

APRIL 2022

Latest News

“Relative Values” by Noel Coward and directed by Amanda Barrett had a successful run at the end of March. Congratulations to Amanda, the cast and crew. There are two reviews of the play in the newsletter.

Sadly January was overshadowed by the sudden passing of Trevor Jones, our secretary. His funeral at Hereford Crematorium and wake at The Royal Hotel were well attended by Phoenix members. His wife Tracey wrote to thank us: “Thank you to everyone connected with the Phoenix Theatre for all of your kind words, memories and donations in tribute of Trevor. So many of you kept in contact with him while he was unwell, which meant a lot to him, and your support to me in the days since his passing is truly appreciated. Trevor loved the Phoenix and you were all his friends, and to see so many of you at the funeral really moved me. I hope you all agree that it was a beautiful celebration of his life.” Tracey requested that, instead of flowers for Trevor's funeral, donations be made to the British Heart Foundation and the Phoenix Theatre. On that basis, the theatre has received the sum of £250 and this has been spent on a new CD player to be used in all future productions.

Another long standing member Sue Jones has also passed away.

Obituaries for both are to be found in the newsletter.

On a more positive note, Renee Field will be directing “The Weekend” by Michael Palin in June and Ellen Dorsett is planning a Youth Group production of “Fantastic Mr Fox” in July.

Screen at the Phoenix is reopening on Saturday 9th April with the Bond Movie NO TIME TO DIE. Screenings will continue fortnightly with West Side Story, Supernova and Belfast. The Duke is pencilled in for when it becomes available. In early June, we will be showing films from local independent film makers as part of the Wye Valley River Festival.

Dick Brice and Maggie Clutterbuck will be performing on Sunday 24th April in support of the DEC Ukraine Humanitarian Appeal.

To celebrate the theatre's 100 anniversary, The Phoenix Theatre Singers will be performing a show entitled “100 Years of Song” from 29th June until 2nd July.

Alison Clarke is acting as our secretary until formally elected at our AGM. The AGM will be held at the theatre on Wednesday 22nd June at 7.30pm. Further details on election of the committee in the newsletter.

Maurice Thompson has kindly offered to head up the provision of lighting and sound at the theatre.

Graham Russell (Newsletter Editor)

Production Co-ordinator's Column

Phoenix Youth Theatre

The Youth Group restarted on Saturday 15 January with our facilitator from the Courtyard Theatre in Hereford, Ellen Dorsett. Sessions will run from 10 to 11.30am in term time. Ellen is planning a youth production in July 2022 which will run for 3 performances. It is to be 'Fantastic Mr Fox' by Roald Dahl. Open Auditions are to be held on Saturday 2nd April. Production dates are Saturday 16th July at 7pm and Sunday 17th July at 2pm and 7pm.

'Relative Values' by Noel Coward

This was our March production and was a great success. Congratulations to Amanda Barrett, her cast and crew, for an amazing production. We achieved 67% seat occupancy, which was excellent, especially in the current climate when people are still a little nervous following the pandemic. There are reviews elsewhere in this newsletter.

A plea to members! We need more volunteers to staff the bar, box office and front of house roles. Many thanks to those of you who kindly gave your time and enthusiasm during this production.

Screen at the Phoenix

The cinema will restart on Saturday 9th April with 'No Time to Die'. There will be 'West Side Story' on Saturday 23rd April, 'Supernova' on Saturday 7th May and "Belfast" on Saturday 21st May. There will be a showing of films by local film makers on Saturday 4th and Sunday 5th June as part of the Wye Valley River Festival.

An Evening with Dick Brice and Maggie Clutterbuck

The evening will be held on Sunday 24th April at 7.30pm. Tickets £10. This will be an evening of poems and songs in aid of the D.E.C. Ukraine Humanitarian Appeal.

'The Weekend' by Michael Palin

This comedy directed by Renee Field will take place from 11th to 18th June. Rehearsals have started. The cast comprises Gerry Clarke, Jane Bovell, Michelle Cooper, Phil Field, Mia Field, Jenniffer Wood, Maurice Thompson, Penny Field and Bob Houghton.

100 Years of Song

The Phoenix Theatre Singers Summer Show in 2022 will be entitled '100 Years of Song' and will celebrate 100 years of the Phoenix Theatre, which started life in 1922 under the name of the Ross Operatic and Amateur Dramatic Society or ROADS, as it was known. The show dates are 29th June to 2nd July.

Rockney – a tribute to the music of Chas and Dave

Peter Gill will bring this show to the Phoenix on Saturday 30th July.

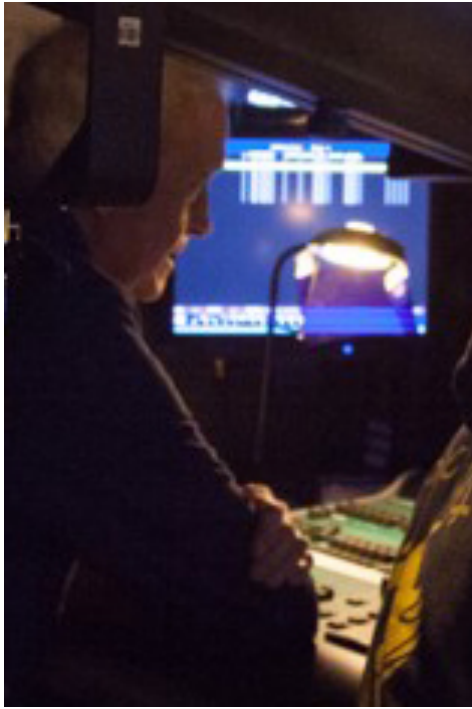
'Meet Tommy Atkins'

Peter Gill will bring this show to the Phoenix Theatre on Saturday 1st October.

Suzanne Hill

Trevor Jones – a tribute

I had the pleasure of working in collaboration with Trevor over a mere 8 years. But what years they were and I have no doubt at all that others in the Phoenix Theatre family feel the same about Trevor as I do. He was a friend and associate possessed of rare talent. But how little we really knew him. To begin with Trevor, a Herefordian, had no interest in theatre at all. His first passion was electronics and after obtaining his Technical Degree at the Royal Radar Establishment College of Electronics at Malvern he remained at the Royal Radar Establishment working on MOD radar development. It was during radar test flights that Trevor developed his love of flying and travelling. But he had been coerced by friends into ‘giving a hand’ backstage at Malvern Theatre, just ‘grunt’ work shifting sets and props for a production. But the seed was sown and it wasn’t long before he’d joined an amateur theatre. Trevor and Tracey came to Ross for retirement, in fact Amanda (unbeknown to her) had influenced their decision. And here his love of theatre combined with vast technical knowledge and expertise was put to our advantage. For years Trevor was our Secretary and Technical Manager, and...? It goes on, just as his total commitment to The Phoenix seemed endlessly at our disposal. Tracey understood, the Phoenix was Trevor’s life. A new suite of scenery and flats, upgraded lighting, music and sound effects. Youth Theatre productions, Hereford County



Drama Festivals, award winning plays, building links with theatrical suppliers, where did it stop? Creating sound working partnerships with our Directors, Stage and House Managers and his colleagues up in Trevor’s eyrie balancing sound and lights. Trevor probably never knew or tried to measure the contribution he so willingly bestowed on us, and I guess we didn’t realise how wide was the cheerful, practical influence that he brought to bear on our endeavours. But we know now, and we are the richer for having known this lovely man, our friend Trevor Jones.

Brian Jackson

Sue Jones (1945 – 2022)



Sue was one of the ardent band of actors who took part in the opening performance when the Phoenix Theatre first opened its doors in 1983. She was a first rate actress and had appeared in previous productions and went on to appear in many more at the Phoenix. Her major performances were as Ruth, wife of Norman, in all three plays of the Norman Conquest trilogy by Alan Ayckbourn, Raina in Arms and the Man, by George Bernard Shaw, and ironically, Moxie in the 1992 production of Noel Coward’s Relative Values, which has recently been revived at the Phoenix. She was a loyal supporter of the Theatre for many years and remained a member despite family and work commitments. She will be remembered by many for her pleasant personality and her ready wit. Her passing is a sad occasion and she will be greatly missed by all who knew her.

Howard Owen

Relative Values - Review by NODA

It was a pleasure to visit The Phoenix Theatre in Ross on Wye and receive a warm welcome from the Company. 'Relative Values' by Noel Coward set in 1951, is a comedy of manners and deals with the issues of class and status which highlight a clash of cultures between Hollywood stars and the English aristocracy.

The audience was met with an excellent looking set suitably dressed with appropriate furniture and props, depicting a living room in the Marshwood household. We first meet 'Crestwell' the butler, a housemaid 'Alice' and 'Moxie' the long-standing personal maid to the 'Countess of Marshwood'. Steve Banner as the butler was everything you could hope for in a first-class butler, anticipating the next move, a soul of discretion with the family and often direct with the other staff. An excellent all-round portrayal. 'Alice' was also well played by Jacky Bedford often requiring a chivvying by 'Crestwell'. 'Moxie' played by Lucy Davies was also a very proper household servant of over 20 years and would have gladly remained so, but for the news of an imminent new arrival in the family of the Earl of Marshwood's fiancé. I could really feel her anxiety and mixed feelings, so well portrayed by Lucy.



'Felicity' the Countess of Marshwood cemented the action throughout and this was an excellent performance by Suzanne Hill (standing). She is trying to accept the social changes that are taking place around her, but ultimately doesn't and feels that her son is marrying beneath his class. Suzanne's expressions, speed of delivery and timing were spot on.

Son 'Nigel' (The Earl of Marshwood) insists he and his American fiancé are very much in love, but has a reputation. Robin Haig gave a convincing performance and so too did his intended 'Miranda Frayle' (Corinne McClune) who swept in with apparent sensitivity but was economical with the truth. She is pursued by 'Don Lucas' an old American boyfriend who turns up unannounced. (Les Davies). Both Corinne and Les had great accents and were convincing.

The principal line up had great depth and the supporting roles of 'Lady Cynthia Hayling' (Ann Stirrup), 'Admiral Sir John Hayling' (Bob Houghton), and 'The Honourable Peter Ingleton' (Tim Betts) were all well played each with a very natural performance. All the cast were impeccably dressed and carried themselves with class. Then, this was a class production by Amanda Barrett.

Thank you for the opportunity to attend and I also congratulate The Phoenix Theatre on reaching its centenary this year.

Bruce Wyatt

Relative Values - Review by Peter Hall

Theatre goers who are familiar with the output of the Phoenix Theatre Company will know that their last major production – ‘The Lady Killers’ – was curtailed after one performance due to COVID. However, after two years, they are back with a production of Noel Coward’s 1951 light comedy ‘Relative Values’; it has certainly been worth the wait. Under Amanda Barrett’s direction, the cast explore the mores of English aristocratic society and how they face the perceived encroachment of socialism and brash interlopers from ‘Tinseltown’. Set in Marshwood House, the seat of Countess Felicity, this three-act play amuses and provokes as Felicity longs for the return of the old order where everyone knew their place in society and kept to it.



(L-R: Jacky Bedford, Tim Betts, Robin Haig, Suzanne Hill, Lucy Davies, Steve Banner, Corinne McClune, Les Davis, Ann Stirrup & Bob Houghton)

Suzanne Hill delightfully captures the essence of the conniving Felicity and the family and staff pressures that beset her. Steve Banner plays Crestwell, the loyal, stentorian butler, who radiates an air of superiority way above his station. Lucy Davies is wonderfully moody and versatile as Moxie the lady’s maid with a family secret. That secret threatens to derail the engagement between Felicity’s son Nigel, the pompous rather vacuous Earl – performed by Robin Haig – and Hollywood actress Miranda Frayle. To complicate matters further, Miranda’s former beau Don Lucas – played with suitable Hollywood glitz and folksiness by Les Davis – arrives at Marshwood House. Corinne McClune endows the beautiful Miranda with a veneer of New World grace and charm which masks her mendacity and determination to snare her man. The canny Felicity recognises this mismatch and convinces Don that all is not lost. Others attending the house party are Felicity’s nephew Peter, played with affectation and wit by Tim Betts, and Admiral and Lady Hayling who Bob Houghton and Ann Stirrup invest with suitable ‘upper crustiness’. Jacky Bedford is the star struck maid at the bottom of the pecking order.

The décor, the costumes and attitudes take us back 70 years, so sit back and watch the clash of cultures, laugh at the prejudices, and hope normal service will be restored as soon as possible.

Peter Hall

Feedback received about Relative Values



How good to see the Phoenix rising again! Judy woke this morning singing her praises for the production and the great evening we had together. The set is delightful and the performances superb. In a play about social distinctions how satisfying to see that established from the outset in the deft exchanges between Steve and Jacky, leading us to the confrontation of Lucy and Corinne.



Costuming beyond delightful (congratulations Lynn and Marjorie). The build-up in anticipation of the 'Hollywood Star' brought a gasp from the audience when Corinne entered – correction – she made an entrance! - vintage Hollywood throughout. And the interplay between Lucy and Corinne was terrific as Suzanne deftly manipulated them, finally to return family relationships to status quo! This was the Phoenix playing at full strength. Thank you Amanda. I note on the programme it discreetly says, 'An amateur production'. Oh Really!! Welcome back; 'Floreat Phoenix!'

Brian Jackson

FOH, Bar and Box Office Staff at The Phoenix

It is great that the theatre is now back up and running with live performances and many of us are able to be back on the stage performing. But these performances cannot take place without Bar, Box Office and FOH staff. Each performance needs five staff on duty-two on the bar, one on box office, a theatre manager and steward. To cover all this, it needs members to do 'their bit' and offer to help. It was really difficult to get staff for the last production and some of us were on duty four or five times during the week and this pressure really is not sustainable!!

So, Phoenix Theatre members if you want live theatre to continue at the theatre you all need to step up and offer to do some FOH duties. Please look at the upcoming programme and message if you can help. Training is on offer if needed.

Meeting the audiences as they come into the theatre really is an enjoyable experience and you will be showing that you care about the life of The Phoenix Theatre.

Box Office - Fiona Leathart leathart.holly@googlemail.com

Bar - Lyn Smith alyn1973@hotmail.com

FOH, Theatre Manager and Steward - Mary Brigg wbrigg@btinternet.com

Annual General Meeting

The AGM will take place on **Wednesday 22nd June at 7.30pm**. There will be an opportunity to elect members to the Committee and raise matters for discussion. There are two vacancies on the committee. If you wish to be nominated, please notify our secretary Alison Clarke by 1st June at the latest. Alison should also be notified of matters for discussion by that date. Any other business (AOB) cannot be raised at the AGM. Nominations and matters for discussion will be notified to the membership 2 weeks before the AGM.

Committee posts

To date the following nominations for Committee posts have been received as follows:

Chair - Pat Fitzpatrick

Secretary - Alison Clarke

Treasurer - Amanda Barrett

Production Co-ordinator - Suzanne Hill

Publicity Officer - Michelle Cooper

Building Manager - Alan Smith

Members without portfolio (3) - Mary Brigg & 2 vacancies

There are two vacancies for a member without portfolio.

The committee plays a key role in running the theatre. Each of the designated committee positions has an important job to play to ensure that the theatre runs smoothly, particularly in organising the production schedule. The three "members without portfolio" also play an active role in decision making. In practice the committee meets every two months on a weekday evening with day to day matters being discussed via e-

mail. Now is a good opportunity to join the committee and make a contribution to running the theatre. If you are interested in joining the committee, please contact our Chair Pat or our secretary Alison.

It has been agreed by the committee that for member without portfolio posts, elections will be made only for the vacant post. Members without portfolio who wish to be remain on the committee do not have to be re-elected. An agenda of the AGM, including details of any further nominations and matters for discussion, will be notified to members 2 weeks before the AGM.

The Committee looks forward to seeing you on Weds 22nd June at 7.30pm.

To contact Alison, please e-mail:

alison@calendarlady.co.uk

To contact Pat, please e-mail:

patsyfitz@btinternet.com