

Greetings! I hope, dear readers, you are all keeping safe and well in this strangest of all times and have got to grips with this brave new world of zoom, social distancing and living in a bubble. I imagine you were not expecting to hear much from us and, truth to tell, there is not a lot to report. But what there is I can lay before you now in this latest edition of View From The Wings (you can tell I've been listening to far too many podcasts of the Coronavirus Newscast, can't you?)

The buzz of activity at Studio was cut short on March 16th when the government advised against visits to theatres and we, along with amateur and professional theatres across the country, took the painful decision to close our doors. Few of us have set foot in the place since, but we are hopeful that things will change in the coming months.

RAILWAY DISASTERS, FAIR LADIES AND MURDER

Up until then, we were recording one of our most successful seasons to date with two sell-out shows before Christmas, a fundraising retelling of the 1906 Salisbury Railway Disaster from History at Large in January, and a hugely popular run of Lerner and Loewe's fabulous *My Fair Lady* from our youth theatre in February.

A cast of 25, led by Hugo Clark's word-perfect Henry Higgins, took to the stage for Cockney knees-ups and Ascot gavottes. The production boasted two Elizas with Elly Wood and Daisy Pullen playing the Covent Garden flower girl on alternate performances - and both hitting that impossibly high note in I Could Have Danced All Night thrillingly. The indefatigable Theo Ross managed to kit them all out in rags and riches and the Fine Times Recorder concluded: "It takes talent and chutzpah to mount a production of *My Fair Lady*, and the young members of Salisbury's Studio Youth Theatre have both in spades.....It's a stunning show."



A tale of two Elizas: Elly Wood and Daisy Pullen with Hugo Clark



The cast of *The Thrill of Love*

Tickets were selling well and we were within one week of opening **The Thrill of Love** when the virus shut down the country. Amanda Whittington's drama is an insight into what led up to the murder of David Blakely, which took night club hostess Ruth Ellis to the gallows in 1955 and enduring notoriety as the last woman to be hanged in this country.

Our May production, **A Fine Bright Day Today** by Philip Goulding, a warm and funny exploration of love in later life, had also been cast and was in rehearsal. Both are wonderful pieces of theatre and we hope very much we can stage them once theatres are allowed to re-open.

FRANK LOCKYER

Some of you may already know and we, at Studio, were

saddened to hear of the death of Frank Lockyer at the end of April.

A highly respected police officer, who also spearheaded the Salisbury Spire Appeal, he was best known to us as the husband of our current president, Rosemary Squires.

When Rosemary became his second wife in 1991, he became her manager as well as her husband. After she accepted the role of Studio president, she attended as many productions as health and her professional engagements would allow and Frank was always by her side. He helped to facilitate the fund-raising concerts Rosemary gave on Studio's behalf.

We have seen less of them in recent years, but know that both of them were always there in the metaphorical wings, cheering on our efforts to build the new extension and encourage our youth theatre.

Our thoughts are with Rosemary now.

A FINANCIAL FILLIP

Running any theatre, even an amateur one, is not cheap and there are still bills to be paid even in lockdown - not easy when you are not in a position to generate income. Plans for the extension have, inevitably, been put on hold, but day-to-day running costs still mount up. So we were very relieved to qualify for the government's Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant Fund (RHLGF) of £10,000, which will help to keep us financially afloat.

IF YOU ARE MISSING US.....

Please log on to our facebook pages - the public page (ie anyone can see it) is:

<https://www.facebook.com/studiotheatresalisbury> and the members' page (and I know some of you are on it) is:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/11865969626> where archivist Lesley Bates has been running weekly throwbacks in pix to previous productions.

NODA NOMINATION

Fingers and everything else were crossed for director Linda Hayman and the **Northanger Abbey** cast and crew in May. Studio was awash with poke bonnets and sprig muslin in May last year and the production was up for NODA South West's Best Drama Production of the Year. The winners were announced in a cyber ceremony. Sadly, but perhaps unsurprisingly as we had not renewed our membership this year, we did not win - but we thought it was jolly decent of them to give us a nod regardless.

SO WHAT DOES THE FUTURE HOLD?

Culture secretary Oliver Dowden has outlined his five-step roadmap to take theatres out of lockdown which, according to The Stage, has been greeted largely with dismay among the big hitters in the industry with no dates and no investment planned. Amateur theatres face many of the same problems, although thankfully no jobs and livelihoods are at risk, only nourishment for our souls and/or egos.

But at least theatres are being allowed to open, even if live performance is currently off limits. So we are hoping that the painting pixies will be back in business in the coming weeks, alongside a few fixers and DIY-ers, as we socially distance our way to a cleaner, tidier theatre inside and out.

In the meantime, a "sound studio" is being set up to allow small groups of members to record short plays. The idea is that some can be shared on YouTube. We'll let you know as and when.

Our youth theatre continues to meet on Zoom and some of their monologues have been shared on our facebook page. Just like our very own Talking Heads!

LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS

There's a lamp in theatres called a ghost light. Traditionally, it's the one left on after everyone has left the building, so that a theatre is never truly dark. Nothing fancy, just a naked bulb in the centre of the stage. Its origins lay half in superstition (theatrical ghosts need stage lights too) and half in practicality (it's a long way down if you stumble from the stage into the orchestra pit because you can't see the edge). Neither of those considerations really apply to Studio, but turning all the lights off for the lockdown seemed a little too permanent.

So we asked long-standing member Alistair Faulkner to come up with a solution.

And he did.

So Studio now has its own ghost light, gently illuminating The Thrill of Love set until such time that we can turn all the lights back on again properly. Because, as many theatres are pointing out, this is just the interval and the second half will start soon.



The cast of *Northanger Abbey*



We hope that by the time you receive the next issue of *View From The Wings*, we'll be brimming with news of productions to come.....until then, stay safe and hold onto the thought expressed by our own dear Queen and the late, lamented Vera Lynn: We'll Meet Again.