



apollonius

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

Forthcoming read-throughs, auditions & other production stuff

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Remember: a read-through is not an audition!

DEADLINE FOR CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE NEXT ISSUE:

Wednesday 1 July

Other diary dates

Virtual coffee morning by	Saturday 23 May
Zoom (see p.7 for more info)	11.00-11.40

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May 2020

In normal times, the photograph on our front page would be one of Paul or Ian's brilliant takes from the current production. In these difficult times, however, that's not going to happen; so our photo is of the 'ghost light' which is currently keeping our theatre alive.

In this issue you will find an update from the Committee and the Trust about what's going on, and various articles which I hope you will find entertaining in these strange times. First of all, however, here is a message from the theatre director, Amy Burns, on life at the Apollo during lockdown.

'On 16 March, following the government's guidelines, we had to make the decision to close the doors of our theatre, something which in its history has never happened before (and which I hope will never happen again). On 17 March a group of us went in and sanitised every touchable area, every dustbin and all the toilets, hoovered the floors and removed all the rubbish, to make sure there are no surprises when we are allowed to go back.

Since then we have been going in, checking everything is secure and nothing is untoward, testing the fire alarms, dosing the urinal, checking the post, changing the show cases and in a very fitting tribute putting up our very own ghost light.

The theatre is sad without the coffee mornings, the rehearsals, the meetings, the youth theatre, play



reading and friendship. A half-finished set fills the stage and half-finished costume rails fill the wardrobe. But there is a sense of wanting and waiting within. I watch the news daily and realise that when this restriction is lifted we will come back, albeit with some restrictions that we will have to adapt to in order to be able to bring back theatre to our audiences, but I know we will be back very soon. Stay safe, everyone.

Amy'

Not much can be added to that, I think. We are all hoping for and looking forward to what just a couple of short months ago filled the horizon, whether because of rehearsals or social events with our friends (I realised that this week will mark two months since the last gathering, on 14 March!). At least we're not in the position of some of the larger professional theatres, already teetering on the brink because their outgoings and overheads include things like employee salaries and other stuff that

we, luckily, don't have; the Old Vic has described their situation as 'seriously perilous'. However, we do still have other liabilities and we can only watch and wait for the time when we can open the doors again. So I'll leave you with a delightful quotation from one of my favourite Guardian columnists, and a few photos from the productions we've been able to put on this year.

'All actors are semi-lunatics. Don't worry. They know and accept, nay, revel in this.'



Editorial: the view from the Editor's chair

Once again, as so often, I have been tickled by something I've read in the Guardian. In this case, it was an article by Britt Ekland, saying that the backstage facilities in UK theatres she performed in during a recent tour were so often cold, draughty and damp that despite being a 'Viking warrior' she succumbed to a chest infection. Well, all I can say is, she's never rehearsed on the Apollo stage in the middle of winter!

Now, before any backstage or other crew leap to the defence of the theatre

heating system and write a 'disgusted of East Cowes' letter, let me say that I absolutely understand and sympathise with the difficulty of heating and/or cooling a space the size of the auditorium to a reasonable standard of comfort. Nevertheless, it's a common sight at rehearsals to see those cast members not on stage huddling against the radiators (those of you who saw the wonderful nature programme about the Emperor Penguins surviving through an Arctic winter by creating a 'huddle' will immediately recognise the

syndrome), and those on stage struggling to demonstrate emotion and/or remember their lines while encumbered with vast layers of jumpers and coats.

Still, the sun has returned now—just in time for no-one to be able to get out in it—and those freezing rehearsals are but a memory. Let's hope that by the time the seasons turn again we once again are able to sit shivering in the auditorium awaiting our opportunity to get on the stage. Strange how priorities change in these peculiar times!

THE '100 CLUB': A REMINDER

As you know, we have had to postpone our three forthcoming productions, 'When We Are Married', 'Liselotte in May' and 'A View from the Bridge', as well as shut the bar and cancel all activities at the theatre, pending more certainty on what the future holds. This disruption must have an effect on our finances, since even without productions going on, the theatre and our other buildings have costs attached to them, and we have to cover those as well as keep maintaining them for when life returns to normal.

For many years we have had a '100 Club'. In summary, you pay £5 per month, and every month your name goes into a draw: there are ten prizes of £50, one of £250 and one of £500. The more people sign up, the more surplus money goes into theatre funds. Given the current uncertain financial situation, fundraising will become an even more important source of income, so now is the ideal opportunity to buy a stake (or more) and stand a chance of winning

prizes. Please, if you can, invest in our theatre's future.

Just either go online to the theatre website and download an application form or ask Cynara Crump, who administers the scheme, to send you one. At present we have less than half the possible number of entrants in the draw, so if we could double it there would be more potential winners and more income for the theatre. The names of recent winners will be published in the next issue. Good luck!

News from the Apollo Theatre Trust



**From Paul
Jennings,
Chair of the Trust**

The development work initiated just before shut down has largely stalled as the surveyor is unwilling to visit the theatre to complete the survey. This prevents the architects proceeding with the plans to join Hancock House to the Theatre. The planned electrical work is also on hold. All this work will be re-started once it is deemed safe (and legal) to do so.

Work is proceeding slowly on re-drafting a possible new constitution to convert the Trust into a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) including the activities of the Players. Working party meetings have been suspended and as yet we haven't resorted to Zoom

for online meetings. The team members are continuing to work from home wading through the legalese of the new document before we submit it to our solicitor for approval.

The unit is looking a lot tidier and less cluttered than it was thanks to Martin Ward and the team. The photo albums that Roger produced are being updated to reflect the current stock and the albums will be available in the theatre once this is complete. It is also hoped that they can be made available via the Theatre's website. We have a problem regarding a large quantity of material for making blinds which was donated some ago and for which we

have failed to find any use. We have contacted local blind manufacturers with no success. Can anyone help?

Normally at this time of year we would be preparing to hold the AGM which as a Trust we are obliged to hold annually. The accounts have been prepared and verified and we will give notice of the AGM when it is deemed safe to hold it. We are allowed a few months' leeway as long as it's no more than 18 months after the previous AGM. As soon as we can we will publish the date and hope to see members there, as it is an ideal opportunity to question the Trust and discuss the future direction of the theatre.

News from your Committee

Predicting the future ... or how to operate a theatre in the age of Coronavirus

As I'm sure the membership can imagine, there has been a lot of e-mails going back and forth between the committee about operating the theatre during Coronavirus.

Back on 16 March, when Boris Johnson suggested that no-one should be attending pubs, clubs, cinemas and theatres where possible (but fell short of a complete ban) it was decided that the Apollo should do the responsible thing and close our doors immediately. This was not a decision we took lightly—with *When We Are Married* just weeks away from performance and *Liselotte in May* starting rehearsals it was a tough call. Ultimately, however, the health and safety of members and audiences is our first concern.

Moving on several weeks (during which we have been going in to check that the Theatre is still standing, hasn't been vandalised, fire alarms are still working and that it's still secure) the lockdown formalised the requirement for places of entertainment to shut completely.

We now as a committee are moving to the eventual re-opening of the Theatre. But, as I'm sure you'll agree, it's pretty difficult to organise when we don't know what the next press briefing will bring. Especially, as I'm writing this piece on Saturday 9 May—the day before the promised lockdown announcement.

Originally, it was a fairly simple affair we had planned. Perhaps underestimating the severity of the pandemic (in our defence, it was early days) we thought we could move each production along one slot, and per-

haps drop one from the following season. Then, worst case was we'd move everything another slot along and all would be well. Well ... this is live theatre and that of course means anything can and will happen. The latest discussions which have been going on have highlighted several potential pitfalls for us to consider. A lot of other venues look to have cancelled anything until Christmas at the earliest. Even if the lockdown is lifted, its effects will be with us for some time. It is the opinion of many that social distancing regulations would be in place for a while longer. This means that we could (at most entertainment industry estimates) only sell between 25% and 33% of our seats to leave enough space.

That's easy—set the box office system to only sell these seats. But what of the bar—you could only have one person serving there under social distancing rules—as with box office. Next, the common areas such as the toilets—we'd need to limit the foyer and bar facilities to 1 person as opposed to their normal capacity to avoid people meeting in close proximity.

These are things that are manageable if we give them enough thought; but before we get to this point there's the rehearsal process to finalise. Can we realistically rehearse with everyone staying 2 metres apart (in old money that's 6' 7")?. We wouldn't be able to ask dressers to assist from closer than two metres, and fittings from two metres away present several additional difficulties.

Social gatherings too would

be difficult—we all know that the bar can get quite snug during busy gatherings—do we limit those to 'one in, one out'?

As you can see from some of the points (and these are only a small subset from our ever-growing list) there's a lot to think about—we can't just throw the doors open again, as much as we'd love to. There is also the elephant in the room I've not yet mentioned—the age of our members. Many are older and fall into the vulnerable categories. As an organisation, we should be protecting our members, so this also forms a large part of our discussions.

Hopefully the membership will understand why we are currently unable to commit to an opening date. What we can commit to however, is that we will re-open the theatre as soon as we consider that it is safe to do so and we are permitted to do so. It might be that we start with limited members only events where we can control the numbers. We can then start to look at lifting restrictions on audience capacity and other issues.

We also want to see WWAM and LIM performed after we open, and once we have more information about an opening date will be talking with the directors, cast members, wardrobe, set builders and all those backstage about how we will go about this.

Until then, I know there are plans afoot to look at taking the membership online for social events; please contact Carole or any member of the committee if you have an idea of something you'd like to see. Stay Safe! **DB**.

YOUR COMMITTEE

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

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

The Performance and the Pandemic

by
Joel
Leverton

I had been asked to provide an article in the previous Apollonius in relation to the upcoming production of 'Liselotte in May', but as I was curled up in my bedroom weeping bitterly over the postponement of my directorial debut, I was in no position to be able to provide the magazine with any suitable material. Now, over a month on, I find myself still in a state of psychological torment—but for completely different reasons. I have just embarked on the two weeks' annual leave that was originally booked to put my efforts into the play, which I now realise I have to put into resisting the temptation to murder my wife whilst in lockdown. I would be lying if I said I wasn't upset that the play was postponed ... in fact, in the moment I was very angry, but not at anyone in particular, just the situation. I had to stop and take stock—the guys who had spent weeks and months on 'When We Are Married' had lost so much more in time and effort—I needed to gather perspective.

So what now? For me, trying to get annual leave from work to do any production is like trying to get blood out of a stone—and when one explains to one's employer why one needs those holidays on those particular days, one is responded to with faces of confusion. We don't know when the theatre is going to kick-start back into action, or how exactly that will take place. However, we do know that there will be a modicum of readjustment and caution—but we as a theatre community can, and will, rise to the challenge when it presents itself and will triumph.

So, prior to this whole virus business, I was in the throes of working on the preliminaries of 'Liselotte in May'. Di Evans had been my second in getting things underway, but sadly her health deteriorated to such a degree that I had to move forward alone. This said, I have had numerous offers from other people to stand in her stead, and Di (as is her way) has given valuable insight through email as to

the direction she would choose to take the show; some of which I have taken on board, and others of which I have completely ignored (as is my way). I planned to write in the previous edition of Apollonius about the auditions and the results of the casting, and would have told you how rehearsals were going and how confident I was that we would have a successful production. And, do you know, for the fact that we had only held two rehearsals before lockdown took place, I was so pleased with how it had gone and genuinely was confident. I shall tell you why in a moment.

It is a lovely thing when people see and run with your vision for something, as it becomes so much easier to be able to move forward with your projects. Before I had even started on rehearsals, my backstage crew had already taken up the mantle with vigour, and I am encouraged that we will have a visually encapsulating piece of theatre.

'Polite' Tom Hilton has agreed to be my stage manager and, unlike previous occasions where he has held this position, I have made him a central figure in the development of the show. This is not to decry the way previous directors have utilised this role, but following the LTG conference 2019 in Hastings, I learned that the Stage Manager can often hold more sway than the director. And now I see why. Tom has grabbed his position and flung his weight about with aplomb. From arranging his backstage team, reading through my notes, supporting in the audition and casting process, and even (on one or two occasions) putting me in my place, he has truly been my right-hand man and I know that when I relinquish responsibility to him during play week (whenever that may be), he will be on top of anything that may crop up.

Casting, of course, has been difficult. Auditions were held on Sunday 23 February where twelve people auditioned for the eight parts available. While it is a great position to be in (having

more rather than less) it makes it more challenging to choose the right people for each role. The process was dragged out somewhat by the fact that others had shown an interest in the play, but could not attend, as well as second and third auditions that were taking place nearly a fortnight after the original audition. Added to this, there were certain characters which caught the imagination of some actors more than others and as a result it has been a struggle to juggle the talent that we have at the Apollo with the demands of the play and the vision that I hold (or perhaps 'held' would be more appropriate). However, I have been really pleased, and I have had good and constructive feedback from the actors who came and supported the auditions. I am deeply and genuinely thankful that people made the effort to come along and be a part of it, to make fools of themselves and to share their views on the play.

As far as casting the show goes, Polite Tom and I believe that we have done it justice:

Liselotte Maner: Susan Simpson
Karl: Karl Whitmore
Ludwig: Martin Ward
Henrik: Robbie Gwinnett
Heinrich: Simon Lynch
Roland: David Stradling
Nikolaus: Peter Gale
Tuxedo: Youth Theatre members Caleb and Kade

I mentioned earlier that the rehearsals had shown good promise – these were drawn from:

The auditions: for much of this I have to tip my hat to the incredible talents of several individuals within the membership of the Apollo theatre who have developed in their own minds how the characters should be and in so doing challenged my own views. I had the opportunity to try out different ways, styles, methods, personalities and approaches to each scene and character within each audition to the extent that each audition became a mini-rehearsal, as much for my benefit as everyone else's. (*contd. overleaf*)

It was a much valued period and I am very thankful to everyone involved – even those who did not get a part.

The first rehearsal between Susan and Martin

Between 19:00 and 21:45, we went through this twenty-minute scene once vocally and halfway through with movements. The mathematics doesn't quite equate, because we spent so much of this time discussing characters; who they were; their childhood; how they will react to each other; what they will be wearing; where they will be looking throughout the scene, etc etc. This would normally be quite dull discussion, yet time flew and I think we were all really happy on leaving Hancock House that night that we had a far better idea of what we expected from the scene.

The first rehearsal between Susan and Robbie

Akin to the night before, we three (who had all worked together on Jeeves and Wooster last year) spent over two hours on this scene which lasts only a quarter of an hour or so. And we realised that all three of us had differing ideas as to how Robbie's character should be. It was fascinating watching how we all thought it should be and drawing from each influence to create this character. We also learned that we none of us know what it means to have 'questioning breasts' and therefore cut the line out. Suffice to say, the scene was blocked by the end of this rehearsal. I was really happy with how it had gone.

So yes, the virus has stopped us in our tracks, but it would appear that the cast and crew of 'Liselotte in

May' remain loyal to the production, which I am truly thankful for.

To you, the membership; this is an unusual play without a doubt, but I would encourage you not to let that put you off. It is a play filled with humour, pathos and passion. The cast have all said how they love their parts and I believe this will show in their performances. The backstage crew, as ever, have shown an enthusiasm that we perhaps take for granted within the Apollo, but who will be instrumental in the staging of this piece. And the committee have been really supportive during the lockdown, ensuring that the play will go ahead – at this point, it's just a question of when. But as ever, the show will go on.

Joel Leverton

The Performance and the Pandemic

(contd.)

WHAT'S IN A SUPERSTITION?

In these days of lock-down and social distancing, we may have found that we have plenty of time to muse on different subjects. Theatre superstitions was one such topic and so I did a little research to find out what was behind some of these traditional myths and legends.

WHISTLING BACKSTAGE

In days of yore when mechanised sets had not even been imagined, ropes were used to operate rigging and these were often manipulated by sailors as these were people who "knew the ropes." On board a ship instructions were habitually given by distinct whistles, so to avoid confusion only the backstage crew were allowed to whistle. Anyone else doing so was likely to cause confusion.

BREAK A LEG

There are several theories about this one. The one that seems to be favourite is

the fact that the performance area of the stage is marked by a line called the leg line, signifying where the legs are situated. Anyone crossing (or breaking) this line is therefore entering the stage area and this would be reserved for those performing on stage.

MIRRORS

Of course, there are many plays that have sets that include a mirror. Traditionally, however, mirrors are considered bad luck. This is because they reflect stage lighting and can disrupt the look of the show.

THE GHOST LIGHT

A single light on a pole is left on stage after the show has ended and is the only source of light in the theatre after everyone has gone home. Like break a leg, there are several theories about why this is done. However, in reference to its name, some believe that the light is there to appease ghostly inhabitants who used to perform at the theatre and who can therefore

continue to perform once they have the theatre to themselves.

COSTUME COLOUR

There is a superstition that green or blue costumes are unlucky. Whilst this may seem bizarre there is a history of this. Quicklime was used in the first spotlights, hence the term "limelight", and gave off a greenish glow. Therefore if an actor wore green on stage they may not easily be visible. Blue dye was considered to be the most expensive to use and so the rumour that blue was unlucky quickly spread among actors.

There are many more theatre superstitions and it is a fascinating subject. Perhaps discerning Apollonius readers have come across others that are not commonly known.

Keep smiling and stay safe.

THEATRICAL SUPERSTITIONS

by
Martin Ward



News from the Youth Theatre: *Peter Pan Returns*

by
Mish
Whitmore,
Youth Theatre
Co-ordinator

As the lights went off and the theatre doors closed, another light came on—well, two actually: the first being the lightbulb of imagination where ideas germinate and grow, and the second being on my laptop.

Far from being abandoned and forgotten, there are thirty-five children whose lives have been turned upside down and the world has just become a very scary place. I felt it my duty to somehow ensure that these children have the support of their friends at this time, even if they can't leave the house. Added to that we had just started to rehearse 'Peter Pan Returns', and I didn't want our members falling by the wayside, so I felt it was important to somehow stay connected, give some stability and carry on with the fun.

My knowledge of technology has been challenged as we found alternative ways to meet and rehearse. However, we have risen to the challenge and are currently using the online platform Zoom to have weekly rehearsals for 'Peter Pan Returns'. This time is giving us the opportunity to explore depth of character and we are using the techniques of practitioners such as Stanislavski to achieve this. The children are busy writing, drawing and creating videos (one girl turned her garden into Neverland) to express their own ideas of not only who their characters are but even Neverland itself. Saturday mornings are filled with joy as we sit by the laptop and one by one see the familiar faces join the lesson. They talk in depth about the work they have created over the week, sharing pictures and ideas, linking thoughts from one character to another. Ideas are being shared as they are developing into

young creatives.

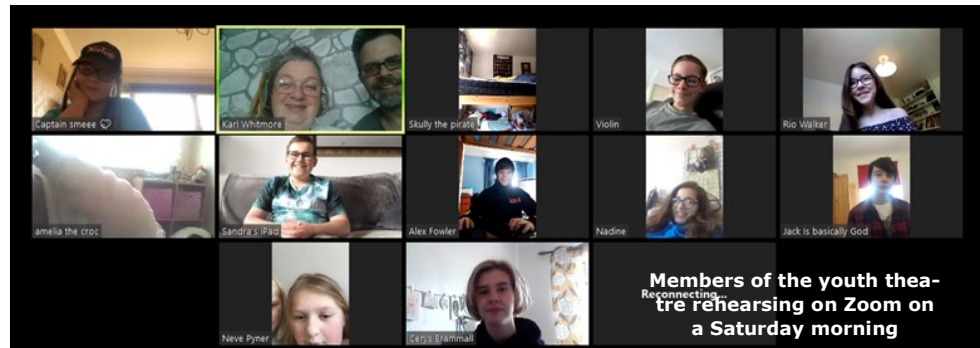
My worry of course is how long it will take before this lockdown ends, how far into the summer this will go: is it at all possible that this could be ready by the end of July when we were scheduled to perform? My thoughts are that unfortunately it will not be, they simply won't have had enough time on stage and we won't be ready with all the technical 'stuff' required for flying children, exploding bombs, giant shipwrecks and crocodiles like Chinese dragons. So the little lightbulb started working again, and the light came on with the idea that maybe this should be next year's production instead, and maybe in the meantime I should apply for some funding to help the children learn even more skills that could create an even more exciting and elaborate show. So (yes I know I should never start a sentence with so) in a time when no plans can really be made, and all ideas float around a little like a boat on the sea, though right now no little boats are floating around, this is my plan. But, I hear you cry, what about a show for this year; after all we want the children to have the experience of live performances—it's by far the best way to learn. Then on went the lightbulb again.

Saturday mornings are spent not just learning to act, but also devising and directing. At our last lesson I had challenged two of our members to work together with the rest of the youth theatre to create 'Antigone—the musical'. Can we really take a Greek classical play and turn it into a show-stopper? Well, my thoughts are: 'why not?' And so these same two children are now working online with the other members and are putting together this show. At this point I

have no idea what it will be as it is in its very early infancy; however, my belief is that with guidance these children can indeed create a show that is worthy of a paying audience and though simple in set and costume (I hear the sighs of relief from Liz and Paul already) it will be an incredibly imaginative and well-crafted piece of theatre.

In recent weeks my husband Karl had started to come along to the youth theatre to help with 'Peter Pan Returns'; he did write it, after all, and though as director I am often heard to say 'death of the author' this is after all my interpretation, and the children being able to ask him questions about the intentions of their characters is of course very useful. It has to be said that the youth theatre has become the highlight of our week and it is an important part of our family life with all three of our children being involved in one way or another. During this lockdown Karl and I have celebrated our silver wedding anniversary. Of course it wasn't the evening we had planned, but the children of the youth theatre created videos especially for us to entertain us. We had songs, we had Romeo and Juliet, a hilarious magazine programme, cards, dancing, and some people just saying how much theatre and Apollo means to them.

This has been an incredible few weeks, a time that we will all remember for the rest of our lives. I hope the members of the youth theatre remember it as a time when they got the chance to be creative, to learn so much about theatre, and that they got to share it with their friends. The future is definitely looking bright, thanks to the many lightbulbs.



At least the weather has been kind to us over the last weeks and I am wondering what everyone's been up to. I know there has been an amazing amount of gardening going on: there's nothing quite like messing about in the soil to raise the spirits! I've seen pictures of beautifully manicured gardens and heard stories of vegetable patches thriving – self-sufficiency is back!! For those of us who aren't lucky enough to have outside space, spring cleaning started early and I think the charity shops are going to be overwhelmed with donations when they open again! Thousands of pieces of jigsaw have been pored over – isn't it addictive? I bought one of the Red Arrows to amuse the man of the house, it seems he wasn't but I reckon I am now qualified to build a Hawk! Then there is the great escape into literature, and what a comfort a good book is; I am presently hooked on Helen Hollick's The Pendragon's Banner Trilogy, let me know what you're enjoying. A much valued member of the Apollo set-building crew,

Paul Hewson, normally runs weekly art classes in Porchfield and Brading. Since lockdown he has been filming weekly demonstrations for us all to have a go at and share. A great idea which has kept us in touch and motivated.

Many of you have had to celebrate your birthdays at home alone. David Barnard was determined to mark the occasion with style and treated himself to a small bottle of Champagne (he assures me it was small!), a miniature pot of jam, scones and clotted cream and sat in his garden in the sunshine and wished himself a very happy birthday! Sunday 10 May would have marked the 30th anniversary of the Mountbatten Hospice's 8-Mile Flat Walk; David is usually a participant and, not to be stopped by the quarantine, has walked the measured mile from Carisbrooke to Newport and back 4 times during the last week!

John Abraham has been keeping us amused on Facebook with his daily diary but suffered a very nasty accident at the end of April while out riding his bike,

which resulted in his having hip surgery. I am pleased to report he is now home, doing well and still keeping up with his posts.

Members have been enjoying getting together with family and friends via Zoom, a bit like Skype for those, like me, who had not heard of it until six weeks ago. I have reports of virtual dinner parties—what a good idea, no fighting about who will drive home!—quizzes, tutorials, arts and crafts with the grandchildren, book clubs ... If nothing else, this dreadful time has made us all think outside the box.

Which leads me on to an idea I have had to host a 'Saturday Morning Coffee 'n Chat' via Zoom until we can all meet again in person. It will start on 23 May at 11am for 40 minutes, so grab a coffee and join the meeting! My ID number is 802 953 5855 and everyone is welcome. If you are not familiar with the programme it is easy to download, it has its own camera and audio which you can choose to turn on. Give it a go!

Carole Crow, Membership Secretary

Well, what do you think?

In an excellent article elsewhere in this issue, Dan Burns gives an insight into the factors the Committee has to consider as it contemplates reopening the Apollo. Though I write this after the PM's much heralded broadcast of 10 May, it is no clearer as to when this will be, but in reality it is likely to be later rather than sooner.

As your members' representative, I need your input into this issue. It is my role to act as a conduit for your ideas, views and concerns.

We are in uncharted waters—an unprecedented situation. The Apollo committee needs to draw on the collective wisdom, knowledge and experience of the whole membership. The discussion needs to be informed by the range of opinion, and take into account the differing needs of various groups reflected in your numbers. It is crucial that decisions are not based on what may be unfounded assumptions about what the members do or do not think, want, feel etc. The Apollo is no more than the sum of its membership. The finest

plans, no matter how polished and perfect, cannot become reality without the informed support and active participation of members, be they in front of, behind or on the stage.

Please contact me, by whatever means suits you best – phone 01983 717618, text 07708 703677, email kate-fysh@gmail.com or even by post (12 Ronsons Close, Cowes PO31 7EZ) – and I will respond and report back. I look forward to hearing from you; and in the meantime, stay safe and be kind to yourselves.

Kate Fysh, members' rep

Updated access details

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 a drop-down box will appear 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; if you can't find it check with the Membership Secretary;
- once you've done that, you should get straight into the members' area. If not, there's a problem and you need to let Ginnie Orrey (webmistress) know, but try these steps first.



Your letters

VIRTUAL PLAY-READING

I'd like to pass on an idea – it may not appeal, but here goes. If you have Skype it might be possible to get an online discussion group going—or, my personal preference (I haven't got Skype) a play-reading session. There's a website 'Project Gutenberg' which provides all sorts of out-of-copyright material; I'm sure you could find suitable scripts—for instance there are quite a few of Shaw's one-acters. Or you may have access to your own scripts, or be able to pick up something online from the library. As I say, just a thought—with my limited facilities I couldn't join in, however much I wanted to.....

See you before too long, I hope!

Eileen Connolly

FESTIVALS

I thought I would write to let other members know about my husband, Paul Stevens', achievements during recent music festivals.

Just before all this madness started the annual music festivals were taking place. This year Paul entered the Isle of Wight Music Festival as he has done for over ten years and for only the second time entered the Portsmouth Music Festival.

Portsmouth came first and he entered four classes and won three of the classes and came second in the other. At the Isle of Wight Festival some two weeks later he entered four classes and won all four. He sang music by Gilbert and Sullivan, Richard Walters, Alexander L'Estrange (words by Lord Byron), Samuel Barber, Franz Schubert, Betty Roe and two arrangements of folk songs. He achieved the highest mark in the adult section for both festivals and received comments such as 'Sincere work and very moving', 'The melancholy and imagery was caught', 'good attention to musical detail', 'Wonderful soaring final phrase with excellent breath control', 'Most accomplished delivery' and 'good vocal technique on display'.



I was overjoyed at getting to polish the silver once again this year!

Gwen Stevens



A few weeks into lockdown my kind shopping friends managed to find a bunch

of uncooked beetroot for us. Having cooked it, the smaller pieces made a welcome addition to salad lunches and sandwiches until there was only one rather large beetroot left. By a happy chance I had been looking at a recipe in a bread-makers' recipe book for beetroot bread and decided to try it. Despite the fact that it wanted white bread flour and I had only 1 cup of spelt and had to use whole-meal for the other 2 cups full, it turned out beautifully, well risen, a lovely rosy colour on the crust and moist inside. I had been thinking of getting rid of my bread-maker, having not touched it for some time but it's really come into its own lately, and I'm really enjoying trying out things with it; of course, it does rather depend on having the right ingredients handy at the time.

Cynara Crump

Rambling Rose



Strange times. It goes without saying that during this lockdown we are all in need of some cultural uplift so it was exciting to be treated to the recordings of the live NT screenings. As I write, two have been screened, at completely opposite ends of the literary spectrum.

The first, 'One Man Two Guv'nors', was a reworking in true farcical style with a larger-than-life talent at the helm. Fast paced and energetic with the whole cast fully engaged, and the audience brought in by breaching the fourth wall—very

music hall in every way from scenery to costume and it certainly entertained!

The second was a 're-imagined' telling of Jane Eyre. A highly innovative staging, so much so that when it started I thought I was still watching a trailer from a rehearsal. Basic wooden runway and gazebo, an abundance of iron ladders and steps, no frills, no colour. Very Bronte. Another incredibly energetic performance, cast members crazily careering up and down ladders (some vertical), over the 'garage' roof, up the runway, back down

again. All very frenetic but I felt that it didn't add all that much to the story, and I was constantly worried whether the actors with long petticoats were going to fall. Of course they didn't, professionals don't as they have had months of practice, but I did find it distracting. Probably just me. And I loved the clever use of the band, hidden on stage but never intrusive, and adding a soundtrack to give the action frisson and depth. That's something to think about when we resume normal service – but not too many ladders, please!

Rose Kelsey

And finally ... The poetry section in the last issue of this organ seems to have struck a chord with some of you, so I thought I'd reprise it with some other contributions from members.

This poem, sent to me by **Evelyn and Francis Hicks**, while not strictly theatrical in content, tickled me—it will definitely speak to quite a few of us!

*I'm normally a social girl
I love to meet my mates
But lately with the virus
here
We can't go out the gates.
You see, we are the 'oldies'
now
We need to stay inside
If they haven't seen us for a
while
They'll think we've upped
and died.
They'll never know the
things we did
Before we got this old
There wasn't any Facebook
So not everything was told.
We may seem sweet old
ladies
Who would never be un-
couth
But we grew up in the 60s -
If you only knew the truth!
There was sex and drugs
and rock 'n roll
The pill and miniskirts
We smoked, we drank, we
partied
And were quite outrageous
flirts.
Then we settled down, got
married
And turned into someone's
mum,
Somebody's wife, then dear
old granny
Who on earth did we be-
come?*

*We didn't mind the change
of pace
Because our lives were full
But to bury us before we're
dead
Is like a red rag to a bull!*

*So here you find me stuck
inside
For 4 weeks, maybe more
I finally found myself again
Then I had to close the
door!*

*It didn't really bother me
I'd while away the hour
I'd bake for all the family
But I've got no bloody flour!
Now Netflix is just wonderful
I like a gutsy thriller
I'm swooning over Idris
Or some random sexy killer.*

*At least I've got a stash of
booze
For when I'm being idle
There's wine and whis-
key, even gin
If I'm feeling suicidal!
So let's all drink to lockdown
To recovery and health
And hope this bloody virus
Doesn't decimate our
wealth.*

*We'll all get through the
crisis
And be back to join our ma-
tes
Just hoping I'm not far too
wide
To fit through the flaming
gates!*

Once again **Mike Crowe** has a few words to add:

How long before we hear
*"A cup and saucer for a La-
dy of leisure,
or a mug for a worker?" It
will be my pleasure.
"Two mugs from one tea-
bag?" It's plain to see
Keep your shares in coffee,
not in tea.*

*And the coffee must be de-
caff, nothing else will do
And how many granules?
Five hundred and two
When the birds get togeth-
er, it seems to me
One has the class, the other
the 'e'.*

*With a visit each week from
the Hon Earl Grey
It adds even more class we
could quite rightly say.
To many more people who
frequent the 'bar'
'Normal business' cannot be
far.*

*With the sound of 'All clear'
and blackouts removed
"Back to normal" will soon
be approved.
So stand by all members,
and 'We'll meet again'
Once the virus has gone
down the drain.*

Once again I turn to Dave Talbot's third volume of poems about life, the universe and everything; and once again I find that as usual Dave has put his finger on a fundamental truth. This time the poem I've chosen is called 'Life is a Learning Curve', and it seemed to me to have something to say about the current unpleasantness.

*'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 dark days and bile,
I managed to emerge stronger, and wearing a smile.'

And as a mantra for these difficult times, I felt this couldn't be improved on!

DAVE'S POETRY CORNER



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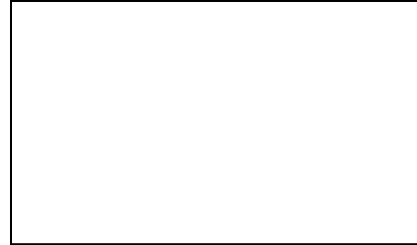
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