



## **Ashby Dramatic Society**

### **The role of the director**

Here, Diane Crane, one of our longest serving directors, gives her personal view of the role:

*"Ashby Dramatic Society has several members who direct plays and I am just one of those members. I joined ADS over 30 years ago, starting out in the props department then graduating to stage management and eventually into directing.*

*I am sometimes asked to explain the difference between being a producer and being a director. Most directors at ADS take on both roles as no-one wants to be only a producer. The director is responsible for finding the play, casting the play and then everything to do with the artistic interpretation of the play such as directing the actors, deciding on what the set should look like, approval of musical choices etc. Scripts cannot be altered, lines added or taken out, without the permission of the author but the director interprets the play and to me this is the most interesting part of being a director – moulding the play the way I want it.*

*With the producer's hat on, I appoint my crew, and this will include the set builders and painters; wardrobe and props; the sound and lighting crew and the stage manager. The producer is responsible for what I would call the "nuts and bolts".*

*As director and producer it is important to be available to the stage manager and all the other departments so that any questions they might have can be answered quickly.*

*The first thing I do is to find a play that I like and want to direct. That play has to be vetted by a group of theatre members (the Play-reading Committee) who report to the theatre management team. The latter are responsible for setting the programme of plays. After discussion, the management team tell the director whether or not he or she has the go ahead for the play to be performed and a decision is taken as to what time of the year it will be put on.*

*Not all directors like to direct the same types of play; some like to direct comedy or farce and others more serious plays. I am not so keen on*

*directing comedy so tend to go more for thrillers or family dramas. When I find a play I want to direct, I try to get it agreed by management quite a long time before it is to be put in the programme. Ideally, I will have a year between the play being agreed and put in the programme to the time it is on stage. This gives me plenty of time to work on ideas for the set and the action plus the artistic interpretation. It is very important to know exactly what direction you want the play to take and to have thought in depth about the characters. It's not helpful for anyone to turn up to a rehearsal with no thought given to these aspects of the play. The actors look to the director for guidance, not just on how to move around the set but in the way they deliver their lines and interact with other cast members. This interpretation is what makes the play come alive.*

*The play is cast some time before rehearsals start so the cast members can start to learn their lines. I hold a couple of production meetings with the producer's hat on to discuss with the stage manager and other crew members how I want the set and furniture to look, and how the actors are to be dressed. If the play is a period play, wardrobe and props have their own challenges to ensure that everything looks right. Lighting and sound are also very important. They convey the mood and other factors such as the time of day and year.*



*Rehearsals start about 8 weeks before the play is to be staged. There are exceptions to this. When I directed **Dangerous Liaisons**, some years ago, two of the characters were required to have a duel with rapiers. I wanted an authentic looking sword fight, so I employed a professional fight director to devise the duel and coach the cast members. Extra rehearsal time was needed for those two members of the cast to learn the moves for the duel and this meant we probably had an extra four weeks rehearsal.*

*Rehearsals are usually held twice a week to begin with, increasing to three towards the first night date. Set building and decoration is going on too but on different days of the week.*



During the rehearsal period, wardrobe and props produce their suggestions and, towards the end of the rehearsal period, the cast are fitted with costumes. If we produce a period play, we may well have to hire wardrobe and wigs. For **Dangerous Liaisons**, most of the costumes were hired from the RSC at Stratford. I try to keep in touch with what budget the different departments need in order to achieve the effect I am looking for. Each play has its own budget; some plays cost more to stage than others.

Publicity is very important. We like to fill the theatre for each performance so the theatre publicity team will be busy behind the scenes getting posters designed and distributed; updating the website and sending information out to sources such as newspapers, local radio and community magazines. These days, social media networks such as Facebook and Twitter also play an important part in promoting a play.

On opening night, my job as director is finished and the stage manager then takes over.”

Diane’s next play is a ghost story, *The Haunting*, by Hugh Janes. It is an adaptation and amalgamation of several Charles Dickens short ghost stories. This will be our Christmas play opening at the end of November and running into early December.

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Tickets available from:  
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