



apollo

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:

Whenever the Muse strikes!

Other diary dates (more info on the website)

Zoom coffee mornings	Every Saturday, 10.00-12.00
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Issue no. 283

March 2021

I'm writing this piece (perhaps fittingly) a year to the day that the committee made the decision to close the doors of the Apollo following the advice of the UK Government. At the time, we perhaps naively thought that it would only be for a few weeks and that the season as it was would just shift along bumping everything back by a slot or two. With the benefit of 2020 hindsight (no pun intended!) how wrong we were! Just a week later and we were placed into a seemingly endless cycle of lockdowns, with very limited guidance on how theatres and entertainment venues in general could operate. Throughout the year a small team of people has been going in to check on the theatre as part of our insurance and security arrangements. Sometimes these visits have found issues which have required dealing with (such as a leak coming through the roof of the scenic store down through the mezzanine to the side passage); Roger and I spent a day on the roof clearing the gutters, and a second (much wetter!) day making urgent improvements to the gutters to prevent it happening again. We have taken the opportunity to undertake some electrical work and improvements ready for re-opening. Unfortunately this highlighted a potential rodent problem (although suspected to be a one off by our pest control experts!) which has now been dealt with. I am pleased however to report that Hillbans were very surprised at the general lack of mice and rats in the building. Work has been going on in other places too, while we were permitted in the building under the rule of 6; Martin and his team have been

busy sorting the Unit, and Paul and the work-night team have been working towards making the theatre 'COVID secure' as well as undertaking a range of maintenance jobs. Carole, together with Mike Whitehead and several of our members have been recording short pieces to be published online to keep our audiences entertained, and has also managed to keep the Apollo coffee mornings going (albeit in a slightly different format) online. Mish has been working hard to ensure that the Youth Theatre have been able to meet online and (when permitted) in the Theatre – there are additional guidelines in place we've had to follow to make this happen. The Readings, Amy and I have managed to host a couple of online quizzes for members to join in with too. My thanks to all of these people, along with all those I haven't named for their hard work in keeping the Apollo spirit alive, as well as the Apollo premises safe and secure (and still standing for us to return to!). Fortunately, the government's schemes of grants to hospitality venues have been able to assist us; thanks to Martin for ensuring that these were applied for as they became available, so together with Ginnie's keen eye on the Theatre's running costs we're able to say we're still here in 2021.

All of the committee have been working hard behind the scenes—we're still having regular meetings on Zoom where plans are being made to return to the Apollo proper. Evelyn, our interim arts manager, has put together a season ready for our reopening—more details of this elsewhere in this issue. Fol-

lowing the latest guidance, we are aiming for a date in June. This will be after the final restrictions should be lifted; and we can return to some form of normality. Some people will be asking why we aren't opening in May when Theatres can return under 50% occupancy. There are a couple of reasons for this, the two main ones being that we want a bit of a 'buffer zone' in case the dates change (not that there has been any form of precedent set for this in the past 12 months...), but perhaps more importantly that the rule of 6 will not allow indoor meetings (and therefore rehearsals) until May, and therefore anything going on stage won't have been rehearsed indoors and there will be no time to prepare the theatre for opening. By way of celebration, we're planning our first al fresco coffee morning for a weekend in May to celebrate that 30 people can get together outdoors. If the dates don't change, it's pencilled in for 22 May—further details to follow. Hopefully the above all makes sense – we've certainly had an interesting year interpreting all the new rules and guidance (much of which didn't make sense!). Thank you to all of our members for your patience and support over this time, and to the committee for steering the Theatre.

All that remains is to say the theatre will need one very big spring clean (there are quite a few cobwebs in places and a bit of dusting to do!). Please contact Amy, Steve Reading or me if you can contribute some help when we're allowed back.

Dan Burns, Technical Manager

Editorial: the view from the Editor's chair

O my word—two more of our beloved 'stalwarts' have rung down the final curtain (tributes to and memories of Isabel Favell and Louis Lawrence can be found later in this issue). What a sad way to start this new year—one full of plans for our theatre and hopes for their fruition. We can only hope that they are looking down on our efforts and sending positive energies as we peer out like small creatures who have been sheltering from the storm and the marauding beasts outside, tentatively wondering whether we can venture into the world of audiences and productions again.

This time is going to be all about how to recover from these unique and difficult circumstances. In an interview, Samuel West came up with a really interesting idea for 'rebooting' regional theatre—and for 'regional' read 'amateur', since everyone seems to have forgotten about us—which has I think a particular resonance for us on the Island. He said, 'If

we could get theatre-filling actors—proper big-name TV and film stars—to do a play at the regional theatre closest to where they grew up ... and to say, I'll take the company wage [aka £0 in our case] and not need the play to transfer. And those who haven't done a play for a while aren't going to have more fun doing anything than going back into a rehearsal room and getting back to their roots.' Now, how about that for a thought? Jeremy (Irons), Jeremy (Northam), where are you? Celia (Imrie), Sheila (Hancock), Stephen (Wight), where are you all? What a coup that would be for the Apollo!

Mind you, there are lessons for all of us as we do that tentatively back into the world thing. In a recent interview about theatres coming back to life, the actor Cush Jumbo said something that really speaks to all of us as we try to work out how to do this new thing. She said, '*I think people's bullshit detectors*

are going to be slightly stronger. We've had a danger in the past of straying into the territory of: 'Ah, that's good enough, put it on.' Now, if people are going to go, and pay money they can afford less than before, they don't want to feel slightly disappointed and ripped off. People will want us to really tell stories and not cut any corners. That's a good challenge for the business.'

It's wonderful that in this issue there are the first casting calls for over a year; and not only that, but one of them is for a new play which will have its world premiere on our stage. This makes Cush's remarks even more relevant.

Incidentally, at the end of the interview Cush said (those of a nervous disposition should look away now) that when theatre are able to reopen 'There will be orgasms in the aisles!' Goodness! That will probably be a first for the Apollo ...

News from the Apollo Theatre Trust



from
Paul Jennings,
Trust Chair

The merger between the Trust and the Players moves on. A final version of the constitution is being circulated to the Players' Committee and the Trust Council of Management for approval before submitting it to the Charity Commission. Subject to the Commission's approval this document establishes a new entity with the working title Apollo Theatre (Isle of Wight) Trust as a 'Charitable Incorporated Organisation with voting members other than its charity trustees' (CIO). This is a relatively new type of organisation established by the Commission to reflect the organisation of many charitable trusts. It also removes the requirement for us to be registered at Companies House and to produce annual reports as a limited company. The constitution sets out the responsibilities of the Trustees and the membership in rela-

tion to our charitable objectives. The day-to-day running of the theatre will be covered by an operational handbook incorporating the new structure agreed by the Player's committee.

A recent electrical inspection at the theatre revealed rodent damage to cables under the floor in the foyer. Unfortunately this affected some of the new wiring installed during the most recent phase of work which will need to be repaired as soon as possible. To try to avoid future problems we have taken out a one-year contract with a pest control company who will carry out bi-monthly inspections and set bait as necessary. The replacement cables will be suitably protected.

Work is well underway at the architects to prepare plans for the joining together of the theatre with Hancock House at first floor

level and we look forward to discussing the plans in detail with the architects in the next few weeks. The plans once agreed will be submitted for building control after which we can start looking for possible contractors to complete the work.

We continue to receive grants from the Isle of Wight Council while we cannot trade. Following applications submitted by Martin Ward, the total received so far is nearing £20k with more to follow and while this money is granted to the Trust it is being made available to the Players as necessary to cover ongoing costs.

Once we get a firm date to return to work in the theatre we will need to have a general clean up and complete the sound insulation work at the back of the auditorium. Please remember that the back row of seats is still unstable.

News from your Committee

Notes from the Committee meeting: 8 March 2021

At the last Committee meeting on 8 March it was great to have some really interesting and engaging discussion on artistic matters—for the first time for far too long.

ZOOMING ALONG

a summary of where we are now, from the Arts Manager, Evelyn Hicks

As we have now been given an indication of when we might expect to resume more normal operations, it is possible to make some provisional plans. It is envisaged that the first play of the season, commencing early September, will be *WITCHCRAFT*, written by Heather Cooper especially for the Apollo. A Casting Call has already gone into circulation and Mike Whitehead has witches flying about in all directions—spoil for choice by the sound of it! He will have cast by the end of the month. If all restrictions are lifted by 21 June, this play can be rehearsed under normal conditions.

Work on the *SUTRO* plays has commenced using Zoom. *THE BRACELET* was first off the starting blocks. It flowed well and was well characterized by the cast of eight, despite technical problems. Where there is a large number of participants, we have found that it is better to do individual recordings. We hope to open this up for auditions at a later stage.

We now await the release of *A MARRIAGE HAS BEEN ARRANGED* at 7.30 on Friday 19 March, featuring *Abbi* and *Joel Leverton*. As *Abbi* is about to give birth, perhaps this particular marriage is quite timely! *Abbi* assures us that her evening dress fits her top half and what more do you need on Zoom apart from the addition of a fan?

This Sunday, we had the first reading of *Maureen's monologues THE AFFAIR OF THE GOLD CORONET* and these are being prepared for YouTube. They work extremely well in a block of six as there is continuity of storyline, yet each individual can rehearse separately. It is an extremely clever piece of writing with good contrasting characters and content that gives each actor an opportunity to shine.

On Friday 12 March we had a directors' meeting for the *Mortimer* plays, '*A London Affair*'; they are all set to go, a Casting Call is in circulation and they await your response. *WITCHCRAFT* will not commence stage rehearsal until these plays have come down. Rehearsal will commence on Zoom and after 17 May it will be possible to use the theatre under the 'rule of six'.

This will be followed shortly in the 30 July - 7 August slot by a *REVUE*, again a public performance. This will feature the *SUTRO* plays and *CAUDLE CONVERSA-*

TIONS, adapted into duologues by *Chris Hicks*, where *Job Caudle* is actually given a voice. *Chris* has managed to retain the characteristics of *Jerrold's* work whilst putting his own mark on the extracts. '*A London Affair*' will be rehearsed with the respective directors, and the *REVUE* will be prepared by individuals at home, coming together on stage over a three week period under the direction of *Julie Stonestreet*. If, however, *THE BRACELET* is included, there will be a notification for auditions.

Sets as such will not be constructed for these shows. This gives us more stage time and the facility to do two summer productions.

So it's full steam ahead unless we are stopped in our tracks by Covid restrictions!

Many thanks to all those members who have come forward and agreed to be willing guinea pigs as we take tentative steps back to what may be a new normality.

In other news: our finances have taken quite a battering over the past year but the Trust have been able to see their way to supporting the Players with a very welcome injection of cash. We are very grateful for this; and providing the plans for productions come to fruition we should be able to keep our heads above water.

YOUR COMMITTEE

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

Interim Arts Manager (elected annually in Nov for season beginning following Sept)	Evelyn Hicks (2020-21 & 21-22) nevelyn.hicks@gmail.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 cynaracrump@gmail.com
Membership Secretary (elected biannually)	Carole Crow (2019-21) carolecrow9@gmail.com	Apollo Trust Buildings Manager (co-opted)	Roger Simpson roger.dodger45@yahoo.co.uk

Casting call: 'Witchcraft'

Well, it's been a long time since that title has appeared in these pages! And I'm delighted to say that the call is for the first staged production of the 2021-22 season, a brand-new play called 'Witchcraft'. This will be the world premiere of the play, which is by an Island writer, Heather Cooper.

Heather is a published author of brilliant historical fiction who has decided to try her hand at writing for the stage (check out her novel 'Stealing Roses' on Amazon—Coves dwellers will recognise Northwood House and the Union pub, as well as other identifiable locations!).

So—to 'Witchcraft', and it's probably about right to describe it as 'Rosenkrantz & Guildenstern meets Macbeth'. We meet the three weird sisters on the blasted heath and watch their meeting with Macbeth and Banquo; however, thereafter we see the action through the eyes of the witches, hear their commentary and watch their attempts to influence things for the better, which doesn't always go according to plan. The sisters have their own characters and 'voices'; the play's funny and clever and runs for about an hour. It's a play of contrasts, between the Shakespearean and the private lives, and between the characters.

Heather has been a devoted supporter of ours for years; she's hoping to be involved as things go forward and is very excited at the prospect of her play being put on at the Apollo. Mike Whitehead will be directing the play, so here is his casting call.

WITCHCRAFT AUDITIONS

I know this is a trifle early to be casting but we have decided that we need to have some material ready to start a full season, hopefully at some time in the Autumn, if all goes well. We should be able to rehearse on the stage by 7 July after the Mortimer short plays have been performed. Fingers crossed!

This play has been written especially for the Apollo and has never been performed before so it is suitable for our getting back to full production, hopefully with an unrestricted audience.

As there are no long speeches in the play and individual auditioning will be difficult to say the least, it will have to be a group effort with everyone wishing to audition being present on Zoom at the same time, unless there is an overwhelming response (!), in which case it will have to be done in groups. If you have difficulty with Zoom or computer tech-

nology in general, let me know and I will try and arrange something.

AUDITION PIECES

ALL: from the beginning of the play until the bottom of Page 7.

WITCHES: two characterisations. Firstly, as Shakespearean witches with high pitched cackling etc.; secondly, as normal conversation with differing regional accents, fairly broad.

MORAG should have a Scottish accent, or at least a suggestion of, if possible.

MACBETH: an 'actor laddie' accent and bearing. Fairly well over the top!

BANQUO: additionally, from his entrance on page 18 until the bottom of page 20.

Two characterisations. Scottish accent if possible but not too broad; Shakespearean acting for the original bits and conversational with the witches.

I am intending to audition by the end of this month if possible, so please let me know by March 25th if you wish to be considered and on which days before Easter you would be available for a Zoom audition.

Mike Whitehead

07772926352

email: michaelwhitehead@yahoo.com

A thought to fill a space

Some fabulous thoughts on theatre in the current circumstances from Simon Callow, in an interview with him and Derek Jacobi in the Guardian. They both have such stellar CVs that it's very difficult to link their experience with ours; but on the other hand, as Simon says,

'Connecting with each other, being together, responding to each other's physical presence—that is what acting is.' It's that which makes the actor's experience universal; that, and what Simon describes as the 'appetite for acting', which I think we can all identify with. On the other

hand, we're less likely to get a crit in a national newspaper describing our stomach as 'a warning to us all'!

Hey ho—onwards and upwards, and here's to our next productions!

Yes, you read that right—another casting call! It's like buses—we don't get anything even remotely resembling casting for getting on for a year, and suddenly we get two at once! So make the most of it, dear members, and register your interest with the relevant director at your earliest convenience, as they say—but at the latest by 26 March.

This call is for a set of three short plays by John Mortimer, 'Lunch Hour', 'Knightsbridge' and 'Marble Arch', all set in London and with a common theme of sexual entanglement. John Mortimer, the Dickens of our day, maintained a thriving law practice alongside his writing career and was equally successful in both. He helped to pass the 1968 Theatres Act which removed the Lord Chamberlain's power of censorship. Law was at his father's behest and writing was his passion. He admitted to being a 'champagne socialist' and had a reputation as the 'defender of the indefensible'. Very much in touch with the common man, he lifts his characters off the page.

The plays will be cast after WITCHCRAFT. The run will be over before rehearsals for WITCHCRAFT begin. Dates may change if the law does, along with the length of the run.

Rehearsals will commence on Zoom and transfer to the theatre from 19 May (groups of six). It is anticipated that the run will commence on 25 June by which time all restrictions on social contact are due to be lifted.

All directors have already purchased their own copies and cast will do their own wardrobe. Scripts can be purchased second-hand from Amazon Smile and providing one goes for the 'good' category, they are usually in OK condition.

LUNCH HOUR and KNIGHTSBRIDGE available as single copies (French's); LUNCH HOUR in John Mortimer Collected Plays Vol 1;

KNIGHTSBRIDGE and MARBLE ARCH available in John Mortimer Collected Plays Vol 2 and also in 'The Wrong Side of the Park'.

LUNCH HOUR

The setting is a seedy hotel in King's Cross where a couple, having an affair, are continuously interrupted. In the interests of discretion, the man fabricates a story which backfires. Simmering tension and sexual conflict are played out as enchantment fades.

MAN: a married company executive, sullen and unhappy at times. With a reputation for being polite and discreet, he overplays his hand in attempts at covering his tracks.

GIRL: a recently graduated Art School designer, lost and uncertain in her field, is flattered by the attentions of an older man.

MANAGERESS: eager to engage in conversation, is insensitive to the situation and overstays her welcome.

Director: David Ballard
david@albany-ballard.co.uk

KNIGHTSBRIDGE

Misunderstanding and confusion arise when the mother of a young lady about to be engaged posts a number of dubious advertisements which call into question her profession.

MURIEL STOKES: described as 'dressed as a Tory woman at a Brighton conference'. In her daughter's opinion, she is awfully boring, puritanical and censorious. She is, nevertheless, a successful business woman.

FRANCESCA: short-sighted, but very pretty. Lonely at times, and uncertain of herself, she cowers apologetically behind her hair and big sweater. Her upper class voice qualifies her for the hospitality room at Television Centre.

HENRY: an intelligent, successful TV presenter, specialising in laying bare the human heart. He is in his forties with greying hair, but

wears young clothes; matching flowery shirt and tie is his trademark. He sees Francesca as a decorative, though expensive addition to his public image.

MAN: old, furtive, depraved, seedy, in mackintosh.

Director: Carole Crow
carolecrow9@gmail.com

MARBLE ARCH

Laura Logan, one time toast of the Rank Organization and star of forgotten British movies, has been installed in the same apartment block as her married lover. They spend a night together once a week. Attempts to evade the scandal of his death in the bathroom of her flat lead to complications. He is a well known public figure and the affair must be concealed with lies and bribes.

LAURA red haired and ageing in flowing black negligee, holds on to the flamboyant and theatrical. She still cherishes the champagne lifestyle as her glory fades. Spirited and waspish, she desperately tries to engineer the situation to save face all round.

JANITOR McNEE Scottish accent and sharp business nature. He plays whatever game is in his best interests.

JOURNALIST: Australian. She has been 'bumming' her way round the world and is intent on getting a scoop for her New Zealand Service. Determined to get her way, she presents as a threat to the operation.

MAX: a man of large stature, Life Peer and owner of two film studios, 33 cinemas and Birmingham Weekend Television—a tycoon of considerable note, yet kind and considerate. He collects odd things such as bits of string, rubber bands. Taking Laura out to dinner was not a possibility so instead, she was given the price of the meals, the sum of which was stored in a box under her bed.

Director: Glenys Lloyd Williams
gglenys@hotmail.com

Casting call:

A LONDON AFFAIR: 3 plays by John Mortimer

Our first public performance!



MEMORY LANE

a last piece from

LOUIS LAWRENCE

As you will have seen elsewhere in this issue, our dear Louis Lawrence recently and suddenly took his last bow. He will be much missed by all of us. As it happens, however, you may recall that in recent issues Louis submitted various entertaining pieces of reminiscence. When he sent me the last one he also sent a second, which I promised to hold over and publish in the next issue. So here, in memory of Louis, is his last piece: 'Memory Lane'.

'In the 1970s I was working for Argos and at the time they used various celebrities to open new shops. Possibly because of my membership of an amateur drama group or even my Royal connections (later!), I was given the task of escorting various celebrities to do the honours. We would exit the back of the shop and walk the street to attract attention and arrive at the shop front to cut the tape with a few words from the celeb. But it didn't always work out as planned!

I walked the High Road at Wood Green with Richard Baker, then appearing nightly on the BBC TV news at nearby Alexandra Palace. Nobody recognised him and when he stopped a lady and said 'Hello, I'm

Richard Baker' she just looked startled and scurried away. In Leeds it was Don Arrol who was MC for Sunday Night at the Palladium. We toured the city but when we finally came back to the shop there was no crowd. On that day Leeds were in the Rugby league final at Wembley so anyone who was not at the match was glued to their television. With Barry John the Wales Rugby player in Cardiff there was a long line outside the shop but nobody would gather round to hear him as he cut the tape, saying 'Oh no, we don't want to lose our place in the queue!' On our walk at Barnstaple, Angela Rippon insisted on stopping to buy some fish. In Maidstone Roy Castle was waylaid by some girls in a hairdressers and they wouldn't let him go till he played 'the Saints' on his trumpet; at Coventry I almost lost Dicky Davis to a local snooker hall (they stopped us as we passed and tried to get him to play a game with them). At Bristol, Stuart Hall was long overdue till he arrived blue-lighted by a police car. He had been delayed on the M4 and had called for police assistance to get him to the shop. At another opening when I walked round with Michael Aspell

there was a huge crowd waiting. Even though I asked people to let us past with Michael in tow, nobody believed me and we could not get through, so we had to retrace our steps to the back of the store. At Nottingham we had stretched a paper screen across the entrance and a local disc jockey was supposed to burst through, but when he hit the paper he bounced off!

Ah yes, the Royal connection. I was a voluntary worker at a youth club when the Duke of Edinburgh visited and we had a room kitted out as a film studio. He came in at the point where I had a lad in army uniform with his feet up on a table which made the Duke laugh and made a good picture for the following day's newspapers. I still have the photo, in which I look anxious because one of the boys up on a ladder looked as if he was about to drop a spotlight on the Duke's head. On another occasion, Princess Margaret congratulated me on my set design for a club show while offering her white gloved hand. I know it was between me and Armstrong-Jones. We both had bad legs, but he had the money.'

*Stage fright—
thoughts on
how to deal
with it*

Can there be an actor out there, amateur or professional, who hasn't at some time suffered an attack of stage fright? Some actors are stricken with it every time they go on stage; others breeze on every night without a care in the world and then are suddenly struck down. We all, I'm sure, remember and sympathise with Stephen Fry's notorious disappearance from a West End run be-

cause of stage fright. My personal solution is to remember what I was taught at university: that the condition is entirely physiological and derives from the 'fight/fright/flight' syndrome. The body is under the impression that it is under attack and does things like shutting down the digestive system (hence 'butterflies in the stomach') and going pale (blood supply being diverted to more

vital organs) to facilitate being able to run away or fight the enemy. My favourite solution, however, comes from John Cleese. He said, 'You've got to remind yourself that the audience haven't come in, sat down, folded their arms and said, 'Go on then, entertain me. I don't believe you can.' They've paid money because they want to see you.' In other words, remember they're not hostile!

Sadly Isabel died unexpectedly in February, possibly Covid related, picked up while she was in hospital. We had been friends since the early days when her surname was Flux and both Peter and I have appeared in many of her imaginative productions. Her theatrical career was far-reaching and impressive. She was a long standing member of the Apollo, Arreton Community Theatre and, most importantly, founder of the South Wight Youth Theatre, from which several young people have gone on to make their name as professionals. Oliver Gully and the Makness sisters, Ashleigh and Harley, are three that immediately spring to mind. Isabel even found time to direct and appear in plays herself and won several County Press Awards.

My particularly vivid memory of her was in the Apollo's 1999 production *Top Girls*. (I'm sure



Isabel in 'It's a Lovely Day Tomorrow' with Ian Johnson

Amy will recall the incident). Isabel was playing the rough and ready Dull Gret, peppering her conversation with obscenities and stuffing her face with food. We were all on stage sitting round a table discussing something or another when suddenly, to make her point, Isabel jumped to her feet, leapt on to the table and delivered an impassioned speech. Quite a novelty, even in those far off days. Of course, she was lighter then, since in later years she had an internal

problem which necessitated steroids to manage, thus causing her to gain so much weight that she had to use a stick to get around. She was none-the-less still able to drive but her road skills did not equal those of her theatrical prowess and my heart was in my mouth every time she got behind the wheel.

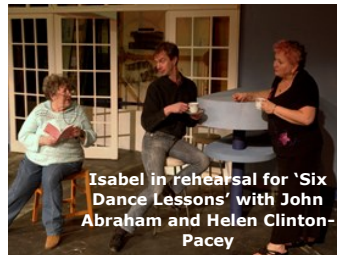
Not only did she have a passion for the theatre, particularly Shakespeare, which she would usually mount outdoors, but she was also an accomplished needle-woman and produced several tapestries and wall mounted 'canvases'. She made her own professional-looking Christmas cards, too. She really did have many surprising talents.

When I last went to see Isabel just before Christmas, she was getting really excited because all the family would be arriving on Boxing Day. It was a tradition. Everyone would bring something towards the meal, somebody would lay the table, someone else cook the turkey or duck and all Isabel had to do was sit and watch. When it was all over, the table cleared, the washing up done and a few games had been played, everyone would then leave to get the ferry back home. Isabel's Day of the Year was over.

On this last occasion when I saw her, it was obvious that she had the beginnings of dementia and it was certainly for this reason her married son Christopher had recently relocated from Oxford to the Island. Isabel's husband Mike, already had dementia and was, and still is, in a care home. He is beyond understanding that his happy, caring wife has died.

Her final production at the Apollo was in 2015 when she directed *Six Dance Lessons in Six*

Weeks. It was, I believe, her last venture into the world of drama, although she still continued to make elaborate plans for future productions, mainly Shakespeare, about whose plays she was extremely knowledgeable.



Isabel in rehearsal for 'Six Dance Lessons' with John Abraham and Helen Clinton-Pacey

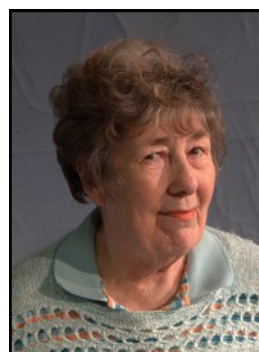
Isabel had a full and happy life, made a wide range of friends and acquaintances and I am sure her memory will stay in the minds of us all for many for years to come.

Cheers to you, Isabel.

Isabel's appearances on the Apollo stage comprised:

The Farndale Avenue Women's Institute's 'A Christmas Carol' (Mercedes)
The Matchmaker (Gertrude)
The Night of the Iguana (Maxine Faulk)
It's a Lovely Day Tomorrow (Mary Langton)
Stepping Out (Rose)
Top Girls (Dull Gret)
Scrooge (Beggar Woman)
The Merry Gentlemen (one of the Cousins)

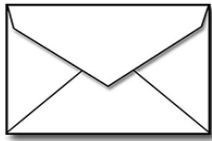
In addition she designed the set for *Charley's Aunt*.



Tribute to Isabel Favell

by

Rita Boffin



Your letters

FAREWELL TO THE BOFF

It's not often that one is present at a funeral where there is a rousing rendition of 'Pee Po Belly Bum Drawers', but that's my abiding memory of dear Peter Boffin's last curtain call, which took place—officiated at by our own Sue Edwards in her new career—both literally and virtually on 10 February. I commend Rita for making the event something special: she and her daughters managed to put together a genuine celebration of a very special man which was both sad and uplifting at the same time. Everyone who speaks of Peter mentions his calmness, his kindness and his sense of fun, as well as the fact that the stage and screen were his life; photography was his other passion, and it was wonderful to see some film of him from times past. A marvellous event, beautifully judged, and culminating (for those physically present) in a glass of champagne and a standing ovation: a fitting farewell to a delightful man. We are all fortunate to have known him.

Ginnie Orrey

MEMORIES OF ISOBEL FAVELL

Isobel's tremendous enthusiasm for anything she took

on was impressive; never more so than with 'The Tamer Tamed' and for theatre in general where she had a really wide knowledge. I had many discussions over the play in her home with Mike in attendance, usually falling asleep and quite obviously in need of Isobel's care and attention. I had the feeling that her health was also in need of care and attention. They were both in poor health and the cancellation of the play badly upset her; however, for a number of years they kept up their yearly trips to Egypt—a month or more long—which they both loved. I am sure that she carried too much pressure from various directions for too long.

Cynara Crump

And a facebook memory from Tobe Spurling-Wright: 'Isobel was a member of so many groups as well as the founder and driving force of South Wight Youth Theatre where she inspired so many young people ... I remember some terrific performances including Rose in 'Gypsy' and Fr Schrider in 'Cabaret'. She was brilliant at getting money for productions and twisting people's arms to play in her show—you could never say no!!! A true one of a kind. Sleep well Isobel.'

MEMORIES OF LOUIS

Whenever I directed a play I would pop in to work nights to ensure that my Left wasn't the stage crew's Right and to be on hand for suggestions from the Stage Manager to realise the play more effectively; e.g. the splendid bar for The Weir.

Louis was usually present, beavering away or monitoring a younger crew member. He had a wide vocabulary and ready wit and enjoyed a good discussion on the State of the Nation. He had led a varied life. Sadly, he suffered antisemitism at school but had not allowed this to embitter his soul.

Louis was an inveterate letter writer to the Press and gave Colin and me tips on getting published: send your e-mail early, keep it brief and topical and, if relevant, refer to personal experience. For example, His Lordship recently had a letter published in the i newspaper about the gratuitous use by some politicians of the Union 'Flag', pointing out that the Union 'Jack' is flown only from the bow of a Royal Navy warship. Colin was a powder monkey in Nelson's ships so he should know. Louis would have liked this precise usage.

Marilyn Ford

'ALLIANCE'

A proposed new play with links to the Apollo



Many of you will remember the event we hosted at the theatre in 2017 to celebrate the gift of Lawrence Holofcener's sculpture, 'Faces of Olivier'. We've been contacted by Graham Pountney (who you may remember helped us out with 'Suddenly at Home' in 2019) who is working with Larry's wife, Julia, who was there on the night, on a new play, 'Alliance'. The play focuses on the relationship between Winston Churchill and FDR

in an arresting, fascinating and dramatic story.

Churchill, desperate to change the disaster that was WWII Britain, leaves London to the Blitz and stays with President Roosevelt in the White House for three weeks over Christmas and New Year 1941/42 as they try to establish a 'special relationship' that could enable the USA to become the UK's prime ally in World War II.

This amusing, sharp, perceptive and eloquent play, written by Giles Cole, is likely to star Simon Callow as Churchill, while Graham is to play Harry Hopkins, one of FDR's diplomats.

The play is planned for opening in 2022, followed by a UK national tour and transfer to London's West End (where Larry's statue, 'Allies'—see photo left—now stands). Watch out for it—it will be well worth seeing!

Firstly, I must thank you all for your continued support, thank goodness it won't be long before the stirrings of life return to the Apollo. Meanwhile the well-received Zoom play readings and Saturday 'Drop Ins' continue to bring us all together.

I'm delight to report that Glenys has recorded two pieces of her own work which will soon be on our YouTube channel and we are currently preparing a

longer piece written by Maureen Sullivan in the form of five monologues to join the other recordings. Aren't we lucky to have such talent amongst us?!

As you will have read, plans are in motion to open the Theatre to the public at the end of June with a production of three John Mortimer plays. Before that on Saturday 22nd (fingers crossed for good weather and no more restrictions) the Theatre

forecourt will host the first 'Coffee 'n Chat' of the year.

There's lots to get involved with preparing the Theatre for opening so I hope there will be many volunteers when the call goes out!

Looking forward to seeing you all soon.

Carole Crow, Membership Secretary

Louis Lawrence 1931-2021

If you watched the live-stream video (what a brilliant innovation!) of dear Louis' farewell, you will know from the contributions of his wife Patricia, daughter and one of his sons, that Louis was born into a Jewish family in 1931 and raised in the East End of London. At the outbreak of WW2 he was evacuated to Hertfordshire, but he returned to London when the Blitz seemed to be over and Germany was attacking Russia. However, Adolf had one last throw of the dice and young Louis nearly fell victim to a V2 rocket blast that destroyed nearby houses!

Although starting his working life as an apprentice bricklayer, Louis developed his marketing and design skills and was soon working as marketing display manager for Dixons Photographic, Willoughby's, Lyons Corner Houses and Green Shield, being involved in their transfer to Argos. In the 60s he trained as a youth leader and spent many years organising camps and clubs and becoming a trustee of several national Youth Centres. When Louis and Patricia retired to the Island Louis

soon became involved with various clubs and groups, from Barber Shop singers to Ventnor Film Club and of course, the Apollo Players.



Louis inherited the muscle-wasting Duchenne Marie Tous condition which explained his rolling gait and frequent falls. Patricia told me that by the time he joined the Apollo he was virtually just balancing on his leg bones but had learnt years ago how to fall and roll! I asked Patricia about his death and she said that on a miserable wet January morning, they were both in the kitchen about to have a cuppa. Louis was complaining about not being able to get out into his beloved garden, when he simply fell down. But this time the master of the fall-and-roll didn't get up.

I often worked with him, but have left comments about Louis' significant contribution to our theatre to Paul Hewson, one of his regular set-building backstage buddies.

Michael Arnell

Louis was one of the stalwarts of the Apollo's often unnoticed set-building team, always there waiting for you to unlock the door and let him in to start work, carrying his little orange tool box with him. Because of his arthritis he had collected his own special set of tools, the Apollo tools being too big and heavy to hold. He was always happy and never complained, always eager to please. You could ask him to make something, he would just get on with it and you could guarantee that whatever it was, it was well engineered and fixed with a thousand huge screws, never to come apart again. When any young member joined the team, it would be Louis who would always step forward and ask them to give him a hand. He soon turned them into really useful set builders.

He used to tell us about organising youth groups in Hackney when he was younger. He was a man of many talents, being involved in the U3A on the Island as well as running Ventnor TV that encouraged young Island film makers with hands-on experience plus offering a range of themed talks at local village halls. What an incredible man.

Paul Hewson

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 first-name.secondname' (remember the dot between the words), and in the bottom box enter your password, which is your membership number.

Once you've done this you should get straight into the members' area. If not, there's a problem and you need to let Ginie Orrey (webmistress) know, but try these steps first.

Episode 2 of a three-part article by

Mike Crowe

entitled

'JUST A WHITSUN WEEKEND LEAVE'

Close readers of this organ will remember that in the last issue we were treated to the first of three instalments of an episode in Mike Crowe's life. While the words 'shaggy' and 'dog' came to mind, stick with it—it gets better!

Later on during that Saturday my wife and I went to Leicester London Road Railway Station and asked for 'Train times to get me to Inverkeithing Station before 08.00 on Tuesday' I must be on board by 08.00 because the ship was under sailing orders. The Clerk duly thumbed through all the timetable books and eventually presented me with a piece of paper with my connections. 19.53 from Leicester's other Station, 'Central', change at Nottingham for the fast train to Edinburgh, then local train to Inverkeithing. All nice and easy. Relax and spend the rest of Saturday and then Sunday and Whit Monday at home.

Come Monday evening and we make our way to the Central Station. Plenty of time for the 19.53 when we arrived at about 19.35. 'Single to Inverkeithing please'. Booking Clerk looks at me and asks, 'Which way are you going?' Pass the piece of paper with the train times across to him. He studies it, looks up and announces, 'These are the Sunday times. Weekdays the train goes at 19.25. It's gone'. 'As I was here on time and the fact that these are British Rail times, can you sign my chit please? The Navy won't believe me otherwise' and this was the first of many signatures and notes on this chit!!

So what now? I knew from experience that there was a later train to Edinburgh via Nottingham from London Road Station, but it left later and arrived later. I would

be about half an hour adrift. Train times confirmed, we made our way to London Road Station. I can't remember the exact times, but it would leave somewhere around 22.00, maybe before, not worth going home so my wife went back home and I waited at the Station. Train came. Got on and we departed Leicester. This train met with the fast train from Kings Cross at Nottingham, leaving there at about 22.50, but not long into the journey we slowed down, stopped, started, slowed down, stopped etc much to the bewilderment of the passengers who must all be regulars because it didn't normally do this. Someone found the answer ... fog. And so we arrived at Nottingham, late, and I missed the fast train to Edinburgh. What time is the next one? 08.00 tomorrow. Another signature on my little bit of paper!

So what now? About midnight and in Nottingham. Need to get to Edinburgh. Next train 8 hours away. Travelling time on the train and it would get me there by about 16.00 Tuesday afternoon!!

So I polished my thumb and hit the road again! I don't really remember much about the journey North except that once again I had some superb luck and lifts. A bit I do remember was one of the lifts. A serving RAF Officer who picked me up in his sports car! He too was willing to sign my chitty of paper to say I was at least trying!! Another part of the journey was being dropped off in Gateshead. Now the problem was that I wanted the road north of Newcastle, I was way down south of this and whilst there was traffic about, it was local. Only one option, walk across that huge iron bridge and make for Newcastle. I do remember looking at my watch as I walked across that bridge: 04.00.

Never been across it since!! I had done more than half the journey in about 4 hours! A few more unremembered lifts until the last one. A lorry. We were close enough to Edinburgh to explain I wanted Waverley Station. 'Where are you heading?' 'Rosyth Dockyard', 'Settle down, I'll drop you at the gates, I'll be going by them.'

I am afraid that this is where things didn't quite work out due to my lack of knowledge and it was more ironic when I tell you we were in the vicinity of Edinburgh's Waverley Station at about 08.00, good time or what? Of course in 1959 the Forth Road Bridge hadn't been built so the lorry driver took me the long way round, up to the Kincardine Bridge and back to Dunfermline and Rosyth, duly dropping me off at the Dockyard Gates as promised at 12.30.

The Dockyard Police informed me that HMS Gambia had sailed. 'Where to and is she coming back here?' 'Don't know and don't know. You'd better join your mates in there' and directed me to an inner room whereupon I met 4 more off HMS Gambia who had missed the boat!! Their story was simple. They had been ashore for a good night out in Edinburgh, stayed overnight in a Navy Club and when they were given a shake this morning, turned over and went back to sleep!! One of them was a Leading Hand so was put in charge of us. My worries or concerns were over. Let the Navy worry now.

We were dispatched to HMS Cochrane, the Naval Base for Rosyth, and found beds and food. A great relief. But where was HMS Gambia?

To be continued ...

I have a love/hate relationship with sailing. I love being out on the water, but become uncomfortable in anything above a force two breeze, or a six inch swell. These feelings are reflected in this account of a sailing trip in Madeira. Those unfamiliar with nautical terminology need to know that the 'heads' are the toilets, and the flushing procedure is usually more complex than normal.

LANDLUBBER

We climbed aboard the Challenger, and once we knew the ropes, We set off for the ocean, each with his fears and hopes. The sails went up, the wind blew strong, I very nearly cried, As the bloody boat leaned over, very nearly on its side.

I couldn't pull the ropes aloft or help the chef down under, I couldn't do a bloody thing but sit on deck and chunder. I threw up at the pointed end, called 'Hughe!' at the blunt, When someone asked me how I felt I answered with a grunt.

I couldn't lie and sleep it off, couldn't make it to the beds, But instead I spent the morning with my head stuck down the heads. The movement was relentless and went on from dusk to dawn, So I started every morning with a technicolour yawn.

At last we saw an island, thank God we're almost there, But we tacked right for sev-

en miles, I whimpered with despair!

The snoring was infernal like the clearing of a drain, Or logs being sawn, or rutting stags, but louder than a train. For measuring the volume normal instruments would fail. Decibels won't do the job, you'd need the Richter scale!

And so I didn't sleep at all, but rather spent my time Sitting upstairs on the deck and thinking up this rhyme. And as I lay 'neath clear night skies, examining the stars, I could have sworn I heard the sound of Venus joined with Mars.

The wind died down, the sea was calm, the boat was almost flat, The sun came out, the dolphins jumped, yes give me more of that! We saw stupendous scenery, consumed fantastic food, And saw a thousand samba girls gyrating, nearly nude!

Now back on terra firma, and there's no more need to tack. I can walk to where I want to go and take the same route back. I do not need to rig the car if I am in a rush, And regardless of the size of job, it's just one pull to flush.

Not all of it was dreadful, in fact much of it was grand, But I still believe my feet belong quite firmly on dry land.

ODE TO STUGERON

Oh Stugeron, thou mightiest king of pills
By cunning chemistry dost thou relieve grave ills!
Before I knew thee, oft o'er rails of boat I've leant and howled,
Delivering my lunch to neptune's realm.

But now that self same surging, billowing swell
Which gave great gastric perturbation in the past
Can I regard with calm assured mind,
Secure in knowledge that the life-preserving meal,
So skilfully in gleaming galley made,
Will from me depart by southern route alone
As gentle nature did intend.

So, Stugeron to thee great praise I sing,
Destroyer of despair, what joy you bring!

POETRY PLEASE!

Once again our poet-in-residence, Steve Taverner, has stepped up to the mark; this time with some Thoughts on seafaring, to which I should imagine many a bosom will return an echo ...

As usual, browsing through one of Dave Talbot's books of inimitable poetry brings up a small but perfectly formed gem, appropriate as always for these uncertain times.

'When One Door Closes'

When one door closes
All we know and like to suppose is
The lord up there is opening a window.
Or we all like to believe and think so,
Whereabouts it is happen-

ing, we just don't know.

DAVE'S POETRY CORNER



The Apollo Theatre Players
Apollo Theatre
Pyle Street
NEWPORT
Isle of Wight PO30 1JT

tel:
01983 527267

ticketline:
01983 210010

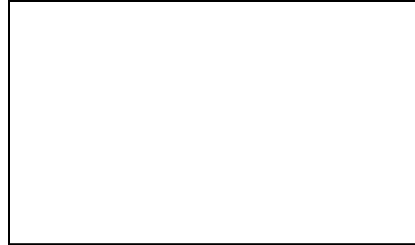
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Bringing good theatre to the Isle of Wight for more than 40 years



The Apollo Players' next production

**At last we're able to say with some confidence—that
there will be a 'next production'!**

**We are, of course, working hard on virtual productions
for our YouTube channel, so do check it out to find
what's new. We're also working on two staged produc-
tions—yes, that's real actors on a real stage in front of
a real audience!! Naturally, this depends on circum-
stances beyond our control, but if all goes well we
should be able to bring you a production of three plays
by John Mortimer in June, followed by a World Premi-
ere in September of a play called 'Witchcraft' by a lo-
cal author, Heather Cooper. It's a great play, funny and
clever, and we hope you'll enjoy it. Check out our web-
site to find out more and to book tickets.**