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AMA Theatre Co.

AMA Theatre Co. is a brand-new Theatre productions company based in Letchworth in Hertfordshire. The aims of the company are to promote live performance and make Theatre accessible to all. Our belief that Theatre has something to offer everyone in our society and that there are many Theatre forms and styles that appeal to varying audiences. This is why we strive to produce and stage a wide variety of projects on varying themes. Anything from new writing to pantomime, comedy and drama and community projects and workshops. Theatre is not only central to our cultural heritage, but it helps build communities and brings people together, it is a source of education and exploration. Our mission is to break the myth that Theatre is elitist and “only for posh people.” Theatre in some form is for everyone, hence our Motto – Arts Made for All.

The following sections provide an insight as to who we are and how we implement our aims and objectives. We hope you find the information about us interesting and hope to work with you at some time in the future.

Founders

We are a husband and wife partnership, Ian Britten-Hull and Annie Albici and we began forming AMA Theatre Co. towards the end of 2019. The formation has been and continues to be a gradual process, constantly building to reach our goals and intentions. Naturally, as with all performing arts organisations, the Covid-19 pandemic took us by surprise and the resulting lockdown was unforeseen, especially to the amount of chaos and disruption this has caused together with the uncertainty surrounding us all.

We took the initiative to use the time positively to work on the structure and to produce a package of shows and projects, as well as to formulate our plans for 2021 and beyond. This time has enabled us to create four different shows that are all ready to go once lockdown restrictions are lifted, either partially or fully. The live shows consist of an Open-Air production, a Comedy Whodunnit, a Pantomime and a Children’s Show. The idea being that these shows can be performed at pretty much short notice and in any given space. We recognise that social distancing regulations in Theatre venues make it near impossible financially for many venues, however, our production costs are low and as such we believe we are in a position to help small venues generate some income, if not the maximum turnover possible before lockdown. For us currently it is more about keeping Theatre alive in the eyes of the community and playing a part in restoring live performance, whatever the difficulties as soon as possible.

Although AMA Theatre Co. is a new venture, this does not mean to say that what we do is new. In fact, we have worked on and produced many projects over the years. Since 2013 we have been running an Entertainment Production Company. As we are both performers in both Theatre and the variety sector, we utilised our skills to produce shows and performance-based pieces for community and private groups. This is anything from puppet and story-telling shows for children, popular for children’s parties to theatrical variety shows in care-homes. We have produced shows and workshops for community groups including play schemes, social and sports clubs, holiday parks and hotels. In addition to this we have, on occasions produced Theatre performances. We initially met working as performers in a show in London and soon after we staged a one man production of Edgar Allen Poe’s, The Murders in the Rue Morgue with Annie directing and Ian performing, which was presented at the Millfield Theatre in Edmonton and later at the Market Theatre in Hitchin.

We have produced and performed Murder Mysteries, Medieval Banquets, Old Time Music Hall, Promenade and Street Theatre Shows, Children’s Entertainment and Educational Shows, Workshops on many subjects including Film Making at Letchworth Arts Centre, Acting and Performing Workshops for many Youth Drama Clubs and topics including Horror Make-Up, Circus Skills, Puppetry, Mask Work, Shakespeare and History. All this

experience has taught us how to understand our audience and what people in the community enjoy and how to relate to them.

One may be mistaken to assume we are jack of all trades and therefore master of none, but our skills have been pared and honed over twenty-five years working in the performance industry. We never let an opportunity to learn a new skill pass us by. Today, we make most of our own costumes, build our own sets, manage our technical equipment including sound and lighting rigs as well as administrating the company and actively engaging in publicity and social media presence. We continue to learn and now becoming members of ITC, who are an invaluable resource we are able to proceed on the next step of our journey.

Ian Britten-Hull



Back in 1982 Ian went to Middlesex Polytechnic and studied on the Diploma in Dramatic Arts in North London. Not only did the course cover acting technique and stage craft but many other aspects of Theatre production including stage management, lighting design, sound production, costume design and set construction.

With performance studies Ian was lucky enough to learn mask and physical Theatre skills under John Wright of Trestle Theatre Fame. Some years after leaving drama school Ian was lucky to work with Richard Gill, founder of Polka Children's Theatre from whom he learnt his puppetry skills.

As a performer Ian has worked on small and large stage productions from Playing Sir Henry in a European tour of The Picture of Dorian Gray to playing Postman Pat in a number one National Musical Tour. Ian's TV and Film credits include Brookside, Emmerdale, Room at the Bottom and Kingdom. One of his first jobs after leaving drama school was a small part working with Al Pacino on the film Revolution.

Annie Albici



Born in Bucharest, Romania into a theatrical family, her father an orchestra conductor and her mother an opera singer, Annie grew up surrounded by the Theatre and is not surprising that she became a professional dancer with a Diploma in Atestat.

Annie came to England in 1989 as part of a professional Ensemble, touring to many of the large Theatres across the UK including the London Palladium. Following the tour, she found she had to pretty much start at the bottom and work her way up. So, Annie started to perform in Cabaret and Review shows in London and gradually worked her way up to small roles in TV, such as Bad Girls, Footballers Wives.

Staffing and Employment

Like most companies we employ professional artists and tech crew on a contractual basis for any given production or project. But we are especially keen to offer opportunities to those under-represented and those just starting out. We endeavour to create a company where anyone who has an interest in the Theatre industry can join with us to gain basic training and experience. Much of this is accomplished by offering casual placement days where one may come and learn how we make sets or props or costumes. We do not charge for these placement days and we welcome anyone to come along and see for themselves what we do. At the current time we are unable to take on staff or hold placement days, so we are doing everything ourselves. All our productions are two handers but incorporate multi character performances and where we can, audience participation and interaction.

Funding and Structure

To date the company has been self-funding. This has been achieved by using the profits from the commercial variety shows where a given client books a show for a set fee. Once expenses are taken out any remaining profit is ploughed back into the business and is used to finance projects that may not necessarily return a larger profit. For example, the Pantomime in December tours to many private venues from schools to care homes and community venues and the revenue generated by charging a fee to these organisations, is then re-invested to cover production costs for Theatre based shows where the profit margins are smaller; especially when covering Theatre hire costs or low percentage of ticket sale. The only real setback the pandemic has caused is our plans to register the company as a charity with ltd guarantee status. This has been put on hold until later in the year and once this step is undertaken, we will look at funding options for future productions.

We are happy to undertake contracts with venues on a hire basis, box office split and co-production ventures. We also appreciate the uncertainty of the current situation and as such we are happy to accept that any given production plans may be cancelled without notice if the pandemic situation should change, resulting in further restrictions. Regarding social distancing we actively work with all venues to ensure guidelines are adhered to and that safety is paramount. In addition, we are happy to discuss ideas and suggestions that we have formulated.

Lockdown

As previously stated, we have used the time during lockdown constructively planning and working on several productions. Like many individuals and organisations, we turned to online shows.

Comedy of Terrors



We took a Cabaret show we had produced some years ago that paid tribute to some of the best remembered Comedy performers of the past including Tommy Cooper, Frankie Howerd and Steptoe and Son, and some others and wrote a Murder Mystery play where a murder had been committed and six classic comedians were the suspects. The entire plot revolved around the old Empire Theatre and two comedic detectives undertook to solve the case. Each of the suspects had their own scene reminiscent of their TV shows and scenes with the detectives. Rather than just make this more interactive and less like a pre-recorded Film, we encouraged the audience to get involved and play detective and send us their conclusions. We awarded a prize for the first correct entry drawn. We had interest from across the UK and some terrific feedback. Because of this success we have now turned the show into a live version to be played out in live venues.

Children's Shows

We were lucky to be approached by a client that operates several nurseries and pre-schools to produce weekly children's video shows. Our living room was turned into a small studio where we were able to film not only the children's shows but Comedy of Terrors as well. Sets and lights were erected daily, and several hours filming would take place before editing the finished product.

The children's videos that ranged from retelling of classics like Treasure Island to original plays. All the shows featured both of us playing varying parts but ultimately acting as storyteller to drive the narrative with puppets performing the character content. All the shows were well received and even two of them have been viewed by over 1.6k each! <https://www.facebook.com/pg/playplaceltd/videos/>

One of the shows we produced was called Tilly and the Magic Cave which we have now turned into a live production on two levels. A small version for venues such as libraries and a larger version for stage performances.

A Covid Night's Dream



When it was announced that Open-Air Theatre was permitted, we took a Workshop production of A Midsummer Night's Dream we had produced some years ago and restructured it into an Open-Air Theatre show. The play is aimed at family audiences and tells the story of how William (Billy) Shakespeare had to perform his famous play with social distancing. This is achieved by Shakespeare himself with Mistress Quickly playing all the parts. The

narrative is helped along with the use of mask work for some characters, whilst others, particularly the lovers are played by puppets with audience members required to provide the voices from their seats.

By offering the show to local communities for staging in parks etc and for anyone who would like a Theatre performance in their own garden, we are able to keep Theatre alive, albeit in a small way during these uncertain times.

Pantomime



Following the successful tour of Jack and the Beanstalk in December 2019 we decided to re-schedule the production for Christmas 2020. However, due to the pandemic uncertainty we have adjusted the production to be adaptable for any given situation. On a basic level the show comes in two versions. A one-hour version and a two-hour version. One hour suitable for schools and similar community type venues and two-hour version for Theatres and community venues. If social distancing regulations are still in place during December 2020 we have a two hander version whereby as a couple the social distancing guidelines are not applicable to us on stage and also reduces production costs, so playing to reduced audience numbers can still generate sufficient income to cover venue running costs if not small profits. With the two hander version puppets are used to a greater extent in the narrative as is multi-character performances. On the other hand, the show can accommodate up to five performers creating a larger production. In whichever capacity the show is presented it always come with interchangeable sets, vibrant costumes popular songs and silliness.

The above shows are fully rehearsed and produced and ready to go. We appreciate that generally time is paramount when planning and staging live productions, however, we are conscious that we are currently living in unusual times and we have these shows in rep in the eventuality any given venue may wish to present a low cost show with shorter production planning time with the aim of generating an income as soon as possible to ease the financial hardship many venues are currently facing. Our website contains video trailers of each of our productions, but we have longer versions available on request. www.amatheatre.biz

Year 2021

For next year we are currently working on three new productions which include new writing, Comedy and Drama.

Behind the Velvet Curtain.



The story of an old lady living in a care home with dementia. The only thing that appears to give her contentment is a doll. Through the doll the old lady relives her childhood memories growing up in communist Romania.

Tommy and Mary



The unusual story examining the secretive affair Tommy Cooper had with his personal assistant Mary Kay.

It's All Gone Titters Up



A satirical look at events over the past few years but taking place in ancient Pompeii. A farcical romp in a re-working of the classic television show, Up Pompeii.

We would like to thank you for taking the time to read about us and our aims. Currently, we are letting people know about us and researching for the future. If we have anything to offer that might be of interest to you, we are more than happy to answer any queries you may have. Please also check out our website:

www.amatheatre.biz – you can contact us directly via: enquiries@amatheatre.biz – or tel us: [01462481969](tel:01462481969)

We sincerely hope we make with you at some point in the future.

Kind regards

Ian Britten-Hull & Annie Albici

Some Reviews and Feedback received over the past five years.

Brenda C

Stunningly good, exceeded expectations. They took the children and in two hours produced A Midsummer Night's Dream. It was magical, funny and enchanting. The children loved doing it. Everyone sat spellbound as Ian as Shakespeare himself narrated the play and the children (mostly 7-12 years old) became the characters who prompted by him played their parts with confidence.

When I contacted Annie and Ian, I had a dream in my head but never thought it would be possible. They asked me what I wanted, and I told them. They came back with enthusiasm and explained how in the two hours they would play games with the group of children, introducing them to characters then perform the play, A Midsummer Night's Dream.

They fulfilled my dream, thank you!

Comedy of Terrors (Online)

Nicki A.

Funny, nostalgic and something I'm not going to forget in a hurry. A very good production.

Jacqueline B

We were thrilled to see we had won! It was really entertaining, and good fun so thank you..

Messages PR

Ian and Annie are one of the best entertainment duo we know, they are really professional and really nice people too.

Mark G. Mercy Ministries

I booked AMA's production of Jack and their Beanstalk for a charity performance. I had tremendous feedback including the comment, "It was a better pantomime than the one at the Belgrade."

Show for our nursery graduation party

Absolutely fantastic xxx We will be booking AMA Events again next year. Children and adults all enthralled by the brilliant entertainment. A refreshing change to have real storytelling, puppetry and magic - without wifi :)

EVENT DATE - 18TH JUL 2019 REVIEWED BY - LIZ N

Childrens Party in Bourne PE10 0ZD

Amazing entertainment

Great entertainment. Kept all the 25+ children and also the adults watching and interacting during the whole 2hrs. Would 100% recommend.

EVENT DATE - 19TH JAN 2020 REVIEWED BY - PETE N

Tammy S

Fabulous afternoon show! Ian and his team did a great job of entertaining 100 people, not an easy job! Thanks so much for all your efforts, we couldn't have done it without you.

John D

Since we met Annie and Ian three years ago, they have always given their all. They are more than helpful with the timings of the event. Their experience and versatility is second to none, they have really paid their dues. I have quite a big extended family, who are happy to call the AMA EVENTS number (07523 059664) whatever the occasion. They have royally entertained us for children's birthdays, adult birthdays and at Christmas, with their very own versions of Pantomimes. They treat every show as though they're at the PALLADIUM.

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