

The Bancroft Players

Newsletter
August 2018

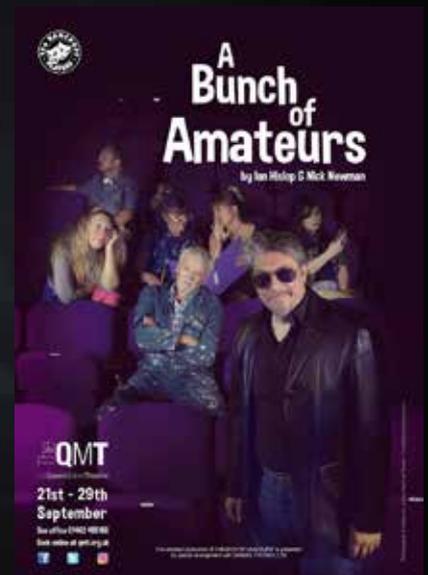
Tickets on sale now for:

A Bunch of Amateurs
Sept 21-29, Main Theatre

The Father
Oct 17-20, The Studio

Bette & Joan
Oct 31-Nov 3, Main Theatre

Box Office 01462 455166 / qmt.org.uk



Big Spirit's Molly Astill, in a scene from 'A Midsummer Night's Dream'. Carlyss Peer and Rory Reynolds co-directed the youth theatre and the adult Bancroft Players in Shakespeare's timeless classic, bringing the 2017-18 season at the QMT to a magical close.

Photo: Paul Seaby

Auditions

The Nutcracker and the Mouse King, September 4 & 6

Diary dates

Social: 'A Tipple and a Tune'
Sat Sept 8, 7.30pm, QMT bar

Workshop: 'Acting in Shakespeare' with Carlyss Peer
Wed Sept 19, 7.45pm, QMT bar

THE QMT



TheQMT



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The Richard Whitmore
STUDIO

Queen Mother Theatre, Woodside, Hitchin, SG4 9SP. 01462 434875, box office 01462 455166. Reg charity no: 283439.

Whoever said August was the quiet month?

August is traditionally a time the QMT goes 'dark' - which is theatrical parlance for closed while we refurbish.

And refurbishy things are already happening in the Main Theatre where the old air conditioning trunking has been removed and scrapped and many of the stage lights have been taken down in preparation for their annual spring clean.

All through this supposedly dark period, though, life continues: *A Bunch of Amateurs* and *The Father* are rehearsing away, Big Spirit prep for Edinburgh, and the monthly writers group still meets up.

Even you, dear reader, are probably relaxing on a beach somewhere, be it in breezy Britain or sunny Spain, gathering your creative juices for another wild season here at Woodside.

And what a year it promises to be!

As you sip your pina colada and brush the sand off your bathing cossie, contemplate auditioning for the Christmas show where we try and cast just about everyone (auditions: early September, see below for details) or joining in the new monthly members' nights planned for the bar.

As you sit on your plump suitcase trying to get the zip to go round, imagine yourself starring in *Black Adder*, *Beacons* (Studio) or *Constellations* (Studio).

And see yourself serving drinks in the bar or showing people to their seats, helping backstage or sharing your considerable talents to make the QMT an even better place.

So you see, even though the theatre is dark, even though you are away on your hols - there's lots going on!

Have fun and see you all soon.

Rory



Audition notice

Main Theatre

The Nutcracker and the Mouse King

Here we are in midsummer, and we're already thinking about the Christmas Play!

It's Christmas Eve. Marie and her brother Tom are out in the snow, watching guests arriving for a Christmas party. The house is large, the people are rich, they don't notice the two children shivering outside.

Through the window they see the great Christmas tree, wonderful food, merriment. Dr Drosselmeyer is handing out magical presents, one of which is the Nutcracker of the title. But later it lies discarded, broken, thrown out in favour of more glamorous presents. Marie rescues it and promises to look after it. But on the stroke of midnight it comes alive, and a battle ensues between him and the Mouse King, who is ransacking the house.

With great characters, exciting action and comic twists, this version of the well-loved story brings the spirit of Christmas to life.

THE DETAILS:

By: ETA Hoffman, directed by Rosemary Bianchi

Auditions: Tue 4 & Thu 6 Sept at 7.45pm

Performances: 7-9 Dec and 14-16 Dec

Rehearsals: Tue & Thu evenings from mid-Sept, plus some extra rehearsals to be agreed with cast closer to the production.

Scripts: Available from Mid-July

Contact: Rosemary at rosebianchi12@hotmail.com

THE ROLES:

Marie: Age 10 but played by an adult/teenager. Brave, forthright and steadfast.

Tom: Her brother, 7, played by an adult/teenager. Easily led, boastful, bit of a joker.

ETA Hoffman: The storyteller, doubling as Dr Drosselmeyer the toymaker/magician. Any age/gender. Mysterious, sees everything, knows everything, appears everywhere.

Nutcracker Prince: Young man, soldier, heroic. Occasionally transforms into wooden toy.

Lady Doray: fabulously wealthy, scheming, cruel. Transforms into the Mouse Queen.

The Hon Charlotte Doray: 10, played by an older person. Selfish, spoilt, prone to tantrums.

Pettigrew: Itinerant purveyor of dubious goods. Shifty, merciless. Transforms into the massively evil Mouse King.

Snotgrumble: Pettigrew's sidekick and lieutenant. Female. Sly and slithery.

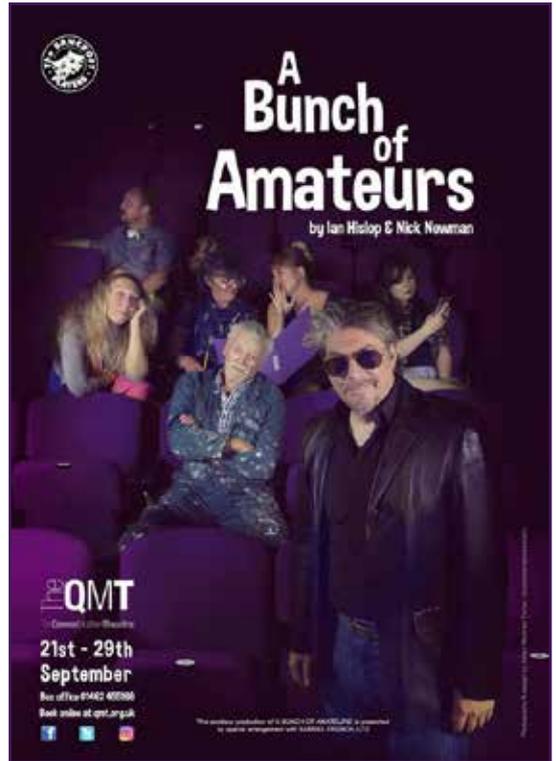
Escobar: The Prince's minder. Loyal, watchful, a bit cynical and weary of the world.

Cook: Transforms into the Sugar Plum Fairy. Cosy and comforting.

Ensemble: Extremely important! Mice, soldiers, guests, Candylanders, and advancing the story. All will be active speaking roles.

What works for me... HOW TO DO COMEDY

The BPs Newsletter's 'What Works for Me' series asks QMT performers to share techniques they find useful. The new QMT season opens in September with 'A Bunch of Amateurs' - a comedy co-written by Ian Hislop in which a Hollywood star accidentally finds himself in an amdram 'King Lear', with hilarious results. Here, its cast explore the art of delivering a funny line so that the humour connects and the laughter erupts.



Liz Pybus

In comedy, the character has to be realistic - you must play it straight and absolutely believe in your character. If you know who your character is, and you deliver that line exactly as that character would, it will be funny. But there never is a single funny line - it's also about the response of the other people. It's the whole thing that makes a line funny, not just the way the person delivers it.

Matt Gray

In stand-up you do your own words - you know where you want the laughs to be. Some of the laughs in this are in unexpected places and the emphasis is on different words. The challenge for me is hitting the punchlines as an American would, as opposed to how I would. This play is a classic culture clash and, when you have an arrogant character, a lot of the laughs come from the reactions - they're not particularly funny lines, but the humour comes in the reactions.

Emma Allerton

When you're rehearsing from the script and sight reading, it's easy to get the emphasis wrong. Often, it's not until the books are down that you really get where the joke is and you get a better understanding of what the writer intended. But you don't stop finding the jokes funny because, when you're rehearsing, you're in character and are hearing them for the first time, every time.



Claudia O'Connell

Don't be disappointed if, on one night, people don't laugh. It's a horrible feeling, but it doesn't mean you're not funny. I'm not a naturally comedic person and I've never really had to deliver funny lines, but I've learned that some audiences are just quiet. That doesn't mean another night's audience also won't laugh. If it was funny in rehearsal then it's funny - just have confidence, and do it again the next night.



Charles Compton

Most directors would say 'go big and I'll tell you if it's too much'. I've yet to be told it's too much - it's a boundary I've yet to explore. My character is really two: there's Nigel as Nigel, and Nigel when he's being an actor and thinks he's John Gielgud. That gives some light and shade and, as soon as I read the script, that's what I wanted to do - I wanted there to be a clear difference in how I showed the two sides of him.

Alan Hemming

You have to be on the button - get your timing right. Know your lines. Have a smile - or a bit of a swear. My character thinks he's creative and keeps having ideas but they're turned down, which sets up a repeating joke. You have basically the same lines, but you need a different approach each time - you need to be measured and not go in hammer and tongs first time, so that the audience gradually realises there's a running joke.

'A Bunch of Amateurs' runs in the Main Theatre from September 21-29. Tickets on sale now from qmt.org.uk

Photos: Paul Seaby and Julian Newman Turner

Backstage clean-up crew at work again at QMT



The bar area undergoes its transformation

Summer Break, what summer break? The morning of Sunday August 5 saw a hive of activity backstage and front of house to tidy away the evidence of last year's activities and arrange the stage and surrounding areas ready for the next season.

Enthusiastic volunteers regained control over the backstage corridor, plumping pillows, folding fabrics and curtains, and untangling lights and cables. Tracks above the stage were re-rigged while the technical team's work on lighting is clear for all to see.

Tasks carried out in the wings to make improvements in storage of stage materials and flats will be a welcome enhancement, while the bar also got a deep clean so it is blingy and sparkly, ready to serve another season.

"I want to say a heartfelt 'thank you' to everyone for their collective efforts," said organiser Emma Saunders. "I think we achieved some excellent results.

"The bar area had a thorough clean and is sparkling - thanks to Lisa, Frank and Christine. The fabric store was reorganised and tidied, Chris and team began work on a supporting structure to help with storage of flats in the wings/paint store area, and the upstairs area by wardrobe/props was almost cleared."

Christine Neal

Casting news

The cast for *The Father* is:

Andre: Charles Plester

Anne: Olivia Gatliff

Pierre: Doug Brooker

Laura: Merrin Sharples-Moore

Man: Jonathan Fletcher

Woman: Amy Walker

The cast for *Bette and Joan* is:

Bette Davis: Natalie Gordon

Joan Crawford: Liz Pybus

New season of members' nights begins in September

A new set of members' evenings has been announced, with events planned in the bar from early September through to the traditional Christmas quiz.

As well as the quiz, there are a mixture of social events - including the opener, Christine Neal's 'A Tipple and a Tune' music night on September 8 - and workshops organised by Rory Reynolds.

Rory said: "These evenings are essentially social, they're held in the bar and they have a theme. We want you to have fun, to enjoy the clubby atmosphere doing something theatre-related. The good thing is they're free, and the other good thing is you get a free wine."

Sat Sept 8: A Tipple and a Tune - share a favourite song, with a little story why you treasure it

Wed Sept 19: Workshop 'Acting in Shakespeare' with Carlyss Peer (Carlyss runs workshops at Shakespeare's Globe and co-directed our summer show, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*).

Wed Oct 17: The Secrets of 'Cold Reading' and Instant Acting (and you get to put on a show within 30 minutes!)

Thu Nov 29: Poems, Pints & Performance (bring along some poetry or a piece from a play and share it with the group)

Tue Dec 18: The Famous Christmas Quiz!! - yes you get your fave quiz-master and lots of jolly japes in a must-attend Yuletide Celebration!

Each workshop lasts around an hour and takes place in the QMT bar, beginning at 7.45pm

Saturday 8 September: A Tipple and a Tune

Lose *The Voice*, ditch the talent shows and make your way to the QMT for a members' evening. Gather on Saturday September 8 at 7.30pm for an 8pm start of an evening where you are asked to share a favourite song, with a little story about why you treasure it. It's a good opportunity to kick-start the new season, meet other members who you might not otherwise meet, swap the box for the bar and have some fun.

Kegs out, bottles in as bar list updates

You may already know what's on stage next season, but there is also a change in what's on in the QMT main bar - it's adieu to draft beer when we open up after the summer break.

Changing drinking habits and intermittent use of the bar sadly meant that kegs of beer were frequently returned half full; a wasteful and costly practice. So, this has represented a good opportunity to review what we

will serve instead and bring the assortment up to date.

Frank and Christine have developed a new order list that includes old favorites and some new beers, fruit ciders and juices that will appeal to a larger range of ages and tastes. There are new wines to enjoy as well.

So, next time you visit the QMT, come and have a taste.

Christine Neal