

The King's Award
for Voluntary Service

Forthcoming read-throughs, auditions & other production stuff

Remember: a read-through is not an audition!

DEADLINE FOR CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE NEXT ISSUE:

Mid-July

Other diary dates

Coffee mornings	Every Saturday, 10.30-12.30
KAVS presentation (see p6)	6pm Wed 3 June
New members' evening	Saturday 13 June from 7pm in the Bar

APOLLONIUS

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

ISSUE NO. 317

MAY 2026

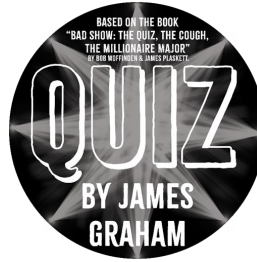
For my front page this time, I am delighted to share with you the directors' take on our most challenging show to date.

Amy's view: Well, what a show! From the moment Helen gave us the script a few years ago, we knew that it was a show that the Apollo had to do, based on a real event that everyone has a memory of. We like to try to do plays that are able to cater for a large ensemble and will stretch actors, set builders, costume department and the technical team.

With this play we studied the history of the show, to ensure that we understood how all the bits fitted together, watched documentaries and read articles to make sure that the information we had would be accurate and truthful. One of James Grahams' writing techniques is to add very specific information in videos and sound, and we had great fun creating these, getting people to film bits that would be included. However, we designed our own millionaire game slides and logo so that it was not just a carbon copy of the ITV show.

Nevertheless, we wanted some of the elements to be like the real events. For example, Charles Ingram's multi-coloured top was carefully built by Peggy Harcourt, who took 4 tops to pieces to make one with all the different colours. This was important because if someone went home to look up the real stories they would know 'who had been who'.

The cast were brilliant to work with. Their faith in us was out-



standing. Their trust that 'this will happen here' - even though they didn't always understand what we were doing - meant we were able to get all the elements we needed in the production and as we pieced it all together the show grew and developed and took on the shape that we wanted.

So from the bottom of our hearts, we thank each member of cast, crew and production teams, all the FOH staff who staffed multiple nights as a lot of our cast would normally do a role. Thank you to the audiences who not only watched but took part in the gameshows and quizzes during the evening.

The set is now down, the costumes away and the hotseats in their new home where we hope you will enjoy them.

Amy

And from behind the scenes:

As I write this, we're finally at home on the Sunday after the last night. The stage looks very different from how it did less than 24 hours ago, and by 2pm a team comprising the backstage cast and crew as well as Tyler from Crown Park have completely dismantled the scaffolding; costumes have been re-

turned to wardrobe and props have started the task of putting everything back where it belongs.

It's been a busy 24 hours, but, true to the whole rehearsal and performance process, a real team effort - everyone has in some way contributed to the post show clean-up. My personal highlight of the day however has to have been the 'chain-gang', where a human chain was formed to load the scaffolding onto the truck ready to be returned.

At no point during rehearsals have I heard a single grumble or moan ... which is a rare thing! That's not to say, however, that this show has been without its challenges - but cast and crew alike have risen to these challenges and tackled them with a minimum of fuss every single time.

I have to confess that there have been moments where I've wondered which deity we've upset in some way, as at one point it seemed as if there was always something else just waiting round the corner.

The first challenge - casting. Surprisingly easy - we had a great turnout for the auditions and were able to pick from a strong selection of cast.

The second challenge - the tech. As Amy's mentioned, we wanted to replicate the experience of the gameshow live on stage. But ... there are a lot of elements that go into even one question on the game, and that's before you add in phoning friends and asking the audience.

[contd p2]

EDITORIAL: THE VIEW FROM THE EDITOR'S CHAIR

Periodically I find myself musing on impermanence—not unrelated to our having just finished the run of *Quiz*, with all the interesting and exciting things that has entailed.

Most art, by definition, is created to survive. Think Turner, Constable, Henry Moore, Barbara Hepworth ... the list is almost infinite. However, despite the list comprising primarily artists whose work is concrete, which seems to assume permanence, there are artists for whom the very notion of permanence is anathema, and whose work is the very antithesis of that. I was thinking—as you do—about a local artist, Eric Geddes, whose remarkable driftwood and stone sculptures, created on the beaches of the South Wight over hours, days, even weeks,

were intended to be destroyed by the sea and the elements.

But of course there are other forms of art which are not concrete and thus subject to a greater degree of transience. Where am I going with this? The theatre, of course. The thought was generated in my mind by the photo of the set for *Quiz*—or rather the remains of the set after the strike the day after the final performance.

That set took weeks to build, using the skills and experience of a whole team, who all, despite the time and effort they put into it, knew that it would soon cease to exist. From this ...



to this ...



to this ...



over the course of a few short weeks. It's all part of the magic that is theatre, of course—creating the illusion of permanence from its opposite.

So once again we salute everyone involved in creating something that will survive only in our memories and gossip at the bar ('do you remember when ...?').

'BEHIND THE SCENES' CONTD ...

Subscribing fully to the 'go big or go home' mentality, somehow we managed to end up with 600 cues between sound, lighting, video and voting. That's 200 more than *Curious Incident*. It all came together in the end – including our very own Corrie episode.

The third challenge: getting the cast together. Not as easy as you'd think. Being a large cast (and having Steve stuck in Sri Lanka for an extended period) we probably only had less than 6 rehearsals overall with 100% of the cast at the same time. But ... the cast weren't fazed!

The fourth challenge: my health. This one was actually quite a biggie, and new medication combined with a few A-fib flare-ups coinciding with the production period saw me either out of action or operating at reduced capacity. There were a good few weeks where I

wasn't able to attend rehearsals; and this extended to the tech, dress and production nights. Fortunately, Colin and Tom hastily re-planned scene changes and Amy was thrown into the tech hotseat. Again ... cast and crew weren't fazed and kept checking in to make sure I was still in one piece (thank you all!)

The fifth challenge: tech and dress week. It's fair to say that we had a couple of major incidents during this week. Ginnie refers to this period as 'the excitement'. I'm not going into the finer details but for all involved, there were a few intense moments. Again, cast and crew alike jumped into action, and demonstrated a flexibility and understanding that has been unrivalled. Plans were drawn up, rehearsals changed at the last minute, and again, no moans or complaints.

Then we hit the show. Sud-

denly, everything fell into place – Amy covered a couple of nights of tech, and I was able to take over for the rest of the run. The cast came together and to paraphrase one of Steve's characters, were 'on a ten' from the word go. The backstage team made all those scene changes look effortless despite a lot of hard work behind the scenes.

You might read about the challenges and think the experience of this was a negative one. In fact, it was the total opposite. The challenges made everyone work a little harder, but by the time we'd hit opening night; you'd never have known what the whole team had faced getting there.

Quiz was a true team effort from everyone—from the set-builders, both from the Apollo and assistance from Crown Park, taking our plans and giving us the scaffolding monolith complete with 5 moving trucks;
[contd p.4]

NEWS FROM YOUR COMMITTEE
NOTES FROM THE COMMITTEE MEETING ON 26 MAY 2026

THEATRE DIRECTOR

As I sit and write this we are over half-way through *Quiz*. It has been a pleasure to be part of such a talented and helpful ensemble, ably directed by Amy and Dan Burns. It's a 'tech heavy' play and our investment in new technology over the last couple of years has made this possible. Audiences are loving it, particularly the audience participation bit. My stand-up comedy spot is my first and last effort!

The audience numbers for *Quiz* have not been outstanding but then we don't judge the success of a play by 'bums on seats'. I do believe it is a sign of the times whereby customers are being more careful in how they spend their money. On the other hand it could well be weather related as we perform during an unseasonably hot week.

It was disappointing to hear that *70 Girls 70* has had to be postponed. Cancelling or postponing a play is bad news for the theatre as it inevitably costs us several thousands of pounds in lost income plus potentially lost customers. I understand the disappointment of the cast who have worked so hard. Details of when it is likely to appear in a future season will be relayed soon.

So it brings me to the question we are always asked: 'Why don't we do more musicals? They are always pop-

ular'. Well, to put on a musical we need not only a talented cast but a director, a musical director and often a choreographer. Without all three, it becomes a challenge. Add to this the fact that licenses to perform are significantly more expensive, our Arts Manager, understandably, hesitates to put a musical into the season, especially as there are thousands of good plays out there, waiting to be performed. And let's be honest, there are many talented musical groups on the island doing a fabulous job.

This week we welcome His Majesty's Lord Lieutenant, who will present the theatre with our KAVS citation and glass 'trophy'. We will find a suitable space to display them. Ginnie Orrey and I had the pleasure of attending a Royal Garden Party at Buckingham Palace recently (see p6). It was quite an occasion and a pleasure to be able to wonder the Palace gardens and get so close their Majesties.

Thanks to all our volunteers who help to keep this wonderful theatre operational; your efforts do not go unrecognised. If you are reading this and haven't yet offered any help, please consider it, you will be made most welcome.

Steve Reading

OPERATIONS MANAGER

Firstly, my apologies for not submitting a report for the previous meeting, I was

unexpectedly unable to provide a report due to a family emergency.

Buildings

The building plans for scheduled upgrade of the theatre are still with the architects and council planning. Updates are slow to come forward due to having to resubmit certain aspects of the original plan to include all fire equipment/ alarm points/fire exits. We remain hopeful that the end is in sight and we can then look forward to starting to smarten the public facing areas of the theatre.

We finally have a date to replace the flooring up near the stage door. The current floor has rotted in several areas due to repeated soakings from rainwater leaking in through the gaps on the external wall. This has caused several areas to warp and make access to backstage difficult for anyone needing to access the disabled toilet. Work will begin on the week commencing 1 June. The plan is to remove the existing flooring, create better drainage to allow water buildup to drain away more efficiently and lay a concrete floor like the rest of the corridor. There will be no access via the stage door at this time other than in a real emergency.

Just a gentle reminder to all directors of our seasonal productions, it is your

YOUR EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE			
Theatre Director & Chair of Executive Committee (elected 3-yearly): Steve Reading (2024-27) director@apollo-theatre.org.uk			
Arts Manager (elected 3-yearly)	Helen Reading (2024-27) artsmanager@apollo-theatre.org.uk	Members' Representative & Membership Secretary (elected 3-yearly)	Carole Crow (2024-27) membersrep@apollo-theatre.org.uk
Business Manager (elected 3-yearly)	Dan Burns (2023-26) treasurer@apollo-theatre.org.uk or businessmgr@apollo-theatre.org.uk	Operations Manager (elected 3-yearly)	Vicki Cook (2024-27) operations@apollo-theatre.org.uk

'BEHIND THE SCENES' CONTD ...

Lin and the Wardrobe team for whom nothing was too much trouble (including the patchwork polo shirt that took up a large part of Peggy's time and expertise!), the props team who I think must dread our props lists at the pre-prod,

our technical and stage management team who made my life so much easier, and the cast—I could not have asked for a better team. Everyone looked out for each other, checked in with each other when the going got tough and deliv-

ered outstanding performances night after night. No ego, no stress. Just doing what we all enjoy doing best. Next time, however, we promise to keep the drama on stage ...

Dan

'FROM YOUR COMMITTEE' CONTD.

responsibility to ensure that your cast clean the dressing and leave it tidy for the next production. This must include emptying of waste bins and ensuring all tea/coffee facilities are clean. My thanks go to the small team who came in before the start of *Quiz* and blitzed the area, you know who you are!

Volunteers

It has been particularly difficult over the last few months trying to cover rosters for productions/screenings/hirings. The difficulty arises when several key volunteers are themselves in a production leaving gaps on rosters. With the summer months ahead of us this also poses a problem with many of us away enjoying the holiday season. Firstly, a huge thanks to those regular volunteers who give lots of their time to help out. Secondly, after my begging email asking for help to cover our next production, my thanks to those

new faces who have stepped forward. Covering the rosters is by far the hardest part of my role; as always if you are willing to come and help, even if it's only one duty once a year, it will make a huge difference. The theatre relies on the generosity of volunteers to keep it going, so please do get in touch for more information on our volunteer roles.

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY/ MEMBERS' REP

Our membership continues to increase—this year will definitely have the highest number of new members since I became MemSec nine years ago and the good news is many are stepping up and getting involved with Theatre life already. There will be a 'New Members' evening on Saturday 13 June and I will be encouraging new and existing members to come along as well as 'heads of departments' to give everyone a chance to get to know each other.

There have been concerns over the unfortunate recent accidents on stage and I have been able to assure everybody that the matter is on the agenda for this meeting. No other matters have been brought to my attention since the last meeting.

Carole

CAN YOU HELP? A PLEA FROM THE DIRECTOR

We are looking to share some of the workload carried by a few people in the theatre. The more people volunteer for these roles, the easier it is to run the theatre, and the more efficient.

We're looking for someone to take on the **Hirings** role. We hire out the theatre around 5 or 6 times a year; some are regular evening hires and it's quite easy to manage. If anyone is interested, please let me know and I can give you a heads-up on the role, which, to be honest, is not time-consuming.

The other appeal is for anyone who has experience in using Sage accounting. The role is a **Treasurer** whose primary role is to pay bills and pay expenses and update our Sage software plus one or two other bits. Our accounts have been outsourced so no accounting experience is needed. Again, it's not too time-consuming but is a very necessary role in the running of the theatre.

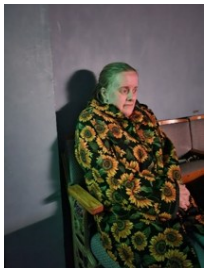
Please contact me at director@apollo-theatre.org.uk or catch me in and around the theatre if you'd like to know more.

FROM YOUR MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

Membership Ramblings
June 2026

The Choir has undergone a few changes lately. Firstly we are lucky enough to have Julie Jones as our new Choirmaster. Julie was the Musical Director for *Oliver* as well as giving a superb performance as Fagin.

We now meet on Mondays at around 1pm in the bar for a 1.30 start. We are looking for a few new singers, so if you'd like to join us or know more about what we're currently rehearsing, do please message me.



The rather gloomy-looking person in this photo is Carol Death, who recently completed the full

Walk the Wight in aid of Mountbatten—and then turned up at a *Quiz* rehearsal! She didn't move much ...

One of our newer members, Rosanna Parker, joined Carol on the walk. Rosanna's story is that 15 years ago she witnessed the care the hospice gave to her Nan during her last days. 1½ years ago, she saw that same care given to her mother-in-law in her last few weeks and walked to support the organisation that supported all her loved ones during the worst times.

If you were lucky enough to catch *All The President's Men* on Radio 4 in April written by Ayad Andrews I know you'll agree congratulations are in order! A most enjoyable and interesting 'Afternoon Play'

Saturday morning coffee goers will have noticed a few different faces behind the counter, for which I give thanks. It allows David and me a chance to mingle and catch up with other jobs. If you'd like do a turn let me know.

Some more new Members to welcome – Alexander Paterson, Simon Bligh, Jim and Marion Large, Jennifer

Waite, Pauline May and Linda Sault. There will be a chance to meet all the new faces at our New Members Evening on Saturday 13 June from 7pm in the Bar. Do come along and make them feel at home and talk about all the opportunities to get involved in Apollo life!

Please don't forget that I am also Members' Rep and represent you on the Committee. If you want to speak to me pop in on a Saturday or give me a call on 07905 220934

Carole

Carol says, 'We started our day walking to the IW College, where we got the bus to the starting line in Bembridge and crossed the starting line just after 6.00am. Good progress was made walking the 9 miles to Arreton in 2 hours 40 minutes, and the 3 miles to Carisbrooke took just over an hour. By 12 noon, after doing a further five and a half miles, we arrived at the Mottistone checkpoint and both of us started to struggle from there. Rosanna started to have knee troubles and my feet were not doing so great; the weather had been fine up until this point and then started to drizzle intermittently throughout the rest of our walk.

Once we got to Freshwater Bay at 2pm we decided to have a little lunch/cake break. We then continued,

at a much slower pace, until we got to Alum Bay just before 4.00. Rosanna's sister-in-law wanted to surprise her by bringing Rosanna's children to cheer us on at the finish line, which was a nice little boost at the end. After we all bundled in the car, Rosanna and the kids got dropped off at home. I went on to the Apollo, and waddled into rehearsal for *Quiz*. My legs at that point had decidedly given up and I said my lines from the back row of the auditorium!

In total collectively we raised £545, which is a great amount for a wonderful charity. Hopefully next year we can raise even more.'

Carol

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

A message from Michael Arnell: there's a copy of the 70 Girls 70 CD in the bar which someone very kindly lent to him but he can't remember who. It's in an envelope, so if it was you, Michael thanks you very much and could you please collect it?

Our love, thoughts and sympathy to dear Sheila Colenutt, who sadly had a fall during the dress rehearsal for *Quiz* and for a while could be found languishing in St Mary's with sundry broken bones. She was in good hands and spirits and had visits from various members; she's now been discharged but her recovery is likely to be quite long so we shall miss her skills in the props team and her smile at coffee mornings.

A BIG ENORMOUS IMPORTANT REMINDER



The King's Award
for Voluntary Service

Just in case some of you may have missed it, a message went out recently reminding all members that on **Wednesday 3 June at 6.00pm (sharp!)** there will be a presentation by the Lord Lieutenant, Suzie Sheldon, of our official King's Award for Voluntary Service. The presentation will be made on our stage, and all members are encouraged to attend.

This award is one of the most significant events in Apollo history. It recognises our more than 50 years of entirely voluntary service to the community, and we feel enormously proud to have achieved it—the only one of the 123 Little Theatres to have done so this year.

So do please make every effort to come along—there will be a bit of a do in the bar afterwards and the Lord Lieutenant has very kindly agreed to stay on for a while to meet members and get a feel for the place.



As a bit of a treat, as a result of our success your Director and I had the privilege of being invited to Buckingham Palace in May to one of the King's garden parties, recognising a whole range of people who have served the community in various ways.

It was a very jolly day: we met some very interesting people, it didn't rain, there was a nice tea, we wandered around the beautiful grounds for a couple of hours (talking about fundraising, as it happens!) and after standing about with most of the other 8,000 attendees (yes, 8,000!) we caught a few glimpses of the King and Queen. We then joined our respective patient spouses and had a very jolly supper involving substantial amounts of champagne.

A wonderful, unique and never-to-be-forgotten day.



A FEW MORE PHOTOS FROM OUR DAY AT BUCKINGHAM PALACE





Your letters

Dear friends, colleagues, fellow thespians and every other type of Apollonian—I'm writing to offer my heartfelt thanks to everyone who was so kind and caring when I had my Unfortunate Incident during a dress rehearsal of *Quiz*. From the start I felt in good hands and cared for, from Vicki and Chris, who brought their professional backgrounds to the situation, to Liz, who very kindly ferried me up to A&E and kept me distracted until Nick could arrive.

Thank you all—and once again my sincerest apologies to everyone in the cast & crew for being so clumsy, and my thanks for being so calm about my

coming on stage plastered!! The price I'm paying is six weeks with one arm out of action—and you wouldn't believe just how many things in everyday life are almost impossible with only one hand available (you just try washing your right hand without the assistance of your left ...!)! One of them is touch-typing, so I apologise in advance for any weirdnesses ...

My sincerest and heartfelt thanks also to everyone who so kindly gave me lifts here and there. I couldn't have done it without you xx

Ginnie Orrey

As you may remember, in the past I've included electronic messages in this

'letters' column, on the principle that whatever the medium, the message is what counts. So here are a couple we've received recently about Quiz:

You were all brilliant! You had so many lines to remember, and so many moves to follow with the mobile sets. The level of work and effort from all involved was really obvious and just amazing. Well done, everyone!

Just wanted to let you know how brilliant the Quiz was 😊 I saw it last night. The acting was consistently v. Good and the tech and production were superb, I thoroughly enjoyed it, please pass on my congratulations to everyone!!!!
Lots of love

A beautiful piece from a contributor new to Poetry Corner, Suzy Jacobsen.

A NODE TO WILLIAM BLAKE

(He who binds himself to a joy)
Finds not himself in sorrow drown'd
For rather has he chosen to lie down
In meadows sweet: the mayfly, lark and leveret he dost greet.
Slips into slumber deep: Oh let natures' balm heal all his woes!
With dreams of gossamer golden wings upon an angel calling him.
Hark! Closer come and take this key and lock the secret in. That ALL God's kingdom is thine.
To marvel. Or to doubt.
But..
He who binds himself to a joy
Finds not himself in sorrow drown'd.

And now for something completely different ... Delighted to include one of Steve Taverner's magnum opi (?). A triumph as always, darling!

FABULOUS

Darling, you were fabulous, I really loved the play,
You shouldn't pay attention to what the critics say.
The dialogue was as witty as anyone has penned,
And nearly half the audience stayed on until the end.
The words that you remembered were spoken loud and clear,
So even people sitting in row four could easily hear.
You played your character brilliantly, the anger and the rage
Were clear for all to see when you knocked Eric off the stage.
You might have missed a cue or two and let one entrance slip,
But I don't think anybody noticed such a minor blip.
Your costume was divine, full of elegance and class,
And very nearly big enough to fit right round your arse.
To sum it up, the whole show was a triumph, so I'd say.
So when's your next performance? Oh how sad, I'll be away.

POETRY CORNER



As I've said more than once in these pages, I try to avoid as far as possible including verbatim copies of external articles. However, I break that rule when something particularly apposite comes up—written in a way I couldn't improve on—and this is one of those occasions.

Written by Lyn Gardner and published in The Stage, it reminds us—if we need reminding—of the immeasurable value of those unseen and essential crew members, the stage managers (the illustration above is of Michael Sheen as the SM in Our Town, which those of you who've been paying attention may remember I was fortunate enough to see recently). One of the comments on the article made the very good point that 'it takes a village to raise a child', which is just another way of saying that an ensemble includes everyone and all of them contribute their own unique skills to the final outcome—stage managers and everyone else.

This has been particularly the case in our current production, Quiz, which is reminding us every moment of how fundamental the contribution is of the backstage team—particularly when we're trying not to trip over or

tread on a black-clad Colin Caldicott as he crawls about pulling and pushing the trucks!

In Thornton Wilder's *Our Town*, recently revived by Welsh National Theatre, the central character and director of the action is a stage manager, played by Michael Sheen in the WNT production, who powers the unfolding scenario. Wilder's play offers an enduring cosmic meditation on the meaning of life. It does something else, too: it is a meta-play that gives one of theatre's most undervalued roles, the stage manager, both agency and visibility.

Stage managers' work largely goes unseen because they make everything run so smoothly. As Stephanie Street said almost a decade ago: 'Stage managers create the whole structure, the scaffolding, the skeleton, upon which every morsel of creative flesh will hang and ultimately live. From the sourcing and organisation of props to the backstage calls, without the stage managers and their unique combination of inventiveness, huge heart and soul and unwavering thirst for detail, nothing, no one, would ever make it on to a stage.' Hear, hear. [*What a hugely appropriate metaphor for our scaffold-heavy set!*]

A stage manager working on *The Play That Goes Wrong* once wryly acknowledged that it went against the grain of years of training and experience to be actively working very hard to

make things go wrong on stage, albeit in a deliberate, highly controlled fashion.

Stage managers rarely get to take a bow, or receive the acknowledgement they deserve. There are a few exceptions, including Simon McBurney's *The Encounter*, the curtain call of which featured backstage workers, underlining that while it may look like a one-man show, it is an ensemble piece, reliant on unseen backstage input. But it is unlikely that audiences will come out of most productions remarking on the brilliance of the play's stage management in the same way they might comment on the performances by the actors or the work of the designer.

Yet without stage managers' contributions, many productions would fall apart and be unable to maintain consistency. Stage managers serve as the eyes and ears for everyone in the production. They are on nobody's side - except the side of ensuring the production is as good as it can be - and are there to make certain that everybody involved is in a position to give their best.

A very successful director once said that, in his early career, experienced stage managers saved his bacon on numerous occasions because they knew far more than him.

So, the question is: why don't we value them more and sing their praises more loudly? Why do we so often take them for granted? In part, perhaps, it is because when your job is to make everything run smoothly and it does, people often fail to appreciate the effort and skill you have put into making it so.

In *Our Town*, Wilder reminds us how the extraordinary is found in everyday ordinariness. So next time we are clapping at the curtain call, let's reserve an extra clap for the unseen stage managers and crew and the extraordinary things they achieve every day as they go about their ordinary business.

APPLAUSE FOR STAGE MANAGERS

**AN UPDATE
ON THE
APOLLO
YOUTH
THEATRE
BY
MISH
WHITMORE**

You will all, I'm sure, be aware, even if only peripherally, of the existence of our own Apollo Youth Theatre. Perhaps you come into coffee morning and see a group improvising in the foyer, or hear something going on in the auditorium, or even do a duty for one of their fabulous home-grown productions. I thought it was time to hear from the AYT director, Mish Whitmore, to give us an update on all the things that have been going on behind the scenes. I think you'll be impressed!

As the director of the youth theatre, it can sometimes feel like we're a bit out on a limb compared to the rest of the Apollo. It could be assumed that we don't do a lot, but the reality is the members have numerous opportunities throughout the year, though not necessarily within the walls of the Apollo theatre. Some of these opportunities come under the 'Raw Theatre' banner. Raw Theatre is my own company, simply to give the youth theatre members more performance opportunities.

We have 40 young people who regularly come through the doors each Saturday morning. Each session starts with me teaching theatrical skills, and then they break off into working groups to devise their own pieces of theatre that they then perform at the end of the session. I teach them skills from numerous practitioners, my favourites being Katie Mitchel, Michael Chekhov, Jac le Coq, and Frantic Assembly, but I also teach the more traditional Brecht, Stanislavski and Meisner, to name a few. This ensures they have a good variety of skills they can call on when they're performing. I also enjoy teaching different types of theatre, platform, ethnotheatre, puppetry, object theatre. I think it's

really important that they can be adaptable and it helps them to be creative. I think this was quite evident during *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. It was so nice to have a number of our members involved in this production, and for them to work alongside other members of the Apollo Players.



Members of the AYT take a bow after *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

In February, our younger ones took to the stage in *Billy the Brave*. They performed both at Apollo and at Quay Arts as part of the Isle of Wight Story Festival. This was an opportunity for our younger members to take lead roles, and many of the older members supported them by providing live music and teaching them to sing.

Last week, I took three of the older ones into four schools across the island as part of the Isle of Wight Story Festival, stories in schools programme. I wrote a piece of shadow puppet theatre, which we performed to the pupils, and then we worked with the school children to create their own pieces of shadow puppetry to show to the other kids in the session. This was great fun and really good experience for the older ones to see how community theatre works.

This week we have seen some of the children dressed as dragons for Arreton Barns dragon week. The costumes have been made by Anthony James of Crea-

turama. Anthony has often created costume pieces, set and props for us, most notable of which would be the crocodile for *Peter Pan Returns*. When I agreed, I didn't expect the weather to be quite so hot, so walking around in the heavy cardboard costumes hasn't been easy, but they've done a great job.

This week, Charlie has been filming in Cowes. I was asked if I could provide a young boy for a film about the sinking of HMV Britannia in Cowes, following the death of George V in 1936. The film will be available to view during Cowes week. He really enjoyed his experience of filming.

Many of you will know Si Lynch who has performed and directed across the island. He has written a play, *Fizzy*, set in 1999, a play full of nostalgia as a group of teenagers find their place in the world. Three of the *Midsummer* young lovers will be reunited again, with the addition of one more to form the cast, which will be performed at Ventnor Fringe 23rd & 24th July. If you have a love of 90s music and creating those mixed tapes for your personal stereo, this one is definitely for you. This will be my last opportunity to direct Harrison Hartup as he heads to university in September.

I was recently approached by Carole Crow, asking if I would be prepared to work on a joint project with the youth theatre and the

Gateway choir. I absolutely leapt at the opportunity. The kids are now working with a choreographer who is currently training at the Laban conservatoire. They spend two hours every week learning contemporary dance skills. We have been lucky enough to receive a grant from Southern Vectis to help cover the costs of this project. This piece of theatre is very much in my roots of socially engaged theatre. When working out what we should do, it occurred to me that young people and older people have a shared experience in that they both experience a loss of self-esteem, changing relationships, and the world becomes harder to navigate. We are using these ideas to tell our story in music, physical theatre, and dance.



The crocodile in *Peter Pan Returns*

The dance skills that the children learn will be very much be put in use again for our annual production. This year we are going to create *The Jungle Book*. Originally, I had intended to buy in the script, as I was concerned that creating our own wouldn't do the book justice. However, the more I read the book, the more I realised most scripts missed all the beauty of the language and the story. Karl and I sat together and created our own version, which is very true to the original story. As usual, we will be writing our own songs and music; it's

great that the members have such wonderful skills that can be used in our performances. I always try to make our annual show a big experience, and this year I am really hoping to achieve this. I am talking with several schools at the moment, and we are hoping that across our 10 performances, we will have additional children to come and do some dances. Strengthening our links with the community is vital and will hopefully strengthen the youth theatre too. This will be an opportunity to bring more people into Apollo who may not have experienced theatre before.

The youth theatre has always enjoyed taking part in carnivals. This year, they will be working with an artist to create structures that will be attached to the car of one of the parents. A large bear reading a book, a snake around the car, a large tiger on top, monkeys hanging from the wing mirrors, and wolves in the back of the car. These will be created with wire mesh and recycled material. This is a fabulous way for us to advertise *The Jungle Book*, and we will be giving out thousands of leaflets advertising *The Jungle Book* and the Apollo Theatre.

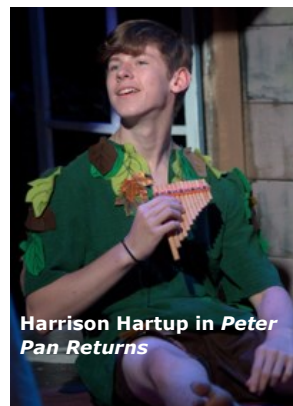
We have also been asked to take part in a youth festival in October, which is being run by Ventnor Exchange. We will be using part of *The Jungle Book* for this. This is a great opportunity for us to advertise both the show, the youth theatre and the Apollo in general.

This will move us nicely towards Christmas. Amy has asked us to contribute to the Christmas show this year. At the weekend, I sat on the beach, giving this some thought (the beach and Christmas is a strange mix when you don't live in Australia!). So

we are starting to give this some thought: disgruntled roast potatoes, and tree ornaments with their noses out of joint are coming to mind, and I think we can have a lot of fun.

Last week, as I left the last school, one of the volunteers for the Isle of Wight Story Festival said to me, 'You need to get your ideas together for February now'. And yes, I do, so with thoughts of sealife conservation, I am starting to develop ideas for the Isle of Wight Story Festival next year.

There is so much that goes on in the youth theatre, and I am so very proud of all the children who take part. They dedicate so much of their time to being the best that they can. They are a great bunch, and they all see Apollo as part of their extended family. Around September, we often lose members who leave the island and start their future careers. As I mentioned earlier, Harrison will leave to go to Bourne-mouth to study film. I will cry, watching your children grow their wings and fly isn't easy; however, I know that the awkward little 10-year-old whom I met when I first took over the youth theatre has grown into a confident young man. This happens every year, and every year it gets that bit harder. But hopefully, they will leave with very fond memories of their Apollo family.



Harrison Hartup in *Peter Pan Returns*

Our LTG rep, Hilary Foister, recently attended the annual LTG conference, this time held in Birmingham. She came away with lots of news and ideas—read on to find out more.

and to be entertained by the Crescent actors/singers who performed pieces from *Come From Away*. This musical had been running there the week before to great acclaim.

The following day was full

He started his talk by recounting that a recent study had discovered that those involved in the Arts live longer! Yay! That made those of us in the room who still enjoy dressing up and playing, smile!

He outlined the work of the Trust in championing the future of live performance in new or old, commercial, subsidized or community-run theatres. Pointing out too, how much the Little Theatres brought communities together and how important that was in today's fractured society.

Another of the amateur theatre world's problems is in its name: amateur.

How often has a patronizing voice been heard sympathizing that 'Ah, so you couldn't make it as a professional, then?' If it is five-a-side football, no one questions the players that way! Therefore, several of the audience said that their theatre had changed their name from 'amateur' to Local or Community Theatre.

It's a shame there is such a stigma for, as we know, our famous actors started somewhere. He asked how we could change the narrative? Are the Council fully aware of the benefits of the theatre to the local economy and has the local college been approached to see if any of its Art or Construction students wants some set building or painting experience?

He certainly made us feel that professional and amateur are one of the same story-telling collective; vital to the wellbeing of all.

He finished by emphasizing the importance of Youth Theatres; vital for the next generation of actors. This



FROM YOUR LTG REP, HILARY FOISTER

Arriving in Birmingham, our hosts, the Crescent Theatre, welcomed LTG members to their sister theatre The Old Rep. This is the oldest rep in the UK and was the launchpad for many of our famous actors. Laurence Olivier, Ralph Richardson, Albert Finney all performed here. In fact, Derek Jacobi made his debut performance there!

Part of the building was sold off after repertory life diminished and the building was left unloved. The Council tried desperately to find a buyer and it was in 2024 that the Crescent Theatre decided to lease it from the Council and run it, alongside their own theatre.

It's been a great success, as the theatre is booked throughout the year with touring companies.

It was a pleasure to meet up with other members

of interest, making it difficult to choose which class to join! I went along to the talk on Neurodiversity where the speakers helped us to understand how to include those wanting to join our theatres, who may have Autism, ADHD, OCD, Tourette's, Dyslexia etc. They emphasized that the goal is not about fixing but acceptance, access and accommodation.

Next on my list was a class on Voice and Movement. Steve Message gave us such an enjoyable experience in discovering how to tackle our characters with the use of different body shapes and to prepare our voices for performance. Who would have thought that thinking like a mouse could alter the way you approach a role!

Next on my list was to listen to the hugely encouraging words of Josh McTaggart, the CEO of the Theatres Trust.

was exactly where I was off to next: the Youth Theatre Festival. This was to celebrate the 80 years of the Guild and of their youth programmes.

9 groups from all over the country arrived to perform their chosen play or play extract. Jo Matthews was keeping things flowing and remarked how well behaved they all were, concentrating hard on putting on a good performance. They certainly did that! I could only pop in every now and then, but the depth of feeling the older members gave the roles was impressive. I also watched lighter, musical numbers that included well-executed choreography and a piece about the Titanic in mime and movement. All was lovely to watch. If these are our future actors, we're in safe hands!

Our final treat for the day was a performance of the play *Little Wars* by Steven Carl McCasland. It was being shown in the theatre's studio, which seats about 60, so there was a nice inclusive feel.

It is about an imagined dinner party set in 1940 in the French Alps where the American novelist Gertrude Stein lived with her lover Alice Toklas. The guests include celebrated novelists Agatha Christie, Dorothy Parker and Lillian Hellman. Throw into this fiery group a heroine and a seemingly unremarkable girl and things get interesting! All these 'amateur' actresses were excellent, a totally professional standard.

I know Alan Magor would agree with that! Jo Matthews introduced us to this actor/director/lecturer who had agreed to come along and talk to us about his experiences. First of all, it was nice to hear him repeat the belief that amateur theatre is the pulsing heart of theatre and essential to keep active. He understood why not every talented actor would want to take on a precarious life where rejection is often felt. He played Sergeant Trotter in *The Mousetrap* in 2019 and took it on tour to India, where they are, apparently mad about Agatha Christie! Eventually, he moved on to directing before securing the job of Principal Lecturer in Acting for Stage at Performers College Birmingham. Here he teaches acting technique, Shakespeare and classical texts. A bit of an all-rounder, he likes to keep all options open.

From the floor came an interesting comment: a man who had done some professional acting found that when it came to writing for the play programmes that he had started acting in amateur theatre, he was told to make no reference to that. Another person echoed that he'd had the same experience. Well, that needs to change! Young people reading a programme need to see that this career didn't happen by magic, but through Youth groups and amateur theatre.

Our last day covered 'Martin's Law', a new set of rules to come into place next year in case of a ter-

rorist outside or inside your theatre. Common sense stuff really, but I jotted down all the details before realizing that it probably would never apply to the Apollo. Only if there are more than 200 people in the theatre do you need to have trained volunteers.

The AGM on Sunday was short, then an Open Forum followed.

The LTG Chair Nick Morley closed the conference with the not unexpected news that our subscriptions will be going up to £155 pa.

I'll leave you though with something to dream about. There is an International Theatre Festival every 2 years. Going abroad with an hour-long play means adapting it so that there is more mime than language. Upside is the huge challenge! Downside is the expense! But your accommodation and meals are paid for, you just have to pay for flights. We can dream!

Hilary

SOME PHOTOS FROM QUIZ



PRODUCTION NEWS

Hello everyone! Well, it is with much regret that I have to inform you that we have had to postpone our production of *70, Girls, 70*.

I was fortunate enough to find a wonderful cast for all the main roles; however, there were still some minor roles that despite arm-twisting we could not fill.

I am hoping that we will be able to squeeze the show into next season somewhere at a time when there may be more

people available, as lots have previous commitments this year. The main cast have all agreed to come along with me on this, and we are having a great time at rehearsals and hope to keep meeting up until we start rehearsing again properly. We are also in the process of looking for a new Musical Director.

This was a very difficult decision, but the show would not have been up to the standards we all expect from the Apollo.

I understand that you may be disappointed, but we do have to keep up our reputation and hopefully we will be performing it next year.

I'll keep you posted!

John



Lovesong is the first play of next season, 2026/27. I held auditions on 24 May and I'm very pleased to be able to confirm that the chosen cast is as follows:

Billy Chris Hicks
Maggie Ellen Weeks
William Daniel Pressey
Margaret Hebe Gregory-Pimm

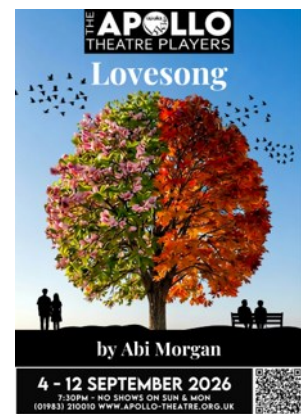
One of the first issues when looking at prospective casts was that the younger and older characters have to be believably the same person! Not a thing to worry about usually, but size and height mattered on this occasion!

I invited a dance teacher along to the auditions to get everyone moving as choreographed dance will

be included in *Lovesong*. Everyone seems excited at the challenges of this different style of play and I hope you will all come along to applaud their efforts when it opens in September.

An exciting and different play that we're all looking forward to investigating!

Hilary



STEAMPUNK DAY AT THE THEATRE!

Clearly fired up by their joyful experience in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, a bunch of members are putting together a family Steampunk social day in July (precise date tbc).

Lin Caldicott says, 'Come in Steampunk costume! There will be a film, *Hugo*, for the kids in the afternoon and an adult 'Steampunky' film in the evening (*Stardust*). Wardrobe will be making accessories for this and embellishing some jackets as well as putting things up for sale. All prices will be very reasonable and funds will go into the Apollo build-



ing fund for essential repairs.

There will be a Saturday costume sale to create an opportunity for everyone to obtain items to 'Steampunk up' your everyday clothes with accessories. If you want to help sew something like a fascinator, neck ruff, hat decoration etc. please

let me know. I have a couple of simple project books if you want to have a peek.

So, if you could have a rummage in your drawers please (ooh la la!) and would like to donate any unwanted watches, old keys, old-fashioned inexpensive jewellery, odds and sods etc. that we can use for embellishments please let me know and I will arrange a collection point. Any ideas are welcome, you lovely creative people. Let the beauty of Victorian invention fire you up!

Lin





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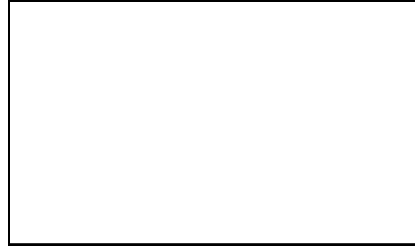
email:
info@apollo-theatre.org.uk

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

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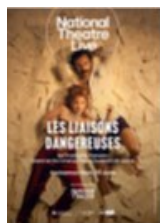


The Apollo Players' next production

Following the unavoidable but unfortunate postponement of *70, Girls, 70*, remember that there is nevertheless lots of stuff going on the theatre, not least the next two screenings of National Theatre Live productions. Not to be missed!



On 4 June Nicola Coughlan joins Éanna Hardwicke and Siobhán McSweeney in John Millington Synge's riveting play of youth and self-discovery, *The Playboy of the Western World*. Pegeen Flaherty's life is turned upside down when a young man walks into her pub claiming that he's killed his father. Instead of being shunned, the killer becomes a local hero and begins to win hearts - that is, until a second man unexpectedly arrives on the scene ... Filmed live on stage at the National Theatre, Caitríona McLaughlin directs this darkly funny tale full to the brim with secrets.



On 25 June you can catch the amazing National Theatre production of *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*, widely praised as a 'sumptuous' and 'magnetic' four-star production, directed by Marianne Elliott. Starring Lesley Manville (Merteuil) and Aidan Turner (Valmont), the show is noted for its high-stakes drama, erotic tension, and stylish, mirror-filled and fast-paced staging.