

Whitefield Garrick

Newsletter

Winter 2020

The past few months have been difficult for everyone and the uncertainty and seriousness of the situation has meant that both Professional and Amateur productions of plays and shows have been either postponed or cancelled. The Garrick Committee have been working behind the scenes to prepare for that moment when we can bring you our usual high standard of plays. Those of you who were lucky enough to see our March 2020 production of *Skylight*, may remember that we had to cancel the play because of the National Lockdown. Since then plans have been taking shape to bring this marvellous play to our Theatre Club Members and here is the series of events leading up to that, written by Production Secretary Jane Murphy:-

Skylight by David Hare Directed by Garyk Barnett



Skylight by David Hare, was the play scheduled for March 2020 at Whitefield Garrick Theatre. We rehearsed through December, January and February into March and as the play took shape, so too did our awareness of something called Covid 19. We followed all the advice and had the theatre cleaned, we wiped surfaces, we used hand sanitizer and we carried on. *Skylight* opened on Saturday 14th March.

The actors played to a half empty auditorium despite all tickets having been sold. The matinee on Sunday was about a third full and audience members were quite rightly, wary. On Monday 16th March at 5pm, Boris Johnson advised the nation that they should avoid pubs, clubs, theatres and other social venues. The Garrick felt it was their responsibility to close immediately. The Cast were alerted and an email was put out to audience members. Peter Hill and I went down to the theatre to turn away the handful of people that turned up. *Skylight* has only 3 people in the cast, two of whom have the bulk of the dialogue. All that hard work, time, emotion and energy, it was heart breaking.

Whitefield Garrick Theatre went dark that evening as did Summerseat Players and Farnworth Little Theatre, along with the RSC, the Royal Exchange, the Lowry and over 40 theatres in London.





***Skylight* by David Hare**

Directed by Garyk Barnett

However, we decided that we would leave the set in situ and re-schedule the play as soon as restrictions allowed. Of course that didn't happen.

Then we hit on the idea of filming and streaming it to Theatre Club Members, as many professional theatres were doing. It took time to get the 'rights' but thanks to our Secretary Pat Hill and Alfie Howard, we obtained permission from Concord Theatricals and everyone, including Director Garyk Barnett who recently celebrated his 90th Birthday, enthusiastically began rehearsals again in October.

We had to work to set guidelines:-

No more than 6 people in the theatre. Masks to be worn by everyone apart from cast.

Everyone to keep 2 metres apart. Under the spritely direction of Garyk Barnett, the moves on stage were altered so that cast members were always 2 metres apart.

No touching each other. Avoiding face to face emoting between cast members. We had to find ways of the actors passionately responding without touching and without directly facing each other whilst being at 2 metre distance!

No sharing of props. The 'props plot' was changed so that items were not passed between cast members.

No touching same surfaces. Extensive cleaning and hand sanitization. We had to ensure that surfaces were not touched on stage,

We rehearsed throughout October managing to work within the restrictions of Tier 2 and Tier 3. Then a date was set to film the first scene of the play. But alas, this latest 'Lockdown' from November to December has put an end to all that.

We have plans to rehearse lines on Zoom but for now it's Goodnight *Skylight* we'll be back.



Ps. We miss you!

Jane Murphy (Production Secretary)

STAGE STRUCK

Our talented members have been forging ahead with their own written pieces of work. Carole Butler has entertained us with her humorous tales of online dating, poems and monologues, John O'Connell has introduced us to excerpts from Shakespeare and our own Martin Ashton gave us a poem about The Garrick that brought tears to the eyes.

Steven Edward Maylott who appeared in our 2018 production of *The Weir*, wrote and performed his own monologue called *Colin Dumbley a Child of The Eighties*, and the talented Catherine Cropper and family presented a very clever improvised Zoom drama about the nightmare of 'writers' block'



In the meantime, Janet Leather our Chairman is still doing a sterling job creating projects for all our members to become involved in and keeping us up to date with all things theatrical. Her inventive ideas have kept everyone interested and on their toes. One of the most enjoyable pieces to be involved in was the poem called *The Theatre is Magic* written by Roger Turner. Each member of the Committee was allotted two lines of the poem to read and record. It was all edited together by Alfie Howard and was posted as a complete work on our website and facebook page.

If you have missed any of these excellent presentations and would like to see them, they are all still available to view on our Facebook Page.

Work Goes on Despite Lockdown

Steps have been taken to keep our wonderful theatre alive and kicking. Lighting man Peter Hill and Sound Man Phil Cohen have been regularly and quietly upgrading, fixing, cleaning, decorating and generally making the theatre a safe place for when we are able to resume. They have also experimented with seating arrangements in the bar area so that when we re-open, social distancing can be observed if required. So that our Members can see that the Theatre is still being kept in tip top condition. Peter has provided a concise list of all the work completed.

Work at Theatre Summer 2020 – In Lockdown – By Peter Hill & Phil Cohen

When the theatre closed on March 12th and Coronavirus social rules were imposed it provided an opportunity to carry out some (Socially distanced) maintenance and upgrades. Between March and September the following work was carried out

Theatre and Backstage

Install sound, light and power connections to enable sound and light control equipment to be easily re-located into the theatre during rehearsals and show set up.

Trace, repair and check faults that had developed on DMX and sound wiring in the 2 years since installed. Give extra support to backstage lighting bar by installing a link to the roofing truss.

Control Room.

Strip out two surplus suspended ceilings. Repair, point and plaster internal brickwork as required. Install insulation board ceiling and walls, then paint. Tidy wiring and remove where redundant, using new ducting. Bring unused space between the wardrobe and control room into use as storage. Fit new shelving and re-arrange stock.

Upstairs Wardrobe

Move insulation board wall, partially clad ceiling, utilise eaves for storage, re-order clothes racks.

Foyers and Dressing Rooms

Centralise display TV's power connections. Improve security on middle door crash bar.

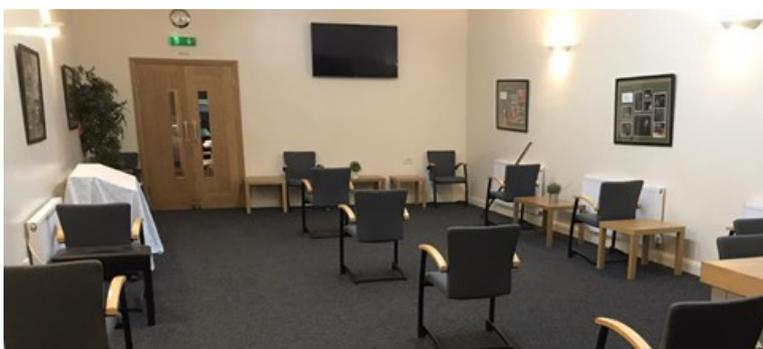
Kitchen Replace hob. Outside Trim self-sown saplings, cut grass (Early summer – will need repeating)

General

PAT (Portable Appliance Test) test and record over 300 items – Lights Cables, Kettles etc. Arrange for service and check on fire alarm system.

Work is currently suspended, when the way forward for renewed performances is clearer we hope to be encouraged to continue with the last stage (Painting in two areas).

Peter Hill



**The Socially Distanced Bar Area
set out for General Committee
Meetings when we are able to
resume**

Manchester Fringe at the Garrick



Selina Halliwell and Mary Taylor In 'Fruit Salad'

We are always interested to know about other projects our members have been involved in during the last 12 months and Selina Helliwell has been very busy. Members may remember Selina from our production of *Rutherford and Son* in March 2018.

Since then, Selina has gone from strength to strength, her Award Winning play *Burnout* was part of the Manchester Fringe Festival last year. Selina's new play *Fruit Salad* was also due to be shown as part of the Fringe this year, but owing to Lockdown had to be cancelled. The play focuses on the lives of two women who became friends due to their fruity names, Cherry and Peaches, and form a close bond of friendship. Selina plays Cherry while her long standing friend Mary Taylor plays Peaches. Selina and Mary often performed in plays together in school and college. Hopefully when Lockdown restriction are lifted, *Fruit Salad* will be re-scheduled. We wish Selina lots of luck in her future career.

Conversation with Marilyn



Nathalie Haley and Matt Rigby who have appeared many times at the Garrick are currently filming a play, which was also part of the Fringe Festival. Called *Conversation with Marilyn*, the play has been written by Kim and Nathalie Haley. In Nathalie's words (taken from Facebook) 'It's about a woman who has Marilyn Monroe living in her head. It's about mental health, fame, feminism and life in general. With Songs!' The play has had to be postponed, however it has been filmed at The Kings Arms in Manchester and the video streamed via You Tube on 28th and 29th November 2020.

One of our Committee Members Carole Taylor, has also been busy during the first Lockdown earlier in the year. Carole was involved in an Audio Play for Actors in Isolation. *God Bless Dewsbury* was written and directed by John Mee a writer based in Stockport. All the actors recorded their lines at home on Smart Phones and then emailed them to John to be mixed together forming a full ensemble production. Nobody in the play met, or left their front doors. Carole has two small parts, she plays *Gerry* in Act 1 and *Pamela Armitage* in Act 2. The play is listed on You Tube as *God Bless Dewsbury (An audio comedy about kindness)*.

FUTURE PRODUCTIONS UPDATE



The following productions have been cancelled or postponed due to the coronavirus pandemic. We plan to bring them to Whitefield Garrick in future seasons.

Tons of Money

by Will Evans and Arthur Valentine
Adapted by Alan Ayckbourn
Directed by Andrew Close

Blue Remembered Hills

by Dennis Potter
Directed by Brian Seymour

These Shining Lives

by Melanie Marnich
Directed by Julie Cunningham
14th to 21st November 2020 (tbc)

Dangerous Corner

by J B Priestley
Directed by John Cunningham
16th to 23rd January 2021 (tbc)

The Anniversary

by Bill McIlwraith
Directed by Glenn Robinson
13th to 20th March 2021 (tbc)

The Titfield Thunderbolt

by Philip Goulding
directed by Andrea Parle
8th to 15th May 2021 (tbc)