



**Forthcoming read-throughs, auditions & other production stuff**

**Remember: a read-through is not an audition!**

**DEADLINE FOR CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE NEXT ISSUE: who knows?**

Other diary dates (more info on the website)

Coffee mornings      Suspend-  
ed until  
further  
notice

# apollonius

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

**Issue no. 277**

**April 2020**

## The Apollo goes dark

Over the years the Apollo Theatre has had its share of 'firsts': UK premieres for plays; visits by royalty, both theatrical and hereditary; and of course the honour of being the first Little Theatre on the Island. However, these are strange and difficult times, and for the very first time in its nearly fifty-year history, the Apollo Theatre has had to go dark for an unspecified length of time.

Everyone reading this will be fully aware of the chaos the coronavirus pandemic has caused across the world. In the context of the thousands infected and dying, the closure of our theatre is very small beer indeed; as one committee member said, 'life is more important than a hobby'. Nevertheless, for many—probably most—of us, it's not so much a hobby, more a way of life, and its absence, for however long it lasts, will leave a significant gap in our lives.

As we watched, in fascination and horror, the events of recent weeks unfurl in front of our eyes, it became increasingly clear that the decision to close the thea-

tre was becoming inevitable. In the end, when the government announced on 16 March that people should avoid pubs, clubs and theatres for the foreseeable future, the decision was taken out of our hands.

It was a particularly sad decision for the casts of our two forthcoming productions. 'When We Are Married' was only weeks away from first night: the set nearly finished, Wardrobe ticking costumes off the list, props sourcing obscure items and the cast rehearsing three nights a week and very nearly at 'books down'. Auditions for 'Liselotte in May' had taken place; Joel Leverton had assembled his cast for this unusual play and we were all interested to see what he was going to do with it. The director of the last show of the season, Arthur Miller's 'A View from the Bridge', was starting to think about audition dates and so on. Everything, in other words, was progressing as normal—and then came the bombshell.

We have an obligation to consider the health and safety of our audiences and

casts, so there was no alternative. For the foreseeable future, therefore, the theatre will be closed for any activities at all—rehearsals, meetings, youth theatre work, hirings, coffee mornings and anything else which involves groups of people. We will be keeping a regular eye on the building to make sure it's safe and secure, but otherwise the plan—until and unless events overtake us!—will be to 'wait and see'. The committee has agreed that 'When We Are Married' and 'Liselotte in May' will be performed as a priority when we can, but as you can imagine the mechanics of that are unknown at present and we are unable to make sound, sensible decisions because of the changeable nature of the situation within the UK. Goodness knows how long the suggested restrictions on public assembly may continue in place.

It only remains for me to say—keep well, look after yourselves and let's look forward to meeting again when circumstances return to normal.

**Ginnie Orrey, Editor**

## Editorial: the view from the Editor's chair



## News from the Apollo Theatre Trust



I had hoped to be able to avoid reference to the current unpleasantness in this column, but events have rapidly overtaken everyone. However, elsewhere in this edition you will find our practical response to the emergency, about which we're being asked increasingly often; I would rather reflect on dramatic and artistic responses to similar situations.

Novels about plagues and epidemics are not rare, creating as they do a restricted environment in which other emotions can play out. Gabriel Garcia Marquez' *Love in the Time of Cholera*, Albert Camus' *La Peste* and Daniel Defoe's *Journal of the Plague Year* all come to mind; but when the Committee were considering the forthcoming season I was reminded of a novel entitled *The*

*Roses of Eyam* (pronounced, so I was informed, 'Eem'). The book, based on a true story, is set in the Yorkshire village of Eyam at the time of the Black Death: the inhabitants self-isolate to ensure that if they are infected they don't pass it on and their neighbours can't get it. When I discovered that it has been dramatised for the stage I was immediately tempted to propose including it in the season. After further research, however, I found out that it is written for a cast of 50 (I kid you not) and therefore perhaps just a trifle out of our range (how would we fit them all on the stage?!). A shame, really—after all, as I've remarked before now, if theatre is not to comment on the important issues of our time as they happen, we lose some of the sense

of immediacy which live theatre gives us.

So I guess all we can do is what we are doing: take all feasible preventative measures, particularly keeping two metres away from each other, keep washing our hands and—most difficult of all in our environment, in my view—stop kissing each other!! I've taken to using the 'namaste' gesture but really, we theatricals kiss as easily as we breathe!

**NB:** I would like to take this opportunity to thank all my contributors to this organ for rising to the occasion. In the absence of current shows I didn't think I'd have enough to fill an issue, but clearly enforced solitude is energizing people's creative juices and I have been inundated with contributions. Thank you all.

Just before the country closed down the Trust held a meeting to review progress on obtaining building control approval for our plans to link The Theatre and Hancock House at first floor level. Roger gave a detailed presentation on what the proposal was planned to achieve, including:

- a safer method of egress from the balcony;
- a permanent new home for the lighting and sound desks;
- slight expansion of the front room in Hancock House;
- an enlarged bar store.

The Trust agreed to place orders for architects to draw up the plans, a complete survey of our buildings in Pyle Street and the services of a Structural Engineer to underwrite the architect's proposals. The survey has been completed using clever laser technology and the architects are about to start

work. As far as possible all communications will be online or by email. In addition we hope to get some electrical work done during the shutdown including the provision of hot water in the foyer toilets. We will carry on getting things done as long as going in and employing people to go in is deemed legal.

Representatives of The Trust and The Players met with a solicitor recently who has proposed that The Trust could be reconstituted as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) (with voting members other than its charity trustees). Among other things this removes the requirement for the Trust to be registered at Company's House and legislates for the use of e-mail and web based services for conducting Trust business. We are currently working on formulating the constitution based on a template provided by the Charity Commission. This will involve developing the relationship

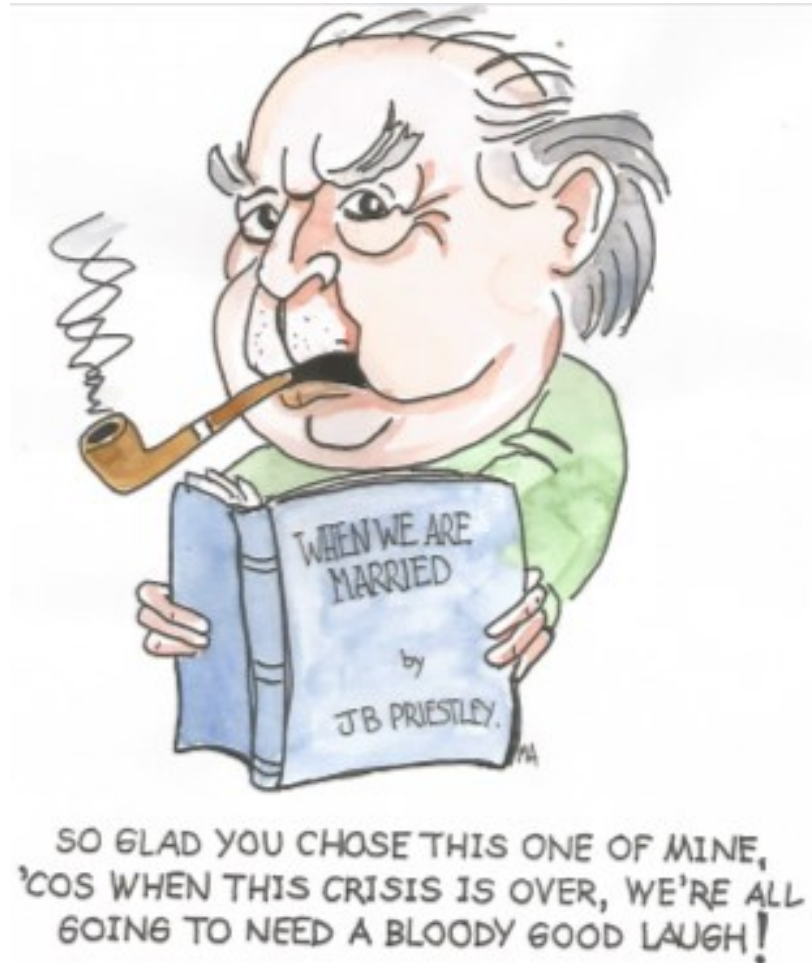
between the Trustees and the active members of the players and more details of this will, hopefully, be published shortly, before a decision is taken to make the proposed changes (or not!). We will still need to recruit trustees not directly involved in running the Theatre.

The new CIO has to publish its objectives in order to be accepted as a charity and this has brought to our attention that our current objectives are simply stated as '... the promotion and encouragement of education in the arts among the public'. On reflection The Trust has focussed in recent years almost exclusively on the maintenance and development of the theatre's buildings and not maintained oversight of the artistic direction of the Apollo. We hope to rectify this with the new organisation.

*Paul Jennings, Chair, Apollo Theatre Trust*

# News from your Committee

For obvious reasons the Committee meeting that would have been held during the run of 'When We Are Married' isn't going to happen, so any reports will be held over to a future issue. The main point for discussion recently has been the 2020-21 season, which as you can imagine is very much in everyone's mind. You will have seen an email about the proposed content of the season and the Directors' meeting, but almost as soon as that had gone out the world changed, so it's all up in the air at the moment. Once things get back to normal we'll review the plans for next season. In the meantime, here's a wonderful cartoon by Michael Arnell.



## YOUR COMMITTEE

**Theatre Director** & Chair of management committee (elected 3-yearly): **Amy Burns** (2019-22) amy@masexodus.co.uk

<b>Arts Manager</b> (elected annually in Nov for season beginning following Sept)	<b>Di Evans</b> (2020-21) diandclem@hotmail.com	<b>2 Members' Representatives</b> (elected annually)	<b>Kate Fysh</b> (2019-20) katefysh@gmail.com
<b>Business Manager</b> (elected biannually)	<b>Ginnie Orrey</b> (2020-22) gginnie@googlemail.com or info@apollo-theatre.org.uk	<b>House Manager</b> (elected biannually)	<b>Steve Reading</b> (2019-21) steverreading104@btinternet.com
<b>Marketing Manager</b> (elected biannually)	<b>Maureen Sullivan</b> (2020-22) msullivan58@me.com	<b>Technical Manager</b> (elected biannually)	<b>Dan Burns</b> (2019-21) dan@masexodus.co.uk
<b>Players' Secretary</b> (elected biannually)	<b>Mike Whitehead</b> (2020-22) michaelwhitehead@yahoo.com	<b>LTG rep</b>	<b>Cynara Crump</b> cynara.crump@virgin.net
<b>Membership Secretary</b> (elected biannually)	<b>Carole Crow</b> (2019-21) carolecrow9@gmail.com	<b>Apollo Trust Buildings Manager (co-opted)</b>	<b>Roger Simpson</b> roger.dodger45@yahoo.co.uk

A  
thought  
from  
Michael  
Whitehead

While I am not usually known for philosophical introspection, the following occurred to me as I lay in bed this morning basking in the sunshine pouring through my window and wondering if I really needed to get up at the ungodly hour of 7.45.

My well-developed imagination (either a blessing or a curse, depending how you look at it) made me think that being isolated from everyone else under the present circumstances was somewhat akin to what people in general were like more than a hundred and fifty years or so ago. It was - if I may describe it as

such—the 'village' society where the inhabitants didn't travel more than a few miles from their home village. For most of their lives, travel was limited by walking unless they were lucky or rich enough to own a horse. I am referring to the local people such as farmers, tradespeople and villagers who did not really have to leave their society. Of course, over the centuries many enterprising people did make astonishing journeys of exploration and discovery on foot or horseback but the majority necessarily stayed within a short distance of their place of birth. It didn't take much more

thinking to envisage a future society where a deadly virus wipes out enough of the population to fling the remainder back into the Dark Ages where day to day survival is a matter of luck. I was reminded of 'The Day of The Triffids', in which John Wyndham wrote that the only safe haven was the Isle of Wight on which to rebuild a society. Let's just hope that the hordes don't think that is so today ...

With that, I jumped out of bed, cursing my imagination and berating myself for thinking such gloomy thoughts on such a lovely day.

'CLOSED  
FOR THE  
DURATION'

by  
Chris Hicks

With so many public institutions closing their doors over the past few weeks, it is the thought of all those empty theatres that really strikes a chord with me. I suppose it's because the performing arts have always been renowned for stoicism in the face of adversity. 'The show', as everyone knows, 'must go on.' The fact that it didn't and couldn't is especially poignant.

There have been very few times when our theatres have been forced to close in this way. Of course, individual theatres have had to shut for a variety of practical reasons, and censorship still rears its ugly head in some benighted corners of the world, but wholesale closures appear to have been exceedingly rare.

Pestilence and War are the two apocalyptic horsemen usually responsible for this crime against civilisation (though religious intolerance has also played its part). Plague closed London's theatres in January 1593 and they didn't reopen until the following spring. On that particular occasion a certain W Shakespeare decided to bolt for the countryside in order to compose sonnets (there's a thought! I suppose it would make a welcome change from daytime television and gardening).

Rather surprisingly, the 'Spanish' flu of 1918 only resulted in sporadic closures. It seems there was no national plan for controlling the spread of disease. This may be because the infection was initially known as the 'three-day fever'. Soldiers suffered a brief period of illness before making a complete recovery. It was only later that the disease mutated in to something more dangerous.

By comparison, war has been less likely to empty our theatres. They were closed at the start of the English Civil War (more about that in a moment) and they briefly closed when war was announced in September 1939. This measure was introduced by the government when early bombing raids were anticipated, but when these didn't materialise, the decision was rapidly reversed.

Most famous of the venues that remained open throughout the war was The Windmill. With its mix of musical cabaret and erotic tableaux it appears to have been exceedingly popular. (The Lord Chamberlain sanctioned the show's nudity, as long as the models didn't move.)

The Blitz resulted in sporadic closures for safety reasons, but many theatres remained in business. Air raids had to

be announced from the stage or signalled by illuminated signs in front of the footlights. In 'The Morning Star' by Emyln Williams, a note in the programme explained that an air raid warning would sound twice during the action of the play but, if there was a genuine raid, this would be indicated using the aforementioned signs.

By far the longest period of closure began in 1642, when King Charles famously fell out with Parliament. The theatres, which had already been banished from the City of London and relegated to the South Bank, were believed to encourage immorality. The Puritans used this state of emergency to close them for good, citing 'lascivious mirth and levity' as reasons (surely, two very acceptable reasons for keeping any self-respecting theatre open).

The ban was not entirely successful, so a further Act of Parliament was passed in February 1648, reinforcing the original edict. Seating could legally be demolished, audiences fined, and actors treated as 'rogues' (!). In total, London's theatres remained closed for 18 years. The ban was finally lifted when the monarchy was restored and Charles II came to the throne, in 1660. Thus, Restoration Comedy was born ... hurrah!.

### From your Membership Secretary

A very jolly group gathered in the bar on Saturday 14 March to eat, drink and make merry, helped along by Steve Taverner who shared his most amusing take on life through his poetry! I am in awe of his talent and his memory - what an entertainer! It was also good to see and chat with some new faces, especially as it turned out to be our 'last fling' for a while. Never fear - there is going to be one big party when we emerge from this dreadful crisis, and in

the meantime rest assured that our lovely Theatre is being checked regularly.

The Committee is very keen to offer its assistance to any member in need of help at this dreadful time, so please do not hesitate to email me if you find yourself in that situation.

I am happy to report we have five new members,

so please shout out a big welcome to Marisol Cambridge, Joe Cody, Stuart Fordsham, Jo Mathews and Donna Dempsey.

I can't wait to see you all around the Theatre again, with rehearsals in full swing and the Saturday morning 'Coffee 'n Chat' once again resumed. For the moment, though ...

STAY SAFE!

Carole Crow, Membership Secretary



*[NB: isn't it odd how frightening the sight of people standing close together already looks? Ed.]*

### 'Twelfth Day; or what you will'

by  
Kate Fysh

Two weeks ago today I was buying sausage rolls for that evening's social at the Apollo—in what now seems like a different world. We were beginning to be aware of the virus and that it would spread, but I don't think any of us really grasped what was to come.

We will all have had much food for thought since then as the unnerving reality of our current situation has registered. We are learning much about ourselves, and others. Other contributors to this issue will be offering wise words or profound reflections, others much-needed humour—our need to communicate and reach out stronger than ever. Like many of you have I have been taking stock of my 'reasons to be cheerful', among which are:

- my immediate family are safe and well;
- I live in a pleasant

home, with a small garden;

- people have offered practical support;
- friends are keeping in touch, keeping my spirits up;
- modern technology allows easy access to my grandchildren;
- the broken limbs over the past couple of years gave practice in being physically confined;
- I am within walking distance of the sea;
- as someone who lives alone, I am used to a solitary existence;
- unread books and the library's online service will provide joy;
- the anticipated pleasure of the return of social contacts.

You will all have your own lists, I'm sure, and I hope you find much to give you pleasure, interest and stimulation. Being part of the Apollo is making this

time easier for me by making me aware I'm not alone.

I started by referring to the last Apollo social; here is something for the next one.

#### A COMPETITION

Entries are sought for appropriately reworded versions of one of both of the following Dylan songs: 'Corrina, Corrina' or 'To Ramone'.

I know that among the membership we have talented poets, wordsmiths and musicians. Rise to the challenge! Entries to be performed at the biggest Apollo bash ever; winners to be decided by popular acclaim.

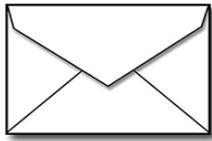
#### Prizes:

1st: 6 toilet rolls

2nd: a bag of pasta

3rd: half a dozen eggs.

Stay well; and I look forward to meeting up again on the other side of all this.



## Your letters

### LETTER FROM A PATRON

We have recently received a lovely letter from one of our patrons, Jennie Linden. Here's what she said:

'Dear Ginnie, Thank you for the latest Apollonius issue, very interesting as always. I must apologise for bring such an absent patron. Unfortunately I broke my ankle 3 years ago which put paid to my driving a car, so my poor husband has to take me everywhere. He is not always free to do this, and so I subsequently find my visits to Newport are few. I am so sorry, as I can see the plays are so successful and excellent and I am planning to arrange e visit. Any of your members live in Bembridge? Or St Helen's? I might steal a lift to see a production—or perhaps to help a theatre workshop, but I do need a lift in, I'm afraid. I send you all support and success for the next and current play, and wish you all well for the coming year too.

Very sincerely,  
*Jennie Linden.'*

Well, there we have it—an interested and committed patron who needs a lift occasionally. Any Bembridgeans able to help—once we're allowed out, of course?

### CALLING eBAY EXPERTS!

As you will all be very aware, a group of members have been sifting the stuff in the Unit and have come across a variety of things which are too good to chuck but not useful enough to keep. We're therefore looking out for a member who has the time and interest to eBay some of the surplus stuff; for example, cinema seats and trunks. This may not be the time, but when things return to normal it would be great to hear from someone who would like to take on the job.

*Paul Jennings*

### 'WHEN WE ARE MARRIED'

As Kate Fysh has remarked elsewhere in this issue, isn't it strange how things have changed in a short time? As I write this letter the cast of 'When We Are Married' would have just been coming to the end of their first dress rehearsal, with the knowledge that by the end of the week they would be in front of an audience. And now they and we are all staying at home, digging the garden, reading our books, taking the occasional obligatory walk—with or without dog—and wondering when we shall again hear Fiona uttering the immortal word 'Club!'. So this letter is just to say to my lovely cast, thank you so much for your

hard work, good temper and unflagging commitment; and I'm looking forward very much to getting our ship back on course when the opportunity once again arises.

*Ginnie Orrey*

### A MESSAGE FROM DAVID VINCE

Hello to all friends at the Apollo. I'd like to thank you for your messages of support and good wishes over the past couple of months and also for the beautiful flowers ... Having been diagnosed with leukaemia just after Christmas, I was unfortunately struck down by a chest infection and sepsis which meant a two-week stay in St Mary's.

Fortunately, I am now recovering well, to the extent that I have had a couple of rounds of chemotherapy. All this time Julie has been my life-saver and carer and remains so during the coronavirus lock-down.

My sympathy goes to Ginnie, who took over as director of 'When We Are Married' when I fell ill, and the cast for the disappointment of the postponement. I hope that I shall be fit to attend a performance with Julie when life returns to normal. Meanwhile, good wishes to everyone and stay safe.

Sincerely,  
*David*

### And in the meantime ...



Slightly different from our normal listing of live streamings to watch at Cineworld, Ventnor Arts Club and others; now the NT and various other companies are vying with each other to put out a programme of transmissions.

Here are a few to whet your appetite. The NT has unveiled a mighty lineup of some of its greatest hits, to be streamed online on Thursdays at 7pm and then available for seven days.

First up on 2 April is the deliriously funny *One Man, Two Guvnors*, Richard Bean's 2011 adaptation of Carlo Goldoni's comedy, with a cast including James Corden and Jemima Rooper. In the following weeks you can see Sally Cookson's adaptation of *Jane Eyre*, Bryony Lavery's *Treasure Island*, and *Twelfth Night* starring Tamsin Greig.

"Wherein is shewed the picture of London, lying sicke of the Plague ..." So runs the

grimly resonant opening of Thomas Dekker's 1603 plague pamphlet, written while the capital's theatres closed their doors. On 1 April, the experimental company *Inulnerable* Nothings host a Zoom livestream reading of what they call a "theatrical curiosity ripe for rediscovery". The reading will feature actors in isolation in the US and the UK. It kicks off at 7pm GMT.

## POETRY PAGE

For some reason, I've been, not exactly inundated, but certainly given the pleasure of reading poems by various people recently, and been surprised, in a good way, at the skills of so many of our members. I therefore decided to devote this page—which could often be described as the 'And finally ... ' page of 'Apollonius'—to showcasing their creations.

First of all, and, mea culpa, long overdue, a piece from our poet-in-residence, **Graham Brown**, written after the production of 'Dad's Army' at Christmas and sadly missed out of the last issue for reasons of space.

*At the Apollo on a December night  
when the stars on the stage are  
shining bright,  
Far away from the footlight's glare,  
In the dressing room a broken chair  
mad-eyed Frazer on the ground.*

*Too many sweets he'd eaten by  
chance.*

*Meanwhile in the so named Floral  
Dance  
Pikey had the wrong hat to doff,  
Hancock's bells had fallen off.  
Sponge's instrument made no  
sound.*

*On another late December night  
Wilson just made it to the Isle of  
Wight  
to answer the phone that didn't al-  
ways ring  
enough to make Captain Mainwaring  
down Joe Walker's Johnny Walker's  
scotch.*

*The Colonel was cut off in his prime  
the night he remembered all his  
lines.*

*Cheeseman reported scandalous  
news.*

*Godfrey never was excused  
as he fell asleep on watch.*

*As the captain fiddled with the hand  
grenade*

*Jonesy out of step on the parade.  
He was saving himself as you do  
For Mrs Fox and Mrs Prosser x 2  
and Mr Hodges could not be found.*

*Women are now the new recruits.  
Frazer and Ironthighs in cahoots.  
Young Ivy speaks but she's not*

*heard yet  
unlike Miss Parish the usherette  
you can hear all over town.*

*The vicar was a-tuning the boy  
scouts  
as the Verger was expressing doubts  
as to where the missing warden was.  
Mrs Pike was oblivious because  
she was tidying Frankie's scarf.*

*Was Captain Mainwaring out of his  
mind  
on his brief encounter of the third  
kind?*

*Mrs Grey has addled his brain  
and if he'd got on board that train  
there'd be no second half.*

*We'd have missed the Godiva Affair  
though none of those beauties end-  
ed up bare.*

*Mr Gordon must have had a tippie  
for he couldn't for dear life say  
'Municipal'  
Thank god he didn't say 'clock golf'  
wrong.*

*The dowdiest waitress ever seen  
stole the show in the café scene  
from Mrs Fox and her men palaver  
and Jonesy in his balaclava.  
We knew it was him all along!*

*The show is over, we have little  
gloom.  
We weren't stupid boys and we were  
not doomed.  
We think it wise to thank Amy &  
Dan,  
The wardrobe props and back stage  
hands.*

*This little ditty I hope you'll like  
and if you don't—DON'T TELL HIM,  
PIKE!*

Now a thought-provoking offering  
from an unexpected source—**Mike  
Crowe** has been nurturing an un-  
suspected poetical streak.

*Mrs Murphy lost her hat,  
Gust of wind, just like that.  
Always loose she had to pin it,  
The trouble was her head was in it.*

*No more smelling pretty Posies  
No more cold or runny noses.  
No more coughs and colds and splut-  
ter  
But where to put that bread and but-  
ter?*

*Gone the art of conversation,  
Like buy a ticket at the station?  
No more eyes in back of head  
To chase the kids back into bed.*

*No more fear when toothache comes  
How can there be without the gums?  
Gone the morning neighbours chat,  
'Cos Mrs Murphy lost her hat.*

[whatever he's on, I'll have some! Ed]

And finally, from our renowned poet  
**Steve Taverner**, one of the wonder-  
ful poems he regaled us with at the  
recent New Members' evening to the  
great hilarity of all present.

*You've heard "The body beautiful";  
whoever coined that phrase  
Had never walked on Sandown beach  
in summer holidays!  
There's lumps and bumps and bulg-  
es, and white whales turning red,  
And bouncy, wobbly shapeless bits,  
we're all so overfed.*

*Where have all the six packs gone,  
firm pecs and pert young bums?  
What happened to Adonis, Aphrodite  
and their chums?  
They all discovered fish and chips  
and cakes and tasty pies,  
Resulting in a doubling or tripling of  
their size.*

*So now along our beaches, it's not a  
pretty sight.  
If it gets worse the extra weight will  
sink the Isle of Wight!*

Dave Talbot recently very kindly gave me a copy of his third slim volume of poems, entitled 'Such is Life: Thinkin' Again'. The poems in this volume struck me as particularly insightful as well as raising a smile, as Dave's pithy views on life, the universe and everything tend to do. This time it was quite difficult to choose one, but I thought I'd quote a short

verse called 'Life is a Learning Curve', which seemed to sum up not only Dave's perpetually cheerful approach to life but also a good way for us all to face what life throws at us.

*Life is a learning curve  
Which some of us daily ob-  
serve.  
We are human after all,  
Lord knows most of us went  
to school.*

*Life is ours to control and  
drive  
And be glad, that we're  
alive.  
Sometimes it can be hard as  
well,  
Many people have problems,  
and dwell.  
When I recovered from the  
dark days, and bile,  
I managed to emerge  
stronger, and wearing a  
smile.*

DAVE'S  
POETRY  
CORNER



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To book tickets or find  
 out more about our  
 productions, go to:

[www.apollo-theatre.org.uk](http://www.apollo-theatre.org.uk)

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 expresses her  
 opinions.  
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 must be signed.

Bringing good theatre to the Isle of Wight for more than 40 years



## The Apollo Players' next productions



**'When We  
 Are  
 Married',  
 JB Priest-  
 ley's  
 hilarious  
 comedy**



**'Liselotte in May': Zsolt Pozgai's  
 bittersweet comedy**

**'A View  
 from the  
 Bridge':  
 Arthur Mil-  
 ler's tragic  
 master-  
 piece**

