



ART DIRECTORS (Ghost light) BLOG

Hi

When will theatres be allowed to re-open?

Quite simply – we don't know the date. Along with the easing of social distances and opening up of pubs, hotels, hairdressers, cinemas and museums from July 4th, can open their doors too but not for live performances. The Culture Secretary, Oliver Dowden, has said that live performances will resume 'as soon as that becomes practical' – but suggested date as yet. Creative ways of using performance venues to live-stream performances are being explored by some organisations and it looks as though open-air events are going to be allowed before indoor ones.

What then is possible now and how is the QMT planning to meet that challenge?

Whilst some regional sister groups will not be presenting anything at all until the 2021, at the QMT we have a working party looking at possible opening scenarios following guidelines. At the heart of everything is health and safety and so we have risk-assessed the QMT. There is a clear protocol in place including people registering when entering the QMT, what areas may be used, and cleaning procedures after any activity. We are exploring how the theatre could function as an attended venue and whether presentations onstage will be viable with limited distancing.

In fact, we have now cast our first show planned, a two-hander by Simon Stephens (writer of the play *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time*). *Heisenberg: The Uncertainty Principle*. will be directed by one of our most experienced directors, Keith Swainston. Rehearsals are under way (socially-distanced of course) and this will be available for performance from late September, guidelines permitting.

Will anyone even want to go to the theatre to once the government allows reopening?

Well this of course is the \$64,000 question. My best guess is that attendance will be affected – at least initially. People are rightly cautious about rushing back to potentially crowded places and shielding will continue to be in place for those who are deemed vulnerable for some time. Seating at the QMT will be cut but so all the rules about the proximity of audience members can be followed and we will work as hard as we can to follow the rules regarding distancing and cleaning spaces and seats to the letter. Even with these necessary constraints in place, I am sure there is an audience out there hungry to watch live theatre again.

From now on too, we plan to pay extra licence fees to professionally video each show so that even if we are not able put that show on stage, then we can stream it online as a QMT Live event. For those of you that watched the QMT Live event *The Importance of Being Earnest* recently, you will be aware that an excellent video production (made by our Business Manager, Jules Newman Turner, who also hosted the event), may be a potent alternative to attending a live performance.

Any road up – at some point all live venues will be open and then we can properly test the waters about getting our audiences back. Let's not fool ourselves though; life will be different and the post-lockdown world will not have quite the same landscape as the one we knew before March 2020. There is a learning curve as to precisely how we function in this new world and we are well aware of that. One thing though we are committed to is to keep live performances going in whatever way we can within that new structure. We hope more than anything that you will want to work with us and continue to support the Theatre and the Society in these novel and very challenging times.

Stay safe. Enjoy life.

Rory Reynolds

Arts Director

How the QMT livens things up:



QMT LIVE 2020

QMT LIVE launched on the QMT Facebook page on Thursday the 25th of June. This first event broadcast the 2019 QMT sell out show “The Importance of Being Earnest” to our members and the wider public. *(If you missed it, you can still catch it on the [QMT Facebook page](#)).*

The evening opened with a short interview between Julian Newman Turner and the play’s director Rory Reynolds, followed by the stage show as filmed by last year.



But “Ernie” was just the first in a program of events planned for the summer.

Look out for more Thursdays of QMT Live entertainment:

- Short plays, shortlisted 5-minute plays & short plays written by Bancroft Players members
- A program of creative workshops including
 - ◇ **Finding your voice** by Alison Hancock
 - ◇ **Technical & lighting** by Chris Lane
 - ◇ **Design** by Rosemary Bianchi and Christine Neal

Watch out for further program announcements via email , Facebook & Instagram

Thursday 9 JULY 7:45PM Finding your Voice

CREATIVE WORKSHOP

by Alison Hancock

Join Alison Hancock, an experienced Bancroft Players Member and voice specialist, who is leading an interactive online workshop on Zoom to help those who would like to improve their voice techniques. Open to members as well as non-members.

There is limited availability so reserve your place early.
Email: getinvolved@qmt.org.uk

Thursday 16 JULY 7:45PM

**FACEBOOK EVENT &
SHORT PLAYS**

'The Corona Chronicles'

Written by Emma Northcott

PREMIERE

Live Facebook event on the QMT Facebook page in which we will be chatting to Emma about her new short plays created during lockdown before showing two of her comedies, recorded specially by Bancroft Players for this premiere.

More ways to liven things up:

BP LIVE 2020

Members evenings full of fun & entertainment

BP Live is an increasingly popular way of staying creative, connected to theatre and to each other. It's the virtual space where short plays, sketches and monologues are performed by members for members.

Gather around a PC or phone to enjoy exiting performances of fun 5-minute plays, plays by well known playwrights, or plays written by our own talented members.

It is on most Mondays. So it back to be entertained, or take part as a director, actor, writer or host another Monday.

Watch out for email and Facebook announcements to see what's on.



Natalie Gordon & Keith Swainston perform an extract from Educating Rita during Monday's BP Live members evening

@nickipope

Every Monday during lockdown I have been hosting BP Live - where members of the @theqmt get together via Zoom, and perform new plays members have written, or scenes from published texts. This evening we had a new piece, followed by Torch Song Trilogy, A Very, Very, Very Dark Matter and Educating Rita! It gets bigger ab bolder every week! Huzzah!!

#theqmt #theatre #keepthestagelightburning #hitchin

THE QUEEN MOTHER THEATRE (THE QMT)

NEXT UP IN BP LIVE:



**BP LIVE
2020**

Monday 13 July at 8 PM

Come and join us for an exciting evening of re-imagined performances from members who fancy a turn at something a bit different. An evening of songs and scenes with a twist!

Join us via Zoom

Meeting ID: **857 2016 2598**

Meeting Password: **568521**

Invite your friends and settle down - Curtain up at 8pm!

Songs | Members Miscast | Scenes



An eye on the next season:

The first real live indoor performance the QMT will offer is an complex and entertaining 2 hander by written by multi award winning playwright Simon Stephen. Heisenberg: the Uncertainty Principle offers 80 minutes of exciting theatre about the natural unpredictability of what happens when two very different people meet and strike up a relationship.

We are glad to announce that two actors have been cast and are now rehearsing with director Keith Swainston, in readiness for when the QMT doors can open once more this autumn (even if we aren't certain of the date).

Heisenberg:

The uncertainty principle

certain to open

at the QMT's next season

Cast:

Georgie Burns - Claudia O'Connell
Alex Priest - Rory Reynolds

In the Spotlight....

Nicki Pope

Nicki is the Bancroft Players Production manager and one of our leading directors. She came to the QMT in 1993. Nicki had already acted in Fringe shows in London and coming back to Hitchin she was looking for a theatre to join. Nicki auditioned for *Macbeth* and was cast as one of the witches. Before taking up the director's baton, Nicki acted in other shows: *Oliver!* as well as *Steel Magnolias* – both favourite shows for her.



Now she is perhaps best known as one of the most prolific and best directors working at the QMT. The first show she directed was a massive hit at the theatre – *An Evening with Gary Linaker*. Other notable productions are *Hamlet* (2006), *Flare Path* (2017) and most recently, *Anne Boleyn* (2019)

Nicki has co-founded her own theatre company (Big Red Fun Bus) with Elliott Bunker and they have produced many plays together. She and Elliott also created *Cabaroke* – which one year provided the entertainment for the National Theatre's Christmas party!

What's your favourite show?

The show I loved directing was *Hamlet*. It seemed to me the most complete realisation of an idea I had and we got a terrific cast and backstage team – all working together. I edited the four-and-a-half hour show down to under-3 hours and we set it in the world of celebrity. The set, which was quite experimental, had a swimming pool as part of it. Crazy!

If you could re-run your life – is there anything you might do a bit differently?

I suppose I would like to have taken the plunge into professional theatre. I had a chance – I was offered a place on the Central School's director's course – but the time wasn't right for me to put my life on hold and go for it. I'd love to be running – I don't know – a regional theatre like The Royal in Northampton, or perhaps even a fringe venue in London such as the Union Theatre. What I love to do is work in collaboration with other artistic people – to build up a team who trust and like each other. I love all that – working together with talented people to produce a show that is in every way unique.

What's the craziest thing you've ever done?

At 23 I packed in my job to work at a ski resort in Switzerland. One morning a group of us got up at 5am and hiked to the top of a glacier, watching the sun rise. We then took our lives in our hands by skiing back off-piste 3km down to the village. It was all really dangerous....

If you could take one record to a desert island, which one would it be?

Definitely David Bowie – he's the love of my life! Probably *Ziggy Stardust*. I was obsessed with him when I was girl and even wrote a GCSE paper on his life! I went to so many of his concerts. He was such a risk-taker musically and he loved to collaborate with others – Brian Eno, Mick Ronson and so on. He even joined Lindsey Kemp's mime company and that was a whole different story. I remember seeing him at the Dominion theatre once when he just danced! I mean he covered every base. What an artist!

What's your favourite quote?

Well it's a bit obscure but I was in *The Critic* by Sheridan when I was in London and one of the lines stays with me: '*Ever while you live, Thames – go between your banks!*' It's a brilliant comedy, and in the context of the play, that's a superb comic line [the character in the play-within-the-play is called 'Thames']

What dream role would you like to play?

Well I always wanted to play Nancy in *Oliver!* when I was younger. Now – I think Cleopatra in *Antony and Cleopatra* by Shakespeare. I really love Shakespeare, particularly his Roman plays: *Julius Caesar*, *Coriolanus* and *Antony and Cleopatra*.

Thanks Nicki!

GET INVOLVED - BECAUSE THE SHOW MUST GO ON!

As some of our long standing volunteers plan to hand on the baton in the new season, opportunities for new individuals and/or teams to get involved in vital roles are opening up.

Whilst an enthusiastic team of volunteers is working tirelessly to bring Live entertainment online this summer, they are also busy planning an exiting program in readiness for the moment that the QMT can open to the public once again.

As some of our longstanding and dedicated volunteers so vital to the running of the QMT have decided to hand over to a new generation, Front and Back of House roles that are critical reopening the QMT need to be filled in order to reopen.

Here are just a few roles on offer to groups or individuals:



*Front and Back of House roles
that need to take centre stage to reopen the QMT*

[Want to get involved know more?](#)

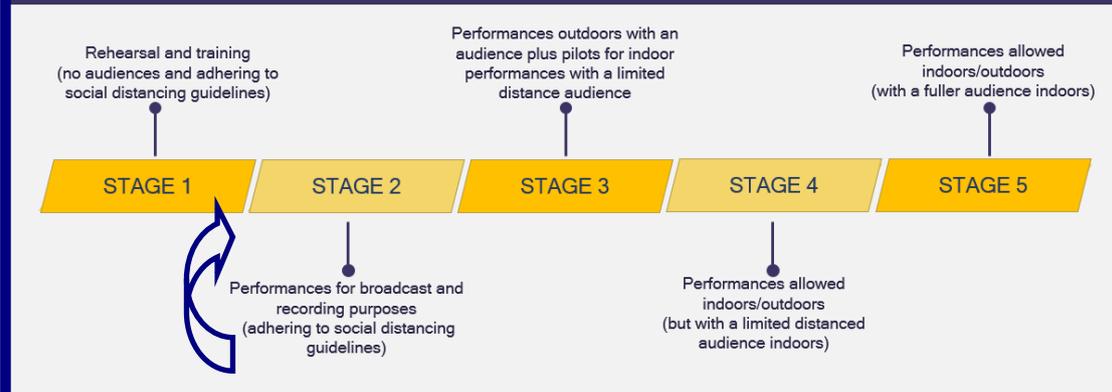
Just head for the [Get Involved](#) page on the QMT website for an overview of the roles and/or contact us on getinvolved@gmt.org.uk.

No one can do everything, but everyone can do something.

(GHOST) LIGHT AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL?

The good news is that the government has produced a roadmap for the return of live theatre.

Government roadmap for the for the return of live theatre



We are now in stage two of a total of five stages. This allows for rehearsals, and for performances for recording purposes. These freedoms help the QMT by casting and rehearsing for shows we wish to put on stage whenever we can put on real live shows again and, in the shorter term, we can professionally record short plays or monologues. Good for our members and good for the QMT audience many of whom are missing the theatre. The bad news is that there is no indication of when stages 3 to 5 will come and how. In the mean time, work is in progress so we will be able to hit the ground running whenever we can put real live performances on again, outdoors or indoors.



AGM Postponed—until we meet again

Just in case you missed the communication from the Chairman and EC, the Bancroft Players AGM 2020 will be postponed pending a relaxation of government guidelines so that we can meet in the theatre once again. At such time, the usual notice of AGM will be given.

BANCROFT PLAYERS' 200 CLUB

It seems strange announcing the winner of the June £50 draw in the Newsletter, not having first told members at the AGM. Plus advising everyone where the 200 Club annual contribution to the theatre will be going. But so be it.

With a virtual drum roll, I am delighted to say that Sarah Chapman has won the £50.

And thanks to modern technology, £500 has been transferred to the BP's bank account. Keith has earmarked this sum for a particular project, which is under wraps at the moment.

Can I also add that Edith, who won £20 in our April draw, has now kindly donated that to the theatre. Many thanks, Edith. Congratulations to all our other June winners.

Paula Downes

May 2020

| | |
|----------------|---------|
| Sarah Chapman | £ 50.00 |
| Alison Hudson | £ 25.00 |
| C T Vernon | £ 20.00 |
| Enid Calverley | £ 15.00 |
| Jan Lilly | £ 10.00 |



STAY IN TOUCH

To stay in touch with what is happening, the best way is to get on Facebook and join the Bancroft Players members group.

For those involved in the creative activities that take place on Mondays' BP Live there is a WhatsApp group dedicated to the arrangements such as selecting players, plays and directors.

Contact Christine Neal or Nicki Pope if you wish to join that group.