

Chesil Street, Winchester SO23 0HU

NEWS RELEASE

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A SUCCESSFUL RETURN FOR CHESIL THEATRE’S OUTREACH

2022 has marked a successful return after the pandemic for Chesil Theatre’s Outreach project, serving the local community. This year’s range of activities was designed to appeal to groups of children and senior citizens.

Recognising that older people may not be able to visit the theatre, three Chesil Outreach groups took theatre to them. In May Deborah Cranmer, Barbara and Nick Kearns visited Tuesday’s Place in Kings Worthy with a rehearsed reading on the theme of transport, followed by short sketches and poems. This delighted the packed hall of retired parishioners. Organiser Helen Braddish said: “The material was judged perfectly with a light touch of humour and hint of yesteryear.” Next came Christina Pye with her team delivering a fast-paced performance for MHA Communities at the United Church. This lunchtime group encourages older people to live life well whilst tackling loneliness and isolation. Following a programme of excerpts from recent Chesil Theatre shows, accomplished musician Marcus Whitfield encouraged an enthusiastic audience to join in song.

Finally it was the turn of Lisbeth Rake’s group to visit Christchurch Older Person’s group. This was a Christmas treat based on December and January editions of the *Hampshire Chronicle* dating back to 1774, compiled and researched by Lisbeth herself. From strange adverts for medicines to poignant letters describing the Christmas truce of 1914, the event set off Christmas celebrations wonderfully well.

For a new venture during the Easter holidays a group of 15 children in care and their social workers visited the theatre for a day’s “backstage experience”. On hand were the Chesil Theatre’s experts in lighting, sound, props and costumes with a range of effects and items to try out. An eight-minute play devised for the occasion gave the opportunity for the children to let their imaginations run free to interpret the script with their chosen effects and put this into a performance by drama students from Peter Symonds College. Outreach Director Isabelle Haigh said “This was a great opportunity for our young visitors to find out what goes into making a play. So much thought and ingenuity went into the four very different performances – everything from pirate outfits to spooky woods, hand-made birthday cakes to foghorns, thunder and lightning. Feedback from our visitors showed they loved having hands-on experience of the technical equipment to experiment, as well as learning how props and costumes have an impact on performance.”

Following this great return for Chesil Outreach, plans are being made for 2023, building on this year’s successes and moving on to new challenges. These include a charity gala at the opening performance of the outdoor performance of *Treasure Island* next summer.

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Editor’s Notes

The attached images are provided repro-free for editorial use.

About Chesil Theatre

Chesil Theatre (Winchester Dramatic Society) is based in the heart of Winchester, presenting up to eight productions a year, ranging from traditional classics to contemporary works. Chesil Theatre also encourages new writing through its biennial festival *TakeTen*, runs drama workshops and readings, plus two lively youth theatre groups, as well as offering stagecraft and technical training. The Company has been performing for over 150 years.

Since 1966 Chesil Theatre has been the Society’s permanent home - a former 12th century church in Chesil Street, Winchester. This medieval building provides an intimate 75-seat studio-style theatre and versatile performance space.