

SINODUN PLAYERS' CHAIR'S ANNUAL REPORT 2025

After nearly two years and many hundreds of hours of work by the Trustees and CIO steering group we have now successfully transitioned from Sinodun Players Amateur Dramatic Society (SPADS) to Sinodun Players (SP) CIO. On behalf of the SP membership I would like to extend heartfelt thanks to the Trustees and all those involved for their expertise and due diligence in getting us through the transitional process.

Before I look back on our achievements, I would like to take a moment to remember those who have sadly passed. Sue Brasher, who joined the SP's in the 1950's played principal roles in many a pantomime. When we acquired the Corn Exchange Sue was one of our regular box office staff and then took over as box office manager, a role she filled for many years. When she retired from volunteering she still remained a loyal and supportive member. Also, a mention for one of our former members, Nick Quartley. Many of you may remember him for his fine performance as Prospero in our 2011 production of *The Tempest*.

Recapping on our SP productions since our last AGM, we completed a successful 2024 season with *Breath of Spring*, directed by Dorothy Hirsch. This hilarious comic romp led to Avril Rangoni Machiavelli receiving The National Operatic and Drama Association (NODA) London Region District Winner Award for Best Comedic Performance.

Our pantomime this year was *Dick Whittington*, directed by Tom Mackriell and Fiona Huntingford Ledger. It was a sellout show and received awards from Oxford Drama Network (ODN) for Best Panto Baddie, with Best Special Moment being awarded to Alex Watts and Fiona for their slapstick. The production also collected a NODA London Region District Award for Best Pantomime, the Runner Up Scenic Award, with Fiona named as the London Region District Winner for her performance as Idle Jack.

Our 2025 season of drama kicked off with our early spring production *Entertaining Angels*, directed by Julie Utley, offering a mixture of black comedy and tragedy through tales of grief, regret and painful secrets revealed.

Late spring brought us *The Penelopiad*, directed by Lucy Pitman Wallace with stunningly beautiful original music scored by Alex Rimes. This was an adaptation of the epic poem *The Odyssey* from the perspective of Odysseus's wife Penelope and her twelve maids, told through narrative and song.

The Summer production *You Never Can Tell* (our first production as SP CIO), directed by Chris Harris was a witty and insightful comedy exploring themes of class, love and social conventions against a stunning set designed by Mike Simmonds and equally stunning costumes provided by Clare Dewell. This production also offered acting opportunities for two of our young Encore students.

Our September production, *The Inheritance* performed in our recently renamed Warburton Room backstage studio was translated, adapted and directed by Len Pannett

and the play's premier showing in English. Through sharp humour and deep emotion, four sisters confront their differing lifestyles when reunited for their mother's funeral.

The forthcoming production *The Father*, directed by Gloria Wright, tackling the harrowing and heartbreaking challenges of dementia, finishes off our 2025 season on the main auditorium stage.

Our 2025 Drama Festival entry *Moving on*, directed by Marilyn Johnstone, performed at Henley, Abingdon and of course our own Corn Exchange Festival. We were awarded the Abingdon Punters Prize and received high praise from the play's author herself. Thank you to all who supported us both home and away.

The Wardrobe Warriors and the Workshop and Design Teams have given first class support to all of our productions supplying costumes and props, set design, painting and set construction. Both teams have continued to raise funds by hiring out costumes to other theatre groups and individuals and building sets for community events such as the Wallingford Fireworks evening. Our marketing team have also been working tirelessly through the year supporting and promoting every SP production within the community and online social platforms.

As well as putting on our own SP productions, we are a very popular venue for contracted live incoming shows and annual community events such as the Wallingford Winter Blues and Jazz weekend, Bunkfest and the Agatha Christie weekend. All these events require a lot of time and planning so thank you to all the technical and backstage teams for supporting both our own productions and our visiting shows.

I also need to thank Diana Christie for her hard work and dedication running our youth group Encore. Not only does she run the regular Wednesday classes she organises and offers holiday workshops throughout the year. Diana and these young students are truly an asset to our membership.

There have been various fundraising and social activities organised over the year. We held a very successful Quiz night back in November. Our traditional Christmas Punchbowl in December supported Crisis at Christmas and the Wallingford Food Bank. In April, the SP's hosted a 'thank you' tea party for all our Corn Exchange volunteers and in May we joined the Board in celebrating our President John Warburton who retired from his theatre duties. More recently we held a very pleasant summer garden party with music and afternoon tea. Thank you to Julie Utley and everyone who helped organise these events.

Thank you to the Board of Directors and the Health and Safety Committee for taking care of the day-to-day running and maintenance of the theatre so efficiently. I extend my thanks also to all the members and volunteers who give up their time to arrange monthly rotas, house manage, run and maintain the bar and box office, usher, serve coffee, bake cakes, operate cinema and market productions. To Gerry Bolton for her continuing work sorting, organising and digitalising our archives and to our CX Times Editor Jean Simmons.

I would like to acknowledge and thank my fellow SPC members Anne Stammers, Dorothy Hirsch, Len Pannett, Sarah Enticknap, Julie Utley, Sam Rhodes and Sandy Milton our minutes secretary. Sue Forward and Rebecca Cleverley are stepping down and I thank them both for all their invaluable input and support but special thanks to Rebecca who has served on the SP Committee in various roles for the past fifteen years.

To conclude, we have had another fantastic and successful year meeting our charitable aims and objectives by offering a wide variety of drama and entertainment. I hope that collectively we continue to embrace, nurture and respect all the talent that we have within our membership.

Caroline Malnick
SP Chair