



December 2020 Newsletter

THE
ROSE
THEATRE

Wishing all our readers ...



Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year





Chairman's Remarks

by Bob Graham

Well what an eventful few months it has been. Twelve months ago, who would have thought we would be here? But we are. I know we all appreciate it is for the greater good of society, but it is nonetheless highly frustrating.

Your committee and I continue to work hard to ensure the long-term financial security of the society and, whilst we are in no imminent danger, the current situation cannot continue indefinitely. Even upon re-launch it is likely to be a very different world for some considerable time. When non-professional theatres were permitted to re-open, we took a decision to try to perform, but the second lockdown came on the very day we were due to start the short season of monologues. It made me immensely proud to see the level of commitment from the membership in trying to get these shows off the ground, with about half of the membership involved in one way or another.

As I write it is still unclear when we can reopen, as the Department of Arts & Culture is yet to update its guidance. However, we have been advised by the Little Theatre Guild that, in line with Government's guidance, we should recommend our members to refrain from travelling in from Tier 3 locations until such time as we have better information about whether we, as a 'charity that runs as a business', can continue to operate normally. I hope this will come sooner rather than later.

2021 is unlikely to be easy for us as we will be restricted in the range of shows we can perform. As the auditorium was configured for the monologue season, we cannot make any outside lets profitable without charging somewhere in the region £30 per ticket, so it is unlikely that any will take place until we can use a full auditorium. Our own shows will remain restricted to a maximum of 80 seats, but with social distancing, this is more likely to be around 60. Our own shows will need to be restricted to small casts until restrictions are relaxed. It isn't all doom and gloom though – we will be performing again soon. I am also aware that just as some of you are living in tier 3, 40% of the tickets for the monologues were sold to people living in tier 3 locations, so we do have to question the viability of an early rescheduling and if we cannot put the monologues on the stage, we will try to find a way to film the actors and stream them and we will start rehearsals for other shows later in the year.

Here's hoping 2021 is the beginning of a bright future and I wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.





Judy Bassett

by Stephen Downing

To have known Judy for over forty years has been a great privilege.

We first met at the Crescent Theatre in Birmingham where I saw her in Webster's "The Duchess of Malfi". She was exceptionally good; that wonderful voice, exquisite timing, a truly heartbreaking performance. She was a most gifted young actress and an accomplished singer who enjoyed great success in various musicals. Every director wanted Judy in their production. I was lucky to direct her subsequently at the Crescent in Shaw's "Mrs Warrens Profession" and "On Approval" by Freddie Lonsdale, during which a young Bill Bassett was in the audience and the rest is history.

Quite unexpectedly we met again when she joined The Rose, and over last few years it has been a delight to spend time with her and Bill both socially and theatrically.

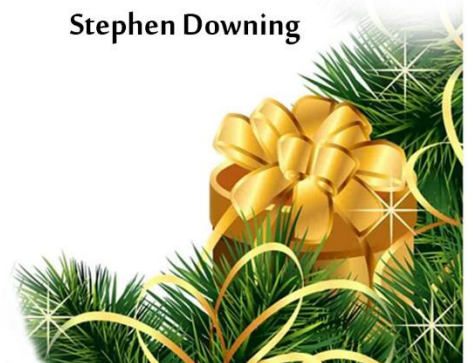
I finally appeared in a play with Judy in Hugh's wonderful production of "Improbable Fiction", and I also can look back on great times in "Present Laughter" and the Scottish play, when one night when she wasn't getting much reaction during the Porters scene, she turned to the front row and in desperation said, "I didn't write this you know!"

Her last performance as Lady Bracknell was a memorable event. She brought such quality to the production. It was a joy to behold and looking back it's deeply sad to think we will never enjoy her performing again.



To Bill and the girls we say thank you for sharing Judy with us. A bright and shining light is dimmed for ever. I will never forget Judy.

Stephen Downing





Artistic Director


Jen Eglinton

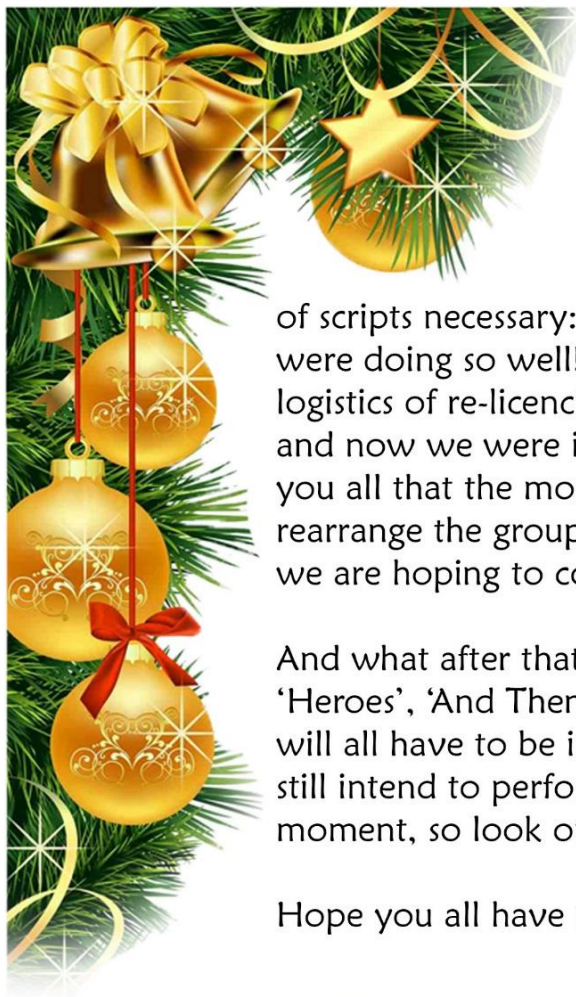
Hello everyone. This has been a tumultuous year, hasn't it? Artistically we were doing very well until the first Lockdown hit. Our first play in 2020 was the 'Farndale' mystery, which may not have been the most intellectual play we have ever done, but boy, did it bring in the audiences! Some expressed doubts about doing such a play, but I am glad you trusted us, for this was exactly what was needed as we set out to entertain and make a profit. It also brought us two new directors, in Martin Salter and Pat Gale, who did a great job of managing the mad cast!

Our second play was the Shakespeare, 'Much Ado about Nothing'. Lots of parts for everyone, and I was pleased to be able to cast a diverse group of people. Welcome to new members John, Matthew, Emma, Jess and Jane, and it was lovely to see Dink again. Did you know she was 90 this year? I couldn't believe it! This again was a play, the choice of which one or two people expressed concerns, thinking it would not sell.... but it did, and very well! A lot of hard work went into creating it, and our actors embraced the fun and seemed to romp through the whole thing. Thank you to Keith, Mike and the other hard workers backstage who made it so lovely to look at. The audiences thoroughly enjoyed it too.

Whilst all this was happening, Pam and her team were working hard on the studio production of 'Heroes', but before it could go on, tragedy struck, and we were plunged into lockdown! Rehearsals for other plays had to be postponed, the theatre was shut down, and we were all devastated, not knowing what was going to happen.

Over the months that followed we were constantly trying to find out what we could and couldn't do, as Government directives were very vague. As the professional theatres slowly began to be recognised as viable, we liaised closely with the Little Theatre Guild, of which we are a member, to try to obtain parity with the professionals, as we own our own theatres and are self-funding for the most part. Eventually the various social distancing legislations came into force, and we did risk assessments and put all sorts of precautions in place to make it possible for our lovely theatre to reopen. We chose a series of short, one-person plays, varying the content and splitting them into groups of three, deciding to perform a group per week over the month of November. Our actors came flocking back, and it was with a lot of excitement that we prepared to reopen, albeit with reduced seating and special rules in place. We have to say 'thank you' to Bob, his team and the Trustees, who worked so hard to keep us going. It was tough and very difficult, but The Rose was alive again!





We all worked feverously, the lines were learned, and we were just about to go into tech and dress rehearsals for the first set, when WHAM! Down came the second lockdown. Everyone was devastated. The actors had worked so hard learning the vast amount of scripts necessary: monologue plays are very hard to perform, and they were doing so well! So what to do? We had already grappled with the logistics of re-licencing our productions and reimbursing audience members, and now we were in the same position. However, I am pleased to inform you all that the monologue plays WILL go on. We are just having to rearrange the groups a little to make sure everyone can be present, but we are hoping to complete what we started!

And what after that you may ask? Well, we still have the licences to do 'Heroes', 'And Then There Were None', and 'Cranford', and although they will all have to be in the main house to make sure distancing is in place, we still intend to perform them in 2021. Final dates are being arranged at the moment, so look out for the e-mails, and keep safe everyone!

Hope you all have a good Christmas, and here's to a great New Year!

FOH by Jane Holt



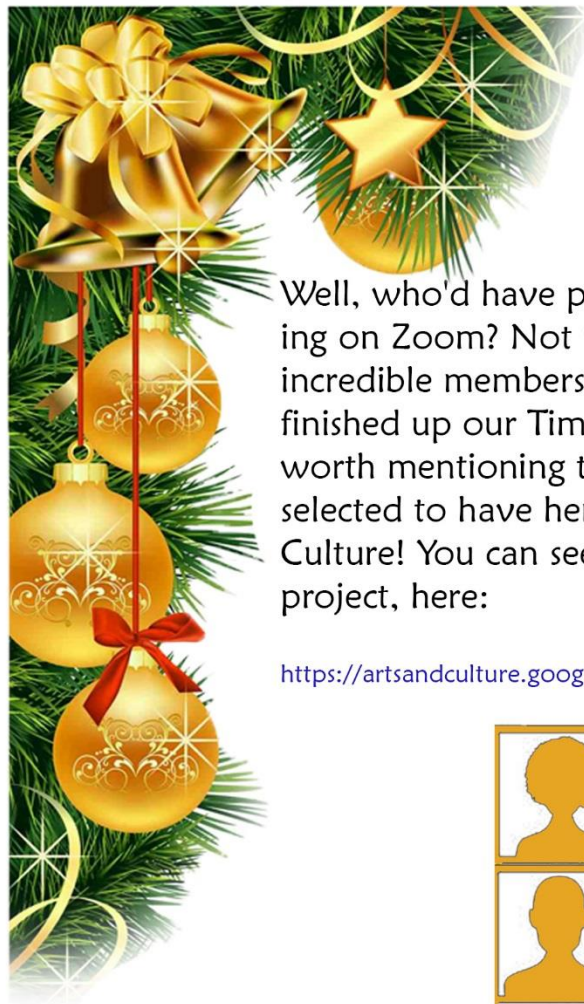
Can I thank everyone who offered to help on FOH for the November performances. It made my life so much easier and it was so nice to have contact with everyone again. I enjoyed the build up so much "normal" life had returned to the Rose and although we feared all along it still might not happen, when the news came the Saturday before it was still very sad. I'd like to think it will still happen and everything is ready for then.



Dink Widdowson at 90

Here's Dink on the morning of her birthday opening her flowers from 'The Rose'.



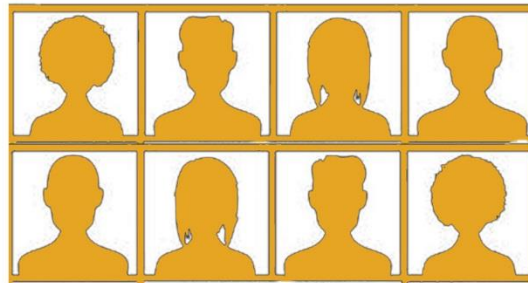


KRYPT

by Becca Williams

Well, who'd have predicted that, eight months later, we'd still be working on Zoom? Not us, but fortunately our Youth Theatre is full of such incredible members that we've been able to keep calm and carry on. We finished up our Time Capsule project over the summer months, but it is worth mentioning that one of our brilliant young people was personally selected to have her work featured permanently on Google Arts and Culture! You can see one of her pieces, alongside her thoughts about the project, here:

https://artsandculture.google.com/asset/biffy-clyro-image-emma/ywHz__ErQ3i-Dg



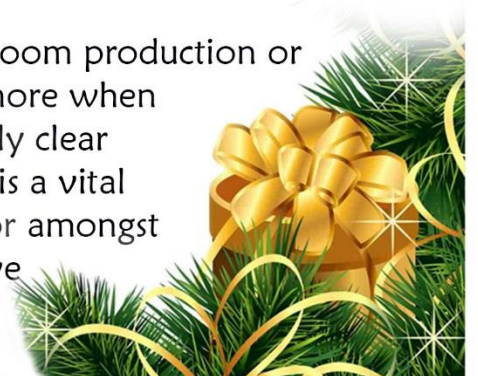
The four Audio Dramas are finally edited and online if you'd like to see them. You're welcome to share privately but mustn't post the links publicly to safeguard our members.

<https://soundcloud.com/user-290601845/eleanor-the-adventurer-and-the-land-of-splendiferous-hats/s-RdGOLxia4Hb>
<https://soundcloud.com/user-290601845/missing-dan-nolan-audio/s-eMQbUmFxcgf>
<https://soundcloud.com/user-290601845/captain-bluebeards-monkey/s-0ZgRbd3BjPO>
<https://soundcloud.com/user-290601845/ballet-shoes/s-ruN1PGAwfQt>

In September, we began working on our new productions. What is suited better to Zoom than Audio Dramas? In four different groups, we spent the weeks studying our scripts, closely listening and honing our voices in order to create distinct characters and entrance our listeners. The finished plays will be ready to share soon, so watch this space - they are well worth a listen!

Finally, in a brave attempt to keep spirits up at the theatre, we have embarked on our seasonal project: KRYPTmas Entertainment. Featuring festive scenes, poems and readings - many of which you might recognise from Christmases long ago - this project is sure to put the jingle back in our bells!

We remain unsure whether KRYPTmas Entertainment will be a Zoom production or whether our young people will finally get to be together once more when December comes. Either way, one thing has been overwhelmingly clear during our time online: the theatre, whether physical or virtual, is a vital place of solace, creativity and togetherness. It has been an anchor amongst the madness. While the world changes all around us, we still have the theatre holding fast. What a wonderful thought that is.





2020 - 2021 committee

by Anne Booth



Honorary Officers

Chair Bob Graham
Vice-Chair Tori Wakeman
Secretary Maureen Higgins
Treasurer David Wakeman
Artistic Director Jen Eglinton

Executive Managers

Stage Manager Keith Higgins
Membership Hilary Thompson
Front of House Jane Holt
Publicity Anne Booth
Props Helen Speake and Ros Casewell
Maintenance Neil Chamberlain
Technical Amy Baker
Wardrobe vacant
Box Office vacant

Members' representatives

Richard Casewell
Hannah Tolley
Katy Ball
Colin Hill
Tony Newbould

Trustees

John Gaston,
Pam Meredith &
Colin Young

We would like to thank those
members stepping down this year

Brian Gale for his sterling work
as treasurer in these difficult
circumstances;

Faye and Andy Bingham for
their valuable contributions to
the committee as members'
representatives.

We welcome David as treasurer
and Colin and Tony as
members' representatives.





'Season's Greetings'

Zoom play reading

On Monday 7th December Bob was joined online on Zoom by enthusiastic members for the online play reading of 'Season's Greetings' by Alan Ayckbourn, in what Bob hoped would be the first of a number of online play readings over the cold winter months.

Twenty-eight people joined us, either to participate or simply to listen. A very festive start to the Christmas season!



Hopefully the next newsletter will reflect news of better times in 2021!

Any Nonnies member is welcome to submit a piece for the newsletter, so maybe during the weeks to come you might like to write a poem or describe how you're getting your drama during these difficult dark months?

All articles gratefully received. You can e-mail me
(sue2hunt@yahoo.co.uk)

Hope to see you soon!

Sue Hunt
News Editor of the Rose newsletter

