

October 2020

CROAK NEWS



Welcome ... to October's Newsletter. For this month, I've taken the opportunity to include a piece of writing from one of our regular theatre audience members, Julie Harris, who has written a wonderful poem in Devonshire dialect. We live in troubled times at the moment, but we also live in a fantastic part of the country and one very close to my own heart, me being a Demshur maid. Also in the Croak this month we have the wonderful Cora Gant 'On The Spot', (who tried to convince me she had nothing to write about when I asked her to be a guest Spotter), but with so much experience and an amazing theatre background she certainly has. There's our regular Wednesday Club News and a joke from John Miles. And photos from Glynis Tame, who is part of the team of props ladies. Plus, a little plug about my forthcoming book. I'm not sure when the next Croak will be hopping its way to you, but do look out for TOADS in the Torbay Weekly in the near future. Best wishes until next time.

Bea Hutchings - editor contact : marketing@toadstheatre.co.uk



Wishing you a Spooktacular Halloween.

FROM THE CHAIR

Hello October!

As the theatrically empty months drift by, TOADS committee has less and less to report to the membership but we shall endeavour to keep in touch with everyone as it's important to maintain contact.

Several thousand pounds has just been spent on a new lighting desk – this is one of those unavoidable expenses that has to be purchased so we might open as a fully functioning theatre (and ordering now means it's cheaper than waiting until after Brexit).

Most of you will have received an email stating the theatre is now closed until 1st May 2021. The May and June productions remain as published in the season brochure but all shows, including professional one-nighters, have been cancelled up to and including Laying The Ghost. Taking the four postponed shows from last season and the seven from this we are now spoiled for choice as to which end up in season 2021/2022 – much gnashing of teeth will now ensue.

I recently sent an email to members as we need to move our perishable goods on as soon as possible. Saturday 3rd October @ 2pm will be your opportunity to donate to the theatre and purchase what remains (we have hundreds of ice creams!). I realise that you might not receive Croak until after this date but I'm sure there will be lots remaining for you to stock up on for Christmas (unfortunately I'm the only turkey available and I'm very expensive – almost £1!).

TOADS and the Little Theatre are very fortunate in that our finances are robust and, thanks to donations from members and patrons alike, we are going nowhere – we just need to be patient and wait this virus out.

As always, keep safe and well.

Jon Manley (chair bloke)

Dartymoor

If us be vexed by mawky thoughts
us goes up to Dartymoor
tu clear our'aed in Demshur air
an' cloimbe gurt Zaddle Tor.
Us goes an clambers upalong
mekin slaw an steady pace -
At vurry top brave braizes blaw
veel gude air'pon our face.
Tes dimpsey now when flittermouse
flies'oer brimmels, peaty ling
zuzpended on a zummer braize
fit to mek ee tek an zing.
Buzzam-chucked, cheered a mite
traispsin truant on our way -
'an all es vree- doant cost'ee ort
Our mazed mood es blawed awaY!

Translation - Dartymoor

If I am troubled by morbid thoughts
I go to walk on Dartmoor
To clear my head in Devonshire air
And climb Great Saddle Tor.
I go to climb to the top
And make a steady pace -
On the top strong breezes blow
I feel good air on my face.
It is twilight now and bats fly
Over brambles and peaty ling
Suspended on a summer breeze
A sight to make you sing.
Rosy-cheeked, and happier now
I walk leisurely on my way -
it is free, doesn't cost a thing
and my sad mood is blown away.

Julie Harris.

WEDNESDAY CLUB

October 2020

We held a socially-distanced Wednesday Club on 9th September, outside the theatre in the glow of sunlight and smiles from the eighteen Wedders people who turned up. It was a jolly session, with most people just pleased to see the old crew. The conversation was brisk and up-beat, with everyone giving their 'Rundown of the Lockdown'.

The air was not blue, but, my word, the (h)air was..... Jean Strong is sporting the ultimate blue rinse, which only she could get away with!

We opened the 'disabled' toilet and each brought their own chairs and refreshments..... and all the precautions were in place.

The following day, such meetings were banned! So this was the first and last meeting for the foreseeable future.

All is not lost, however, as Nigel and I will be re-starting the Zoom sessions on 30th September, initially as a trail, but this might continue if there is a worthwhile uptake. 2.30pm start.

Nigel has been circulating his quizzes.... he's on number eighty now!.... and various updates on loads of theatrical information. Thanks, Nigel!

Teignmouth Players are doing a full refurbishment to the Ice Factory Studio Theatre, with walls and doors moved.... we won't know the place when we finally open again.

Jo Loosemore gave a very interesting talk entitled 'Mayflower 400' at The Palace Theatre, describing the 'Pilgrim Fathers' and their first years in America... setting sail four hundred years ago.

This was the first presentation (socially distanced) in the main auditorium since Lockdown. The talk highlighted Jo's enthusiastic stewardship of the 'Mayflower 400' Exhibition, which is due to open shortly at the newly refurbished museum, 'The Box', Plymouth. Well worth a visit, by the looks of it.... but tickets must be booked in advance.

I didn't see the Dartington Playgoers open air presentation of 'Ernie's Incredible Illucinations', a short play by Alan Ayckbourn, but I'm told it was a real treat!

No doubt the Toads tongue-in-cheek production of 'The Curse of the Pharaohs' will be mentioned elsewhere, but it was most enjoyable to be on stage again, even briefly!

See you next month...or perhaps not.....

John Miles

What's on in October?

**TOADS THEATRE
ONLINE**

All videos are available for viewing NOW and the links will also be on our website www.toadstheatre.co.uk in the very near future.

Current zoom details for Wedders

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/7065552652> (Password: Bvi6Az)

TOADS FACEBOOK THEATRE CLUB

You are also welcome to join a private group TOADS Facebook Theatre Group by clicking this link

<https://m.facebook.com/groups/646297912879700/> or copy and paste into your browser.

If Facebook is not your thing then there is a twice weekly quiz and clickable links to the latest online free to watch shows from a variety of UK theatres together with the best other lockdown productions on BBC iPlayer.

[https:// torquayonlinecafe.blogspot.com](https://torquayonlinecafe.blogspot.com)

Nigel Colledge

The Conscientious Courtesan

In the Naughty Nineties in Paris (that's 1890s, of course!) there was a famous society lady who was the toast of the Pigalle. She was a great celebrity in those heady days; proud was the man who took her on his arm for an evening at l'Opéra... followed by a night to remember in Montmartre.....

It was only a slight exaggeration to say that all the male (...and some of the female) students at the Sorbonne idolised her, and some were so besotted by her charisma that they would do almost anything to spend just one night in her exclusive company..... but her fee for a full night was one thousand francs!

Ever resourceful, the students decided to conduct a raffle. They sold one thousand tickets at one franc each and, at the appointed hour, the winning ticket was drawn. The tickets were all sold within a day, and so the draw was made, with a booking for the following evening...and night..... with 'Madame'.

There was great excitement as the ticket was drawn, followed by despair for 999 of the students. The one lucky winner, an impoverished young man from a small village in the north, could scarcely believe his good fortune. He spent the next day borrowing suitable attire from his friends, and at the appointed time, turned up at his fine lady's door.

The following morning, after a stupendous evening with this most professional of ladies, she asked him about his background. 'Madame, I am a carpenter's son from the north'. "How then can you afford to pay for my favours, young man?" The student told her about the lottery and how he had won. He explained that he was envied by the whole university, but particularly by those who had bought tickets and lost.

"What a touching story, young man; I am a woman who has a heart and a social conscience, and I cannot take money from poor students. Wait there and I'll return your money"

She went to her desk and opened her safe. Reaching inside she took out an envelope, sealed it and handed it to the student. He couldn't believe his good fortune, but waited until he was outside the apartment before he opened the envelope...

He found it contained his one franc piece.

John Miles

PROPER JOB

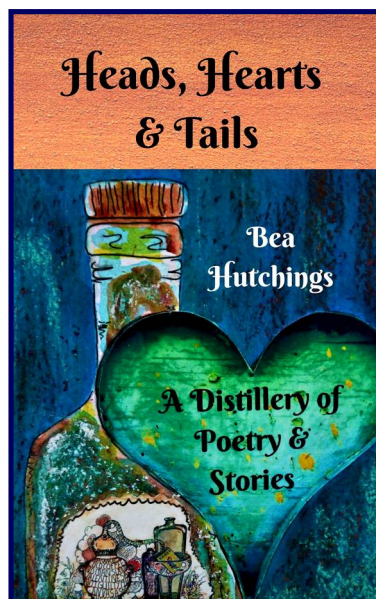
Catching up with THE PROPS LADIES during lockdown.



And Now For Something Completely Different...

I've been very busy during lockdown putting together a book of my poems, stories, illustrations and photographs. All locally sourced. Heads, Hearts & Tails will be available from the end of October. Do please get in touch for more details and if you would like to purchase a copy.

Thank you. Bea



ohbeahave@gmail.com

"This book is a delight. It's full of treasures - poems, stories and pictures to make you laugh, think, sigh. Opening it is like wandering into a shop of wonders and curios. It's a book to keep close by, to rummage in, to rootle through to find a familiar piece, or to open randomly to find a new favourite. The poems and stories are touching, funny, intimate, sometimes a bit mad (these are my favourites). I love the 'Distillery' sub-title and the extensive references to gin. IMHO Brenda Hutchings is a purveyor of the finest moonshine."

Matt Harvey

ON THE SPOT this month, drum roll please, for
CORA GANT

My first interest in the theatre was at the age of 4 seeing the ponies that pulled Cinderella's coach being fed and watered between matinee and evening performances at Derby Grand Theatre. I think my bias towards backstage activities and wanting to know how effects were created began then.

When I was about 15 the local repertory theatre had a catastrophic fire and was closed for 3 years. Some of the volunteer front of house staff formed a dramatic society with the idea of helping to raise funds towards re-opening the theatre. Actually I think they lost more than they raised but it kept the group together. I went off to teacher training college, and wrote a play for my thesis. Once back home with the Playhouse re-opened I joined the volunteers, helping in the coffee bar, or the sweet kiosk, or selling programmes, and the duty everyone tried to dodge- attempting to keep the young audience in their seats at pantomime matinees. Occasionally, when the stage staff were short handed I was allowed to operate the follow spot, complete with rose and green gels, and a large pair of asbestos gloves. The amateur section of the theatre kept going too, and here I learned to prompt, still my favourite task in the theatre. The theatre scenic artist taught me how to draw up a working stage management script, also how to splice a tape on a reel to reel tape recorder, a skill which is now quite redundant- what's a tape recorder?

After some years teaching at a lovely school on the outskirts of Derby, and spending most of my evenings at the Playhouse (this was before the invention of the national curriculum when teachers were allowed to have a life outside school) I applied for a post in Torquay and came to teach at Ellacombe. As I had spent holidays in Torquay I had seen several Toads shows so I set about trying to join. In those days you had an interview with the committee to see if you were suitable material before you were able to become a Toad. I couldn't even get an interview! However since there was no queue of people anxious to scrape old paint off prop fireplaces, or sweep up after the set builders I managed, after 8 months, to creep in by the back door, and became a Toad.

At the end of my first season, which then ran from October to May (we had to move out of Babbacombe theatre in the summer) the stage manager and the assistant stage manager both left to work away from Torquay. Somehow the role passed to me and the tips I had received from the Playhouse proved to be quite useful.

As time went on I came to know people from other groups, while taking a couple of drama courses, for extra qualifications, one for drama in education and one for theatre studies. Toads began to ask me to direct, then SADS asked me to do a production. One of the Bijou directors asked me to prompt there, and later to direct. Dartington Playgoers needed a stage manager for their summer Shakespeare in the private garden of the Hall, a challenging task, but quite magical if you got it right. This was an annual event for me for several years until the furniture got too heavy to lift in and out of the garden every night, and sometimes in the middle of the performance if it rained half way through the evening.

Now I am content to prompt and do FOH, and see as much theatre as I can, wherever I can.

Listed here are some essential contact details:

Box Office 01803 299330
boxoffice@toadstheatre.co.uk
if you'd like to get involved in front-of-house duties

Jon Manley*
chairman@toadstheatre.co.uk
Jackie Tarney 07815 323982
boxoffice@toadstheatre.co.uk
if you'd like to help behind the bar

Jill Pettigrew* 01803 525071
secretary@toadstheatre.co.uk
if you'd like to join the wardrobe team

Anne Jordan 01626 330866
annepoppy@blueyonder.co.uk
if you'd like to join the props team

Joy Book* 07704 584953
Joybook9597@gmail.com
if you'd like to help in the coffee shop

Brenda Hutchings 07800 644508
marketing@toadstheatre.co.uk
if you'd like to submit an article for Croak

John Miles 01803 858394
johnmilesandmiles@gmail.com
for Wednesday Club

Andrew Stidston 07976 364412
orby100@yahoo.com
if you'd like to help with set-building

Al Dunn 07880 734880
al.dunn@icloud.com
if you'd like to get involved with techy stuff

If you want to act, or get involved backstage in any production, or as props or prompt, contact the director in each case, whose number will always be listed in The Croak with the audition information. If you're still not sure who to call, any member of the committee will always help to point you to the right person. As well as those names marked with an asterisk above, the committee members are:

Alan Tanner Treasurer 01803 613701
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Anna Reynolds 07788 994398
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