



VIEW FROM THE WINGS

Issue No 25: July 2023

Our 70th anniversary season is drawing to a close – just **Steel Magnolias** to come later this month – and it's been jam-packed.

Since September, we've notched up six adult productions, a youth theatre show, three festival entries, a host of fundraising events involving bees, barn dances, baking and a Studio Sandwich. And we've welcomed a new President in national treasure Christopher Biggins. Not only that, but our little theatre has played host to scout pantos, visiting productions, Blue Badge training and, still to come later this month, stage schools Starcast Performing Arts and Stagecoach, each bringing a production to our theatre. Phew – it's been whirlwind of activity.....

Steam punk wolves, shiny shields, borrowed boats, and social media

This half of the year began with our youth theatre giving a steam punk twist to **The Wolves of Willoughby Chase** and producing an entry to the Totton Festival of Drama less than four weeks later. SYT's production of **Tracks** by Peter Tarsi was joined in Totton by **Murder! In Little Grimley** by David Tristram and **English for Pony Lovers** by John Finnemore. All three plays scooped acting awards with SYT's Em Poole named Best Youth Actress and mother and daughter Rachel and Emilia Fletcher (pictured left with director Lesley Bates) walking away with Best Actress and Best Supporting Player trophies. **English for Pony Lovers** was the festival's overall runner-up and went on to the AETF's Western Area Final in Frome in May where, it is commonly acknowledged, we was robbed (but did get a shiny shield for Best Stage Presentation, so it wasn't all bad).



George Goulding's production of his brother Philip's play **A Fine Bright**

Day Today was finally given the green light after Covid postponement, proving popular with audiences and critics, who heaped praise on every aspect of the production. All week, a rowing boat, borrowed from owner Chris Carnegy after a chance encounter with the director and cast member Paul Chalmers on the riverbank, adorned the set. As the coastal cottage and cliff were dismantled on strike day, cast and crew helped haul the vessel down the bank and launch it – not quite lifeboat style – into the water where seasoned oarsman Chris rowed it safely home (pictured right).

A bold modern adaptation of Ibsen's revolutionary **A Doll's House** in May was notable for welcoming a number of talented new acting members to the Studio family and showing that the Helmers were no slouches when it came to social media.



New President

In June, the cast of **Murder! In Little Grimley** provided the entertainment for a welcome party for new President Christopher Biggins (pictured below with the cast) with returning Patron Barney Norris in attendance.

For nearly three decades, Salisbury's own singing superstar Rosemary Squires has fulfilled the role of Studio President admirably, lending her support in a myriad of ways from fundraising concert-giver to enthusiastic audience member and advocate. We owe her a huge debt of gratitude. Sadly, poor health has meant that Rosemary has had to step back, but current DOP Jackie Pilkington was delighted to report that she had persuaded the man known as Biggins, who grew up in Salisbury and began his acting career here, to step into her nigh-on-impossible-to-fill shoes. He expressed his admiration for the facilities we have in Ashley Road, met as many members as possible and promised to return again soon.



Filling a Studio sandwich

The following week, a fundraising Studio Sandwich ie two slices of comedy – **English for Pony Lovers** sharing the stage with **The 39 Steps Even More Abridged** – plus a supper filling on the Friday, netted in excess of £1500 for the Studio coffers, which are becoming increasingly strained in the current financial climate. Offered as a thank you to our benefactors and donors as well, it was also an opportunity to see backstage and progress made on the extension. On a warm summer's evening, the interval supper was very much a find-somewhere-cool-to-eat occasion – with two of our diners deciding the stage manager's desk backstage was just the ticket.

Behind the scenes

Work continues to improve our theatre – new shelving for our props has arrived and awaits installation.

Bar manager Paul Chalmers and his team have set their sights on upgrading the refreshment area of the foyer, including installation of a system of removable panels doing away with the unwieldy padlock and chain security currently in operation. Next are plans to reposition sinks, replace fridges and freezers, increase cupboard storage for glasses and stock, and install a large blackboard. Oh, and a small dishwasher and a coffee machine would be on the wish list funds allowing.

STILL TO COME:

July 10-15: Steel Magnolias. Truvy's beauty parlour in Louisiana opens its doors for business next week. Be prepared to laugh, cry and enjoy the gossip about Shelby's upcoming wedding. Bring a hankie. Age guidance 12+



Director of Production's David Rhodes **NEW SEASON 2023-24** looks like this:

October 2-7: Last Summer at Bluefish Cove. It's the 1980s: gay rights are far from universally accepted, but Bluefish Cove is a haven for gay women. Jane Chambers's landmark play explores the tender relationships between a group of lesbian friends as they relax and enjoy their annual summer holiday until newly-divorced Eva stumbles into their midst..... NB Strong language throughout. Age guidance 14+

December 4-9: It's a Wonderful Life: A Live Radio Play. Studio Theatre is transformed into a 1940s radio station, with the actors providing their own music and sound effects for Joe Landry's radio play version of Frank Capra's much-loved film. Apprentice angel Clarence shows George Bailey the difference his life has made to so many others. "Each man's life touches so many other lives. When he isn't around he leaves an awful hole, doesn't he?"

February 12-17, 2024: Little Shop of Horrors. Seymour Krelborn dreams of a life beyond Skid Row. One day, he finds a strange and unusual plant that can make his wishes come true, but can he afford to pay the price and can he get away with murder? SYT dive down (and out) in this hugely popular roller coaster ride of 1960s doo-wop, green fingers and blood – lots of blood. NB features mild swearing, scenes of domestic violence and drug abuse – and a sadistic dentist. Age guidance 12+

April 22-27, 2024: Love from a Stranger. A tense psychological thriller from Agatha Christie, adapted by Frank Vosper, in which Cecily Harrington seeks "love from a stranger" following a sweepstake win that, in many ways, reflects elements of Christie's own colourful life.

July 8-13, 2024: One Man, Two Guvnors. Written by Richard Bean, with songs from Grant Olding, this was a huge hit for the National Theatre and its leading man, James Corden. Fired from his skiffle band, Francis Henshall becomes minder to Roscoe Crabbe, a small East End hood, now in Brighton to collect £6000 from the father of his fiancée. Mayhem ensues.

PLUS

October 21: History at Large revive George Fleming's Nelson Remembered, first performed at Studio in 1983, as a fundraiser to mark Trafalgar Day.

March 2024: Totton Festival of Drama. Studio will be hoping to pitch a play or two into the mix.

Bees, Barn Dances and Bakers: On the fund raising front, the Studio Sandwich was not the only event aimed at



raising cash and the profile of the theatre. We've had a tasty talk from a local beekeeper and enjoyed jigs and reels from Wiltshire Tempest at a family barn dance. In June, a team of bakers and makers (pictured left) from Studio took over the village hall of Wimborne St Giles, serving tea, cake (and more Studio sandwiches!) to the masses and turning a profit of more than £500.

Coffee mornings (10am-12pm) at the United Reformed Church continue: please add August 19, October 21, and December 16 to your diaries. Our annual stint as market stall holders falls on August 5 this year. Donations of good quality bric-a-brac always welcome. Plans are afoot for quiz nights at the Dusthole (congrats to Carol and Tony Harding, who hosted a highly successful quiz night for us

last year and have just been named landlords of Salisbury's Pub of the Year), a Burns Night celebration and the return of our popular Garden Party. Watch this space.....

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