

Playgoers Membership Statement

July 2022

The Playgoers Society of Dartington Hall is a very well-respected theatrical club with a 75-year legacy of producing high-quality theatre in South Devon.

As a club-member you have a variety, and growing number, of opportunities each year to expand your enjoyment and knowledge of all aspects of live theatre, and to make friends and socialise with fellow members of all ages, many of whom are extremely well qualified and experienced in the performing arts.

There is so much we are doing that you can be involved in, and we encourage all members to have a go at things they have not done before, from acting and backstage/production management to front of house organisation; from sound and lighting design to publicity; from set design and build to props and costume sourcing; and being active on the committee.

Even if none of those is your bag, your membership fee will support regular productions of interesting, challenging and maybe less-often performed plays, which will expand your community's love of theatre.

We run regular acting and backstage workshops, which are free to you as a member, where you can learn the various skills needed to make a production work, helping you become a more all-round performer and theatre-lover.

All of this is available to you with your membership fee, which is only **£20/year**, has not increased for many years and is competitive with similar theatre groups in the area.

In summary, membership of Playgoers each year gives you:

- the chance to fund the continuity of live community theatre in S Devon
- free high-quality workshops in various aspects of theatre productions
- full involvement in any production, currently 3 major ones and other smaller pieces through the year
 - as an actor (if successful at any number of auditions you go for)
 - as part of the team of stage or production management, props, costumes, backstage, set, lighting, sound, FOH etc
- full insurance cover while involved in any production
- the opportunity to be directed by qualified practitioners
- the chance to meet and act/work backstage with a variety of new and experienced performers and learn together
- high quality live theatre to enjoy with your family and friends
- the chance to vote at AGMs, serve on the Playgoers' committee and help shape the future of your society.

Playgoers' history

In the 1920s Dorothy and Leonard Elmhirst began their experiment at Dartington Hall. As Dorothy's passion was the arts, one of her many initiatives was to establish the Playgoers, initially for the benefit of the community that lived and worked on the estate. The group began in 1946, and in their first year of productions (1948) they staged *Noah*, *Medea* and *You Never Can Tell* in the Barn Theatre (now the Barn Cinema).

The theatre group gradually grew beyond the estate and drew an active membership from all parts of south Devon. Playgoers continued to stage several high-quality productions each year, including, from 1974, its iconic outdoor Shakespeare in the private garden of Dartington Hall, often with a professional director. Summer 2022 saw the return of outdoor Shakespeare with a production of *As You Like It* in The Hollow next to Studio 31.

Following the conversion of the Barn to a full-time cinema in 2014, and the unavailability of the Private Garden, Playgoers now perform in Studio 31 and various open-air locations with their touring productions.