



VIEW FROM THE WINGS

Issue No 26: January 2024

As we ease ourselves gently into 2024, it's time to wish you a Happy New Year and offer a huge thank you to all who supported our productions last year – we're very grateful and hope we can tempt you back with what's to come in the next few months.



Since the last issue of VFTW.....

.....Studio has favoured its distaff side (and, whisper it quietly, about time too) with two very different all-female plays. A cast of six got to grips with Southern Louisiana drawls, hairspray and curlers in **Steel Magnolias** to be followed by more American accents as our ladies tackled Jane Chambers' ground-breaking **Last Summer at Bluefish Cove**, garnering much praise and fending off the challenge of being upstaged by a stunning set (pictured left), featuring a beachside hideaway, fronted by tons of sand and lapping waves.

We finished with a sold-out production of **The Flint Street Nativity** – a last minute substitute, but a popular one, for It's A

Wonderful Life, for which the rights became unavailable. Many familiar Studio faces – and some new ones – tapped into their inner seven-year-olds, splendidly kitted out as Kings, shepherds and Nasa spacemen.

Studio gets creative

In between, Studio members were encouraged to explore their creative side with the inauguration of a new monthly venture – Creative at Studio Theatre or C@ST. So far, we've had play readings of members' own work from adaptations to original plays and, in September, our Patron Barney Norris (pictured right with the cast) directed a rehearsed reading of Athol Fugard's **The Road to Mecca**. Rehearsals were open to members and the final "performance" to the public. We concluded the first set of sessions with a potted panto performed for members and two short recordings adapted by Rachel Fletcher from Charles Dickens' Sketches by Boz: **A Christmas Dinner** and **The New Year**. You can listen to both by visiting our website at www.studiotheatre.org.uk



Sad losses to report

Like most years, 2023 had its ups and downs from House Full notices to the very sad losses of two much-treasured members of our theatre community. Just before Christmas, our current Director of Productions David Rhodes passed away after a lengthy illness. He had hoped to see his season through to its conclusion next summer, but it was not to be. Many of you will have seen David (left) in the numerous plays he appeared in for us as actor, singer and musician – most recently as Malvolio in *Merely Players*, a murderous knight in *Murder in The Cathedral*, Egeus in *The Comedy of Errors* and a pantomime pirate in *Treasure Island*. He approached Shakespeare and panto with the same gusto that he approached life and Studio is the poorer for his loss. In Autumn, Studio also lost its much-loved former President Rosemary Squires, who had faithfully championed and supported us for nearly 20 years. Ill health had already persuaded her to step back to allow national treasure Christopher Biggins to take her place, but she is remembered with great affection.



Fresh start for Studio Youth Theatre

This month sees the relaunch of Studio Youth Theatre, which has a new leadership team headed up by Antonia Harding as Artistic Director. It will run every Wednesday at Studio between 5.30pm and 8pm for young people in Years 9 to 13. The programme for the first half term will be a mixture of drama games, the basics of theatre, script and character work. Further weekly programmes will be available on the SYT page on our Studio Theatre website. If you have a youngster interested in joining SYT, please contact Renata at secretary@studiotheatre.org.uk for more information.

Out with the old.....ticket prices, that is (sorry about that)

Studio's committee also realised that, try as it might, it was impossible in the current financial climate to keep ticket prices at the same levels as previously and has decided that for the rest of the season, ticket prices will rise to £15. However, student tickets for those 16 and under will remain the same at £8 and we are introducing an early bird ticketing period with tickets initially on sale at £13, before the price rise kicks in closer to the performance.



In with the new.....Director of Productions

Our AGM in October saw the return of Anthony von Roretz and Tom Maskell for another two year stint as Chair and Treasurer respectively and a newly appointed DoP to oversee the 2024/25 season in Tamsin Jacson (left), who is even now cajoling directors and sorting through suggestions to tempt you inside our doors.

Fundraising frolics and freezers

George Fleming and his History at Large thespians focused on the life and times of Nelson in a fundraiser to mark Trafalgar Day and Blue Badge Guide Lorna Matthews-Keel led a group of 20 through the dark (and bitterly cold) streets of Salisbury on a Ghost Walk. Such was the demand for tickets, that Lorna is considering a repeat – when the weather is not quite so cold!

In the meantime, keep an eye out for news of a Burns Night celebration in February and the return of our popular garden party in July.

Studio has also provided rehearsal space for (imaginatively titled) The New Group, who staged a benefit concert at Studio to say thank you in November, raising close to £1500. Featuring some very old and experienced hands from Salisbury’s music scene, it was a great night. If you want to experience it for yourself there will be another on March 1. Another new venture involved a wrestling ring and more OTT histrionics than you will ever see in a Studio Theatre production as bodies hit the floor and bounced off ropes, then crashed out of the ring and up the aisle to the delight of a sell-out audience ranging in age from eight to 80. Who’d have thought that wrestling could be wholesome family entertainment but, my word, it was – and I urge you not to miss the next visit of ASW South on March 2.

News of former members

• Brian Jones, aka singer and actor **Brian Protheroe** (last seen at Salisbury Playhouse in The Children), started his acting career as a teenager with Studio. Now he is rediscovering his teenage roots with a new music album, the recently released A Salisbury Boy.

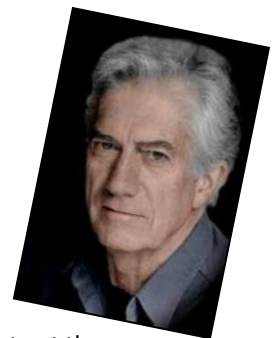


• SYT alumnus, **Monaya Abel**, who is moving up the ladder behind the camera (quite literally), is working on a film with Brad Pitt.

• Our very own President, **Christopher Biggins**, has just completed a run in panto at the Mayflower in Southampton, playing the Man in the Mirror in Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs.

• **Andrew Harrison-King**, who played keyboards for Treasure Island – The Pirate Panto, will be tinkling the ivories once again for a showing of Buster Keaton’s 1926 masterpiece The General at the Medieval Hall on February 11.

• **James Bradwell** has recently lent his voice skills to role-playing video game blockbuster Baldur’s Gate III and you might spot him in a couple of upcoming episodes of Bridgerton.



Still to come – extended runs of both our in-house productions this Spring:

April 16-20 and 22-26: 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 5-6 and 8-13: One Man, Two Guvnors. Written by Richard Bean, this was a huge hit for the National Theatre and its leading man, James Corden. Fired from his skiffle band, Francis Henshall is fond of food and money in that order, and finds himself as the servant of two masters in his pursuit of both. Throw in an upper-class twit, a local mobster, a ham actor and a dodderly waiter – and mayhem ensues. **Please note: there is a matinee at 2pm on July 6.**

PLUS We are entering both the Totton Festival or Drama in March and the Woolstore One Act Play Festival in Codford in May with Lesley Bates’ stage adaptation of Baroness Orczy’s **Lady Molly of Scotland Yard.**

Planning is also underway for a joint venture with Salisbury Museum in June centring on the life and letters of artist Rex Whistler to tie in with a major retrospective at the Museum to mark the 80th anniversary of Whistler’s death. Watch this space for more information.....

And we have visitors....as we play host to Salisbury and South Wilts Scouts and this year’s pantomime **Beauty and the Beast** in January and to Finishing the Hat Theatre Company and its original musical about Beatrix Potter’s brother **The Other Potter** in May.

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