

# Catholic Association of Performing Arts

## Newsletter May/June 2020

Hello everyone

It's wonderful to be back and produce a CaAPA Newsletter!

We pray that everyone this reaches is safe and is cared for. As the lockdown slowly eases, we are now resuming something of a normal service during these very testing times!

Apologies for not producing a Newsletter during May but several practical problems prevented this. Now however CaAPA has invested in cutting-edge technology (a new laptop!), which they have entrusted to me, and I am now ready and able to report any of your future activities, plans, thoughts and messages for the delectation and delight of all our members!

*(Please send any messages to [kennethmichaels@hotmail.com](mailto:kennethmichaels@hotmail.com) for inclusion in future newsletters).*

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But first some very welcome and timely words from our Chairman -  
**Richard O'Callaghan:**

*Chairman's message:*

**Dear fellow members,**

**How strange and unnerving everything is, and has been really for three or four years, but especially for the last four months or so. What will people say about 2020 in fifty years?**

**My heart goes out to all of you who have suffered from Covid 19 or who have lost loved ones or who are struggling to cope with self-isolation, lockdown, having difficulty making ends**

**meet or who are missing the hugs, kisses and warmth of children, grandchildren, family and friends.**

**May God bless us all; He loves each one of us infinitely more than we can realise.**

**Jesus I trust in You! Jesus I trust in You! Jesus I trust in You!**

**With love to you all,**

**Richard O'Callaghan**

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We hope you are all coping as well as is possible and we would dearly like to hear your lockdown experiences – the challenges of being in a restricted space with family - or perhaps alone; the kindness of friends or neighbours; perhaps you've volunteered in your communities, had to care for children or home-learning teenagers, or elderly relatives; taken part in Zoom meetings (religious or dramatic - or both!), witnessed the extraordinary work of the NHS staff and other key workers. All of your contributions will be very welcome!

We had hoped that none of our members would be affected by the loss of a loved one during this terrible pandemic, but sadly this is not so. This is a very moving personal testimony from **Robin Marchal:**

**Hospital Chaplains.**

I picked up a gentle voice message with a short, touching invitation.

I called her.

She said, "You're Teddy's brother?"

"Yes", I replied.

'Thank you', she said. "I have the phone against his ear ... please say a few words".

I did. "You are loved by so many ... we are all thinking of you ... keep happy ..."

"Lovely." she said.

Our hearing, it seems, is probably the last of our senses to cease functioning.

I know of two others who have had a similar experience. I imagine, in the current crisis, there are hundreds.

My heart and deep eternal thanks go out to all, heavily masked Chaplains who daily and nightly, risk their own lives at the bedsides of the dying. God bless them all.

Thanks Kenn for suggesting that I share this.

P.S. In Corpus Christi Church our CaAPA Memorial Book is 'housed' in an oak, glass-topped piece of furniture. Brother Ted made that.

Thanks Bro ...RIP

Robin.

And thank you Robin for sharing this.

On a lighter note:

**Mgr Vladimir Felzmann** has suggested that you might contribute to the next newsletter (in July) some of your funny or most embarrassing (!) experiences - either on-stage or off! We could all do with cheering up during these difficult times!!

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## **CaAPA Memorial book**

**May**

1992 Joyce Carpenter

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1992 Maria Brown

1995 Viscount Furness: Vice President

2001 Richard Shaw

2007 Charles Pemberton: Vice President

2009 Joan Campion

2019 Martin King

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## **June**

1998 William (Bill) Igoe: Vice President

2000 Cardinal Basil Hume OSB: President

2002 Mary Allen

2009 Danny La Rue: Vice President

*Eternal rest grant unto THEM O Lord,*

*And let perpetual light shine upon them,*

*May they rest in peace,*

*Amen.*



Retrieved from The Stage recently. Does anyone know the date these lovely people were 'snapped'?!

Another snippet from the archive (10 March 2005):

*50 years ago:*

The Pope has appointed Alan Rye, honorary secretary of the Catholic Stage Guild, a Knight of the Order of St Gregory in recognition of his work organising pageants. (The Stage, March 17 1955, Chit Chat).

Talking of pageants and things theatrical it is hoped that CaAPA will again be able to mount an evening of short plays this Autumn. In the past three years a small committee have met and selected several short (up to 12 minutes) playlets on a specific theme and these have been rehearsed with members of CaAPA, and other professionals, for a very entertaining and thought-provoking evening at the CAA in Covent Garden. Past themes have been the role of Women in the Church,

Refugees and the Homeless. All monies raised go to a nominated charity – previously a convent in Essex, the SVP and, last year, Westminster Cathedral’s homeless charity The Passage. Each charity provides a speaker to explain the work of their organisation.

This year’s theme is to be ***Action for the Church in Need*** and you will be able to find out about the excellent work this charity does on their website (*Founded in 1947 as a Catholic aid organisation for war refugees and recognised as a Pontifical Foundation since 2011, Aid to the **Church in Need** is dedicated to the service of Christians around the world, through information, prayer and **action**, wherever they are persecuted or oppressed or suffering material **need**.*

[acnuk.org](http://acnuk.org) ).

We hope all you budding writers will start to think about this theme and start creating!

You can use up to about 5 actors and we would like to have a closing date of 1 October. This should give every successful writer time to find a director and cast (CaAPA can help with this!) and even have time for a rehearsal!

Use your time in lockdown! Wednesday 25 November is the intended date, but this is dependent of course on the CAA having reopened by then.

We also have a very tentative date for the Christmas meal – Tuesday 8 December – but this has not been confirmed yet and is subject to the above caveat.

During these distressing times you might find this article by William Cash in *The Tablet* interesting:

I hadn’t realised until I began re-reading the Canterbury Tales that Chaucer’s 14th-century “road trip” poem – 29 pilgrims heading off from the Tabard Inn in Southwark for a story-telling spring jaunt to Canterbury – would never have been written were it not for the Florence plague of 1348. It was this disaster that inspired Boccaccio to compose his Decameron – a social comedy based on the idea of a small group of young Florentines exchanging witty, human and risqué stories to pass their time of exile from the ravaged city.

Chaucer read Boccaccio closely and may even have met him: working as a diplomat for the English court, Chaucer travelled to Italy in the 1370s. He was a part-time poet.

Having hardly left our ancient hamlet of Upton Cressett, in Shropshire, for several weeks, I am reminded how today's forced isolation has enabled those of us lucky enough to be holed up in remote country boltholes – not unlike being snowed in for weeks – to experience the joys of an almost medieval cycle of life, in which people rarely travelled beyond their immediate landscapes and feudal villages. As a result, our forebears were more connected to each other, to the identity of their landscape, and, I think, to God.

Living like a medieval Freeman has re-focused both mind and spirit. When you aren't rushing to catch a train, watching a Google calendar fill up months in advance with engagements, attending endless social events, and dealing with an avalanche of daily emails, you start to view the "Wheel of Life" – or Rota Fortuna – in a different way. I have found reading Chaucer in my very rusty Middle English, connecting back to the clearly structured medieval view of the world, has been refreshing for the soul. A world in which God came first and everything else had its natural rank and position.

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Nobody could ever describe Chaucer as a rootless Davos-style global "Citizen of Nowhere". I'm ashamed to say that I have often felt like one as I rush around (pointlessly) on business or just social rat-racing.

The more I've self-secluded in our little hamlet, visiting when possible our tiny Norman church of St Michael and its lead tub font with carved sides that feel like rough stone cheekbones, or tramping alone through our deserted medieval village (we were also visited by the Black Death), I've felt a strange spiritual kinship with the medieval mindset. It's as if I've stepped into some morality play where one is forced to look at the world – and one's values, and life – differently.

Suddenly the invisible and "unseen" is more important than the "seen". Yet the paradox is that neither diplomat-poet like Chaucer, nor a humble author/publisher such as myself, can survive for long in self-isolation.

Chaucer sat at the high table of what historian Marc Girouard calls the "high-low" social mess of medieval society, which was probably less elitist and money-shielded than today's apartheid of the Rich v the Rest.

The reason Chaucer, the upper-middle class Christian son of a wine merchant with court connections, became such a court celebrity was because he was a poet of the world.

When he writes in “The Knight’s Tale” that the nobleman’s cotton tunic had rust-mark stains from wearing chain mail after coming back from war, we feel we are stepping into the 14th century world of the Canterbury pilgrimage; although Chaucer makes it clear that most soi disant “pilgrims” regarded such a journey as a form of holiday, or even a marriage market (the Wife of Bath has gone through five husbands, and is maybe looking for a sixth).

Like those today paying expensive tour companies to have their designer ruck-sacks ferried to comfortable hotels as they “walk the Camino” in Spain, Chaucer’s pilgrims are driven by baser motives than the piety they declare as they ride along in the April sunshine, mocking each other and exchanging bawdy gossip. Plus ca change.

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The Canterbury Tales are chastening today as a ribald satire on the very idea of going on a pilgrimage, a form of travel often revived in times of plague or war. Indeed, the Herald plans to offer a reader’s walk to Canterbury in the footsteps of Chaucer – once the Covid-19 travel ban is lifted – to mark the 850th anniversary of the murder of Archbishop Thomas Becket.

One tragedy of the pandemic is that Canterbury cathedral is postponing its events to encourage pilgrims to visit the famous cloisters where Becket was murdered in 1170. Exhibits were to have included the famous blood splattered “tunic” that Becket reputedly wore, and which was being sent over from Rome. This holy relic can usually only be seen inside a glass reliquary in the Papal Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore.

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Chaucer’s art was forged the hard way. Not just on the actual battlefield (Edward III paid a £16 ransom for him after he was taken prisoner near Rheims), but more importantly, he had to fight even greater life trials. In November 1386, through no fault of his own, he found himself suddenly out of a job as the king’s chief wool customs officer. He was “denounced”, forced to resign and turfed out of his London home. He then began seven years of penniless seclusion in Kent, cut off from his courtly audience.

Yet Divine Providence works in mysterious ways. It was this reversal of fortune that was to make Chaucer the father of English poetry, as he was forced to write for a wholly new audience outside the court: the public. Despite their racy fabliaux comedy, the tales were born out of adversity.

Although never rich – Chaucer’s last work was a begging letter to the king called “The Complaint to His Purse” – he had at least self-invested in that most critical form of capital for an artist: human experience.

*(William Cash is chairman of the Catholic Herald)*

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**Michael Slater** reminds us that one of the benefits of membership of CaAPA is as below:

*“Take advantage of the Club for Acts & Actors in the heart of Covent Garden on Bedford Street.*

*Open from 12 noon on weekdays for lunch and the bar for drinks - including tea & coffee!!!*

*You are allowed entry until 7 pm but you must have your CaAPA membership card with you.*

*This does not allow you to take a guest; however you can ask a member if they would be kind enough to sign your guest in.*

*Needless to say the club is closed at present until the lockdown is over.”*

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**Michael** also states that we will publish a formal statement about Data protection in the next Newsletter.

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We look forward to receiving your lockdown stories, amusing on-stage and off- tales and any items you think might be of interest to the members.

(Once again, please send any messages to [kennethmichaels@hotmail.com](mailto:kennethmichaels@hotmail.com) for inclusion in future newsletters).

In the meantime please stay safe and may God bless and protect you, your families and friends.

\*\*\*\*\*Stop Press!!\*\*\*\*\*

**Michael** has also just sent this valuable information:

www: [indcatholicnews.com/news/39170](http://indcatholicnews.com/news/39170) click and you will find

Mass and prayer resources. ICN weekday Mass and Mass on Sunday and other services.