



The Bancroft Players

Newsletter
December 2017



Rory Reynolds

Returning to the QMT: monthly club nights

The word of the month is 'camaraderie'. I think it's one of those words about to fall into disuse according to the newspapers along with 'fairly', 'fortnight' and 'twice' (believe it or not!).

I'm sure you all understand its meaning - the dictionary defines camaraderie as 'mutual friendship between people who spend time together'. Exactly what we do at the QMT!

Now Big Spirit definitely have camaraderie going on - you see them together much of the time camarading... (which isn't a word by the way, but it ought to be). And for BPs in *Flare Path*, *The Thrill of Love* and going all the way back to *Little Shop of Horrors*, you see it blazing away among the cast members. They enjoy each other's company and that's camaraderie right there.

The thing is - once the play is over, the curtain falls on

Saturday night, and the set is cleared - the little cast-family dissolves. What can we do about that?

Oh it's okay for Big Spirit, they meet the following Sunday whatever and it's on with the next adventure. But for the adults - well it's all a bit more hit and miss.

What this long intro is about is preparing the ground for the return of regular BP club nights at the Theatre starting this month, December. We had the wonderful Cabarokie at the start of the month, and the traditional BP Xmas Quiz is coming up on Wednesday 20th December.

In January there will be BP Desert Island Discs where you bring along a couple of songs and talk about their significance with our hosts Russell 'n' Rors (yeah better tell Russ about that!) and then in February we have Tom Wright, a professional

Artistic Director's Blog

director, coming along to share his tips and run a masterclass in 'Let's Direct!' So there's lots to get excited about!

Hopefully meeting once a month like this will help us all, every one, to keep our camaraderie in good nick throughout the year and prove that the word should not be going out of business!

Congrats to the whole team for *The Thrill of Love*. It was a wonderfully moving show with flawless performances. And of course to Big Spirit for *Earthquakes in London*. Book now for *A Christmas Carol* and *Sex With a Stranger*. The season continues apace...

Nag-alert! Please send me ideas for plays next season by clicking on this address right now: bigspirittheatre@hotmail.com There - now consider yourself nagged.

Rory

Natalie Clayton as Ruth Ellis in Jon Brown's production of 'The Thrill of Love', written by Amanda Whittington. Photo: Paul Seaby.

COMING SOON:



A Christmas Carol
8-10 & 15-17 December
Main Theatre.



Sex With a Stranger
17-20 January
The Studio.



BP Grand Christmas Quiz
20 December





The cast of Alison Hudson's production of 'A Christmas Carol', adapted by Stephen Sharkey from the Dickens classic.

'A Christmas Carol': a timeless tale with a hard-hitting history

As the QMT's production of 'A Christmas Carol' opens its run, Rosemary Bianchi explores the harsh reality behind the classic seasonal tale and looks at how Dickens's ghost story lives on through the years.

The clock is ticking for Ebenezer Scrooge. It's Christmas Eve and soon it will be Christmas Day, the worst day of the year, the day when it's impossible to get any work done because everyone is enjoying themselves. Bah, humbug!

Dickens's classic Christmas ghost story returns to the Queen Mother Theatre in a dazzling new version by Stephen Sharkey, directed by Alison Hudson.

Most are familiar with the story of the Three Spirits, the humble, overworked Bob Cratchit, fragile Tiny Tim and Scrooge's confrontation with his true self. But how many know that this tale is rooted in a far darker truth?

The book was published on December 17 1843 in the decade known as 'the Hungry 40s'. As is well documented, although he came from a loving family, Dickens's childhood was often brutal and his spell as a boy working in the Charing Cross blacking factory cast a long shadow over his writing.

His books and talks held a mirror up to Victorian Society, highlighting in particular the plight of defenceless young workers.

A month before he began writing *A Christmas Carol*, he was engaged to speak at the Manchester Athenaeum. His talk was themed around the terrible conditions for juveniles in

London's jails and doss-houses and the desperate need for educating the poor so that they could rise above their present condition.

The 1840s were not only 'hungry', but were also known for hard-headed business practice, where profit was put before the welfare of workers. Scrooge, with his motto of 'work or the workhouse', is the embodiment of this philosophy of workers as commodities, stripped of all human dignity.

Children worked 11 hour shifts underground in mines and girls who sewed dresses for the emerging middle classes could work

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'A Christmas Carol': Continued from page 2

16 hours a day for a pittance and a room above the factory floor, just like Martha Cratchit. Not only were children cheap, but their fingers were small and dextrous, useful in working the machines. But machines were dangerous, and Dickens said 'there were crippled Tiny Tims by the hundred' in the manufacturing towns.

Dickens initially wanted to write a pamphlet which he would call *An Appeal to the People of England on behalf of the Poor Man's Child*, but soon realised that he would reach a far greater audience and have more impact if he framed his arguments in the form of a story, a moral tale with Christmas at its heart.

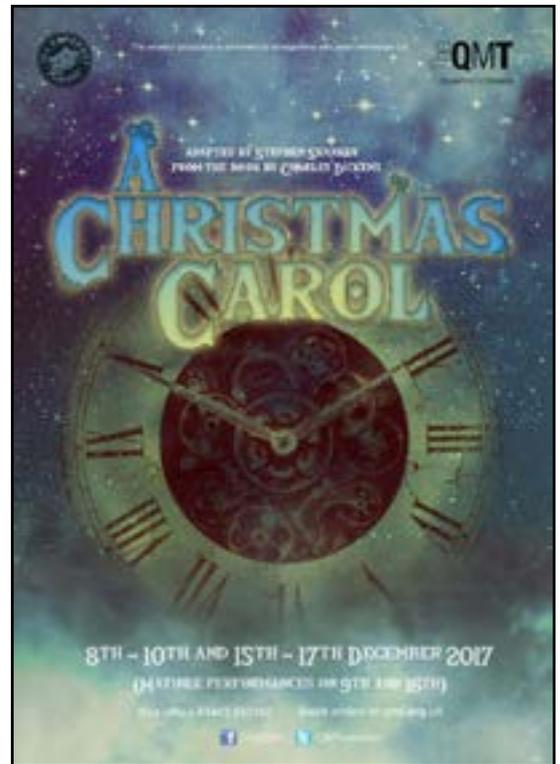
A Christmas Carol, subtitled *A Ghost Story for Christmas*, was very influential in establishing the modern spirit of Christmas, in other words what we now think of as a 'traditional' Christmas. Prince Albert had recently introduced the first Christmas tree into Britain and the idea of a family-centred festivity was gaining popularity.

The first edition of the book, a handsome production bound in fine cloth with gold blocking and six coloured illustrations, was an instant success and its first 5,000-copy print run sold out immediately.

It is the most adapted of his works, and actors who have played Scrooge include Patrick Stewart, Jim Carrey, Michael Caine, Ross Kemp and Albert Finney. The Muppets, the Flintstones and Mr Magoo all had a go, and, bizarrely, there's *Barbie's Christmas Carol*, and *Bah! Humduck!* starring Daffy Duck. There are at least half a dozen productions on stage this season including those at the RSC, The Old Vic and Hull Truck, while Simon Callow is reprising his one man version.

Dickens may have had a very serious aim in writing his tale of greed turned to good, but would also have appreciated how it has provided family entertainment for the past 174 years.

The Bancroft Players' production of *A Christmas Carol* is at the Queen Mother Theatre on December 8-10 and 15-17. Times: Friday 7.30, Saturday 2.30 and 6.30 and Sunday at 2.30.



DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

A Christmas Carol
(Main Theatre)

8-10 & 15-17 December

Auditions: *The Effect*
11 & 13 December

BP Grand Christmas Quiz
20 December

Playwriting group
(John Coxall Room)
16 January

Sex With a Stranger
(Richard Whitmore Studio)
17-20 January

Playwriting group
(John Coxall Room)
30 January



You've waited the whole year for this!

The BP GRAND XMAS QUIZ

Yes a chance to haunt the bar at the QMT, buy cheap drinks, have a laugh and win huge prizes, some costing more than £1.

No expense has been spared in order to make this night fun! And best of all - its FREE!

WEDNESDAY 20th DECEMBER at 7.45pm.

So put your glad-rags on and let's quiz-til-you-fizz!

Joy Carrell



Joy Carrell with the cast of 'Lock Up Your Daughters' (1988). Clockwise from left: Paul Collis, Joy, Roger Hawkins, Nick Perry, Alison Hudson, Colette House.

We were so sad to hear of the passing of Joy Carrell on October 8 2017. She was a very active member of the Bancroft Players for more than 25 years, from the early days of St Anne's to the busy times at the Queen Mother Theatre.

Joy loved taking part in many productions, from Fraulein Kost in *Cabaret*, to Clara Soppitt in *When We Are Married*, which was the last production at the Town Hall.

Others included *Lark Rise to Candleford*, *Pack of Lies*, *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, and probably her favourite role as Lady Alice More in *A Man for All Seasons*, the first production at the new built theatre in 1983.

She latterly also co-led the Junior Bancroft Players for several years, which she thoroughly enjoyed.

Joy had unfortunately been suffering from Alzheimer's in recent years and passed away peacefully at her Letchworth care home with her three daughters by her side.

Bruce Writer

It is with great sadness that we have to announce the passing of Bruce Writer, who died peacefully on November 3 after a short illness.

Bruce was a keen supporter of the Bancroft Players, having been a regular attendee of shows since the days of St Anne's Hall and was a long term patron of the Queen Mother Theatre.

He was a familiar face to many at the QMT, counting many friends among the membership. Indeed some of his fondest memories were of times spent at the QMT with the friends he had there.

Our thoughts are with Julie, Dan, Jeremy and family.

Bancroft Players' 200 Club

Looks like I've done it again – yep, once more my number has come out of the bag.

Several assurances, I did not personally pull out this number. This month the draw was done in its entirety by members of the *A View from the Bridge* cast. And to compound the situation, another of my numbers came out next. That one I did insist on redrawing.

As I said last month, it can pay to have more than one number. In fact I have three numbers! So naturally this does increase the possibility of winning regularly.

Only other thing to add this month is that December of course means our mega £100 draw. So who will be the lucky recipient this year? Watch this space and sadly too late to join now to be included in this particular draw. As ever, congratulations to this month's winners.

November Winners

£25: Paula Downes

£20: Fay Worboys

£15: Wendy Whitmore

£10: Alex Hancock

Paula Downes

(paula.downes@ntlworld.com)

QUEEN MOTHER THEATRE
QMT

The play's the thing: unleash your inner Bard with the QMT Playwriting Group

Peter Matthews looks back on his experiences during a year in the QMT Playwriting Group

Just over a year ago, I took a step out of my usual comfort zone of learning lines and avoiding the furniture, and found myself at the inaugural meeting of the QMT Writers Group.

What was I thinking!

Sure, I'd always wanted to write, but I had never really got serious about it. Then suddenly I found myself in the company of some seriously talented proper writers. Running the group was the lovely Sally Abbott - top BBC screenwriter - and our own Rory Reynolds, himself a prolific playwright and published author. Should I really be here?

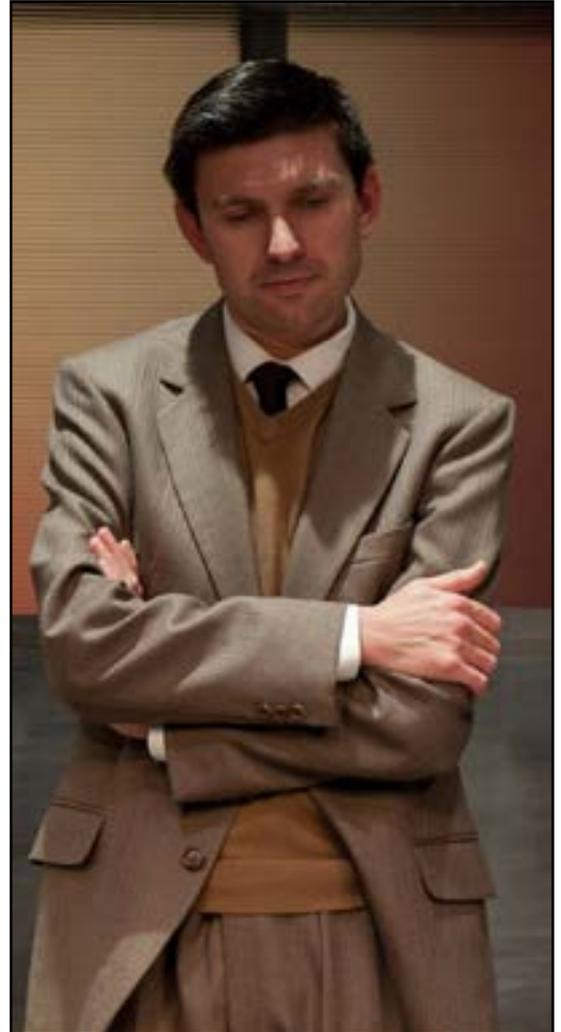
But over the course of our monthly meetings, something brilliant happened. I actually started to write stuff!

With the motivation of needing to produce a piece of work each month (never anything too taxing), I wrote monologues, a short story, various scenes and eventually a one act play for our playwriting contest - which was deservedly won by Emma Allerton.

Mine still needs serious re-writing but, nevertheless, over a year I've slowly become... someone who writes. A writer? Perhaps. Not an especially good writer - not yet anyway - but a writer all the same.

I'm enormously grateful to Sally and Rory for sharing their knowledge and expertise, and making the monthly meetings so enjoyable. To receive advice and feedback from a professional writer like Sally is fantastic. The group as a whole is incredibly supportive of each other. We're quite a diverse mix of people and always open to new members.

One of the great things about our theatre is there's something for everyone, whatever your talent, and I think having a writers group adds wonderfully to our whole creative ensemble.



Peter Matthews looking thoughtful during the 2015 production of 'Copenhagen'. Photo: Julian Newman Turner.

We are so lucky to have the renowned scriptwriter, Sally Abbott running the BP SCRIPTWRITER'S GROUP.

You don't have to be an experienced writer to join though - Sally is brilliant at guiding you whatever your level of expertise.

The BP SCRIPTWRITER'S GROUP meets on the last Tuesday of each month at the QMT at 7.30pm. Bring a pen and a pad to the event and link up through the Facebook page to catch up with our current projects and see what resources have been shared. (Message Andy Darley at <https://www.facebook.com/andydarley> for an invite as it's a closed group.)

See you there!

Rory Reynolds

Next meeting: January 16 (instead of December) then January 30.

Who's who in the Bancroft Players

Executive Committee 2017 to 2018	Diary Organiser <i>Edith Pratt</i>
Richard Whitmore <i>President Emeritus</i>	Fire Officer <i>Chris Lane</i>
Frank Pratt <i>President</i>	First Aid Officer <i>Paula Downes</i>
Les Edwards <i>Chairman</i>	Front of House Manager <i>Paula Downes</i>
Susan Mellor <i>Secretary</i>	Health & Safety Coordinator <i>David Hillelson</i>
Tim Hallas <i>Treasurer</i>	Junior Theatre Group <i>Alison Hudson</i>
Rory Reynolds <i>Artistic Director</i>	Keys Distributor <i>David Lester</i>
Nicki Pope <i>Production Manager (Main Theatre)</i>	Licensing Manager <i>Tim Hallas</i>
David Lester <i>Production Manager (Studio)</i>	Membership <i>Edith Pratt</i>
Chris Lane <i>Theatre Manager</i>	Newsletter <i>Rosemary Bianchi</i>
Julian Newman Turner <i>Business Manager</i>	Properties <i>Audrey Hawkins, Julie Chamberlain</i>
David Borner <i>Committee Member</i>	Publicity Manager <i>Julian Newman Turner</i>
Charlotte Ryan <i>Committee Member</i>	Refreshments/ Stewards <i>Lyn Bryars, Mo Mutton</i>
Emma Saunders <i>Committee member</i>	Set & Design Manager <i>Rosemary Bianchi</i>
Zara Schafer <i>Committee Member</i>	Technical Manager <i>Alan Bailes</i>
Appointments 2017 to 2018	Workshop Coordinator <i>Clive Hall</i>
Vice-Chairman <i>Chris Lane</i>	Wardrobe Liaison <i>Sally Hull</i>
Box Office Manager <i>Vacant</i>	Welfare: <i>Vacant</i>
Bar Manager <i>Vacant</i>	What's On Distribution <i>Susan Mellor</i>
Bar Committee <i>Frank Pratt</i>	Youth Theatre Group <i>Rory Reynolds</i>
Bar Rota <i>Mark Castell</i>	200 Club <i>Paula Downes</i>
Bookings Manager <i>Edith Pratt (evening), Keith Crook (day)</i>	

Newsletter: Last date for copy

Items for publication should be submitted to the editors at newsletterqmt@live.com no later than the 15th of the month. We aim to publish the next issue by the 26th of the month.

Audition notice

The Effect

The Effect is a clinical romance - winner of Best New Play, Critics' Circle Theatre Awards 2012.

Two young volunteers agree to take part in a pharmaceutical drugs trial. This funny, moving play explores questions of sanity, neurology and the limits of medicine, asking what makes us who we are and how we love.

Connie and Tristan are the two drug trialists and, as the medics increase the dosage, they find themselves attracted to each other. But are their feelings real or a side effect - a chemical trick?

Meanwhile Lorna and Toby are the two doctors running the trial. As they hotly debate the big questions surrounding depression it becomes clear they have a history.

This play is a fantastic challenge for its cast members with interesting characterisation - it is fast, witty, moving, funny, and sad. Four brave, open and energetic actors required!

If you are unable to attend the auditions for any reason please get in touch with me as we will try and arrange a time to see you.

Sam Powell

THE DETAILS:

By: Lucy Prebble, directed by Sam Powell

Auditions: Mon 11 & Wed 13 Dec

Performances: 14 - 17 March

Rehearsals: Mon & Wed

Scripts: From Box Office

Age: Some flexibility depending on the dynamic between cast members.

Contact: sampowell2@hotmail.com

THE ROLES:

Connie Hall: Playing age early to late 20s. A bright psychology student.

Tristan Frey: Playing age early to late 20s/30. A boisterously flirty drifter.

Dr Lorna James: Playing age late 30s-50 years. A psychiatrist, efficient but vulnerable.

Dr Toby Sealey: Playing age late 30s-50 years. Lorna's supervisor, also a psychiatrist.

Could you write for the newsletter?

Regular readers of this newsletter will have noticed that, in recent months, editions have been either slim or non-existent.

The simple reason behind this is that we are short of people to help produce it. Help is needed to expand on the work done by the core team of Rosemary Bianchi (editor) and Andy Darley (design and layout).

Key factual information such as auditions, casting, membership

and the 200 Club is provided by BP stalwarts such as Rory Reynolds, Paula Downes, David Lester and Edith Pratt, but we are in desperate need of people interested in writing interviews, previews and features, or covering one specific aspect of the Bancroft Players - for example, reporting on exec meetings.

Full help and support will be given, so please drop us a line at newsletterqmt@live.com if you'd like to get involved.