



# APOLLO

THE IN-HOUSE MAGAZINE OF THE APOLLO THEATRE, ISLE OF WIGHT

ISSUE NO. 314

DECEMBER 2025

## Forthcoming readings, auditions & other production stuff

- 'Quiz': read-through Monday 26 January 2026, 19:30 in the Apollo Bar.
- 'Quiz': auditions Sunday 1 February, 1030am tbc

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

## DEADLINE FOR CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE NEXT ISSUE:

1 February 2026

## Other diary dates

Coffee mornings Every Saturday, 10.30-12.30

**Apollo Christmas Show** Friday 19 & Saturday 20 December 2025

**AGM & 12th Night Party, including Big Fat Quiz of the Year** Saturday 10 January 2026 7pm

Steve Young UK Nashville Nights Country Music Trio in aid of Age UK (see p 16) Saturday 21 February 7.00pm



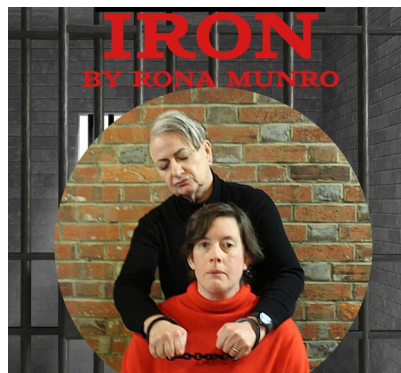
I had mixed feelings about seeing *Iron*. I assumed it wasn't my kind of play and felt it was an odd choice so close to Christmas. I couldn't have been more wrong. While certainly not light-hearted, it contains moments of sharp, well-placed humour within a deeply poignant and challenging subject.

*Iron* is an intense psychological drama. Fay is serving a life sentence for murdering her husband with a kitchen knife. Twenty-five years into her sentence, she receives her first visit from her adult daughter, Josie. Raised by her paternal grandmother, whom she calls 'Mum,' Josie has no memory of her father or the crime. She arrives seeking answers, while Fay desperately wants the past to remain buried.

The play is predominantly a two-hander, supported by two prison guards. The set is simple but effective: a prison waiting room on one side, Fay's cell on the other, and a table and chairs centre stage for visiting hours. There are no curtains, allowing the action to flow seamlessly. The opening—accompanied by an acoustic cover of *The Sounds of Silence*—immediately immerses us in the rhythm of prison life. Sliding barred doors cleverly redefine the space throughout.

Fiona Gwinnett gives a masterful performance as Fay, with Amy Burns providing a compelling counterpoint as

Josie. Fay is unpredictable: confident one moment, distraught the next. Initially, this volatility seems like institutionalisation, but it gradually suggests deeper mental health struggles, evident in her fixations and anxieties. At times she appears manipulative, subtly reshaping Josie to fit her needs—such as urging her to get her ears



pierced, which Josie later does in an attempt to please her.

Humour surfaces sparingly but effectively. One particularly memorable exchange—where Fay requests cigarettes and receives fruit instead—elicits a light chuckle and later resurfaces with added emotional weight, reinforcing the human connection between them and us as the audience.

By the interval, uncertainty still surrounds Fay. Was the murder planned, spontaneous, or even committed by her at all? A fellow audience member described the play as 'intense,' noting the persistent air of mystery and the threat of violence. The

prison guards—played skilfully by Paul Gwinnett and Holly Squires—add crucial dimension. One is compassionate and hopeful; the other hardened and sceptical. They provide stability amid the emotional turbulence.

The second act is uncomfortable, raw, and deeply affecting. Fay lives vicariously through Josie, while Josie increasingly moulds herself to her mother's expectations. Her compassion intensifies to the point of personal sacrifice as she attempts to appeal Fay's sentence. Underneath is a childlike longing for her mother.

When the truth finally emerges—and Josie's suppressed memories surface—the revelation is shocking and heartbreaking. Fay ultimately pushes Josie away, knowing it is the only way to free her. The final moments, underscored by a cover of *Sacrifice*, are devastatingly tender.

Though repetition in the script initially jarred, it ultimately underscored the numbing effects of institutional life. *Iron* is an emotional rollercoaster 'Intense' hardly does it justice.

*Abbi Lewerton*

## EDITORIAL: THE VIEW FROM THE EDITOR'S CHAIR

Well, as you can all imagine, there's only one thing visible from the editor's chair at present—our wonderful achievement in being awarded the King's Award for Voluntary Service.

You will all, I hope, have seen the special edition of Apollonius telling you all about it, so there's not much more I can say except that the award is for all of us: whether you appear on stage, staff the bar, build the sets, create the costumes and props, run box office and front of house, look after the building, manage the accounts, sort out publicity (or even write Apollonius!), run coffee mornings and other members' events or just be a 'silent supporter', we are all volunteers and equally deserving of this award.

One of the things applying for the award has done is to remind us how much we all do to make this theatre happen, and why—because theatre is in our blood. Not because we earn money from it, but just because it's there and it's important.

And speaking of important, this issue has another very special article—but one that as it happens also has a direct link to our KAVS award. On page 6 you will see an article from a national publication about our lovely Philip Fryer, in which he is quoted as saying that his work with the Gateway choir was the richest musical experience of his life, and that some of the singers were discovering choral singing later in life.

Now that is inclusion writ large—the element of our KAVS application which swung it for us. This is about seeing it in action, not just talking about it; and it's something we can justly be proud of. I'm sure the Gateway singers will go on to honour Philip's memory.

And as an addendum to this, my train of thought has suddenly thrown up a review of the recent film *The Choral*, starring (be still my beating heart) Rafe Fiennes, Roger Allam et al. The reviewer, in what I can only describe as a voice dripping with snark, refers to Fiennes' role as a choir-master who 'oozes patrician distaste' for the local

choral society; and goes on to describe the film as 'veering dangerously towards the am-dram end of the spectrum'. Well, frankly my dear I was speechless with irritation (apart from growls of fury). Not only did he assume that a 'patrician' choir-master would look down his nose at a local society—something that the unquestionably patrician Philip would never have done, indeed describing it as 'one of the richest musical experiences of his life'; in describing Fiennes' performance as a 'beacon of class in a picture that veers dangerously towards the am-dram end of the spectrum' he implies that 'am dram' (o how I hate that term) neither has class nor appears anywhere but at the lower end of the spectrum.

I don't have space here to follow that thought through, but be assured that I shall, I certainly shall ...

To help celebrate our KAVS award, it is possible to purchase enamel badges. I know such things are not so much in fashion these days but if you would like one to wear when you're public-facing, please let me know and we can organise it through the official vendors. The badges cost approximately £2.50 each.



Some of our volunteers celebrating the King's Award



**A CHRISTMAS MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR**

**As this is the final Apollonius of the year I would just like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has helped make 2025 a very special year for the Apollo. To all of you who have given your time to help I would like to say a very big 'thank you'. You have worked back stage, operated the tech, built and painted sets, stood front of house, clicked on the box office, helped behind the bar, served coffee, taken photographs, done marketing and social media, helped with props, assisted with costume, acted on stage and, of course, made it possible to achieve the King's Award for Voluntary Service. Have I missed anyone? Please continue to support our theatre with your time and effort and help make 2026 an even better year.**

**I'm both thankful and grateful for your loyal and continued support and wish you and your families a very happy Christmas and prosperous New Year.**

*Steve Reading*

**DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

This season is going so well. With almost full houses for our first 2 plays we have pretty much achieved our unwritten aim of having two "bums on seats" productions in order that we can experiment with challenging drama for the rest of the season. Iron is one such example. Superbly acted, the writers' intention communicated and some well informed audiences who have come and, in many cases, been blown away with the production. Exciting drama which I trust will continue into future seasons.

After long delays, our accounts were finally signed off and filed with the Charity Commission, albeit late. As a result Dan and I have held discussions with a local accounts agency to handle our day to day accounting and to provide financial reporting, checks and balances that will enable us to make data-driven decisions on spending. The cost of this would be less than our current accountants charge.

We have received one complaint about our intention to perform *Immaculate*. This has been dealt with sensitively and I'm grateful for the support and help given by all of our Trustees. If any member has cause to complain (about anything), please use our Complaints Procedure which can be found in the Members' section of our website under 'Really Useful Book'. Or use

the members' rep (Carole Crow) to raise your concern. We give trigger warnings where appropriate but we cannot always know what offends or upsets. The trigger warnings are there to inform, so if you feel you might be upset or offended, please don't attend—it's like switching over the TV channel.

We have reinstated our members Christmas Show and I'm encouraged by the numbers of members who want to be involved. I'm looking forward to it. All proceeds go to our Building Fund.

Our delayed AGM will be held on Saturday 10 January 2026 and it will be followed by our annual 12<sup>th</sup> Night Party with the ever popular 'Big Fat News Quiz of the Year'.

Finally, as this is the last report from me for 2025 I'd like to thank our Management Committee for all of their hard work in helping to move the theatre forward in leaps and bounds. They all give a lot of their time to improving the Apollo and encouraging others to join in. My heartfelt thanks to our hard-working set builders, props and costume teams who give their all for each production. Thank you also to all of you who give your time to help fill the rotas for each play. May you all have a happy and restful Christmas with my best wishes for 2026.

*Steve Reading*, Theatre Director

**NEWS FROM YOUR COMMITTEE**  
 NOTES FROM THE COMMITTEE MEETING 8 DECEMBER 2025

**YOUR EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

<b>Theatre Director</b> & Chair of Executive Committee (elected 3-yearly): <b>Steve Reading</b> (2024-27) director@apollo-theatre.org.uk			
<b>Arts Manager</b> (elected 3-yearly)	<b>Helen Reading</b> (2024-27) artsmanager@apollo-theatre.org.uk	<b>Members' Representative &amp; Membership Secretary</b> (elected 3-yearly)	<b>Carole Crow</b> (2024-27) membersrep@apollo-theatre.org.uk
<b>Business Manager</b> (elected 3-yearly)	<b>Dan Burns</b> (2022-25) treasurer@apollo-theatre.org.uk <u>or</u> businessmgr@apollo-theatre.org.uk	<b>Operations Manager</b> (elected 3-yearly)	<b>Vicki Cook</b> (2024-27) operations@apollo-theatre.org.uk

## NEWS FROM YOUR COMMITTEE (CONT'D)

**ARTS MANAGER**

*Iron* has opened to very positive audience feedback in spite of lower numbers than usual. It is a serious play covering difficult themes, a very worthy production with a fabulous cast. My thanks go to all involved.

*Immaculate* rehearsals are going well, with new director Vicki Cook at the helm. She is doing a grand job so far and the group of young actors are committed and hard working ... and talented. We have made it clear in all advertising that there is strong language and adult themes and that those of a particular religious bearing may take offence. However, last time it was performed on the Island it had totally positive responses from audiences.

The costume department have begun an overhaul of the stock, allocated specific roles to members of the team and are now going from strength to strength. Vicki, Steve and I managed to create some space for them above the sewing room by sorting the soft furnishings area. This was to enable them to have a 'sorting space'.

Set builders are still pushed for time, but continue to produce creative and complex sets. I would like to thank them for all the work on *Iron* as well as their positive attitude to 'getting things done'.

Rehearsals have started early for *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, in the capable hands of director Julie Stonestreet. The auditions were well attended and Julie has a strong cast with a mix of ages and experience. I know that the costume department are very excited about ideas for the fairies!

Michael Arnell has been nominated as the Arts Man-

ager for the next 3 seasons, so far no one else has shown an interest, so unless anyone else changes their mind and we need to vote at the AGM, he will be taking over. I am, of course, still around until the end of July when the current season finishes and will assist Michael in whatever he needs me to do until then.

Some of the plays for the 2026/7 season have been decided, depending on the availability of the performance rights, but there are still gaps in that season that the new Arts Manager will need to fill.

Publicity is going well, led by Ginnie. But please, if you see something come up on your social media relating to Apollo productions, share and comment as it helps us get to a wider audience.

*Helen Reading*

**OPERATIONS MANAGER**

There is very little to report from Operations this month, mainly due to spending large amounts of time at the Apollo cleaning and tidying areas that have been much needed, lots of rosters and productions/screenings to cover and directing my own play *Immaculate*.

However, at the beginning of November a few of us descended on the Unit to clear some much-needed space for rehearsals. This involved hiring a skip which was swiftly filled with unwanted furniture, old material and various other bits that have not seen light of day for some time! This has created a good amount of space and allowed better access to the facilities for all. There is still a lot more to sort out but with time needed and most of us being so busy with other Apollo duties this will very likely happen in the New Year sometime.

We recently combined the G15 and Usher role on our rosters, removed Box Office Assistant and have for screenings reduced the number of volunteers required for each performance. It is hoped that the need for fewer volunteers on an evening will mean the rosters will be easier to fill. We still seem to be very reliant on the same faces. It is too early to tell whether this will prove successful.

Our building planning continues behind the scenes and my thanks to Roger Simpson for all his hard work on this. While this project has been ongoing for some time, it is very much hoped that we can start to upgrade some of our public areas in the near future. Future work on the horizon includes refurbishment of the bar toilets and new flooring outside the stage door.

Finally, as the year draws to a close, it's been a very busy first year for me as Operations Manager. However, I have been blown away by the amount of time many you have given to the Apollo. Whether it's as part of our productions, backstage etc or helping to cover our rosters, I am sincerely grateful to all of you. I wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Ps, I never miss a chance to ask for your help, *Immaculate* is the first play of 2026 please do email me if you can come and volunteer.

*Vicki Cook*

**MEMBERS REP & SECRETARY**

Very little to report at this time. There have been comments on how cold the auditorium was on the first night of *Iron*. Membership numbers still continue to grow, with three new members in November.

*Carole Crow*

### Membership Ramblings

You are invited by Philip Fryer's family to a Thanksgiving Service for his distinguished life, on Saturday 14 March at 3.00pm at Holy Trinity Church in Cowes and afterwards at the Royal Ocean Racing Club (formerly known as the Royal Corinthian Yacht Club), for tea and cakes. The Gateway Choir will be singing as part of the service.

Over 40 of our members are coming together on 19 and 20 December to create a 'Festive Revue' to give you all a real treat of songs, sketches, poetry and monologues. Tickets for members are free (you will need your membership number to book - contact me if you have forgotten it) and only £5 for non-members. All proceeds will go into the 'Building Fund'. I'm looking forward to seeing you there!

If you need to escape from the Christmas shenanigans the Theatre Bar will be open for 'Coffee 'n Chat' on Saturday 27 December.

We have three new members: Ayad Andrews, Poppy Anderson and Jack Sedgwick. Welcome to you all! *Carole*

You may remember our excitement earlier this year when a team from the Apollo won the cup in the Senior Mime Class at the IW Music Dance & Drama Festival. Next year's Festival will be on 14 and 15 March and we must decide whether to enter again. There are two categories: a 5-minute mime for pairs or a 5-minute mime for four and over. We're looking for someone to take this on—could it be you?! Contact Carole Crow for more information.

*As you may all remember, the post of **Arts Manager** is coming up for election this year. Anyone can stand; all you need to do is tell the membership your plans for the artistic side of the Apollo and let them do the rest! At present two people are standing: **Michael Arnell** and **Amy Burns**, and here are their 'manifestos'.*

**Amy Burns:** As we move towards another year of the Apollo Theatre and its movement towards the next season, I would like to put my name forward to stand for Arts Manager when Helen steps down after her successful tenure. So a little about me, for those who may not know me. I have been a member of the Apollo Theatre Players all my life, my parents being part of the team that helped convert the old chapel into the theatre that we use and love today. I have over my years taken on many roles at the Apollo and been involved in many productions—helping with the creative, technical, practical and physical sides of theatre. I have at some point done every role, both FOH and backstage; I have been on the committee in the past and helped with the transition to our new format, and am aware of all the tasks that the role of arts manager has to undertake. I think artistically that we have a great opportunity to put on brilliant theatre: we have the space and resources to do what we want, using all the talents of everyone at the Apollo. I will always consider the casts and crews in my play choices but also our audiences, who need to be challenged in their viewing and entertainment. My view is that we must create balanced seasons of plays to provide something for everyone to enjoy whether on stage, backstage or in our audiences. I am happy to listen to you, the membership, and hope that I can continue the work that Helen has done in putting on great theatre at the Apollo.

**Michael Arnell:** I have been a member of the Apollo Players since 1977. I have been in or directed 104 productions at the Apollo and 132 for other Island Theatre groups. I have held the post of Arts Manager several times, plus Membership Secretary, Committee Chair/Secretary and Theatre Director. I initiated and ran the regular Saturday children's theatre workshops, Apollonius and Saturday coffee mornings. I have designed, painted and dressed many sets. However, my ongoing passion over the years is to encourage would-be and new actors by providing workshops to demonstrate and practise stagecraft skill—teaching them not to **act** but to **be**. My proposed season will be decided and ordered by consultation with the technical and wardrobe teams and of course with the members willing to direct the plays. If elected I will maintain contact with production teams from auditions to first nights. I understand that a couple of plays have already been 'pencilled in' and I propose that the season below be considered.

<b>Emma</b>	Jane Austen	Comic adaptation by Doon Mackichan and Martin Millar	4f 2m
<b>The Cane</b>	Mark Ravenhill	Family debate about past/present standards	2f 1m
<b>Season's Greetings</b>	Alan Ayckbourn	Seasonal family comedy	4f 5m
<b>Shakespeare In Love</b>	Tom Stoppard	Big cast	12-18
<b>The Anniversary</b>	Bill McIlwraith	Family black comedy	3f 3m
<b>Allelujah!</b>	Alan Bennett	Big mixed cast, many elderly	25
<b>Pressure</b>	David Haig	D-Day high command drama	2f 9m

*Carole Crow*  
membershipsecy@  
apollo-theatre.org.uk  
Tel: 07905220934

*As you will know, dear readers, I make it a rule not to include in Apollonius articles from elsewhere verbatim unless there's a very good reason. This, I'm both glad and sorry to say, is one of those occasions.*

*You will all remember the recent sad loss of Philip Fryer, choirmaster of the Gateway Singers and occasional contributor to Apollonius. We all knew, or had an idea, that he had a significant back story, but no-one could give us the details.*

*Well, entirely fortuitously, an article from the Spectator by associate editor Damian Thompson has fallen into my hands and I repeat it here to show us how we were unwittingly touched by greatness during the short time Philip was with us. Note particularly the penultimate paragraph.*

In the early 1970s my father moved offices and I was plucked out of my cosy prep school in Surrey to land in the eccentric surroundings of Presentation College. My new school's modern block was surrounded by decaying Edwardian villas occupied by Irish teaching brothers with impenetrable accents. There was a broken aeroplane on one of the lawns; I never found out how it got there.

Talk about a culture shock. Already I was besotted with classical music; to say that the brothers didn't share my enthusiasm is putting it mildly. There wasn't a flicker of interest in eight years – something that puzzled me until I read Thomas Day's book *Why Catholics Can't Sing*, which argues that, in the Irish diaspora, highbrow music stirs folk memories of English colonial occupation. Presentation College didn't even have a full-time music teacher. My parents soon decided I'd be better off at a public school that did. They were surprised when I refused to move. The reason? I

was receiving an unofficial but first-class musical education from a young Anglican English master, Philip Fryer, who sang tenor in the finest choirs in the country.

Born to a tea-planting family in Ceylon, Mr Fryer spoke RP with the extra polish of an expat. He was handsome with a toothy smile and magnificent wavy hair ('Ooh, he's dishy,' sighed my statuesque piano teacher Mrs Oats after seeing him play a Gilbert and Sullivan romantic lead). He loved his oddball colleagues—but he was a naughty mimic and couldn't resist sending them up in stage Irish. I'll never forget his imitation of an off-key Catholic congregation sliding into a *rallentando* at the end of every verse. He also did a mean Bob Dylan.

Mr Fryer, who went from 'sir' to 'Philip' when I was in the sixth form, could instantly spot a pupil who loved classical music—actually not difficult, since we were busy getting our shins kicked. He was also an expert sailor who introduced many boys to the sport but wisely didn't rope me in. There was another musical nerd in my class, a shy lad called Michael Smith. Mr Fryer would drive us up to concerts in London and test our knowledge with a game he called 'Spot That Tune'. 'Give me 'Morning' from *Peer Gynt*,' he'd say. That was easy, so he'd up the stakes to Beethoven's Violin Concerto (I got that) or the beginning of Janacek's *Sinfonietta* (Smith beat me to it).

Then there was a new excitement. Philip became a founder member of the Chorus of the Academy of St Martin's in the Fields and in 1979 he took Michael and me to hear the ASMF, conducted by Laszlo Heltay, recording Haydn's *Stabat Mater* in the gorgeous acoustic of St Jude-on-the-Hill in Hampstead. There was a luxury line-up of soloists: Arleen Augér, Alfreda Hodgson, Anthony Rolfe-

Johnson (Philip's singing tutor) and Gwynne Howell. Philip always tried to pinpoint the moment in a work that, in its beauty, would eclipse everything else. His suggestions were inspired—for example, a long-delayed entry of the tenors in the first Kyrie of Bach's B minor Mass. And if you doubt that the Haydn *Stabat Mater* is a masterpiece, listen to the chorus 'Quis est homo', which starts in declamatory fashion and then dissolves into a soft, soaring fugue at the words 'in tanto supplicio'.

A few weeks ago, Philip, Michael and I sang those words together—joyfully but with a catch in our throats. Our beloved mentor was in a hospital bed on the Isle of Wight, suffering from a devastating lung disease. He was emaciated but still handsome; his daughter Ali, who is as charismatic as her dad, was doing her best to control the flow of lady visitors. There was often an over-supply of sopranos in the amateur choirs that Philip coached. He told Ali recently that conducting the island's Gateway Singers, some of whom were discovering choral singing in their 70s, was the richest musical experience of his life.

Michael and I had planned to stay at the hospital for less than an hour, but Philip didn't want to let us go. He was bursting with anecdotes, one of which involved a supposedly well-loved English conductor whose nitpicking during an Albert Hall rehearsal was so annoying that when Philip nipped out for a pee in the backstage gents he found the words '[well-loved conductor] is a c\*\*t' scrawled on the mirror. Looking back, I don't think Philip would have told that story if he hadn't sensed that we'd reached the end of our 52-year journey together.

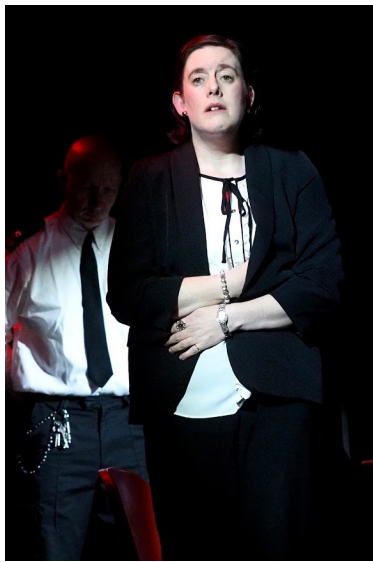
*Damian Thompson*



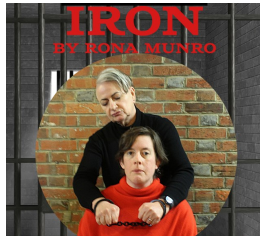
**PHILIP FRYER**



**PRODUCTION PHOTOS**



# PRODUCTION NEWS

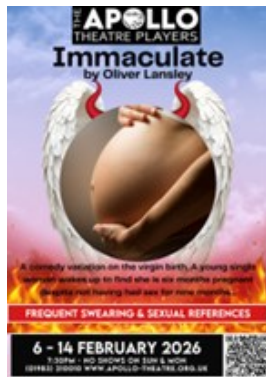


Well, what a joy to receive such positive audience responses to *Iron*! It just goes to confirm our view that audiences don't just want 'bums-on-seats' shows—they will respond thoughtfully to interesting and challenging productions too. Here are just a few of the responses we've received (not to mention the standing ovation on the first night!):

*Hullo Apollo Team! Absolutely splendidly well per-*

*formed last night IRON, we have been to many many productions of plays throughout the world with fully professional actors ..Theatres with huge budgets , where you would expect to see the highest standard performances. What we watched last night at your little theatre was equal to any of those. Denis Couldn't believe the actors were amateurs. A really professional show! Best performances I've seen*

*on the Island. That was NOT an amateur performance. Those actors were superb. Totally amazing performance. Catch this show if you can. Highly recommend this must-see psychological drama at the Apollo Theatre. Well acted and very thought-provoking. Congratulations to all involved. Incredibly powerful performances from the cast. Well done all!*



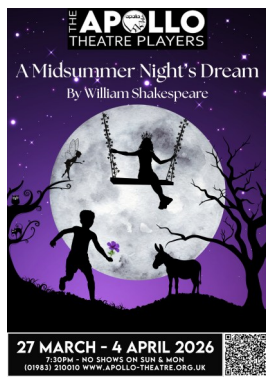
A huge 'thank you' to all who turned up to the read-through and auditions for *Immaculate*. Both saw high numbers and with the choice of sixteen people for a cast of six, as a new director I was spoilt for choice! It was good to see so many familiar faces but really encouraging to see so many new ones. Recent productions have been a magnet for new members to see what we do and *Immaculate* was no exception.

As rehearsals are now under way, behind the scenes the usual plans are being made for set design, costume and props. *Immaculate* has many funny moments that will be enhanced by sound and lighting—thankfully I can rely on our technical team to bring my vision to life!

*Immaculate* has frequent swearing and sexual references and may not be for everyone, particularly if you dislike criticism of organised religion, but it is at its core a

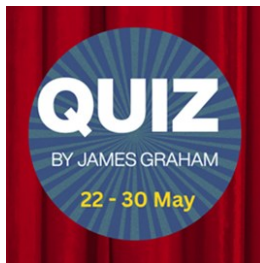
light-hearted play which is fast-paced with witty one-liners and comedic chaos. The amazing cast of six include Mark Duffus, an Apollo familiar face, and the return of Hebe Gregory, Carl Burch and Olly Fry, all of whom have been on the Apollo stage previously. Imogen Evans and Dan Pressey are making their debut at the Apollo. Please do come and support these new faces.

*Vicki Cook*



The director of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Julie Stonestreet, has been very visible about the theatre, discussing her ideas for costumes with the wardrobe team and working on finalising her cast. She's putting a huge amount of energy, imagination, enthusiasm and experience into this production and we're looking forward very much to seeing the outcome. In the meantime, here's her cast:

THESEUS	Ian Moth	PUCK	Lorenzo McGrath
EGEUS	Jack Sedgwick	FAIRIES	Suzie Chilton,
HIPPOLYTA	Chris Turvey		Di Marsh
PHILOSTRATE	Latia	Youth Group	Tess, Hazel,
LYSANDER	Harrison Hartup		Latia, Tabitha,
DEMETRIUS	Dominic Lowthion	INDIAN BOY	Flo, Harry
HERMIA	Imogen Netherway		Carlyle
	Jessica Rockhill		Charlie Murphy
HELENA	Donna Thornall		
QUINCE	Steve Taverner		
BOTTOM	Ellen Weeks		
STARVELING	Michael Arnell		
SNOUT	Jack Sedgwick		
FLUTE	Sarah Fowler		
SNUG	Jake Harrison		
OBERON	Lin Caldicott		
TITANIA			



In 2001 Major Charles Ingram and his wife coughed their way to a million pounds on ITV's *Who Wants to be a Millionaire?* programme with Chris Tarrant. Now 25 years later, Amy and Dan Burns will be bringing this story to the Apollo stage.

Do you want to be involved? There will be parts

for all, ranging from non-speaking audience members to the main characters.

For more information or for a script to read, contact [amy@masexodus.co.uk](mailto:amy@masexodus.co.uk) (07886 389 561) or

[businessmgr@apollo-theatre.org.uk](mailto:businessmgr@apollo-theatre.org.uk) (07401 306 577)

Read-through Monday 26 January 2026 at 19:30 in the Apollo bar.

Auditions Sunday 1 February 2026, 10:30am TBC

**Production dates 22-30 May 2026**

## PRODUCTION NEWS

So, Ida has invited Gert, Eunice and Walter (they're the ageing love interest—more on that later) and Harry to have dinner with her at the Cornucopia restaurant located in the Sussex Arms lobby. She is looking much better than she did when she left a few months ago, so what has she been doing? When she left she was not feeling well, so she popped into the chemist to get a thermometer to check her temperature, but the cashier was so rude to her, she walked out of the store—complete with the thermometer in her hand. Yes, she's stolen it! She admits she should have felt ashamed of herself, but she felt marvellous, excited, her heart going boom-ditty-boom-ditty-boom, so the next day she went back and walked out with an electric curling tong set, a sunlamp and an electric toothbrush—after all, nobody takes any notice of old people! She sells it all off and can now

afford to live almost like a queen.

She's been so successful that she wants to expand and form a 'gang' and use the money to renovate the decrepit and run down Sussex Arms and eventually buy it and run it for the benefit of its elderly residents. The assembled group are horrified at the thought and reject the idea out of hand. Ida agrees to stay the night.

The following morning, Ida is preparing to leave when Eunice walks in dressed in a beautiful brand new coat from Sadies Store ... Where has she got it? She simply looks at Ida and says 'boom-ditty-boom-ditty-boom'. Yes, she's stolen it! One problem though—to make sure there wasn't an empty hanger left on the rack, Eunice hung her own coat on the hanger ... and it has her name sewn in the lining! So they have to return to Sadie's and reverse the theft, and needless to say, it

does not go as planned! The farcical situation ends up with Ida having to 'faint' and get Sadie to order her a coffee, but it has to be served in a china cup—she cannot possibly drink Coffee in a Cardboard Cup <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r0ZM7v9219s> (this is deliberately not taken from a recording of the show).

We return to the Sussex Arms where Eunice and Walter, who are engaged to be married, are sitting and watching the television in the hotel lounge. They look at the audience, wondering what they are thinking. 'Do We?' (really do 'it' at our age?) - well, they're not going to tell! [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b\\_UU7Gai4JY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b_UU7Gai4JY)

More in the next issue of Apollonius ...

*John Abraham*

THE LATEST  
TEASER FROM  
THE DIRECTOR  
OF ...



## HOORAH!

*Our Committee has decided to reinstate the annual*

# APOLLO CHRISTMAS SHOW

**FRIDAY 19 & SATURDAY 20 DECEMBER 2025**

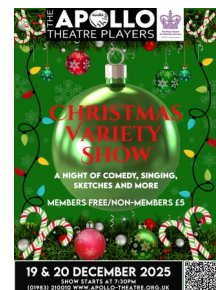
**A MEDLEY OF MIRTH, MUSIC & FESTIVE CHEER  
IN TWO ACTS**

**WITH AN INTERVAL FOR REFRESHMENT & SOCIALISING**

**ALL MEMBERS & FRIENDS ARE CORDIALLY INVITED!**

**MEMBERS FREE, FRIENDS £5. BOOK IN THE USUAL WAY**

*Michael Arnell, director*



## THE SATANIC VERSES

### THOUGHTS ON IMMACULATE BY IAN MOTH

The controversy that some expect around our fourth play in the season, *Immaculate*, would be a real storm in a teacup.

The whole backstory to Lucifer, Gabriel etc has about as much basis as a story as the antics of the Gods on Mount Olympus. Lucifer, later assuming the name Satan, is really a reference to Venus, the 'Morning Star'. He is not a proper biblical character, although he is claimed to be mentioned in Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28 (see below). Unfortunately in the first the prophet is writing about the King of Babylon and in the second the subject is the King of Tyre. Gabriel turns up most spectacularly in Luke 1:26, but pretty well every clerk in holy orders will accept that this is a literary device, and would not argue if you asserted that

Luke is essentially making this story up.

In mythology, Jesus isn't the only person enjoying a 'virgin birth'. Alexander the Great, the Ptolemies and some Caesars, and a host of characters from religions across history and across the globe share this apocryphal distinction. Some people will feel uncomfortable with the plot, but very few clergy. For this we have to thank Graham Linehan. The sight of Fathers Ted and Dougal on their futile protest outside Graggy Island's cinema, displaying a placard reading 'Down with this sort of thing', is absolutely the last word.

#### Ian Moth

##### **Isaiah 14:12**

*How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground,*

*which didst weaken the nations!*

##### **Ezekiel 28:13**

*You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone adorned you: carnelian, chrysolite and emerald, topaz, onyx and jasper, lapis lazuli, turquoise and beryl.*

*Your settings and mountings were made of gold; on the day you were created they were prepared.*

*You were anointed as a guardian cherub, for so I ordained you.*

*You were on the holy mount of God; you walked among the fiery stones.*

*You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created till wickedness was found in you.*

*Through your widespread trade you were filled with violence, and you sinned.*

*So I drove you in disgrace from the mount of God, and I expelled you, guardian cherub, from among the fiery stones.*

## A NOTE ON MUSICAL MAGIC FROM JULIE STONESTREET



First of all, a HUGE THANK YOU to all those who turned out to support us for our very first show. How it would be received was an unknown entity, but you have blown us all away with your unrestrained enthusiasm on the night and all the lovely comments since. As a result, we feel extremely heartened as we begin to consider our next show and a new set of songs. We love to have feedback, so please do tell us what you particularly enjoyed, and what you would like to see more of. A few numbers for singing along to has been suggested, and we can certainly incorporate that into the next programme. We welcome new members too, so don't be shy, do come along and join us.

My original idea for the group was a small number of singers who would semi-stage musical numbers using a few props and token articles of clothing, such as a shawl or hat. That of

course soon went out the window, and we had the explosion of colour, sparkle and attention to detail you saw on the night. I had expected pandemonium backstage for the dress rehearsal, as everyone charged around, frantically changing in different areas for their next appearance. However, this wasn't the case, as the cast professionally organised their props and costumes, appearing calmly on stage as if by magic.

We couldn't have achieved that without monumental support from Liz, Lin, Mary and Pam from the wardrobe department, who took our demands in their stride and were there in person when needed. Thank you!

Simple lighting with a curtain backdrop would have done of course. But then I thought special lighting effects for EACH number would be nice, coupled with individual images for every song. The sound and lighting team rose magnificently

to the challenge, and my heartfelt thanks to Steven, Meg, Tom, Dan and Amy for their time and commitment. Special thanks too, to Tom, who agreed to appear briefly on stage with us. After the cast's months of rehearsal, it was Tom, who probably rehearsed for about a minute, who received the biggest laugh and applause of the night!

The Apollo Theatre Committee have been incredibly supportive. Many thanks Steve, Helen, Carole and Ian. Special thanks to Vicki for her wonderfully sparkly poster (just my thing!) and to Ginnie, who created the most beautiful programme.

Rehearsing with this group has been such fun, and their enthusiasm is through the roof. We are practising songs for the Christmas show just now, but are greatly looking forward to planning our next show. No dates set yet, but watch this space!





## Your letters

### DIRECTORS' WORKSHOP

My thanks to Michael Arnell for organising and leading a workshop on directing for the stage. The event, which was held in the auditorium on a Sunday afternoon in November, was geared at offering practical advice for would-be directors.

Although Michael may have been a little disappointed with the numbers, it was good to see some new faces in attendance, as well as a couple of experienced hands.

I'm sure we would all agree that the session, which Michael kept pithy, was well worthwhile. As someone who has little experience of directing, I nonetheless instinctively recognised from my attempts at acting many of the points he made, and appreciated having them so clearly articulated and made concrete. With years of experience behind him, as actor, director and arts manager, Michael touched on a wide range of topics—from set design to the placement of actors on the stage. He also had strong views on the value of pre-production planning and how rehearsals

might be organised.

Later, we had the opportunity to work in pairs on a short scene, which purposefully allowed for a range of different interpretations. Once these had been performed, Michael worked with John Abraham to offer further suggestions on both the relationship and status of the two characters in the scene. In doing so, he was able to illustrate his points about blocking, entrances, the use of the space and the value of costume and props. Should Michael offer any further workshops, I would strongly recommend them to all members, even if they are not necessarily interested in acting or directing themselves. Indeed, I hope Michael will revive his acting workshop, as I joined the Apollo just two weeks after the last one.

*Phillip Griffiths*

### MUSICAL MAGIC

I have to say I was blown away by the recent musical production, *Musical Magic*, directed by Julie Stonestreet and showcasing the best of Apollo musical talent. I always knew we had some

outstanding singers and dancers in the company; this show not only confirmed that opinion, but also gave opportunities for some of our newer members to show what they could do. For some it was a very early appearance on the boards; for others perhaps a return after absence. Whatever the reason they all gave remarkable performances: from Suzie and Hannah Chilton's duet to Pat Suttman's dance sequence in *Love Changes Everything*. And though one wouldn't presume to single out any particular pieces, nevertheless Phillip Griffiths and Anthea Weekes gave standout performances in *Could I Leave You* and *Some People* respectively; and the ensemble pieces *Cell Block Tango* and *Movie in My Mind* left many of us speechless. But as I say, Julie did a remarkable job in putting the whole evening together; direction and casting showed individuals off to their best advantage, and overall I think they can justifiably pat themselves on the back—while we look forward to the next one!

*Ginnie Orrey*



A principle I've always worked on—and never found it disproved—is that everything's connected to everything else. I've recently found an example of this, rather close to home, and it's to do with the current play, *Iron*. It turns out that there is a link between the author, Rona Munro, and the Apollo.

On 6 December 1989, the original 26-year run of Doc-

tor Who came to its conclusion with the broadcast of the final episode of a three-part story called *Survival*, written by Rona Munro.

The novelisation of her scripts was published in October 1990.

The cover illustration for the book (left) was painted by Apollo member Alister Pearson (right), who as many of you know is a prolific and



brilliant artist. This is one of many such paintings he did

for various items of Doctor Who merchandise.

The book itself is long out of print, but an audiobook version is available as both a CD and a download.



This edition wouldn't be complete without mention of the sadly late but unquestionably great Tom Stoppard (who once described himself as a 'bounced Czech' because of his origins in Czechoslovakia). His looks always remind me of a cross between Mick Jagger and Freddie Mercury, which

might or might not have flattered him.

My favourite story involves his friend Harold Pinter (who was not known for his modesty). When there was a proposal to rename the Comedy Theatre in London the Pinter Theatre, Pinter wrote to many people can-

vassing support for the change of name. Stoppard replied to the letter by saying 'Have you thought, instead, of changing your name to Harold Comedy?'

Mind you, he was also quoted as saying 'It is better to be quotable than to be honest,' which may define the man.

You will have read many times over the years about our intention to join Hancock House with the theatre and that ongoing discussions, often lengthy and expensive, with architects and Building Control are moving at what some may consider a snail's pace. All of which is probably true.

Running a Grade II and Grade II\* building is an onerous responsibility and is often expensive, as we can't just bodge repairs. A glance at the front of the theatre will reveal rotting wood and peeling paint, all of which needs attention, but in a more complex way than decorating the exterior of your average home. So in order to acknowledge the work that needs doing both in terms of repairs and new works, we have set up a building fund which is to be used separately to our everyday spending.

What goes into our building fund? Well, basically all of our income from non-Apollo Players productions. Our seven shows a year should be sufficient to keep the theatre running. Naturally this depends on numbers coming through the doors. The last three years have seen a marked increase in ticket sales and Helen Reading as Arts Manager is to be commended for her seasons which have caught the imagination of both actors and patrons. Keeping these numbers high by providing interesting, challenging and modern plays (with a splash of old favourites) is essential to securing our future.

Our building fund is fed from NT Live, opera, external hirings, our own extra shows (Musical Magic, Christmas Show etc) and social events. As the fund grows, we can decide which

project needs undertaking. For example, our investment in a new screen for Screenings was funded mostly by NT Live income. The committee's intention is keep you posted on how the building fund is developing and what projects we will need to undertake. Our two main concerns at the moment are the above mentioned exterior works and the potential for problems with the dressing room flat roof which is a bit of a patchwork. Having a separate building fund might also help us to secure grant funding for some of these projects.

So the message is: please keep supporting our productions, either through buying tickets, volunteering at events or encouraging friends and family to join us and to spend as much money as you can in our lovely bar—but not overdoing it!

*Steve Reading*

## OUR BUILDING FUND



The New Members' Night was a great success. Every member of your committee was there to form a welcoming party: Steve, Helen, Vicki, Dan, Mike and me and it was lovely to actually put faces to the names on the membership list!

All departments of the theatre were represented: Paul

Hewson for the set-building team, Mary Cody for wardrobe, Sheila Colenutt and David Barnard for props, Dan for tech and Tom for all things backstage. There was lots of chatter, lots of mingling and lovely refreshments. As we are completely run by volunteers, I really hope the evening has inspired many of you to get

involved in all that makes the Apollo tick. If you couldn't make it on the night, please remember that Saturday mornings in the Bar between 10.30 and 12.30 is the place to get to know us!

*Carole Crow*

## NEW MEMBERS' NIGHT, 22 NOVEMBER

It's been a while since I updated you on what's going on with NTLive—or as we know it now, Screenings at the Apollo, or SATA, comprising NTL and Opera at the Apollo. The 'opera' part of the venture, ably overseen by Colin Caldicott, comprises a range of wonderful, internationally-renowned performances screened at venues around the world including the Royal Opera and Ballet in London. Ticket sales have been a bit slow but they are definitely starting to pick up as we move into a new year. So—what can you look forward to during the first half of 2026? On **17 January**

there will be a showing of Puccini's heartrending opera, *La Bohème*, recorded live at the ROH in 2020. Poverty and passion collide in a story of friendship and fellowship, love and loss. Featuring some of Puccini's best-loved music.

On **22 January** you can catch a fearless, contemporary take on Shakespeare's Hamlet, with Olivier Award-winner Hiran Abeysekera as Hamlet. Trapped between duty and doubt, surrounded by power and privilege, young Prince Hamlet dares to ask the ultimate question—you know the one. A sharp, stylish and darkly funny reimaging.

In **February** (date tbc) you can

catch one of the most watched NT Live releases of all time. Academy Award-winner Helen Mirren plays Queen Elizabeth II in the much-anticipated return of the hit production *The Audience*, that inspired Netflix's *The Crown*.

And there are more wonderful productions in the pipeline including *The Playboy of the Western World* and *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*, as well as some great operas including *Falstaff* and *the Pearl Fishers*. We shall be letting you know when they're released, and of course in the meantime keep an eye on our website for updates on these and all our own productions.

**National  
Theatre  
Live**



## KAVS CONGRATU- LATIONS!

from  
**JO MATTHEWS**

I was delighted to read the news that the Apollo has been awarded the prestigious KAVS, very well deserved.

I believe us to be the only little theatre mentioned in the latest awards list, making it even more special.

Other little theatre recipients in recent years include the Lace Market in Nottingham in 2022, Guide Bridge, Greater Manchester in 2020, along with Progress in Reading, STERTS in Cornwall, and the Corn Exchange, Wallingford.

Perhaps that burst of appreciation for little theatres in 2020 was in particular recognition of how we all limped through lockdowns, doing our best to maintain relationships with our members, and providing some sort of entertainment online. Indeed, I have memories of 'attending' an Apollo quiz, readings, and a radio play—from 100 miles away. I read in Apollonius of electrical works, safety checks and other tasks being carried out on the premises, as ever, by loyal members putting the good of their theatre very high on their list of curtailed activity.

As part of my work for the Little Theatre Guild (I say 'work', but like you I do it altruistically), I travel the country visiting 'our' theatres. It never ceases to affect me, witnessing the huge amount of effort put in to offer 21<sup>st</sup> century standards and expectations to members and audiences, although often in creaky old buildings. That is, of course, alongside presenting seasons of classic, popular and new plays. It is a real labour of love.

The Apollo probably comes in the category of one of our 'medium' size theatres but punches above its weight in terms of dedicated locals who don't let being on an island stand in the way of offering great cultural experiences, and gently coaxing audiences into more cutting-edge drama.

I am signed-up to many free little theatre newsletters, and followed the progress of the Corn Exchange towards their award; it took over three years altogether. I'll just share a little of their journey to their QAVS Award with you.

Gloria Wright, Chairman at the Corn Exchange, wrote in their newsletter:

*"CONGRATULATIONS! All the work of our wonderful members and volunteers has been officially recognised. On this day, 2nd June 2020, the Sinodun Players and Corn Exchange Wallingford have been given the Queens Award for Voluntary Service. This is the highest award a voluntary group can receive in the UK and equivalent to an MBE.*

*"So how did all this come about? It was audience member and Deputy Lieutenant for Oxfordshire Lynda Atkins who nominated us, as she was so impressed by everything that we did for the local community. Over the course of several meetings, we gave her the information she needed to be able to complete the very detailed nomination form.*

*"As part of her submission, Lynda stated: "Without the Society and its volunteers, the Grade II Corn Exchange—which sits in the Market Place—would not exist as a community facility.*

*Over 700 supporting letters stated how much the donors enjoyed attending events in the theatre and commented on the professionalism and friendliness of the volunteers"*

*Gloria continued: "After the nomination was accepted, a visit from two independent 'judges' took place, who interviewed a small number of us. They were given a tour of the premises and asked a lot of questions about how we maintained*

*everything. They were clearly amazed at the large number of members and volunteers we had and how everything was managed on a purely voluntary basis". I couldn't be more proud! Gloria".*

We have something precious we don't want to lose.

There's often talk of the war generation (beautifully depicted by our *Lilies on the Land*), selfless, hard-working, modest. The next generation have followed on, as demonstrated by the time and effort we put into our theatre community with no expected reward other than pride in our achievements. Now the challenge is to imbue the younger members with the same principles. The Apollo is rising to this challenge and it is so good to have it 'officially' recognised.

I couldn't end this without a quick plug for the new Little Theatre Guild Yearbook 25-26, hot of the press. It's of particular interest to directors and would-be directors as it gives the stats for seat occupation and the plays chosen, thereby offering clues as to what you might expect in terms of popularity. Interesting to see *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* was top of the pops, so the Apollo is right in the groove! I can send anyone a pdf if they are interested:

[jo.sth.matthews@gmail.com](mailto:jo.sth.matthews@gmail.com)

Congratulations to all members for the award, especially those who collated the information required for the bid. Bask in the glory!

Last word goes to Amy during lockdown:

*I hope that your continued support and membership will be given to the Apollo—she needs us as much as we need her.*

*Jo Matthews*

I was going to introduce myself as Elsa Jean Krakowski, that being the character I inhabited in our recent production of *The Unfriend*—but things have changed and I've now taken on the role of Little Theatre Guild Rep and will do my best to relay the interesting snippets I learnt while I was at the Cotswold Playhouse.

We were welcomed with a talk about the long history of the Playhouse. Contance Smedley was the leading light. She organized an 'Historical Pageant of Progress' in 1911, which involved 1,000 performers! Imagine organising that! Afterwards, she gathered some of the performers and formed a band of travelling players to take theatrical performances around the local villages, and the Cotswold Players were born!

In 1951 the Methodist Church was bought and in 1957 the theatre was opened. What really impressed me was the enormous dedication by certain members in the renovation work. Seats out, balcony down, diggers in, orchestra pit sorted, parts of the building totally renovated, all by volunteers.

And I don't know if it would appeal to our members, but they still have a Tuesday Club. This is an informal gathering of the skilled and not so skilled, to try and tackle small jobs that need fixing around the theatre. These can, of course, end up highlighting jobs of a more serious nature, but the Tuesday Club members can chew it over during a coffee break! If we don't already have something similar, would that be worth considering?

A tour was given of this enviably sized theatre. Props, wardrobe, dressing rooms, green room, all enormous! Naturally, there was a hydraulic lift in the basement, ready to bring things magically up onto the stage!

The play the theatre was showing was Tom Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*. A sharp, witty and absurd script which kept the audience amused. The cast deserve high praise for their pacy and impressively acted

show. I was particularly taken with the projections. I'm sorry that I didn't have time to find out more about that equipment.

Our next treat was to listen to Jessica Swale in conversation with our very own, Jo Matthews. Jessica has established herself as a formidable playwright and director with plays *Nell Gwynn*, *Blue Stockings* and *Thomas Tallis*. What came over so powerfully was her love for her work. She loved delving into historical books to draw inspiration for her characters. She said she didn't want anyone in her plays to feel like an extra. However few words that an actor said, that they felt theirs was an important part of the story. To those ends, she said she had cut certain characters out entirely, making sure everyone had a story to tell. She had won me over with that statement alone. Have we already produced any of her plays and if not, might it be worth a look? Her next production is *Paddington the Musical*, opening in November at the Savoy Theatre.

Finally, we were down to the nitty-gritty stuff: Health and Safety.

Lee Simcox spoke to us about the legal requirements for our theatre's safety and suggested that we should invest in a copy of the Technical Standards for Places of Entertainment. For members of the LTG this can be bought for the reduced price of £45, but it is available with online access to e-book. This publication provides a set of standards for the buildings, equipment and management of premises. He emphasised that theatres can present unique hazards to performers, staff and the public due to the number of people present in unfamiliar surroundings which may be noisy or poorly lit. The aim was to provide simple guidance to help licensees, technical managers and enforcers to understand the requirements needed in places of entertainment. Lee also

reminded us that there should always be a fully stocked First Aid kit and that there should be at least one First Aid trained person present at each performance. Ideally, FOH or SM.

[l.simcox@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:l.simcox@hotmail.co.uk) is happy to help with queries or visit the theatre to give it a once-over H&S check if requested. I would be happy to forward the slides Lee used to anyone interested.

Martyn's Law [ Terrorism. Protection of Premises] will not come into effect until 2027 and I'm not sure it would affect us, but I thought someone might like to check it out.

Caroline Kendall then gave us a talk about safeguarding. There was a good deal about making sure any children under 16yrs taking part in shows are well supervised. That they had an individual mentor to trust and turn to with a problem. Ensuring that everyone knew how to recognise, respond and report a safeguarding issue. One rather nice idea was that before rehearsals begin we are all reminded to be kind to one another.

Much was discussed during the Open Forum at the end of the day, but the one that caught my attention was the various experiences theatres had had with matinees. It was a very new idea for some, and those that had chosen to give it a go for a year, reported total success. A great many older people had attended Sunday afternoon performances. One theatre had replaced Saturday evening with Sunday evenings and found it better attended. Overall, it was agreed that they all had fuller houses at matinees.

Hilary Foister



**OUR NEW LTG  
REP, HILARY  
FOISTER,  
REPORTS BACK  
FROM THE  
RECENT LTG  
CONFERENCE AT  
THE COTSWOLD  
PLAYHOUSE,  
STROUD, ON 3-4  
OCTOBER**

**ONCE AGAIN  
STEVE DOUBLE  
BRINGS  
NATIONALLY-  
RENOWNED  
ARTISTES TO  
THE APOLLO  
FOR AN  
EVENING OF  
MUSIC  
IN AID OF AGE  
UK:**

**THE NASHVILLE  
NIGHTS  
ACOUSTIC TRIO,  
COMPRISING  
STEVE YOUNG,  
SAVANNAH  
GARDNER AND  
JADE CUTHBERT**

**21 FEBRUARY  
2026  
TICKETS VIA  
OUR WEBSITE**



Featuring Californian country singer Savannah Gardner, former Isle of Wight resident Steve Young on guitar & vocals and London's very own rock 'n' roll virtuoso fiddle player Jade Cuthbert you can be sure of a night filled with show stopping, guitar jangling, fiddle smokin', boot stomping, country hollering, three-part harmonising antics from the front half of the much celebrated Nashville Nights Band who are now into their fourth triumphant year in London's West End. This one-off special evening will feature songs from Savannah & Steve's own album releases as well as classic country crowd pleasers you can sing, dance and shake your hat at.

Steve Young is a British guitarist and songwriter originally from the Isle of Wight and now living in Hertfordshire. He is also a music teacher, working in various schools including a Special Needs Academy and Hertfordshire high schools teaching guitar, bass, drums, keys, songwriting and band development. He recently created a new project in a south London prison on their Music Rehabilitation Programme, helping young offenders and those with special needs to change their outlook and prospects on life as well as achieve certificates in music performance.

Since 2014 Steve has written and released four albums: *Troubadour*, *A Little North Of Nowhere*, *Is Anyone Listening* and *Famous For A Day* alongside various singles and EPs including his latest, *Riffin' For A Livin'*, which is due out in January 2026. His band 'The Real Time Players' are regulars at prestigious festivals across the UK including the Isle Of Wight Festival, Planet Rock Stock,

Black Deer Festival, Old Town Live, Goatfest and countless local rock clubs and venues. He is a highly sought after corporate entertainer, performing across Europe as a solo artist or with his band and country tribute show 'The Nashville Nights' whose hit show has been selling out in London's West End since 2023. He has also released a number of singles which have received national radio play on BBC and Planet Rock as well as 200+ global radio stations. In 2017 he was chosen as Artist of the Month by Caffè Nero and his songs have received 1000s of in-store plays.

In April 2024 he became the centre of a global news story as the first person in the world to receive a revolutionary new mRNA cancer



vaccine. The story was front page news around the world and lead story on many TV channels including the BBC. Sky News combined the story with his music career when he was invited to meet with King Charles III in April 2024 at London's UCLH Hospital.

In June 2024 Steve began work on his new album, *Famous For A Day*. He told BBC News, 'Writing and recording music is my identity. As long as I am playing guitar, teaching guitar and writing songs then all is OK with me.' The album was released in March 2025 and coincided with a charity concert which raised over

£5,000 for the UCLH Cancer Fund and Macmillan. The sold-out show included 80s pop legend Nik Kershaw and 17 other artists including 70s star Paul Layton from the New Seekers.

Earlier in his career Steve performed with Darren Hayes (Savage Garden) from 2007 to 2012 as his full-time guitarist. The 7-piece band toured the world, selling out the Royal Albert Hall, Wembley and arenas in Australia and the USA.

In 2011-2013 Steve worked as musical director for West End theatre star Ramin Karimloo on a project called 'Broadway to Bluegrass' which toured in the UK, United States, Canada and South Korea, featuring hit songs from *Les Mis*, *Phantom* and *Miss Saigon* performed in a bluegrass/country style with acoustic guitar, fiddle, double bass and piano.

Savannah Gardner blends blues, honky-tonk & gypsy jazz into her big sound while keeping vintage and traditional country alive and well. Her London-based band 'Savannah Gardner & The Recovering Good Girls' are selling out venues all over the UK with their energetic and almost theatrical show. Savannah's special connection with her audience has earned her the UK AMA's Live Act of the Year nomination for 2025 and has won her slots at coveted festivals like Glastonbury, Black Deer, C2C London, Red Rooster, The Long Road and more.

Steve Young website: <https://linktr.ee/steveyounguk>  
Savannah Gardner website: <https://savannahgardner.com>  
Nashville Nights insta: <https://instagram.com/nashvilleniightsband>

In the last Apollonius there was a very interesting article by Alan Rodway about the Royal Opera House, Jersey, which stirred very distant memories for me. You see, I actually performed there!!

Let me start at the beginning. As a teenager—no, I'm not going to say how many years ago that was—I worked for Hotpoint as a demonstrator in Oxford, one of those ladies whom some of you may remember seeing in domestic appliance showrooms demonstrating how dry a Hotpoint spin dryer would get your clothes, or how easy it was to iron a shirt on a Hotpoint clothes press. The company gave me the opportunity to relocate to Jersey to take over their whole sales network in the Channel Islands

— how could I refuse?! The firm arranged for me to stay at the Grand Hotel on the Esplanade, St Helier, for three months to give me time to settle and find accommodation.

When I lived in Oxford, I was a very keen thespian, so one of the first things I did to make friends in Jersey was to seek out the local amateur dramatic society, which happened to be The Jersey Green Room Club who staged their productions at the Jersey Opera House! My performances there included a part in the chorus of a Christmas pantomime and Louise Harrington, the mother in *Five Finger Exercise* by Peter Shaffer. I always played older characters in those days—today it isn't an option! I do remember that the first act

started with the family sitting around the breakfast table; I was sitting half on to the audience and had the first line. I opened my mouth to speak on the opening night and nothing came out!! I gulped and tried again with success, thank goodness! Moments like that live in your memory forever!

The time came when Hotpoint wanted to relocate me back to the mainland. It was the beginning of summer and I'd grown used to living close to the sea so declined their offer and became the Cocktail Bar Manager at Longueville Manor Hotel, a very prestigious establishment! Of course that was the end of my performing days in Jersey!

*Carole Crow*



Who can this be?  
Read on to find out ...

Ding Dong merrily on high for jolly Yuletide's looming. Blooming Christmas cards to write, it always leaves me fuming.

Must be some I can cross off, there really are too many. Poor old Auntie Peg has died, but who the heck is Penny?

Yes, now I remember her, we used to work together, got promoted over me, let's say 'goodbye' for ever!

They've split up, and so have they. What inconsideration! That means two more cards from me; I'm rigid with frustration.

This is really such a bore, it's costly, time-consuming, my goodwill's run out the door, my attitude's alarming.

No more writing cards for me, I'm finished with this caper. I must think of Planet Earth and save a pile of paper.

Oh, no! What was that I heard? There's post down on the doormat! Cousin Fred has sent to me, I'll have to send one back. Drat!

Now, I can't cut Uncle Ted, or he will be offended. My relations won't believe a slight is unintended.

So that's Uncles, Aunts and Grans, one Grandpa and ten cousins, friends from everywhere I've worked. It's running into dozens!

Next-door neighbours from my youth, the man who taught me ballet, bridesmaids when I married John, the girl who cleaned our chalet.

Scrabble players from our club, the couple on our Rhine cruise, Jane who once gave me a lift, the team who take our refuse.

Yes, my dentist's really nice (although he's so expensive) and the lad who cuts my grass, the nurse who's not offensive.

My hairdresser is a laugh, the butcher's quite a dolly, and the postman is a chum. I cannot end this folly.

So, there's no escape for me, I'd better get this started, 'MERRY CHRISTMAS' to you all, Both here, and those departed!

Yes, I like to get a card, The picture's make me jolly, Robins, Christmas trees and bells Some mistletoe and holly.

Wow! I've finished the whole lot, I'm feeling pretty good. Phew! And if you are reading this, I'll add you to my list, too!

## POETRY CORNER RETURNS!

I'm always delighted to welcome contributions to Apollonius, especially from people indulging their creative side. Here's a seasonal poem from Ellen Weeks, entitled *Ding Dong!*

THE **APOLLO** THEATRE PLAYERS

# Immaculate

by Oliver Lansley



A comedy variation on the virgin birth. A young single woman wakes up to find she is six months pregnant despite not having had sex for nine months...

**FREQUENT SWEARING & SEXUAL REFERENCES**

**6 - 14 FEBRUARY 2026**

7:30PM - NO SHOWS ON SUN & MON  
(01983) 210010 [WWW.APOLLO-THEATRE.ORG.UK](http://WWW.APOLLO-THEATRE.ORG.UK)



For those of you who receive your copy of Apollonius on paper, could you please detach this page and put up the poster on the other side in a window where people will see it?

If you receive it by email, could I ask you please to print off the poster bit—if you have the technology—and put it up somewhere visible. Every poster helps!

If you are able to join the poster section of the marketing team, you would be very welcome indeed. We need people to put up a few posters for each production—three or four, perhaps, or whatever you can do—in local supportive businesses. We particularly need people in Ryde, Wootton, East Cowes, Bembridge and the West Wight, but every single poster helps.

Please let Ginnie Orrey know ([gginnie@gmail.com](mailto:gginnie@gmail.com)) if you can help.



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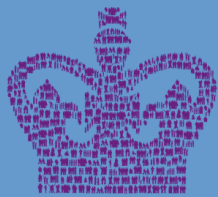
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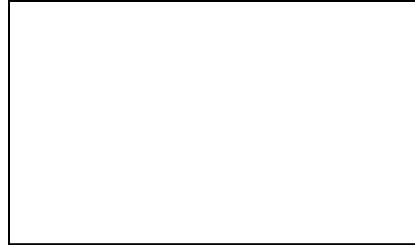
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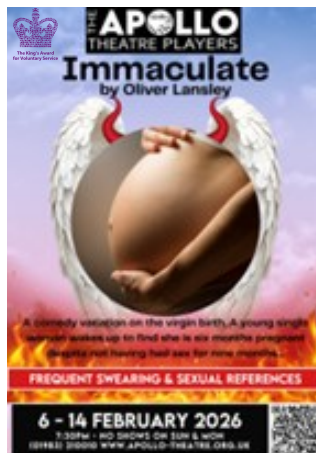


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## The Apollo Players' next production



**PRODUCTION DATES**

**6-14 FEBRUARY 2026**

This play is likely to offend some people. It's very 'sweary' and makes derogatory references to christianity. But it is ... *hilarious*.

Here's the story. You're young free and single and haven't had sex for the last eleven and a half months, then one morning you wake up pregnant, with the Angel Gabriel on your doorstep claiming parentage. The situation quickly spirals into farcical confusion with no fewer than three more potential fathers claiming parentage: one of them an ex-boyfriend, one of them a nerdish contemporary from school that you wouldn't want to be seen dead with, and the third—Satan himself.