

Chichester Festival Theatre

Behind the scenes tour

Friday 23 February 2024



Those of you who went to see 'Drop the Dead Donkey' may not have realised that several of our TASA members were part of the crew!

A group of about 30 TASA members joined this behind the scenes tour, organised by Pat King.

The group was split into two smaller groups, each with an excellent guide. Ours was Susan, who was able to tell us all about the building, the history, and what goes on behind the scenes.

The original theatre (1962) was the brainchild of Leslie Evershed-Martin, a councillor, and was built after some serious fundraising. The theatre itself is now a *Grade II listed building*, and was designed by architects Philip Powell and Hidalgo Moya who managed to keep the cost down by using a lot of concrete. The Minerva was added in 1989.

We were most impressed to learn about what goes on before, during and after a show and how many people this involves. A steady crew of 60 people with many extras when needed, keep the shows going. All costumes are laundered after every show with items such as uniforms drycleaned regularly. We were lucky enough to meet up with one of the ladies who, apart from laundering, makes wigs. Real hair is used, and each wig can take up to a month. Average cost: from £1000. Some shows use up to 30 wigs. A quick change of clothes within 20 seconds is done by several people who treat the actor a bit like a racing car in a pitstop. Use of Velcro and poppers, hidden behind the buttons, help in this process.

We thanked our guide and Pat for a thoroughly enjoyable afternoon.