



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 ....

Other diary dates

Coffee mornings: all	29 May
10.00am-1200 on the Theatre	5 June
forecourt if weather and regulations allow!	12 June
	19 June
	26 June
	3 July
	10 July
	17 July
	24 July
	31 July



**DI EVANS**  
**Entertaining Angels**  
**RIP**  
**27.04.2021**

# apollo

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

Issue no. 284

May 2021

## The Apollo comes back to life—with ‘A London Affair’

‘A London Affair’ is a collection of three superb one-act plays written by John Mortimer, who has been described as a wit, flirt and genius—all of which shine through in abundance in these pieces.

Susan Simpson is directing Kathryn Ward, Ian Moth, Eve Cardew and Garry Smith in the fast moving ‘Marble Arch’; the more dramatic ‘Lunch Hour’ featuring Carol Simpson, David Stradling and Cheryl May is being directed by David Ballard; and I am doing my best to keep Ginnie Orrey, Martin Ward, Holly Squires and Ian Moth under control in the light-hearted ‘Knightsbridge’.

There is a great advantage in having three plays on the go: more actors have been able to be involved while still maintaining the ‘rule of 6’, and it has given three of us the opportunity to have a go at directing, under Evelyn’s wing, of course. Initial rehearsals have been mostly via Zoom, which isn’t exactly ideal so the

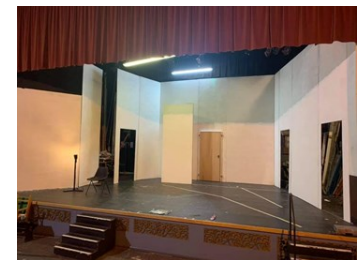
concentration has been on learning lines; but there has been an occasional gathering in someone’s garden when the weather permits (as you can see from the ‘action shot’ below!).



It’s a very different approach to the normal way of doing things, and we are all impatient to get together in the theatre and build that special bond which is inevitable as characters begin to evolve.

As far as set-building is concerned, the original idea was to have the plays performed against black legs, but the wonderful Paul Jennings has designed an in-

genious set that can be used for all three. This has required some careful plotting which is not easy with virtual rehearsals; it’s all in the head but will it work on stage? Only time will tell!



It’s a delight to work with all this talent, especially after so many months of closure and separation. As I write, our amazing back-stage crews have still to begin to work their magic but I must thank them in advance for all the hard work they are going to be doing.

We are all very excited to be the team that brings our Theatre back to life!!

*Carole Crow*

The first production of the forthcoming post-Covid season, subject to any Government restrictions, of course, will be ‘Witchcraft’ a deliciously dark and witty play written for the Apollo by Isle of Wight novelist Heather Cooper and directed by Michael Whitehead.

Based on Shakespeare’s ‘Macbeth’, the three witches, played by Marylyn Ford, Julie Stonestreet and Rose Kelsey, prophesy the future for Macbeth and Banquo (Ian Moth



and Michael Arnell) but just what are they up to when they aren’t brewing up trouble in their cauldron? You will be able to find out on 3 September!

*[Those of you who have been paying attention for the last couple of years may have noticed an occasional series entitled ‘Novels with theatrical themes’. I mention this because I am in the throes of reading one which in itself isn’t exactly on a theatrical theme; however, one of the characters, an actress (sic), mentions that ‘good plays are the scarcest commodity in the world and good playwrights worth their weight in platinum’. This is, I think, a proposition which is strongly borne out by Heather’s play. Ed]*

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

O dear, how sad. Another of our great, long-standing members has rung down the final curtain, joining those others who have recently left us and whose memories and experience of the Apollo are irreplaceable. We shall all have memories of Di Evans to cherish—memories of a truly great actor, inspired director and prop-maker, and contributor of witty and sometimes acerbic asides to conversations. Where shall we find her like again?

However, as I'm sure Di herself would agree, the show must go on; and as you will see from the Committee pages, we are on track for doing just that. In the meantime, I've come across a number of things which I thought might amuse and entertain you, my readers, before we all get thoroughly entertained in our usual way!

You can see below the theatre director's plea for ideas to help us commemorate our forthcoming anniversary; and I hope many of you will have good, innovative suggestions to make.

I have also, as so often in this editorial, found a highly apposite comment in the Guardian. Speaking of the situation so many workers in the arts have found themselves in, the point was made that *'art is a daily practice and discipline, not something that can be dropped and picked up at will. According to those on the right, all this is absolutely fine: it's simply market forces at work. Some even talk of a welcome winnowing down—if the pandemic sees the weakest go to the wall, then so be it. This view is careless, and despicable. You can judge a society by the respect accorded to its artists.'* How

very true; and the reason we are working so hard to bring our artistic efforts back to the stage.

In the meantime, I was in the process of clearing out my attic the other day and came across a booklet commemorating the 100-year anniversary of my University; one of only a handful offering degrees in Drama in those long-ago days. Idly turning the pages I came across a photo which I felt I had to share with you, as evidence that Coarse Acting existed long before Michael Green invented it!



## FUNDRAISING: IDEAS WANTED!

With the theatre having been closed for the past year, we have of course received no income from productions. While we have also not had the expenses associated with plays, there have still been ongoing payments to meet, which has left our coffers somewhat emptier than usual.

While we are not quite in the poorhouse yet, mainly thanks to a couple of grants we have been able to apply

for, we are looking at possible ways to raise some cash to keep us going through the next few months until we are able to get back to our 'normal' season.

Your committee have given this issue a lot of thought, but we are throwing the question out to our inventive, creative and inspired membership: can you think of original, practical ideas to bring in some extra funds? Do you perhaps

have experience or background in marketing, advertising, fundraising or similar?

If you can help, please let me know – I can be contacted on 07747738338 or [msullivan58@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:msullivan58@hotmail.co.uk) – or talk to any of our committee members. Let's get our lovely theatre not just back on its feet but hit the ground running....

*Maureen Sullivan, Marketing Manager*

## CELEBRATING THE APOLLO'S 50th ANNIVERSARY!

I'm sure many of you will know that it was back in 1972 that the Apollo began producing plays and performing them to our audiences.

Many things have changed in those fifty years; but the main thing that hasn't is that we're still here, nearly 50 years later, and still putting on plays. After all this time, and the last year in particular, there is a definite

need to celebrate!

We are beginning to pull ideas together to decide how to make this celebration happen. It's got to be something special, though the format of that is still wide open to suggestions. So—would you like to be part of that decision-making? Do you have an idea that you think would help to celebrate the golden age of the Apollo? If so, do

please get in contact with me at

[Amy@masexodus.co.uk](mailto:Amy@masexodus.co.uk)

or give me a call, so that we can all get our thinking caps on. It may seem like a long time till September 2022, but believe me, that time will fly by and we need to make sure we're ready to make the very best of our remarkable heritage.

*Amy Burns, Theatre Director*

# News from your Committee

Notes from the Committee meeting 10 May 2021

## ARTS MANAGER

As you can imagine, I get questioned from time to time about what next season might look like. So far I've been unable to give definitive answers, since I'm sure that everyone understands that we can only open up in line with the government guidelines in force at the time. However, I've put together a first draft (right), so that at least people can begin to think about what they might want to be involved in, and roughly when, so they can plan round it. Just do please remember that everything is still tentative and subject to change; for example, the 50th anniversary celebrations will be in there somewhere, and of course the government may entirely change its mind about what we can do anyway!

## GOVERNANCE

A couple of less gripping but nevertheless important bits of news for you. The half-yearly Players' accounts have been drawn up and approved and will appear on the theatre website; and the Players' committee have approved the draft of the new Constitution which will now go forward as the bedrock of the new merged Trust/Players organisation. More news on that soon.

## YOUTH THEATRE

Discussions have been held with Mish Whitmore about the return of the Youth Theatre as lockdown restrictions are being lifted. The latest guidelines allow them to return but with severely limited numbers; and having calculated the num-

production/author	possible director	possible production dates
A London Affair (John Mortimer)	Carole Crow/David Ballard/Susan Simpson	2-10 July 2021
After all These Years [visiting production]	Graham Pountney	16-17 July 2021
Witchcraft (Heather Cooper)	Michael Whitehead	3-11 September 2021
God of Carnage (Yasmina Reza)	Steve Reading	5-13 November 2021
[Youth Group production]		16-18 December 2021
Breaking the Code (Hugh Whitmore)	Martin Ward	4-12 February 2022
Ladies in Lavender (Shaun McKenna)	Glenys Lloyd Williams (?)	1-9 April 2022
Doubt (Patrick Shanley)	Susan Simpson	20-28 May 2022
Memory of Water (Shelagh Stephenson)	Maggie Cardew	15-23 July 2022

bers we'd be permitted, Mish has made the decision to wait for a return date until the fourth step of the roadmap, when restrictions are due to be lifted, so that she can offer a 'proper' youth theatre experience again. Working in smaller groups has been limiting for the group, and many of them haven't enjoyed it.

She is also looking forward to taking forward the suggestion of the youth theatre being more involved as we've discussed previously. At the moment we don't know how the mechanics of it will work, but she is open to a discussion once normality has started to return.

## VOLUNTEERS WANTED!

Now that we are full steam ahead there are lots of opportunities to get involved in putting on a production. All areas are in need of sup-

port, from set building to front of house rotas, and in particular the Props team badly needs new recruits. Can you help?

In addition, before we can open the theatre to the paying public again, it will have to have a really good and thorough clean. Again, volunteers will be essential; we shall probably have professional cleaners in for the auditorium and so on, but the bar and foyer will have to be done.

It's fun being an important part of the Apollo family and very rewarding. Some of you are already hard at it and all we can say is 'We couldn't put on a production without you', so a big 'Thank you!'. Please drop a line to either Steve Reading, FOH manager, or Carole Crow, Membership Secretary, for more info.

## YOUR COMMITTEE

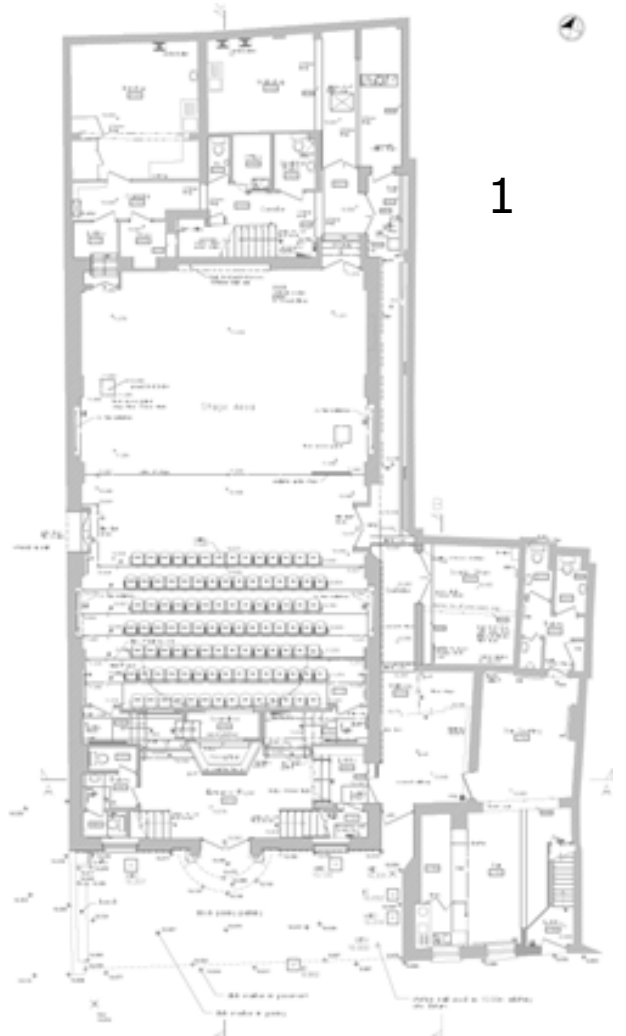
**Theatre Director & Chair of management committee (elected 3-yearly): Amy Burns (2019-22) amy@masexodus.co.uk**

<b>Arts Manager</b> (elected annually in Nov for season beginning following Sept)	<b>Evelyn Hicks</b> (2020-22) nevelyn.hicks@gmail.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> cynaracrump@gmail.com
<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

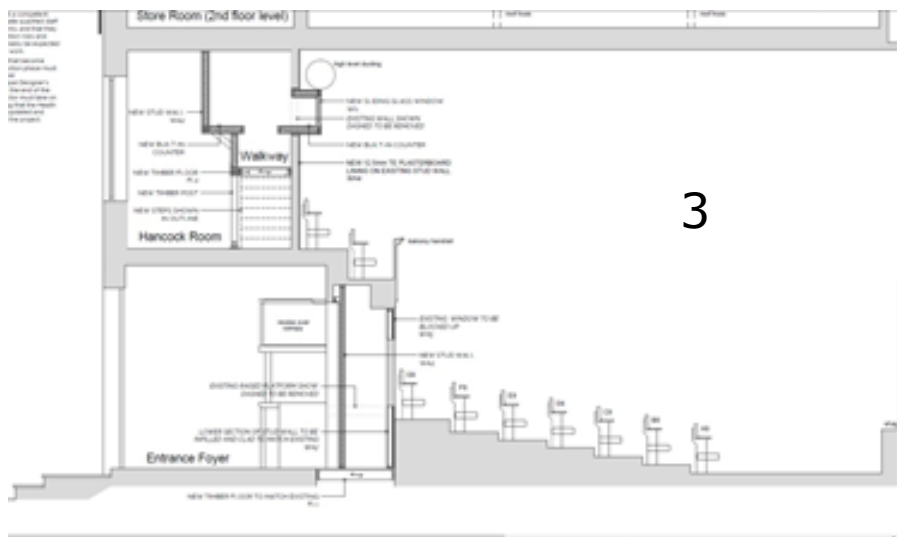


## News from the Apollo Theatre Trust

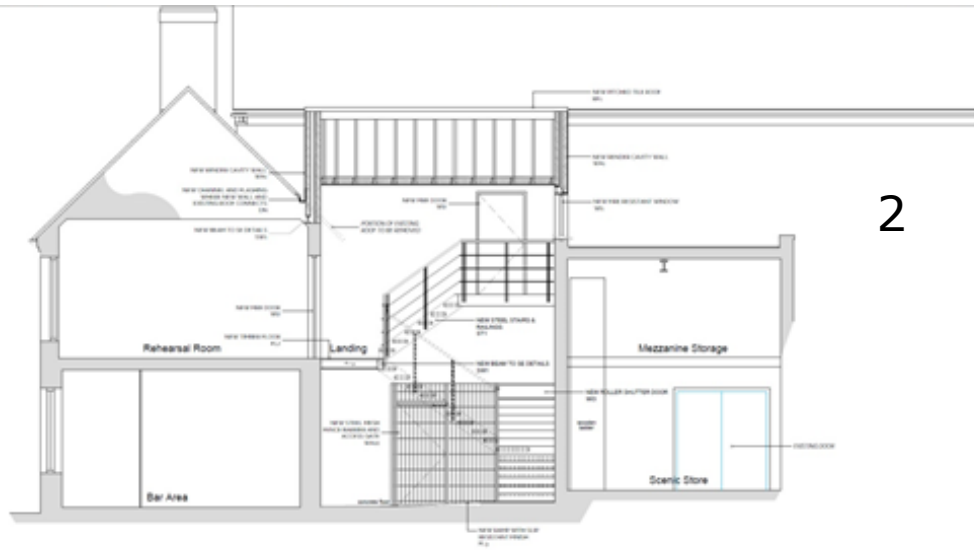
This update is devoted to the proposed developments to the theatre buildings. Image 1 shows the theatre 'as is', while the rest of the images show various aspects of the proposed plans.



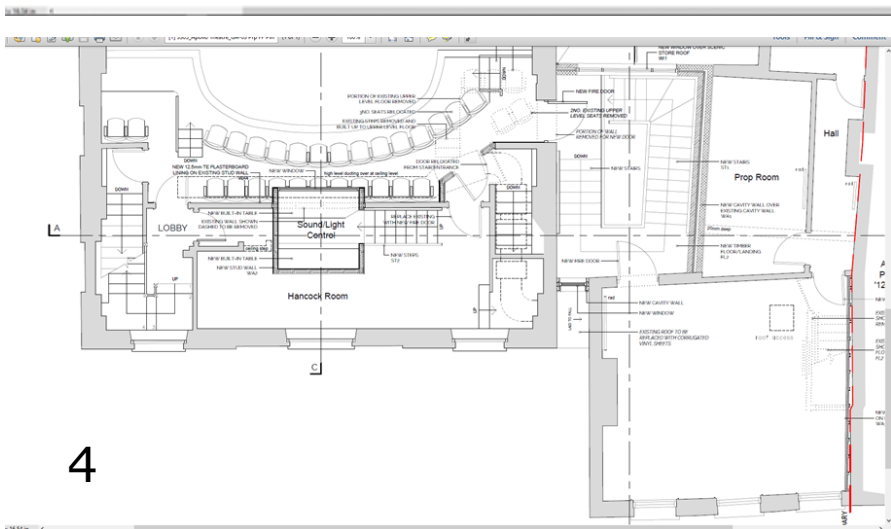
**1** (Ground floor 'as is') In order for the architects (Mattinson Associates) to start work we needed an accurate set of digital plans of the affected areas. They recommended GQG Services. The Trust decided that it would be best to get them to produce a detailed set of plans of the whole theatre, including Hancock House, as a baseline for any future work. After delays caused by the Covid restrictions, GQG produced the plans showing all the odd levels and angles which gave previous architects so much trouble. A view of the ground floor plan is shown on the right - note that there aren't many right-angles!



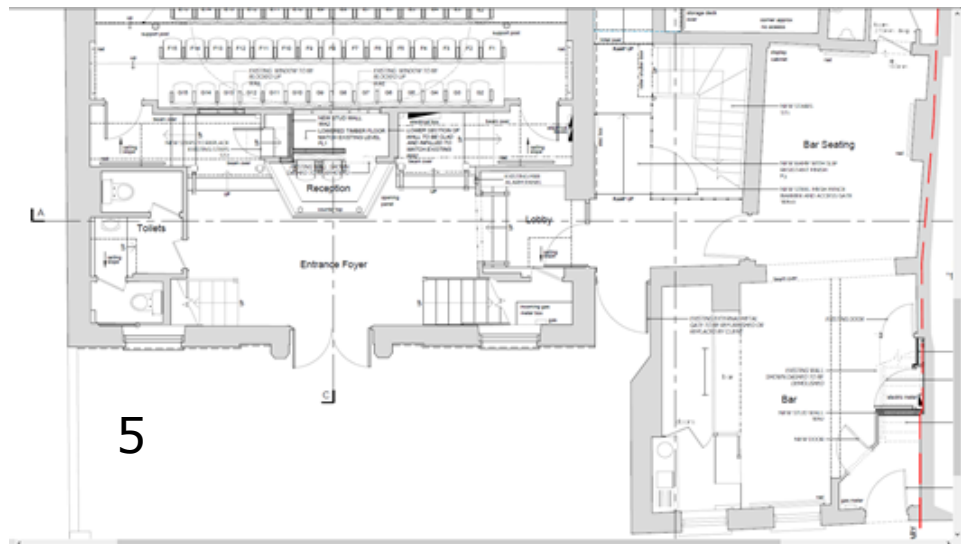
**3** (Section through new lighting/sound box) In the Hancock Room, and raised up to minimise the impact on the sewing area, is a new lighting and sound control box with a window over the balcony. In order to allow access to these areas during a production without disturbing the audience, a new lobby is to be built at the top of the right-hand staircase with doors leading to the balcony and the Hancock Room. The staircase in Hancock House is to be removed, opening up the space in the first-floor front room.



2 & 4 (first floor proposal) Pic 4 shows a new doorway on the right-hand side of the balcony leading to a new staircase leading across to Hancock House and down to the space outside the bar thus providing a new emergency exit from the balcony avoiding the wooden stairs into the foyer (see also section through new staircase from balcony, pic 2).



5 (Ground floor proposal) This proposal shows the area behind the box office being opened up at floor level to form office/storage space. The removal of the stairs in Hancock house allows the bar store to be moved into that space, freeing up room in the bar.



Not a lot of news on the membership front this time—but at least it's because we're all getting busy with productions!! Saturday morning 'Drop-Ins' have continued to keep some of us in touch, and our first gathering for coffee on the forecourt took place on Saturday 22 May despite somewhat unreliable weather!

We are of course enthusiastically preparing for curtain up on 'A London Affair' for 2 July, but because we are still in uncertain times no bookings can be made until

21 June when we are sure there will be no further disappointment. As soon as we get the 'green light' a further bulletin will go out letting you know that Ticket Source and our booking line are open.

Those of you who remember Paul and Sue Jennings' garden party last year will be delighted to know that it's happening again!! Yes, they will be throwing open their garden to us on Saturday 26 June from 2.30pm; they will provide cakes and beverages, but bring your own chair and mug. Please try to car-

share where possible, because parking, or more importantly leaving, was a bit of a problem last year!

The reopening of the theatre offers a great opportunity for more of us to get involved with the many activities that keep it running smoothly. From backstage crews to front of house teams, we all have a part to play, so please, don't be shy about coming forward – we can't do it without you.

*Carole Crow, Membership Secretary*  
Carolecrow9@gmail.com

Here's a bit of nice news: a free gift for all members (well, those who are quick off the mark, anyway!). For some time now we have had a stock of Apollo Theatre cloth bags; the

intention was to sell them all, but that hasn't happened, so the Committee has agreed that the remainder can be given away FREE to members. We have only a limited supply,

but if you'd like one, please drop a line to Ginnie Orrey at [info@apollo-theatre.org.uk](mailto:info@apollo-theatre.org.uk) and one will be reserved for you. First come, first served!

And a bit more nice news! As I'm sure you'll have heard by now, Abbi and Joel Leverton were safely delivered of a baby boy, Josiah Reuben, on 12 April, weighing in at 6lb 13.5 oz. We are all delighted to congratulate them on his arrival, and I'm sure we shall be introduced to him very soon! In the meantime, here's a picture for you all to go 'aaah' over ...



Sadly, another of our former members is lost to us: Marilyn Rose, who was very active at the Apollo in the 1970s and 80s (when she was known as Marilyn Jones). She took small parts in four plays but her main contribution was set painting and for a period being the membership secretary. In the picture she is shown with two other late members, John Underwood and Mike Howley, in 'Wait until Dark' in 1986/7.

**MARILYN ROSE**



**'100 Club' winners**

The Trust Secretary, Cynara Crump, has sent through the list of 100 Club winners up to date. Congratulations to all—and a reminder to those of you who don't indulge in the vice of gambling (though in a very gentle way, in this case!), you too could contribute to Theatre finances and be in with a chance of winning.

June 2020	Gill Kennerley	£50
July	Nigel Talbot	£50
August	Mrs S Rockhill	£50
September	Ms D S Summers	£500
October	Peter Gustar	£50
November	Mrs M James	£50
December	George King	£50
January 2021	David Adhimar	£50
February	Rita Boffin	£50
March	Mrs S Rockhill	£50
April	Hilary Simpson	£50

**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 Ginnie Orrey (webmistress) know, but try these steps first.

## DI EVANS: A LIFE WELL LIVED

### GOODBYE, DARLING DI

As most of you must know by now, Diana (Di) Evans died peacefully at the Hospice on Tuesday, 27<sup>th</sup> April, surrounded by her family who have arranged her funeral for 2.15pm on Thursday, 13 May at the Crematorium.

Di Evans was born in Croydon in 1940. Her grandmother had been a professional entertainer and young Di had childhood ambitions to become a ballet dancer. Her height stymied that dream. She trained at Bath College to become a school teacher, and as a student met a Welsh trainee dentist, Clem Evans. They were married in 1964 and moved to Wales where they raised their two children, Susan and Martin.

Because she couldn't speak Welsh, Di was not allowed to teach. Happily that changed in 1978 when Clem became a partner in a dental practice in Newport and the family became Islanders. Di then taught for many years, mainly at Brading Primary School. Although 'everybody knows everybody' in the Island teaching community, and I was aware that a certain Mrs-Evans-of-Brading was well respected, our professional paths rarely crossed. That covers the basic facts of Di's professional and family life. What follows is a simple personal observation of a fellow member's extraordinary contribution to the Apollo and a sincere tribute to a wonderful woman I was proud to call 'friend' for over forty years.

I had seen her in a couple of plays in the late seventies, before we were both cast in 1981 as the married couple in Rattigan's 'In Praise of Love'. This was the first of over twenty plays we did together, five of which were as husband and wife.

I had only been in six plays and was slowly 'learning

how to act', but in that play I became aware of Di's superior technique which was not to act but simply to be! With apparently little effort she delivered a powerful but heartbreaking performance. This was the first of many lessons she unwittingly taught me.

Our next play together, 'The Creature Creeps', a ridiculous farce, was a brilliant example of how a good production of a mediocre play is much better than a poor production of a masterpiece. Di was a sort of housekeeper in a castle crammed with bizarre characters and simply had to enter occasionally, say something and exit. Boring? Insignificant? Not at all! Overshadowed by a cast of larger-than-life maniacs, Di's performance was a masterclass in underacting. Entering in a long black gown, she glided on, hands clasped under her bust, head slightly angled, shoulders slightly hunched, slowed to a halt, waited and humbly delivered a killer line, slight bow and exited to an uproar of laughter. She stole the show.

Di was often elected as our Arts Manager because the membership soon realised she was a 'safe pair of hands'. She directed many plays and never had any difficulty casting even large Shakespeare productions because actors respected and liked her. The same was true of all the backstage teams whose common attitude was 'nothing's too good for Di Evans!'

In over forty years I never heard her be unpleasant to anyone, or indeed heard a member express anything other than admiration and affection for this kind, good-natured, lovely lady. Thank you, Di.

*Michael Arnell.*

Although I don't have Michael's long knowledge of Di Evans, my relatively brief (in Apollo terms) acquaint-

ance with her goes a long way to supporting Michael's comments. I only performed with her in one play, Edward Albee's 'difficult' and (I have to say) less-than-rapturously-received 'A Delicate Balance', but I was struck by her calm professionalism. I also remember her appearance in 'Ladies in Retirement', when she said to me, à propos of her small part as one of the bonkers sisters, that she'd rather be on stage in a small part than not at all; and as Michael says, she stole the show once again. Her class and style stood out whatever part she appeared in.

I never had the privilege of being cast by her (says more about me than about her, I fear) but whatever production she directed was memorable long after the curtain had come down for the last time. A list of the shows she directed can be seen below; suffice it to say that everyone who saw any of them will no doubt confirm that they could stand up against many professional productions for their innovation and energy. We shall not see her like again.

*Ginnie Orrey*

### PLAYS DIRECTED BY DI

A View From the Bridge (1987)  
Equus (1990)  
Playboy of the Western World (1991)  
Hobson's Choice (1993)  
Dancing at Lughnasa (1996)  
A Man for all Seasons (2001)  
The Heiress (2002)  
As You Like it (2004)  
Amy's View (2004)  
The Cherry Orchard (2006)  
Twelfth Night (2007)  
The Visit (with Amy Burns) (2008)  
The Accrington Pals (with Steve Reading) (2008)  
Breakfast with Jonny Wilkinson (with Ian Moth) (2009)  
Daisy Pulls It Off (2010)  
Skylight (2011)  
The Railway Children (2012)  
The Rape of the Belt (2014)  
A Streetcar Named Desire (2015)  
Dangerous Corner (2016)  
The Lady Killers (2017)  
Bronte (2019)



**DI EVANS**  
**Moments from a theatrical**  
**life**





## Your letters

### MEMORIES OF DI

I never had the privilege of being directed by Di, but in the relatively short time I knew her she stood out: as a director, an actor, an enthusiastic props manager and just as someone with character and a huge sense of humour. Whenever she was on stage she effortlessly showed her style, whether as the lead in 'Entertaining Angels', her last (sadly appropriate) appearance on the Apollo stage, or as a minor character in 'Ladies in Retirement', or her other many and varied performances. We shall have to go far to find her like again.

*Ginnie Orrey*

In 1987 Marylyn and I had been away sailing all summer and on our return Di rang to invite me to be a one line walk on in Miller's A View From The Bridge, due to open soon. Quickly it was dress rehearsals and the final dress (on a Sunday then ) was a disaster as Eddie Carbone, the lead, was taking prompt after prompt. That evening Di rang and asked me to do it and Paul Jennings, the Theatre Director , said she had to open in two weeks. My class of eight-year-olds learnt fast to get on on their own as the mad teacher wandered the classroom shouting lines. We did it, to stellar reviews. I said to Di at the last night party, 'You wouldn't have cast me as Eddie, would you?' Pause ... 'No!' She did eventually cast me as a failed priest in Friel's Dancing At Lughnasa. Another hint? We acted together only once in Albee's A Delicate Balance. Again, seeking her approval, I asked how she found it. Pause ... 'Mmmm.' But I loved her just the same.

*Colin Ford*

Once again I use the posts on facebook to enhance your letters page. So many people have posted memories of and tributes to Di Evans; here is a selection of them.



I am truly devastated. Di was the most inspirational, talented, creative, kindest person I ever met. The stars will shine a little less brightly. She is already sorely missed. *Maria Wilkinson*

She was a wonderful person, so intelligent and such a great director. She will be greatly missed and always remembered as a kind, talented and funny person. X *Gwen Stephens*

Very very sad news, such a lovely and talented lady. Rest in Peace xx *Suzie Chilton*

Sending so much love. Di was an incredible lady and huge inspiration to me. She will be so very missed. Xxx *Joe Plumb*

Incredibly sad News. Di was always someone I looked up to. I will miss her dreadfully. *Eve Mary Anne Cardew*

I am so so sorry to read this. She was always so positive and told me she was looking forward to swimming this Summer. Cancer is such a cruel master, rest in peace Di, we'll all miss you... *Suzan Carr*

Such very sad news. Di was uniquely talented, an inspiration and wonderful company. My favourite director too. I shall miss her enor-

mously. *Fiona Gwinnett*

I was privileged to know her as a friend at The Theatre.. .. truly a Beautiful, kind, talented and very inspirational lady .. xx *Sue Edwards*

So sad. I was privileged to have worked with Di on several Apollo shows in various capacities. Talented, organised, inspirational, warm and friendly - and everyone wanted to be in any show she directed. A lovely lady. Xxx *Maureen Sullivan*

I will miss the dear, warm hearted talented lady that Di was xx *Kathryn Ward*

So sorry to hear this. I have so many happy memories of knowing Di. We had many laughs. My thoughts are with you all. RIP Di. Xxx *Kathy Adcock*

It was always a pleasure and a privilege to work with Di when she directed. It was also a huge challenge to attempt to meet her expectations. She started acting at the Apollo in 1980 and was always a wonderful presence on stage. She will be missed so much for her wicked sense of humour and the memories she created. *Paul Jennings*

So shocked to hear this sad news. A very special lady, who will be much missed. *Danny Carmichael*

We're all very aware of how the theatrical world has changed over the past year, not least because we've all had to be extremely innovative to find ways of meeting up when we can't meet up. Here two members give their surprisingly different views on how that's worked out: *Rambling Rose* gives an actor's view, and the Arts Manager, Evelyn Hicks, from the more strategic perspective. Still, as *The Date* approaches, I doubt there will be many people who will regret getting back on a physical stage and interacting with our colleagues (Evelyn's comment about technology struck a particular chord!!).

Oh I long for the days when Zoom meant a treat, the ice lolly of choice, multi layered and gaudy of colour, to be savoured and sucked until the colours had transferred onto your lips and teeth and, in my messy case, all around my mouth. Colours that no doubt were full of harmful E numbers and induced hyperactivity. However I would still chose that sticky confection over the recent scourge that is the Zoom meeting. I avoid them as often as possible and can only gawp in wonder at the participants that seem to enjoy this modern day torture. TV is full of Zoom interviews, head and shoulders fill the screens. I

am absorbed by them when faced with their inevitability, and find myself totally distracted. Not by the intelligent dialogue or incisive interviewer's technique but by the background ephemera and the choices of décor belonging to the face in the foreground.

And now of course having signed up for an upcoming production I am in the position of rehearsing via Zoom, sitting in front of the PC screen, gawping at the flickering illuminated squares and hoping that my background does not detract/attract attention. I am mesmerised by my fellow actors, their jerky movements, broken dialogue, disappear-

ing visuals and sound, and all the while trying to portray my character and in some instances even attempting to synchronise dialogue with other cast members. Utterly hopeless! Better than nothing you may well argue and you'd be right of course.

We're so lucky that we have the technology to keep in contact with our friends and colleagues. I'm not advocating it's abandonment, I'm just nostalgic for the days of simplicity, and good old face to face contact. "Aren't we all" I hear the cry, Zooming all over the world.

*Rose Kelsey*

*Rambling Rose*



Who would have thought it—auditions on line and rehearsals commenced on Zoom. Not ideal, of course, but possible. Having commenced with the reading of play scripts, we had, as it were, dipped a toe in the water. While there are several limitations, the major advantage is enhanced communication through facial expression. Every little twitch is noted! It is not necessary to project to the same degree and light and shade in vocal renditions is achieved with more facility—that is until technology lets you down with a bang. The most fragile time seemed to be evenings when there is high demand. Sometimes all one got was a voice in the wilderness!

Casting online was a very swift operation. Script extracts had been distributed in advance, but extracts were not set in a context as

there were no texts in circulation. The *Mortimer* plays were cast in succession with all the directors participating. Online rehearsals have commenced with some meetings outdoors under the *Rule of Six*.

The same model had been used with 'Witchcraft'. Again, focus on sound had to be a strong element. One is more aware of language and how it is used when there is not the addition of movement. Also, the text has nowhere to hide. Coffee mornings have been a whole new experience. Because of the nature of the media all are engaged in every conversation with the occasional pause for breath. Many a pre-production meeting has taken place and all set designs from primitive caves to revolving fireplaces have been shared. A quick flick of a mouse and a new set emerges. If only

it were so easy in reality! We've also travelled back in time with Paul supplying photos of historical events we've talked about—Barbara Turner in fancy dress, 12<sup>th</sup> Night in the snow and the occasional shot of a past production. I was astonished to be presented with a photo of myself in 'The Old Ladies' and wondered who it was. I considered that I looked older than I look now, or was that wishful thinking!

It's so easy to go to a meeting with the quick flick of a button—no traffic jams, coffee or wine on tap; get dressed from the waist up and hide the weight increase with a good camera angle. I've met a lot of people and made new friends without budging over the last few months, so not all bad.

*Evelyn Hicks*

**Looking at  
the World  
Through  
Zoom-  
coloured  
Glasses**

For those of you who have been on tenterhooks waiting for episode 3 of Mike Crowe's ~~shaggy dog story~~ epic of naval heroism, you're in luck. At last we shall discover what on earth it was all about!

## 'JUST A WHITSUN WEEKEND LEAVE'

We were called together a couple of days later, the leading hand given train passes etc and off we went. To Loch Eriboll. Where is Loch Eriboll? Get your map of Scotland out (you will be needing it), and look at Cape Wrath, right in the top left-hand corner of Scotland. Move along the top coast to the east and you will find a huge inlet. That is Loch Eriboll. We are at present just north of Edinburgh. We have a long, exciting and in parts, beautiful journey ahead of us.

Once again I have to admit that there are parts of the journey to Loch Eriboll I do not remember. However, I do know that our last train took us as close to Loch Eriboll as possible, to a place called Lairg, at the southern end of Loch Shin, so we had to get out. We had arrived and the place wasn't really awake—neither were we, come to that—but it didn't take long to see most of Lairg and our Leading Hand found an hotel where we had breakfast. Look at where Lairg is and imagine the looks we were getting. 5 matelots in 'sailor suits', quite likely as far away from the sea as one could get !!!.

So what happens now? We wait for the 'daily bus', the local post/community/everything bus, to come and pick us up. You will need your map here. It leaves Durness in the morning and arrives at Lairg at midday; the driver has a rest and lunch, then departing at 14.00, he drives back to Durness and we would be on it! This was once an ordinary bus, but the back few seats had been taken out and a wire netting partition put across to create a 'cargo' area, reached through the back door. I am led to believe that cattle 'could' be in there!! In the bus itself and alongside the driver was a milk crate with mail on top, plus newspapers and bread! A true 'community bus'. What was to unfold now was the highlight of the journey to the ship, from the time the ticket clerk told me I had Sunday train times and that my train had gone. We travelled alongside Lochs Shin, Merkland, More, other Lochs and rivers

through some stunning scenery (remember this was late spring).

Every so often the bus would stop in a field gateway, no buildings around, and the driver would get out and shove a newspaper or letters or a bottle of milk in a hole in the hedge. 'There are some houses down there, they will be up for them in a minute,' and with that drove off to a group of houses clustered at the roadside with people waiting. The driver would hand out goodies again, mail, milk, letters etc and so on to these little gatherings which were in some cases miles apart and the only sign of any human life.

That journey, one of the most fascinating of my life, took the afternoon. When we arrived at Durness we looked for HMS Gambia tied up alongside the wall. I don't recall a wall for a Colonial Class cruiser to tie up against, but what we did see was a Royal Navy (because it had RN on it and was painted navy blue) yes, a Royal Navy Land Rover! Up here in the very north of Scotland! Why? How? What for?

Well, we were flying the flag of the Admiral of the Home Fleet, and he had his own staff AND a Land Rover for running about in. The Land Rover had driven all the way up to Scotland to be on duty and his duty was to take us back to the ship—well, to a jetty half way up the Loch to where the ship's motor boat would come and fetch us.

And so at about 19.30, 5 days adrift, I stepped back on board. Was it 'Nice to see you Mike. Welcome back. Go and get something to eat, have a wash and get your head down'? Not likely! 'Off caps; Commander's defaulters tomorrow'. Then I was allowed to sort myself out. Commander's defaulters sent us to Captain's defaulters, and I was 'sentenced'. To be honest I was a bit miffed. I was given 5 days' stoppage of leave, 5 days' stoppage of pay and 5 days' extra duties. My Divisional Officer said I could appeal. I thought I had done well and used my initiative to get back and should be let off, but as my DO explained, someone had to do my work

while I was away. When I heard what the others got, I shut up and looked at what I had got. 5 days' stoppage of leave? We were stuck in Loch Eriboll with nowhere to go; when we did leave, it was on an exercise, at sea. 5 days' stoppage of pay? As a National Serviceman my pay was minimal, so 5 days of next to nothing didn't add up to a fortune. 5 days' extra work? Like washing paintwork on the upper deck as the sun was climbing in the early morning still of the Loch, or packing the lunches for an exercise one day in the near future.

And the other 4 who were adrift through their own fault? 21 days' stoppage of leave which would affect them later; 21 days' stoppage of pay which would hurt as these chaps were regulars; and 21 days' extra duties.

I mentioned an exercise. Well, I did go ashore on this and it turned out quite hilarious. We had a detachment of Royal Marines on board and very early in the morning they went ashore and got themselves dug in and camouflaged among the heather. The ship's company went ashore later and lined up across the glen. The signal to sweep across and dig them out was a Very light fired into the sky where we would all see it. The time came, the Very light fired and we started the sweep. Meanwhile, behind us, 'what goes up, must come down' and the Very light did just that. Into the very dry heather, which caught fire. Exercise called off, we spent the next 12 hours fighting the fire in the heather.

Thus ended my Whitsun weekend 'and a bit'!

Filming of the film 'Sink the Bismarck' mentioned two episodes ago? Well, on her way from Rosyth to Loch Eriboll, HMS Gambia stood in for the Bismarck! In the film, many of those lined up on 'Bismarck's' deck were HMS Gambia's crew, including one from my mess, Tom Keefe. Always makes me smile to see that excerpt and see Tom looking all German!!

It really happened, it really did!



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## The Apollo Players' next production



**'A London Affair'**

**2-10 July 2021**

We are delighted to reopen the Apollo Theatre with an evening of three short plays by that greatest of comic writers, John Mortimer. Described as 'a wit, flirt and genius', Mortimer brings his special brand of comedy to these pieces, 'Marble Arch', 'Lunch Hour' and 'Knightsbridge'.

We are still bound by Government guidelines, and we can only open in line with them; but rest assured that everything possible will be done to keep our audiences and cast safe and to give you an enjoyable evening of light-hearted entertainment.