

# The Bancroft Players

Newsletter  
May 2019



Big Spirit's production of 'Oedipus and Antigone'. Photo: Jade Newman Turner

Tickets on sale now at [www.qmt.org.uk](http://www.qmt.org.uk) for:

## We Happy Few

By Imogen Stubbs.

**May 6-11**

*"By far and away the funniest and saddest backstage play for half a century."*

Daily Express



## Bea

By Mick Gordon.

**June 5-8**

*"Bed-ridden by illness, Bea is lively, naughty and full of life - until she asks a terrible favour of those closest to her."*



## Anne Boleyn

By Howard Brenton.

**June 17-22**

*"A celebration of a great English heroine and a rollickingly good drama full of huge characters."*



The QMT



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

# Coming soon to the QMT



## Bea

*By Mick Gordon, directed by David Lester*

Bea's body is useless to her. For eight years she has laid marooned in her bed, surrounded by the evidence of her life before illness struck. But, even though on the outside she is almost paralysed, inside she's dancing and always reaching for the light. Bea is lively, naughty and full of life - and dependent on her mother and carer to do everything for her. But when she asks something of them that no parent or friend would want to be asked, both are forced to challenge the boundaries of their own compassion.

**June 5-8 at 7.45pm**

## Anne Boleyn

*By Howard Brenton, directed by Nicki Pope*

Hunting through an old chest, the newly crowned James I discovers the controversial legacy of Anne Boleyn, Henry VIII's notorious second wife. Time jumps back 70 years, when the witty and flirtatious Anne was not only in love with Henry, but also with the most dangerous ideas of her day. Conspiring with the exiled William Tyndale, she plots to make England Protestant - forever.

A celebration of a great English heroine, this "rollickingly good drama", full of huge characters, offers a compelling portrait of a woman contentiously described by James I as "the whore who changed England".



**June 17-22 at 7.45pm**

## How to support Natalie as she heads for the hills in a good cause

### *Natalie Gordon explains why she's tackling the Three Peaks Challenge*

As most of you know, my idea of a challenge is trying to find a bottle of Villa Maria Sauvignon Blanc for under a tenner in Waitrose. So you will probably be surprised to read that I have signed up for the Three Peaks Challenge - walking Ben Nevis, Scafell Pike and Snowdon, all in under 24 hours. I am trying to raise as much money as I possibly can for the Garden House Hospice - a wonderful charity.

So if you haven't sponsored me yet and would like to, please go to my fundraising page at <https://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/NatalieGordon7>. Alternatively I will accept cash, cheques or Kendal Mint Cake - just let me know. Thank you so much - it's going to be tough so I need all the help and encouragement I can get. See you in the bar!

*Natalie*





**'We Happy Few', the BPs' May show in the main house, portrays a wartime theatre company with a difference. Christine Neal looks at how Hitchin's postwar theatre scene became the Bancroft Players we know today.**

## We happy many - Hitchin on stage

In *We Happy Few*, we follow a group of female actors touring Shakespeare plays round the United Kingdom during World War II. It is based on real-life wartime touring group, the Osiris Players.

Plays to entertain the nation and keep morale high were encouraged during World War II, while in Hitchin the citizens were educated and entertained by the Hitchin Entertainments Society. At the end of the war, in 1945, The Bancroft Players were formed from this society with the objective of producing plays and establishing a permanent theatre for the town.

Keith Crook's excellent history of the society, which can be found on the QMT website,

records that the first play they staged was *Pygmalion* at the Town Hall in December 1945.

In 1956 St Anne's Hall was bought and adapted as the first theatre for the Players. Plans for a new modern venue started as early 1977, but it took some 15 years to fundraise and get the Queen Mother Theatre built, with three local businesses taking on the construction on a non-profit basis.

The first production, *A Man for all Seasons*, was performed at the new Queen Mother Theatre in 1983. Since then a long list of excellent performances have been staged there and the theatre has become home to 'we happy many'.

*Christine Neal*



Top: 'We Happy Few', 2019. Above: 'Pygmalion', 1945. Below: 'A Man for All Seasons', 1983.



Keith Crook's history of the Bancroft Players is downloadable as a PDF from the members' area of the QMT website. A summary appears at <http://www.qmt.org.uk/bancroft-players/history-of-the-bancroft-players/>.

'We Happy Few' runs until May 11 on the main stage. Tickets from Box Office or [qmt.org.uk](http://qmt.org.uk).

## Bancroft Players' 200 Club

Yet again another brief report, you will soon be getting used to this! The usual information should you feel the urge to contact me and a list of the April winners. For further information on the 200 Club please contact me on 07778 014428 or [paula.downes@ntlworld.com](mailto:paula.downes@ntlworld.com).

### April Winners

- £25: Pauline Sadler
- £20: George Gregory
- £15: Mark Bianchi
- £10: Ann O'Dell

*Paula Downes*

## Ylana & Plester's Big Quiz Extravaganza

Thu 23 May, 7.30pm - 10pm at the QMT

Hi all!

Charles Plester and I are hosting a fundraising event in aid of my foundation course at the Emil Dale Academy. This course has hugely influenced my future in performing and helped me gain a place on their degree this September, so I would really appreciate your support.

The night features a quiz hosted by Charles, with breaks to enjoy performances by myself and friends. Sitting at tables in the auditorium of the QMT, it will be a fun night full of laughs and nattering - I hope to see you there.

*Ylana Schafer Thomson*



Katherina Kubrick introduces the screening of 'A Clockwork Orange'.

## Team Super Seraph screening

The QMT has played host to a special screening of the classic movie *A Clockwork Orange* to raise money for Team Super Seraph.

Katharina Kubrick, daughter of the film's director Stanley Kubrick, introduced the screening and fans attended in costume.

Raffle prizes included a rare original poster for the movie signed by Malcolm McDowell, who played lead character Alex DeLarge.

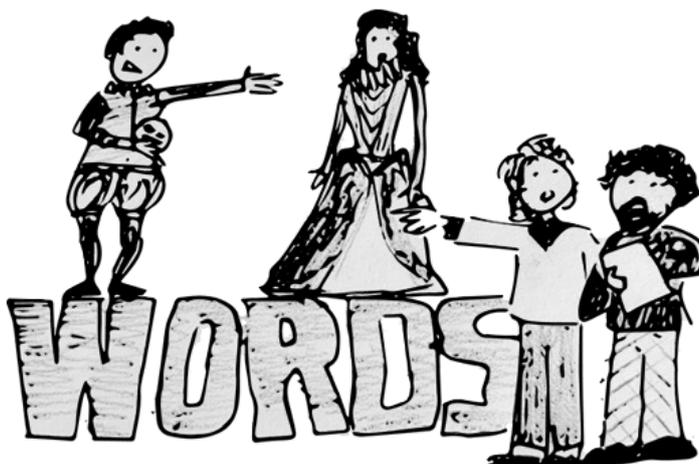
All money raised went towards the treatment of four-year-old Seraph Thomas, who suffers from high-risk neuroblastoma.

For more information about how to help the campaign to fund his treatment visit [www.teamsuperseraph.org](http://www.teamsuperseraph.org).



## MEANWHILE, BACKSTAGE...

By MATT GRAY



IS THIS SOME SORT OF JOKE?

No... IT'S A PLAY ON WORDS

## Could you help out in the coffee bar?

We need help with stocking the coffee bar with delicious coffee and ice creams - can you spare some time when a play is in the main theatre?

Anyone who does volunteer to help is entitled to a Front of House Voucher to see one of the amazing Bancroft Players productions.

You will be able to come on any of the 'concession nights', which are Mondays to Thursdays. You just need to get your ticket by going to the box office.

So, we are eagerly awaiting the deluge of interest from all members and friends!

You can email us at [qmtmembers25@hotmail.com](mailto:qmtmembers25@hotmail.com) and letting us know you would like to help to keep the coffee bar going.

We are so looking forward to hearing from you.

Vivien Kerr

## BP members win recognition

Congratulations to Jon Brown for directing the winning play, *Dinner* by Moira Buffini, at the Hertford Theatre Week.

The festival attracts entries from all over the country and six plays are chosen to compete over the week at the Hertford Theatre.

This is the third time that Jon has been in a winning production, once for his portrayal of Joseph Merricks in *The Elephant Man*, and recently in the black comedy, *God of Carnage*.

The recognition for Jon comes hard on the heels of success for other BP members.

In March, Graeme Bussey won best actor at the Sawston Drama Festival, in *The 2nd Night* by Jim Anderson. He is due to reprise the role at the Welwyn Drama Festival later this month.

And a monologue developed in the QMT Writers' Group by Andy Darley, *Best Dad Ever*, was picked for performance at the Gateways new writing showcase. This is a quarterly event staged by Redgates Theatre in Hackney Wick to promote emerging writers and actors.