

Join us and join in!



What can you do at the Chesil Theatre?

The Winchester Dramatic Society has been providing entertainment for over 150 years. In 1966 we established our home in the Chesil Theatre, a 12th century former church in the heart of the City. In our intimate studio-style auditorium we perform a wide-ranging programme, as well as running two thriving youth theatre groups, drama workshops, training, social events and an active community outreach programme. We also have the Chesil Theatre Festival of New Writing, TakeTen, a nationwide writing competition premiering new work. In addition, we provide an ideal venue for small-scale visiting professional shows.

Whether you've been involved in amateur theatre before or are completely new to it, there will be something to suit you. Our aim is to produce high quality and enjoyable theatre experiences in a friendly and welcoming atmosphere. Contact welcome@chesiltheatre.org.uk.



How to get involved in ... acting

For all our productions we hold an initial informal reading of the play. This is very much a social event, open to all. You can listen to others or take part yourself and of course have a chat in the bar. If the play appeals to you, just come along to one of two open auditions. Scripts are available in advance and cast details are normally published on our website with audition notes. We aim to let everyone know the outcome from auditions within a few days. Rehearsal evenings are usually Monday, Wednesday and Thursday plus occasional Sunday afternoons, over a ten week period. The week leading up to performances is usually busy with technical and dress rehearsals so you would need to keep a clear diary. Eight performances take place from Saturday to Saturday.



How to get involved in ... directing

We encourage members to suggest plays they would like to direct, or you can leave the choice to others. Our Production Sub Committee reads many plays before finalising a balanced programme across the spectrum of theatre genres. Taking the role of a Production Assistant with one of our experienced Directors is a good way to learn how the process works at Chesil Theatre and starting off with a one-act play is often a helpful introduction too. Whilst Directors cover all artistic aspects, each show also has a Producer who deals with the administrative side and liaises with the backstage and creative team.



How to get involved ... backstage

There may be only two or three actors on stage but behind every production is a dedicated crew headed by the Stage Manager who runs the show during performance week, technical and dress rehearsals. The SM is supported by Assistant Stage Managers whose role it is to first source then take care of any props, help costume changes, operate lighting/sound and prompt during rehearsals or performances. No experience is needed as we can give training but you do need to be available for technical rehearsals in the immediate run-up to a show and all performances.



How to get involved in ... design

Each play has a design team covering set, lighting, sound and costumes. This group works together with the Producer and Director to achieve the overall visualisation and interpretation of the production. Before taking full responsibility for these areas, it is best to gain experience.



Here are some ideas:

Set construction and décor



We have a full computer-based inventory of all our flats, drapes, stage blocks and furniture with design assisted by a SketchUp program. We achieve great things on our small stage despite limitations on time, space and budget! Our H2H (“Hamming to Hammering”) group meets every Tuesday evening and works on the construction and decoration of sets. Décor can be an immensely rewarding artistic opportunity; creating a Regency drawing room, Art Deco apartment, gloomy forest or Scandinavian exterior.

Lighting and sound



Lighting and sound are pre-programmed before performances. For the technically minded, we have a Chamsys MQ60 board which can deal, literally, with thousands of cues. We can also use projection and synchronise images with lighting and sound through our Ardsound system, devised and built by one of our members. Help is always needed for rigging and focussing lighting, when training can be given too. Researching sound effects and music can also be a satisfying and enjoyable task. Could you source a train station announcement in Russian or a quietly boiling kettle?

Costumes



Where possible we use costumes from our own extensive wardrobe but sometimes these are hired or made/adapted specifically for a show. You don't need to be an expert dressmaker to help. Researching historical periods and adapting styles to our needs is also an interesting aspect.

Stage properties



We have an extensive range of props and furniture, some stored at the theatre, others available at our off-site container. The list runs from some 100 telephones to a coffin, a tin bath and artificial food! All are described and photographed on our source list. Sometimes props have to be made – possibly an ancient “distressed” document or newspaper of the time.

How to get involved in ... front of house and behind the bar

A Front of House Manager and Bar Supervisor is needed for each performance, with assistants. These are the “meeters and greeters” who make that all-important first good impression of Chesil Theatre. The FOH Manager takes responsibility for the safety of the audience throughout, as well as ticket sales and liaison with the Stage Manager. The Bar Supervisor oversees the money side, restocking and clearing up whilst assistants can help before and during the evening.



How to get involved in ... organising, marketing, administration

Performances can be likened to icebergs. There is an unseen army of volunteers behind each show who make it all possible: from maintaining the building to arranging hirings, putting together rotas for the bar to fundraising. Our marketing involves printed material, news releases, social media, email bulletins, website updates and occasional special street promotions. Are you a natural with Facebook? Could you put together a show programme? We're always happy to hear of new ideas to widen our publicity coverage. Chesil Theatre is a registered charity, run by members of our Executive Committee, elected at our AGM, who are also Trustees of the charity. We welcome new members to this and the various sub-groups responsible for specific areas: productions, social events, bar management.



How to get involved with ... Chesil Youth Theatre

Chesil Youth Theatre operates weekly during term time for Seniors (13-16) and Juniors (8-12). Sessions cover all kinds of drama topics: improvisation, text work, stage and backstage skills as well as working towards the dedicated CYT annual production. Our CYT Director welcomes assistants and chaperones. We can easily arrange the necessary Disclosure and Barring Service clearance if you don't already have one.

Contact youth@chesiltheatre.org.uk



Into the future

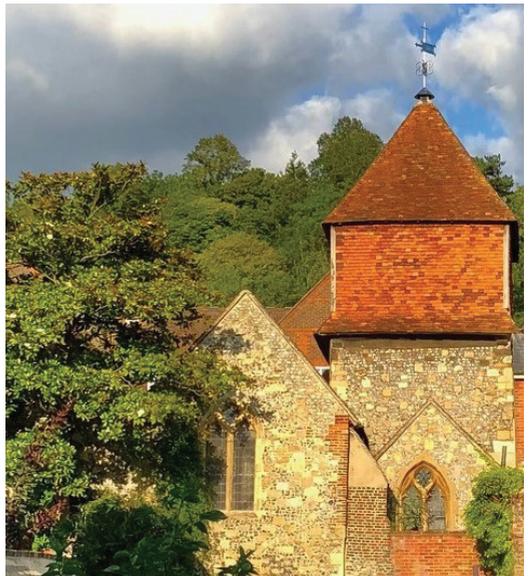
Chesil Theatre is embarking on a major project to extend the current theatre into an even bigger and better arts hub, transforming the face of Chesil Street. There'll be a new foyer, rehearsal/ performance space, improved facilities for those with mobility impairments and much more. Join in our journey!

There is so much on offer behind our red stage door.

Whatever your interest, we have something for you...

Join us and join in!

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or visit www.chesiltheatre.org.uk





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