



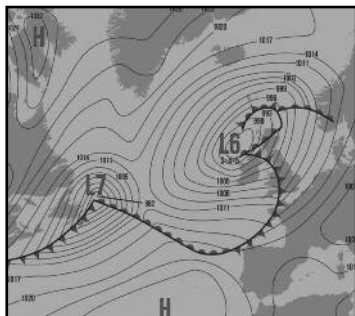
Ilkley Players

Weston Road, Ilkley,
West Yorks LS29 8DW
Tel: 01943 609539



Newsletter No: 373

October 2026



PRESSURE

by David Haig

29th October – 7th November

**Co-Directed by Dick Hebbert
& James Kingsley**

This amateur production is presented by arrangement
by NICK HERN BOOKS.

Dear Reader

Welcome to our latest newsletter. Autumn is in the air now and summer feels a little way behind us. But fear not! We have some wonderful plays and other events to keep you entertained.

Our season kicked off in style with our main house production in the Wharfeside, the very popular *Private Lives*, directed by Steve Mason. Congratulations to the wonderful cast and crew!

Next up was *North Country* in the Wildman Studio; an adaptation of Tajinder Singh Hayer's 2016 post-apocalyptic play. You can read a review of this in our next issue. Again, many congratulations to all.

As always, we aim to have a wide range of articles to inform and entertain. So, there are updates from our Co-Artistic Directors, Chair of the Trustees, a write up of Bard from the summer, a review of last month's *Private Lives*, and more! Included are some lovely celebrations of our wonderful Rosie Bond, Vanessa Jackson at

the Minack Theatre and pieces in celebration of both writing and reading! We do hope you enjoy these. If you would like to write something for the newsletter please do get in touch. We always welcome new contributors! Drop me a line at: marie.ilkleypg@gmail.com

Marie Varney



Just over ten years ago at Ilkley Playhouse we put on a production of David Haig's *My Boy Jack*, a wonderful drama telling the story of how, at the outbreak of the First World War, Rudyard Kipling pulled strings to get his son John – 'Jack' – a commission in the British Army, only to lose him in his first action at the Battle of Loos in 1915. Wonderful because Haig took the audience from John's happy childhood at home with his parents and sister to their agony of initially not knowing what had happened to Jack, followed by the

unbearable loss when his death was confirmed – for which Kipling's wife Carrie never forgave him.

Haig has only written three plays, but he has the ability to draw for his audience the very human experience of his characters in times when their spirit is tested to its limit. In *Pressure* it is not loss which provides the challenge for Haig's characters, but expectation; for Eisenhower and his two rival meteorologists, dour Scot Stagg and bullish American Krick, the imperative to make the right calls so as to give the monumental, allied invasion of Nazi-occupied Europe the best possible chance of success places a huge weight of expectation on their shoulders – collectively, but also individually.

The other strength in Haig's writing is to show how the relationships between his characters bloom or crack as they grapple with the situation into which history has put them. So we see Eisenhower and his driver Kay, thrown together by the demands of war, teetering on the edge of illicit romance, how Kay, initially repelled by the frosty Stagg, comes to understand that the pressure on him comes not just from the need to give an accurate weather forecast and Stagg and Krick, each expert in their own way, struggle to forge an understanding to enable them to agree on their advice to the military 'top brass' – and how, suddenly, when it's all over; when the storm clouds have passed, each is left to work out what comes next – after having been in the eye of the storm, how to move on.

It is no surprise that Hollywood has taken *Pressure* for its latest blockbuster film; Haig is a great storyteller and a keen observer of character and relationships and this tale of how its protagonists coped with the weight of history on their

shoulders is a perfect vehicle for his talent.

Dick Hebbert



Asides

What a sparkling start to the new season! Congratulations to the cast and crew of *Private Lives* on a witty and stylish production. All the things that make our productions special were present, including laughter (did you see what I did there?) The set, costumes, props and lighting all enhanced the performances, which were energetic, engaging and effective. There were even nightly visits from the Playhouse butterflies. There are many examples of theatrical superstitions, including ghosts who stalk the backstage corridors, and apparitions in the upper circle. Not to mention the Phantom of the Opera. At Ilkley Playhouse, we have our butterflies, the spirit of David and Pat Wildman checking in and blessing each production. This time, they were joined by a third presence. We'd like to believe that it was Mary Ambler enjoying time with old friends in a place that she loved.

Congratulations, too, to the company of *North Country*. The first of our Fringe productions provided a thought-provoking and interesting experience and showcased the talents of some new members appearing alongside and mentored by more experienced performers. Chrissie Poulter's adaptation of the script allowed for a multi-

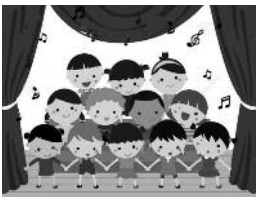
generational approach and has prompted some further possible projects.

You may be aware of the disappointing news that our intended world premiere production of *Lord Arthur Savile's Crime* has been withdrawn from the season. At the time of writing, we are busy finding a suitable replacement for that slot. By the time you read this, all being well, we will have selected a play. The newly combined play selection and casting committee is busy reading scripts for the 2027-28 season. As ever, our thanks to the members who comprise that team for all their time and commitment.

Curating a season of plays can be a challenge. There is definitely some pressure to find the right combination of productions. And talking of *Pressure*, we hope that you enjoy this production of David Haig's tense play. If you have seen the film, you will see how the stage version in comparison contains the action within one room, adding to the tension. Movies paint on a much broader canvas with bigger casts and the scope for multiple locations. This stage production zooms in to focus on the key characters and the different forms of pressure that they find themselves under.

There is much more to come this season. The events and classes continue, and the building is buzzing with activity throughout the week. We welcome delegates of the LTG Regional Conference to our theatre in November, and we hope that they will be impressed. So, don't be a stranger; you are always welcome at Ilkley Playhouse whatever the weather.

Yvette & Damien
Co-Artistic Directors



GREENROOM NEWS

Greenroom finished the academic year on a high with the popular Summer Showcase held on the Wharfedale Stage on 11th July. The Juniors brought Aesop's Fables to life, with a few new twists of course! These included a fabulous influencer lion, a cheese that thought she was the star of the show and a detective ant trying to solve the case of the missing seeds. The moral of the story, as decided by the cast, don't trust actors, they make everything up!

Seniors did us proud as always with a mix of devised scenes, ranging from *Peter Pan Goes Wrong*, to a disastrous but ultimately heartwarming attempt to integrate boys into a girl's boarding school. A highlight of the Seniors' sections was some strongly performed monologues, both funny and moving.



Junior Greenroom members

These were a new introduction to the showcase and definitely one to be continued. The cast played to a nearly full house. A big thanks to Julia Wilson who provided the audience with refreshments before the performance and to Russell

O'Callaghan who provided us with fantastic photos.



Senior Greenroom members

Some of our actors didn't stop over summer! A big congratulations to Lucy Hey for her great performance in *Bard in The Yard*. A big congratulations too, to Greenroom tutor Eliza Wilson who secured a place at Falmouth University to study a BA(Hons) Degree in Acting and Performance. We will miss her greatly but wish her every success and couldn't be more proud of her. She promises she will visit and tell us all about it whenever she is back in Ilkley.

Julia Wilson (Eliza's Mum and experienced actor/teacher) has kindly agreed to step in to support the group while we look for a more permanent Greenroom Tutor. In the meantime, there are exciting opportunities for guest tutors to come and share their skills. We are fortunate to have masterclasses run this term for the Seniors by Jono Gadsby, who comes with a vast range of experience and knowledge. We are very grateful that Jono has offered his time. Thanks also to everyone else who has generously offered their skills, we do appreciate it and our students gain a lot from having new input. So, our term is now in full swing and with exciting plans ahead. One of the most exciting being a Junior Greenroom production of *Charlie and the Chocolate*

Factory adapted by Richard George. Performances will take place 5th - 7th March 2027 in the Wildman and we will begin rehearsing in January. More on this later but suffice to say that we can't wait to stage this and plan to make it every bit as spectacular as our last Junior Greenroom production *Aladdin*.

We still have room for more members in both classes. Check us out. More details can be found on the Ilkley Playhouse website under Get Involved/Drama Classes. Free taster sessions are available.

LISA DEBNEY

Mobile 07443 483366

lisa.debney@talktalk.net



Around the World in 80 Days

by Laura Eason,

original author Jules Verne

Directed by Alex Whitaker

This production is presented by arrangement
with Nick Hern Books.

"The world is surprising, isn't it, Mr Fogg?"

"That all depends on what one is expecting."

When eccentric and wealthy Victorian gentleman Phileas Fogg wagers his life's fortune that he can circumnavigate the globe in just eighty days, the adventure of a lifetime begins for him and his hapless valet Passepartout.

Together, they race against the clock on a dizzying succession of trains, ships,

sledges and elephants, journeying from the highs of the Indian mountains to the wild plains of America, and across everything in between.

Outwitting the police, fighting off bandits, and maybe even picking up a passenger or two along the way, Fogg and Passepartout are joined in spectacular fashion by over fifty unforgettable characters in this high-flying, free-wheeling, globe-trotting spectacular!

Around the World in 80 Days will be our next main production in the Wharfeside Theatre, directed by Alex Whitaker. As well as our usual Saturday matinee, there will be an additional relaxed performance matinee on **12th December**, with fewer audience numbers. This show will be slightly adapted - the sound will be turned down a little and the theatre lights turned up, and a relaxed performance always includes a relaxed attitude to noise and movement (voluntary and involuntary) in the auditorium. There will also be a special 'quiet zone' and there will be front of house volunteers on hand to ensure everyone is welcomed.

A visual (social) story can be provided for anyone who needs it, as well as a clear synopsis. Please contact the office on **01943 609539** if you require a copy of the "Social Story" in advance.

**Thursday 3rd - Saturday 12th December
2026 7.30pm**

**Matinee 2.30pm Saturday 5th December
Additional Relaxed Performance Matinee
2.30pm Saturday 12th December**

Tickets £15.00

**Over 60s: £13.00 (Mon-Thurs and
Matinee) Students £7, Greenroom £6**

Wharfeside Theatre



President's Notes

August may often be considered a quiet month for the Playhouse, but this year it was anything but. Rehearsals were in full swing for *Bard in the Yard*, another excellent production that was warmly received at both the Playhouse and the Manor House. When rain interrupted one performance, Act Two was moved indoors to the Playhouse rather than continuing outside at the Manor House. Congratulations to everyone involved.

There was also plenty happening behind the scenes. Work on the new boiler continued, and the props stored in the cellars underwent a major clear-out. My sincere thanks to everyone who helped with this considerable task—your hard work is greatly appreciated.

Planning and preparations are also well underway for the forthcoming Little Theatre Guild conference, which the Playhouse will host in November.

So, despite appearances, the Playhouse has been far from quiet. Our production of *Private Lives* gave the season a fantastic start. The acting was excellent, the staging was beautiful, and the audience on the night I attended was highly appreciative and complimentary. Congratulations to the entire cast and crew.

Let's carry this momentum into the 2026–2027 season by supporting strong ticket sales for *Pressure* in November.

Thank you to everyone who gives their time so generously to make the Playhouse such a vibrant and important part of Ilkley. We urgently need more volunteers,

particularly to staff the bar and coffee bar, so please consider offering whatever time you can. On the final night of *Private Lives*, I ran the bar alone for a sold-out performance. Our audience was wonderfully patient, but some people were served only just in time to take their drinks into the auditorium before the play began or the interval ended. It was hard work—especially since I had forgotten my glasses and had to borrow a pair from lost property to read the prices and the card machine—but I managed. If I can run the bar single-handedly, anyone can lend a hand. Even one shift can make a real difference, so please join our volunteer team and help the Playhouse keep thriving.

Julia Wilson
President

Minack Matters

Those of us who have travelled to Cornwall over the last 30 years for our Playhouse Minack productions will have worked alongside the theatre's director there, Phil Jackson. We relied on Phil for his sound advice and support in the run up to our arrival and for his calm, professional presence when we were in situ.

Imagine our delight when some years ago he 'hooked up with' and later married one of our own – Vanessa (Gibson as was). Vanessa had been an active member at the Playhouse both acting and directing with her productions of *Oh What A Lovely War*, *Joseph Andrews*, *The Jungle Book* and *Of Mice and Men* touring to the Minack.

Since losing her to Cornwall, Vanessa has taken up various roles in the arts, her final one being Marketing Manager at the

Minack, a role from which she retires this month (following Phil, who headed for the golf course a few years ago!).

It has been a pleasure to have had them both on hand over such a long period to support us - a period during which we won the coveted Minack Trophy (for the second time) with *The Crucible* and have continued to offer high quality productions as part of many successful Minack seasons.

We're delighted we have been invited to bid again to be part of the 2028 or 2029 seasons, following another successful run there this summer with *The Girl on the Train*, however there will be a tinge of sadness to our return next time with no Phil or Vanessa around at the theatre.

Our thanks are due to them both for all they have done for us over the years and from everyone at the Playhouse, we wish them a very happy 'joint' retirement and a great celebratory 'big' trip to New Zealand!

Ilkley Playhouse

Bar Volunteers - Please Help!!

The bar needs more volunteers; can you spare just one night every month or two? The bar helps create a welcoming atmosphere and brings in much needed funds to help the Playhouse keep going.

It's not onerous, one night every couple of months would really help to ensure that.

Training by an experienced volunteer will be given and there is a crib sheet behind the bar to remind you what to do and when!

If you can help (or to find out more) then please get in touch with myself **07776 237849** or Cath Laughey in the office. Many thanks!

JontyHawkes17@gmail.com

Jonty Hawkes

8x8x8 Creating a short piece of theatre.

We are now halfway through the entry window for our biennial celebration of new writing called 8x8x8. This is an opportunity for playwrights and aspiring playwrights from all over the world to create a brand-new play which tells a complete story in just eight minutes. In September 2027, the best eight plays will be performed as a fully staged version: lines are learned, costumes are worn, suitable music and sound effects play, the stage is lit and the audience is full. In addition, the best sixteen plays go in a book which is on sale to everyone via Amazon alongside the three books from previous festivals. (Interested? The best way is to go into Amazon and search Cundell Walker.)

The festival began in 2020 in order to provide a vehicle for creativity during lockdown, but its success meant that it has continued on a two-year cycle ever since. Eight willing volunteers are reading plays at every spare moment already, in order to reach the shortlist of sixteen. Finally at the start of next year, we will meet to decide the final programme for the performance. Now it's not just a case of the best individual plays, but the best mix of plays to make an interesting evening out for our audience.

It takes skill and sticking power to get through so much reading, but it is also a pleasure and a privilege. Maybe we are reading the work of the next Tom Stoppard, or James Graham. Who knows what potential we might unlock?

As you read this it may be just too late to enter this time. The submission window ends on **1st November**, but you might just sneak in there. If not, there will be

another chance in 2028. Why not join people from New York, Dorchester, Wellington NZ and even Skipton by writing your own contribution. The full details of the competition are on the web site.

Jay Cundell Walker

LORD ARTHUR SAVILE'S CRIME 11-20 March 2027

You may have noticed, if you have looked at our 2026-7 season programme, that our advertised March production is *Lord Arthur Savile's Crime*. The production was to have been a new work written around Oscar Wilde's play by Henry Filloux-Bennett, the writer of *Toast* – the play about the life of chef Nigel Slater which was the opening play of our last season. Regrettably we have to advise you that, for reasons beyond the control of Ilkley Playhouse, we will not now be in a position to put on the production as planned. This was to have been an exciting development for our theatre and we are very disappointed that it will not go ahead.

We are conscious that the play had been advertised as part of our current season and that some of our patrons have bought season tickets which will include seats for the advertised play. We are in the process of choosing a substitute for the March production and we will advise members and patrons of the programme change as soon as we are able to do so.

Dick Hebbert
Chair of IP trustees



Bard in the Yard

As the nights draw in it's good to look back on sunnier days and warm nights and to a mainstay in the Playhouse calendar during the August Bank Holiday Weekend - *Bard in the Yard*.

It's been 7 years now since we started our collaboration with our friends at the Manor House to perform 'bite sized Shakespeare' renditions, using their wonderful outdoor backdrop. We've been entertained with monologues and duologues in the early years and have now settled into the format of two of the Bard's plays per performance, expertly adapted and abridged by 'Bardoliers' (and Directors) Dick Hebbert and Andrew Leggott.

This year offered the chance to see *The Merchant of Venice* – often referred to as a 'problem' play, not fitting neatly into the categories of comedy, tragedy or history and *Much Ado About Nothing* – most definitely in the comedic category. Both galloped along apace weaving the key parts of the stories together with pleasing clear diction across the board – well done to all.

It's always great to see such a good mix of experienced Playhouse actors mingled with graduates of Junior/ Adult Greenroom classes working alongside those who may be exercising their acting muscles for the first time. This year Andy Price, a frequent player on our stages, took the main roles of both Shylock and Benedict. Hard to find two more contrasting characters, he brought a real sinister edge to 'Merchant's' Shylock and

made the language dance in his quick-witted sparring with *Much Ado's* Beatrice (Vani Midgley) with whom he was well matched.

Bard regular, Beth Roberts, gave a solid performance as Lancelot Gobbo (such an excellent character name!) in *Merchant*, transforming into the 'plain-dealing villain', Donna Bella for *Much Ado*. A promising start too from Janet Wilkes who as Nerissa to Louise Wildman's Portia made a convincing confidant/fellow conspirator. And, of course, these performances wouldn't be the same without Dick Hebbert stepping into a role (often late in the day) – a touch of *The Blues Brothers* this year as the Prince of Morocco in those shades!

As always, there are those who work unseen to ensure all runs to plan in performance and Jen Souter, our regular Bard Stage Manager, was on hand once again to do just that.

Samantha Hill



Private Lives – a review!

Private Lives was a splendid starter to the season. Noël Coward's play, probably because it was so shocking in 1930, still resonates with modern audiences. Two people who entirely please themselves and care not a jot for anyone else seem to fit very comfortably into 2026. Steve Mason directed this witty and sophisticated piece of classic theatre.

Kate Maddison-Greenwell was elegant as



Amanda, the woman who seemed to attract multiple admirers and who cared not a jot for any of them. She brought pace and bite to her role and provoked much amusement from the audience. Simon Henson played Elyot, the role taken by Coward himself in the thirties. Simon is new to the Playhouse and he provided a suitably cool, disinterested and suave foil to Amanda.

At the start, Elyot and Amanda were on honeymoon, but with other people. Elyot's new, short-lived wife was played by Becky Buckmaster. As Sybil, she was appropriately whingeing and annoying. Sybil was always going to be too sweet and naïve to hold onto her new husband, but perhaps there was a happy ending in store for her with Amanda's discarded spouse. Ned Sproston, as Victor, gave a strong performance. He was totally believable as the spurned husband smoking a pipe that almost had an acting role of its own, it was so expressive. Thanks must go to Chris Cundell who came out of the tech box to cover this part due to illness on the final night and to Paul Chattwood who covered tech on that occasion.

The set worked beautifully for all three acts, props were accurate and appropriate and the women's costumes, in particular, were absolutely spot on. Bravo to the backstage crew led by Lotte O'Keeffe, to Trish Breen for props and to the wardrobe team.

Finally, a massive well done to Amanda Ashby who was quite a scene stealer with her appearance as the maid, Louise. She spoke only in beautiful French but made everyone aware of exactly what she was thinking. An impressive cameo performance.

Jay Cundell Walker

View From The Chair

Our production of David Haig's *Pressure* goes toe-to-toe with the Hollywood blockbuster film based on the same play. I haven't seen the film – I'm co-directing our play and don't want to get anyone else's ideas into my head – but I understand that, as with most films of a stage play, it is different in many respects from what you will see in our Wharfeside auditorium. By that I don't mean that our production will be in any way inferior, they are two different things and, as I have said before in this column, whilst production values may differ between amateur and professional films and plays, if the play is good and the audience engaged then the experience is fulfilling for actors and audience alike – especially with a play as good as this one.

The above point is particularly worth making for this production, where we are delighted to welcome to our theatre over the final weekend, delegates from other theatre members of the Little Theatre Guild (LTG) as we host its 2026 Northern Conference. Founded in 1946, the LTG is a confederation of amateur theatres, providing a valuable resource and a place for its members to pool knowledge on productions, production techniques, theatre management, sustainability and theatre development. As the LTG website says it has become a 'beacon of excellence' in the world of amateur and community theatre.

We will be especially pleased to see our friends from the Stockport Garrick Theatre who, following their own

production of *Pressure* last year provided invaluable help and advice on some of the technical aspects – and not to mention equipment – for putting on the play. And while I'm acknowledging LTG activism I should also thank the Ilkley Playhouse LTG rep of many years, Rosie Bond, who has travelled the length and breadth of Britain to speak and listen on our behalf.

To admit to involvement in amateur theatre usually invites howls of derision and comments about wobbling sets and *Acorn Antiques* acting, but our audiences know that many amateur theatres – especially those who are LTG members – provide both a valuable community resource and a high standard of production. I have made the point before that the word 'amateur' means one who has a love of something. Those who put hours of work into making plays in LTG theatres and indeed elsewhere, do so for no other reason than they like doing it and we can claim that, as a consequence of that, amateur theatre has an integrity that the sometimes bloated professional theatre often lacks.

Welcome to Ilkley to all our LTG colleagues – we hope you enjoy the show.

Dick Hebbert



LTG Northern Regional Conference 2026 at Ilkley Playhouse

We are very pleased to welcome LTG Theatres visiting Ilkley Playhouse for the LTG Conference, which is taking place

over the weekend from **Friday 6th to Sunday 8th November**. They will be joining us for the last night of our November production of *Pressure* in the Wharfeside Theatre

The Conference covers a weekend of theatre, workshops, seminars, guest speakers and the AGM and Open Forum meeting for the Northern Region of the Guild. Our theme is "Home Grown in Ilkley" and we have related the events to actors, directors, backstage crew and speakers; members of our theatre, past and present.

If there are any Playhouse members who would be willing to volunteer to help during the Conference weekend and you haven't yet contacted me, please let me know, Rosie Bond, your LTG Rep, via the Playhouse office or by emailing me on rosiebond@btopenworld.com

Rosie Bond

Ilkley Playhouse Quiz Night Saturday 21st November 2026 at 7.30 pm

Join us at Ilkley Playhouse on **Saturday 21 November** for a lively Quiz Night with friends, friendly competition and plenty of laughs. Gather a team with a winning mix of Playhouse knowledge, sport, music and general knowledge—you may even want to recruit a long-standing member for those theatre-themed questions! A pie-and-pea supper is included, the bar will be open throughout the evening, and tickets are just £10. Come along, put your knowledge to the test and enjoy a fun social night at the Playhouse.

Pay on the night, to book your tickets please contact Julia Wilson:

Email: president@ilkleyplayhouse.co.uk

Celebrating Rosie Bond's 50 Years at Ilkley Playhouse

In August, Ilkley Playhouse held an afternoon tea to celebrate Rosie Bond's remarkable 50 years of dedicated service. Throughout that time, her reliability, generosity and wisdom have supported almost every aspect of Playhouse life.

This year also marks her 20th Minack. Over three decades, she has missed only one production and has usually served as Tour Manager, Tour Treasurer or both.

She has represented the Playhouse in the Little Theatre Guild for nearly 20 years, bringing back valuable ideas and insight.

As a long-serving Treasurer, Rosie played a vital role in securing and managing Lottery Funding for the Wildman. Today, she manages performing rights licences and coordinates Costume and Wardrobe, working closely with production teams.

She also steps in wherever needed—a true example of quiet, practical commitment. Much of Rosie's work happens behind the scenes, but its impact is felt throughout the Playhouse.



Rosie Bond

Rosie, thank you for your time, knowledge, kindness and humour. Your 50 years of service are an inspiration, and we are fortunate to have you in our Playhouse family. Warmest congratulations on this magnificent milestone!

Celebrating the National Year of Reading 2026!

In love with anniversaries! In 1876, our much-loved building on Weston Road was opened – as a Working Men's Reading Room and Lecture Hall. A brass band paraded down Brook Street to lead the townsfolk to this impressive building beside the River Wharfe. It was built to be a place where mill workers, and others, could meet to socialise and engage in something educational, enlightening and entertaining – an alternative to the pub or their lonely lodgings, away from home as many of them were.

Now 150 years later we have a script library lining the walls of the men's dressing room (that much doesn't change it seems – in the women's? Wigs!) and, lining the basement corridor as well as the Sheridan Suite Box Office area, is Jonty's Lockdown Library with nearly 2,000 donated books for sale, raising much-needed funds for the playhouse with a once-a-month collection date.

We are still a home for reading and readers - every production has its readthrough and the selection of shows for each season is the result of many hours of reading, as the Reading and Casting Committee sift through scripts over the Autumn months.

I'm writing this on the day that Ilkley Library re-opens after a 7-month refurbishment and we have until the end

of the year to continue the celebrations of this National Year of Reading. A leading role is brilliantly played by the Grove Bookshop, a treasure trove which also holds author talks and workshops as well as a monthly book club. They used the Wildman Studio recently as the shop was too small to hold the numbers booking in for a talk. And of course, there is our regular visitor - The Ilkley Literature Festival – taking over the whole ground floor of the Playhouse through October – talks, book signings and chats over cake and a cuppa.

Meanwhile we have our own part to play, celebrating books, stories, poetry and song as well as plays – using the power of the stage to bring them to life.

Our recent story-telling version of Tajinder Singh Hayer's play *North Country*, put the reading of a book centre stage as three characters read the story of their life, with scenes remembered leaping into youthful life with young performers. Post show discussions included the author Taj, members of the original 2016 production, the Grove Bookshop and members of the cast who are themselves writers – playwrights, a journalist and a poet. More on this in the next issue!

Some of our actors prefer a project which involves reading, not memorising lines, or one which demands less time and can work around their own life commitments ... or one which involves the spoken word but maybe as story, poem or monologue. Is that you? Or someone you know? Get in touch with us – the Fringe at Ilkley Playhouse – and take part in readings, *Bard in the Yard*, the 8x8x8 festival of short plays and more.

For the first time this year we are presenting a Halloween evening on **31st October at 7.30pm**, tales of suspense and disbelief, at the atmospheric Manor

House – our *Bard in the Yard* partner. IP Players will be reading stories and poems - tickets are £10. We are also having an hour of spooky tales for children and families there that same day at 2pm. No need to book for this free event – just turn up! For more information and to book tickets for the evening event, visit the Manor House website:

www.ilkleymanorhouse.org/what's-on/

Did you know that one of the five policy aims of our iP Fringe is to: Encourage New Writing. So, the 8x8x8 festival (another lockdown project) isn't just a playground for actors and directors every two years; all the 8-minute plays are newly written, previously unpublished or produced.

Over the next few months, the *North Country* project continues with some practical workshops – spoken word, poetry, stories and scenes. So, if you missed the 8x8x8 submission date you can still flex those creative muscles in good company. Keep in touch if you're interested. Contact Chrissie at **chrissie.ilkley@gmail.com**, or keep in touch via our socials!

Chrissie Poulter

A Request for Poster Distributors

We are seeking volunteer poster distributors for Ilkley. The role would entail delivering around 15 posters promoting our forthcoming productions to shops and businesses around Ilkley for which a list is provided.

We have a rota system so it would be every 2-3 months. If interested please contact **info@ilkleyplayhouse.co.uk** or **01943 609539**.



COMING SOON

For your further Entertainment...



Stagefright Comedy Club

Strictly 16+

Acts are subject to change. Refunds are only available if the event is cancelled.

Showcasing the finest acts on the UK and international comedy circuit in the intimate surroundings of the Wildman Studio, the club has become a staple of the Ilkley entertainment diary.

24th October 8.00pm

Bobby Mair

'Capable of greatness' - Time Out.

Canadian wunderkind and web sensation as seen on *8 Out Of 10 Cats*, *Roast Battle*, *The Stand-Up Sketch Show*, *Pointless Celebrities* & *Never Mind The Buzzcocks*. He's opened for Doug Stanhope, Bill Burr and Bill Maher, appeared three times at *Just For Laughs* in Montreal and once appeared on *Katie Hopkins TV Show* just to give the fee from the show to everyone she hates.

Justina Seselskaite

'Simply brilliant' - Micky Flanagan.

British Comedy Guide Talent Award winner and *So You Think You're Funny?* finalist with her cheerily engaging but clever sharp wit.

Jack Wood

'Weirdly funny' - Notts Comedy Review.

BBC New Comedy Awards short lister with 3M likes across TikTok and Instagram.

Laurence Tuck

'Stunningly original jokes, it's been years since I've seen a new comedian with jokes this good' - Adam Bloom

Mark Smith

Serving up cheeky innuendo, fast-paced crowd work and stories that are as outrageous as they are relatable.

Compere - Anthony J. Brown

'Stole the show, headlining with his razor-sharp wit and deadpan delivery' - Hucknall Dispatch.

Tickets £14.00 • Wildman Studio

Future Dates: 6th Feb, 3rd April, 29th May, 3rd July • Acts TBC



Ten Fields

Celebrate a decade of soaring melodies and unforgettable live performances as Ilkley's own Ten Fields mark 10 years together with a special hometown show at Ilkley Playhouse.

Over the past ten years, this five-piece band has built a reputation as a compelling live act, blending tight musicianship with rich, dynamic arrangements. Their melodic, guitar-led sound draws inspiration from the timeless songwriting of Crowded House, Fleetwood Mac and Jackson Browne, while echoing the expansive textures of The War on Drugs.

Members of the band have had music featured in independent film and television and have received national airplay on BBC Radio 2 and BBC Radio 6

Music. They have supported artists including Chris Difford and Glen Tilbrook of Squeeze, ABC, Abigail Washburn and Simon Felice, and have performed at festivals and venues across the UK and Europe.

Reviewer Quotes:

"Ten Fields have an Americana flavour, to both Crowded House and REM, both bands came to mind as I was listening. ..."

(FATEA magazine)

"A cut above the average indie folk band"

(R2 Magazine)

Friday 23rd October 2026 7.30pm

Tickets £12.00 • Wildman Studio



The Music of John Denver

Chris Bannister is returning to the Wildman Studio with his tribute to 'The Music of John Denver', featuring a set that includes both new songs and some of the Christmas songs that John loved to perform live.

For over 15 years, Chris has toured the world, keeping John Denver's legacy alive with some of his most beloved hits, including *Rocky Mountain High*, *Annie's Song*, *Calypso*, *Leaving On A Jet Plane* and many more.

This acoustic show highlights the lyrics that made John Denver one of the best-selling solo artists of all time. Chris's distinctive vocal style has often drawn comparisons to the legendary American singer, but from the very beginning, he has maintained his own identity, choosing not to imitate John's visual performance

style. He is recognised as one of the finest interpreters of John Denver's music worldwide.

Friday 13th November 2026 7.30pm

Tickets £15.00 • Wildman Studio



35 years of The Hall Brothers!

Brothers Nick and Duncan Hall bring their signature mix of soaring sibling harmonies and virtuoso guitar playing to this special anniversary show. Performing together as The Hall Brothers since 1991, they're celebrating 35 years of their distinctive brand of folk rock. Whether as a duo or with other acts (including Nick with Plumhall and Duncan with the Rob Dylan Band), their live shows are always something special - and this one promises to be no exception.

They'll be joined by long-time collaborator John Carey (fiddle), along with a powerhouse rhythm section: Chris Bunyan (drums/percussion) and Ricky Silvers (bass). Audiences will enjoy music spanning their full musical journey, from intimate acoustic duo to full folk-rock five-piece.

"The Hall Brothers. Wow! What can I say? You were AMAZING!! What a fantastic night of music, energy... entertainment and professional showmanship." — Wilfrid's Folk Club, Ripon

**Saturday 14th November 2026 7.30pm
(bar from 7.00pm)**

Tickets £12.00 • Wildman Studio



Fire & Rain

Once in a while something magical happens when a group of musicians come together to perform music they truly love. Fire & Rain are not a tribute band, but a group of like-minded musicians united by their love of the music of James Taylor.

The band formed in 2013 when Tom Townsend and Bob Walker were invited by a local promoter to create an homage to Taylor's timeless songs – an opportunity not to be missed.

Bob was commissioned to transcribe and arrange the music, the band came together, and years of gigs later Fire & Rain continue to go from strength to strength, bringing warmth, musicianship and genuine affection to this wonderful catalogue of songs.

You don't have to be a fan of James Taylor to enjoy Fire & Rain – but the chances are you will be by the end of the night.

Friday 20th November 2026 7.30pm

Tickets £17.50 • Wildman Studio

Trappings

by Paula Boyle

Directed by Jenny Morton

Technical Director: Paul Chewins

A Rise and Howl Collective production

Be there for the launch of a new play written by Paula Boyle in collaboration with Kelly Downes, Kate Maddison-Greenwell, Hetty Steele, Alex Whitaker

and Will. Directed by Jenny Morton.

Four women await the arrival of a new inmate, 'fresh meat', on the first day of their group therapy sessions.

Dystopian, witty and darkly comic each person has their own story, strangely recognisable; as old as storytelling itself but disturbingly still heartbreakingly relevant.

*"bat s*** mental; Classics meets Orange is the New Black meets sci-fi. I love it"*

Age 14 +

Strong language

**Friday 27th and Saturday 28th November
7.30pm 2026**

Tickets £10.00 • Wildman Studio

Divas, Disco & Icons

A dazzling, high-energy theatre spectacular celebrating the greatest disco anthems and powerhouse vocal legends of all time.

Starring acclaimed vocalist Sandy Smith alongside the sensational Briony Gunn, this electrifying show features iconic hits from Cher, Tina Turner, Donna Summer, Gloria Gaynor, Whitney Houston, Barbra Streisand, Shirley Bassey and ABBA.

Packed with huge songs including *I Will Survive*, *Dancing Queen*, *It's Raining Men*, *Simply The Best* and *Skyfall*, audiences can expect stunning vocals, glamour, nostalgia and non-stop feel-good energy.

A spectacular night of big voices, legendary hits and unforgettable entertainment that will have you singing and dancing all the way to the finale.

Big voices. Big hits. Big night out.

Please note that this is a seated event.

Friday 15th January 2027 7.30pm

Tickets £17.50 • Wildman Studio

..... Important Dates for Your Diary!

2-18 Oct	Ilkley Literature Festival	Wildman & Various Venues	
23 Oct	Ten Fields	Wildman	7.30pm
24 Oct	Stagefright Comedy Club	Wildman	8.00pm
29 Oct-7 Nov	Pressure	Wharfeside	7.30pm
		<i>Main Stage Production</i>	
6-8 Nov	LTG Northern Regional Conference		
13 Nov	The Music of John Denver	Wildman	7.30pm
18 Nov	Members Night - SLP College Cabaret	Wildman	7.30pm
14 Nov	The Hall Brothers	Wildman	7.30pm
20 Nov	Fire & Rain	Wildman	7.30pm
21 Nov	Christmas Social - Quiz Night	Wildman	7.30pm
27-28 Nov	Trappings	Wildman	7.30pm
28 Nov	Greenroom Christmas Showcase	Wharfeside	11.00am
3-12 Dec	Around the World in 80 Days	Wharfeside	7.30pm
		<i>Main Stage Production</i>	
15 Jan	Divas, Discos & Icons	Wildman	7.30pm
16 Jan	Holly Taymar sings Eva Cassidy & Joni Mitchell	Wildman	7.30pm
21-30 Jan	Pack of Lies	Wharfeside	7.30pm
		<i>Main Stage Production</i>	
5 Feb	Jon Palmer Acoustic Band	Wildman	7.30pm
6 Feb	Stagefright Comedy Club	Wildman	8.00pm
16-20 Feb	Hamlet	Wildman	7.30pm
24 Feb	New Season 2027-28 Launch Night	Wildman	7.30pm
5 Mar	Roald Dahl's Charlie and The Chocolate Factory	Wildman	7.00pm
6-7 Mar	Roald Dahl's Charlie and The Chocolate Factory	Wildman	2.00pm
		<i>Junior Greenroom Production</i>	

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For online booking and more information go to our events page at
www.ilkleypayhouse.co.uk. Telephone bookings on 01943 609539
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If you would like to contribute in any way to the Newsletter please
email: marie.ilkleypgh@gmail.com
I look forward to hearing from you.