



VIEW FROM THE WINGS

Issue No 22: January 2022

Happy New Year to you all – and I know we all fervently hope it will be an improvement on the last one. But we at Studio are doing our best to rise above the challenges of these strange times with a full programme of

productions and lots of ideas to celebrate our 70th anniversary year.

FREEDOM DAY AND BEYOND

After a rocky start to 2021 with very limited access to our own theatre premises and little chance of inviting the public inside, we lurched unsteadily into the second half of the year muttering the mantra "July 19 = Freedom Day".

Well, it was and it wasn't, but with a raft of festival trophies won off site (at Totton) under our belts and at least two major productions planned for autumn, our spirit of optimism could not be dimmed and we forged ahead on a wave of enthusiasm.

Ventilation systems were updated, hand-sanitising stations installed and one-way systems to and from the bar planned should they prove necessary.



Work was put on hold in the new extension to make way for set-building, the workshop was finally fitted out so that the auditorium could be cleared and costumes were stowed in the enlarged wardrobe leaving space in the rehearsal room to actually rehearse!

TREADING THE BOARDS AGAIN

Like our phoenix logo, Studio flapped its wings and History at Large reopened our little theatre in August with a fund-raising historic mock trial – more of a whodunit – looking at events leading up to the untimely death of William Longespee "Longsword", the third Earl of Salisbury, in 1226.

Arsenic was thought to have played its part in Longespee's demise and arsenic certainly played its part in our first major production since

lockdown as lonely old men were sent to a

better place by the two elderly aunts of New York theatre critic Mortimer – with

the help of their home made elderberry wine. Classic black comedy **Arsenic and Old Lace** proved very popular at the box office, but was hit by cast illness and cancelled at the eleventh hour. Luckily, we were able to reschedule for two weeks later and are grateful to the many of you who rebooked. The new dates also gave us the opportunity to offer more seats as restrictions were relaxed, although it is perhaps telling that the single socially distanced performance sold out first.

Our Totton Festival award-winning production of **Afterplay** by Brian Friel was given a two night outing immediately after Arsenic and Old Lace, letting our Salisbury audiences see it on home turf.



In December, a talented trio of young people took the central roles in Edith Nesbit's timeless classic **The Railway Children**. For those of you who missed it, you can still see the marvellous trailer for the production filmed at Shillingstone Station by professional film-makers Catherine Court Pictures. It's available on our website www.studiotheatre.org.uk or our youtube channel.

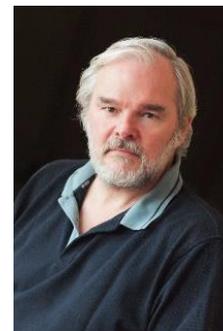
So it wasn't all plain sailing, but we arrived at Christmas feeling we had weathered the storm and were on the road to recovery.

CHANGES AT THE TOP

Steering us into this new dawn we have a new chairman in **Anthony von Roretz** (*right*), who has been with Studio since 2013 and a new treasurer in **Tom Maskell**



(*left*), who has illuminated many of our productions as lighting designer. Anthony will be familiar to many of you as actor, director and regular Front of House face, but is also much valued for his photographic skills (all those production images in the foyer are his) and handiness with power tools on set building days. The AGM also yielded a full house on the committee front, who are raring to take us into our 70th anniversary year with a wealth of ideas for celebration. PLUS – You will be delighted to hear that the AGM decided against raising ticket prices for the coming year.



A BIG THANK YOU TO YOU

Lack of income normally generated by our productions over the period of lockdown from March 2020 has tested our finances – we still have a theatre building to run – so being able to stage productions in the last three months has given a welcome boost to our coffers. We want to thank you for supporting us – despite audience hesitancy, which is hitting theatre generally, we still played to an average 75% capacity across the season. And we would particularly like to add a word of thanks to those who donated a little extra to our Build a Better Theatre fund when you booked your tickets – whether it be a few pence or a few pounds. Since September, you've generated more than £200 in extra donations via Ticketsource, which is much appreciated.

STILL TO COME:

January 19-22: Button and the Bandits! It's still panto season, oh yes it is, and although the first show into Studio this year is not strictly a Studio production, it has a strong connection. This year's seasonal offering from Salisbury and South Wilts Scouts and Guides is written and directed by former SYT member and newly elected Studio committee member Cassia Woolley. Tickets £6 are available from Salisbury Information Centre or online at www.ticketsource.co.uk/salisburyscouts
February 21-26: The Alibis. SYT tackles a series of comic ten-minute interlinked crime dramas by a variety of authors.

And on to the remainder of our 2021-22 season and you would not be wrong if you scent a whiff of déjà vu about it as we resurrect the productions that were in rehearsal, but never got to see the light of day, pre-pandemic. Getting a second crack at the spotlight are:

March 28-April 2: The Thrill of Love. Ruth Ellis works hard and plays hard in Soho's nightclubs. She yearns for a movie-star lifestyle, but then she meets David, a wealthy, womanising racing driver and makes headline news in a way she never dreamed of. Amanda Whittington's tense thriller sheds light on the life of the last woman to be hanged in Britain.

May 23-28: A Fine Bright Day Today (tbc). Widowed Margaret Harvey has built up a protective barrier of routine and ritual over the years - until visiting artist Milton comes to lodge in her house armed with patience, humour and cheap wine. Studio's own George Goulding moves into the director's hot seat for this warm and funny exploration of love in later life, penned by his brother Philip.

June 20-25: Merely Players. A cornucopia of words, music, songs and sonnets (including all the best bits) cherry-picked from Shakespeare and set before you on a summer's night at Studio.



PLUS SYT has put in entries to this year's Totton Festival of Drama in March, including a commissioned piece written specifically for our young people.

A fund-raising garden party reprising some of Merely Players is scheduled for July.

All performances take place at Studio Theatre in Ashley Road, Salisbury, unless otherwise stated. Our box office is Salisbury Information Centre in Fish Row. Seats can be booked on 01722 342860 or online at www.ticketsource.co.uk/studiotheatresalisbury