



The Bancroft Players

Newsletter

May 2018



Seb Creasey in Big Spirit's highly-acclaimed production 'I Don't Like Mondays', written by Rob Hughes and directed by Katie Milward. Photo - Paul Seaby; lighting - Dan Barnicott; set - Clive Hall; design - Hannah Brown.

Future of Bancroft Players at risk, warns chairman

The key committee vacancies of treasurer and secretary, and the vital role of refreshment manager, must all be filled at the AGM if the society is to survive and thrive: can YOU help?

At the AGM next month we will thank and applaud Secretary Sue and Treasurer Tim, not forgetting Lyn (who has looked after refreshments).

All three are standing down after many years of hard work and service on behalf of the Society. Consequently it will be ESSENTIAL to fill these vacancies.

Secretary: takes and circulates the minutes arising from our six/seven weekly EC meetings and prepares for the AGM.

Treasurer: to join the Finance sub committee to liaise with Fay our Book Keeper and shadow Keith and generally assist in monitoring our financial affairs.

Refreshment Manager: An equally important, but unsung role. I believe members of Lyn's team are happy to continue to help, details on request.

Please be aware as to the importance of volunteers coming forward to take on these roles.

If this does not happen, the ongoing success of our society will be put at risk.

I urge you to carefully consider if you can take on one of these positions, do please speak with Sue, Tim or Lyn or contact me for any further information.

Looking forward to seeing you at the AGM in June.

Les Edwards, Chairman

Tickets on sale now at www.qmt.org.uk for:



Directors' evening

Find out about next season's plays from their directors. Friday 25th May at 7.45pm. See inside for more information.

AGM

The AGM of the Bancroft Players will be held in The Studio on Thursday June 14 at 8pm. The agenda and minutes of the last meeting will be sent in due course.



A Bunch of Amateurs

This will be a fun play to do with the added challenge of how to be convincing as an amateur actor. And it comes with acting out some scenes from *King Lear*!

Keen to boost his flagging career, fading Hollywood action hero Jefferson Steele arrives in England to play *King Lear* in Stratford - only to discover that this is not the birthplace of the Bard, but a sleepy Suffolk village. And instead of Kenneth Branagh and Dame Julie Dench, the cast are amateurs trying to save their theatre from developers.

Jefferson's ego, vanity and insecurity are tested to the limit by our enthusiastic amateur thespians. As acting worlds collide and Jefferson's career implodes, he discovers some truths about himself.

The script was originally written in 2004 for a film of the same name, but then rewritten for the theatre and with Ian Hislop as co-author you can imagine some killer lines! However, our approach here will not be to 'camp up' the world of am drams, but take an entirely professional approach, bringing out the spirit of amateur theatre and why we do it... if that makes sense.

THE ROLES:

With two exceptions, ages are not specific: casting the right combination will be more important.

Jefferson Steel: Fading Hollywood star. Arrogant, insecure, brash, gauche, demanding, vulnerable and ultimately aware of his own absurdity

Dorothy Nettle: Director of The Stratford Players and the moving force behind keeping the theatre alive. Her sweet and accommodating nature conceals her inner steel

Jessica Steele: Jefferson's teenage daughter, who has been neglected by her Hollywood star father and now wants to make him pay for it

Nigel Dewbury: Solicitor and leading light of the Stratford Players. Rather pompous, stuck-up and self-regarding. Believes he is the star of the show and should play all the leading roles.

Fancies his romantic chances with Dorothy

Mary Plunkett: Owner of the Rectory B&B. Jolly, generous and an unashamedly adoring Jefferson Steele fan - although somewhat confused about which roles he played in this films... and how keen he is on her

Denis Dobbins: Handyman and village Mr Fixit. Avuncular though slightly dull, Denis is star-struck by Jefferson and fancies heading up his entourage of one

Lauren Bell: 30-something marketing executive, former physiotherapist and the sponsor's wife. Passionate about the arts and smarter than her husband allows her to be, but regarded more for her looks than her intellect

Other non-speaking roles: 2-3 members of the Stratford Players, plus some audience on stage for the performance of *King Lear*

THE DETAILS:

By: Ian Hislop and Nick Newman, directed by David Lester

Auditions: Tue 19 & Thu 21 June

Performances: 21 - 29 Sept (eight-night run TBC)

Rehearsals: Tues & Thurs

Scripts: Available shortly for loan and quick return using a sign out sheet behind box office

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

The Father

"The most acclaimed new play of the decade"

Now advanced in years, Andre was once a tap dancer. He lives with his daughter Anne and her husband Antoine. Or was he an engineer whose daughter Anne lives in London with her new lover, Pierre? The thing is, he is still wearing his pyjamas and he can't find his watch. He is starting to wonder if he's losing control...

The Father is the winner of France's highest theatrical honour, the 2014 Moliere Award for Best Play, and has received an unprecedented ten five star reviews from major national newspaper critics.

This is a play that constantly confounds expectations and works almost like a thriller, with a sinister Pinteresque edge, as complete strangers keep on turning up in Andre's flat. It will be both fun to be part of whilst offering a challenge to all concerned.

THE ROLES:

Andre: The father, playing age from 60 upwards

Anne: His daughter, playing age mid-thirties to mid-forties

Pierre: Anne's partner, playing age appropriate for Anne

Woman: Playing age similar to Anne

Man: Playing age similar to Pierre

Laura: A carer, playing age under thirty

THE DETAILS:

By: Florian Zeller (translation by Christopher Hampton), directed by Brian Seal

Auditions: Mon 25 & Wed 27 June

Performances: 17 - 20 October

Rehearsals: Mon & Wed

Scripts: Available from Box Office shortly, please sign out then return promptly

Further information: Brian Seal - brian.seal1@ntl-world.com

2018-19 QMT season: play-by-play guide

Main House

Well after a delay we are now ready to announce the next season at the QMT.

It's been a hard slog this year as we've had a struggle with licences. When there's a professional production of a play on, especially if it's touring, then the rights are never available to amateurs. Ho-hum!

But we've got a great programme for you so let's list them. These are our main house shows: David writes below about the Studio.

September: *A Bunch of Amateurs* directed by David Lester This is a cracking new comedy by Ian Hislop about - well - a bunch of amateurs putting on a show. For comedic reason they're rubbish of course.

After this current season of plays which featured the brittleness of love and sex in relationships, the new season in The Studio has a flavour of the fantastical and spiritual where we see relationships through confused eyes, prisms of time and breaking free from life's restrictions.

17-20 October: *The Father* by Florian Zeller directed by Brian Seal. In a recent translation by Christopher Hampton, this award-winning play makes us see things as if through the confused eyes of Andre, as he struggles to make sense of a progressively befuddling world. It's a play that constantly confounds expectations, as complete strangers keep on turning up in Andre's flat.

16-19 January: *Beacons* by Tabitha Mortiboy directed by Vivien Kerr. A magical play set around an ice cream van at the top of Beachy Head. Julie runs the van by day and patrols the cliff by night to prevent future jumpers. She has the company of ex-hobo Bernard while young Skye helps

November: *Bette & Joan* directed by Elliott Bunker. This is about the feud between Bette Davis and Joan Crawford when they were forced to work together on the 1960s film *Whatever Happened to Baby Jane*. Expect fireworks!

December: *The Nutcracker* directed by Rosemary Bianchi. Not the ballet, but the original fairy tale story wherein the King & Queen of Mouses have stolen the Christmas star. A super Christmas play for all ages.

February: *Blackadder* by Richard Curtis directed by Sally Hull. Yes, this brilliant series is now available for the stage so expect Edmund, Queenie and Baldrick to be at their rip-roaring best. A sure-fire hit!

out as a distraction from her troubled home life. Julie toys with online dating as Bernard pines for her.

13-16 March: *Constellations* by Nick Payne directed by Grace Reinhold-Gittins. An exceptional romantic drama that explores a relationship through the prism of quantum multiverse theory. We meet the would-be lovers Marianne and Roland - she a gawky theoretical physicist, he a humble beekeeper - at a barbecue where Marianne attempts, in a series of scenes, to chat Roland up. Each snapshot is a different universe, a different possibility. A thinking person's romcom!

5-8 June: *Bea* by Mick Gordon directed by Seb Creasy. A cunningly-constructed and inventive play about young Bea, full of bounce and brio, even though she has been more-or-less confined to bed for eight years, thanks to an unspecified illness. We see a physical expression of an inner life, a spiritual fantasy and - for a play about the limits of compassion - *Bea*

May: *We Happy Few* by Imogen Stubbs directed by Charles Plester. Based on the adventures of the real-life Osiris Players during WW2. An all-female theatre company set out to bring culture to the provinces. Funny and touching in equal measure.

June: *Anne Boleyn* by Howard Brenton directed by Nicki Pope. The remarkable life of the woman who caused the Reformation in England. The story of Anne's rise and ignominious fall. An epic tale of personal ambition.

We hope you like it. Nicki, David, Elliott and I want you to get excited and make 2018-19 the best season yet!

Rory Reynolds

The Studio

is joyous. At times it is killingly funny as we watch the day-to-day routine of Bea and her Northern Irish carer.

David Lester

QMT SEASON 2018-19 DIRECTORS' EVENING

You are cordially invited to the Bancroft Players new season Directors' Evening.

Whether you are an actor, backstage or just interested to see what the new season is all about, come along to our launch.

Each director will talk briefly about their show and you can ask any questions you like.

Add in a free glass of wine and you have an event to remember.

We would love to see you on Friday 25th May at 7.45pm (note: this replaces 'In the Actor's Studio' which was scheduled for this date)

What works for me... SHORT SCENES - VERY SHORT SCENES

Lemons Lemons Lemons Lemons Lemons', Sam Steiner's thought-provoking two-hander about language and communication, is not the first play in The Studio this season to feature rapid changes between very short and non-linear scenes - audiences will recall 'Sex With a Stranger' working in a similar way. But it's certainly the first to boast a title more than twice the length of its shortest scenes...

The challenge for cast and crew is to portray convincingly the changing timelines, locations and emotions without the benefit of set or costume changes, and often with barely a pause for breath between them.

Director Russ Hurn and his cast and crew offer some tips about how they are making it all work.

Russell Hurn (Director)

Because of the way the play's constructed, what we did was try to create a linear story for ourselves first and then break it into pieces - like assembling a jigsaw so we were familiar with each piece. We're also going to use some creative lighting and media to help the audience, and use the stage positioning to indicate the storyline.

Gabs Rodriguez-Cleary

Imagination is particularly important - really picturing where you are. For example the future scenes are short and sharp and I see us in a spotlight, whereas for those in the living room I can see our space. Each scene has a very distinctive feel, and what helps is having a partner that's willing to play. We're quite good at snapping from one scene to another - there's no resistance.

Emily Miles

You have to be focussed with how you learn the lines and you have to be open to changing different emotions with each scene. The way I'm doing it is defining how I feel in each scene and that's helping me go from one to another because my character feels quite differently in each.



Liz Pybus (Assistant Director)



I would describe it as a dance - one changes their steps and the other has to follow. Emotionally it's like they're partners in it and, through the dance, the characters become believable. Then the audience will fill in any gaps - 'I believe that's a car', or a sofa, or he's on his keyboard. If we're doing a good job, they will fill in those gaps subconsciously.



Luke Hutchings (ASM)

We've all got to know our cues as the pace of the play is so fast. It's not like when you're doing a play set in one room and each scene's half an hour long and you've got time. It jumps a lot so you've got to be right there on the dot.

Louis Horn (Stage Manager)

It's very different from doing a show that's prop-heavy, with lots of set changes. It's smaller in scale and more of a pre-set kind of show, which means the responsibility is harder - you can't just chuck a prop on or get someone to walk on with it so there's a whole other aspect to it.



**'Lemons Lemons Lemons Lemons Lemons' runs from June 5 to June 9.
Tickets from qmt.org.uk or the Box Office.**



'Quartet' director Elliott Bunker surveys the scene

Quartet: A charming tale with no self-pity

Rosemary Bianchi previews 'Quartet' by Ronald Harwood. Performance dates: May 14 - 19 in the Main Theatre.

As the evenings lengthen into summer, our thoughts turn to more gentle pleasures - and where better to indulge this than at the QMT, where Ronald Harwood's hit play *Quartet* is due to open.

This charming tale, set in an up-market country house retirement home for aging thespians, focuses on a clutch of former opera singers: scatty, gentle mezzo soprano Cecily, teetering on the brink of dementia; proud, fastidious Reggie; aging Lothario Wilfred and grand diva Joan.

In the distant past the four performed an iconic rendition of Verdi's quartet from *Rigoletto*, 'Bella figlia dell'amore', appropriately a musical depiction of the differing agendas of four very disparate characters. Now, to celebrate the great composer's birthday, they plan to recreate that event for one last time.

Reminiscences abound, both wry and mischievous, as the group bickers and banter its way through drama-packed rehearsals. Their mantra is NSP (no self-pity) and they attack the task with a bravura which masks the vulnerability of their ages.

Ronald Harwood is renowned for his backstage plays, in particular the multi award-winning *The Dresser* which draws on his own experience as a young man working in that role for the legendary Sir Donald Wolfit.

Growing up in the same suburb of Cape Town as his cousin, Anthony Sher, they shared a passion for theatre, and although Harwood trained at RADA, he admits that he was such a bad actor that he would never have made a living: "Now I love writing."

Quartet is imbued with a deep understanding of the demands of live performance and, as well as hilarious one liners and put downs, it sketches situations which may be very familiar to anyone who has ventured onstage.

A quintet of quickfire questions for 'Quartet' director Elliott Bunker.

Will we hear much from 'Rigoletto'?

The music will feature prominently throughout - hopefully it will act as a recurring theme and the audience's ears will tune in quite quickly to what the characters are doing.

Have you ever seen 'Rigoletto'?

No, but I've listened to it lots and I love it - I can't wait to see it, I genuinely can't wait. I've always loved music in theatre. This one in particular is beautiful. It inspires pictures in my mind.

What appealed to you about this play?

The chance to work with a smaller cast. As a director you need to work and think differently with a smaller cast - you need the characters to come through. I'm using it as an opportunity to spend more time with the characters in a play.

What do you look for when casting?

I try to choose actors who bring something of themselves to the characters - every actor I've worked with brings something to the table.

What was the most interesting challenge?

The final scene because the actors have to bring another character to the stage, going back 30 years in their lives to when they were at the peak of their profession, and into another performance mode.

'A Midsummer Night's Dream': July 2-7

Moonlight and midnight



'A Midsummer Night's Dream' is among Shakespeare's most magical and other-worldly plays. Here, Helen Ashworth looks at the Bard's use of the moon as a symbol in the play, and how it weaves its influence over humans and fairies alike.

Performance dates:
July 2-7 in the main theatre.

Having been asked to write a short piece on whatever aspect I wanted of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* – a tough call, since there are so many themes and motifs in this play, all of which require far more analysis than I have room for – I eventually picked up a script with the idea of finding something I could write about.

As a result I was struck by how important the moon is in the play, after all, the word *moon* occurs three times in the first two speeches.

As Shakespeare's plays were mostly performed by daylight, the actors needed to create the idea of darkness or half-light in the imagination of the audience, especially as there were no lights to turn off or to dim.

Repeated moon references helped, by working on the audience to create a dreamlike atmosphere. Familiar things look different by moonlight; they are seen quite literally in

a different light. Comically, this problem is examined in the final act, when the Rude Mechanicals use a lantern to represent the moon.

Different phases of the moon run through the play. It starts in its last, darkest, phase, as Theseus and Hippolyta discuss their forthcoming wedding.

This phase is personified by Hecate, the ruler of the Underworld, who is associated with magic, mysticism, and even death. However, its new phase is about to begin and is described by Hippolyta as "like to a silver bow, bent in heaven", an implicit reference to Cupid's arrow, which draws lovers together.

This imagery also invokes Diana, the virgin huntress and guardian spirit of the adolescent moon. In this guise, the moon is the patroness of all young lovers. The new, slender moon, though, won't last, but will move into full maturity, into

a ripe, fertile state, just as the marriages of the young lovers will eventually result in children.

The moon also has a less benign face: she is not pleased with Oberon and Titania, who, as we all know, are "ill met by moonlight". Their quarrels have made the moon pale with anger, resulting in some disastrous consequences for humans.

Despite the various meanings of the moon in *A Midsummer's Night Dream*, it is a unifying force, shining on all the characters as they deal with their changing situations.

Drenched in moonlight, the play references Hecate's mystical underworld visions, the chaste huntress Diana, and Phoebe's rich fertility. It is also aligned with the more comical, folkloric image of the man-in-the-moon, who, in the guise of Robin Starveling the tailor, lights the action of 'Pyramus and Thisbe'.

Helen Ashworth

Main image: 'Come set thee down upon this flowery bed' - 19th century lithograph by Currier & Ives Printmakers, New York. Below: Robin Starveling as Moon, illustrated by Louis Rhead for 'Lamb's Tales From Shakespeare', 1918. Both images are from the vast collection held by the Folger Shakespeare Library and made available for use rights-free.



'A Midsummer Night's Dream': July 2-7

A set fit for a Dream

How to start designing the set for a play that everyone knows and has been staged a few times by the Bancroft Players?

Keith Warren takes us through his creative process for the forthcoming production of 'A Midsummer Night's Dream'...



After an initial meeting with directors Carlyss and Rory to get their initial thoughts and 'vision', and a read through the script to get the feel of things, I looked for images and references around the theme and style... but not anything from past productions.

I then did some sketches to try and incorporate ideas or elements as well as discussing lighting ideas with Dan, construction with Dave and Clive, staging with Emma and Charlotte and costumes with Hannah to try and ensure it can all be delivered.

Then it's a scale drawing to place the set in the available stage layout - trying to include lots of areas to step back into and hide, different levels to step up and down and sit on, floor space to enable performers to have as large a space as possible, making it feel quite dark in places and tying it all together in a cohesive theme.

I add in some pictures and notes to explain the different elements and after some feedback from the directors proceed to the next step - a

model to make sure it all works and then it can be shared with the cast and crew.

With such a big cast, it's important to get things agreed early enough so actors can block movements - but I'm also aware that final positions of certain elements such as columns, lights or trees will have to wait until the 'get-in'... it all adds to the fun.

Here's a little preview of part of the plan - if you want to see the finished set and how all the elements come together you'll need to get your ticket to the show booked!

Keith Warren

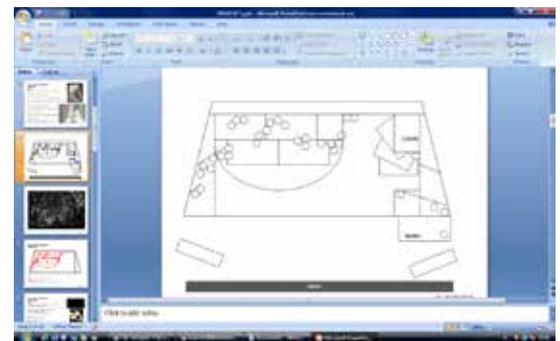


Photo: Keith Warren (right) and Keith Crook in the workshop.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Spring Awakening
(Big Spirit, The Studio)
May 10 - 12

Quartet
(Main Theatre)
May 14 - 19

Directors' Evening
May 25

Playwriting Group
(John Coxall Room)
7.30pm, May 29

Playwriting Group
Monologue-fest
(Main Theatre)
June 2

Lemons Lemons Lemons
Lemons Lemons
(The Studio)
June 6 - 9

Club Night: Whose Line
is it Anyway?
June 15

Audition: A Bunch of
Amateurs
June 19 & 21

Audition: The Father
June 25 & 27

A Midsummer Night's Dream
(Main Theatre)
July 2 - 7

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.



The cast of 'I Don't Like Mondays'

Programme sales at Big Spirit show raise £75 for Florida school shooting survivors

Big Spirit's recent production *I Don't Like Mondays* addressed the topical subject of school shootings in the US - a theme that became even more relevant when a horrific massacre took place at a Florida high school during their rehearsal period.

In response, they decided to donate money raised by sales of the show's programme to support the survivors and families of the Parkland shooting. As a result, £75 has been donated to the Stoneman Douglas Victims Fund.

If you didn't get a chance to buy a programme, but still want to help, you can donate here:

<https://www.gofundme.com/stonemandouglasvictimsfund/donate>

Bancroft Players' 200 Club

Yet again I am embarrassed to see my name at the top of the list. I can assure you I did not draw it out and was prepared to put it back (and not for the first time have I done this I must add!) but was persuaded to leave well alone. As I have said in the past, I do have three numbers in the draw – and Sarah does have two. Just my way of encouraging you all to increase the odds on you winning! I end this month by saying 'congratulations' to our April winners.

April Winners

£25: Paula Downes
£20: Sarah Chapman
£15: Ken Burton
£10: Alan Hemming

Paula Downes

'One Act Bites' short plays weekend rescheduled for September

'One Act Bites' will be a warm-up to the new season in The Studio. Two nights of short, two-hander, One Act Plays presented by new directors.

Take note: the date for the event has been moved from June because of congestion in the scheduling. It will now take place on September 5 & 6.

More news soon.

David Lester

The
Richard Whitmore
STUDIO