



Newsletter April 2020



CORONAVIRUS (CO-VID 19) UPDATE.
Following the recommendation from the government on March 16, we have taken the difficult decision to suspend all performances at the Rose Theatre until further notice.



Theatres across UK close as
London's West End goes
dark over Coronavirus

Howeverlet's look on the positive side.



**Now we all have to stay in, what can we do
if we miss going to the theatre?**

Well, why not tune into the National Theatre's weekly free broadcast each Thursday? With plays such as *Jane Eyre*, Bryony Lavery's excellent version of *Treasure Island* and *Twelfth Night* over the next couple of weeks, it's a great way to get a regular fix of live theatre.

Other options include Marquee TV, which is currently offering a free 30-day trial (£8.99 per month thereafter). Here you can watch a range of recent RSC productions, as well the Oscar Wilde season that graced the West End last year.

If you like a regular fix of Shakespeare, why not try Globe TV, which features recordings of live productions from the Globe? However, be warned - the free content here is limited.

The BBC has announced further programming for its 'Culture in Quarantine' scheme to run while arts venues are locked down. The company will broadcast six of the RSC's recent productions on BBC Four and BBC iPlayer: *Macbeth*, *Othello*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Much Ado About Nothing* and *Hamlet*.



More shows to see ...



If you like the musical arts there is quite a feast of opera and ballet. You can watch free musicals each weekend from Sir Andrew Lloyd Webber through his initiative, 'The Show Must Go On'. *Phantom of the Opera* will be the third to be streamed from 7pm on Friday 17th April. Audiences will have 24 hours to watch. The names of other musicals to be streamed are being kept under wraps but we do know that down the line ALW's 1975 show *By Jeeves* will be featured.

Available until 26th April, starring Stephen Rea, the award-winning *Cyprus Avenue* by David Ireland mixes live capture of performance from the iconic Royal Court Theatre stage production with location shooting in Belfast.

Curve Leicester and Theatre Royal Bath's 2017 production of Joe Orton's hit play *What The Butler Saw* will be streamed online from 19 April.

<https://www.curveonline.co.uk/news/watch-our-archive-recording-of-joe-ortons-what-the-butler-saw/>

Hampstead Theatre in partnership with the Guardian is streaming a series of hit productions from its digital archive for free. From Monday 13th April until Sunday 19th April you'll be able to watch Howard Brenton's *Drawing the Line*.

<https://www.hampsteadtheatre.com/whats-on/hampstead-theatre-at-home/>

The Colchester Theatre streamed its production of *Cinderella* for free over the Easter weekend to give audiences a piece of panto fun! This is still available until Sunday 19th April. A great way to keep kids of all ages entertained while the lockdown continues.

<https://www.mercurytheatre.co.uk/cinderella-online>



If comedy is your thing, why not try the comedy store's subscription channel?

<https://nextupcomedy.com/comedystore>

The channels costs £9.99 per month after the obligatory 7 day free trial, but a proportion of all subscriptions do go directly to the artists, whose material has been released. You can also watch the famous *King Kong* on Facebook.

Of course there is always BBC radio, which regularly broadcasts excellent modern and classic drama. Hilary Mantel's *The Mirror and the Light*, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and George Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss* are just three among many drama productions that can be downloaded to any device for up to 30 days by accessing the BBC Sounds app.

Finally to help you choose amongst the many shows on offer 'WhatsOnStage' is updating on a daily basis a list of stage shows, musicals and operas that you can watch online for free.

https://www.whatsonstage.com/london-theatre/news/stage-shows-musicals-opera-free-stream-online_51198.html

Nothing can actually replace being in and around the theatre but some of these are wonderful substitutes to keep theatre as an important part of your life. There's so much on offer ... you won't run out of things to watch!

Whilst many of the above productions are free, many venues are encouraging audiences to support their running costs and /or fundraising efforts with a donation during venue closures in these difficult and unprecedented times.

Apologies the links aren't hyperlinked in this newsletter.



Chairman's News



Bob Graham

What a difference a couple of months make.... There we were at the start of the year looking at a brilliant opening to 2020 with 'Chase Me Up Farndale Avenue S'll Vous Plaît' - virtually sold out before the curtains opened. A brilliant week, complicated only by the (in relative terms) small matter of a flood to the foyer area. We followed up with a very strong return from 'Much Ado About Nothing', even though we had the issue of the mysterious triggering of the fire sounders every evening. This was resolved with a planned installation of a new fire sounder system. Our favourite tenants, KODS, had another successful show, with 'Our House', and then BOOM! Covid-19 arrived and all activities were suspended from Monday 23rd March.



Since the doors closed, David Wakeman, Brian Gale and I have been working on understanding the financial impact that Covid-19 will have upon us as an organisation and determining what steps need to be taken. We firstly had to address the issue of staffing. As members of staff cannot come into work, we have applied to furlough our contracted staff posts through the government scheme. We have assured them that their positions are safe and that they will have no loss of income for three months. However, we couldn't guarantee to sustain that, if we were to remain closed beyond that time.

We have taken the decision to postpone all our professional shows and reschedule them, partly to maintain our cash flow, but this is proving a little difficult as all future bookings are provisional. It is certainly possible that postponement may result in an increase in the number of professional shows next year, so we may need to ask a lot from members in order to meet the front of house demands that such an action would require. Regarding our own shows, we have also taken the decision to postpone rather than cancel, so the three shows that were scheduled for the remainder of the Spring/Summer season will now appear in the 2020/21 season.

However, we must continue to stay positive! We will recover and we will thrive again. We are already planning for our reopening and whilst we cannot physically meet as members and friends, innovative ways of maintaining our sense of community are already springing up and we will continue to try to find more ways. Those of you who regularly use social media will be aware that the Nonentities were part of a national online quiz, others shared memories of the theatre for World Theatre Day recently- there has also been a sharing of poetry on the Nonentities' Facebook page - and there will continue to be opportunities to be creative on those platforms. If you haven't joined the group, message Tori with a join request.



**Keep
positive!**

THE
ROSE
THEATRE

We will prevail!

Hilary, in her role as membership manager, has agreed that people can contact her if they have any concerns about anything, including support to access essential supplies and she is happy to act as a point of contact. I will try to keep you informed and any members are welcome to call me about anything related to the theatre. If you haven't got my number but would like to speak to me, e-mail at admin@rosetheatre.co.uk Stay safe everyone and I look forward to seeing you all when we re-open.

Bob

Members Matter



Hilary Thompson



From left to right: Matt Morgan, Emma Preece, Jonathan Flowers & Jessica Bishop in 'Much Ado About Nothing'

Welcome to all our new members! It has been such a delight to have them working alongside our longer standing members in all sorts of roles. Jonathan Flowers, having had a small role in 'The Railway Children', was joined by Matt Morgan, John Spencer, Emma Preece and Jessica Bishop in the cast for 'Much Ado About Nothing'. It was a great opportunity for them to meet people, show their obvious skills and take part in one of our rare Shakespeare productions.

Backstage we have had new support as well. Claire Arnold joined just before Much Ado and assisted the wardrobe team, this being her professional background. Katie Brown worked alongside Anne Booth to deliver props for the Farndale Farce and found herself collapsing beds and wrapping actors in wool - the usual mayhem! Not deterred she then went on to do props for Much Ado. Going forward, Emma, Chris Meusz and Jessica were offering to assist with props and sound and Jonathon and Matt had been cast in the last two plays. Great that new members supported the taking down of the Much Ado set, including Chris and Dean.

Where next?

As soon as we re-open, we will be recruiting actively for light and sound and also for set building and painting. We particularly value our Front of House volunteers and as ever will be seeking new members and of course existing members to play their part. If government regulations permit, Clear Out weekend will take place in July and Stuffing Day in August. These and other practical projects all offer the opportunity to meet up and work as a team and hopefully have some fun. I will be seeking volunteers to be DBS checked to work with children and then hopefully join with KODS and others for a "chaperone" training event at some stage in the future.

Congratulations to

Ros Casewell, Jan Young, Anne Booth and also husband Alan on "big" birthdays this last three months - the only ones I know about! Not forgetting too ... Josh who celebrates his 21st on the 17th April.



Becca Williams and Jack on their engagement!

Also to Mike and Kath Lawrence on the birth of their 3rd granddaughter - Isla Brooke - and to Alex Hyde, a past member and still a supporter of the Rose, on the birth of her son Sebastian.



It's always good to get news and views so please feel free to contact me. If anyone has to be isolated or finds themselves stuck, do please contact me - 07500337585 or admin@rosetheatre.co.uk



Front Of House

Jane Holt



Just wanted to say a big THANK YOU to everyone who has signed up for FOH duties during the past season - it is very much appreciated!

Something I am quite keen to do in the near future is to reduce the amount of waste we generate front of house. Sally Howes came up with a really good idea for the used coffee granules - she advises me they are good for the soil and plants in your garden. If anyone else has any other good ideas like this that we could try, please contact me on janeholt61@gmail.com. I will consider anything and, if necessary, am happy to do some research in my down time.



Also once we re-open again, I am hoping to install recycling bins for glass, paper, cans etc around the theatre so we can reduce the number of recyclable products being put in the general waste bins.

Hope you are all keeping well and I'm looking forward to seeing you all again in the not too distant future.

Props

Helen Speake
and Ros Casewell



News from the props room.....WE HAVE FOUND THE CANDLES!

They were in with the Christmas decorations!

As soon as the theatre is back up and running, we will be doing another cull so please, no more donations until after the clear out. If there is anything precious that you don't want throwing out, please claim it when the theatre re-opens.

Our next project is helping to clear the dressing room corridor. There are two large music drums which we cannot see any need for. If you know of any reason to keep them or have any suggestions please let us know.



Thank you props people for helping to keep the props room clean and tidy. We're looking forward to welcoming two of our new members, Chris Meusz and Emma Preece, who have volunteered to shadow props for 'And Then There Were None' and 'Cranford'.

Love Batman and Robin x
aka Helen & Ros

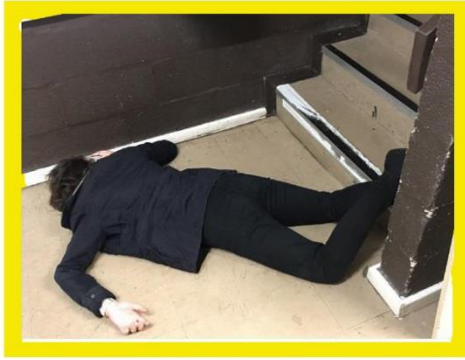


KRYPT

Becca Williams



Murder, mystery and monologues on the move: our Senior group embarked on a site-specific performance to die for in February! 'Murder at the Theatre' invited an audience of family and friends to become Junior Detectives for the evening. Guided by our team of super-sleuths, they learned of the tragic death of Rosie Young, an aspiring (but suspiciously terrible) actor who had just performed as Hamlette in the opening night of the company's new play, entitled 'Let's Ham: Hamlet, but Backwards!'



Rosie was found dead at the foot of the stage door stairs, but all was not as it seemed and our detectives detected foul play. Could it have been the Stars, a celebrated couple who usually shared the leading roles but found themselves snubbed? Or was it the directors, who cast Rosie despite her lack of talent and regretted their decision? What about the bar staff, Rosie's jealous former friends who would give Gary and Josh a run for their money? Could it have been the wardrobe mistress and her apprentice, who hated Rosie and tightened her costume to the point of pain?

As our audience moved around the theatre interviewing the suspects, their minds began to sharpen and their legs began to ache. We learned that Rosie had indeed been pushed... but only after she was poisoned! A chain of suspicious text messages from the stars; a ring lost and found in wardrobe; a disappearance from the aftershow party by both bar staff: all red herrings. For, despite the audience voting otherwise, it was obvious to anyone with their eyes open - it was the directors what dunnit!



It was a really incredible evening and some parents declared it their favourite performance yet! A special thank you to the Non-entities that stepped forwards to sleuth with us, and to those who helped us with refreshments and audience-wrangling.

What's next for KRYPT?

Coronavirus sucks. It has stopped us meeting. It has suspended our Juniors' performance of Imagination with only one week until opening night. It has disrupted our members' exams, and they are still uncertain of how they will obtain GCSEs, A Levels and even access the universities they were striving for. The virus has disrupted life as we know it and we don't know how long the disruption will last. But... we in the theatre understand one golden rule: The Show Must Go On[line]!

Our members are collaborating with youth theatres around the country (and the world!) to devise a digital project: The Coronavirus Time Capsule. Each week, we will record their experiences in video clips and collate them into a digital performance to share. The aim is to find a space for the thoughts and feelings of teenagers to be recorded to ensure their voices aren't lost amongst the headlines. We have already started working on our first videos and we will be able to share them with you soon!

And until then? Keep busy. Stay creative. Watch as much online theatre as you can. Breathe. Relax. This is just the interval.



Tori triumphs with Facebook fun!



I know you must all be fed up of conscientious, well-meaning advice to wash your hands, stay inside, be sensible...all the things I know you'll be doing because you're not daft. I'll keep this brief, I promise, I just want to say well done and thank you for keeping the Nonentities alive and kicking online whilst we're all staying indoors and keeping safe in real-life.



Mike Lawrence has been doing a fantastic job of sharing daily photos to keep conversations going - some lovely memories shared. There have been quizzes, discussions about best/messiest/funniest moments on stage, and the sharing of photos and stories for World Theatre Day.

Personally I was thrilled when a half-baked idea to share baby photos snowballed into nearly 40 Nonnies contributing their best baby faces and keeping each other amused for days trying to guess who on earth was who. It was so hard!! I'm glad I volunteered to put it together because I would have been completely clueless! But, the guesses, discussions, hundreds of comments, laughter and (most of all) confusion proved that the Nonnies are not down-hearted.



'The Nonentities' Facebook page is a private group consisting of 94 members - the virtual home for all Rose Theatre-dwelling folk on the info-superhighway. If you're interested in joining or need help getting started with Facebook, contact Tori (e-mail tori@dwakeman.co.uk)



You're all wonderful!
Stay safe, look after yourselves and keep lighting up the Nonnies FB group with your brilliance.
Love to you all,
Tori x



Tori Wakeman

Medieval weddings

... following on from 'Much Ado'!

by Pat Gale

Weddings used to take place (we are talking medieval here) in the porch entrance before moving, in later years, into the NAVE (so called because it looked like an upturned boat (naval/navy). A wagon with ale on it would parade through the village with the village musicians on board, and drink would be dispensed from it. If, however, you were playing, you didn't drink so... 'on the band wagon'. There was only one wedding dress for the whole village (most folk only owned one outfit.) This dress, known as the bride-ale gown, would be used by every village bride. Friends would gather at the lytch gate (lytch means 'body'), which was where dead bodies were left for burying. Flowers were put on graves to cover the smell. Not needed today, thank goodness, (although we still take flowers!) and follow the family into church.

The couple would usually marry in Spring, as clothes were worn all year and goose grease smeared onto bodies to keep off the bitter winter cold. In Spring, a wash down would be taken and therefore was the most desirable time to get married, when one smelt the most acceptable!!

How things have changed...
but love and marriage will always lift our hearts and bring a smile!



Blood, Vomit and Blow-up Dolls!



by Anne Booth

This is the title of my talk given to the WI groups at Brockencote and Hagley recently - you need something to get their attention! We are often asked to give talks about the society and the theatre to local groups and this is a great way to remind people that we are here, impart a bit of local history and give publicity to our future shows. Hilary Thompson and I put together a varied piece - Hilary talks about the history of the Nonentities and the vision of Kenneth Rose; the various buildings that the theatre has been housed in; the way our society operates and the various roles within it. She uses some of the lovely set models that we have in the theatre to describe the set building process. Many of the ladies had fond memories of the Theatre in days gone by and happily there are still patrons amongst them now.

Then it's over to me for an insight into the weird world of props and behind the scenes shenanigans. I explain the various ways actors can be ill on stage and introduce the famous vomit cushion; blood is always a good topic and my re-enactment of cutting the head off the poor chaffinch in Miss Julie wakes the audience up when I bring the cleaver down!; I take along Jimmy, the blow-up doll used in Elsie and Norm - always gives a laugh when I mention the 'other things I might like to purchase' as suggested by Amazon when I had to buy Jimmy on-line!

We charge a small fee and this is put to good use by the theatre. We always receive a warm welcome and it's great to spread the word about The Nonentities. If members know of any other groups that would like to hear from us do ask Hilary or myself and we'd be only too pleased to help. There is another talk planned at the Chad's branch of the WI in Kidderminster. Date TBC!



Anne Booth, Janet Poole from the Brockencote WI and Hilary and a selection of their visual aids!

Chase me up Farndale Avenue, s'il vous plaît *'une comédie très saucy'*

'With falling scenery, manic performances and a script that features more comedy twists and turns than a Brexit Mandate document, you will not fail to find funny in the Farndale Avenue players at-tempt at yet another amateur theatre production'



Louise Fulwell 'seemed to channel the memory and personality of Penelope Keith's Margo into her performance, gliding from every incident with a pleasant and confident smile'



Amy Cooper 'showed great comic timing as the femme fatale caught up in the chaos only to be derailed by the news of her partner's affair up in the technical control room'



Hannah Tolley 'begins principally as the Hotel's maid with a vacuum cleaner that has a life of its own and Miss Tolley clearly revels in the chaos'



'Keeping real track of all the fake chaos for The Nonentities is Director Martin Salter, who does a good job of keeping this crazy play on track by being committed to it being . . . well off track'



All quotes from
'Behind The Arras' review.



Stephen Bougourd 'is Gordon the only male member but amusingly having to cross dress due to the logistical timing of the Guild's play'

The plot eventually becomes irrelevant as the chaos descends both in the guild's attempt at the performance and being further frustrated by their technical department who add their own brand of calamity to the proceedings with mistimed and mistaken sound effects'



Joan Wakeman plays Minnie, 'the reluctant wardrobe mistress. Forced to read from the script at all times, until it's eventually destroyed, her deliberate stiff rendition of the part adds a great deal of comedy to the company's serious theatrical intentions'





Much Ado About Nothing



directed by Jen Eglington



"I love you with so much of my heart that none is left to protest"

All quotes from Behind the Arras.

Tori Wakeman as Beatrice and Richard Taylor as Benedick are equally matched in their command of their roles and seemed happy to try and act each other off the stage. It's fair to say it was a draw.



"Some Cupid kills with arrows, some with traps"

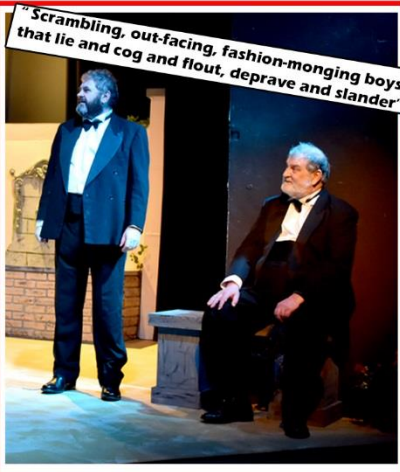
Hero and Ursula (right) played by Jane Williams.

Chris Kay 'was a doting and able Claudio' and Beth Grainger 'was delightful as Hero and yet convincingly broken when she is wrongly accused of infidelity'. Father Francis (centre) was played by Dan Taylor.



Bob Graham (right) was Leonato and 'added a backbone of experience to this excellent production whilst Tony Newbould (left) ably assisted him as his brother Antonio'.

The Main Cast



"Scrambling, out-facing, fashion-monging boys, that lie and cog and flout, deprave and slander"

The role of Don Pedro was played by Tom Rees (far right) who 'revelled in the seething jealousy he has for his brother and cut a fine figure in his Italian military uniform'.



Hero and Margaret (right) played by Jess Schneider.

"When I said I would die a bachelor, I did not think I should live till I were married"



'Directed by Jen Eglington, The Non-entities balance this production with a lot of skill and fully maximise their available talent. It's a given that for a modern audience to fully appreciate Shakespeare, it must not only be faultlessly spoken but be well acted and here both boxes are ticked'.



"I whipt behind the arras; and there heard it agreed upon that the prince should woo Hero for himself"

The Baddies! Matthew Morgan (right) as Borachio, John Spencer (centre) as Don John and Jonathan Flowers (left) as Conrad.

The Watch



Dogberry Pat Gale
Verges Sue Hunt
Tina Katy Ball
Gina Dink Widdowson
Mina Emma Preece
Lina Jessica Bishop
Sexton Nick Haynes



You are thought to be the most senseless and fit woman for the constable of the watch; therefore, bear you a lantern.



Do not forget to specify, when time and place shall assert, that I am an ass.



the full cast and crew



Obituary ~ Do Evans

It was with great sadness that on January 14th we said goodbye to Do Evans, another of our longstanding members who had been part of the fabric of the society for more than 60 years. Do joined the Nonentities in 1956. She was a teacher but had also trained at RADA with some of the greats. Do had many milestones in her time with our company, not least as Stevie in the first play performed in the studio and director of the tour de force that was Nicholas Nickleby amongst many, many others. She will also be remembered as a part of the team that set up the first incarnation of a Youth Theatre. I am sure those of us who knew her all have our own fond memories and will miss her, but those of us who didn't know her should never forget that it was the talent and hard work of Do and her peers that built our theatre and the reputation we continue now to enjoy.

Thank you, Do, and may you rest in peace.

I hope you enjoyed reading this month's rather belated newsletter. It normally comes out in March! It's been a rather strange one to compile since many of the articles, written pre Covid-19, had to be re-written in light of our dear theatre having to be closed. Hopefully the next newsletter will reflect news of better times. Anyone Nonnies member is welcome to submit a piece for the newsletter, so maybe during the weeks to come you might like to write a poem or describe how you're getting your drama fix in lockdown....? All articles gratefully received. You can e-mail me (sue2hunt@yahoo.co.uk) Hope to see you in the not too distant Summer. Stay home and keep safe!

Sue Hunt
Newsletter Editor