

SOME RECOMMENDED READING

If you're looking for something other than screen-based entertainment, but still want to immerse yourself in the world of theatre here are a few suggestions for great reads! If you'd like to add to the list send your recommendations to contactstirlingplayers@gmail.com

***Mrs Jordan's Profession: The story of a great actress and a future King* by Claire Tomalin**



This brilliant book is one that has an Adelaide connection, and a connection to the Stirling Players, too!

When Claire Tomalin's biography of Dora Jordan was published, it brought serious attention to the little known story of the greatest Shakespearean comic actress of the late 18thC and early 19thC. Tomalin, a long-time editor of The Times Literary Supplement, brings Dora to life, from her humble beginnings, walking between theatres across the Yorkshire moors (with a company of 30 or so actors "and assorted children" and sets on a wagon), to her arrival at Drury Lane under the directorship of Richard Sheridan. It was there that she came to the attention of the Duke of Clarence, becoming his mistress and, over the next 23 years, bearing his 10 illegitimate children while never giving up her career.

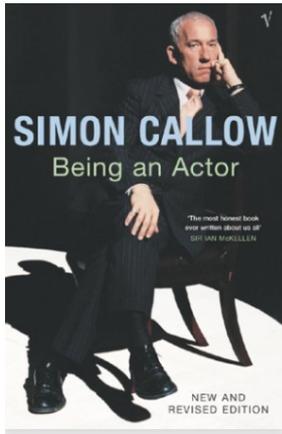
Impeccably researched and readable, this biography offers the reader so much: a fascinating story of an individual, a history of English theatre, a royal romance and an entrée into a past milieu.

The Adelaide connection? Dora's Duke unexpectedly became King William IV and married Queen Adelaide. Tomalin's account of this, and its impact on Dora and her children is enough to move the reader to tears.



And the Stirling Players' connection? Dora played Miss Sullen in *The Beaux' Stratagem* at Drury Lane in 1802. We presented the Australian premiere production in 2015 to great acclaim, with Anna Bampton as Miss Sullen, seen here (right) with Kate van der Horst as Dorinda.

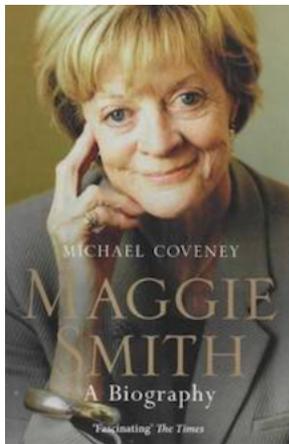
***Being An Actor* by Simon Callow**



Simon Callow's long acting career has run the gamut of theatre, film and television, in such diverse roles as the kilted Gareth in "Four Weddings and A Funeral", Mozart in The National Theatre's *Amadeus*, to The Duke of Sandringham in *Outlander*. Along the way he has also written books, directed operas, conducted choirs and narrated audiobooks.

But there is more to his memoir than an account of his career. What he articulates so beautifully for non-actors is the essential nature of those who act, and what he offers to actors and non-actors alike, is a fantastically entertaining insight into the UK's theatre scene.

***Maggie Smith: A Biography* by Michael Coveney**



Michael Coveney was a theatre critic for major UK publications and websites for more than 40 years, and what makes this authorised biography so riveting is the archive of material he has to draw on, and the breadth of his knowledge of productions and actors, such that he can compare closely Smith's casting or performances with those of other actors he has seen in the same role.

Given Smith's long and varied career, this makes for an unputdownable read.

***And That's Not All* by Joan Plowright**



In writing about her own illustrious career, Joan Plowright has given us a unique insight into mid-century English theatre and beyond, with her career spanning The Royal Court, Chichester and The National Theatre, of which her husband, Sir Laurence Olivier, was founding director.

She writes about management of the companies, and their struggles, the selection of plays, the casting of actors and the style of directors. Her chapter on working with Ingmar Bergman is a gem. But she is also able to convey something of the ordinary dilemmas, even for the famous:

"The next two leading ladies to join the National Theatre, Maggie Smith and Geraldine McEwan, joined the company expressly to take risks, to develop their talents and extend their range. We all shared the same dressing room and those walls must have soaked a whole history of first night nerves, and disappointments. I remember Geraldine lying

prostrate on the divan before opening night of The White Devil, and murmuring, 'Oh God, these first nights, Joan.' I remember Maggie, on the night of The Beaux Stratagem trying to keep afloat because of an acute ear infection. 'Just let it be over soon' was all she could manage. It was the day on which her Oscar for The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie had been announced and it should have been a night for celebration”.

From her treasure trove of letters and her diaries, she draws the reader, with her unpretentious style, through the years of performance, dramas, rivalries and triumphs, all set against the background of her life as the wife of the greatest actor of his generation.

With Nails: The Film Diaries of Richard E. Grant

The Wah-Wah Diaries by Richard E. Grant



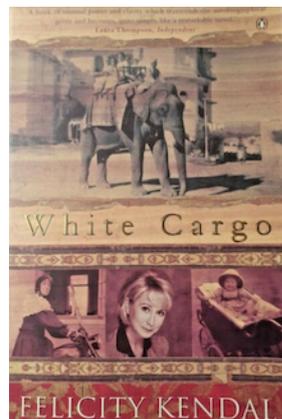
“When Richard E. Grant was 10, he witnessed his mother commit adultery in the back seat of a car with his father's best friend, which subsequently led to his parents' divorce. This event inspired Grant to keep a daily diary, which he has continued to do ever since.”

How fortunate are we, as readers, to be privy to the beautifully written, insightful and, at times, painful accounts of his days: from his beginnings in the cult movie *Withnail and I*, to the five-year struggle to direct the story of his African boyhood, and his mother’s desertion, in the film, *Wah Wah*, through to his career experiences in Hollywood with the likes of two Martins, Scorsese and Steve.



He is an observer of people, by turns funny, witty and gossipy, with an amazing enthusiasm in the face of the highs and lows of an actor’s life.

These two wonderful books can be read in any order.



White Cargo by Felicity Kendal

“One day I was literally thrown onto the stage. I must have been about nine years old. The Company already had Macbeth in the repertoire and my father thought it a good idea to set me to work on Saturdays. That way we could incorporate the MacDuff wife and son scene that he had had to cut for want of a small boy to play the son.”

Felicity Kendal tends to be known through her television work in *The Good Life*, but she has played almost every leading

Shakespearean role, and worked with directors like Ayckbourn, Shaffer, Stoppard and Frayn.

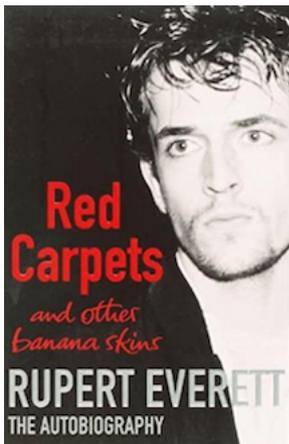
You could say she has theatre in her genes, with a mother who was still putting costumes away on a night she went into labour, and a father who played stages from Drury Lane to New Delhi. What makes her memoir so special is her entertaining account of the life of her family's touring company of Shakespeare-wallahs, taking culture to the princely states of India.

Hers was a magical childhood and a busy one.:

One of Felicity's important jobs is looking after the props. As we can't carry props for 15 plays, Felicity is responsible for borrowing what we don't have on any given day. At six she was helping, at eight I gave her her first salary book, and now at eleven, she gets ten rupees a month which she writes down in her little green book.

Her father's diary entry also hints at the complex nature of his relationship with his daughter, another theme of this wonderful book. Kendall apparently began writing it at his bedside as he lay in a coma.

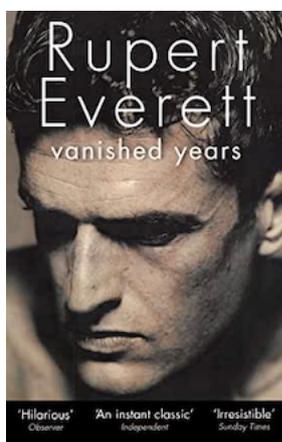
***Red Carpets and other Banana Skins* by Rupert Everett**



Be prepared for a wild ride through Rupert's world. The film sets, the theatre rehearsals, the stress of working on the West End, and his frenetic off stage life.

Everett is another actor who writes brilliantly, recalling his life and the people in it in exquisite detail. He is funny, candid, camp and shocking, but you can't help liking him, and this reader came away with a greater understanding and respect for him, his generous spirit and, above all, his *joie de vivre*.

***Vanished Years* by Rupert Everett**



"'You were such a solitary child,' Granny says dreamily. 'Very quiet. You always played alone. You hated birthday parties. Now I read in Hello! that you're the life and soul of every party. What happened?'" 'Life,' I reply. 'Life changes one.'

Rupert Everett's second volume of memoirs presents this life as a series of stories or, rather, a series of memories, anecdotes and reflections that enable the reader to dip in and out of the collection (and his life) at random. His writing moves from the hilarious, to the moving, to the acidic, especially when dealing with celebrities like Madonna. But, regardless of the tone, or the subject he never fails to mesmerise with his way with words.

