

It is now over a year since the first Covid-19 lockdown and our theatre has remained dark during all this time. Although not set in stone, HM Government have provided a new road map offering at least a glimmer of hope for the future. With this in mind we are able to make tentative plans to recommence productions later this year if things do not change again.

A date for an Annual General Meeting has been set for the 22nd July, this year. We hope by then, it will be possible to put some firm dates in place for your diaries. In the meantime, we intend to recommence rehearsals for the first full production of 2021. All being well, we will be able to stage Amanda Whittington's *The Thrill of Love* in October.

Of course, our main priority continues to be the health and safety of all our members. Therefore, it may be necessary to reduce audience numbers to maintain social distancing for this production.

OUR NEXT PRODUCTION

The Thrill of Love

By Amanda Whittington

In October 2019, director Ben Maytham cast our then 2020 spring production - *The Thrill of Love*.

Ben explains his thoughts regarding subsequent events thus:

In January of 2020 the rehearsal began. The cast were set, the rehearsals were flowing and then in March 2020 as we all know, everything changed.

As a director of the show (and an actor in everyday life) I had never experienced anything like this. I felt we were walking into the unknown, not knowing when or if, we would be able to put on the show that for three months we had worked so hard for. Dates for the production were changed twice last year alone. In addition I had to recast a role due to one of the actresses being awarded a place at Drama School. Emails were flying and Stress levels were high. So, I began to doubt when, if ever, we would be able to stage the production.

It was hard initially, as all I wanted was to do that which I love and showcase the amazing talent I had assembled for the show. Now I find myself in a place where I can only conclude, 'It is what it is'.

The Thrill of Love will happen but its just a question of when. Again, the show has been postponed once this year and October 2021 is now the month we may potentially bring you the Ruth Ellis story - two years on from when this journey started.

Throughout lockdowns the cast have been incredible. I have been in constant contact with them all. We have done online rehearsals/read throughs and even managed to record two trailers for the show. As hard as it has been for all of us I know we will come out of this stronger.

We cannot wait to bring you back to our lovely theatre and tell the story of Ruth Ellis. Keep a eye out for October 2021. But have no fear - if October is too soon the production will go on...and it will be very special indeed.

Thank you my fellow group members for all the support and love during this difficult time.

MANIFEST JUNIOR AND YOUTH GROUPS

At last, we can make tentative plans to restart our Junior and Youth groups and Amanda, Kate and Chris can't wait to see you all. Providing the Covid situation continues to improve and we come out of restrictions as per the 'Road map', classes will start in September in line with the new school year.

However, we are planning to invite all the children and young adults still interested in taking part (all of them we hope) together with their parents, to come for a get together and some fun on stage, as soon as we are able. Hopefully, late June or early July.

We are also planning to hold some workshops during the summer holidays for anyone interested.

Until then keep safe and well.

2021-2022 MEMBERSHIPS

We are amending our previous newsletter item as published in November last year. Due to the disruption of our activities last year and this, all 2020 paid up members will be able to enjoy the benefit of free membership in 2021 and 2022. In addition, anyone joining anew or renewing a membership that may have lapsed, will benefit from free membership in 2022.

A DOUBLY SAD LOSS

With heavy hearts, we have to inform you of the passing of two highly respected members.

Jean Murfitt passed away quite suddenly on the 26th January. Jean was a founder member and worked tirelessly behind the scenes in support of her husband Dennis during the group's early years.

Gordon Prior, another very active and much loved member succumbed to cancer on the 31st January. Director and Theatre Trustee Kerry King expressed these thoughts that I am sure many of us share:

The Manifest Theatre will miss Gordon, it will not feel quite right him not being there any more.

When we think of him, there will always be many fun memories of who he was, what he did and how lucky we all are that he will always be part of our history.

The thought of Gordon and the person he was brings a warm fuzzy feeling, and a smile, and that's a special legacy for all of us that he's left behind.