

APRIL 2021

Latest News

With the recent easing of lockdown rules, our optimism is rising that the promised roadmap will lead us to open up society by the end of June with the real prospect that the Phoenix can reopen its doors later in the year. The committee has been discussing how that should take place and what measures might need to be in place (if any) to give confidence to members and our audiences alike to return to the theatre. If all goes to plan our first performance will in September when we will host Our Star Theatre Company's production of "Sherlock's Excellent Adventure", followed by a Singers Charity Concert for the Friends of Ross Cottage Hospital and then a reprise of "The Ladykillers" in November. Despite having had no income during the pandemic we are in a sound financial position, our treasurer Amanda Barrett having secured two grants from Herefordshire Council to help with our running costs. More details at the AGM.

We have scheduled our AGM for Wednesday 23rd June and, like last year, it will be a Zoom meeting. At the AGM we will be electing the committee for 2021/2022. Our current Chair, Alison Clarke, is standing down having been in the post 4 years which is the maximum number of years permitted by the Theatre Rules. Pat Fitzpatrick has kindly offered to become the new Chair. Pat has been on the committee since July 2019 and is therefore well placed to carry on the good work instigated by Alison. Traditionally the new Chair comes from within the committee and to formally recognise that tradition we are proposing to amend the Theatre Rules accordingly at the AGM. We will be announcing the procedures for elections in due course but if you wish to be considered for a committee post, please let the committee know well in advance. Nominations will close 5 weeks before the AGM on the 19th May.

Suzanne Hill was interviewed by Kate Justice on BBC Hereford & Worcester on 6th March and gave an excellent account of the Theatre and our plans for reopening.

Two long standing members have moved out of the area to be nearer their families. David Pollard has moved to Suffolk and Diana Tubb has moved to Wales. They have both been enthusiastic and busy members of the Phoenix Theatre (see below). We wish them and their families the very best in their new homes.

During lockdown Alan Smith, our Building Manager, and Trevor Jones have been busy installing a new extractor fan to improve the air flow in the auditorium and make us ready for reopening the Theatre. This was quite a project and further details follow. Sadly there has been another instance of vandalism on the Theatre roof. Slates have been replaced and a CCTV camera has been installed on the roof.

Graham Russell (Newsletter Editor)

Production Co-ordinator's Column

'The Lady Killers' by Graham Linehan

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. We are hoping to put it on at the end of November 2021. Renee Field has kindly agreed to move 'The Weekend' to a later date.

Phoenix Theatre Singers

The Phoenix Theatre Singers are planning a concert on Saturday 2nd October 2021 in aid of the Friends of the Ross Cottage Hospital. Rehearsals are to begin in July.

'School for Scandal' by Sheridan

David Pollard has now moved to Suffolk to be near his son. Recordings of this play are on hold due to Covid 19 restrictions.

Phoenix Youth Theatre

It is hoped that the Youth Group will restart after Easter 2021 with a new facilitator from the Courtyard Theatre in Hereford. There is no news as yet.

Herefordshire County Drama Festival 2021

The Phoenix Theatre will not be entering the HCDF in 2021. The festival will take place at the Market Theatre, Ledbury from 27th to 29th May 2021.

'Abelard and Heloise' by Ronald Millar

Brian Jackson would like to direct this play in March 2022. A Zoom reading took place on 17th March. It is a love story set in 1131 in France. A reading and auditions will be held in the autumn.

'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 2022.

Our Star Theatre Company's production of 'Sherlock's Excellent Adventure' by James Barry

This production will take place from 16th to 18th September 2021.

Venice Revisited

This musical will now take place in November 2022. More information when available.

Suzanne Hill

David & Diana (leaving the theatre)

David Pollard has acted and directed on many occasions. He played Counsellor Drivinitz in *Anastasia* (seated below), and he took part in *The Doll's House* and *Lord Arthur Savile's Crime* to name but a few. He directed *Quartet*, *Harvey* and *Arsenic and Old Lace*. He also wrote and directed *Can Malone Die?* which we entered into the Herefordshire One Act Drama Festival. David set up his own theatre company entitled Hand to Mouth Theatre and it's offshoot, Hand to Mouth Sound Theatre which broadcasts plays and monologues on the Podomatic website. David set up the recording of several plays including *Lady Windermere's Fan* and was producing *School for Scandal* which is sadly on hold due to the lockdown.



Diana Tubb is an accomplished actress appearing in many plays including *Lord Arthur Savile's Crime*, *Harvey* and as Mrs Terence in *Night Must Fall* (standing below left). Diana was a member of Goodrich Arts Society for many years before joining the Phoenix Theatre.



Photos from the Past

No 1: The Embrace



This photo epitomises the tension and passion generated by the wonderful scene between Anna, Michelle Cooper, and the Dowager Empress of Russia, myself, Suzanne Hill. This is the scene in the play, 'Anastasia' by Marcelle Maurette, where the young girl, Anna, who has been trained by charlatans seeking the late Tsar's money, to pretend to be Anastasia, the youngest daughter of the Russian royal family, who were all assassinated in 1918. Anna tries to prove to Anastasia's grandmother that she is in truth her granddaughter. Initially, the Empress is dismissive and scornful, but when she is reminded of incidents which only the real Anastasia would know, she opens her arms to her granddaughter and they embrace in tears.

This play was performed at The Phoenix Theatre in April 2016. As an actress, there are some plays which one feels it is a privilege to have been involved with. This play was one of these. Michelle and I developed a great bond, and in close moments Michelle still calls me Grand Mama. A production never to be forgotten!

Suzanne Hill

Phoenix Theatre Ventilation System



In readiness for opening the theatre post the Covid lockdown the committee decided to look into whether or not the air ventilation system was adequate in the rate of air exchange. We did a smoke test and discussed the results with Denco, a specialist air ventilation company in Hereford.

The ventilation system works by having a fan in the foyer pulling air in from the outside and a fan in the roof pushing it out through the roof.

Together we decided that for the volume of the auditorium with an audience in it the rate of exchange was not sufficient. They advised us that we should install a bigger fan in the roof and use the existing one to replace the foyer one.

Accordingly a new fan was purchased to replace the one in the roof. This fan presented a challenge: how were we going to get it into the roof? It weighs 63 kilos (140pounds). A block and tackle was hired being capable of lifting one ton. The loft ladder was temporarily removed and a beam was screwed between two rafters directly above the loft hatch. The fan was duly hoisted into the loft (top left) and manoeuvred into position (bottom left).



Alan and Trevor