



apollo

The in-house magazine of the Apollo Theatre Players, Newport, Isle of Wight

Forthcoming read-throughs, auditions & other production stuff

- 'Every Christmas Story Ever Told—And Then Some': auditions Tuesday 9 April, 7.30 in Hancock House
- 'Suddenly at Home': read-through Monday 6 May, Hancock House, 7.00pm
- 'Suddenly at Home': auditions Sunday 9 June, 2.00pm in the auditorium

Remember: a read-through is not an audition!

A REMINDER that the box office is now open every Saturday morning from 10.00am-12.00.

DEADLINE FOR CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE NEXT ISSUE:

Wednesday 8 May

Other diary dates (more info on the website)

Coffee mornings Every Saturday, 10.00-12.00 in the bar

IW Jazz Weekend: 6 gigs at the Apollo (see www.IWjazzweekend.co.uk for more info)

Eleanor Berry, 'My relationship with Robert Maxwell' 6 June, 7.00pm

'The Weir'

The current show, Conor McPherson's play 'The Weir', has the accolade of being one of Michael Billington's '101 Best Plays'. If you haven't read it—or dipped into it—the book lists 101 plays that Britain's longest-serving and arguably best respected theatre critic considers the best ever. Obviously that's a matter for discussion, but the fact that he includes 'The Weir' says a great deal for this young dramatist's skills: his ability to capture what Billington calls the 'quiet desperation of the

unfulfilled'. Marylyn Ford, the director, has this to say about putting on such an iconic production.

'In the early days of the Apollo we gained a good reputation for bringing to our audience work by living playwrights: Pinter, Orton, Bond, Bennett & Hare. So it's been good to present 'The Weir'. Early 20th-century plays were pretty safe, and provided escape and romance—nothing wrong with that, but the lives of ordinary folk with highs and lows, sadnesses and humour are worth writing about. In these days of youtube and filmed performances it is important for us to continue to present our own interpretation of new work.

However, sometimes I feared my little ship 'The Weir' would sink in a perfect storm of



Ginnie Orrey and Michael Arnell in 'The Weir'

theatre bookings, a previous Big Play, illness and scant advance printed publicity, but we sailed to harbour safely.

To the creative Construction Crew, the clever Technical Team and my lovely cast: Thanks. Thanks. And ever thanks. Oh, and Fordie says, 'Cheers Apollo! The Guinness was grand.'

Production dates: 29 March-6 April. See p.2 for free tickets!



Colin Ford, David Vince and Michael Arnell in 'The Weir'

'NATURAL CAUSES'

The director of this black comedy by Eric Chappell (creator of 'Rising Damp') is Martin Ward. Martin says, 'The first challenge for me was to choose a cast. The excellence of those who attended the auditions made it a very difficult process and I could have cast the play twice over, such was the standard of those who came along. After a great deal of

brain-racking I had my cast:

- Walter** - Steve Reading
- Vincent** - Steve Taverner
- Celia** - Kathryn Ward
- Angie** - Helen Reading
- Withers** - David Carr

'Natural Causes' presents its own challenges. It has elements of farce, involving mistaken identities and glasses that may or may not contain poison, not to men-

tion a dying pot plant! Does anyone end up taking the poison? All will be revealed from May 17!



We are all looking forward to polishing this gem over the next few weeks.'

Production dates: 17-18 & 21-25 May

Editorial: the view from the Editor's chair

News from the Apollo Theatre Trust



From the Chair
of the Trust,
Paul Jennings

**FREE
THEATRE
TICKETS
FOR
MEMBERS!**

Readers of 'The Observer' may have seen an interesting article recently about the use of accents in theatre and film. This of course is particularly apposite for us at the moment, given that the actors in 'The Weir' are required to adopt a robust southern Irish brogue. There is a view that 'authenticity is all', and that actors who 'fake' an accent are guilty of 'cultural appropriation'; which is all very well, but there aren't many actors on the Island with a

Good News

The council have once again accepted our application for the discretionary element (20%) of the rate relief we attract as a charity. We have to submit a claim every year on the basis of fulfilling our objectives to provide drama on the Isle of Wight and delivering, at the theatre, services that the council are unable to provide. This includes lettings to outside organisations. Our claim is also supported by our commitment to inclusivity. We need to remember that this award is by no means guaranteed when councils are short of money and we must maintain our effort to support applications in the future.

Bad News

We have written to the council planning department to try to enlist their support in removing the unused ugly gate illegally erected across the side passage by the

Just in case any of you didn't receive a recent email, here's a reminder that free tickets are on offer to members. Yes, you did read that right—the Committee have decided to offer a members' 'perk' of free tickets to see the current Players production, 'The Weir'. The show goes up on Friday 29 March and runs till Saturday 6 April (not Sunday or Monday), and any member making a booking for at least one paid-for ticket qualifies for one additional free seat. Just quote the

convenient Irish background!

On a more serious note, though, if the use of regional accents is acceptable in situations where RP would be the norm (and of course RP is itself an accent, if you think about it), surely the opposite applies too? It's a way of taking the movement towards colour- and gender-blind casting one step further, which must be a good thing.

The actors in 'The Weir' at first found the accent quite

owner of Olivos. They have sadly responded thus: "As the gate is not located within the curtilage of the listed building and it is over 2m away from the public highway then planning permission would not be required. As the gate is not attached to the listed building then listed building consent would not be required." It is worth noting that although the gate is not attached to the Apollo it is touching the brickwork, but I doubt this actually counts.

Parking on the forecourt—a personal observation

There seems to be some confusion about how cars should or should not be parked on the forecourt. Last year one member was given a hefty fine for blocking the pavement when parking; however, I believe that the vehicle was parked with the front wheels on the forecourt but with its rear end blocking the pavement, forcing pedestrians and

code "WEIR19" to take £8.50 off a booking (the equivalent of one free ticket); if you're buying tickets online, enter the code in the 'discount code' box, or if you're buying at the box office the staff just need to enter the code to apply the discount.

'The Weir' is a powerful play set in rural Ireland. It's beautifully written, combining tales of the supernatural with closely observed dramatic naturalism. It won the Olivier Award for Best New Play in 1999 and the author,

challenging, but the better they got to know the lines, the more they realised that they could actually only be spoken in the accent because the rhythm and cadences made it natural. They were lucky to have the help of a natural Irish speaker to help identify particular sounds which were specific to that accent, so while they might not pass for natives in a pub in Sligo, hopefully our audiences 'won't know the difference'!

wheelchair users into the road. For the past few months a large builder's van has been parked, with our permission, on the forecourt in the left-hand space. This vehicle did extend onto the pavement but leaving space for pedestrians and wheelchairs to pass safely. I do not believe the owner has been prosecuted. My conclusion is that most family-sized cars can be parked on the forecourt square on to the building, allowing up to 4 vehicles to park safely. Obviously the spaces on the extreme left and right can accommodate slightly longer vehicles so it would be helpful if smaller cars used the centre two spaces, when they are available, being careful to avoid damaging the steps and the pot plants!. **NOTE: this issue is likely to become more significant when evening parking charges are introduced in Pyle Street (on 6 April).**

Conor McPherson, won the Evening Standard and Critics' Circle Awards for Most Promising Playwright. The play is set in a small pub where two locals are chatting with the owner until the local bigshot arrives with a woman recently arrived from Dublin. The men vie with each other to tell scary stories until Valerie tells her own heart-breaking tale.

The show runs for about 1 hour 45 minutes without an interval. Hope you can come - and bring lots of friends!

News from your Committee

Notes from the Committee meeting on 25 March 2019

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

A quieter time on the membership front: a few more renewals have trickled in and there is one new member since my last report. Michael's workshop was well attended and went very well; the next one will take place on Thursday 11 April. There was a 'Full House' for the Members' Evening last Saturday; everyone enjoyed themselves and I have had a lot of positive feedback. A big 'thank you' to Keith for entertaining us! The next social gathering will be on April 27 when we will celebrate Shakespeare's birthday; Maureen and I will be putting a plan together and circularising details to the committee and members shortly. I would like to remind you that the Box Office is now open every Saturday morning between 10-12 and it would be helpful if David or I can be made aware of any issues there might be with the booking system, to ensure a professional front!

BUSINESS MANAGER

Another quiet month from a business point of view. I have requested the licences for the first three shows in the 2019-20 season and two are paid for and confirmed ('Suddenly At Home' and 'Dad's Army'). Scripts will follow but I'd appreciate directors letting me know if they can obtain them by other means—as some directors already have. Alan and I have come up with new arrangements for non-Bar 'housekeeping' purchases—sounds boring but actually quite important!

MARKETING MANAGER

I am currently trying to organise a radio interview with the director of 'The Weir' as requested at the weekend. Season leaflets were distributed from 1 March in tourist destinations across the Island; more are needed as well as more in the theatre and another print run is being ordered ready for the start of 'The Weir'. Looking ahead to next season, I will be contacting directors regarding images for shows soon.

HOUSE MANAGER

Rotas for Bronte were filled all evenings and we were able to cope well with the change in the performance layout. A total of 451 tickets were sold which equates to 66% capacity. There were one or two FoH issues (concerning members) which require further investigation and I will report back soonest. During the run of Bronte there were several occasions where the IT failed, largely due to wi-fi connectivity. Our box office team coped extremely well and maintained cool heads in front of customers and I understand that this has now been fixed and that we should have a reliable connection for The Weir. We have, at this point, an almost full rota for The Weir.

A reminder to directors that FoH needs to know about significant issues relating to productions: for example, whether there is smoking in a play or the use of a smoke machine, or whether there is to be no interval (which obviously impacts on ice-cream purchases). This is

just an observation but this is the sort of information that FoH needs up front and should really be on our website and online booking system. I'll contact directors for the forthcoming productions to prompt for this information.

On the subject of smoking, the complaint that we received from a customer last Autumn has been responded to. I would now consider the matter closed. The FoH Manager role still needs to be reviewed as there is too much for one person, especially if the incumbent is also in full-time employment. I will work on a proposal and allow the committee a non-meaningful vote and possibly an indicative vote! Basically we need a Housekeeper.

Bar report: Takings for Bronte were fairly strong and again, I had no problem filling the rota. Following Bronte there were 3 nights of RedTIE theatre and a cricket club awards night plus a Jazz afternoon, all of which made a significant contribution. The Bar rota for The Weir is also complete despite the usual bar managers all being away at the same time.

YOUR COMMITTEE

Theatre Director & Chair of management committee (elected 3-yearly): Amy Burns (2016-19) amy@masexodus.co.uk

Arts Manager (elected annually in Nov for season beginning following Sept)	Maggie Cardew (2018-19) cardewmaglet@gmail.com Di Evans (2019-20) diandclem@hotmail.com	2 Members' Representatives (elected annually)	Tom Hilton (2018-19) thilton1@hotmail.co.uk Mike Crowe (2018-19) mike.crowe1@btopenworld.com
Business Manager (elected biannually)	Ginnie Orrey (2018-20) gginnie@googlemail.com or info@apollo-theatre.org.uk	House Manager (elected biannually)	Steve Reading (co-opted 2018-19) steveread104@btinternet.com
Marketing Manager (elected biannually)	Maureen Sullivan (2018-20) msullivan58@me.com	Technical Manager (elected biannually)	Dan Burns (2017-19) dan@masexodus.co.uk
Players' Secretary (elected biannually)	Mike Whitehead (2018-20) michaelwhitehead@yahoo.com	LTG rep	Cynara Crump cynara.crump@virgin.net
Membership Secretary (elected biannually)	Carole Crow (2017-19) carolecrow9@gmail.com	Apollo Trust Buildings Manager (co-opted)	Roger Simpson roger.dodger45@yahoo.co.uk



CASTING CALL:

'EVERY CHRISTMAS STORY EVER TOLD—AND THEN SOME'

**Production dates:
5-13 July 2019**

If my timing is right, 'The Weir' is in full swing and 'Natural Causes' rehearsals are well under way, which means that the season will soon be coming to an end ... But not yet ...

The finale fast approaches, and with it the call for enthusiastic, Christmas-loving, stocking-filling, turkey-eating, cracker-pulling actors hell-bent on keeping Christmas alive all year round.

Auditions for 'Every Christmas Story Ever Told—And Then Some' are set to take place on Monday 8 April 2019 at 19:30.

Directors Amy Burns and Joel Leverton are on the lookout for people who have a genuine interest in Christmas, love having a laugh and are prepared to make fools of themselves in front of full houses. The actors will be playing themselves, so we are looking for people

with distinct characters who will get on well with those onstage and backstage. The hunt is not limited by age, gender, nationality or shoe size – anyone who thinks they match the below descriptions will be considered:

Actor 1 (as per script, Jim): 'The Miser'. S/he is required to be a bit of a grouch; they thought they would be doing A Christmas Carol and are rather partial to the notion of a traditional Christmas production. Throughout, they're not that bothered about being involved in anything other than Dickens.

Actor 2 (as per script, John): 'The Idiot'. S/he is required to be exactly that. They love Christmas, believe in Santa and have a tendency to dash around the stage in flashy costumes.

Actor 3 (as per script, Michael): 'The Middle Man'. S/he is required to be the in-

formative one who placates both Actor 1 with their traditions and Actor 2 with their childlike innocence. They are the fount of all knowledge and keen to cover every Christmas story ever told.

There is a measure of physical demand to this play, but if you think you can carry out any of the above roles; enjoy dressing up; can engage with an audience who may or may not be that engaged; think on your feet; be prepared to improvise if there is call for it and are game for a giggle, then come to the auditions for 'Every Christmas Story Ever Told—And Then Some' at the theatre on **Tuesday 9 April 2019 at 19:30 in Hancock House.**

If you're interested and would like to read a script, they can be obtained from Amy Burns (amy@masexodus.co.uk) **Joel Leverton**



CASTING CALL:

'SUDDENLY AT HOME'

**Production dates:
6-14
September 2019**

'Suddenly at Home' by Francis Durbridge, is an intricate classic thriller, with unexpected twists and surprises, in which a scheming husband kills his wealthy wife in pursuit of his idyllic dream. Durbridge, master of suspense, weaves an explosive narrative of lust, greed, danger and deceit set in a luxurious 1970s London apartment. Well-portrayed characters cause mayhem as the plot unfolds, and there are plenty of opportunities for a range of actors.

If you would like to read a script as soon as they arrive, contact the director, Evelyn Hicks, on evelyn.hicks@yahoo.com.

CHARACTERS

Maggie Howard (30-40) A wealthy, flamboyant outspoken 'lady' described as 'somewhat coarse in speech and manner' but not unattractive. Larger than life, Maggie dreams of moving to Bermuda despite her husband's reluctance and is determined to fulfil her ambitions.

Audition pages 15-18

Helen Tenby (23-35) Maggie's younger sister, stylish, intelligent and loyal and the owner of a successful art gallery. Sensitive to the needs of others, she is slow to doubt their integrity. A

trusting friend to all, she is swept along and embroiled in the action.

Audition pages 26-28

Ruth Bechler (20-30) An attractive German au pair described by Maggie as 'marvellous' with the reputation of being a wonderful cook, terrific worker and trained nurse. Efficient and quick-thinking, she executes her role with nerves of steel—a lady to watch ...

Audition pages 41, 50, 51

Sam Blaine (30-50) Conceited yet likeable and very 'trendy'. His character changes from a happy-go-lucky author of saucy books to a fearful murder suspect employing devious tactics to survive. He is described as having 'a mind like a corkscrew'.

Audition pages 3-6

Sheila Wallis (30+) A sexually attractive, blonde femme fatale (who also happens to be a heroin user). She is generally compliant and vulnerable, but capable of intense anger and aggression when provoked. Her tense disposition creates unease around her. An actress by profession, she can carefully orchestrate her responses until the pressure gets too much ...

Audition pages 46-48

Glenn Howard (35-50) Unsatisfied with his life, Glenn craves a fresh start. On first impression he appears to be a likeable man with an easy charm and the social skills of a highly successful salesman. But underneath lies a plotter and manipulator with ruthless ambition and unlimited aspirations. As the plot thickens, his mood swings from confidence to unease but his savage determination drives the action to the bitter end.

Audition pages 15-18

Inspector Appleton (50+) Described as stout and grey-haired. Professional, methodical and discerning, he pursues his line of questioning adeptly. Has a shrewd analytical mind and commands respect and attention.

Audition pages 56-59

Remick (30+) This 'serious-looking man' is supportive of his friend Sam and ingenious in his efforts to try to get to the truth. He interrogates ruthlessly, sometimes with a touch of menace. Is he really all that he seems?

Audition pages 34-37

Read-through: 7.00pm on Monday 6 May in Hancock House

Auditions: 2.00pm Sunday 9 June in the auditorium

FROM YOUR MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

A foggy night on the Isle of Wight saw eager thespians feeling their way to the Apollo to enhance their acting skills. What a treat awaited us! I have enjoyed many of Michael's workshops, always learning something new and leaving enthused about our art. This was to be no exception and if anything, 'simply the best'. We began the evening with breathing exercises to calm the nerves before taking that step into the spotlight and techniques to open up the throat and assist projection, followed by a little choral work to loosen us up and lift the spirits. Down to work! How many ways are there to say some of Shakespeare's famous lines? You had to be there to keep count! More tips, techniques and tricks of the trade. Michael's next 'trick' was to shuffle us like a pack of cards, into threes. Each group was given a one-sided telephone conversation to analyse and then perform in three different ways - with humour, emotion and anger. A brilliant exercise seeing us all helping each other with our performances and learning much from Michael's constructive criticism of our efforts. We all enjoyed ourselves immensely and agreed we were taking away some very valuable lessons. How lucky we are that Michael so generously gives up his time in helping us improve our acting performances. I, for one, can't wait for the next workshop on April 11, when I believe there will be a 'script'! Thank you, Michael!

NEXT DRAMA WORKSHOP

Thursday 11 April 2019, 7pm to 9.30pm

Leader: Michael Arnell

Thanks to all who attended the last session. It was great to see so many members and meet some potential new members. Our next session will continue to explore how we transfer the author's script from "PAGE TO STAGE". Please wear comfortable clothes and sensible shoes. Coffee/tea/biscuits provided. Bring a non-member friend; they could become acting members too!

NOTE: the date: it's Thursday because of you-know-what for you-know-who! (see p6)

Shakespeare Social Evening 27 April

Calling all members (and would-be members): put 27 April in your diary! This is the date of the next Members' Social Evening, to be held in the Theatre Bar from 7.30pm. As it's close-ish to Shakespeare's birthday, we're making it a Shakespeare theme, but love of the Bard isn't necessary - just come along and have a good time. Following the popularity of recent members' evenings, we just had to have another! Some entertainment will be on offer, the bar will be open and there will be a buffet - please feel free to bring along any food contributions if you wish. More importantly, come and meet other members, chat, drink and be merry. Doublet & hose optional...



How to access the members' area of the theatre website

- Go on to the website and hover over 'membership' and the 'members' area' tab should drop down;
- click on that and you'll get the message 'We're sorry, the content you are trying to reach is restricted to members only';
- click on 'member login' and you'll get the drop-down box containing the two areas 'username' and 'password';
- in the top area enter your 'username', which is 'firstname.secondname' (remember the dot between the words), and in the bottom box enter your 'password', which is your membership number. Your membership card has your number on it, but if you can't find it check with the Membership Secretary or me;
- once you've done that, you should get straight into the members' area. If not, there's a problem and you need to let me know, but try these steps first.

Ginnie Orrey, webmistress

How to access the online diary

To check the diary, go to <http://diary.apollo-backstage.org.uk> (note there's no 'www' at the beginning, and it's not the normal Apollo website). To just see what is booked in, you do not need to log in—you can use the options on screen to select a view that will either show you a day, week or month for a particular area. Use the mini calendars at the top to choose which day/week/month you wish to view. The **day view** will show you all of the areas together, whereas **weekly** and **monthly views** will show a single room at a time—click on the title of the room at the top left to change the room you are looking at bookings for. To view more information about the booking, including who made the booking, click on the title of the booking which will then take you to the details page.

To make bookings (or change your own—it will not allow you to delete or change other people's bookings), you will first need to log in by clicking on the login button at the top right of the page. This will open the log-in page, which needs you to use the same details as the members' area of the website. If you can't log in, double check your details, and if you still can't log in, drop me an e-mail (dan@apollo-backstage.org.uk)

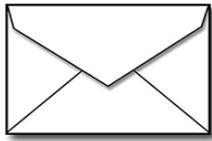
To make a booking, check to see if the time is free. If it isn't,

the diary won't allow you to make a booking.

Click the time you wish to start your booking: the page will change to the bookings page, where you need to fill in the details—brief description, room, start/finish times and type are the minimum, although you can provide other information. Remember that if you're booking the **stage**, you'll also need to book the **auditorium**. You can hold down the CTRL button on your keyboard to select more than one room under the same booking. Once you have entered the details, there is a 'save' button at the bottom of the page with two green ticks to the right. This will save your booking on the diary. If you go to click 'save' and see a red cross instead of a green tick, this means that your booking conflicts with another. You'll need to double-check the date/times have been entered correctly. If you need to over-ride a regular booking such as work-nights, you will have to contact Dan Burns, Technical Manager, to do this.

How to access the Apollo Theatre wifi

When you want to access the wifi, you'll see on the list of networks one called either 'Apollo backstage' or simply 'Apollo theatre'. The password is 'apollotheatre'.



Your letters

From Marylyn Ford

A MEMORY OF KAY MORTON

In November 1992, Colin and I arrived in New Zealand aboard our 40' sloop, 'Allure'. We had left Cowes 15 months earlier and had visited so many exotic places in the Caribbean, Central America and the Pacific Ocean and were looking forward to a four-month stay in NZ while the monsoon raged to the North. We bought an old car to tour in and had anchored in the Bay of Islands, North Island; after satisfying all officials of our legality I visited the local library to check the info that the Lonely Planet guide couldn't supply. Imagine my astonishment when I heard Kay and Alan from Totland Bay talking on the other side of the shelves! They had flown in as part of a UK Rotary Club delegation, and there we all were on the far side of the world, looking forward to exploring the Land of the Long White Cloud.

[Editor's note: the Antipodes seem to have that effect on Islanders. During my stay in Australia a couple of years ago, I bumped into Islanders not once but twice (once on a beach four miles long and completely deserted apart from us and one other couple)—and the Island being the Island, they all knew people we knew!]

'I'm one of the few women who's made it on talent in Hollywood. I tried to sleep my way to the top, but there were no takers.' (Roseanne Barr)

'Actors all soon become rogues and vagabonds anyway ...' (Sheila Hancock)

'How many actors does it take to change a light bulb? One - you hold it and the world revolves round you.' (Danny de Vito)

From Eileen Connolly

Are you, or do you know anyone else who might be, willing to help me with an unusual request? I have had for some time a wish to learn the basic principles of how to handle a ferret—nothing elaborate, just how to pick one up, hold it comfortably (for both of us) and put it down without irritating it (and possibly a quick run-down on what would actually be likely to irritate a ferret). I'm therefore looking for someone with a reasonably good-tempered ferret who'd be willing to give me one or two lessons – suitably remunerated, of course. Ryde area preferred but would be willing to travel. If this idea appeals, please contact me: e.connolly49@btinternet.com

From Pete Bourne, Ryde Methodist Church

I hope you will not mind me asking this but I am looking for an old or out of use audio mixing desk, the larger the better. I'm afraid I have no money as it's for Church activities. If you come across one that the owner is prepared to donate could you please think of us and let me know. Pete Bourne Ryde Methy @ Garfield Rd.

From Michael Arnell

MOG DOESN'T BELIEVE IT!
When I was informed that the date of my next Stagecraft Workshop would have

to be changed I was understandably irritated (I'm not known as MOG for nothing). And when I was informed of the reason for the change, I was flabbergasted. Let me explain. Not that many years ago, I was a non-acting member of the Newport Repertory Club when they used the old Queen's Hall in Lugley Street. Life (i.e. getting married, starting a family), intervened and so my involvement with the group lapsed. During this period I kept in touch with certain members and heard all about the initiative of a mainland couple who galvanised the group into acquiring their own premises. The story of John and Pat Hancock and the birth of the Apollo Theatre Players is legendary. One of those very active founder members was a tall gangly young man called Roger, who found time, when not up a ladder, to court a certain petite Miss Hilary Sloper. They married and started a family, the eldest of whom joined the Apollo Children's Theatre that I'd started after being bullied into becoming an 'acting' member. I watched this little girl, and her subsequent sisters grow up. All of them are absolute poppets, and as a family have contributed an enormous amount to the ongoing success of our theatre ... BUT, there is no way that little Amy Simpson, sorry, Burns, is FORTY YEARS OLD!

**And on
that
note ...**

You are cordially invited to join Amy
in celebrating her 40th birthday.

At The Royal Ocean Racing Club,
Cowes Parade

Friday 12th April at 7:00pm

Dress to Impress

Carriages at Midnight

RSVP—07886 389 561 or amy@masexodus.co.uk



My previous contribution to 'Apollonius' recounted a tale of a writer's ambition unfulfilled. I thought I would put pen to paper (or tap a few letters on a keypad) a second time to make an observation about acting.

Let me say straight away that what I know about acting can probably be stencilled on the back of a British postage stamp - second class. However, I have seen numerous performances over the years, both amateur and professional, and one of the things that always strikes me about those on stage is the contribution of so-called minor characters. I am specifically referring to anyone who either does not have a speaking part or must contribute very few words to the proceedings.

I have been in that situation many times. "We're desperate for someone to stand in as third spear carrier - can you do it?" was the traditional cry when I first got involved in theatre. "Sure," I'd say with a level of fear in my voice that I usually reserved for those moments when I knew I was about to

step into my own personal form of hell - often when I had to go for swimming lessons at school. I would stand where the director told me to stand and try to be the epitome of the definitive spear carrier, thrice removed. All the while the thought ghosted around my head that if I failed to do what the said director wanted, it didn't matter. It was not as if I was the chief spear carrier, with actual words to deliver, and I was, after all, hidden behind numerous others who were far more important—and taller—than I was. Over the years, I have come to appreciate that having a minor part is equally as important as anyone who has been gifted with the lead or has held a major role in a show. I have witnessed productions that have actually been let down by members of the supporting cast simply because they have not felt themselves part of the action. This may seem a strange observation but I have been in shows with and directed cast members who seemed to feel that being on stage was something they did because they

had nothing better to do. I watched a dear, now departed, friend on stage many years ago. He was required to come on and stand without saying a word. He did so, and his stance and body language were such that he was instantly able to convey his angry mood, integral to what was unfolding around him as the scene played out. It would have been easy to ignore anyone in that position, as the focus of attention was on those who delivered their lines. But what struck me all those years ago was how someone without a single word to say could hold your attention and, by being in character throughout, maintain that suspension of disbelief that is crucial to the theatrical experience.

If, therefore, you are ever in the position of playing a minor role, never think that your contribution is less worthy compared to that of your fellow cast members. Every single person on stage has a vital role to play.

Martin Ward

THE ART OF THE SMALL PART

A
contemplation
by Martin
Ward

A
reminder
of the
plays for
next
season

'Suddenly at Home' (Francis Durbridge); 4m 4f Director: Evelyn Hicks	6-14 September 2019	A man schemes to murder his wealthy wife for love of another woman, but is that woman her sister, her friend or the au pair?
Jeeves & Wooster in 'Perfect Nonsense' (the Goodale Brothers, after PG Wodehouse); 3m Director: Fiona Gwinnett	25 October-2 November	An inventive, fast-paced comedy. Winner of the 2014 Olivier award for best comedy
'Dad's Army' (Perry & Croft); cast of thousands Director: Amy Burns	13-21 December	Script contains 3 episodes of the television comedy adapted for the stage, of which I suggest we do two plus the short sketch written for a Royal Variety Performance, in which they have formed a choir and sing The Floral Dance (with the song changed to a Christmas song).
'The Thrill of Love' (Amanda Whittington); 1m 4f Director: Chris Hicks	14-22 February 2020	A dramatisation of the true story of Ruth Ellis, the last woman to be hanged in Britain.
'When We Are Married' (JB Priestley); 7m 7f Director: David Vince	3-11 April	Three couples gather to celebrate their silver wedding only to discover that the parson who married them was not authorised to do so. Pandemonium breaks out!
'Liselotte in May' (Zsolt Pozsgai) 1m (playing 8 characters) 1f Director: Joel Leverton	22-30 May	A lonely woman tries desperately to find a mate but somehow each of her prospective partners dies on the first date. The playwright has won the Hungarian Drama award three times and the European Drama award. Widely produced in Europe and now available in English translation
'A View from the Bridge' (Arthur Miller); 9m 2f Director: Steve Reading	10-18 July	A modern tragedy of jealousy and betrayal. The lives of Eddie Carbone and his family begin to unravel when they take into their home two relatives who are illegal immigrants from Sicily.



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The Apollo Players' next production

'Natural
Causes'

17-18 &
21-25 May
2019

Walter Bryce lives in a country house with a lovely garden and a trout stream. Vincent is from Exodus, a euthanasia group that assists people in suicide. When he is invited to Walter's house to assist in the disposal of Walter's wife, Celia, he senses something is wrong. Why are the suicide notes unsigned? What is the role of Walter's attractive secretary? Why has the Samaritan been sent for? Will any of them die, willingly or unwillingly, from natural causes? The author, Eric Chappell, is one of the top writers of comedy in Britain today.

