



The Bancroft Players

Newsletter
May 2017



Rory Reynolds

Artistic Director's blog

Ylana Schafer Thomson was on song as Elle Woods in April's 'Legally Blonde - the Musical'.

New season: a thriller, a killer, a carol and a dream

At last we can announce next season in the Main House and the Studio which has been agreed by the EC. Oh you lucky people!

September: *The Ladykillers* directed by David Lester: Classic black comedy based on the well-loved Ealing film of the same name. A sweet little old lady alone in her house is pitted against a gang of criminal misfits intent on committing the perfect heist. Of course they choose to pose as unlikely classical musicians and then decide they'll have to knock off Mrs Wilberforce ...and her parrot! Cast: 6m, 2f, 1 parrot

November: *The Thrill of Love* directed by Jon Brown A wonderful new play by Amanda Whittington about the true story of Ruth Ellis, the last woman to be hanged in Britain. What happened on that fatal night? Ellis

pleaded not guilty but then refused to offer any defence. A mesmerising and gripping story. Cast: 1m, 4f

December: *A Christmas Carol* directed by Alison Hudson. In a splendid new version of the well-loved story by Stephen Sharkey, we catch all the tragedy and the joy of the original. Full of great characters, some songs and full of Christmas spirit(s)! Large cast of men, women, teens and children

February: *A View From the Bridge* directed by Edith Pratt. An American classic by Arthur Miller. Eddie has an obsession with his niece and so doesn't approve of her being courted by Rodolfo. His hatred of her suitor reaches a violent and unexpected climax. Cast: 7m, 2f

May: *Quartet*. Ronald Harwood's moving play about Cecily, Reggie and Wilfred

who live in a home for retired opera singers. All is calm until Reggie's ex-wife turns up and starts acting the diva. Sheer delight! Cast: 2m, 2f

June: *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. To celebrate the first play in the Dell Open Air Theatre in 1951, we return once more to Shakespeare's best comedy! We are looking for a cast of Adult BPs, Youth theatre and Juniors to make this a truly family occasion. If you've ever fancied appearing onstage with Big Spirit, this is the perfect opportunity. Great fun promised! Cast: lots of people!

We start casting the first play, *The Ladykillers*, almost immediately so see elsewhere in this learned journal for the audition notice. Please read David's article about the Studio/Fringe programme for the coming year.

Rory

COMING SOON:



Steel Magnolias
15 - 20 May,
Main Theatre.



Pronoun
7 - 10 June,
The Studio.



Flare Path
19 - 24 June,
Main Theatre.

SAVE THE DATE

Bancroft Players' AGM,
Wednesday 28 June



Annie Wilkinson

**“Glamorous,
generous,
courageous
and funny to
the end”**

Remembering the life of much-loved BP stalwart Annie Wilkinson, who died in March.

On 20 April 2017 a full house of some 350 or so friends and family gathered at St Mary’s Church, Hitchin, for Annette Wilkinson’s (nee Farrow) funeral service.

Thereafter, as a fine counterpoint to the sadness of the overall occasion, a cacophony of noise, bright colours and sheer vibrancy encored throughout a crowded wake at The Hermitage. Annie had planned it all. With her love of a good party and all things theatrical, the final curtain finally fell on this memorable lady.

So a few kinds words in memory of Wilkie’s (Mike’s) wife, Hannah and Gemma’s mum, Glen and Cam’s mother-in-law and Joe, Millie and Will’s Nana,

Convent school educated Annie had absolutely no theatrical background whatsoever before its beguiling magic began for her with attendance/performance over an eight year period with The Ballet Rambert School Dance Company in London.

Annie then left to set up her own ballet school in Hitchin whilst, at the same time, also becoming a significant performer in the local amateur scene with The Bancroft Players, The Externals, the Hitchin Thespians and the Letchworth Arcadians.

In 1970 Annie enjoyed top billing with Mike Wilkinson when they married at



Annie with grandchildren Millie, Will and Joe.

St Mary’s Church, Hitchin with other supporting roles being taken by Sally Hull (Matron of Honour) and Jane, Sarah and Kate Whitmore, the eldest daughters of The Bancroft Players’ new President Emeritus. That this fine supporting cast were also all present at Annie’s funeral some 47 years later speaks volumes.

After long term working commercially for her father’s company and then Mike’s, in 1989 Annie became bursar to the Hertfordshire Theatre School where for many years she also taught ballet and tap under the auspices of the late John Gardiner. Annie also appeared in some 23 Bancroft Player productions at either St Anne’s Hall, Hitchin Town Hall or the Queen Mother Theatre.

Annie’s special gift, however, was to have the choreographic vision to create wonderful large scale musical extravaganzas. In this respect Annie directed 14 major Bancroft Player shows of which *Guys and Dolls*; *The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas*; *Underneath the Arches*; *Stepping Out*; *Grease* and *Annie* (yes... Annie!!) were particularly memorable.

So sadly now the lights have dimmed and, following a long cruel illness,

Annie has had to exit the stage for the very last time. Glamorous, generous, courageous and funny to the end, Annie was all those things and much, much more.

Annie was truly a lovely person who is missed by so many. We who knew her well are very grateful indeed to have had her in our lives.

Brian Hull



Annie in ‘The Music Man’ (with Sally Hull), ‘The King and I’ and ‘Half a Sixpence’.

An exciting new season of edgy plays in The Studio

Studio Manager David Lester introduces the plays that will make up the 2017-18 season in The Richard Whitmore Studio

Our next season in The Richard Whitmore Studio promises a programme that's surprising, provocative, innovative, witty, perceptive, and sometimes dark. All the plays explore relationships in contemporary settings and have been chosen to offer a distinct alternative to the Main Theatre. All have challenging, attractive roles for actors.

We open the season in October with *Reasons to be Pretty*, a witty, biting play by Neil LaBute to be directed by Matt Gray. LaBute's theme is how people of all levels of education and eloquence use words as instruments of power. What makes this play resonate is less its Big Theme - beauty (or lack thereof) and its discontents - than how that theme illuminates the insecurities of people who

don't feel they have much to offer the world.

Next up, in January, is *Sex with a Stranger* by Stefan Golaszewski, directed by Cliff Francis. This perceptive and touching play captures the humiliations of lust and the painful inequality of a trio of characters in their twenties. It's artistically subtle, with a clever, non-linear time scheme and there is a sense of ice at its heart - one may leave it with a shiver.

In March it's *The Effect* by Lucy Preble, directed by Sam Powell. This intriguing and compelling play is set in a drugs trial unit where two volunteers are taking an experimental antidepressant. A psychiatrist tracks their behaviour, but it's we in the audience who really keep watch. Are they lovestruck

or are their emotions being manipulated by chemicals? And, if so, does that make them any less valid, or less an expression of who they are?

This brings us to June and *The One* by Vicky Jones, directed by Keith Swainston. An astonishing debut play and the newest in the programme, its frank, edgy dialogue and biting wit shows gender stereotypes the door, while the temerity with which it vents opinions and shows you things on stage put one reviewer in mind of watching someone skipping through a minefield looking for daisies.

There were several members who offered other plays and we are aiming to find opportunities and the space for new directors to present one act, two-hander plays.

David Lester

Annie: "By far the best musical director"



1999: The cast of 'A Slice of Saturday Night'.

I worked with Annie at the QMT on three occasions and I have very fond memories of each of those shows (*writes Jon Brown*).

The first time was back in 1999 and it was my favourite show under Annie's directorship.

It was *A Slice of Saturday Night* and it was my first big musical; working with the likes of Charles Plester, Liz Pybus, Carl Rutherford, Alison Hudson and Fay Worboys. It was a classic 1960s comedy musical and what a show Annie produced.

I remember Annie being very committed and determined. She knew what she wanted straightaway and she worked us really, really hard in rehearsals. We did have huge fun though. The

end result was a colourful, slick and energetic show which had just about everything.

I learned such a lot from Annie. Wonderful memories and 'Slice' is right up there in my top 5 favourite shows at the QMT.

Annie's last show that she directed at the QMT was *Santa in Space* in December 2010. She cast me as an 'audience booing' villain, but I am eternally grateful for that because... it was the show that I met my wife Alisha.

Annie was by far the best musical director at the Bancroft Players. Her standards, end results and sense of fun will live on forever. My thoughts and prayers are with Mike and all the family - God bless you Annie.

Barney Taylor: "To become an actor, you have to learn the basics"

After five years with Big Spirit Barney Taylor is in his final season before drama school beckons. A dark and brooding Prince of Denmark in 2015's production of 'Hamlet', QMT audiences have more recently seen him play leading roles in 'The History Boys' and 'Legally Blonde - the Musical'. He is currently directing the transgender love story 'Pronoun', which will run in the Studio from June 7-10. Rory Reynolds caught up with him to talk acting.

Barney is what I would think of as a powerful actor, someone who can draw you completely into the character he portrays, writes Rory Reynolds. If you saw him in *Hamlet* or more recently as Dakin in *The History Boys*, you'll know exactly what I mean.

RR: How did you become interested in acting?

BARNEY: Through Big Spirit. When I was 13 I came down to the QMT to watch Jenny Wall, an old family friend, in *Romeo & Juliet* and *Road* (by Jim Cartwright). After seeing *Road* I think I was convinced I had to join and I came down with my older brother. He wasn't that interested but for me, right from the first show, it has been my entire life.

RR: You have a passion for acting - but what, to you, is 'good acting'?

BARNEY: For me it is absolute truth to the moment you're in when you're on stage. Good acting is about playing off whatever you're given in terms of script, using

that as a starting point for your exploration of character and motive and what they, the character, feel in that moment. So it's never the same every night - it's fresh minted each time you play the scene. It's reacting to what you're given and playing off that. It's something you can't do alone though - it needs at least two of you, each committed to exploring that moment of time together, and to do that well you need an absolute knowledge of your character.

RR: How do you get that absolute knowledge of the character?

BARNEY: It's about seeing the world from your character's perspective, so you need to build up as complete a picture as you can of their world - what's important to them. I think it's what Stanislavski called 'the Given Circumstances', the world in which the character lives and then what they want to do in that world. I try not to use acting tricks - I'm not what you might call a 'tricksy' actor in the way that some people are. I find improvisation really useful, having to be the character in unplanned moments, realising how they react, how they feel about things. Watching others too is important, watching good actors ply their trade as well as people-watching and seeing how they cope with the world.

RR: I guess you've been influenced by a range of people. Outside of Big Spirit who or what has inspired you?

BARNEY: I spent part of last year on a Foundation course at Guildhall School of Drama and Music in London and I had an acting coach there called Brodie. I learned most from him about the kind of acting I'm interested in. He works in a very harsh way, which I get on well with. First of all he creates a 'safe space', a place where you can experiment - get things wrong, try things out without feeling uneasy. But then he will work you hard in that space. So if I had to be frustrated as a character, for example, he will get you to a pitch where you are incredibly frustrated so you say: 'I can't do this!' and then he'll say: 'now go on from there...' And there you are incredibly frustrated just as your character is and so you can draw from that real emotion.

RR: Anyone else?

BARNEY: Adam Wright (who was also in Big Spirit and comes back and directs for us when he's available). He's a naturalistic director, that's his thing. He didn't give us an inch when directing us and gets us all to ask questions about motive and feeling every second we're on that stage. That was the first time, I think, that I discovered acting was such hard work. He sold us the idea of 'not giving up' - discovering every line in the moment, not switching off and saying 'oh I know this bit, I can do it on automatic pilot'. That to me is bad acting. The good actor is

Continues on next page:



Barney directing a rehearsal for 'Pronoun', which runs June 7-10 in The Studio

In conversation with Barney Taylor
Part two of Rory Reynolds' interview

someone who never gives up on making discoveries every time he or she plays the scene. In real life, you don't have a script so you're forced to react in the moment. In order to be convincing in your acting, you have to engage in the same process, so that one line leads to a realisation that takes you onto the next.

RR: Let's talk about *The History Boys*. What did you enjoy about working on that?

BARNEY: I love the way Alan Bennett writes. He writes naturalistic plays but not in naturalistic language. No one speaks the way that the characters in an Alan Bennett play speak - except perhaps Alan Bennett himself. He writes in his own voice so every line sounds natural when he utters it but the challenge is to find a way for the character to sound as though these poetic lines are flowing naturally from their lips. For us as boys that was hard work. Luckily for Charles Plester, who played Hector, he is sort of Alan Bennett within the play so he could naturally use Bennett's voice. But as teenagers we had to take a different route. We started by building up a camaraderie between us. We had poetry events and so forth, played games, enjoyed each other's company, just as the boys at Cutler's Grammar School do. And of course they're all incredibly bright and made to quote all this poetic stuff by Hector day by day at school. So for them it feels normal and we had to get to a point where it felt normal for us too. I mean, I had never heard of the word 'apotheosis' before this play - yet to them it's an everyday word. So it was quite a journey.

RR: Was there a favourite moment for you in the play?

BARNEY: There were two. First of all both the scenes where Dakin is with Irwin (Cameron Fraser)



Philip Wade Photography

because I feel we work in a similar way. For me Cam is a very, very good actor. Each time we played those two long scenes, we were both totally in the moment. The second is the best scene in the play, although it doesn't involve me - it's the end of Act 1 when Hector has been sacked and he gives a lesson to Posner (Seb Creasey) about Hardy's poem, *Drummer Hodge*. I'm gutted that I never get to see the moment where Hector talks about loneliness and the untouched hand which describes both him and Posner. Their hands never touch - it's a heart-breaking moment. I'm on stage doing something else but I love to listen to the scene - and especially the way Charles says his lines - it's just really wonderful.

RR: Finally, what advice would you give a young aspiring actor, aged about 13, to help them?

BARNEY: If they're local I would say join Big Spirit. To become an actor you have to learn the basics - how to behave as an actor, how to think like an actor, to be treated seriously like an actor so you take yourself seriously. And that's something that Big Spirit does. The tricks, if you like - the rules. Looking up, breathing and speaking to the end of every line, the energy you need, the relationships with each other. That's what I call the basics. When they are in place you are ready to build up your skills as a good naturalistic actor.

Youth Theatre Corner

Well people seemed pretty blown away by Big Spirit's production of *Legally Blonde*. Hurrah! It followed hard on the heels of *The History Boys* earlier in April so it's been a pretty busy time!

Now the group are straight into *Much ado About Nothing* which is our open-air Shakespeare this year. No rest for the wicked it seems - but wait, there's more. Another group are busy rehearsing with Barney Taylor for the June Studio production of *Pronoun*, and yet another dozen are prepping themselves for the Edinburgh Fringe which takes place in August. Whew!

And then we have the dreaded auditions for next year in July. It's crazy! Needless to say, the group are having a great time: they love being part of the QMT and they love being together. So it's perfect. Oh - and good luck with all those exams guys! Make sure to make time to revise. Meanwhile, we'll look at some nice pictures of *Legally Blonde*!

"Give my love to the leprechauns."



Gay - or European?



"I don't speak MTV!"



"I can't believe you just called me a butthead."

The Ladykillers

This celebrated Ealing comedy, set in 1956, tells the classic blackly comic tale of a sweet innocent old lady, alone in her home, pitted against a gang of criminal misfits who will stop at nothing. Many will know the 50s film and the script has been artfully adapted for the stage by Graham Linehan (credits include *Father Ted* and *The IT crowd*, among others). It was greeted with great reviews when it first played in the West End in 2011.

Eccentric widow Louisa Wilberforce lives with her chatty macaw in a house in King's Cross. She's known to the local police as a fantasist. But when approached by Professor Marcus, a slippery would-be lodger, she is remarkably gullible. Instead of suspecting Marcus and his four henchmen as they plot a robbery, she falls for their pretence of being musicians in rehearsal, despite their showing no trace of musical talent.

This will be, we hope, a laugh out loud comedy but with a really splendid range of character roles. It has a dark side as the play builds to its climax with Mrs Wilberforce vs the bank robbers! Departing a little from the famous film with Alec Guinness, all the gangster parts are written strongly. Important to note is that those cast should find and inhabit the role and not attempt to copy how characters were portrayed in the film.

THE DETAILS:

By: Graham Linehan, directed by David Lester

Auditions: Mon 12 and Wed 14 June

Performances: Fri 15 to Sat 23 Sept (8 performances)

Rehearsals: Mondays and Wednesdays

Scripts: Available shortly by box office with signing in/out list. Please consider choosing a passage from the play to read and act at the audition.

Ages: The ages above refer to the ages to be portrayed and are a guide.

Further information: David Lester on 07515 339148 or davidlester46@gmail.com.

THE ROLES:

Mrs Louisa Wilberforce: Female, acting mid 70s to early 80s. Eccentric, but not cute. Displaying an air of innocence under a veil of firmness.

Professor Marcus: Male 40s to 50s. Charming, but rather creepy with the air of an 'academic'. The leader and 'mastermind' of the gang.

Major Courtney: Male 40s to 50s. A retired major, or at least purports to be one. Has military bearing but doesn't engender confidence.

Harry Robinson: Male 20s to early 30s. A 'spiv' and 'teddy boy' of the era, nervous with some dubious habits.

One-Round: Male 30s. Needs to portray a large muscular character, a punch drunk ex boxer. Not the sharpest knife in the drawer.

Louis Harvey: Male 30s to early 50s. The most sinister of the gang with an air of menace and trusting no one.

Constable Macdonald: Male late 30s to early 50s. An archetypal policeman of the time (no *Line of Duty*). Smaller part, but important role.

Mrs Jane Tromleyton: Female 70s. A very small speaking part and one of the ladies attending the musical soirée that the gang are pressed into giving.

Mrs Wilberforce's Guests: Five females who attend the musical soirée hosted by Mrs Wilberforce who have non-scripted parts, but make plenty of noise!

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Steel Magnolias
(Main theatre)
15 - 20 May

Flare Path
(Main theatre)
19 - 24 June

'Meet the Directors' evening
5 June

Bancroft Players AGM
28 June

Pronoun
(Studio)
7 - 10 June

Much Ado About Nothing
(Big Spirit, open air production)
5 - 8 July

Audition: The Ladykillers
12 & 14 June

Bancroft Players' 200 Club

My piece last month did drum up some interest, an existing member has asked for another number. Well, better than nothing I guess, and thanks to Helen Huson. This of course highlights the fact that you can indeed have more than one number.

Heading into my busy holiday period (though some would say that is all year round), so only a brief report for April and May.

Congratulations as always to the winners but I am astounded that April saw another all-female line up PLUS three are called Ann – all spelled the same way. Well done, ladies, and our May winners too. Don't forget June sees our £50 draw!

Paula Downes

April Winners

£25: Carole Humphreys
£20: Ann Mulholland
£15: Ann Hudson
£10: Ann O'Dell

May Winners

£25: Barbie Gardiner
£20: Brian Hull
£15: Bev Bollons
£10: Sue C Mason

Steel Magnolias: Come and be pampered at an evening of laughter and tears

Rosemary Bianchi speaks to Brian Seal, director of 'Steel Magnolias', about his new show and how he got involved in theatre.



'Steel Magnolias' is on in the Main Theatre from May 15-20. Book online at qmt.org.uk

"I first got involved in theatre when I was a teenager. I used to play in a band and every Sunday we played at a Youth Club in Hatfield. One Sunday the Youth Leader came up to me and asked me to be in a play at The Barn in Welwyn. I'd never done anything like that before, but I said OK, and off we went. It was a George Bernard Shaw one-act play, *Overruled*. We were entered in the Youth Drama Festival, and we won. I loved it and you haven't been able to get me offstage since. I realised the other day that was exactly 50 years ago. The opening night was on May 15 1967, and the opening night of *Steel Magnolias* is May 15 2017. That must be a good omen.

"Since then I've done mainly musicals, particularly with The Arcadians at the Gordon Craig. One I look back fondly on is *Scrooge, The Musical* in which I played Bob Cratchit and Elizabeth Shaw, who is 'Ouiser' in *Steel Magnolias*, was my wife. When the big curtain went up we were sat like the Quality Street chocolate box, and the snow started to come down. It was absolutely magical.

"My first show with the Bancroft Players was *Hi Di Hi* with Sally Hull as director, but I'd always wanted to do *Stop the World I Want to Get Off* and that was my first directing opportunity at the QMT. I'm a big Anthony Newley fan, possibly because I was born in Hackney and so was he. I love his stuff, it's really quirky and clever. Then there was *Noises Off*, which was fun but also a nightmare co-ordinating the onstage/offstage action.

"Approaching *Steel Magnolias* was interesting as there was a perception that it was a bit old fashioned. It's usually played as set in the late 80s when it was written, or the early 90s when the film came out, but the script says 'time: the present', so I decided to bring it up to date, to 2017. A few technical things needed updating, for example we're using mobile phones and

hand-held blow driers rather than those beehive style machines, but the story hasn't changed - the story is timeless.

"Once again I'm working with an all female cast, as in *Stop the World*. We were truly blessed at auditions, because we had real talent and could have cast it twice over. We've got a great cast and it has been a pleasure to work with them. They've been receptive to my ideas and have worked really hard. It's a tough ask as it's a fantastic play, but it's all about the words, the story. Being set in a beauty salon presents its own technical challenges, for example we need running water. We've had a hairdresser, Steve Hilliard, who has a couple of salons, come in last week to do a hands-on workshop with the cast, which was really helpful. Of course Nerys has professional hairdressing experience, so as the owner of the salon she has a head start if you'll excuse the pun.

"The audience can expect laughter and tears in equal measure but overall it has the feelgood factor and is based on the true story of the writer's sister. It is set in Louisiana, but it could be equally true for Hitchin. I've added quite a bit of incidental music, pop, American music, because there's a radio onstage. Just stuff I like and I hope the audience will too. Everything from Hank Williams to Elvis, with a little bit of Dolly thrown in.

"We do hope you will come along and be pampered with us for an evening at the local beauty parlour!"



Disabled parking bay

I fear there could be confusion among members now the council has kindly created four disabled parking spaces right outside the theatre. These have not rendered our own disabled parking bay obsolete, and it should be kept empty for performance nights. It can be used for general parking during the day and non-show nights. Why am I involved? Well, it is the House Manager's job to track down any cast or crew member who might have parked there on show night and ask them to move their car because we have a wheelchair booking. So much easier if you don't park there in the first place. I have asked the EC if this bay could be suitably signed to avoid confusion. Thank you for your co-operation over this.

Paula Downes

Who's who in the Bancroft Players

Executive Committee 2016 to 2017	Fire Officer <i>Chris Lane</i>
Richard Whitmore <i>President Emeritus</i>	First Aid Officer <i>Paula Downes</i>
Frank Pratt <i>President</i>	Front of House Manager <i>Paula Downes</i>
Les Edwards <i>Chairman</i>	Health & Safety Coordinator <i>David Hillelson</i>
Susan Mellor <i>Secretary</i>	Junior Theatre Group <i>Alison Hudson</i>
Tim Hallas <i>Treasurer</i>	Keys Distributor <i>Keith Crook</i>
Rory Reynolds <i>Artistic Director</i>	Licensing Manager <i>Tim Hallas</i>
Nicki Pope <i>Production Manager (Main Theatre)</i>	Membership <i>Edith Pratt</i>
David Lester <i>Production Manager (Studio)</i>	Newsletter <i>Rosemary Bianchi</i>
Chris Lane <i>Theatre Manager</i>	Properties <i>Audrey Hawkins, Julie Chamberlain</i>
Julian Newman Turner <i>Business Manager</i>	Publicity Manager <i>Julian Newman Turner</i>
David Borner <i>Committee Member</i>	Refreshments/ Stewards <i>Lyn Bryars, Mo Mutton</i>
Elliott Bunker <i>Committee Member</i>	Set & Design Manager <i>Rosemary Bianchi</i>
Emma Saunders <i>Committee member</i>	Technical Manager <i>Alan Bailes</i>
Zara Schafer <i>Committee Member</i>	Workshop Coordinator <i>Clive Hall</i>
Appointments 2016 to 2017	Vice-Chairman <i>Chris Lane</i>
Box Office Manager <i>Vacant</i>	Wardrobe Liaison <i>Sally Hull</i>
Bar Committee <i>Frank Pratt, Roger Nobes</i>	Welfare: <i>Vacant</i>
Bar Rota <i>Maureen Nobes</i>	What's On Distribution <i>Susan Mellor</i>
Bookings Manager <i>Edith Pratt (evening), Keith Crook (day)</i>	Youth Theatre Group <i>Rory Reynolds</i>
Diary Organiser <i>Keith Crook</i>	200 Club <i>Paula Downes</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.

2017-18 season unveiled

Show	Dates	Director	Venue
<i>The Ladykillers</i>	15-23 Sept	David Lester	Theatre
<i>Reasons to be Pretty</i>	11-14 Oct	Matt Gray	Studio
<i>Thrill of Love</i> (Big Spirit)	29 Oct - 4 Nov	Jon Brown	Theatre
<i>A Christmas Carol</i>	22-25 Nov	Rory Reynolds	Theatre
<i>Sex with a Stranger</i>	8-10, 15-17 Dec	Alison Hudson	Theatre
(BP Juniors)	17-20 Jan	Cliff Francis	Studio
<i>View from the Bridge</i>	7-9 Feb	Alison Hudson	Theatre
<i>The Effect</i>	26 Feb - 3 Mar	Edith Pratt	Theatre
(Big Spirit)	14-17 Mar	Sam Powell	Studio
<i>Quartet</i>	25-28 Apr	Rory Reynolds	Theatre
<i>The One</i>	14-19 May	Elliott Bunker	Theatre
<i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i>	6-9 Jun	Keith Swainston	Studio
(Big Spirit Barton show)	18-23 Jun	Rory Reynolds ++	The Dell / Theatre: TBC
	5-7 Jul	Rory Reynolds	Barton

For more information see Rory's blog on the front page of this newsletter and David Lester's article on page 3.

5 June: 'Meet the directors' night

Now the new season has been announced you all get a chance to meet the lucky directors and they will talk to you about their plans for their exciting productions *writes Rory Reynolds*. It takes place at the QMT, of course, on Monday June 5 at 7.30pm until about 9pm. Each director will give a short and hopefully inspiring talk about their show. You get a chance to have a drink with them and chat afterwards. It's open to everyone who is interested in being part of the season next year whether as an actor, backstage or in any capacity. There's a free glass of wine too, so put the date in your diary - and bring your friends, it's too good to miss!

Calling new directors

Following the evening last year aimed at new directors for The Studio, we plan another initiative to provide opportunities for those with an interest in directing to take this a stage further *writes David Lester*. Among the plays submitted by members for the new season were some one-act two-handers, including plays by Pinter, and it was unfortunate that we had to disappoint them. We hope to find space in the constantly demanding QMT calendar to give some new directors opportunities to take their ideas forward - more news to follow.

Peter Elmer

It is with sadness that I inform you of the death of Peter Elmer. Peter was a part of the technical team in the early days of the Theatre, working on many shows as well as playing Mr Fezziwig in *A Christmas Carol*. In later years he could be seen at the Theatre on Monday mornings, along with Mike Gibson, carrying out essential general electrical maintenance. He suffered from a stroke last year and passed away on Saturday. There will be a thanksgiving service for Peter on Friday May 19 at 2pm at Christchurch, Hitchin. Our thoughts are with his wife and family.

Edith Pratt