

# THE ROSE THEATRE



## Newsletter July 2023

### Chairman's remarks

Hello all. I am writing this, still in the glow of a tremendous week with Nell Gwynn. An excellent production to end the season, if not an especially profitable one.

This has been a year of recovery and we have through all of your hard work achieved exactly what we needed to: put the theatre on a very secure financial footing and got lots of bums on seats. We have also now returned to having someone to run the office in the form of our new Venue Manager, Sharon. Our Publicity Manager, Anne Booth, gives us an insight into Sharon later on! Please feel free to pop in and say hello to her when you are passing.



This has been a successful season on and off stage. We have made money and significantly out-performed many of our peers in amateur theatre, so huge congratulations need to be given to Jen for choosing the season and for Richard for his work in casting the second half and we have a lot to look forward to next year.

Membership has grown this year and it was particularly good to see members at such different stages – did you realise that we have members spanning seven age decades in Nell Gwynn? I am really beginning to think that maybe we need to think about how we can revive members' social nights to keep the spirit of this season's plays going.

Thank you all for your hard work throughout the year and don't forget that membership subscriptions were due on 3rd July. You can renew by bank transfer, if you wish. Lastly, earlier in the year we launched our new website and I am sure you will agree it is an improvement, but we could still do much more with it. If anyone feels brave and wants to contribute to website content by writing about experiences on any shows or in the form of a peer review, please speak to me.

**Bob**

Enjoy the Summer and see you in September.







## Our Buns were just the right size!

What an enjoyable experience it was to work on props for 'Calendar Girls' – and what a challenge! Those of you who came to the play back in February will remember that there were many short scenes with lots of props on for a short time, then on to the next. So, precision planning was essential. I'm good at that and my partner in crime Donna Abram is the artistic creator, so we made a good team. We were joined by trainee props person Sue Jones, who proved to be a real asset and a quick learner (enabling her to take on props for 'Nell Gwynn' recently).



Calendar Girls had a couple of key moments: one of which was of course – THAT SCENE! Donna came into her own creating the Babylon of buns for Katie Brown to hide behind and the marmalade display to hide Jess. The scene was timed to perfection with the ladies being hidden in all the right places ahead of the photo flash. We had previously had a photo shoot to create the calendar images which were then projected onto the stage. Thanks to Tori for coming in to take those shots. All went well every single night and thankfully that scene came just before the interval to give us all a breather.

The creation of the sunflower artifacts to come on for the final scene were another challenge and I think we bought the whole stock of Dunelm's sunflower display! Director Richard Taylor's vision of that last scene really paid off and the final effect was very moving. But what to do with all those sunflowers and very specific props? As Helen and Ros, the props managers will tell you – there is a limit to our space in the props room. Well, the answer came in the form of Highbury Little Theatre over at Sutton Coldfield who agreed to buy all our surplus flowers and props at a reasonable price to use in their production of the play in June. We were all happy as it took some work away for them and we recouped some of our expenditure, so David Wakeman (treasurer) was happy!

We were a little bit sad to see the display of the Westlife creation being sold, but we know it went to a good home. We were also very sad at the end of the play as a real bond had been established amongst so many ladies – cast and crew. The fellas weren't too bad either. It was a pleasure to work on this play and although it can be time consuming and a little frustrating at times, doing props is a great way to get involved in a play if you don't want to act. You do feel part of it all and Donna, Sue and I are looking forward to the next one!





# Krypt



# Becca Wilbrooke

There have been some strange goings-on at the Youth Theatre this year. Our younger members have reported incidents of time travel while our Senior Company are witnesses to murder!

Okay, that's a bit dramatic... but our Junior Company really did delight audiences with their devised production of *The Boy Who Had a Secret*. It focused on a central character who was a very normal young lad until he became bestowed with his family's ancient powers to control time with a click of the fingers. An every day story of country folk. The performance in May was a huge success and brilliantly demonstrated the creativity amongst our young people!



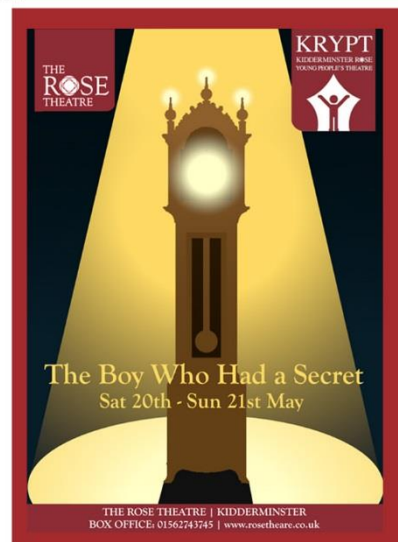
Our Senior Company, meanwhile, are getting ready to share their interpretation of *Macbeth*. They've chosen a very dark, sinister setting in which the Witches control the narrative as if murder is just a game. We're performing on the 15th and 16th of July and it would be lovely to see you there to support our cast - they're the Nonentities of tomorrow!

There's no stopping us, though - once *Macbeth* has been vanquished (spoiler alert), we've got the KRYPT Awards and then it's straight into our Summer School, KRYPTfest. We never stop having fun!



Once again, we'd like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who goes above and beyond to support KRYPT. Whether backstage, behind-the-scenes, as part of our rehearsal process, in the set designing and building team or even Front of House, we appreciate every last bit of help we can get our hands on. If you're interested in supporting your youth theatre, one of the easiest things you can do is come along to support our performances. The kids really do put on a blinding show (if we do say so ourselves) and the tickets are cheaper too!

*This spectacular clock was built in the workshop by Mike and Sally*





# Members Matter



Jen  
Eglinton

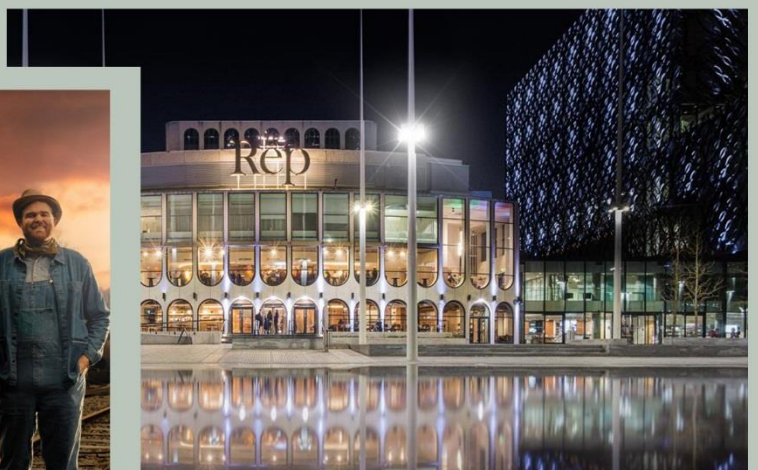
Lots of things have happened, so forgive me if I forget something: still shell shocked after Nell!

Over the year we have had several new members join the society, in a variety of roles. They very quickly become involved and are most welcome. When the applications come in, I chat to them if possible and send them on to the appropriate managers for induction. FOH, Wardrobe, Stage Crew and Acting have all gained new recruits this year. So welcome to you all!

The places we definitely need help with are Tech and Stage Management. David Wakeman, our temporary technical Manager, is desperate for people to work in the Sound and Lighting departments. If any of you are even vaguely interested, or know anyone who is, do let us know. Training is available, and the job isn't just a frightening array of knobs and buttons! If you can handle a computer, you can do this. Both jobs can be split into riggers and operators: the first sets up the show, sourcing or focusing and recording the cues, the second operates them during later rehearsals and the show week. It is a vital part of a production, and we cannot perform without it, so please come and have a go!

We had our first Nonnies Night out in March when we ventured by coach to the Birmingham Rep to see a new production of 'Of Mice and Men' by John Steinbeck. Bob helped me sort out the travel and bookings as I haven't done it before (I know, you would think I was more savvy wouldn't you?), and I think everyone enjoyed the experience. We have a couple more productions in mind for the future if we can fit them in!

Now that we come to the end of the season, we are looking forward to a well-earned rest and preparation for the next run. Departments have to be sorted, and repairs made where necessary, and organised for the future. We never stop in this field: We are either preparing for, re-hearsing, or performing some sort of production, and then on to the next! However, we can't do it without you, our Membership. Thank you, on behalf of all the Management, for all your hard work and dedication. It's what makes the Nonnies great. So come on, bring your families, bring your friends, and become part of our family.





## Welcome, Sharon!



We'd like to introduce you to our new venue manager, Sharon Tandy, who was appointed in April and is settling in very well to her role at the Rose. She will be working initially 9.30-3.30 every week-day except Wednesday, enabling our Box Office to be contacted every day. Our regular BO volunteers- Chris, Katy and Sue will continue to man the phones Mon Wed and Fri, enabling Sharon to do the multitude of other office tasks. Previously office manager at the Town Hall in Kidderminster for 16 years, she brings a wealth of knowledge and experience and will be a great asset to our society.

Originally from Birmingham, she has lived in Kidderminster for 22 years and is married with two boys aged 20 and 18. The family is completed by Scout, the Romanian rescue dog, who enjoys taking Sharon for local walks. Not only does she have many office and admin skills, but she is also a Children's author! Writing for ages 9-11, she was runner up in the Children's Bath Novel Awards for her book 'ROBOMOM' and has also been on their shortlist. (I'm sure there's a good novel to be written about a local dramatic society – always a drama at the Rose.) She loves reading novels and poetry and going to concerts and gigs. Hopefully, she will get to see all our plays and get to know the cast and crews and all the members.

Please introduce yourself next time you're at the Rose, if you haven't done so already.

## In memoriam Penny Walton 1967 - 2023



In March this year we heard the very sad news that Penny had passed away. She was a stalwart in the wardrobe department. She used to spend lots of time sewing for fun. She loved making her own dresses, as well as for friends. She put these skills to good use working on costumes for productions at the Rose. Since being diagnosed with cancer Penny taught herself how to crochet. She loved creating blankets and toys, donating many of these for charities, as well as for gifts. During her last few months Penny was looked after by the wonderful staff at Mary Stevens Hospice, Stourbridge. Penny passed away peacefully on 13th March, 2023.

£1,000 was handed over to Mary Stevens Hospice after the Rose's collection during the run of 'Calendar Girls'. It was a fitting tribute to Penny.

Thanks to Alan Jones for managing the collections each evening. Alan is pictured here with his wife, Sue Jones, who did a sterling job on props with Donna and Anne. By the way we recouped some of the spend by selling lots of flowers and props to Highbury theatre Solihull for their production in June!



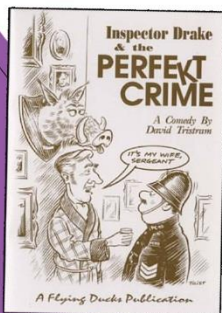


# New Season's Plays



# Richard Taylor

## Plays for 2023 - 2024



11th September – 16th September  
Inspector Drake and the Perfect Crime by David Tristram (2F, 2M)

6th November – 11th November  
Agnes of God by John Pielmeier (3W)

27th November – 2nd December  
The Ghost Train by Arnold Ridley (Revised) (4F, 5M)

29th January – 3rd February  
Mind Games By Anthony Horowitz (1F, 2M)



26th February – 2nd March  
Lettice & Lovage by Peter Shaffer (3F, 2M)

8th April – 13th April  
Waiting For ... Waiting For Godot  
by Dave Hanson (1F, 2M)

13th May – 18th May  
Black Coffee by Agatha Christie (3F, 10M)

17th June – 22nd June  
The Good Life by Jeremy Sams (3F, 3M)





# A close-up look at all that finery!

Look at this fabulous attention to detail in the costumes for the Nell Gwynn production!

Congratulations to Alix, Jen, Carol and Donna on their efforts to combine both beauty and detail.



## A message from Dink

What a great experience to be put in 'Nell Gwynn'! Thank you for including me. It was a thrill to be part of such a great show, with so much talent in abundance on and off stage. Everyone was so kind and considerate to me – I had my own 'minders'; you know who they are! Thank you. I even had my own chair on stage! (So did Colin and he's younger than I am.)

I didn't miss an entrance. I mean, who would want to miss an entrance carrying a 'potty'? I don't know if there is a theme, but in the last Shakespearean play directed by Jen, I was asked - or delegated or even relegated - to be on stage mopping up the contents of the potty which had been showered on Richard! I'm the Queen of the Potty!

Many years ago, here at the Rose I played a tap dancer in 'Stepping Out', which included two of my own performing activities: dancing and acting; but 'Nell Gwynn' included all three: acting, singing and dancing! Thank you, Richard.

Many thanks to my drivers, Jen and David, who made it so much easier and more pleasurable for me to take part. If it proves to be my swansong at the Rose, it's good to 'bow out' on a real high! A special thank you to Sue (Hunt), my usual driver to all other plays at the Rose. Sue, you're a star!





# Hats off to Props!

Hilary Thompson



The next time someone asks me to just knock up a hat for props – well what more can I say? So our illustrious Nell Gwynn decides to embarrass the French visitor by wearing a giant (and I mean giant) copy of her hat. The hat needed to be over a metre wide and so I found myself in the Rose foyer for several days surrounded by cardboard, wooden sticks, plastic pudding bowl, metres of lace, voile and ribbon and much more. All topped off with roses.

I discovered the powers of extra strong PVA glue and staples - standard millinery approach of



course! The metres of lace and voile had to be ruffled and all attached to my lovely lace covered pudding bowl - well actually one of the ones we use usually for crisps.

Gradually it began to take shape, discovering that one and half metres wide is a hell of a hat to hold. The challenge then being for Tracy and Pinder to hold the hat aloft and sway to the music. All above our illustrious Nell, who of course is a lot taller than either of them. But we got there and thankfully it didn't collapse. So a sad farewell to my hat, now distributed across wardrobe, props and the bin. Such is the way with props. But if anyone wants a challenge to their creative skills - well props is the thing.



## Other Dates for your Diary

**from Monday 3rd July**



**Saturday 29th July**

**10.00 am to 3.00 pm and**

**Sunday 30th July 10.00 am to 1.00pm**

Volunteers needed as usual. Please could you tell the office if you are coming as we need to know for numbers



**Thursday 10th August  
at 10.30 am**



**Saturday 16th September**





# Baptism of fire

Alan & Sue Jones



Alan and I joined Nonentities less than twelve months ago. Having been well trained by experts on props for Calendar Girls and the Vicar of Dibley we were delighted to be asked to do props for Nell Gwynne as a baptism of fire while sunning ourselves in Lanzarote.

We commenced by attending rehearsals and liaising with director Jen and Hilary, plus reading and highlighting all the pages in the script with props to refer to later on. We were told to go home and be creative. We then spent a morning with Hilary in the props department pulling out all props that we thought were relevant to be shown to Jen. We found it easier by having boxes ready to load with props for Act One or Act Two and a place to store said boxes for future use.

A morning or two was spent on research and a trip around the charity shops for items not readily available – like a non-engraved decanter for King Charles Table. Becoming creative and flexible was next on the agenda and we filled baskets required for the opening scene with nosegays, pouches filled with newspaper and made out of the muslin sock linings I had to wear these when I fell off my bike and cut my leg and had to wear a boot for six weeks), to flowers, candles, fake vegetables all from the

props department to keep costs down. On show nights we realised that some actors liked to talk, some to be quiet, some liked to pace and practice their words etc. and felt our role was to be there if they needed us or to leave them to it and keep out of their way. Alan, dressed as a servant, was asked

to take small parts in the play and even got used to being called a damn'd confounded dog by Nell at the end of each performance. I was also dressed as a maid so could come on between acts to pick up coins thrown in the first act and rearrange props as required.



One problem we needed to solve was how to get King Charles table, tray, decanter glasses and chair off in a short break between scenes. This was solved by blue tacking the tray, decanter and glasses to the table so that it could be removed all in one go.

Alan and I were nervous and excited on show nights – worried in case we missed a cue, had the prop on the wrong side etc, but all went very well and we thoroughly enjoyed our Baptism of Fire and cannot wait to do it all again. So if any of you directors need to source plenty of props in your productions and are looking for a props team to do it, we are available.



## Thank you

for taking the time to read this newsletter!  
What has been really wonderful this time is to have members submitting something for us all to read. News from a different perspective!  
So a special thanks to Dink Widdowson and Sue & Alan Jones

Could you write something for the next one?  
If so email me your piece on [sue2hunt@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:sue2hunt@yahoo.co.uk)  
Sue Hunt  
Newsletter editor



# Rumours

It's highly likely that at some time you will have seen a work by Neil Simon, even if you have not heard of him. Widely considered as one of the most prolific and respected playwrights of the 20th century, plays such as *The Odd Couple*, *Barefoot in the Park*, and *Lost in Yonkers*, resulted in him winning numerous awards including four Tony Awards, the Pulitzer Prize for Drama, and the Mark Twain Prize for American Humour.



*Rumours* is a chaotic but well-crafted play that revolves around a dinner party hosted by a wealthy couple, but one obviously where things go hilariously awry. The hosts are missing, and the guests are left to cover up the situation, all leading to a series of incredulous misunderstandings and comedic mishaps.

The story begins with the imminent Dinner Party and the host Charles, someone we never get to see, has inexplicably shot himself in the ear. Guests Chris and Ken, played brilliantly by Jessica Schneider and Richard Taylor have arrived and made the gruesome discovery. As other guests arrive and in an attempt to save face for poor old Chris, they elaborate on the reasons for his absence.



First to enter the fray is Len and Claire played by Jennifer Groome and Stuart Wishart. Claire is the absent hostess's friend determined to get to the bottom of things while Mr Wishart added great physicality and comic timing to his role having to become more animated to the chaos as it unfolds around him. Whilst some of the gags and jokes are now maybe a little dated, it was the energy of the performances that push the humour further. Joseph Harper as Ernest the therapist was a prime example of this. His relaxed demeanour eventually erupts into manic shouting much to the amusement of the some of

the rest of the cast who were on the verge at corpsing over his intensity. Katy Ball as Cookie the Cook with Back issues, Beth Grainger as the glamorous Cassie, and Christian Davies as Glenn, all provide excellent support in their respective roles. The police arrive in the form of Chris Kay as PC Conklin, and Donna Abram as his sidekick.



Whilst in the first act the guests are keeping the facts from each other, the ensemble are now in it together and are collectively keeping it from the police and their attempts to cover up the situation ramps the chaos to new levels.

Although the play is a wild exaggeration of a situation devoid of any sensibility, it's a great escape featuring the type of humour that made *Fawlty Towers* such a success. The production calls upon a large cast from the team who fully capture the spirit of Neil Simon's witty and complex play. Under the direction of Tori Wakeman, *The Nonentities* have delivered a fantastic production of this fast paced comedy. You may groan at some of the obvious gags, but with its well-timed action, clever dialogue, and the sheer hard work of this talented company you will be fully entertained.



Excerpts from 'Behind the Arras'- written by Jeff Grant





The Nonentities have assembled perhaps one of the largest casts for some time, for their current production of Nell Gwynn. The play written by Jessica Swale is no small undertaking both in its scale and ambition but gives ample opportunity for many of the cast to shine. Swale's play centres on the significant historical importance of a 17th century woman called Nell Gwynn. It is said that she rose from humble beginnings and a dubious background, to become one of the most beloved actresses and mistresses of King Charles II.

The play presents certain challenges for any independent company to produce but those seem to have been met and overcome within this current production. Swale's play is crafted in the manner of a traditional Shakespeare work.

It's also Shakespearean in both its costumes and staging and travels from a humble theatre setting to the grandeur of the King's palace. It also has a considerable amount of musical content and whilst Director Jen Eglinton admits that this is not really the company's forte, the interludes were equally as enjoyable as the drama. She also states that there is seven decades of Nonentities performers present in the production.



Hannah Tolley takes on and commands the formidable central role of Gwynne herself. Long-time performer Richard Taylor gives a spirited performance as Edward Kynaston ousted by Gwynne as one of the first female performers in the company.



Stuart Wishart adds swagger and flair to his portrayal of King Charles although I couldn't quite get over his potential to play Captain Hook in his Royal finery, moustache and long wig.

A relatively new company player Beth Dalton had several moments to show how capable a performer she is in the role of Rose and looks to be a great asset to the company, as she added true weight to her performance. Tracey Man and Louise Fullwell in the royal roles as Catherine and Madame Kerouaille were delivered in Spanish and French something of a feat in itself. Faye Bingham was the bitchy Lady Castlemaine with Bhupinder Brown as Nancy, Nell's over enthusiastic friend and assistant.

There was great support as always by Bob Graham as the frustrated Theatre owner Killigrew and Tony Newbould as Charles Hart, the man whose love of Nell tempts her into to the theatrical limelight. David Wilkes played

the writer Dryden and for this production has written some fine original music that was played live.

Nell Gwynne effortlessly blends humour, romance and music into this historical tale. Transporting the audience back to the 17th-century and complete with its bawdy wit, exceptional costumes, and authentic props, The Nonentities have created an immersive and fully entertaining experience.

*Excerpts from 'Behind the Arras'- written by Jeff Grant*

