

LTG Newsletter

Vol. 35 No. 2 June 2021



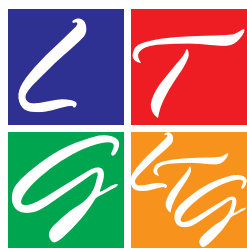
75th Anniversary of LTG

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Little Theatre Guild of Great Britain

Vol. 35 No. 2 June 2021

The Little Theatre Guild represents 120 member theatres that control and manage their amateur theatre companies with an annual audience of over 650,000 patrons and a turnover of approximately £4 million.

Visit us at www.littletheatreguild.org

Deadline for articles for the LTG Newsletters 2021 & 22: **12 August 2021; 6 November 2021; 29 January 2022**

LTG Representatives

New LTG Reps - we welcome the following new LTG Reps. If your LTG Rep is changing please inform the LTG Secretary (details below).

Ali Fenn - Sterts Theatre and Arts Centre, Liskeard, Cornwall, chair@stertsarts.org

Miriam Beber - Westovian Theatre Society, South Shields, info@westovians.co.uk

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The contents of this newsletter do not necessarily contain the official views of the LTG.

LTG Regional Conferences 2021

Decisions to hold National and Regional Conferences physically or online are difficult choices right now. Your National Committee has had many conversations on the subject and is doing its best to organise the fulfilment of its statutory obligations and to see friendly faces at least on screen.

At the time of publication, the following information is correct, but please do stay in touch for any changes.

Central Conference - no theatre has so far come forward to host this event and the LTG National Committee will consider if they can work with a Member to host a short online event.

Southern Conference - the Tower Theatre, Stoke Newington remain keen to host a live LTG S Region Conference 18 & 19 September. We all keep our fingers crossed that circumstances will allow this to take place and S Region Members feel sufficiently confident to attend.

Corrections and clarifications: In the December 2020 edition the image on page 5 of RSS in Marble Hill House should have been credited to Anne Purkis.

White Rabbit, Red Rabbit from Caxton Theatre

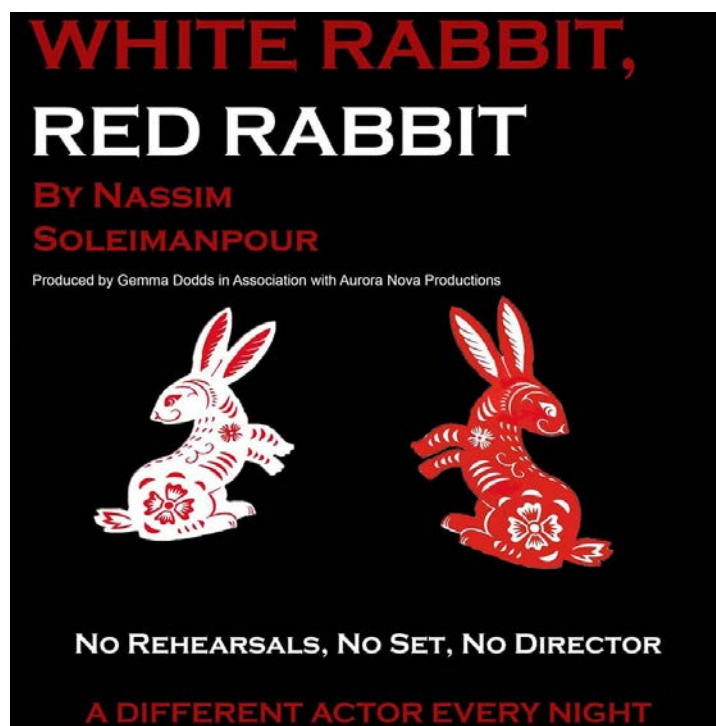
Ed: On 13 March I watched online *White Rabbit, Red Rabbit* from The Caxton Theatre. I was initially attracted to it because it was by an Iranian writer, Nassim Soleimanpour, and was described as an "audacious theatrical experiment and a potent reminder of the transgressive and transformative power of theatre". Really? Also, the production was to be presented "with NO REHEARSALS, NO DIRECTOR and a script

waiting in a SEALED envelope on stage". I had to watch, and I was so glad I did: it was absolutely fascinating and full marks to the Caxton team for taking this on and producing such a high-quality piece of theatre.

Gemma Dodds, who was seen throughout the performance, talks about her onscreen stage manager role and the gestation of the production.

I initially found *White Rabbit, Red Rabbit* back in 2017. I think I was looking for something a bit different and stumbled across it. I ordered the script but was then in a quandary as to whether I should even read it. If I read it, would I ever be able to get it performed? It sat unopened for about a week until I decided I had to read it. Once I did, I then had to find an appropriate actor to present it while I would produce it.

The full text of Gemma's article is available to read on the LTG Website.



LTG Newsletter

Chairman's Letter



As I type, a dress rehearsal is taking place at my theatre a mile away. Fifteen months ago, that would have been nothing special, but this one truly is. Everyone's taking great care not to get close, and the audience tomorrow will also keep their distance – if there's any kissing, loving or fighting in the play it

has to be real-life partners who are on stage. What a brave new world we're in, with 'brave' taking on so many shapes and forms. Aldous Huxley, like George Orwell, foresaw some strange new human behaviours, but not this precise one, with its insidious presence and invisible threat.

Hugely well done to everyone who's helped get their theatre going again, doing it in the faith that all the components of a production will come together like they used to, all the vital ingredients are there and the alchemy can work. But it's important to remember that those who still need to stay at home do so and take their 'coming out' very cautiously. They may be feeling a bit outside of all the excitement and there needs to be a place for them when they eventually return. With its friendly, welcoming reputation, I'm sure amateur theatre can rise to that occasion.

Thank you for attending our AGM on Saturday 15 May. I hope you found it interesting, especially the topics that you raised in Any Other Business and Open Forum. With organisations that we all need to use, such as Concord and PRS, it's important to remember that your National Committee are always interested to know your concerns and communicate with the companies on your behalf, representing a large group of users. In some instances, we, as a group of 120, are the larger proportion of their customers. Yes, 120! We are accruing new members and believe ourselves to be offering great services for a modest fee. But it's probably the money-can't-buy factor that is the main attraction – the universal challenge of putting on shows, managing buildings and the camaraderie we build up across the country.

The best laid plans of mice and men ... I'm sorry that our Member Lockdown Activity film failed to play properly and hope you were able to click on the link and watch it afterwards. It is still available on SharePoint; just ask and we'll send it to you. Make a coffee and enjoy fifty minutes of great work. Featured are Ilkley Playhouse, Stockport Garrick, Richmond Shakespeare, Talisman Kenilworth, The Questors Ealing, Archway Horley, Abbey St Albans and Cleadon Cleveland. My thanks to them for their films. There is, of course, an irony in not being able to share the technical skills that we were showing off due to a technical hitch. Almost worthy of a comedy script.

Lastly, please use the new 75th birthday logo on your websites! You can download a copy from the LTG Website. It's colourful and makes it clear that we have been in business, supporting each other, for seventy-five years and are a force to be reckoned with.

Break a Leg for your re-openings.

All good wishes

Jo Matthews
Jo Matthews, Chairman

Newly Elected Member of the LTG National Committee: Sheila Cooper, People's Theatre

I became a member of the People's Theatre in Newcastle upon Tyne soon after being transferred to work in the North East of England. I had done props with a group in Edinburgh and, knowing no-one in my new home, it seemed natural to look for an amateur drama society as a way to meet new people. Little did I expect to meet my future husband there and then go on to serve on the Management Committee... and now the National Committee of the Little Theatre Guild!



My roles in the theatre have been many, but not on the stage. We all know the large teams of backstage crews it takes to mount a production and this is where I was to be found: sourcing and making props, painting sets, running the Box Office, managing the FOH Bar (not all at the same time). I have also been Production Assistant and co-directed some plays.

When I joined, the People's had been in their present premises for under 10 years and money was very tight. Things gradually improved over the years and in the 80s we altered the auditorium and converted the former upper tier into a Studio Theatre. The Foyer and Art Gallery were also redesigned. Come the 21st Century and it was time for another refurbishment – new, fully accessible Studio and total transformation of the Foyer, Bar and Box Office area. It was a struggle as the recession hit while plans were in the embryo stage, but somehow we managed to raise most of the cost and topped it with a loan to see the project to fruition.

I have been attending LTG Conferences for several years, the last 10 as Rep for the People's, and have come to know many of the regular delegates; these are enjoyable occasions and there is always something to learn from them and take home to my theatre. I look forward to my time serving on the National Committee.

Thoughts from our Members

In mid-May your Editor put the following four questions to a range of LTG Members. Their answers are below. I will approach these members again in 12 months to ask them to reflect on their responses and to look once more look forward to the next 12 months.

Caxton Players, Grimsby

Their Main Stage seats 184 and their Studio Bar seats 40. Established in 1943 they joined LTG in 1952.



How would you sum up the past year?

An opportunity to stand back and reflect on our theatre and how we run it. To do refurbishments that we couldn't have done whilst open as usual. To tidy up props, wardrobe etc. Other than that, difficult, dismal, saddening.

Will your theatre change the way it operates and selects plays in any way?

We have no current plans to do so. However, one of our committee members has presented a paper on how he feels we could do things differently, which we will be discussing.

In the past year, what have you learned about your members?

Our active members have kept in touch with each other via social media and doorstep and garden visits, as permitted. Some stronger bonds have been formed during regular walks and zoom chats. We've found things in common outside the theatre and talking about theatre and got to know each other better.

What are you most looking forward to?

Getting together again at a reopening party. Being able to function again as a theatre. Welcoming audiences, especially our loyal season ticket holders.

Theatr Fach, Llangefni, Isle of Anglesey

Their theatre seats around 100 and the group was established in 1949. They joined the LTG 1963.

How would you sum up the past year?

I would sum up the last year as Concern and then Non Existent. Our concern was if we could carry on financially, and once that was secured, we've had to sit and wait for the virus to go away.

Will your theatre change the way it operates and selects plays in any way?

I cannot see our theatre changing the way it works.

We are a very small band.

Plays are selected by the Director and then approved by the Artistic Director.

In the past year, what have you learned about your members?

We have contacted them, and they understand the situation. At the beginning of the first lockdown, I was very cross with some youth theatre parents who wanted some of their money back quickly (only three meetings were left). I suppose they were bored in lockdown.

What are you most looking forward to?

We are looking forward to reopening. However, Wales has not put a date for dropping the 2-meter rule like England has, therefore it is impractical to start anything before this is changed. We are aiming to open with a comedy show in October and or the Panto in early December.

The Playhouse Theatre, Northampton

Established 1961 and member since 2018, seating 85.

How would you sum up the past year?

A rollercoaster of hope, alarm, optimism, irritation, and relief that The Playhouse has weathered the storm. Also, it has given us the chance to give thought to getting vital work done.



Will your theatre change the way it operates and selects plays in any way?

We expect to have to 'build in' added checks re Covid, but sincerely hope that, restrictions permitting, we can re-launch a theatre that the audience and members feel safe coming back to.

In the past year, what have you learned about your members?

Judging from the number of folk who have enquired, there is a pleasing appetite for our re-opening. Our members have shown they really want to come and see a show.

What are you most looking forward to?

Seeing members, audience and cast members in the flesh again!

The Grange Playhouse, Walsall

The group began life during WWII and their theatre opened in 1951 and joined the LTG in 2002. Their theatre has 104 seats.

How would you sum up the past year?

The last year has been challenging but also rewarding. The help and support we have received from patrons



and members has been truly overwhelming.

Will your theatre change the way it operates and selects plays in any way?

The way we select plays for the forthcoming season has definitely changed. We are

looking at small casts to reduce risks of transmission.

In the past year, what have you learned about your members?

We have learned that we have a core of dedicated members who are passionate about our theatre and will do whatever it takes to get us up and running again.

What are you most looking forward to?

We are looking forward to welcoming patrons back into our theatre, to rehearsing and meeting up with people and friends and most of all, just getting back to some sort of normality.

Station Theatre, Hayling Island

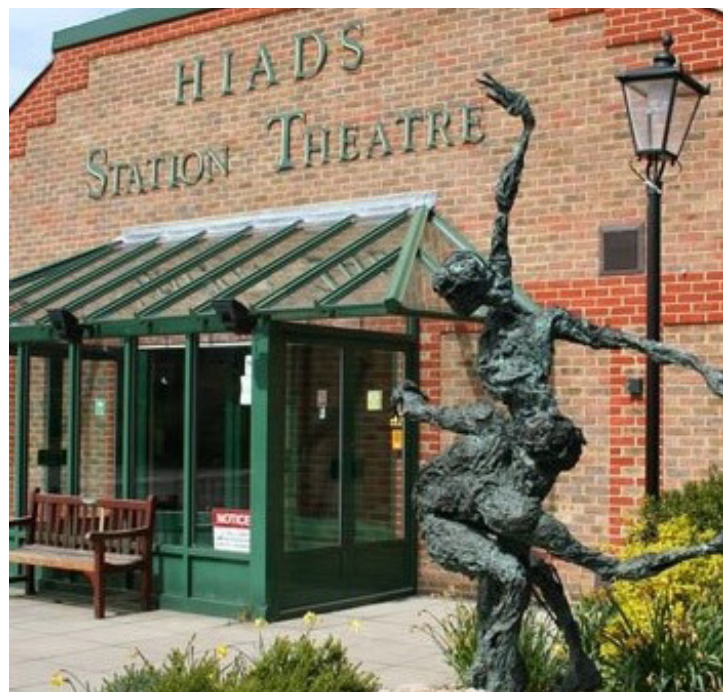
The group was established 1949 and joined LTG in 1995. The theatre is a converted disused railway goods shed and has 144 seats in the Auditorium and 50 seats in the Studio.

How would you sum up the past year?

The uncertainty of how to deal with this virus and how long it was going to last, were its most debilitating effects because it was impossible to plan the events that are the lifeblood of our society.

Will your theatre change the way it operates and selects plays in any way?

We do not yet know how many of our patrons will return and the first few plays will be an experiment in finding the best way to revive interest and confidence. We are considering plays created in-house while we have limited capacity and our most important skills will be flexibility and adaptability to change.



In the past year, what have you learned about your members?

Our members emphasised how important involvement with the theatre was in their lives, so we ran a writing competition and held play readings. They are now preparing an exhibition of 'What we did in lockdown' for our gallery.

What are you most looking forward to?

Being able to put on the loudest, most colourful and outrageous pantomime ever with lots of audience participation and celebration. And on a quieter note, to hold a social event at which we will remember the longstanding members who passed away during the pandemic and to whom we were not able to say goodbye.

Cotswold Playhouse, Stroud

The group was established 1911 and has been a LTG member since 2005. Their auditorium seats 152.



How would you sum up the past year?

Our past year, ironically, has been a time during which previously discussed ideas and plans have found the space and opportunity to happen. In particular, we have installed a major new heating and ventilation system in our theatre.

Will your theatre change the way it operates and selects plays in any way?

The greatly increased use of online communication will continue. We anticipate using more film and video in the promotion of our productions and will continue to look at different ways of storytelling in this medium. The way in which we select plays is unlikely to alter.

In the past year, what have you learned about your members?

The week-by-week support and involvement of our members has been much more obvious than previously. This has been evident in attendance at online play-readings, involvement and performance in filmed events and in-house writing.

What are you most looking forward to?

The 'real' production in November of *Nell Gwynn*, which held its dress-rehearsal on the very night that lockdown was announced in March 2020.

Michael Shipley looking back after 75 years



May 1946 – Hard to realise that 75 years ago the Guild was founded by a mere handful of committed enthusiasts, devoted to the arts of amateur theatre. Just to remind you, “the inauguration took place at the Waldorf Hotel in London on 18th May 1946”, and also to remind you, the following objectives were spelled out: “To promote closer co-operation between the little theatres constituting

its membership, to act as a co-ordinating and representative body on behalf of the little theatres and generally to maintain and further the highest standards in the art of theatre as practised by the little theatres, and to assist in and encourage the establishment of other little theatres”. There were nine founder member theatres. By 1951 there were 17 members, in 1961 24 members and, following a positive recruitment plan, numbers steadily increased to over 60 by 1985, to 84 by 1996 and to 99 by 2006. Today there are 120 members. Of course, over the years quite a few members resigned or sadly ceased to function, but nevertheless the story is one of continuing success.

On revisiting the archives, which I have saved over the years (especially during those 30 years that I was actively engaged in editing and preparing your quarterly Newsletters), here are a few of the highlights, selected in reverse order:

May 2016:

We were celebrating our 70th anniversary with a conference at the Crescent Theatre, Birmingham, with 136 delegates in attendance. Articles in the Newsletter covered ‘mumbling actors’, threats to the building of The Lisbon Players, audience etiquette, and reliability in the acting fraternity, while regular features included columns from Kevin Spence, Martin Bowley, news of New Writing, news from member theatres and colour photos of recent productions from member theatres.



May 2011:

The AGM took place at the People’s Theatre, Newcastle, celebrating its centenary. The AGM told us that the new Chairman of the Guild would be Ian Thompson and that Kevin Spence would be the new Vice Chairman; also, that new members included Brighton Little Theatre and The Corn Exchange, Wallingford. The sad news was that Southern Region Secretary Rosemary Shaw (Devizes) had died in April after a short trip to hospital for surgery for her troublesome back, or so she thought at the



time. It turned out to have been a severe cancer and inoperable. A large number of her close and dear friends were able to attend the funeral. “There can be few who have served on the Guild committee for so many years as Rosie and who will have made so many theatre friends across the whole country.”

The big news came from the announcement that Oxford Film and TV Company had agreed to fund Sky Arts with a new show devoted entirely to Amateur Theatre on a national network – *Stagestruck*. At last, the amateur world was being taken seriously. At the same time, news came through that the RSC’s Open Stages Project for 2012 was developing confidently, with various LTG members preparing contributions.

Articles in the Newsletter covered reviews of two new plays (in Penrith and West Wickham); Martin Bowley’s ‘Ten Best New Plays of 2010 in London’; contributions from Durham and Sunderland about a visit from Sir Ian McKellen; Priory Theatre’s peep into the new building at Stratford; Youth Theatre matters; and a reprint from Alfred Emmet (The Questors) penned in 1952 about promoting new writing, Alfred’s ever lively favourite topic! Altogether, quite a busy issue, with lots of material to squeeze into the limited space!

May 2006:

The AGM took place at Leicester Little Theatre in April, with 124 delegates present for the Diamond Jubilee event. Anne Gilmour was chairman and Steve Pratt vice-chairman. Niall Monaghan continued to advise on H&S matters, as did Philip Bradley on Youth Theatre matters, as well as the latest CRB requirements. Geoff Bennett was made an Honorary Associate. A new member was TOADS from Torquay, making it our 100th member!



One new venture promoted at the conference was a ‘New Plays Column’ for the Newsletter, which Keith Thompson (Barn Theatre) agreed to edit and which opened the edition with a full page of news! Martin Bowley (The Questors) also contributed his regular column of information about new plays he had seen in London. Other topics this edition included: the Lottery Debate, about the ‘unfair’ allocation of lottery money to amateur theatre groups; the Globe Theatre LTG Youth Workshop for August 2006; the start of the RSC ‘Complete Works’ project; and a piece from John Sheppard about ‘playing Shakespeare without an interval’, a topic which recently again has been entertaining theatregoers! And, despite it being a record year for the West End Box Office and numbers of visitors, there was a serious threat for the future of the Theatre Museum.

May 2001:

“The most significant events over the past couple of months have been the five relationship meetings held to discuss how the National Committee relates to the member theatres”, wrote retiring chairman Tom Williams (Chesil). He had also been busy meeting the Drama Director of the Arts Council of England; considering the Government Green Paper on Culture and Creativity; and the draft regulations for Places of Entertainment.



Meanwhile the leading article on page 1 was dealing with the problems caused by the outbreak of Foot and Mouth Disease; also a prevailing fear amongst many members that retrenchment and financial collapse might prove to be a disaster. Other articles were culled from pieces supplied by Robert Tebbett, Rugby Theatre, Royalty Theatre Sunderland, Romsey AODS, Oast Theatre Tonbridge with a report on a new play by Jean McConnell, Geoffrey Whitworth Theatre Crayford, and Samuel French. Quite a lively issue!



The main article, however, was a reprint of a piece by Richard Eyre, as a keynote address at a National Theatre conference. Amongst other points, I noted: "Let's face it, London professional theatre sometimes is head-burningly, ball-breakingly, bowel-churningly bad". Perhaps we should have the whole piece reprinted soon, because of the many words of wisdom Eyre writes elsewhere. Browsing old papers can be lots of fun!

April 1996:

The topic everyone wanted to talk about at the Leeds 50th anniversary conference was – The National Lottery! "There was a huge demand for a day's seminar as soon as possible to exchange ideas and expertise, and to pass on help and guidance. The danger ahead for the Guild is that the more control the Arts Council is given, the weaker our position might become. The Arts Council and the amateur movement have never been close bed-fellows. Old attitudes die hard. The more funds, and the more power the Arts Council take on, the more the professional sector will dominate. Guild theatres are never going to have more opportunity than now to pursue their needs for capital expenditure. Revenue funding has never been a major need for us." News had already been received of grants of £746,608 to Stoke-on-Trent Rep, £667,500 to The Questors Ealing, £911,000 to Nomads Players of East Horsley and £120,000 to Hayling Island ADS, while many member theatres had now lodged applications.



Meanwhile there was a detailed report on the conference at Leeds University, at which many old friends attended, some making speeches, including chairman John Anderson.

Spring 1991:

The leading article was provided by Highbury Theatre with 'Notes on the Provision for People with Disabilities in the Highbury Theatre Redevelopment Programme'. Everything was geared for completion by 1992 for the 50th anniversary. The topics of future jobs were the lift, removable seats, handrails, disabled toilet, the car park and an induction loop for the deaf. The basic work for the old first-world-war army hut included partial rebuilding, levels without ramps, steps with ramps and all levels to be accessible with wheelchairs – a massive undertaking!



Other topics included a piece from William Bray of Geoffrey Whitworth Theatre Crayford about the closing of the British Theatre Association, formerly the British Drama League, started in 1918. There were some detailed notes from a Lighting Seminar run by Cyril Hines at Formby Little Theatre. And Keith Morris from Priority Theatre Kenilworth entertained us with anecdotes about theatre ghosts.

Summer 1986:

Although this date came just before my first edition of the 'new' Newsletter for the Guild, it forms the first folder in my collection – a booklet celebrating the 40th Anniversary New Plays Festival, sponsored by Carnegie UK Trust. "The New Plays Festival ran from September 1986 to October 1987. Member theatres were encouraged to present one or more new plays in their forthcoming season, to encourage new writing, especially of plays that amateur companies could confidently tackle, and which perhaps needed casts larger than most professional companies could afford to hire. Original writing was the main theme, but premieres of foreign plays were also encouraged. From a membership of 61 theatres, only 16 theatres participated, presented 20 new plays over the course of their seasons. The provision of a significant subsidy and the generous freedom from royalties given by the playwrights, were not enough to stir the imagination of those who ran the majority of the little theatres. There were two reasons usually given for failure to participate – the new plays were not good enough for us, and our audiences would not like them! This was not the experience of those who did participate. But you can lead the horses to the water, but..." Members contributing to the Festival were Wheatsheaf Players Coventry, Highbury LT, South London Theatre Centre, Tower Theatre Islington, Club Theatre Altrincham, Quay Theatre Sudbury, Bolton LT, Lewes LT, The Questors Theatre Ealing, Caxton Theatre Grimsby, Talisman Theatre Kenilworth, Lindley Players Whitstable, Grove Park Theatre Wrexham, Workington Playgoers Theatre, Progress Theatre Reading and Oast Theatre Tonbridge.





New Writing 8x8x8 Playwriting Festival 'A Fresh Start' from Ilkley Playhouse

On 24, 25 and 26 June, Ilkley Playhouse will present eight eight-minute plays, by eight different playwrights. The plays will explore our world, ask questions about the past and the future, help us to laugh at ourselves and explore the concept of a fresh start. They will be presented both to a live audience and online.

After a short interval, the audience will have the opportunity to ask questions of some of the authors, directors and members of the two judging panels. A book containing all the plays can be purchased through Ilkley Playhouse for £6.50. Books will be on sale at all performances. The book can also be ordered via Amazon or Amazon Smile by searching 8x8x8 A Fresh Start in the Books section.

Ilkley were delighted to receive 84 entries from about 60 playwrights. Artistic Director Jay Cundell Walker explained that they allowed more than one entry because they didn't know how many people would enter. In future, she thought it likely they would only allow one entry per author because this turned into a big job for the Playhouse Eight readers!

The Workington Playgoers Celebrate their 85th Birthday

Tony Parker, Production Director and LTG Rep for the Playgoers, writes that on 4 April 1936, the first production by the Workington Playgoers was performed in the old Theatre Royal. Their home, now known as The Theatre Royal, opened its doors 153 years ago as a music hall. The following is taken from local newspaper the West Cumberland Times, dated 4th April 1936.



Workington Playgoers in Outward Bound

An eagerly awaited event in Workington was the first performance of the recently-formed Playgoers' Club, at the old Theatre Royal, where stage plays were introduced to the town nearly a hundred years ago and whose doors were closed by the advent of talking pictures in 1930, was re-opened on Thursday night for the production of *Outward Bound*. The place was packed by an audience whose reaction to a performance of outstanding merit augured well for the future of the club.

The Playgoers, which were one of the few companies to put on a live performance after March last year, are opening their 2021 season in June with Jez Butterworth's *The River*.

Playwriting Competition Carver Theatre

To keep members on the ball over lockdown, the Carver Theatre, in Marple, Cheshire held an Online Writer's Competition. They were keen for playwrights to put their skills to good use and offered the winning entrant a production of their play for the world to see.



They sought dramatic plays of between 20 and 90 minutes suitable for Carver Theatre Online with a small cast, and offered feedback for every play submitted. They have recently announced that the winner is Andrew Wild with his play *A Difficult Man*. Carver Theatre have also thanked all the contributors and noted that many were entries of a very high calibre.

Andrew Wild is well known in local theatre circles as an adjudicator with GMDF (Greater Manchester Drama Festival) and he has directed a number of shorter, studio productions as he prefers the immediacy and intimacy of smaller performing spaces.

In their announcement of the winner, Carver Theatre note that Andy's "directing experience is also evident in his writing and this tightly focussed, compact and engaging play, set mostly in East Berlin, will make a visual and technical challenge for the Carver Production Team". Andy remarked that "there's plenty of work to be done in polishing the script and working out the moves and cues". *A Difficult Man* will go into production as soon as Covid restrictions are lifted.

Cotswold Playhouse

Update from LTG Rep Geoff Butterworth

Cotswold Players Playathon

On 27 March, members of the Cotswold Playhouse read by Zoom a solid 24 hours of plays in aid of the charity, Teens in Crisis. Events opened at 10:00 with excerpts from Shakespeare's *Henry V*. Many many readings followed, including Edgar Allen Poe, Chekhov, Edward Lear, *The Diary of a Nobody* (read by longstanding LTG Rep Patrick Howell), *The Seagull* (last performed in 2009 to Sir Ian McKellen) and Oscar Wilde's Short Stories.



The event ended the next day at 10:30 with a collection of Shakespeare's final speeches. This event reached the target and raised an incredible £2,400. **Ed:** Great work Cotswold Players.

Dean Caston, LTG Rep at the Oasthouse Theatre:

Rainham Theatrical Society on Tour

The Story & Music of Rodger & Hammerstein

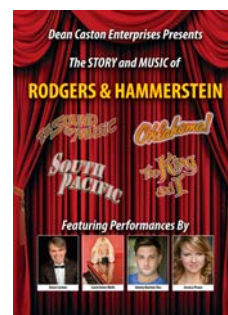
What a year it has been with theatres closed since March 2020 (although some did manage to re-open for a short period in November/December) and entertainment mainly being performed via social media. Music hall played a significant role in the war effort of 1914-18, keeping up morale and encouraging young men to sign up and fight for their country. Music hall star Vesta Tilley became known as 'Tommy the Trench' as she used the music hall to lure young men into volunteering for the army. I wonder what she would have made of the recent pandemic?

Last year I was due to direct and narrate a new show, *The Story & Music of Rodgers & Hammerstein*, which had to be postponed. But, fingers crossed, I will take the show on the road this year opening at The Alexandra, Bognor on Saturday 7 August. The tour takes in nine theatres, including three LTG Theatres, and will re-create some of those classic songs that dominated musical theatre during the 40s and 50s. Their musical theatre writing partnership has been called the greatest of the 20th century.

Oscar Hammerstein II was born in July 1895. In June 1914, he performed in his first play with the Varsity Show *On Your Way*. In his early career, Hammerstein teamed up with many other composers, including Jerome Kern, however, his most successful partnership was with Richard Rodgers.

Richard Rodgers was born in in June 1902. Their first musical collaboration was *Oklahoma!* in 1943. They went on to write some timeless classics in the 1940s and 1950s such as *Oklahoma!*, *Carousel*, *South Pacific*, *The King and I* and *The Sound of Music*.

The Story & Music of Rodgers & Hammerstein will include some of their most popular songs including 'People Will Say We're In Love', 'Edelweiss' and 'Some Enchanted Evening'. I will be narrating the show and will be joined by Carol Anne Wells (a Lady Ratling) at the piano, Jimmy Burton Iles and Jessica Pease. Hope you can join us at a theatre near you!



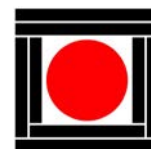
Alexandra, Bognor (7 Aug), Hippodrome, Eastbourne (27 Aug), Stage, Sevenoaks (5 Sept), Oasthouse, Rainham (24 & 25 Sept), Water Rats, London (5 Oct), Chesil, Winchester (9 Oct), Crescent, Birmingham (10 Oct), Avenue, Sittingbourne (22 Oct) and Malthouse, Canterbury (23 Oct).

Online Festival Theatre Is My Love

19 - 28 November 2021

News from International

Amateur Theatre Association AITA/IATA



The APPLICATION WINDOW IS NOW OPEN for you to submit entries to the 2nd AITA/IATA online festival, *Theatre Is My Love*. The application window is short, only 1 - 30 June and the event will take place 19 - 28 November 2021. All information is on the website www.theatreismylove.online.

Since 1 January 2019, has your theatre produced a video of a show by either adults or by children and youth that you think meets the criteria detailed on the website? All LTG theatres are entitled to submit an application and it would be great if some of our Members submitted work for consideration.

Mondial du Théâtre, Monaco

17 - 22 August 2021

It has been confirmed by AITA/IATA President Béatrice Cellario that the General Assembly and Festival – the Mondial du Théâtre – will take place as a live event 17 – 22 August in Monaco. Full information about the event is on the AITA/IATA website www.aitaiata.net/mondial_2021.html. GB will be represented but sadly, not as at the last Mondial in 2017 when The Questors performed Noël Coward's *Red Peppers*, by a group from an LTG Theatre. But, the event will be held in another four years, why not plan for a suitable production to be ready to submit by the middle of September 2024?

The AITA/IATA General Assembly will vote on a revision to the Constitution of AITA/IATA which may result in Associates, such as The Questors Theatre, having voting powers giving them a greater say in the running of the Association.

Other festivals and events

Do check out the Events pages of the AITA/IATA website www.aitaiata.net/events.html for international amateur theatre festivals - there are a few starting to be announced and I am sure more will appear soon.

Ilkely Playhouse: Lockdown Library

A great idea has emerged from Ilkely Playhouse – a Lockdown Library. The library first ‘opened’ its doors on the 23 May 2020 with 170 books to choose from. This has grown to over 2,500 books, over 1,100 DVDs and they’ve raised over £3,500 for the Playhouse.



All topics are covered from mysteries to fantasy, romance to crime, biographies to cookbooks and something for all ages. And they say the choice of DVDs isn’t bad either. Members can look up the list of books and DVDs online, send their order to Jonty Hawkes – bar director and a busy man by the sounds of it – and collect their order from the theatre. Charges are £1 for DVDs and paperbacks and £1.50 for hardbacks. Delivery is arranged for those who find it difficult to get to the Playhouse.

LTG New Member, Sterts Theatre and Arts Centre

LTG is delighted to welcome new member Sterts Theatre (website www.sterts.co.uk). Based in Upton Cross near Liskeard, Cornwall, they have a unique 400-seater tented amphitheatre with a studio for winter performances. Like several other LTG Members they have The Queen’s Award for Voluntary Service and have recently received a grant from the government’s Culture Recovery Fund.

The theatre was established by Ewart and Ann Sturrock, who were convinced that there was a need for an arts and environmental centre to fulfil their long existing desire for children, young people and adults to meet and work together in a suitably equipped centre. In 1982 they took the calculated risk of buying the barns and outbuildings that had originally belonged to their farmhouse. The transformation from pig farm to arts centre had begun and these buildings now form the core of Sterts.

They are very proud of their work in the community, which includes the Sterts Youth Theatre Company Juniors for those aged 7 to 13. This focuses on building confidence and teamwork and their training includes stage breathing, voice projection and improvisation. The Sterts Youth Theatre Company is for those aged 9 to 25 years and members work with a core team of professionals to

develop skills for both on-stage and behind the scenes. The singers are not forgotten and they can join the Sterts Singers.

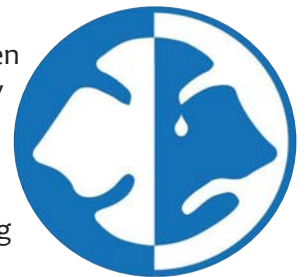


Their post-Covid programme starts on 2 June with *The Little Mermaid* from Sterts Youth Juniors. On 15 July they perform *Shrek The Musical* and in August *The Hypochondriac* by Molière.

Their nearest LTG neighbour, TOADS in Torquay, is only 55 miles distant, although the picturesque Cornish roads make it a 1½ hour drive. But, for those on their way to or from The Minack Theatre, if you drop off the A30 and head to the south of Bodmin Moor, you will pass Sterts. **Ed:** Why not pop in and say hi.

Great News from The Talisman Theatre, Kenilworth

The Talisman Theatre has been awarded up to £100,000 by Kenilworth Town Council from its Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) fund to help finance the first stage of its exciting redevelopment.



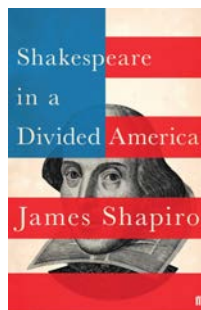
In their press release, Nigel Elliott, Chair of the Talisman Theatre, said: ‘This is an incredibly exciting time. We’re proud of the high standard of theatre we produce here, however, our 50-year-old building is in need of refurbishment. So that we can continue to provide the wonderful plays, musicals and pantomimes the people of Kenilworth expect from us, we need to make sure the Theatre is fit for the next 50 years. We’re enormously grateful for the funding we’ve received from Kenilworth Town Council which, along with other grants and our own fund-raising will, we hope, enable us to start work on the first phase this year’.

The whole redeveloped project will cost around £1.3m, but for now the Talisman team have been focussing on the first phase at a cost of £275,000. As well as seeking grant income, the team has been holding fund-raising events for both members and the local community. Supporters can also donate via the Theatre’s website www.talismantheatre.co.uk.

Shakespeare in a Divided America

by James Shapiro, Faber @ £10.99

The following article is from Michael Shipley about a book he can enthusiastically recommend. The 2020 Guardian review notes that Shapiro 'is once again right on the money' and that the book is 'timely and resonant', while the BBC's Will Gompertz notes that the book "is an unpretentious, fact-filled, lightly-written, meticulously-researched history of seven politically-defining moments that occurred in the US over the past 200 years".



James Shapiro leapt into fame with his 1599: A Year in the Life of William Shakespeare, a truly magical piece of work, full of interest and variety, packed with information and insights, both of the history of the period as well as the plays themselves. His next volume, 1606: The Year of Lear was for me perhaps a touch too erudite, indeed discursive. But I found this latest book to be a true return to form.

The book has an introduction and eight chapters which discuss in exciting detail major events in American history in the context of Shakespeare's work and its acting history. Some chapters are particularly fine – even spell-binding – like those dealing with slavery and *Othello* in 1833; the riots in New York in 1849 about the rivalry between actors William Macready and Edwin Forrest; the assassination of Lincoln in 1865 and his love for Shakespeare; the 1948 attitudes to sex and colour in *Kiss Me, Kate* and *The Taming of the Shrew*; and finally the influence of Twitter and Facebook and other sites on theatre performance in an age of Trump and 'fake news'.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: Unconscious Bias



As part of LTG's work to consider Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (ED&I), there is a document on Unconscious Bias in the Backstage area of the LTG Website, in Category Policy. The document supported an online Zoom course attended in July 2020 by Julie Grimshaw and Debbie Lisburne-Diason of the Sinodun Players at the Corn Exchange, Wallingford.

The Zoom session was organised by Housetheatre and the 18-page presentation comes from Equality & Diversity UK, www.equalityanddiversity.co.uk. They run courses on ED&I, Equality Impact Assessments, Unconscious Bias, Anti-Racism Training, Equality Champions and Train the Trainer.

The Unconscious Bias document covers:

- Equality legislation
- Unlawful behaviour
- Equality duties
- The business, moral and legal case for EDI
- Inappropriate behaviour
- What is unconscious bias?
- Practical steps to tackle unconscious bias
- Action-planning

For more information, contact LTG Rep Gloria Wright: gloria.wright@sinodunplayers.org.uk. If you do not yet have access to the Backstage area of the LTG Website, contact webmaster@littletheatreguild.org.

Love [and Survival] in a Time of Covid Tower Theatre's Mini Cross-Arts Festival

The Tower Theatre describe their summer event as 'a communal reflection on how we've survived the past year and celebrate our re-emergence'. It is planned to take place over three weeks, in a mixture of outdoor and indoor venues, from 25 June to 18 July.



They want to draw on 'the multi-talented Tower community to provide artistic experiences of every kind: drama, music, movement, visual arts, audio art, performance art...'.

At the time of writing, The Tower have created their first trailer for the festival and announced the first release of programming information. Tickets will be on sale from 7 June and information is on the Tower website www.towertheatre.org.uk.

Obituary Column

David Johnson - Chelmsford Theatre Workshop. A Member since the early days of the group, he appeared in many plays and was a regular Front of House volunteer. He will be remembered with great fondness. [Facebook post 21 Feb].

Bernice Yates - Carver Theatre, Marple. Involved in amateur theatre for most of her life but with 'Carver' since 1970's. An actor and director, a role model for new young actors and later, Secretary and Production Secretary who made sure that Carver's productions were as close to professional standards as humanly possible. [full obit 25 Apr].

Simon Willis - Teddington Theatre Club. He was a huge friend of TTC, with some unforgettable performances.

Di Evans - Apollo Theatre Isle of Wight. An actress and Artistic Director and a member for 40 years. "A wonderful lady and so incredibly lovely and down to earth." "She was a great director who knew exactly what she wanted." "Di was the most inspirational, talented, creative, kindest person I ever met."

As our Members make plans to open their theatres to live performances, here are just a few posters that advertise their productions. The LTG National Committee wish every Member the very best as they welcome audiences back to live theatre.

