

JULY 2020

Latest News

I hope you all are staying safe as we ease ourselves out of the lockdown. Sadly, as with all other theatres, the Phoenix remains closed for the time being. The announcement by the government that cinemas can open from 4th July does offer a glimmer of hope in that we may soon be able to start showing films again at the Phoenix. The committee has carefully reviewed the guidelines for re-opening cinemas and has taken the view that now is not the appropriate time given the protocols that would need to be in place. This situation will be reviewed in the weeks ahead as the situation regarding the virus becomes clearer. Unfortunately “live theatre” will not be returning to the Phoenix for the foreseeable future given the need for social distancing of cast and crew. However, the set for “The Ladykillers” remains on stage and will be the first production when the theatre re-opens. Suzanne has been busy rearranging our future programme so that, should the theatre be given the green light to open, we will be ready to go!

You are probably all Zoom experts by now and we took advantage of this novel medium to host a virtual AGM on Monday 8th June and a play reading a week later. Our resident Zoom expert Graham Isle hosted both meetings and everyone involved thoroughly enjoyed taking part and having the chance to see each other face to face for some time. For those new to Zoom, Graham organised a taster session the week before the meetings to go through the procedure for logging on etc.

The AGM had 27 attendees. Alison gave her annual report and in particular announced that the Phoenix had won two NODA awards: for “Night Must Fall” and the Singers Summer Show. Amanda gave her financial report and announced that the Phoenix had received a grant of £10,000 from Herefordshire County Council to tide us over the lockdown. This is very welcome news as the theatre has running costs of over £8,000 a year. As no other candidates were forthcoming, the committee remains the same with Alison continuing as chair for a 4th term.

For the play reading, participants were able to read the script from the Zoom screen whilst Graham scrolled through the script as the reading progressed. This seemed to work well. The play being read was Chekhov’s “The Cherry Orchard” which David Pollard wishes to direct in 2021.

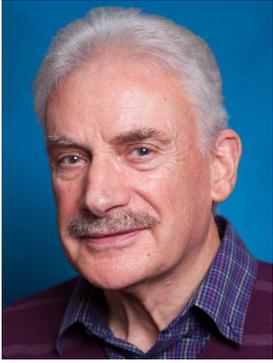
Our membership secretary Catriona Pearson recently updated the committee on the current membership for 2019/2020. This now stands at 106 full members, down from 133 for 2018/19, with 27 members having not renewed for this year. Subscriptions are due for renewal on 1st September and you will find renewal and standing order forms at the end of this newsletter. Please renew your membership as your continued support is important not least for the long-term financial health of the theatre.

David Pollard has launched his Hand to Mouth Sound Theatre which aims to provide video and audio recordings for our entertainment whilst the theatre is closed. There is more from David about this below.

Ben Mowbray from Our Star Theatre Company continues to share his Lockdown Series of radio plays and he has booked the theatre to perform “The Great Gatsby” in September 2021.

Graham Russell (Newsletter Editor)

From the President



I am sorry not to be able to join you for this for what must be the most unusual AGM in the history of the Phoenix/ROADS! Being a technophobe, my skills do not stretch to such ability as is needed. Prior to lockdown the Phoenix had enjoyed a successful year due to the tireless work of the committee and for this we owe them our thanks.

It was most unfortunate that Tom's first effort as director had only one performance, but I am sure that can be rectified in the future.

However in spite of recent setbacks, as I said in the April Newsletter, I'm sure the Phoenix will rise again with even more spirit and enthusiasm.

So, may I congratulate and thank all who have contributed in any way, great or small, to the theatre during the past year, and there are many!

I wish everyone well for the future, and look forward to normal service at the Phoenix as soon as possible.

Thank you all.

Howard

Chairman's AGM Report



Well what a year!! I am going to put aside the current conditions and talk about the last year that we have had at our lovely theatre. We have had another fantastic year with many members of the public being entertained whilst we are all having fun enjoying our hobby.

Since the last AGM there have been many exciting performances by the Singers, visiting companies, restarting the Phoenix Youth and of course our in-house plays.

The Singers put on another fantastic concert, With a Song in My Heart, which was once again a huge success. NODA have now added concerts into their portfolio of reviews and came along to see it. Not only did the representatives give the concert a glowing review but it went on to win in the NODA awards ceremony last month in the Best Concert Production category. Congratulations to Mary Brigg and all concerned

It is lovely to see more and more things happening at the theatre. The coffee mornings and members' evening are continuing to be well supported and we have had book launches not only by visiting authors but by our very own members too. What a wealth of talent we have in our little theatre.

The Phoenix Youth Theatre has risen from the ashes and relaunched on 14th September in collaboration with The Courtyard. It is being run by Ellen Dorsett and at the beginning we had approximately 10 children. The numbers were steady and it was starting to grow. Unfortunately, as with everything else, it is on hold but not finished and will restart when possible. It has been lovely to see and hear the children enjoying drama again.

The Performathon raised over £1100 for Children in Need which is a spectacular amount. I for one think that it is a huge achievement that we can raise so much money for others and not just ourselves.

Our November production of Night Must Fall was another huge success. 91% occupancy over the run is very impressive. NODA came to see it and in their words "The Phoenix did it again!" and we sure did as not only was it enjoyed by many it also picked up the NODA award Best Play 2019. To have won this four years in a row is very impressive. Let's make it five this year.

The Singers Xmas Show is always the start of Christmas for me and I think for many others as 92% of seats were sold and another great review and nomination from NODA. Also, £318 was raised during the nights for the Ross Lions Xmas Appeal.

The theatre Xmas Party took place in December and 33 people enjoyed a buffet supper, dancing and performed karaoke. A great evening enjoyed by all and it was lovely to see even more there this year than last. I asked last year if we could encourage more people and we did so let's see if we can beat that number this year.

Sadly Keith Shawcross passed away earlier this year. He had been a trustee of the theatre for many years and had allowed us to use his knowledge on many occasions. He will be a sad loss to us. This meant that we had to appoint a new trustee. We appointed George Barratt who lives in Bridstow and has already helped us in some areas. Welcome George!!

Last year I spoke about the Cinema Group being disbanded and that we had secured the continued running of it to start very soon after the last AGM. The cinema (Screen at the Phoenix) was relaunched on the 15th June to a sell out of Bohemian Rhapsody and has a successful run of films. The selection of films has been carefully thought out and there is always something for everyone in their programmes. Thank you to all for enabling us to keep this part of our family.

Now we come to the beginning of March when Covid 19 came into our little corner of the world. The Ladykillers had opened on the Saturday to raving audience reviews but unfortunately had to be pulled on the Monday in line with health recommendations. It has been a very strange time for us all and I hope that you have managed to stay safe and sane. I have no answers to when we will be able to open safely and we are waiting on the Government giving us guidance. What I do know is that we will reopen as soon as is safely possible to do so. The initial thoughts are that we will continue with the running of The Ladykillers as the set is still up and the cast and crew had worked so hard to get it on stage. The committee will be having extra meetings as soon as we have any guidance and are committed in bringing you more opening nights as soon as possible.

I would like to say a massive Thank You to all of the hard working members that are behind the scenes. From the set builders, to wardrobe. From the bar staff to front of house. From the lighting crew to sound. Without all of these people none of the productions would be possible, so I urge every one of you to please see if you can help out in any of these roles. The more it is distributed the less of a burden to everyone. We are specifically looking for people who can spare any time to help with set construction, painting or climbing ladders and also front of house. If anyone would like to help please get in touch with any of us on the committee and we can help.

Finally, I would like to say Thank You to the committee. We have had a productive year with moving things forward behind the scenes. Thank you to Amanda for keeping us to task with the money and ensuring that we always have a solid financial grounding whilst still being able to spend to improve the theatre.

I look forward to a time when the doors are reopened and we are welcoming our first audiences to see the wonderful shows that we always put on at The Phoenix.

Alison Clarke

Committee 2020/2021

At the AGM, the committee was re-elected unopposed. The committee is as follows:

Post	Member
Chair	Alison Clarke
Treasurer	Amanda Smith
Secretary	Trevor Jones
Production Co-ordinator	Suzanne Hill
Publicity	Michelle Cooper
Building Manager	Alan Smith
Member Without Portfolio (1)	Mary Brigg
Member Without Portfolio (2)	Pat Fitzpatrick
Member Without Portfolio (3)	Graham Russell

Production Co-ordinator's Column

The Cherry Orchard – Zoom reading

A reading of 'The Cherry Orchard' by Anton Chekhov was held on a Zoom link on Wednesday 17th June. David Pollard plans to direct this play in 2021. Graham Isle kindly hosted the reading. 12 members read with Graham, David and Suzanne helping. It was an enjoyable evening, despite a few technical issues. Everyone is looking forward to another play reading soon. Thanks to David and Graham for organising the event.

The Ladykillers

Our next production, when the theatre reopens, will be 'The Ladykillers' by Graham Linehan, directed by Tom Lee-Hynes. The set remains in place and the cast and crew are keen to get back to perform to our audiences.

NODA awards for 2019

Our November 2019 production of 'Night Must Fall', directed by Brian Jackson, was nominated for Best Drama in 2019 in the Herefordshire Section of the West Midlands Region of NODA, and we won! Also, the Phoenix Theatre Singers Summer show and the Xmas show were both nominated for Best Concert Production 2019 and the summer show, entitled 'With a Song in my Heart', won! Congratulations to Brian, Mary and everyone involved.

Permathon and Gala Concert

Mary Brigg would like to hold the delayed 2020 Summer Show on 14th - 16th October, prior to the annual Permathon and Gala Concert on Saturday 17th October.

‘The Weekend’ by Michael Palin

This comedy was to be our May production in 2020 directed by Renee Field. It will now take place in May 2021.

Our Star Theatre Company’s production of ‘Death at Sea’

This production will now take place on 7th & 8th May 2021.

Venice Revisited

We still hope to put on this musical in March 2021 and had planned a reading in September.

Suzanne Hill

Four Years in a Row!



‘Phoenix did it again!’ Not my words but the opening words of NODA’s review of ‘Night Must Fall’, the Emyln Williams thriller we put on in November. The review continues; ‘Another brilliant production from the small cast who ‘do’ these types of play so well.’ Not hyperbole, for at the annual conference of NODA on May 31st ‘Night Must Fall’ by the Phoenix Theatre players was voted ‘Best Play of 2019’, making it four years in a row. I must pay tribute to my cast who were ‘spot on in their characterisation’ (NODA again) delivering a complex psychological thriller with such perfection. Each character was so well defined; Mrs. Bramson, the killer’s victim (Suzanne Hill in her wheelchair); Olivia, her niece whose world falls apart (Michelle Cooper); Hubert, the rejected suitor (Nigel Patrick); Mrs. Terence, the feisty housekeeper (Diana Tubb); Dora the gullible maid (Penny Field); No-nonsense nurse Libby (Amanda Smith); Dan the smooth psychopathic killer (Tim Betts) and Inspector Belsize carefully trying to entangle the plot to reveal the killer (Tony Hearn). Lighting and set established the moody atmosphere of the piece and this also received a NODA commendation, as did the timing and duration of Mrs. Bransom’s murder (no quick ‘bang you’re dead’ here).



For a director it is extremely gratifying to see your cast (and indeed the whole company) come together with such perfection and to be rewarded with the NODA accolade. It sets a challenge for future productions but it is a challenge that The Phoenix Theatre is surely well equipped to meet.

Brian Jackson (Director – ‘Night Must Fall’)

And The Winner is....

As many of you will already know in March 2020 (shortly before lockdown commenced), we were notified by our NODA representative Louise Hickey, that The Phoenix had received nominations in both the Best Drama and Best Concert Production categories for 2019. The awards were supposed to take place on Sunday 10th May at Warwick Hall but sadly the ceremony had to be cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Instead a virtual awards ceremony was held on YouTube on Sunday 31st May and we're delighted to inform you that we won both awards for our district.

Best Drama 2019 - Night Must Fall (director Brian Jackson)

Best Concert Production 2019 - With A Song In My Heart (musical director Mary Brigg, accompanist: Richard Watson)

A huge congratulations to everyone who was involved in these two productions. What a fantastic achievement and accolade to The Phoenix Theatre and its very talented members. This is now our 4th consecutive win for Best Drama, which proves that we set a very high standard for all our shows. Here's what Director Brian Jackson had to say when receiving the news "Hi everyone, on behalf of the wonderful cast and company of ‘Night Must Fall’ I have to say a fabulous ‘well done’! We did the Phoenix proud. And added to that, to Mary and her fabulous Singers too. A great win Mary; enjoy the moment".

The Best Concert Production is a new category for 2019, which has been greatly welcomed by many groups. It gives special recognition to concert productions which up to now weren't covered by any of the existing award categories like Best Musical. Not only did the Singers get nominated for their summer concert (which of course went on to win) but they also received a second nomination for their fabulous Christmas concert too, which is testament to how wonderful their shows really are. Louise Hickey was certainly impressed when she reviewed both productions and had this to say about the winning concert: "From the moment the Singers took to the stage it was evident that we were in for an excellent evening's entertainment. With beautiful arrangements and a delightful programme it was a wonderful evening".

Mary Brigg was delighted with the news of nominations (and of course the win!) and upon receiving the news commented "A great achievement for our Phoenix Theatre. Congratulations to Brian and all the cast and crew of Night Must Fall .. and of course congratulations to all the wonderful Singers, Richard and all who helped with the performances, which made With a Song in My Heart such a success".

Who knows when we will be able to reopen the theatre and re-commence rehearsals but I'm hoping that this good news will reignite the fire in our hearts, so that the Phoenix may rise from the ashes once again.

Congratulations to all and here's to a successful 2020/21 season.

Love to you all

Michelle Cooper

Radio Theatre at the Phoenix?

To those members of The Phoenix Theatre who have already listened to my podcast Hand to Mouth Sound Theatre – a big thank you. I think we've got off to a flying start.

What's it all about you ask? I set up Hand to Mouth Sound Theatre as an open but curated 'stage' for writers and performers of radio plays. In essence it's amdram for radio. The 'stage' is open to any company with a good quality production. Right now that's limited to mainly monologues and solo readings but eventually I'd like to get more multi-cast and complex productions.

I know that The Phoenix has both the performance skills and technical skills to produce excellent radio plays. So this is a callout to any and all Phoenix Theatre members who would like to join with me in making sound theatre.

So, performers, script writers and sound technicians – if you are interested drop me an email to:

davidandalexpollard@gmail.com and tell me what you have.

And of course – for everybody – please support the Sound Theatre by listening at:

www.podomatic.com/podcasts/handtomouth.

Best wishes to you all.

David Pollard

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION & RENEWAL FORM 2020/2021
THE PHOENIX THEATRE COMPANY
Reg. Charity No: 508668

There are two types of membership as set out below. Memberships are renewable annually on 1st September. (Subscriptions for new members joining on or after 1st May are not renewable until the September of the following year).

Please ✓ the appropriate box: New Membership Application Renewal of Membership

FULL MEMBERSHIP £20

This form of membership enables you to fully participate in all activities within the theatre which include: acting, directing, backstage, the Singing Group, Front of House, Cinema and attend social events. With this membership you have full voting rights at the Annual General Meeting (AGM). You are also eligible to stand for election to any committee post at the AGM.

FULL JUNIOR OR STUDENT MEMBERSHIP £10

This membership is open to any persons under the age of 21 or full-time students above that age. You are able to fully participate in all productions and attend social events.

Name:

Address:

.....

Telephone:

E-mail:

I agree to my name, telephone number and e-mail address appearing in the Members Directory in the Members area of the theatre website accessible only by theatre members. This will enable you to look up contact details of other members.

Please tell us what your interests are by ✓ the appropriate boxes:

- Acting Directing Stage Management Set Construction Set painting
 Sound Lighting Wardrobe Props Cinema Singing General Backstage
 Front of House Bar (serving drinks) Box Office

(All the details that you enter on this form will be held on a secure database accessible only by the Membership Secretary and Committee Members using a dedicated password.)

Payment options (please tick the relevant box below):

- BACS Sort Code: 30-94-14 & Account No: 02231108** (preferred payment option)
 Cheque payable to "The Phoenix Theatre"
 Standing Order (if you already pay by standing order)
 New Standing Order (see form below)

Please send this form, and cheque (if paying by cheque) to:

Membership Secretary
The Phoenix Theatre
St Mary's Street
Ross-on-Wye
Herefordshire
HR9 5HT

Tel: 01989 564570 E-mail: info@phoenix-theatre.org.uk

Date:

Signed:

STANDING ORDER FORM

The Manager _____ Bank

Address _____

Post Code _____

Please credit the account of The Phoenix Theatre at:

Lloyds Bank

Sort code: 30-94-14

Account no: 02231108

With the sum of £20.00 on 1st SEPTEMBER 2020 and every year until further notice

My name _____

My address _____

Post Code _____

My Sort Code _____

My Account No _____

Signed _____

Date _____