

Midway through the year and on the eve of our 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary season, it's a good time to look back at what has gone before and forward to what is to come.

Currently in the works is an anniversary book recording the troughs and triumphs of Studio Theatre over the last 70 years.

For those of you who might want to mark the occasion, we've produced a new commemorative badge to mark our platinum jubilee. This enamelled beauty costs a fundraising £3.50 and will be on sale the next time you come to a Studio production.



## So how did it all begin?

After 1945, the Centre Players, based in the War Workers Recreational Centre (what was Debenhams until recently), and the Phoenix Players, a Salisbury am-dram company, amalgamated to form the Centre Players Studio Theatre Club. In 1952, premises were found behind the Milford Arms Inn in Milford Street. Hardwork and imagination converted its old wine store into an intimate theatre with a pocket handkerchief stage and seating for around 50. The first production, *Amphitryon 38* by Jean Giraudoux, was staged in the autumn of that year and from that point we chart our beginnings. Several rented premises followed before we purchased the lease of the old ATC huts on the current site in 1985. Dilapidated and leaking from the start, they remained home until their demolition in 2003 and the construction of our own purpose-built theatre, which opened in 2006.

Since then, our fortunes have taken a dramatic upturn, enabling us to embark on a new extension in 2016.

## Challenging times, festival awards and garden parties

But the last two years for us, like the acting profession in general, has been challenging and this last six months very much so.

After a promising, if slightly chequered, re-opening of the theatre in October last year, audience numbers and productions this side of Christmas have taken a tumble.

Covid-19 infections disrupted rehearsals for Studio Youth Theatre's February production of **The Alibis** and its entries into the Totton Festival of Drama in March. It was the first time the youth theatre had entered the festival and found it to be a thoroughly enjoyable experience. One of its plays was a specially commissioned entry for the young people, **Institute** by Marcus Armstrong, the other was an intergenerational collaboration between our own very young Ollie Boyle and slightly more mature George Fleming. Maddy Ryalls was rewarded with the Best Youth Actress award and Pete McAuley's work with our youth theatre and Starcast Performing Arts School was recognised with the Adjudicator's Award. **The Thrill of Love** had been postponed since March 2019 – the production having been pulled a week before curtain-up by the lockdown. So it was pleasing to see it on stage this March, where it was much praised by the critics and appreciated by the audience, some of whom entered into a lively debate on capital punishment at the Q&A session following one performance.



Our planned production of **A Fine Bright Day** had to be postponed once again, but the good news is that it is scheduled for next season.

Our Elizabethan entertainment, **Merely Players**, was also reduced to three performances from the scheduled six, but extracts were played out on a sunny afternoon at our annual garden party in the Woodford Valley earlier this month. Grateful thanks to Studio Theatre supporters Joe and Rachel Studholme for once again hosting this event.

• And a **big thank you** is due to you, dear readers: since the last VFTW, we have received more than £3000 in donations.

## News from behind the scenes.....

Work continued behind the scenes and our furniture store's new two-tier storage should make it easier to locate the odd chaise longue or occasional table. Communication between backstage crew has been conducted via unreliable headsets, but no longer. Our technical bods have sourced a brand new wireless system, which should allow our stage managers to be understood and obeyed from now on. No excuses.



## ....and from former members

Good news too from former members James Bradwell (actually, he is still paying his membership!) and Monaya Abel. James was in a run of *My Night With Reg* at the Turbine Theatre in London last year and has just completed the run of the premiere of tense psychological thriller *Corinna, Corinna* at the Everyman in Liverpool, picking up a nice selection of reviews for his scrap book. And SYT alumnus Monaya Abel, who was behind the camera for the TV series *This Is Going to Hurt* with Ben Wishaw, has just completed work filming *Empire of Light*, directed by Sam Mendes. Starring Olivia Colman and Colin Firth, filming finished at the end of May and the movie is expected to be released later in the year. While she was working on it, Monaya's 24th birthday was celebrated with a rousing chorus of Happy Birthday to You - sung by 75 skinheads (all film extras we hasten to add).



## What comes next?

So on to the packed new season from our Director of Productions, Jackie Pilkington. Pandemics, rail strikes and cost of living crises allowing, it will look something like this:

**September 29-October 1: Murder in the Cathedral at St Thomas's Church.** What better way to help St Thomas's Church celebrate its 800<sup>th</sup> anniversary than a production of T S Eliot's masterpiece, staged in the church believed to be the place of worship constructed for the workers engaged in the building of Salisbury Cathedral. Rescheduled from 2020, this is an exciting joint venture with David Hallen as Thomas Becket and members of Studio and St Thomas's congregation in the ensemble. Ann Acton directs.

**October 18-22: The Comedy of Errors.** Shakespeare's silliest and sunniest comedy gets a radical reworking as two sets of twins create mayhem in Ephesus. Confused identities, cross purposes and a family reunion are all on the cards – and maybe a conjuring trick and an exorcism or two. Olivia Dutson directs.

**December 5-10: Treasure Island – The Pirate Panto.** Aha, Jim lad - It's getting close to Christmas so voyage to panto land with our trusty band of pirates, parrots, and treasure seekers. Our very own Ian Flindell has penned a piratical tale to chill the blood and warm the cockles. So step inside the Admiral Bimbo Inn and join us for a rollicking ride aboard the Hispaniola. **Please note: there will be a matinee on December 10.**

**February 13-18: The Wolves of Willoughby Chase.** Studio Youth Theatre bring Joan Aiken's classic tale of two young cousins and a goose boy fighting for survival against howling wolves and grim governesses in the bleak, snowy landscape of an alternative Victorian England, to the stage. Russ Tunney's enchanting adaptation is funny, sinister, heart-warming and great fun.

**March 27-April 1: A Fine Bright Day Today.** Postponed from 2020, we're delighted finally to present Philip Goulding's warm and funny exploration of love in later life. 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. George Goulding moves into the director's hot seat.

**May 22-27: A Doll's House.** Director Tamsin Jacson tackles Bryony Lavery's adaptation of Ibsen's revolutionary classic, which still resonates today. Marriage and motherhood, blackmail and betrayal, truth and lies – Nora's domestic life unravels and a door famously slams.

**July 10-15: Steel Magnolias.** Truvy runs a beauty parlour in Louisiana where a group of women gather to gossip, discuss Shelby's upcoming wedding and each other. Robert Harling's comedy-

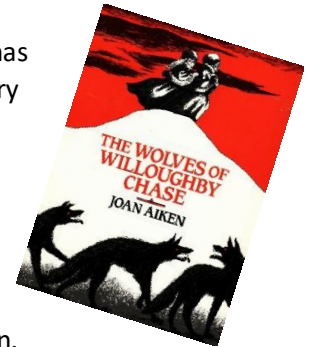
drama became a much loved film and won an Oscar nomination for Julia Roberts' Shelby. Anthony von Roretz will direct a stellar cast of Studio women. Bring a hankie.

## And there's more....

**August 26-27: History at Large mock trial.** A fundraiser for Studio and part of Salisbury History Festival, HAL stage an inquest into the death of Salisbury resident Eileen McNamee, who perished aboard the Titanic. Tickets at £10 will be available from Salisbury Information Centre or on the door.

**January 25-28: Alice in Wonderland.** Salisbury scouts' pantomime pay their annual visit to Studio.

**March 2023: The Totton Festival of Drama.** Studio will be hoping to field a play or two.



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](http://www.ticketsource.co.uk/studiotheatresalisbury)