



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:**

Whenever the muse strikes you!

Other diary dates (more info on the website)

Virtual coffee mornings (see page 5 for details)	Every Saturday, 11.00-11.30
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# apollonius

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

Issue no. 280

September 2020

## 'TELL TALES'

At last—news of an Apollo production! More information from the director, Chris Hicks.

'Without being able to stage plays in the usual way, many theatre companies have had to explore a variety of alternatives. So, as the dust began to settle at the Apollo, our members quickly produced poetry, prose and the occasional quiz, to be enjoyed by the privileged few with access to Zoom (some of us are still stranded in the latter part of the 20th century!). So far, so good.

The next problem has been finding ways to involve the wider membership and gain access to that most precious of resources, an audience. Thanks to Carole Crow and Mike Whitehead, we've been able to experiment with audio theatre for the first time.

'Tell Tales' is the latest production from 'Apollo Broadcasting Inc', due to be recorded on the 23rd of this month. Five short monologues with a twist in the tale (none longer than 10 minutes).

So thank you to everyone who turned up at the 'Tell Tales' auditions. It was heartening to see so many people back at the Apollo, although we all had to behave ourselves in accordance with the latest Covid guidelines (thanks to Carole Crow and Kate Fysh for making sure we stuck to the rules!). Despite the restrictions I found it an enjoyable evening and hope that others felt the same. It is always interesting to hear how different individuals tackle the same piece of text. A lot of people read exceedingly

well, making it very difficult for me to choose a cast.

On reflection, I realised that the best performances frequently came from those actors who chose to ignore the punctuation. In order to produce a comprehensible narrative, any writer must punctuate the text, but this does not necessarily make for natural speech patterns. When we talk, we often pause midsentence (searching for the right word, hesitating to speak the truth, lapses in concentration ...). Perhaps that's why some writers will actually use the words 'beat' or 'pause' in their text, rather than simply using the relevant punctuation mark.

One way or another, I could have cast these monologues a number of different ways. In the end I had to make some decisions, so here's information about the five pieces and the casting:

'Digging up the Past' with Martin Ward as a site manager who struggles to cope when things go wrong on a major new development.



In 'Taking Care' Carol Crowe plays a paranoid woman slowly recovering after a serious illness.



'Celebrity' has Eileen Connolly as a spirited Grandma



who attracts international attention after an incident at the local post office.

'The Duchess of Argyll', with Fiona Gwinnett, is the story of a woman with a flamboyant alter ego and rather expensive tastes.



And finally, 'Closing Time', read by Michael Arnell, is the story of a man who loses his way while walking home from the pub one night.



All five 'tales' will be available on the Apollo website in the very near future.

With so much talent on tap, what are we going to do next? This wretched bug isn't going to go away, so we need to think of alternative ways of getting theatre back into our lives and involving more people ...

...any thoughts?  
*Chris Hicks*

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

### News from the Apollo Theatre Trust



You know, I'm getting rather tired of ranting about the current impossible position theatre—or indeed the arts as a whole—in this country finds itself in. Grouse shooting, anyone? I mean, for goodness' sake—if you want to go out carousing in the streets till the small hours then go on back to your friends' houses for more carousing that's fine; if you want to go on a coach trip from an infected area in the north of England to the Isle of Wight in close proximity with about fifty other potentially infected people, not to mention rubbing shoulders with scores more

The Unit is now in a state where it could be used for rehearsals when required. It also provides a space where theatre activities can take place in isolation to prevent mingling. We are currently investigating using it a meeting place for the Youth Group who can, under current rules meet in larger numbers than controlled by the 'Rule of 6' (at least this is true at the time of writing!). There are however still things stored at the unit which we need to think carefully about keeping but enough space has been created to provide an acting area roughly equivalent to the Apollo stage.

The surveyors have been working in the theatre over the last few days and have committed to supplying a set of drawings that the architects can start work on by Monday 19 Oct. The architects have a draughtsman standing by ready to receive them.

The electrician has completed the current phase of work, including improved working lights, emergency lighting and power sockets on stage for set building and stage lighting (see Roger Simpson's report on page 6

people on the ferry (some of whom have come over for Covid tests, for goodness' sake) no problem; if you want to go and spend hours panting and sweating in the gym with lots of equally sweaty panting people, be our guest; but go and see a play, in a big, airy theatre, many feet away from anyone in another seat and even more feet away from the actors, who aren't singing, shouting or breathing on you? Not a chance. The problem, to my mind, is that this 'government' has no idea what real life looks like, nor what the effect of being shut out of the arts for

for more on this). There is now touch-free hot water in the foyer toilets. The next phase in the improvement of the theatre electrics is our responsibility after which we will get the professionals back to hopefully improve the power controls in the box in the foyer making it easier for those using the theatre to activate the lighting they need.

The plan to merge the Trust and Players into a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) was given approval to proceed to the next stage by the Trust AGM and will be further discussed at the next meeting of the Players Committee. Meanwhile the working party will finalise the constitution and develop the structure of the operational management team to run the theatre. The CIO will still be a charity subject to the rules of the Charity Commission but no longer a company responsible to Companies House. As a charity it has to declare and be held responsible for its charitable objectives.

Currently these objectives are proposed to be:

*'To inform, educate and entertain the public in matters connected with the arts,*

months at a time is on anyone with even a modicum of sensibility. At least Sir Nicholas Serota, chair of Arts Council England, welcoming the support given to major venues such as the Bristol Old Vic, the Theatre by the Lake in Keswick and the Young Vic, said 'Theatres, museums, galleries, dance companies and music venues bring joy to people and life to our cities, towns and villages.' You said it, Sir Nicholas—now go and convince your philistine masters!

O dear—I did promise not to rant ... but sometimes nothing else will do!

*and in particular the performing arts, by any appropriate means including the provision and maintenance of facilities for educational and charitable purposes. Such facilities include but are not restricted to the Grade II\* listed building known as the Apollo Theatre in Pyle Street, Newport, Isle of Wight, and other properties; and the CIO recognises and accepts its responsibility to maintain and develop the buildings so far as is reasonably practicable.'*

Some of the perceived benefits of the merger include:

- to improve the management of the theatre by providing one body to manage all day to day aspects and avoid delays in decision-making;
- to provide oversight in order to improve long term strategy and artistic direction in compliance with our charitable objectives.

Once the Constitution of the CIO has been drafted the merger will be subject of a EGM of the Players and it is hoped that as many members as possible will attend.

**Paul Jennings, Chair,  
Apollo Theatre Trust**

## News from your Committee

Notes from the virtual Committee meeting on 12 October

Well, the Players committee meetings continue to be held, albeit via the sometimes temperamental medium of Zoom. I venture to say, though, that actually it makes for much more organized meetings, as we have to put our hand up to speak—none of the usual interrupting or talking over each other that normally happens in meetings the world over!

Instead of formal reports from each committee member, various items were discussed that had become important over recent weeks, and this is a summary of the things we talked about.

Financially, the Players are still fairly OK on a day-to-day basis. The Trust managed to access some local government funding, and what with that and the money still to come from the bar we can carry on—for now.

Artistic matters are of obvious importance. The licences for the three plays at the end of last season have been sorted out: 'When We Are Married' to be held over to next year (pending a review of the possibility of staging it),

the permission for 'Liselotte in May' was given to us for free by the author anyway, and 'A View from the Bridge' has been re-funded. The plans for 'When We Are Married' are to be discussed at the end of November, when we should know a bit more about what will be permitted by then. If possible, the dates for the three plays left in the 20-21 season will be 2-10 April 2021, 21-29 May and 10-18 July—though there are a lot of 'ifs' and 'buts' to get through first!

We revisited the issues discussed at the last Committee meeting and agreed that for the time being they are the way forward.

Approval was given for a Christmas show, to be directed by Amy and Dan Burns in liaison with Chris Hicks; the detail is yet to be agreed. More information on how members can get involved will be on its way very soon.

It was also agreed to recommence our popular Stagecraft Workshops run by the wonderful Michael Arnell, designed for all abilities and a great confidence booster for the newer performer—more information to follow! A Club Night for members was also dis-

cussed; many complications relating to the rules on social distancing remain to be sorted out for any future shows but we are committed to bringing the theatre back to life.

We were delighted to hear that the Youth Theatre is still hanging on in there, though the plans for them to work in the Unit have been shelved because the rules on social distancing make the space unusable. They will be back in the theatre on Saturdays from 24 October and going forward they will work round whatever production is going on at the time.

Governance: the Committee gave approval in principle for the merger of the Trust and the Players into one Charitable Incorporated Organisation (see Paul Jennings' report on page 2). The detail is yet to be finalised but a working party is on the case and will report back to you, the membership, as things progress.

### 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> (2019-21) 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) steveread104@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

## Rambling Rose



When the dear Editor of this illustrious rag asked me to contribute a little rambling, my first thought was that I didn't have anything to say! I know, hard to believe from someone who is never verbally challenged, but to be honest I haven't seen anything worth commenting on in the theatrical sense.

And then I started to ponder on the people rather than the content of performance and my thoughts wandered to those dear colleagues who have passed away in the course of my membership. Many very talented and supportive friends, all coming together to unify under the play's umbrella. Sometimes it felt like a new little family unit for those brief few weeks of rehearsal and performance, intimacies shared, no holds barred and sometimes peo-

ple baring all, dressing-room etiquette not withstanding. Honestly the sights I've seen is nobody's business. However, I digress. My main point is that actors by their very nature are eccentric and egotistical in general. My daughter, when asked by me whether I should get tickets for her children to see a play, shouted out to them 'do you want to see Nanny showing off again?'. I was told as a schoolgirl that acting was indeed 'showing off', but I don't hold that view myself. I believe it is just another form of artistic expression, and can enrich and educate our lives. It takes some considerable talent to blend oneself into a new cast without being the "sore thumb". We all know of cast colleagues who have not been the easiest of bed-

fellows, but give amazing talented performances and so their tantrums are tolerated behind scenes.

And so my mind goes back to the lovely people who are no longer with us, they taught us much, left their legacies at the theatre, our memories of them will hold strong in the wonderful photo archive. It is so important to treasure our members whilst they are still with us, love them or not, everyone has a unique place and a shared love of performance. Some with huge egos and a sense of entitlement, others shy and retiring or reluctant to communicate, but all are welcome under our Apollo banner.

*Rose Kelsey*

## NEWS FROM THE UNIT

It's been a strange and difficult year.

In 2019, the task was begun of sorting the unit. Throughout the latter half of that year members of the Apollo continued the process of restoring the facility to its intended use. It was hoped that we could forge ahead in 2020, and by now be announcing the completion of the operation.

Sadly, Covid-19 called a halt to our efforts and so for a large part of this year we have been forced to stay away. However, in recent weeks activities have been resumed. We have once again sifted through the myriad chairs, tables, units and other set adornments. We have got used to hearing the familiar cries of: 'Didn't we use this in that play we did in 1990?' or whatever year the discovered item was associated with. It has become a real

trip down memory lane for some of the team. An accompaniment to this nostalgia was another phrase which went something like: 'Anyone know why we are keeping this?'

From its former appearance as the product of several house clearances, the unit is now almost at the stage where it can once more be used for the purpose for which it was intended. This is thanks to the hard work of a number of Apollo members who have given up their time to the cause of sorting, identifying and deciding upon what stayed and what didn't. Recently Paul Jennings and his team dealt with the set-related items that had been stored against the walls of the unit. These have now been relocated, revealing the marked-out acting area that matches the dimensions of the theatre stage. It is hoped

that, once normality returns, the unit can once again be used for rehearsals.

The trick, as I have mentioned before, is to keep the unit tidy and maintain it as a rehearsal space and storage facility. There is still work to do; although we are nearing the end of the process of identifying what is there, we need to progress this task to properly catalogue what remains, so that future directors can more easily choose relevant items for their shows.

My thanks, as always, go to everyone who has contributed to this task. To coin a phrase, it will be a good job done.

*Martin Ward*

Last time I wrote I was happily announcing the restarting of the Coffee 'n Chat— and what an opening it was! It took place on the stage with lots of you popping in making it a very joyful occasion; just to be able to interact with friends (at a distance, of course) made life seem suddenly 'normal'.



Once the plumbing had been sorted in the bar, we returned to our rightful spot and were jogging along very nicely until further restrictions have forced us to close once again. I have had to revert to a half-hour Saturday Zoom meeting at 11am, this time as a 'drop in' just to keep our lines of communication open.

For desktop computers the Zoom meeting ID [884 3828 2357](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88438282357?pwd=KzVQMG8yUUdDd2w0Wj) Password [Apollo](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88438282357?pwd=KzVQMG8yUUdDd2w0Wj)

If you have a smartphone or laptop just click on this link (only for digital copies)

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88438282357?pwd=KzVQMG8yUUdDd2w0Wj>

#### [FoUk53cTYvZz09](#)

My original plan back in July was to have a Zoom social evening, to include the reading of Chris Hicks' radio play, but with the opening of the theatre (albeit restricted) and Michael Whitehead's expertise, we were able to record 'George' on the stage, I could almost hear the theatre creaking into life and feel its relief at hosting a performance once again! You'll



find access to this excellent play on the website.

What to do next? Once again Chris Hicks has come to the rescue with five cracking monologues, one written by Inga Holden and four by himself and this time we were able to hold proper auditions on the stage. They were very well attended; the theatre came alive with talent and each role could have been filled many times over. My first thought was to have

them performed live before an audience, something to have up our sleeve for when we can open our doors to the public, but fate was against me so they are to be recorded in October and will be available on the website in due course (see page 1).

With such enthusiasm for performing audio entertainment the hunt is on for the next project; any suggestions will be very welcome. I know there is a wealth of writing talent out there!

I have received an interesting idea from Evelyn Hicks for social gatherings when they are allowed. She has suggested we hold 'Open Stage' nights (similar to 'Open Mic') and invite members to book a short slot to perform their own work or a favourite piece. Please give it some thought if you would like to participate; I think it will be great fun and something to look forward to whether you play an active part or just sit back and enjoy the entertainment.

You will be hearing from me!! **Carole Crow, Membership Secretary**

#### **EVIE WATTS**

Because so many members couldn't attend the funeral of Evie Watts, here's a short report. Although Evie was evidently a favourite Aunt and Great-Aunt to an extensive West Country family, her nephew Trevor felt it wise to allow only six of them to attend, bearing in mind her enormous Island "family". Therefore, although Holy Cross at Binstead is a little mediaeval church, it still felt pitifully empty with only thirty of us scattered around the nave to say our final farewell.

Evie was a woman of faith as well as someone who led her life *her* way and had, of course, pre-arranged her funeral service in detail many years in advance, including readings and three hymns. Sadly, we couldn't sing them, but happily the choir had pre-recorded her choices. Apart from Evie's lay-reader friend who conducted the service, only three others were invited to contribute memories: her nephew Trevor, an ex-Sandown school colleague and myself. Although each was different in its focus – family stories, education, theatre – what emerged was the very clear image of a fiercely independent, intelligent woman with an enormous capacity for fun, friendship, kindness and finding the good in anything or anyone.

**Michael Arnell**

#### **Updated access details to 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 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

### FROM YOUR MEMBERS' REP

Mea culpa! Elsewhere in this edition you will find the notes from the most recent committee meeting. At the previous meeting in July, one of the many topics discussed was what to do about this year's AGM. After the discussion, I said I would write something for Apollonius; however, due to old age and decrepitude it completely slipped my mind. Please forgive me.

In the current circumstances it is obviously not possible to hold a physical AGM in November—even less likely now than it seemed in July. A virtual meeting via Zoom was considered, but the practicalities meant it would not be possible, and of course many of our members are unable or unwilling to use the technology and would therefore be disenfranchised. In the light of this the decision was made to forego the AGM this year and to extend the terms of the elected committee members until the next AGM, some time in 2021. This, of course, rides roughshod over our constitution,

and although the point was made that we are not legally obliged to follow this, I did point out that members paid their subscriptions under the impression that we operated under the known rules.

While this effective disenfranchisement of you all gives me concern—I am always wary of deviations from known rules as it can set precedents and be the beginning of a very slippery slope—I did accept that we are living in exceptional times and I could see no realistic alternative, so I agreed to the proposal.

This is not a matter on which I was able to canvass you, nor on which I had had any input from any members. I trust you feel that a your members' representative I reflected what most, if not all, of you would have wanted.

Apologies, again, for my tardiness; and looking forward to the time when we can meet again.

*Kate Fysh*

PS: do I get a brownie point for not using the word 'unprecedented'?

### FROM AN ASPIRING EXTRA

Seeing Carole's notice for 'extras' applications, how I would love to be a film extra. I wonder if they would accept someone of my type; i.e. old (decrepit); walks with difficulty (bad knees), prone to dribble (depends on the food offered). Hard of hearing (needs written instructions or being shouted at). Gets tired easily (requires rest period every hour). Unusual body shape (years of intemperate living). Bad-tempered (nobody understands me, especially my wife). Poor eyesight (keep losing my specs). Memory loss (see previous re specs). Saggy face (see previous re living). Drops and spills things (they make utensils so small and awkward nowadays). Mumbles (poor dentistry). I suppose there might be something as perhaps a background sitting on a park bench (but not for too long if the seat is hard) or body being carried off?

*Louis Lawrence*

Following requests from members to improve our electrics, the Apollo Trust approved the expenditure of over £7000 on Phase Two of our planned electrical work.

### THE UNIT

A movement-activated light has been fitted which will automatically switch on when the unit is entered. We have fitted a sweep fan in the roof area which can be used to cool in the summer or to re-circulate heated air in the winter. All circuits have received a safety check.

We have also fitted a new over-sink water heater and a hand-wash heater over the toilet wash basin.

### THE THEATRE

Numerous items have been attended to, including:

- new over-stage emergency lighting;
- hot water in the front of house toilet;
- new distribution boxes;
- new auditorium sockets, on stage are 4 double sockets for the technicians' use and 4 double

sockets with safety cut-outs for the set builders' use;

- various isolating switches and outlets for future projects;
- a socket has been fitted under the post box on the forecourt to provide power for our next barbecue (an isolating switch is fitted in the foyer).

*Roger Simpson,*  
*buildings manager*

'Works department' update:  
the electrics

Poetry Corner continues, with another irresistible contribution from our poet-in-residence, Steve Taverner. Steve says:

'Those of you who read the County Press will have seen that one of our sea eagles recently took a trip to Scotland, returning by a route which provides an irresistible poetic opportunity.

### **THE FLIGHT OF G 324**

Fed up with the Isle of Wight,  
The mighty eagle took to flight.  
North to Scotland's glens she flew  
To take in the amazing view.  
Via Barnard Castle she returned,  
For, listening to the news

she'd learned,  
For such a journey it is wise  
To check up on your eagle eyes.

I'm going to suggest that eagle G324 should be re-named Dominique ...'

*Steve Taverner*

## POETRY CORNER

*Fortuitously, Louis' letter on p.7 coincided with some of our members becoming extras. Kathryn Ward has very kindly shared her experiences on set with us.*

With so many calls recently for actors to be extras on the island I thought I'd give some guidance on the basics of this role. This is based on my own experience and on tales from the 'holding area'.

Wear comfortable shoes! This might seem obvious but it's amazing how the most comfortable shoes you possess suddenly become unbearable after being on your feet for several hours. Blisters appear like magic and limping is not allowed on set. If possible take slippers.

Even if you know that you are being used only in indoor scenes wear at least three layers—you can always take some off. And if you know you will have outdoor scenes wear thermal underwear and use industrial strength hair-spray. There's nothing worse than being told to trip lightly across an outside

area while your hair is being blown by a gale force winds across your eyes and wiping out your vision.

Make friends with the costume department—they have blankets.

Do not eat beans for breakfast. There is little worse than expelling excess wind during the filming of a quiet scene and incurring the director's wrath. Shamed for all to see and hear!

Whenever you can, use the loo. You need to train your bladder, etc, to perform on demand. The director will not wait for you.

Expect to be bored to tears. You will be held in a separate room, away from the real 'actors' for hours, almost like an embarrassing uncle at a posh wedding, then at a single call be expected to sprint into position. Once you are in position and primed to go expect to wait again when the director decides to reshoot another scene first. Running shoes are useful which is why if possible most extras wear trainers if they can. The call to action can come at any time, including

half-way through a coffee break, a tricky crossword or even lunch. Then you will be ignored again for several hours. To counteract this boredom I suggest taking a good-sized book: something like War and Peace or Lord of the Rings should last you.

Do not expect to see yourself on screen. Your scenes are likely to be cut and even if they are kept your appearance will be fleeting or at such a distance that even your nearest and dearest will not recognise you. T

Technically you are 'supporting artistes', which sounds wonderful. To the crew you are background. So no exaggerated gestures, outlandish clothes, dramatic actions or piratical limping, à la Ministry of Silly Walks [or Michael Green's immortal photograph, 'the man on the left has read this book'. Ed].

Most of all, enjoy yourself! You will be fed, meet interesting people and be paid. What's not to like?

*Kathryn Ward*

## ADVICE ON BEING AN EXTRA

I'm fortunate enough to have copies of all four of Dave Talbot's books of poems—or his 'thoughts on life', as they're subtitled. Whenever I'm looking through them to find a suitable poem for this corner, I never fail to find something pithy and wise, expressed in a very few

words but demonstrating Dave's ability to summarise many of life's challenges and find a way through them. Here's one such, entitled 'Out of the Box':

*There's a lot to be said for getting out of the box.  
Focus on what's good in life,  
and forget the knocks.*

*It's often a good thing to be hurled  
Into the hurly burly of the weird and wonderful world.  
As nobody knows what's round the corner, in any way.  
'Just enjoy the day and live for now', they say  
Life's much more fun, with a smile.*

## DAVE'S POETRY CORNER



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## The Apollo Players' next production



Yes, you saw that right—a Christmas tree! It's been proposed that the Apollo put on a Christmas show this year, and the Committee has approved it, provided we can work within the rules (whatever they are at the time ... ). It feels like a piece of good news: it seems a long way away, but it will be upon us before we know it! Amy and Dan Burns have stepped up to the mark to direct it; what it will consist of is still very much in the planning stage, but it's likely to follow the format of the 'old' Christmas shows which many of you may remember. More news as we have it!