you would like to have a go, come down to the Venture Theatre on a Monday night after 8.30pm. Preparation for scenery painting requires very little skill so anyone can help and Angela is looking to build a team that can work together. "All you need are some old clothes and an enthusiasm to learn," she says.

Of course, you may choose to develop your skills further. This takes observation and practice. The scenery painters have to work closely with the director, set constructor and set dresser. Sometimes it may be necessary to construct a card model of the set and offer different relevant colour schemes. The period of the play is important, so a knowledge of the history of interiors, colour theory and computer access are all useful.