

Summer 2020

The Official CTC newsletter
castlemainetheatreco@gmail.com

Castlemaine Theatre Company wishes you a happy new decade! We sincerely hope that you and your loved ones remained safe during the extremely intense events that heralded the beginning of the 2020s. We wish peace and healing to those who have suffered personal loss, and hope for renewal for our land and our nation... and for the font nerds, our new featured title typeface for the 2020s is Krungthep, backed up by a personal fave, Courier (bold oblique).

PETER PANTO AUDITIONS COMING SOON book yours now



Auditions will soon be upon us for the first production of 2020. It's a panto version of Peter Pan, originally written by JM Barrie. We'll be performing it in mid-winter as a Christmas in July Panto. It will have all the trappings of traditional Panto – a comic, cross-dressing Dame, lots of opportunities for audience participation, a few songs and a happy ending. Another tradition of Panto is a very irreverent attitude to the narrative, with characters from different fairy tales turning up all over the place, and this production is no exception! The full title of this adaptation is *Peter Panto or One Flew Over the Second Star on the Right*. That's right, you guessed it, it's a playful mash up with the iconic novel and script, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*. Nurse Ratched is our Dame, and Nana the dog is a therapy dog with a difference. Written and directed by Kate Stones, (*Gallipoli: The Musical, Monkey and the Monk*), the production promises to be a hoot! Peter Pan was first performed on 27 December 1904, so it has always been a Christmas show. Barrie went on to write a novel version, which had alternative storylines to the original play. The story was created from imaginary games played by Barrie and family friends the Llewellyn children. Barrie's play was performed every Christmas for the next 10 years, and each time the author made adjustments and updates to the script. Peter Pan was famously turned into an animated Disney film in 1953, and then written as musical in 1954. So the story is essentially fluid and ever-evolving. There are some essential elements though – there's plenty of pirates and a crocodile and some lost boys. There's a daring rescue and a cranky fairy, and definitely some flying! Our version will update the story to make it a bit more in line with contemporary values. Peter will definitely be asking audiences to renew their commitment to believe in fairies. We are also mixing up genders, with a male Tinkerbell, and female Pirates, including the dastardly Captain Hook. It's a large cast production with opportunities for men and women of all ages including young people. We'd like to cast Peter, Wendy, John and Michael with young people under 20 if possible. We'd love help with set and props if anyone is keen to contribute to that side of the production. We'll be performing at The Phee Broadway Theatre.

Characters and casting

Nurse Ratchet: The traditional Panto Dame. Played by a man, more butch than camp. Initially severe and a bit spooky, but reveals a more playful caring side without too much provocation. Wants to organise everybody, but often gets things wrong. Likes to see herself as a good nurse but doesn't have much duty of care.

John: Nerdy. Apparently responsible and straight-laced, but in fact somewhat subversive. Keen to grow up and play father figure.

Michael: A Crazy Kid

Chief Bromden: A short Malaysian gentleman, mistaken for a Native American by Nurse Ratched. Actor also plays Tiger Lily.

Wendy: Actor aged 13-25. Ideally 15-17. Curious, intelligent, pensive, hormonal. Loves animals. She has trained her dog, Nana, to be a Freudian Analyst. Not naturally feisty, but learns to be strong, has the courage of her convictions. An orphan, she has had to grow up quickly.

Nana: The Therapy Dog. A Canine Freudian Analyst. Actor in a dog suit with spectacles and a briefcase or satchel. Actor female.

Tinkerbell: A sassy, saucy, snarky jealous man-fairy in a sharp suit. Can sing, but cannot speak except by ringing a bell. Understood only by inhabitants of Neverland.

Peter Pan: A curious combination of Nobility and Narcissism. Profoundly courageous. Completely enthralled with his own marvelousness. Charismatic and swashbuckling, yet incapable of genuine love. Only true loyalty is to Tink, although not forever. Will NEVER grow up. Actor gender can be any.

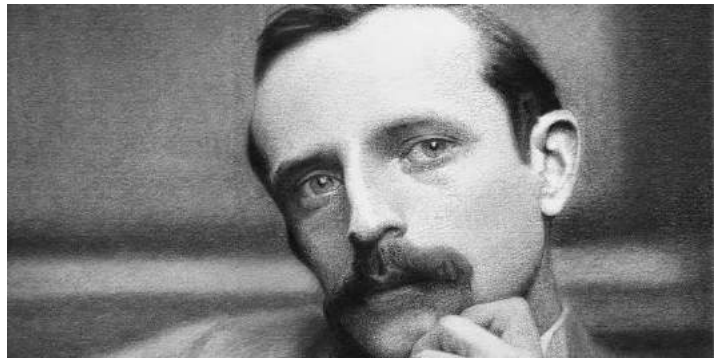
The Lost Boys: are teens – early 20s. LBs can be male or female, they are like a boy band and will sing a song in harmony at some point. The LBs include: Slightly (a genius, musical, graceful dancer, conceited); Tootles (Always misses the adventures, humble); Nibs ('gay', debonair); Curly (A 'pickle'); The Twins. Max 6, min 4.

Captain Hook: Female actor, not acting male, but not overtly female. Hook is a different class from her crew, she is 'never more sinister than when she is most polite'. Smokes two cigars at once.

Tiger Lily: Captain of the Magpies footy team

The Pirates: Female actors. Smee (the only non-conformist, likes a chat) and Starkley (A gentleman). Cecco (Handsome Italian), Jukes (every inch of her tattooed), Cookson, Skylight (the Lookout), Mullins and Noddler (hands fitted on backwards). Max 8, Min 4

Magpies: Castelmaine's local football team (actors any gender)



James Matthew Barrie, the original creator of Peter Pan. A controversial figure, then and now.

Audition date: Sunday 8 March. Call Kate to make a time on 0431 998 707. Prepare an audition piece with some humour, that shows off your unique qualities. You can sing a song, but bring your own backing or be ready to sing acapella.

Peter Panto Production week and Performance Dates

(you must be available for all these dates):

Tech run: Sat 20 June 2020

Dress: Sun 21 June

Dress: Tues 23 June/Thurs 25 June

Opening night: Fri 26 June

Evening perf: Sat 27 June

Mat perf: Sun 28 June

Evening perfs: Fri 3/Sat 4 /Mat Sun 5 June

Final weekend: Fri 10/Sat 11/Mat Sun 12 June

Rehearsal days:

Monday and Thursday evenings, 7-10pm beginning Monday March 23
plus additional Sundays as required (approx. 3)

AGM 2020

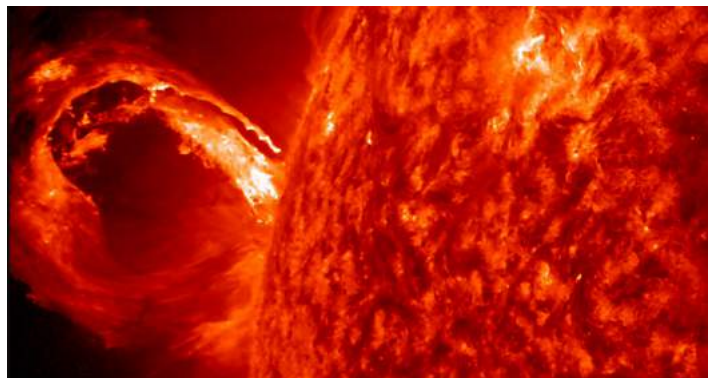
Yes, it's that time again. The 2020 Castlemaine Theatre Company AGM will take place at **7pm on Thursday 12 March at Castlemaine Hospital Auditorium**. Any paid up member of the CTC is welcome to attend the AGM and vote on any motions that arise including the election of the 2020/21 Committee. If you are not a member and would like to join in advance of the meeting, please fill in the attached membership form, email back to us with confirmation of your EFT payment, or post with a cheque to

The Secretary (membership)
Castlemaine Theatre Company
PO Box 12
Castlemaine 3450

Membership is \$25 full price and \$15 concession for one year, from March to March. Membership is a great way to support our organisation, it also enables you to promote any (non CTC) local theatrical events you might be involved in, or performance workshops you might be running or promoting, via our 300 plus strong mailing list and Facebook page. You are welcome to join on the night of the AGM, as a new member, or renewing an existing membership. Our Treasurer will be available from **6.45pm** to process new memberships and renewals.

If you would like to nominate to join the CTC Committee, **please let Seamus, the Secretary know via email in advance of the meeting:**
castlemainetheatreco@gmail.com

This is a picture of the sun, which we travel round every year, which is when we have the AGM...every year. Well you try and think of an interesting AGM pic!!



Dancing at Lughnasa



Meryl Streep (left), Brid Brennan and Sophie Thompson in the 1998 film version of *Dancing at Lughnasa*, directed by Pat O'Connor

We are very excited to announce our second production of the year will be *Dancing at Lughnasa* by Brian Friel. The production will be directed by **Gayle McClure**. Gayle is on the Three's A Crowd committee, and she also works for Arena Theatre Company in Bendigo. We are so thrilled to be working with Gayle, who graduated from Queens University Belfast with BA's in Theatre and Music. She is a founding member and former Director of Accidental Theatre in Belfast. Gayle was Events Manager at the Old Castlemaine Gaol, running live music and theatre, and writing and producing specialty ghost tours.

The play was written in 1990 and made into a film in 1998 starring Meryl Streep, Kathy Burke and Michael Gambon. Set in the fictional Irish village of Ballybeg, Ireland, *Dancing at Lughnasa* is a memory play, told from the perspective of an adult Michael. He recalls the summer of 1936, which he spent at his aunts' home when he was seven years old. The five Mundy sisters, all unmarried, live in a big cottage just outside of the small village. Kate, the eldest, is a schoolteacher; Agnes and Rose knit gloves and help keep house with Maggie and Christine (Michael's mother). Their older brother, Jack, a Catholic missionary priest, has recently returned home from a Ugandan leper colony where he has lived for the last 25 years. Jack is a changed man. He is suffering from malaria and memory loss. His newfound respect for pagan traditions and beliefs is a source of tension between Jack and Kate. Meanwhile Michael's father, the charming Gerry, pops in and out of his son's life, keeping Michael and Christina on tenterhooks. As the summer ends and Kate loses her job, the sisters face the breakup of their family unit and a future filled with heartache and tragedy. Brian Friel's multi award-winning play is a masterpiece, portraying the strength and bravery of five sisters who dance wildly in a final celebration of their lives, before they change forever.

We will be performing *Dancing at Lughnasa* at **The Goods Shed Arts Space**, a brand new creative space made available to the community by Castlemaine State Festival.

We will be auditioning for *Dancing at Lughnasa* in August. As that's a bit late in the year, I thought I'd give you the dates, so you can keep them in mind for your year planning. Often by that time of the year people's diaries are filling up for the year, so if you're keen to be involved, make sure to keep it free!

Dancing at Lughnasa Dates

Production Week

Bump in Friday 20 Nov (day and evening)

Tech Sat 21 Nov (day to approx 7pm)

Dress 1 Sun 22 Nov (all day)

Dress 2 Tues 24 Nov (evening)

Dress 3 Thurs 26 Nov

Performances

Friday 27/Sat 28 Nov evening and Sun 29 Nov mat

Friday 4/Sat 6 Dec evening and Sun 7 Dec mat

Friday 11/Sat 12 Dec evening and Sun 8 Dec mat

Meet a (Committee) Member is back! DELWYN HOPKINS

How long have you lived in the Mount Alexander Shire area?

I have lived in the Mount Alexander shire for 10 years, before that I was in Yandoit.

Where are you from?

I am originally from Endeavour Hills, Southeast of Melbourne.

How long have you been involved with the CTC?

I have been involved with the CTC since 2018.



Delwyn performing in As You Like It with Clare Shamier (left). Photo by Diana

Tell us about your first experiences with the CTC

I had been wanting to get back into theatre for many years and finally felt like my children were old enough for me to commit to a performance. I saw an ad for *As You Like It* auditions in the paper. The auditions were the following day so I didn't have time to get too nervous (or read the script). When I went for the audition I said that I felt like a rusty old gate, but the panel were really relaxed and supportive. I got the role of La Beau and that was the start of my re-entry into the world of theatre. I then was a crew member in *Blood Wedding*. I then got the opportunity to be Stage Manager for *Frankenstein's Children*. This was such a great experience as I was able to work with great crew and techs and I learnt so much from everyone. I also got to work alongside my daughter Sage, which I loved. It was easy to work with her, as I knew I could put my trust in her and be fairly direct. We would spend our drives home each night talking about what had gone really well and what we wanted to do better the following night.

Why did you decide to nominate for the Committee?

Community theatre isn't just about acting on stage, there is so much more involved and it felt important for me to contribute in a variety of ways. I also feel honoured to be on a committee with highly skilled people.

Have you always been interested in theatre? Or is it a new passion?

I grew up watching community theatre, we used to go to all the plays put on by the 1812 Theatre and the Basin Theatre. My parents also took us to the Opera, Australian Ballet and as many other theatre experiences as they could. I have always loved the theatre. I developed a love for acting in late high school and did surprisingly well in VCE drama. I then went and studied Performance Studies at Victoria University.

What other pass-times or passions do you have?

I love to spend time with my four children, I love gardening, reading and slowly renovating our home. I work as an arts therapist for Anglicare Victoria and am really passionate about working with children who have experienced trauma.

What special Delwyn things do you bring to the committee?

Hmmm...I am a fairly calm and patient person and I think this helps other to feel calm. I am good at multitasking (most of the time) and I am

someone who reflects a lot on things. I also value all roles involved in the theatre and have experience in back stage and acting.

'Thanks Delwyn! We are so lucky to have you on the team!' xKate



Delwyn Stage Managing Frankenstein's Children with Director Stephen Mitchell. Photo by Kate Stones

Ever wondered what it was like to be a Tech in amateur theatre in the 1950s?

An old and dear friend of my parents (he was their Best Man), Ivor Dykes, passed away on 28 December 2015. With no knowledge of his passing, on the exact day of Ivor's death, four years later, I re-read a letter he sent me soon after my dad passed away, back in 2003. The letter included an account of his memories of theatre in Leeds in the early 1950s, and his fond memories of my parents Philip and Margaret. When I first received the letter I was teaching Visual Art in secondary schools, and the story didn't really have a lot of meaning for me. But many years later, immersed in my own theatre practice, I was deeply moved by Ivor's account.

According to his obituary "Ivor was born in 1924 at 4 Hanover Place during a period of depression, leaving school at 14 to work in Abbot & Smith Organ Builders. He was elevated to Leeds Town Hall Organ Tuners' lad for two years until 1942, and during the war worked with the Friends Ambulance Unit. Ivor has always loved writing, and wrote this on his time with the ambulance unit:

"And so it came to pass... that in late 1942 a skinny, underweight lad set off early one morning with a heavy kit bag, bound for the training camp in Birmingham, with tearful waves from the family. After a cold nearly sleepless night, at 6am a rather rough bugle brought camp 16 to life. After an obligatory mile run, breakfast was tea, toast and porridge containing dubious bits of mouse dirt. Camp 16 was a very formative influence on my 'Conchie' life. Despite the fact that we were all in the same boat, our different educational backgrounds soon became obvious. How easily a Friends School or University lad, could demolish my own elementary education. However, our bunkhouse discussions went on long after lights out and broadened everyone's outlook. The piano in our training hut was a real wreck, but these people could use it to make it sound amazing... Now I was faced with people who could so easily make music, write proper English, knew about history, art and politics."

This experience really seemed to have energised and influenced his later life – especially his love of the performing arts. After the war he was briefly a motor mechanic, and then a television engineer, but becoming fascinated by emerging theatre techniques, he joined the theatre – working on the lighting for the original production of 'Oh What a Lovely War'. His slides for this are I understand still being used today. He finished his working life as the Chief Technician for the Nuffield Theatre Studio in Lancaster University." *Alan Shaw, 9 February 2016, South Leeds Life online journal cited 30 December 2019.*

This is a special one for the all the techs out there. Where would be without you? Completely in the dark.



Ivor (centre) at my parents' wedding. Philip and Margaret on the right. My Aunty Dorothy seems to be eyeing Ivor favourably! Uncle Geoffrey on the far left.

The Leeds Arts Centre *A Time Slice from an Influential Period*

By Ivor Dykes (1924-2015)

Portland House, Portland Crescent, in Leeds, was the base for Leeds Arts Centre, for a few years until demolished in the mid 1950s. It was an umbrella for music, painting, literature and film, with a bias to theatre. The AC and Proscenium Players were the most active of some five amateur theatre groups who used the Leeds Civic Theatre. The AC had a bias for 'popular' theatre and antipathetic to 'art' theatre: They excelled in revue and large cast shows. The Proscenium Players were led by Alec Baron, a well-read and intelligent director, of émigré Jewish stock. Their shows had a marked left-wing bias, were exploratory and pushed that group to its technical limits. A few years later Alec became administrator in the future Leeds Playhouse and (even later) very influential in the West Yorks Playhouse.

I was a television service technician in working hours, but worked with both companies on lighting and sound design, but [I also did] some acting and directing with the AC. I specialised in doing sound with the P/Players. One could experiment and risk a lot with the AC, but the P/Players were more rigid [*sic*]. There were the Arts Theatre, and Childrens' Theatre Groups, both were more sporadic in putting shows on, borrowing from other companies (I played my first acting role there, an incredibly old man there).

It was a time when there were many grants for Drama colleges. Stanislavski was daily reading, the American Group Theatre was the 'thing'; Jimmy Dean, 'My Fair Lady', Oliver's Hamlet and Henry V, were emulated. Pirandello was in the offing. Most important it was a jumping off ground for young actors (and there were many of them on their way).

I joined the AC circa 1953, just for the music group. From regarding theatre as a joke, within a year I had been converted. Then began a very significant factor – meeting two long term influential people, Peter O'Toole (a budding genius), but mainly Philip Stone (a professional actor whose career was suspended due to TB). This was a chance to apply my rather narrow serious music interests into a fun field.

The Arts Centre was established in Portland House [*My dad talked affectionately of his two landladies in Leeds who used to call him 'Lord Portland' – Kate*]. It had once been somewhat pretentious, but a run down wreck...we later saw it being demolished! The ground floor consisted of incredibly untidy stores and workshop rooms. Leading from this, an appalling loo and a cellar door which threatened rats and untold horrors. The main work area was a large first floor open plan room for general use.

Above was an attic converted into a tiny theatre with a stage c 12' x 8' [3.7m x 2.5m] and an auditorium c 12' x 15' [3.7m x 4.5m]. The technical facilities were unbelievably crude, a few naked bulbs for footlights, a couple of 200 watt bulbs in tin cans. There I built a tiny, but adaptable, highly dangerous liquid dimmer board. The four dimmers could be routed for individual lights or used as masters. Clever – but those drainpipes offered plenty of mains tingles!! Using photoflood No.2s (still in cans) gave something like active light – until they blew! I continually experimented with lighting and sound both, in the Attic – and nearby Civic Theatre. Not that there was much of either to play with there, in the early 50s. Sound: A gramophone (the Pan for the Nat Anthem), we sometimes borrowed an awful tape recorder. We were lent a wire recorder – and spent most of the time knotting wire and cursing sound.

The technical crudities of both theatres in the immediate Post-War period can be illustrated – the Attic Theatre as described above; but the Civic Theatre had only just got rid of a 25 way liquid dimmer beast – replaced by a 36 way, slow, choke system, with a penchant to drop the odd hot resistor. The main need was to control battens (five sets): 500w P 45s and floods on Bar 1. All meant that the couple of 1Kw P 76 Acting Area lanterns on Bar 2 were the only interesting sources (the few low angle front of house spots gave a pathetic yellow bloom). For revue and musicals one had to rely on two hired follow spots.

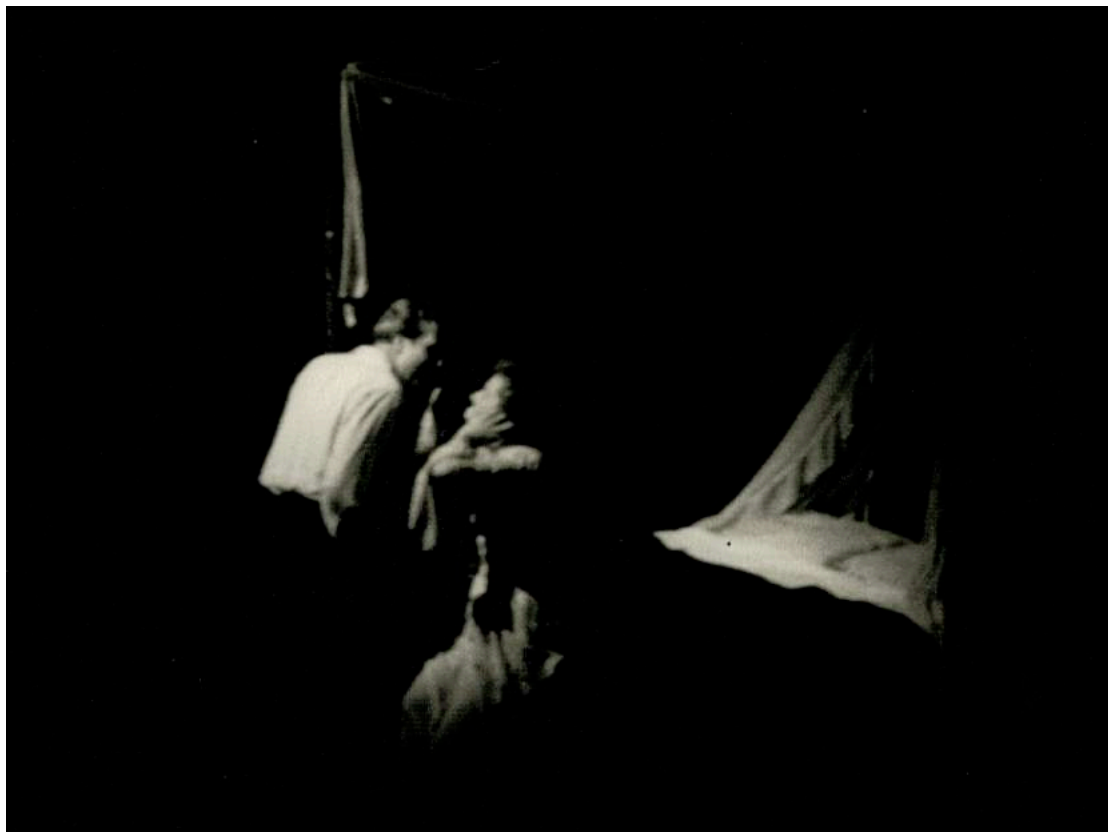
A number of people liked working together. Phil Stone, Peter O'Toole, (the beautiful) Margaret Pickard, Gordon Snell, Tony Pedler and myself. We were more interested in serious aspects of theatre rather than the ubiquitous light revue and comedy. We started to concentrate on poetry, drama, acting and directing techniques. Phil Stone and Peter O'Toole set up 'The Bomb Group', the intention being to 'blow up' the attitude over popular play selection and preparation. We six became 'The Bomb Group'. We cleaned out a filthy cellar, after weeks of hard and dirty work. Then started serious work on voice, movement and interpretation. But first of all was learning to breathe.

Phil and Peter were the only ones with any idea of voice production. Peter, flamboyant, a likely matinee idol! Phil, highly professional, wide range of poetry, interpretation and music; he also only had about one-and-a-half lungs. Our first lesson was – how long we could count out loud on one lungful of air? Phil went on and on and on – long after the full lungs of the Cellar Group gave up. I always owe a large debt to Phil for his introduction to blank verse and so many things a real actor needs, both physical and mental. Very handy for a person like myself with a technical bias, and to extend my linking music and drama. Margaret, as a science lab technician, was a super person to exchange tech talk, as a foil to undue acting rabbit.

We met with considerable objections in the rest of the Arts Centre, up to the Management Committee. Nevertheless we mounted a sophisticated production of Shakespeare excerpts and music in the Attic Theatre. Our group was now named 'The Cellar Theatre Workshop'. I played Aguecheek, murderously directed by O'Toole. Snell [played] Belch and O'Toole, Malvolio. Phil and Peter did a splendid 'Cesar' Tent scene. A one night stand that became a highlight of Attic Theatre productions. Phil started to specialise in various Pirandello productions (translated by Fred May). One exceptional production of 'The Man With a Flower in His Mouth' was directed by Alec Baron and played both Leeds and Bradford.

O'Toole went off to RADA [Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts] etc. etc. Snell to playwriting at the BBC, Phil married lovely Margaret (I was their Best Man), then back into professional theatre at Sheffield with Geoffrey Ost. Meanwhile I was experimenting with both directing and acting, having my voice 'electrocuted' and learning 'RP' with Phil's old voice teacher Evelyn Briggs at Leeds College of Music. Then working with a new group on 'Lear' in the Attic Theatre. I cut a quarter of the play, sorted all the technicals, did some of the direction and played Edgar. Despite all those disadvantages (and then try to imagine THAT play on a 12' x 8' stage), it worked as a show and Phil was unusually complimentary. Then they demolished Portland House and all activities transferred to rooms opposite the Civic Theatre.

In a new rehearsal place various little groups experimented with Ionesco; my 'Mr Smith' in 'Bald Headed Primadonna' was OK. The AC now quite accepted 'fancy' playwrights, and I directed a successful Tennessee Williams short play 'The Long Goodbye', and had quite a ball playing in my first revue – they were disasters – my Orsino was appalling. I stood in as director of 'The Living Room' for the Harrogate Festival in the Royal Hall (what a play to choose for that acoustic!). They just couldn't project and I loused up by looking for ever deeper meanings. It came bottom!



This blurry photograph was taken in 1957, with my dad on the left playing Hamlet. Probably taken at the Leeds Civic Theatre, perhaps lit by Ivor.



A dashing young Peter O'Toole

My thoughts now moved to joining the real Theatre Workshop and Joan Littlewood. TW was a term I had first heard from Alec Baron, (and we had borrowed for our Attic show). Alec had talked about TW ways of working, of George Cooper and other local actors who had found Stratford East suited them as a totally new approach to British theatre. It struck me that my sister's best friend Eileen Kanelley worked there after many other theatre jobs. [Alec talked about] How TW had strong international knowledge and influence; about Joan L. and Brecht. I started to prepare for departure to London, initially into TV servicing, but with a determination to work at TW.

I started my London job in Selfridges TV Service Department and sent in my application for an audition at Stratford. As an interim I joined The Questors Theatre in Ealing, following another ex Leeds lad. That company was still working in a wooden hut. Their lighting control was even more lethal than the stuff I had left in Leeds. Worse, I found their approach to theatre to be lacking in guts and energy. I was auditioned into an annual revue but found it soft and

quite lacking in drive – too pretty and gutless.

The first show I saw at Stratford was the first production of 'The Hostage'. This was what I had been looking for in theatre, and people around me in the audience joined in appreciation – this was real theatre. I went to Stratford every week to see how this magic was made. Sitting in the Gallery I made notes about the lighting, and anything in the production I didn't understand. More often than not, a rather dumpy woman in a blue beret was up there as well. I later realised it was Joan.

My application for an audition finally came through – it was a deliberate shock! I did have an audition at TW as an actor, but told I would be more use in the light and sound area. In that unique theatre environment, the stuff Phil gave me, coupled with my own amalgam of science and aesthetics, enabled me to cooperate with people without appearing an ignorant twerp.

Ivor Dykes
19 June 2003

On the passing of dear Phil, addressed to his children Kate and Andrew Stones.



Ivor took this lovely photograph of my mum with my older brother Andrew, c. 1964

That's all for now...enjoy the rest of the Summer's sweaty pleasures. Stay safe. Follow us on Facebook and Instagram, www.castlemaintheatrecompany.com Support local theatre...see you there!