



apollo

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

Forthcoming read-throughs, auditions & other production stuff

- 'Dangerous Obsession' auditions: Sunday 13 February, 2.30pm in the auditorium (see page 10 for more info)

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

DEADLINE FOR CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE NEXT ISSUE:

Wednesday 23 March

Other diary dates

Coffee mornings Every Saturday, 10.00-12.00

Dates for next season's productions See page 11

Members' Night 25 March

'Apollo Gateway' (see page 7) Every Wednesday from March

Members' Rep meeting (see page 5) Saturday 19 February, 12.00-2.00

'Breaking the Code'

Bringing any show to the stage depends on the talents and hard work of a large number of Apollo members. Breaking the Code has been no exception. I remain grateful to all those who, in whatever capacity, have contributed to the success of the production.

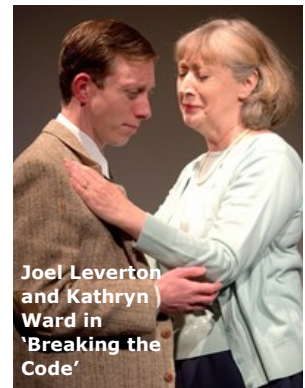
Having three months to cast, rehearse and perform any play sounds like a decent amount of time. In reality it is, but all directors face challenges at various times and Breaking the Code has had its share. Selecting a cast from those who attended the auditions was the first challenge. The talent on display gave me a couple of sleep-

interrupted nights as I wrestled with my choices. Letting people know that they had been unsuccessful is never a task that I look forward to, but to anyone who wants to direct it is a necessary part of the process.

Rehearsals were problematic because, with a cast of nine, I had to build a schedule around individual availability. Work and other necessary absences needed to be factored in. I was also aware that Covid-19 was still prevalent, a fact that was brought home to me when a cast member tested positive just before Christmas. There were some interesting rehearsals; at various times parts have had to be read in from the auditorium, resulting in some scenes being played out with the Invisible Man. The fact that the cast have coped heroically with periodic unavailability has been one of the most positive aspects of the production.

My interest in this play, and Alan Turing in particular, began over thirty years ago when I first became aware of

Hugh Whitmore's script. This is the third time that I have directed Breaking the Code, and my enthusiasm for the play has not waned in all of that time. As several authors have observed, comparisons are odious and I will



Joel Leverton and Kathryn Ward in 'Breaking the Code'

confine myself to saying that this has been a wonderful experience. It has been a privilege to work with a team of talented and knowledgeable people in all aspects of this production and I thank them for their hard work and expertise.

Martin Ward



Garry Smith and Joel Leverton in 'Breaking the Code'

'Doubt: a parable' - our next production

Susan Simpson will be directing our next production, John Patrick Shanley's fascinating play 'Doubt: a Parable'. Susan says, 'Thank you to everyone who attended the audition. I had a lot of talent to choose from, but unfortunately all female! I don't know whether it was the content of the play, the character himself or my intimidating nature that put off the men, but after a little searching I have been able to cast a strong group of

actors and I look forward to getting into the rehearsal process. The question is: will we ever decide if he was in the wrong?'

If anyone is interested in helping, please let me know.'

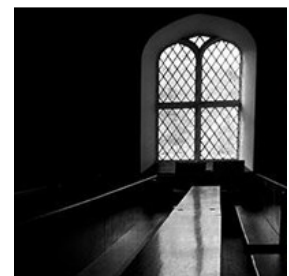
Cast

Sister Aloysius: Fiona Gwinnett

Sister James: Amy Burns

Father Flynn: Pete Stockman

Mrs Muller: Lucy Benton



**Production dates:
1-9 April 2022**

Editorial: the view from the Editor's chair

I was hugely tickled recently by a comment from the great Sir Ian McKellen, explaining how he acts. 'I imagined what it would be like to be a wizard, and then I pretended, and acted, in that way, on the day. And how did I know what to say? The words were written down for me in a script.' As understatement goes that would be hard to better! Still, it's a very good place to start ...

And speaking of places to start, here we are once again at the beginning of a new year, and one which brings us challenges which

are I think unprecedented in the history of the Apollo. But if we all recognise the existence and the nature of the challenges and work together to face them we can all say we are playing a part in the Apollo's continued success.

It's also the start of a whole new era in the management of our theatre, and although the timing is fortuitous it couldn't be a better one for these changes to be made. We are looking forward to the 50th anniversary celebrations, just to add another layer to the excitements of

this year; plus, of course, the lifting of all Covid restrictions on theatre-going. 🙌

There's a lot about the past in this issue, as inevitably there will be in the months to come. However, as Michael Arnell so rightly says in his article on page 8, while the past is fascinating, the future is what matters—and that's in our hands.

News from the Apollo Theatre Trust



Some of you may be surprised to be seeing a report from the Trust after the reorganisation of the Players came into effect last year. The fact is that the Apollo Theatre (IOW) Trust Ltd will continue to exist until the CIO is officially accepted by the Charity Commission, hopefully sometime during 2022. Meanwhile the Trust remains legally responsible to the Charity Commission and Companies House for the proper running of the Apollo including the filing of accounts.

That said, the Players have now largely taken over responsibility for the running of the theatre, including the control of capital expenditure. As well as preparing for the handover to the CIO the Trust will be concentrating on matters associated with the development and maintenance of the properties owned by the Apollo. The plans to join the theatre to Hancock house are temporarily stalled as we await a response from the structural engineer who has offered to carry out the necessary calculations to check the safety of certain aspects

of the plans necessary to obtain approval from Building Control.

One part of the proposed development includes replacement of the roof over the side passage including the seating area outside the bar, which as you may have noticed gets flooded in heavy rain and covered in moss washing off the roof which also blocks the drain and gutters. A further problem has now arisen in that the party wall outside the stage door has developed a bulge on our side. This has thrown up a challenging legal problem. We have long assumed that the wall belongs to Orme House, the garden of which extends behind Hancock House to the boundary with the theatre. In fact in the past we have reached agreement with the owners of Orme House to get permission to hang over, or rest on, the wall to allow the building of the workshop and the roof over the passage. Having approached our neighbours to discuss getting the wall repaired they have questioned their ownership of it and we can now find no

evidence in the deeds of either property to indicate who it actually belongs to or who is responsible for maintaining it. We may need legal advice as to how to proceed to prevent the wall becoming a danger.

The Trust will also be discussing with The Players what use they plan to make of The Unit on the Dodnor Trading Estate other than as a store for furniture and bulky scenic items. One issue is the use of The Unit for rehearsals. This has been problematic over the years as the furniture storage got out of control. A lot of work was done (led by Martin Ward) during lockdown to resolve this. In addition better heating has been installed. There is now ample room for rehearsal in a space representative of the theatre stage. One possibility is to investigate what else needs to be done to make The Unit more 'rehearsal friendly'. I'd be interested to get members' view on this.

Paul Jennings
Chair, Apollo Theatre Trust

News from your Committee

Notes from the Executive Committee meeting
21 December 2021

The new Executive Committee has lost no time in getting together to make plans for the future of the Apollo Players. You'll be pleased to know that they are not letting the grass grow under their feet! The plan at present is that a precis of the discussions at the Exec will be published here, so that members have an idea of where the Exec's thinking is going. However it's really important to emphasise that all members have the right to an input into what's going on. If you have something to contribute or to discuss with a member of the Exec, do please contact them either at coffee mornings or by email. They will be delighted to hear from you.

At their first meeting on 21 December, the Exec agreed some new ways of doing things—for example, written reports will be published only in Apollonius rather than taking up time at the meetings, other than for some exceptional reason (and reports will be needed to the Charitable Trustees once they're on board), and the Exec members will meet more regularly with their teams. The members of those teams who have already been identified appeared on the structure chart which was published in the last issue of 'Apollonius'; as additional members are identified the chart will be updated and republished. Some posts are

still unfilled; a list of those will also be published to give more members the chance to contribute to the theatre. [see page 5 for an initial list]

It was re-confirmed at the meeting that until the CIO comes into existence and is confirmed by the Charity Commission, the Trust continues to exist in its present form, and matters which are rightly the business of the Trust will continue to be dealt with by it. At present the most pressing of those matters are the plans to join the theatre and Hancock House at first-floor level and the need for a business plan for those alterations. These will be discussed at the next Trust meeting on 16 February.

Other practical matters discussed by the Exec included:

- the Youth Theatre are to have their own budget, like other productions. It was proposed that they have a summer production slot (though not this year, as it would coincide with the preparations for the 50th anniversary celebrations—of which more later), with perhaps smaller productions at other times of year;
- we should strive to change the demographic of our audiences with a view to diversity and younger people;
- we must reduce the amount of 'tat' on display around the theatre. More importantly, we must attempt to increase our membership; in particular, get more young

people involved in all areas and reach out to those who have been members in the past;

- we should raise and maintain the standard of both plays and actors;
- we should introduce high standards of dress and politeness when dealing with patrons (especially FoH Managers); and make people feel welcome when coming to the theatre;
- we should present challenging plays as well as ones that may attract full houses;
- reintroduce a social calendar with club nights, workshops etc.
- update our technical equipment (especially lighting), and it was agreed that a new video projector would be purchased.

Other items were agreed:

- that the House Manager's job description would be updated;
- that Ginnie Orrey should become LTG rep, taking over from Cynara Crump;
- that the Trust must negotiate with our neighbour to deal with problems with the party wall.

The Exec's next meeting will be on 10 February, so do please take the opportunity to contact them if you would like to discuss anything mentioned here, or you would like something addressed.

YOUR EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE			
Theatre Director & Chair of Executive Committee (elected 3-yearly): Paul Jennings (2021-24) paulmartinjennings@gmail.com			
Arts Manager (elected 3-yearly)	Helen Reading (2021-24)	Members' Representative (elected annually)	Kate Fysh (2021-22) katefysh@gmail.com
Business Manager (elected 3-yearly)	Martin Ward (2021-24)	Operations Manager (elected 3-yearly)	Ian Moth (2021-24)

REPORTS FROM THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

From the Director

After just a couple of months it's good to see the new structure settling down with so many members stepping up to take on new roles and many thanks to those 'old hands' who are helping to make it a smooth transition. Almost all the identified roles have now been filled but there are a few situations vacant—see the details elsewhere in this edition. Even if you don't fancy any of the roles advertised there are still plenty of opportunities to get involved. Steve Reading and Ian Moth are still struggling to fill their FOH duty rotas for 'Breaking the Code' and this problem is reducing our ability to let the theatre out to other performing arts organisations, which is a key part of our charitable objectives and our eligibility for rate relief. There are always jobs that need doing around the theatre and others that can be done from the comfort of home.

This will be the last Apolloni- us before an important

'golden' anniversary. On 25 March it will be 50 years since the Apollo first opened its doors to a paying audience probably best described as 'small but appreciative' for a week-long run of 'The Tiger and The Horse' by Robert Bolt. This and the following production of 'The Waltz of the Toreadors' were part of a spring festival of Drama Music and Art organised in and around the Apollo. This was a precursor to the grand opening of our first full season which we will be celebrating properly from September. But these two productions represented the culmination of barely 17 months of hard work by the membership—no professional help was involved and as it says in the programme for 'The Tiger and The Horse' the conversion from a Methodist church was 'almost complete'. I remember walking into the theatre for the first time seeing sets being built as the seats were being installed. Of course Roger Simpson was there probably doing both and I remember him building a

backing flat for one of the productions, during Act1 on opening night. Hillary Sloper (now Simpson) gets a credit in the programme for assisting with props. Sadly there is no photographic record of Tiger and the cast list is largely populated with people I don't recall. If anyone knows of Carole Warren, Jacqueline Cooper, Richard Plummer, Donald White or Noel Watkin it would be good to contact any of them still surviving for their memories.

Ticket prices were 40p in the stalls and 45p in the balcony, which included a programme and a cup of coffee in a plastic cup ready mixed with Marvel milk. There was no bar as we were banned from serving alcohol as a condition of purchasing the building from the Methodists.

There is to be a members' social evening on 25 March so we can raise a glass [*hopefully without Marvel milk! Ed*] to all those who assisted John and Pat Hancock to lay the foundations for our wonderful theatre.

From the Business Manager

One of the main challenges that the theatre faces is the ongoing rise in energy costs. The fact that so many energy companies have fallen by the wayside is indicative of the crisis that faces the energy industry. Wholesale energy costs that are dependant on global prices are having the most significant impact on bills, and while the Apollo cannot influence that situation we can all play a role in making sure that we do not waste energy when we are in the theatre. Being mindful of our energy consumption whenever we

are in the building is one way of controlling costs.

As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic during the past two years our income has taken a downward turn. We have not been able to generate the funds that we need to ensure that we continue to function as an entertainment venue. Government grants have helped, but now that we have once more taken to the stage we need to do everything we can to fill the seats in the auditorium.

In addition to generating as much ticket income as possible, we need to think about the role that sponsor-

ship and fundraising play in helping to secure the theatre's future. I am currently looking for someone to join the Business Management team to take on this role, so if you are interested and would like to know more please contact me or any member of the Executive Committee.

The CIO will take time to come into effect, and there are challenges ahead for the theatre. I am looking forward to facing those challenges and to playing a part in the Apollo's continued success. My thanks go to the committee and to all theatre members for their support.

From the Operations Manager

The first priority is recruiting a House Manager, then a deputy for myself as Operations Manager. General day-to-day running of the theatre continues more or less as usual but we are vulnerable to emergencies.

Staffing the theatre for performance nights remains haphazard—there is no vast body of volunteers fighting for a task. Many thanks are of course due to those volunteers who do step forward.

The next challenge on the horizon appears to be on the lighting front. The shift

to LEDs has resulted in the older technology becoming so obsolete as to be unobtainable. We are looking at significant investment or we shall be acting in the dark. Work continues on getting a better idea of timescales on this problem.

Jan Moth

From your Members' Rep

What do YOU think? We need to get more members actively involved in running the Apollo.

You've seen the pleas about the rotas—it's getting ever harder to fill them, and it's usually the same people doing it. At the moment, a few are doing a lot—how can we change things so that a lot do a few? The Executive Committee are going to have to address this, so they need to know what the wider membership thinks—your ideas, suggestions and concerns. So—

- if you currently do 'duties'—what are your observations, what would

make it easier?

- If you don't—why not? What changes would make it more likely that you would?
- If you used to, and don't any more—why? Is this something we can reverse, and if so, how?

I need to hear from as many of you as possible, not just the 'usual suspects', valuable as their input is. For this reason, I'd like to invite YOU to a discussion meeting on **Saturday 19 February**. I will be at the coffee morning and will stay on afterwards in the bar from 12.00-2.00, so do please come if you possibly can and share your thoughts and ideas.

Everyone is welcome, and all contributions very gratefully received. If you can't make it, but would like to share your thoughts, do please feel free to text, phone, email or write to me—I shall be delighted to hear from you.

As your Rep, I want to make sure that I can feed in what YOU think to this important debate. Our biggest asset is our members: let's make sure we make the best use of their time and effort.

Kate Fysh

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The latest from the Arts team. All posts in the team are now filled, as follows: Abbi Leverton leads on Publicity, with Joe Plumb creating the posters, flyers and programmes, beginning with the programme for Doubt. Abbi will be running the website, social media sites and organising everything to do with any Island publications.

Ginnie Orrey continues as Editor of Apollonius, the main proof-reader for all publications and LTG representative.

Kathryn Ward has taken on the role of Production Manager and will be working closely with future directors to ensure their technical and artistic teams are in place.

Props and costume are now a part of the Arts team and meetings with both these groups are happening shortly to discuss ideal ways of working with directors to minimise stress and maximise communication.

Mish Whitmore has great plans for the Youth Theatre over the coming year and they will be taking the July play slot from July 2023 on a permanent basis. Shorter play runs during the season, between our usual play runs, will be performed by the Youth Theatre.

Carole Crow continues as Membership Secretary and has also been organising the Gateway Wednesday meetings, which seem to be going extremely well.

The 50th Anniversary celebrations for the theatre are being organised by Amy Burns, the main event coinciding with the official opening of the Apollo on 9 September. There will also be a social event for members on 25 March, exactly 50 years since the first Apollo performance. Carole and Amy will be working on this together, so any ideas—please contact them.

I am still reading plays (all the time) in preparation for the 2022-23 season and have 4 that I would definitely like in, but am undecided about the others at the moment—so many to choose from!! Any ideas – please email me.

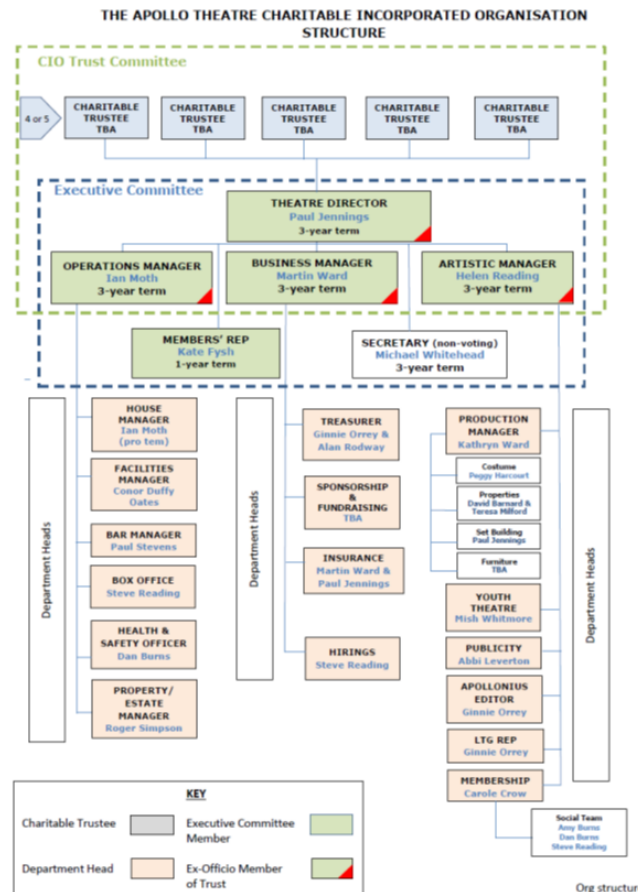
In other news ... I am working on updating our child protection policy along with a protection policy for vulnerable adults. Also a code of conduct (when working with children, vulnerable adults and using social media) will be published in the next Apollonius, to ensure we are protecting all members as well as being legal in terms of insurance. Kate Fysh will be our CPO (child protection officer) and will be the first point of contact if there are any concerns.

A big THANK YOU to Dan and Amy Burns, Maureen Sullivan and Evelyn Hicks for all your advice, support for the new team and for making this transitional time just that little bit easier.

Please email me if you have any questions/suggestions/gripes/spare gin.

Helen Reading

LATEST UPDATE



'The Devil's Mirror'



A sigh of relief from Mish Whitmore, Youth Theatre Co-ordinator

... and if you missed the show, here's a review by two youngsters, Phoebe Heng (12) and her sister Felicity (9). Brilliant to have the show reviewed by some of the very audience it's aimed at! Not only that, but as they happen to be the granddaughters of one of our members, perhaps they're members in the making!

I remember our first session back after Covid. It was August and a few children trickled through the door; perhaps our members are on holiday, perhaps they're waiting for September. The weeks came and went and the kids came and went and our hearts sank as we realised that we had lost a lot of members through lockdown. Some had grown up and got jobs, some moved away, others lost their confidence or doing their A levels etc.

But as the weeks passed we gradually started to gain new members and we began working on 'The Devil's Mirror'. Oh what a whirlwind it was! We had just four months to write it, cast it, learn a whole host of new skills and then be ready for a performance. There were times when I didn't think we would make it, when lines weren't learned, when I thought I'd asked too much of them, when there was more teenage drama off stage than on stage and all with the fear that Boris would announce a lockdown or theatre closures, or that a major cast member would get Covid and that all our work would be in vain. Our first dress rehearsal was an absolute disaster and the children battled costume changes, set changes and remembering props. We only managed to get through Act 1 in 3 hours, and with our opening night

I've seen some other Christmas shows this year but those were pantomimes, and what was nice about this non-panto but still wintry show was that under the skilful direction of Mish Whitmore, it kept to its storyline.

It was a nice change to see so many young people as the main characters and was a wonderful twist to have the girls saving the boys in this play. The idea for the set was quite clever as they could change the scenes as quickly as possible with extra effects to let us believe where they were and what they were doing even more. Costumes were fantastic with many people to help create the characters in the play.

'The Devil's Mirror' was spe-

cially written for the Apollo. This excellent production was by Karl Whitmore, who took inspiration from many different stories. During the play, all the young people were very confident and focused especially when they had to perform the new tricks they had learnt and the choreography from Jaydene Paddock.

Lighting and Sound technicians – Harry Spencer and Neve McIntosh – did an outstanding job as well as everyone else backstage and onstage. Many of the young people did amazingly well but Jess Rockill displayed some impressive acting when it came to playing Gerda as the most stropky character in the play and was a contrast to Khaya Mangena playing Sephie.

just 3 days away it crossed my mind that a case of Covid might be a blessing! But somehow those kids found their way. They dug deep, they found the extra strength and focus and suddenly all the pieces fitted together and we had a performance. They absolutely excelled themselves and I don't think anyone who saw it could fail to see what a good job the youngsters had done. To learn so many skills, not just acting but magic, baton throwing/twirling and circus too in such a short time was nothing short of a miracle. The feedback I received from audience members was amazing and even more impressive given that most of the children had never performed on stage before.

I am so proud of everyone who took part. I want to take the opportunity here to say a massive 'thank you' to everyone who supported us through the process and the performance. All the guys who built our set, Michael Whitehead, Paul Jennings, Liz and the costume team, Tyler for stepping in as SM (we've now adopted him), all the people who volunteered for box office, bar etc and all those who bought a ticket and came to watch the youth theatre.

This could be the end—but it isn't. The other day we had our first session back and I was looking forward to see-

ing all the now familiar faces, but even that didn't pan out quite as I'd imagined. There were twenty new members, taking us back to 45 youngsters squashed onto the stage, the same number as before Covid. As there have been many changes within the Apollo itself there are also changes within the youth theatre, and we have decided that to give the members more strings to their bow we are going to be starting musical theatre lessons too.



I think we have a very exciting year ahead of us with lots of opportunities for our young members to perform and to learn so many more skills that will give them a great insight into all aspects of theatre both on and off stage.

Some people with smaller parts doubled up and played another part as well. They had yet another smart idea to have a shadow for Kay (played by Tom Howard) while he was possessed. It must have been extremely difficult to do because they both had to speak at the same time and move at the same time: the Shadow (Harrison Hartup) and Kay did amazingly well.

I would advise anyone to see any of the Apollo Youth Theatre's plays and people missed out greatly if they didn't see this production. Overall the performance was spectacular and a huge well done to everyone included in the making of 'The Devil's Mirror'.

January ramblings from your Membership Secretary!

What better way to start the year—I refer of course to the **Twelfth Night party** hosted by Steve and Helen. It was a really fun evening, thanks to Steve's Pointless quiz—a definite brain teaser! It was good to see Maggie Cardew up and about and on top form, even though she is still reliant on crutches and a wheelchair. Steve has promised more fun events during the year.

The **'Apollo Gateway'** is gathering momentum and we have held two performing workshops this month. There are so many ideas in the melting pot it's been necessary to add more sessions and we are now looking at meeting four times a

month from March. As well as Michael's workshops and play readings from established writers, Glenys will be giving new local writers the opportunity to have their plays read and discussed on the second Wednesday of the month from March: more information from Glenys in due course. On every fourth Wednesday plans are afoot to start an Apollo Choir! We all know how good a singsong can be for one's mental and physical health but the breathing techniques and projection are also of great benefit for stage performances. If you would be interested in joining in, please let me know. Hopefully we will be in a position to put on an evening's varied entertainment for a Members' Night

later in the year. Please come along and get involved with as many activities as you can!

We have new, already active members: Di Crawford, Maggie Sawkins, John Waterman, Joe Plumb, Harry Spencer, Scott Walsh and Ian Saunders—welcome to the 'Apollo Family'!

Thank you all for your continuing support via your annual subscriptions: they are going a long way towards keeping our heads above water at this difficult time and allowing the Players to do what we do best—put on exceptionally good productions!

Carole Crow
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 07950 220934

membership matters

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.

100 CLUB UPDATE: the winner of the £500 at the end of August 2021 was Mavis Bownas, who has been a member of the 100 Club ever since its inception and a faithful member of our audience for even longer. The September winner (back to the usual £50) was Mrs S Roswell, one of our recent members; in October Martha James won the £50, in November it was Mike Whitehead and in December Andy Chilton. Watch this space to find out who will be the lucky winner for January 2022. *Cynara Crump*

'Through the Wardrobe': an update

For the first time the youth Theatre took the Christmas slot for their production. Liz Santer liaised with Mish and the 28 children, providing them with an array of fantasy costumes; some of the cast had three and four costume changes! Using her links with Trinity Theatre, where she is wardrobe mistress, Liz was able to

source most of the costumes from their stock, creating clowns, devils, dancers, a snowflake army and more, leaving our own wardrobe team to make a few special costumes and sewing many alterations. All congratulations to Liz for bringing the story to life with the colourful collection on stage.

The wardrobe team are now meeting again on Tuesday evenings after the Christ-

mas and New Year break and currently 'picking' costumes from our stock for 'Breaking the Code' and fitting the cast. We are also reading the script for 'Doubt', the play going up in April.

Here's to a good new year in the theatre.

Peggy Harcourt
 Wardrobe Mistress

SITS VAC

As promised, here is a list of the currently vacant posts/jobs identified by the Executive Committee. This is just a snapshot; as other vacancies come up they will be advertised here. The most important thing to remember is that we're trying to separate out jobs that need doing, so each one isn't too demanding of time or energy and thus encourage lots more members to get involved in the running of the theatre. If you'd like to find out more

about any of the jobs, just contact the relevant Exec member for a chat.

Ian Moth, Operations Manager, is calling for a **House Manager**, to take responsibility for overseeing the general cleanliness and tidiness of the theatre, managing the Front of House, G15 and Ushering team, and the ice cream sales operation; and a **deputy Ops Manager**, to work alongside Ian and help to make sure all the responsibilities of the Ops Manager are covered. Operations covers House, Bar, Box Office, Estates & Buildings, Technical & Equipment and Health & Safety.

Martin Ward is looking for someone to join the Business team to take on the role of **sponsorship and fundraising**—by which we mean local activities, as opposed to national grant applications, lottery funding and so on. If you have a flair for getting money out of people, do get in touch!

There is also a need for a new role: that of **furniture coordinator**, to assist directors in sourcing the furniture for their productions from our own collection, including maintaining the index/catalogue, and to establish relationships with other sources of furniture (eg BHF).

OUR TRUE ROOTS?

A look back in time from

**Michael
Arnell**

OUR TRUE ROOTS?

As we celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of our first production at the Apollo Theatre, in 1972, I think it appropriate to look back seventy-two years to the real first production by the Players that was staged at the Queen's Hall in Lugley Street, Newport

'The Queen's Hall?' I hear you ask. Right, let me take you to the front of Boot's in Newport High Street (that was once Harvey's cake shop and restaurant). Go in and straight through to where the floor slopes up, just by men's shaving stuff. If you had looked up and ahead a few years ago before the ceiling was lowered, you would have seen the fancy front of a balcony. Go out into Lugley Street, cross over to the charity shop, turn and look back. You will see that it is a large, quite ugly Victorian building, with dimensions similar to our Apollo. That was the Queen's Hall, with central steps leading up and into quite a big auditorium with a stage at the High Street end.

In that building, at 7.15pm on Thursday, 23rd March, 1950, the newly formed Newport Repertory Club staged its first production, John Van Druten's comedy, 'The Distaff Side'. The cast included the founding members of the club, Cyril Amey, Irene Fry, Gwen Elbourn and Tom Mills who were all members of a WEA Play Reading group that was set up in 1948.



For nearly twenty years, we Islanders looked forward to the Rep's next production which seemed to us to be a wonderful range of professional-quality plays. Over the years, overners with an interest in drama who'd moved to the Island, joined the ranks. One such was a young chap doing his National Service at Albany Barracks who first appeared in Ibsen's 'Ghosts' in June 1953. I was only eleven and my aunt said I was too young to see that particular play. Later I saw him in several plays and found out that his name was Francis Hall, that he was a RADA student and very, very good! Ten years later I became a member at the invitation of a young 'lady' that I rather liked. I made it clear that I couldn't possibly act on stage but was happy to help backstage with props and painting the (rather short) flats, etc. I could also watch and admire the rehearsals of the talented members who actually acted.

Sadly, Harvey's closed the whole premises, including the Queen's Hall which was sold to Boot's. The Repertory Club had to find other premises, including the school hall and stage at the isolated hill-top Priory Boys' which is now part of Carisbrooke High's campus. The Club's reputation ensured audiences were happy to travel 'into the country' for good drama and in 1967 the Rep welcomed two experienced ammrammers from Birmingham, Patricia and John Hancock. They both first appeared in 'Towards Zero' in March 1968 and then in all the subsequent five plays up to 'The Late Edwina Black' in April 1970 when the decision was made to buy the Rep's own premises and change the name from Newport Repertory Club to the Apollo Theatre Club.

I had ceased to be involved with the Club by then, having married, become a parent and changed careers from industry to teaching. I knew all about the purchase and conversion of the Pyle Street Methodist church and went to the opening play in March 1972. There was a small audience the night I went, which was probably down to the choice of the Robert Bolt play, but things took off properly in April with 'The Waltz of the Toreadors'. I joined the Players in the late seventies and was delighted later to work with many of the Rep Club actors I had admired years before, including two of the founding members, Cyril and Gwen, plus that young soldier and the married couple from Birmingham.

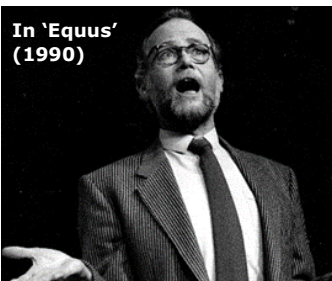
It is interesting to look back to the origins of any social group and value the contributions of past members, but to ensure good healthy progress, it is far more important to look FORWARD.

M Arnell

Many of our longer-standing members will remember Francis Hall, who died just before Christmas at the age of 89 in St Vincent's Retirement Home, where he had contentedly spent the last year of his life. His funeral was on 31 January at 3pm at the Crem; thanks to all former members who attended.

Francis' son, Bill, and daughter, Cathy, have very kindly got in touch with us to give us an outline of their father's life.

Francis had a positively stellar career in the theatre and was a very active member of the Apollo in the early days. Born in 1932 in Hawkhurst in Kent to Henry Ronald and Phyllis Daphne Hall, he was educated at Lancing College and then at RADA. He was called for National



Service in August 1951 and was posted to Albany Barracks, which accounts for his links with the Island. Encouraged to integrate into the local community, he joined the Newport Repertory Club, where he took on a range of roles including Oswald in 'Ghosts' and Johnny March in 'Windows'.

He subsequently returned to RADA for a refresher, and in 1954 he took part in their annual student per-

formance at The Savoy in London where he was awarded the prize for best individual performance in any English Class for his portrayal of Osrick in Hamlet. Judges included Sir Ralph Richardson. He then spent 18 months with Salisbury Playhouse.

In 1960 he married Island-born actress and drama teacher Joy Osborne Higginbotham, and from the mid-1970s they were both active members of the



Apollo, acting and directing a number of plays.

Francis directed some of our most challenging productions, including

- Five Finger Exercise (1975/6 season)
- Measure for Measure (1976/7 season)
- Rope (1977/8 season)
- Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf? (1978/9 season)

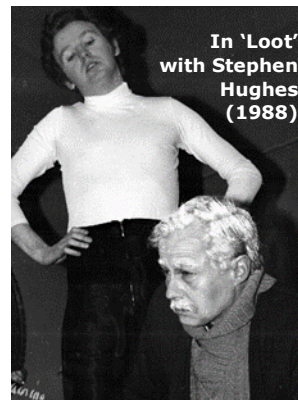


- A Severed Head (1979/80 season)
- Macbeth (1982/3 season)
- Savages (1986/7 season)
- Loot (1987/8 season)

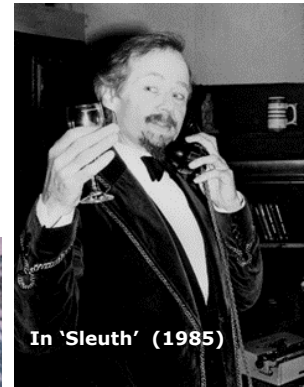


- Lunch Girls (1989/90 season)

In the early 1960s Francis gave up professional theatre and joined Dillons University Bookshop for a more regular income. He was to remain a bookseller for the rest of his working life, in 1987 becoming owner of the Phoenix Bookshop in Ryde.



After he retired he avidly pursued his interest in theatre, music and film, both in England and abroad. Joy died in 2008.



**FRANCIS EDWARD HALL
1932-2021**



**'DANGEROUS
OBSESSION'**

BY NJ CRISP

**AUDITION
CALL****Sunday
13 February
2.30pm**

The penultimate production of this season is a compelling psychological thriller in two acts

Production dates: 20-28 May 2022 (excl Sunday and Monday)

Characters:

Sally Driscoll, Mark's wife. A charming woman (ideally up to 38 yrs because the script mentions childbearing), very interested in human nature. She likes a drink and a dance but is there something else hidden beneath her sweet nature?

John Barrett is a very ordinary looking man in suit and tie and carrying a briefcase: one sunny afternoon, he intrudes into the comfortable lives of the Driscolls. He appears pedantic, self-deprecating; but is he dangerous?

Mark Driscoll, Sally's husband. A successful businessman, confident, outgoing and enjoying his wealthy lifestyle. He can be critical, superior; but for how long?

This is a well written, tense play set in the 1980s with lots of twists and mood changes. I hope we have a lot of fun with it.

Audition Pieces: p2-3, 10-11, 28-29 and 48-51

Scripts/info available from the Director, Glens Lloyd Williams
gqlenys@hotmail.com or 07486 914456



Your letters

Matinee performances

Hopes raised, then dashed. Elation then despondency. What on earth am I talking about? Well, for the past twenty or so years I have, from time to time, suggested that a matinee performance for each of our productions would be of a great advantage to the Apollo financially, and to the public, for whom it would be a welcome addition to nothing but evening slots. Then, a few weeks ago, the powers that be decided to trial a matinee for each of its shows as from February 2022. Success at last. However, this exciting news was short lived. Within a week or so the idea was scrapped. Why? Because of difficulties with parking – not really an issue, given the small number who would come by car – and possible work commitments for both cast and crew. So how do other island amateur societies such as Trinity manage to offer matinees? Surely, they too have members who work, yet they seem able to find ways to resolve the issue.

There are many elderly people who love theatre but who will only venture out in daylight and others, like me, who live far from brightly lit roads and therefore do not drive after dark. Thus a matinee would allow me to either help out or actually

see a show. As it is, I just have to content myself with the County Press review or hope one of my daughters happens to be visiting at the right time.

Yet I notice the Apollo Youth Theatre has included two matinee performances during the run of its Christmas show, one on Saturday 18th December and the other on Sunday 19th. If the Youth Theatre can do this, why can't it become standard Apollo practice? Surely a Sunday matinee wouldn't encroach on many members' working week and if it did, maybe once in a while and with sufficient notice, it could be sorted out. After all, why do we put on shows? Is it to entertain the public or just for our own satisfaction? Both, of course, so why not widen the net and scoop in those people who are at present unable to enjoy our excellent productions which sadly, on occasions, are presented to merely half full houses? Seven afternoon slots, even without all seats occupied, might result in recruiting a few extra members, and that must be a good thing.

Well worth a try, don't you think?

Rita Boffin

A response from the new theatre director

Dear Rita,

Thank you for your congratulations—it's going to be an interesting and challenging time. Thank you also for raising your concerns about matinee performances at the Apollo.

The problems you mention are real and we currently do struggle to staff evening performances. The concept of the work-free weekend has largely disappeared especially for those working in retail and hospitality. The youth group are putting on matinees as it suits their membership, who mainly rehearse during the day. It's also a show aimed primarily at children and matinees work better for the younger ones. We are, however, finding it difficult to find FOH staff and crew to support them.

All that said, I do understand the problems which some people find in attending evening performances and we do need to keep the subject of matinees under review in order to maintain and hopefully widen our audiences. I'm sure it will be a subject of future committee meetings.

With very best regards,

Paul Jennings

I'm very pleased to say that our poet-in-residence, Steve Taverner, has emerged from his artist's garret to entertain us with another of his timeless flights of fancy—one that he thinks may resonate with some of our membership (can't think what he means!).

REFLECTION

My reflection has run out on me, he left the other day,

Tired of all the lockdowns, he went on holiday. Just walked out at dead of night, he didn't stop to pack, And now when I look in the mirror, there's an old git looking back.

Just like the old reflection, he matches all my moves, But his neck has gone all saggy and his face has got deep grooves. At least he's still got all his

hair, though most of it is white, And from the lack of teeth I'd say he's been in quite a fight!

I'd like the old reflection back, but that can never be. I suppose I must accept that that wrinkled wreck is me. But here's a cheerful prospect to end this dismal verse, I soon won't be able to see him, if my eyes get any worse!

Poetry please!

One of the sad things, I always think, about new years is that they often make us think of absent friends. One of those from my point of view is Henry Woolf, who died at the end of last year. For those of you with long memories, in the 1970s Henry presented a children's TV programme called 'Words and Pictures', which may be the way many people remember him. However, he had a long and stellar career in TV, film and stage—as an example, he appeared in Peter Brook's original 'Marat/Sade', for goodness' sake—as poet, writer, actor and not least as raconteur, as well as lifetime friend of Harold Pinter. I had the great good fortune to know him for some thirty years as a 'sporadic friend', I suppose

you'd call it. I first met him when I lived in a flat in a Victorian mansion block in Folkestone; I lived in the basement flat, Henry owned the top floor garret flat and somewhere in between lived June Brown, aka Dot Cotton from East Enders. What a cultural building! I met his family fairly regularly, and in 2008 had the great pleasure of going to stay with him and his wife, Susan, in Canada; he had been head of drama at the University of Saskatchewan, where they lived for more than twenty years until Henry's death.

It's very hard to categorise Henry; but once met, never forgotten. He had a marvellous, deep voice—brown velvet, RP, but slipping seamlessly into East End in a nod to his roots in Hack-

ney, where he and Pinter grew up. He had a way of saying 'Oh, Virginia' which is impossible to convey in print but was very Henry. His physical presence was unique: very tiny, barely my height, but absolutely bouncing with energy (he once played Dudley Moore's body double!) and a consummate talker. He would barely draw breath all evening: informed, intellectual, utterly fascinating and hilarious. I last met him in London about three years ago at the launch of his last book, 'Barcelona is in Trouble', when he would have been about 88; the evening included a piece he had written, possibly not his best but still inimitably Henry. He will be much missed.

Ginnie Orrey

Meditations on an absent friend

You may think it's early days to be thinking about next season—the 22-23 season, our 50th—but it's never too soon to start making plans! Obviously the actual productions haven't yet been decided on, but we have identified the dates on which they'll be put on. So here are the dates for your diary:

Play 1	Friday 2 September 2022-Saturday 10 September
Anniversary show	Date to be decided
Play 2	Friday 14 October-Saturday 22 October
Play 3	Friday 2 December-Saturday 10 December
Play 4	Friday 3 February 2023-Saturday 11 February
Play 5	Friday 24 March-Saturday 1 April
Play 6	Friday 19 May-Saturday 27 May
Play 7	July 2023 Youth Theatre production: date to be confirmed

DATES FOR NEXT SEASON'S PRODUCTIONS

I was delighted to see that Dave Talbot, our other poet-in-residence, has recently published another volume—his sixth—of 'poems and views on daily life', subtitled 'Such is Life'. Dave was kind enough to give me a copy and as always the poems are full of pithy and sometimes moving

comments on life as he sees it. I was particularly entertained by a poem entitled 'Meditation' which I think has a message for all of us. 'Meditation'

Have you heard about the train station meditation? It's a great thing to do and

really helps the nation Clears some thoughts out of the brain like a drain The good ones are allowed to stay While bad and unpleasant ones get sent away I use it regularly, and everybody can And the result is I'm starting to be a happier man.

DAVE'S POETRY CORNER



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

tel:
01983 527267

ticketline:
01983 210010

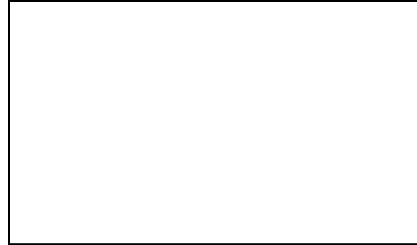
email:
info@apollo-theatre.org.uk

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

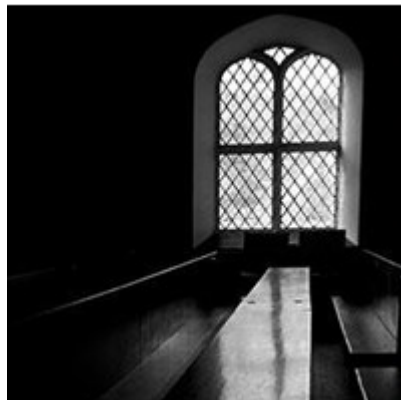
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Bringing good theatre to the Isle of Wight for more than 40 years



The Apollo Players' next production



**'DOUBT:
A PARABLE'
1-9 APRIL 2022**

'Doubt' is a drama by John Patrick Shanley, set in the St. Nicholas Catholic Church and school in the Bronx, New York in 1964. A strict nun, Sister Aloysius Beauvier, believes that one of the priests, the charismatic Father Flynn, has been molesting a 12-year-old boy, the school's only African-American student. She confides in a young, naive nun (Sister James) and shares her concerns with the boy's mother, who is surprisingly unconcerned. The play concludes with a one-on-one confrontation between Sister Aloysius and Father Flynn as she attempts to get the truth out of him. The question hangs in the air at the end of the play – were Sister Aloysius' concerns justified?