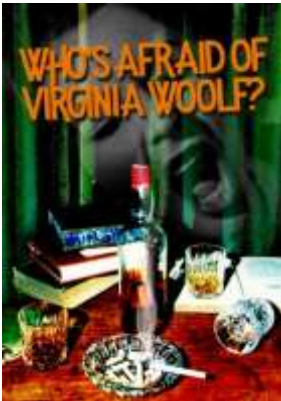




The Prompter

The Theatre Royal & Workington Playgoers' newsletter – January 2019

Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?



Written by Edward Albee

Directed by Brian Young

February 5-9th at 7.30pm

This enduring masterpiece of American drama was first staged in 1962 but its portrayal of a destructive marriage has lost none of its mesmerising power.

George is a middle-aged history professor at an American college. He and his wife Martha attend a faculty party and return home in the early hours of the morning, when George discovers, much to his displeasure, that Martha has invited a new professor and his young wife to their home for some after-party drinks. As the alcohol flows and dawn approaches, the young couple are drawn into George and Martha's terrifying games until the evening reaches its climax in a moment of devastating truth-telling.

The title of the play is a pun on the song 'Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Wolf?' from Walt Disney's Three Little Pigs (1933), substituting the name of the celebrated English author Virginia Woolf

'The most wickedly entertaining, most viciously nasty ... play in the American canon' The Telegraph

'The humour is merciless and the pain exquisite' Evening Standard



Girls Like That



Written by Evan Placey

Directed by Jane Douglas

January 16th -19th at 7 pm.

Following their highly successful production of A Christmas Carol before Christmas, Workington's Theatre Royal Youth (TRY) will be swapping festivities for impact this January as they explore the relentless pressure exerted on young people by advancing technology and feminism. Girls Like That by Evan Placey was specially commissioned by Birmingham Repertory Theatre, Theatre Royal Plymouth and West Yorkshire Playhouse, and was developed through work with young people in 2013.

This production marks a number of firsts: this is Director Jane Douglas's debut, as well as being the first production specifically taken on by TRY's older members. The age range in TRY is now 8 to 18 and this is a new initiative to give the older members (aged 16-18) an opportunity to present a play on a par with the main Playgoers' productions

The play is both entertaining and thought provoking. It presents a considerable challenge to the young actors who can't wait to shock the audience and make generations before them flinch at some of the harsh realities of teenage life today. Director, Jane Douglas says, "I'm really pleased I'm not a teenager growing up today with all the technology and social media pressures. I was concerned at first about some of the content in the play, but am very proud of how well the girls have dealt with it – I'm not sure I would have done so well at their age!"

Warning: Contains strong language and adult content.

Dancing Lights Cinema Club

at
The Theatre Royal.

JANUARY 20th: Dir. Stephen Fry	'BRIGHT YOUNG THINGS'	(2003)
FEBRUARY 3rd: Dir. James Cameron	'THE ABYSS'	(1989)
FEBRUARY 17th: Dir. Tarsem (Singh)	'THE FALL'	(2006)
MARCH 3rd: Dir. Bill Condon	'MR. HOLMES'	(2015)
MARCH 17th: Dir. Kevin Costner	'OPEN RANGE'	(2003)
MARCH 31st: Dir. John Amiel	'COPYCAT'	(1995)
APRIL 14th: Dir. Peter Weir	'MASTER & COMMANDER'	(2003)

Doors open at 6.30. Screening at 7 pm.

*Entry is free to members,
as are tea and biscuits!*

Calling ALL Theatre Lovers!



Happy New Year everyone! Do you have a favourite play you'd like the Playgoers to produce in 2020? If so, the Productions Committee would like to hear about it. Please send your choice to myself at parkerstbees@outlook.com

There will be six adult plays in 2020 (plus three TR Youth ones). They will be from the following categories (in no particular order):

1. A comedy
2. A whodunit
3. A classic
4. A Shakespeare/Elizabethan/Jacobean play
5. A modern drama
6. A popular Christmas production

We look forward to seeing your choices.

Tony Parker, Production Director



Too Many Books?

Need to make room on your bookshelves for all your new Christmas Books? The Theatre Royal BookNook (situated on the mezzanine floor in the old bar) will happily take your overflow! Please leave them in the foyer with a note (so we can thank you). All donations gratefully received.

Want five minutes peace and quiet? Why not take a coffee up to the old bar and have a relaxing browse through our books? There's something for almost everyone. £1 per book.

Theatre Royal Season Ticket 2019

6 productions for the price of 5 (at 2018 prices)

Adult Season Ticket: £55 (instead of £69)

Concession Season Ticket: £50 (instead of £63)

We have a varied, exciting programme in store for you in 2019. We're looking forward to performing two masterpieces of American drama – Edward Albee's **Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?** and **The Crucible** by Arthur Miller. We will also be staging the popular comedy **Stepping Out**, about seven women and one man who meet at a weekly dance class to tap their troubles away. The annual summer Shakespeare production will be **A Midsummer Night's Dream**, one of the Bard's best-loved plays. Our autumn production will be Trevor Griffiths' hard-hitting play **Comedians**, set in Manchester in the 1970s and the season will finish in early December with an adaptation of the BBC hit comedy **The Vicar of Dibley**.

Why not save money by buying a Season Ticket for these six unmissable shows?





Stepping Out

Written by Richard Harris

Directed by Pat Brinicombe

April 2nd-6th at 7.30 pm

Stepping Out is a hugely popular play that won the 1984 Evening Standard Award for Best Comedy. It follows the lives of seven women and one man (Geoffrey, the 'doormat') who meet at a weekly dance class in a dingy North London church hall to tap their troubles

away, accompanied by miserable, moaning pianist Mrs Fraser. Led by the patient ex-professional Mavis, the group begin their journey with two left feet and end up exceeding all expectations when they are asked to perform in a public charity gala.

Playgoers' veteran Pat Brinicombe, who took part in a previous Playgoers' production, now returns as director and some of the performers have real-life experience of joining tap dance classes as mature students, though they never won any competitions!

Come and enjoy a trip back to the 1980s with this feel-good show, full of comedy gold.

A Workington Playgoers Production - Part of the Season Ticket

More on Brassed Off



Did you enjoy the music of 'Brassed Off'?

Were you impressed with our talented town band?

Then treat yourself!

February 22nd at 7.30pm
Workington Town Band
Present A Concert
featuring
The Music from 'Brassed Off'
Plus
A Further Selection of Delights
Venue: The Theatre Royal

If you missed the show, you missed a treat. Read this review sent in by one regular and much valued member.

*'Brassed Off was an excellent experience. The ability of the musician actors to appear to play the instruments was wonderful. The co-ordination of music as required was very good as one was quite convinced that the actors were playing. The finale was so moving that I cried. Thanks to all.
J Mercia Haughan'*



Box Office

Please note that, apart from show weeks, due to low footfall the Box Office will no longer be open on Mondays and Wednesdays.

Tickets can be booked on-line or you can leave an answerphone message or pay on the door for our shows.

Could This Be For YOU?

Would you like to be more involved with The Theatre Royal?

Anyone who wants to volunteer or become an acting member can come along to Saturday Morning Coffee where Pat Brincombe will give them an application form and chat to them about which aspects of the theatre they are interested in getting involved with.



Urgently Needed

We urgently need a new Membership Secretary. We would be delighted if anyone wished to volunteer for this role. Please contact any member of Council.

The Railway Children

Adapted from the novel by Edith Nesbit
Thursday 2nd – Saturday 4th May 7pm
A Theatre Royal Youth production



Workington Playgoers: Members' News

As you may have noticed, December proved to be a VERY busy time for the theatre and all departments are grateful to everyone who helped. Our organisation only works if as many people as possible try to do something even if it's **only** attend a play or tell someone else about an event!

Once again our theatre proved it can cater for all ages as we played host to visitors and performers from two to ninety two. Christmas concerts abounded and compliments flowed.

We are now revving up for the new season and our two early season plays are closely followed by the annual Dance Festivals. The theatre is extremely busy on those weeks so please check carefully where and when you can rehearse! The broom cupboard is already booked!

Glynn Scurr will be on the lookout for volunteers to help with catering for the Dance Festivals. If you can do a two hour session, please contact him by text, email me or leave an answerphone message. You will not be expected to work on your own. Alcohol is not served during the Dance Festival and till training can be given if required.

The following page is a 'member request' and contains current details of who does what in our theatre. If no contact details are given, please address queries to me at: news@theatre-royal-workington.co.uk

and they will be forwarded to the appropriate person.

You can also leave phone messages on 01900 603161 or write directly to the theatre.

If you have any theatre linked news, please email me and I will try to include it.

Gillian Scholey (Editor)

Who's Who?

Members responsible for the running of Workington Playgoers at the Theatre Royal

President: GEOFFREY HALL

The Board known as Council

Chairman: MORGAN SWEENEY

Secretary: GRACE WALKER

Company Secretary: GEOFFREY HALL

Treasurer: GILDA WELLS

Productions Director: TONY PARKER

Technical Director: GEOFF BRINICOMBE

Publicity Director: KELLY DAVIS

Other useful contacts

Theatre Bookings and Sponsorship: PAT BRINICOMBE

Front of House Manager : GLYNN SCURR

Maintenance Manager: TONY MAGORRIAN

Properties Manager: JANE DOUGLAS

Wardrobe Manager: HELEN EARL

Box Office: ANNE BOWMER tickets@theatre-royal-workington.co.uk

Membership Secretary: ANNE BOWMER membership@theatre-royal-workington.co.uk

Editor of *The Prompter* (Newsletter): GILLIAN SCHOLEY news@theatre-royal-workington.co.uk

Facilitator for TRY: PAUL ADAMS try@theatre-royal-workington.co.uk

Theatre Royal Film Group: BEN BRINICOMBE. film@theatre-royal-workington.co.uk

Committees

There are two sub committees operating under Council – The Theatre Management Group, chaired by Gilda Wells, and the Productions Committee, chaired by Tony Parker. Playgoers' members are welcome to attend Council and Committee meetings. Contact the chairperson for dates and times of meetings.

Little Theatre Guild Northern Conference, 26-28th October 2018

On October 26th, I braved the Manchester ring-road system (why does any city need so many motorways) and finally found the way through Greater Manchester's Friday rush-hour traffic to my hotel in Stockport, and The Stockport Garrick Theatre where the conference was to be held

That evening was given over to registration and a meet-and-greet. I started the next day with a theatre tour. The theatre was originally a mill, only becoming a theatre in 1925. Like us, the auditorium seats about 150, but they are fortunate to have a wider and larger stage. They also have rehearsal space in their basement, and sometimes use their bar as a studio performance space; they have stage-lights permanently there. Maybe something we could think of. Their bar is also decorated with murals, cartoons and collages of past productions; ours looks very staid in comparison. They also had a novel way of storing props in productions, again something we might consider

The first workshop I attended was given by a young professional actor who gave us an exercise in text reading from some modern writing, especially by Simon Stephens. After lunch we had a presentation by the Dramaturg (no, I didn't know what it meant either)

at the Royal Exchange. In fact, she's a kind of guru for new writing for the theatre, and gave us a most entertaining talk, laced with lots of good advice for anyone thinking of writing for the theatre.

The AGM had nothing specific or very relevant to us so I'll move on to the evening performance. This was an adaptation of the classic *All Quiet on the Western Front* by two members of the theatre. There was an excellent set and the very realistic lighting and sound effects soon woke anyone who had overindulged in the bar beforehand.

On the Sunday morning, the last workshop I went to was a presentation on the history of the Stockport Garrick players and their theatre. The players were founded in 1902 and occupied the theatre first in 1925. A very interesting collection of photographs, drawings and programmes was brought together in a Powerpoint presentation, which the club take round to WIs and other organisations, both raising donations and also the profile of the group and theatre, plus getting new audience members. I know we do some similar things, which is good, but we can do a lot more.

I've outlined the formal activities of the Conference, but equally if not more important is the chance to talk to other Little Theatre delegates. One picks up lots of new ideas, but it's also comforting to know others face the same challenges as us. Finding out what seasons their theatres were putting together for next year also gave ideas and food for thought. A most rewarding and enjoyable weekend, and I look forward to attending other occasions next year.

Tony Parker

We have had to say sad farewells to two people who both made huge contributions to our Club, Dudley Evans (who died on 12th November 2018) and Geoffrey Hool (who died on 27th November 2018).

TRIBUTE TO DUDLEY EVANS

By Ian Mitchell

It is an honour to be able to pay tribute to Dudley Evans who died on 12th November at the age of 95.

Born in 1923, as the son of a Methodist minister, his early life involved several changes of home. Then, in his teens, he trained to be a pilot in the Second World War but actually ended up as a bomber in Lancaster sorties over Germany. After the war, he eventually settled down as a teacher in Workington with his wife and family and he and Jean soon became an integral part of the Playgoers Club.

In 1959, Dudley became Vice-Chairman. He held this position for 11 years, which included the momentous purchase of the Theatre Royal in 1960. In 1974, he was elected President at a time when the President was also Chairman of Council, a post requiring a total grasp of all the varied facets of the management of a very active theatre group. He was also a Trustee.

Under his stewardship we bought the premises on Wilson Street and the theatre underwent extensive structural works. However, he ensured that we still provided a full programme of plays for our members and our public. I will always be grateful for his support (sometimes with his fingers crossed!) during those turbulent, exciting times.

In 1987, he had become the longest-serving President of the Club, and then, when Council adopted a policy of rotation of office-holders, he took on the role of Productions Director.

Never a particularly keen actor, his main passion in the theatre was as a producer (before we started calling them directors!). The first play he produced (that I can remember!) was ***Queen and the Rebels*** in 1961. He went on to be one of the most influential producers in the Club's history, with a particular fondness for costume plays and those with a good human story. He had to fight his corner to get the Club to accept that a play based on a true story about the plague would be appreciated by our audiences. But, with his good track record, he won the day and his production of ***The Roses of Eyam*** in our Golden Jubilee Year will always be remembered by all who saw it and all who were in it, including myself and 57 other Club members – another record!

In our Diamond Jubilee Season, he turned his hand to writing – and wrote two plays for the Junior group, ***O, Cumbria!*** and ***Believers***, which he also directed. His final production was ***Shadowlands*** in 1997, after which he retired to indulge in his lesser-known hobby of painting and his life-long love of gardening (still directing, albeit through the window, a one-woman performance by Cath as she placed plants where he wanted them!).

So, farewell Dudley, and may I thank you on behalf of us all for your contribution and loyal devotion to the Workington Playgoers Club throughout your lifetime.

TRIBUTE TO GEOFFREY HOOL (1923–2018)

By Morgan Sweeney

Devoted husband and father of four daughters, maritime sailor, accomplished chef and bon-viveur, and pillar of the Workington Playgoers Club for 62 years, Geoff Hool was a most accomplished Stage Actor, Stage Director, and Stage Designer/Constructor. He was a Playgoers member from 1955, when he first came to work at British Steel in Workington, until he relinquished the role of President of the Club in 2017, due to failing health. Before becoming President, he had served as Productions Director, Trustee of the Club, and Club Chairman, for decades previously.

Geoff was born in Bradford in 1923. He went to Leeds University and studied Electrical Engineering. While working for English Electric, until 1951, he met and married his wife, Marjorie, eventually moving to Workington, in 1955 where he continued to work; retiring in 1986, aged 63.

Marjorie was an excellent actor too, appearing, like Geoff (and sometimes with Geoff), in a long succession of plays, over six decades. Their daughters all became extremely good actors themselves and they continue to be active acting-members both here and in the North-East. Geoff saw the Playgoers as a sort of extended family – both in embracing the membership himself, and making his own family such a part of it. He was certainly a patrician figure; I remember when I joined in 1994 (as Francis Nurse in *The Crucible*) he and Marjorie spent a lot of time at the cast party telling me all about the story of the Playgoers and making me feel completely at home. I'm not sure we do that, now, as well as they did then.

He was a master of the details of stagecraft and stage-direction too; able to improve a performance with an aptly placed word, at just the right moment. And his own theatrical judgment, as director and actor, was always instinctively right.

He was a believer in Konstantin Stanislavski's remark that there were 'No small parts; just small actors' and he would often accept parts, large and small, for his own enjoyment and/or the good of a production – either of these was reason enough. Anyone who saw him in *Sleuth* (1999), at age 76, could testify to his continuing ability to take on a huge role at an age when most of us would be terrified of drying, completely, on stage.

Geoff was also a wonderful raconteur. I had the pleasure of helping him adapt three TV screenplays for the stage. We'd meet, for two hours at a time, and settle down to work. But, because Geoff was such an accomplished sailor (particularly in Scottish coastal waters; he knew the West Coast of Scotland and its islands very well) and such an accomplished cook and gastronome, he'd spend most of the morning sharing anecdotes about maritime catastrophes and near-misses, about perfect pork-crackling and sunken soufflés, so the whole thing took at least three times as long as it should have.

But I enjoyed all that because his good humour was always infectious and his bonhomie always completely genuine.

In later life, he remembered with great pleasure, performing, at age 79, in a production of Ronald Harwood's *Quartet* in 2002, sharing the stage, once more, with Marjorie.

He directed his last play, Ben Elton's *Blackadder* (2013), which he had also adapted for the stage, at 90 years of age.

He will be greatly missed.