



The Bancroft Players

Newsletter
July 2017



'Flare Path' director Nicki Pope with her cast and crew. Photo: Julian Newman Turner.

Les Edwards

'Thank you to everyone for another outstanding year'

It has been a tremendous privilege and indeed a real pleasure to have been chairman of the society for the past twelve months. I can report another outstanding year with a record number of productions - all, without exception, of the highest standard.

It is of course invidious to highlight any particular show but I cannot resist recalling Julian Newman Turner's 'highly injury prone routine' in *One Man Two Guvnors*. *Proof* in the Studio was brilliant, Big Spirit greatly entertained us with *The History Boys* followed by *Legally Blonde*, and let's not forget how the theatre literally shook during the production of *Ghost Train*! Also, most recently, Barney Taylor directed his first show, *Pronoun*, which was very well received.

As ever, thanks must go to everyone concerned in ensuring the Bancroft

Players' reputation as the leading amateur dramatic society in the area is upheld and I do wish to pay particular tribute to all the many volunteers both front and back stage who give so generously of their time.

During the year we mourned the passing of two very distinguished members who during their lifetimes gave so much to the society. I refer of course to past chairman John Coxall and the indomitable Annie Wilkinson. We will always remember the contribution they made and their part in ensuring the success of the theatre.

Chris Lane has provided an insight as to the continuing improvement programme at the theatre and we record with thanks Elliott Bunker's assistance in setting up the new box office booking facility.

Chairman's report to the AGM

As we look ahead we reflect upon the very high audience numbers and as a consequence a healthy financial situation, however we cannot afford to be complacent.

I have in mind compiling a detailed report/analysis covering all elements of the theatre administration and activities, examining the potential outlook in the short/medium term. Including a Business Plan and general appraisal in the conclusion.

Rory Reynolds and his team have again put forward a most attractive programme for the coming season and I know that you will join with me in applauding a successful year as it comes to a conclusion and we look forward to the next twelve months of great entertainment here at The Queen Mother Theatre.

Les

The QMT



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

The end of the season means it's all about to get busy at the QMT

Yo you bangin, kotchin, reet-neat geezers out there in QMT-land, innit.

Whoops, sorry for lapsing into the patois there, but this gangsta version of *Much Ado* in Barton is playing havoc with my normally sober language skills.

The Big Spirit Shakespeare in the park (well, in the garden really) traditionally marks the end of the BP season. Hi hum.

But with David and his A-Team already getting *The*

Ladykillers underway and *The Thrill of Love* and *Reasons to be Pretty* auditioning all I can say is - here we go again!

It's great when the QMT is bustling with activity and the lead up to Xmas is always our busiest time. And we need you, yes you dear reader, to help us out.

Don't fancy acting? Great - come and work backstage or front of house. Whatever you do you'll get a funny wobbling feeling in your tummy that tells you that you're doing

something exciting. Wanna appear onstage but feel a bit tentative? Come along to the auditions at least and see what happens.

Hey guys - at the QMT we are opportunity knocking at the front door of your talent, no matter how hidden you think your talent may be.

Okay enough with the metaphors. You roll wiv us Bruv, and you be more'n okay, you be well shabby an' dat.

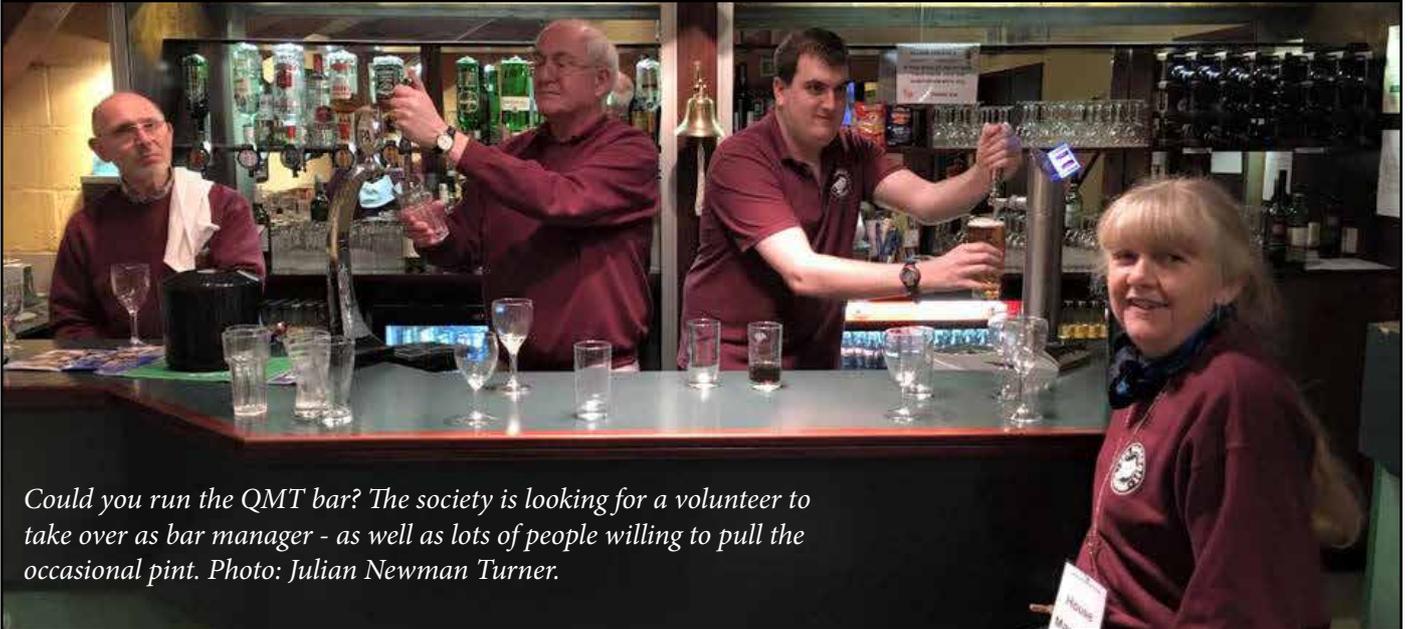
Rory



Below: Images from rehearsals of Big Spirit's open air production of 'Much Ado About Nothing' at Barton.



Bancroft Players' AGM: 28 June 2017



Could you run the QMT bar? The society is looking for a volunteer to take over as bar manager - as well as lots of people willing to pull the occasional pint. Photo: Julian Newman Turner.

Bancroft Players' AGM: A society in good health – but more members must get involved to keep it that way

The Bancroft Players' AGM heard that the society is thriving creatively and in a sound financial position – but needs more members to step up if it is to continue on its present successful course. Andy Darley reports.

Tributes paid to Roger and Maureen Nobes as they step back from managing the QMT bar and rota: search now on for new volunteers

The Bancroft Players' AGM once again painted a picture of a society that can truthfully claim to be one of the most successful and thriving amateur dramatic societies in the country.

But, as ever, there was a recognition of the need for more volunteers to keep the 'behind the scenes' aspects of the theatre running as professionally as possible.

President Frank Pratt pointed out that each week-long show requires 36 volunteers in areas such as box office, bar, coffees and front of house.

The need for more members to help was highlighted by the decisions of Roger and Maureen Nobes to step back from managing the bar and organising its rota.

In his resignation letter, Roger said: "I feel that after seven years as bar manager

plus a further three on the bar committee, it is time for someone else to have a go.

"I have enjoyed the job and would like to thank everyone involved, with a special mention to Maureen, Frank Pratt and Mark Castell. I will, of course, consult with whoever takes on the job to show the ropes and pass on all the information they need."

His decision means the society is looking for new volunteer bar manager. Duties include:

- Ordering stock from Greene King
- Buying dry goods and wine at Booker wholesaler in Luton
- Banking the takings
- Ensuring plenty of change is in the till
- Making sure the bar is ready for performances

Anyone interested can contact business manager Julian

Newman Turner at publicity@queenmothertheatre.org.uk.

Sessions to encourage new bar volunteers are planned by Charlotte Ryan, who was elected to the committee in place of Elliott Bunker after his term ended. Details will appear in future newsletters.

The AGM also heard reports from Big Spirit's Barney Taylor and Seb Creasey, and BP committee members Tim Hallas (treasurer), Chris Lane (theatre manager), Rory Reynolds (artistic director), Nicki Pope and David Lester (production managers for main theatre and Studio) and Julian Newman Turner. Alison Hudson spoke about the Juniors group and Paula Downes reported on the 200 Club (see her piece on the back page). The report from chairman Les Edwards is reproduced on the front page of this issue.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Audition:
Reasons to be Pretty

25 & 27 July

Playwriting group
(John Coxall Rm)
25 July

The Ladykillers: casting news, and extras needed

We need six ladies who can look in their seventies or eighties on stage for a 'concert recital' which takes place during the play. There are no lines to learn. You will need to attend some rehearsals late August. It should be lots of fun so please let me know if you are interested?

David Lester



There is a perfectly innocent explanation for why Professor Marcus and his gang are all in this cupboard, and if you'll give him a moment to come up with one he'll explain everything. 'The Ladykillers' in rehearsal. Photo: David Lester.

Here is the cast for the BPs' production of *The Ladykillers*. The standard was extremely high and, to be truthful, we could have cast the play in many ways.

PC McDonald: Keith Warren

Mrs Wilberforce: Alison Hancock

Professor Marcus: Charles Plester

Major Courtney: Doug Brooker

Harry Robinson: Elliott Bunker

One-Round: Gareth Martin

Louis Harvey: Greg Jones

Mrs Tromleyton: Sally Hull

If you were not cast on this occasion, please don't be too disappointed. The QMT has lots of productions in prospect for the coming year and we really want you to come along and audition - you will find all the details in this newsletter or on the website under "members' area".

Rory

Audition reminder Studio Reasons to be Pretty

Greg is overheard admitting that his girlfriend, Steph, is no beauty but that he wouldn't change her for the world. Steph is devastated; Greg can't see what he's done wrong.

Meanwhile Greg's friend Kent alternates between boasting about how gorgeous his wife is, and chasing after a hot new colleague.

Throughout *Reasons to be Pretty*, Neil LaBute shows us how an off the cuff remark about a lover's features can lead to the destruction of a relationship.

The result is a rueful, intelligent comedy that asks us whether we should all stop defining ourselves, and each other, by our outward appearances.

There are four roles; two female, two male. All four characters have a monologue and US accents are essential to this piece, so be prepared to work on these if cast. Please look at the monologue for the character you are interested in from the play to read and act at the audition.

THE DETAILS:

By: Neil LaBute, directed by Matthew Gray

Auditions: 25 & 27 July

Performances: 11 - 14 Oct

Rehearsals: Tues & Thurs

Scripts: Available soon from Box Office with signing in/out sheet

Age: No ages are specified in the script - however, due to the situations the characters find themselves in, they are clearly younger than middle age. I see them as aged 25-35.

Accents: US accents are essential to this piece

Contact: Matt Gray at mrmattgrayis@hotmail.com

THE ROLES:

Steph: At the start of the play she is the partner of Greg. Vulnerable yet with hidden strength; Steph only interacts with Greg during the course of play and so their dynamic must be believable.

Greg: A pseudo-intellectual/hipster type, who somewhat ostentatiously reads Poe, Hawthorne, and Swift on the nightshift at the factory he works at. He is firm friends with Kent, but has reservations about Kent's wife, Carly, whom he holds

responsible for the breakdown of his relationship.

Kent: Not a big thinker and, from the outset, a morally ambiguous character. He displays 'Alpha male' traits towards all the characters in the play. Kent will need to display a strong physical presence.

Carly: The pregnant wife of Kent, and Steph's friend. Carly works as a security guard at the factory with Greg and Kent. Over the course of the play Carly's life changes in ways she never expected.

The magic of one: opportunities for new directors in The Studio



One-act powerhouses 'hang', which played in March, and the more recent 'Pronoun', demonstrated how The Studio is an ideal venue for impactful shorter productions. Photo: Kelsey Duffy and Natalie Gordon in 'hang', by debbie tucker green. Paul Seaby.



Studio Manager David Lester explains how new directors will get the chance to learn their craft by staging one act plays next Summer

Plays in The Studio are often just one act, but what a punch they can have.

Recognising the appetite there is from would-be new directors at QMT, we are creating a new, additional opportunity for you to find, direct and put on a one-act play in The Studio during the next season.

The plan is for any member who hasn't directed before at the QMT to submit, audition and stage a play during a two night *One Act Play Bites* programme in June 2018.

Okay, it's a long way off - so there's plenty of time for research.

Some ground rules of course. The play should:

- be a one- or two-hander
- require no set structure
- use a straightforward lighting plot
- use only simple moveable props
- be no more than an hour in length

Please note that rehearsing is unlikely to be possible on a regular basis on site at QMT.

Beyond these simple ground rules it's wide open.

Your play could be 10 minutes long or improvised or written especially for the occasion. And you will be offered support.

There's a launch to the *One Act Play Bites* for all those interested on Friday 29 September (provisional date) over a glass of wine or beer (of course).

So, please get your thinking caps on!

David Lester

2017-18 membership subscriptions are now due

Full Membership: £40 - £30 if paid before 30 September.

Under 18, unwaged, Student, Over 60s: £20 - £15 if paid before 30 September. **Please Note:** this does not include BP Juniors or Big Spirit Members

Club Membership: for those who do not participate in productions. This applies to someone who *only* carries out the following duties: Box Office; Duty Theatre Manager; Steward; Coffee or Bar. The subscription is £20 - 'early bird' discount of £5 applies if paid before 30 September = £15

Cheques - should be made payable to The Bancroft Players, placed in an envelope marked for my attention and left in the box office, or send to **Bancroft Players (Membership), FREEPOST, ANG6544, Hitchin, SG4 9YA. (no stamp required).**

Debit or Credit Card - Please contact me and I can take payment over the phone on 07874 025501 evenings only.

Standing Order (paid on the same date each year). If you would like to take up this option then please let me know and I will send you the necessary banking information.

Internet Banking - if you bank online let me know and I will give you the necessary information for you to pay this way.

QMT Website Booking System - if you have an account for booking tickets then you can pay your sub through this system. There should be a Membership category. If you try this and have any difficulties then please let me know.

Many thanks,

Edith Pratt, Membership Secretary

Tel: 07874 025501 - e-mail: qmtmembs25@hotmail.com

Who's who in the Bancroft Players

Executive Committee 2017 to 2018	Diary Organiser <i>Keith Crook, 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>Keith Crook</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, one vacancy</i>	Youth Theatre Group <i>Rory Reynolds</i>
Bar Rota <i>Vacant</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.

Bancroft Players' 200 Club

As it was our £50 June draw and of course the AGM at which I announced how much the 200 Club would be contributing to the theatre and what it will be going towards. So, a busy and rather exciting month for the Club - plus we have two new members!

As you will see Mr & Mrs Croxford won the £50 but I cannot find out anything about them other than they are Patrons of the Society. Still I am sure they will be thrilled with their win.

Each year just before the AGM, I sound out members of the EC and others as to what worthy cause they feel I can donate money to. This year the sum was once again £500, which was enhanced by the £10 that Miss Bird kindly sent me following her £100 win in December.

I was particularly thrilled (with my First Aid Officer's hat on) when the suggestion came back

that it could be put towards a defibrillator that the theatre is hoping to purchase in the not too distant future. More details when it is acquired.

Turning to June's lucky winners, the £10 winner was Mary Blake. However I have since received an email from her son, to say she sadly passed away in February and that he wished the sum involved to be put back into our funds. So this will therefore be added to our donation in June 2018.

He added in his email that "Whilst spending the last fifty years of her life in Hitchin, she particularly enjoyed attending plays and events put on by the Bancroft Players." I have sent our condolences to him.

June Winners

£50: Mr & Mrs P Croxford

£25: Greta Johnson

£20: Audrey Hawkins

£15: Mike Mackenzie

£10: Mary Blake

Paula Downes

Front of House staff incentive

There was some discussion at the recent AGM about an incentive for Front of House staff that possibly might not have got through to all people involved in these very important tasks. If you do a shift during a performance – be it a BPs' show or an outside booking – you are entitled to a free drink. This covers House Managers, Bar Staff, Box Office Staff, Stewards and Coffee Bar helpers. So don't forget to claim your free drink during that shift.

Paula Downes

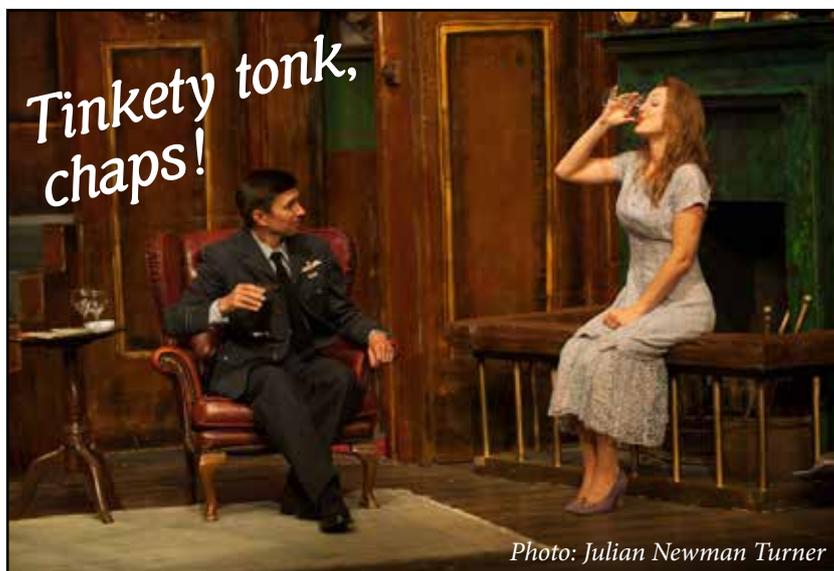


Photo: Julian Newman Turner