



The Bancroft Players

Newsletter
October 2016



Greg Jones, Julian Newman Turner and Gareth Martin serve up some chaos in *One Man, Two Guvvners*. Photo: Paul Seaby

Rory Reynolds

Artistic Director's blog

“Out with the old and on with the next”

Well thanks to Keith Swainston et al for kicking off the season with the sell-out hit that was *One Man, Two Guvvners*. I hope you managed to catch this commedia dell'arte machination of mayhem because, if you didn't, you missed a treat.

With Gareth Martin as our eponymous hero, Jules being hit in the face several times a night and Alex 'Orlando Dangle' Hancock in a permanent pouting hissy fit, this was broad comedy at its very best.

But theatre is always in a state of flux, my dears. It's all out with the old and on

with the next. In the wings waits the season's first Studio production, *Be My Baby*, with *Waiting for Godot* and *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* in rehearsal and *Proof* auditioning. It's all go.

So why not come down and be part of the action? Stop being a spectator and become instead a spect-actor either onstage or behind the scenes. You know it makes sense!

Ever fancied being a playwright? Of course you have! Over the years, Big Spirit has turned out a number of good playwrights as well as great actors thanks to its writing group. Now we're starting up a group for

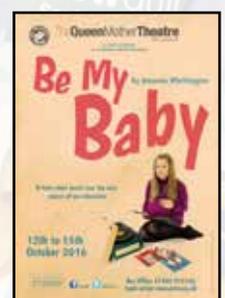
adult scriptwriters and you're invited along. See the ad elsewhere for details and stop dreaming, start writing.

Even as this new Season opens, we're planning for the wonder-fest that is the 2017-2018 season. If you have any suggestions for plays or musicals you'd like to see why not write in and let us know? It's worth being aware that all the plays in this year's programme were taken from members' suggestions - so you see, we do take notice! Email bigspirittheatre@hotmail.com with your ideas.

Ching-ching!

Rory

COMING SOON:



Be My Baby
Wed 12 - Sat 15 October,
Richard Whitmore Studio.

Waiting for Godot
2 - 5 November,
Main theatre.

**The Lion, the Witch
and the Wardrobe**
9-11 and 16-18 December,
Main theatre.



The Ghost Train

Regularly mentioned by critics as one of the two scariest plays in the theatre, *The Ghost Train* is a well-constructed thriller with a good range of character roles.

Set in the 1920's a group of travellers are dumped at a remote Cornish station late on a stormy night with a long wait for the next train. The stationmaster warns them against staying there with a hoary old story about a Ghost Train. The stranded travellers dismiss this as baloney and decide to stay. Then strange things begin to happen...

The Ghost Train explores the psychological consequences of throwing a disparate group of people together in an isolated location with no prospect of escape. Tempers become frayed, and the characters' true natures are gradually revealed as they try to come to terms with the unnatural situation.

The setting will be a station waiting room on the auditorium floor with the audience on three sides. That closeness will help the actors build the tension and suspense. At the far end will be windows and doors through to the station platform from which the audience may glimpse the dead stationmaster's red light swinging in the distance.

There is comedy of course, but think Hitchcock rather than Dads Army (which the author of this play regularly appeared in). This should be enormous fun to do – so grab a script – unless you are of a nervous disposition!

THE ROLES:

Richard Winthrop: Late 20s to early 40s, rather domineering and bad tempered business owner

Elsie Winthrop: Mid 20s to 30s, wife to Richard, and seeking a divorce

Saul Hodgkin: The Station Master, rather grumpy, late 50s to 60s

Charles Murdock: 20s just married, about to lose his job

Peggy Murdock: 19 to early 20s, devoted wife to Charles, on their honeymoon

Miss Bourne: 60s, anxious and travelling alone with her pet

Teddie Deakin: Late 20s to mid 30s, cheerful, rather annoying and places particular importance on his appearance

Julia Price: Mid 20s to early 30s, elegant, tormented with an air of mystery

Herbert Price: 40s to 50s, brother to Julia, a little sinister and rather posh

John Sterling: 40s to 50s, a doctor and friend of Herbert

Two police constables who appear in Act 3, one of which is a small speaking part

THE DETAILS:

By: Arnold Ridley, directed by David Lester

Auditions: Mon 17 and Wed 19 October (note change from last month's newsletter)

Performances: Fri 24 February to Sat 4 March 2017 (8 performances)

Rehearsals: Mondays and Wednesdays

Scripts: By box office with signing in/out list. Along with the scripts will be the sections of dialogue we will be using at the auditions

Ages: Please take the ages here as a guide (and not those suggested in the script). The final selection will be based on how combinations look as well as ability.

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

Casting news: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe

Peter: Felix Elliott

Susan: Ylana Schafer-Thompson

Edmund: Charlie Preston

Lucy: Emma Fisher

Professor Kirk: Clare Bailey*

Mrs Macready: Amy Walker*

Mr Tumnus: Louis Bailey*

Grumpskin: Matthew Gray

The White Witch: Natalie Clayton

Mr Beaver: Russ Hurn

Mrs Beaver: Sally Hull

Maugrim: Baya Salmon Hawk*

Leopard: Emily Hallahan*

Father Christmas: Cliff Francis*

Rumblebuffin: Andy Darley*

Aslan: Andrew Cowley§

Ivy: Millie Hurn*

Margaret: Harpreet Gill*

Betty: Darcie White*

Railway Porter: Roy Danagher*

Air Raid Warden: Anne Cowley*§

Eagle: Isabel Lawther*

* = also ensemble, § = also music

Junior Ensemble: Tige Burns, Phoebe Harrison, Lola Malone, Violet Morris, Oscar O'Gara, Jennifer Saunders, Ella Bailey Shadbolt.

Backstage Crew Wanted:

SM Helen Ashworth is looking for additional crew. They won't have to turn up to every rehearsal, just those in the last week, including dress & tech, and of course the performances.

If you can help, please contact Helen at helen@hale-end.com.



Rosemary Bianchi previews our Studio season opener, 'Be My Baby', written by Amanda Whittington, directed by Vivien Kerr.

Performance dates:
12-15 October in the Richard Whitmore Studio.

Be My Baby: The power of music

Be My Baby is a drama that has, at its heart, some of the most iconic music of the 1960s.

At the centre of the plot are four girls in a home for unmarried mothers. The tunes they play on their Dansette record player form a soundtrack to their hopes, fears and dreams.

1964 was a year that saw sexual liberation, the abolition of the death penalty in the UK, the Civil Rights Act in the USA, and the first marriage of Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton.

The Beatles, Bob Dylan and the Rolling Stones topped the hit parade, but our girls - waiting for the arrival of their babies in St Saviour's - find

the strong beats and uplifting messages of the time's girl groups to be more in tune with their lives.

The title song *Be My Baby* made stars of The Ronettes and Ronnie Spector, while a teenage Sonny and Cher sang backing vocals. The Ronettes' *So Young* also features in the play, and other

songs include *Chapel of Love* by the Dixie Cups and *Past Present and Future* by the Shangri-Las.

So, when you come to see this poignant play, look forward not only to an evening of exceptional theatre, but also to enjoying the powerful beats of a decade when music ruled.

Waiting for Godot: how a classic began

Samuel Beckett's classic play comes to the QMT from Nov 2-5. Now seen as a cornerstone of contemporary drama, its initial success was not straightforward.

Beckett wrote the play (his first) in French, but was anxious for success in London to help establish his credibility as a playwright.

Attempts to recruit big-name actors all failed, while the Lord Chamberlain demanded cuts to the script. Beckett accepted some but rejected others, insisting Estragon continue to drop his trousers in the final tableau.

Director Peter Hall hoped for help from Beckett, but they never met. In a telephone call, Hall asked

what Godot meant. The reply: "It means what you want it to mean."

The actors were unnerved by the pauses, fearing the audience would assume they had forgotten their lines, but Hall directed them to pause for as long as possible: "It's a bizarre play and we might as well play it bizarrely."

It opened on August 3 1955 and Hall thought it might not last its planned four-week run. However, glowing reviews meant that "after the second week we were the toast of the town", and the production became a theatrical legend.

Beckett, however, was disparaging: the pauses were not long enough.

Rosemary Bianchi

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Be My Baby (Richard Whitmore Studio)
12 - 15 October

Ghost Train Auditions
17 and 19 October

New Studio directors evening
Youth Wing, 20 Oct, 7.45pm

Playwriting group launch
27 October, 7.30pm, £5 charge

Proof Auditions
25 and 27 October

Waiting for Godot (Main theatre)
2 - 5 November

**The Last Night at Blake's Theatre
(Big Spirit, Main theatre)**
23 - 26 November

**The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe
(Main theatre)**
9-11 and 16-18 December

Proof

Catherine has spent years caring for her brilliant but unstable father, a famous mathematician. Now, on the eve of her 25th birthday, she must deal with her own volatile emotions; the arrival of her estranged sister; and the attentions of Hal, a former student of her father's. Over the weekend that follows the discovery of a mysterious notebook draws Catherine into the most difficult issue of all: how much of her father's madness – or genius – will she inherit?

This is a compelling drama that deals with complex issues and emotions. The dialogue is naturalistic and full of subtext. All characters are meaty and rewarding roles to play; each with their own internal issues and insecurities. The play is set in the present day, in Chicago. The staging will be simple and so the majority of the rehearsals will be focused on the text. For this reason the cast will be asked to be off-book early in the rehearsal process.

THE ROLES:

Robert: 50s. Brilliant and world-renowned mathematician. He sadly goes from brilliance to madness. The play shifts backwards and forwards in time so you see him as he was before and through the degrees of mental instability. When lucid, he is engaging, charismatic, full of youthful energy and passion for maths. This makes his descent into madness all the more tragic as you get a sense of a man lost before his time.

Catherine: 25. She and her father had a strong bond through their shared

love of maths, which is seen in the scenes set in the past. She has spent years caring for him and has lost a sense of normality. She is reclusive, has mood-swings and is passive aggressive – particularly towards her sister. She struggles throughout with the worry that she may become like her father. As she and Hal connect you see some light and hope come back into her life.

Claire: Late 20s. Moved to New York and has the “perfect life” – the career, partner, home and social life. Claire doesn't share the family aptitude for maths and struggles to relate to her

sister. She tries to organise and “fix” Catherine's life in a practical way without having any real understanding for what Catherine is going through.

Hal: 28. He sees himself as a cool mathematician (plays in a rock band) and tries to compensate for the label “geek”. He comes to the house to look through Robert's notebooks in hope of making a discovery and achieving something great with his career. He brings some fun to Catherine's life but his ego and pride threaten their developing relationship.

THE DETAILS:

By: David Auburn, directed by Tamsin Goodwin-Conelly

Auditions: Tues 25 and Thur 27 Oct, at 8pm

Performances: Wed 18 Jan - Sat 21 Jan 2017

Rehearsals: Tues and Thurs, 8pm. Some Sundays in run-up to performance.

Scripts: Behind box office.

Ages: Some flexibility, however Catherine's age is set at 25 so other characters would need to fit around this.

Accents: Standard American preferred.

Further information: Tamsin Goodwin-Conelly at tamsin.gc@gmail.com. If you are considering auditioning please email so we have an idea of numbers.

Cartoon: Matt Gray



Bancroft Players' 200 Club

Something of a catch-up, so apologies if you have already seen some of these results. It is some time since I have explained how the 200 Club works, so here goes. For just £12 per year, paid by Standing Order (preferably) or cheque, you are assigned one of 200 numbers. Sadly I still have plenty to go! This number is then entered into a monthly draw where you could win a prize - £25, £20, £15 or £10. Every December there is an additional £100 draw and every June an additional £50 draw. In June we hand over a cheque to buy something for the theatre. The amount very much depends on income from Club members but, for the past few years, has been £500. This year it is paying for a new laptop and software for our finance team. To take part, please contact me on 07778 014428 or paula.downes@ntlworld.com.

Paula Downes

June Winners

- Diana Linnett £50
- Andrew Carmichael £25
- Mrs F Scoresby £20
- Marilyn Warmingier £15
- David Hillelson £10

July Winners

- Peter Robbins £25
- Marion Everitt £20
- Amanda Campbell-Phillips £15
- Bill Weedon £10

August Winners

- Joan Armstrong £25
- Peter Russell £20
- Carole Phillips £15
- Martyn Jolly £10

Three ways YOU can make the magic happen at the QMT

If you've ever sat blinking as the lights come up at the end of a play, dreaming of how one day you might cast a spell of your own over an audience, here's how get started. In the Richard Whitmore Studio, new manager David Lester is holding an evening get-together for anyone who's ever thought about directing. If writing is more your thing, a week later we launch the QMT Playwriting Group. And, if you'd rather dip your toe in gently, you can read about getting started as an Assistant Stage Manager - a role that could lead you anywhere...

Could you direct? Find out at the Studio 'new directors' evening

Just tell the story ... as believably, as excitingly as possible.

This is the main role of the theatre director. Are you an aspiring director? Or maybe its something you have considered, but would like to know more about before taking the plunge?

We have an evening especially designed for you to find out more about directing in The Studio. It's not

a teach-in, but will be an informative evening covering items such as:

- Types of plays ideal for The Studio
- The potential offered by The Studio for staging and audience experience
- Previous Studio directors' and stage management experiences
- Going about the process of choosing a play

It's informal, interactive and hopefully will stimulate your imagination. We'll have a small panel to answer questions. Oh and there'll be a glass of wine, so when is it?

New Studio Directors Evening in The Youth Wing on Thursday 20 October at 7:45pm

For further information contact David Lester at davidlester46@gmail.com

QMT launches new playwriting group to promote local talent

Did you know the UK produces more playwrights than any other country? That's a tradition we'd love to support at the QMT and, as a result, we are launching an initiative to promote new playwriting in this area.

Following on from the establishment of the very successful QMT Young Playwriting Group we are setting up an adult (20yrs+) group too.

It's open to everyone (that means you don't have to be a Bancroft Player to come along) and the only qualification required is that you want to learn how to write plays or become better at writing plays.

It's that sense of wanting to improve your writing that will be at the heart of the new group: there will be teaching available plus some homework, as well as the chance for you to write a new one-act play for the QMT playwriting contest to be held in June 2017.

The winning play will be cast and staged in the Studio, alongside the winning Young Playwright's play. Please note that only plays written by members of the QMT Playwriting Group during the course will be eligible to enter.

So, if you or someone you know wants to be part of this bold initiative, get in

touch (via bigspirittheatre@hotmail.com) or just come along to the first meeting at the QMT on Thursday 27 October 2016 at 7.30pm.

The guest tutor will be the TV writer, Sally Abbott (regular scriptwriter for *Eastenders*, *Casualty* and of her own BBC TV series, *The Coroner* among many others). Sally is an experienced writing tutor as well as a commissioned TV scriptwriter and so we know you'll have a great time.

The cost of each session will be £5 which will go to fund the project.

Rory

Assistant Stage Manager: A little job that might lead anywhere

Why would anyone want to be an Assistant Stage Manager? Well, if you have either just joined the Bancroft Players or want to move on from acting to other theatrical adventures, I strongly suggest you apply.

It is not so much what an ASM does

that's important: the best bit of their job is getting to watch everyone else work.

So, if you have ever fancied yourself as a director but have no idea where to start, watching directors will teach you. The same goes for lighting, stage managing, wardrobe,

props and make up. You might even end up lending a hand with the rigging.

If you are very lucky, you will be handed the Book* and be taught how to use the Stage Manager's Desk - that's the sacred place where, headphones on ears and heart in mouth,

you'll call the lighting and sound cues for the Gods in the gallery.

You never know where this little job might lead you. Once, a long time ago when working in a theatre in London, I met a very young ASM. This young man ended up running the

National Theatre - his name is... shhhh!

Ever hopeful, Baya Salmon-Hawk, ASM Waiting for Godot.

* The Book is the Stage Manager's bible where he or she writes down, crosses out, furiously scribbles all the stage directions, props and costumes notes, etc.

Who's who in the Bancroft Players

Executive Committee

2016 to 2017

Richard Whitmore
President Emeritus

Frank Pratt
President

John Coxall
Vice-President

Les Edwards
Chairman

Susan Mellor
Secretary

Tim Hallas
Treasurer

Rory Reynolds
Artistic Director

Nicki Pope
Production Manager (Main Theatre)

David Lester
Production Manager (Studio)

Chris Lane
Theatre Manager

Julian Newman
Turner Business Manager

David Borner
Committee Member

Elliott Bunker
Committee Member

Emma Saunders
Committee member

Zara Schafer
Committee Member

Appointments

2016 to 2017

Vice-Chairman
Chris Lane

Box Office Manager
Vacant

Bar Committee
Frank Pratt, Roger Nobes

Bar Rota
Maureen Nobes

Bookings Manager
Edith Pratt (evening), Keith Crook (day)

Diary Organiser
Keith Crook

Fire Officer
Chris Lane

First Aid Officer
Paula Downes

Front of House Manager
Paula Downes

Health & Safety Coordinator
David Hillelson

Junior Theatre Group
Alison Hudson

Keys Distributor
Keith Crook

Licensing Manager
Tim Hallas

Membership
Edith Pratt

Newsletter
Rosemary Bianchi

Properties
Audrey Hawkins, Julie Chamberlain

Publicity Manager
Julian Newman Turner

Refreshments/ Stewards
Lyn Bryars, Mo Mutton

Set & Design Manager
Rosemary Bianchi

Workshop Coordinator
Clive Hall

Wardrobe Liaison
Sally Hull

Welfare
Vacant

What's On
Distribution Susan Mellor

Youth Theatre Group
Rory Reynolds

200 Club
Paula Downes

Exciting months ahead for BP Juniors

It's September and the Junior Bancroft Players bandwagon has started to roll again.

This year we have 28 bright young things eager to learn - some old faces, some new faces and some faces that we couldn't do without.

We have an exciting and busy few months ahead. As well as rehearsing for our main theatre production in February several of our juniors have gone out on 'loan' to main theatre productions.

Johannes Schafer-Thomson has been cast as the boy in *Waiting For Godot*, and Rosemary is looking to use some Juniors in her Christmas Production of *The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe*. It is such good experience for the kids to work with other members of the society



and very rewarding for us to see them confidently spreading their wings.

I like to give the Juniors a challenge so our main production this year, *Double Trouble*, is based on Shakespeare's *Comedy of Errors*. It involves lot of running around, quickfire lines and classic Shakespearian mistaken identity. Watch this space for more details later in the year.

Alison Hudson

Youth Theatre corner

Once again Big Spirit will be commandeering the whole theatre to undertake one of their promenade productions. Called *The Last Night at Blake's Theatre*, it refers to the old building still standing at (funnily enough) Blake's Corner by the Victoria pub. It was once a theatre and, while taking a few liberties with the facts, we are visiting the theatre on its closing night in May 1938. The place is very rundown but the management are trying to keep it going by putting on one last production - *The Turn of the Screw*, the ghost story by Henry James. You, the audience, are invited to join them for their final night. The theatre has been dogged with bad luck but they are trying their best to keep everything going. It ends with a weird cabaret in the bar. Buy your tickets now - the dates of production are Wed 23 - Sat 26 November.

First Aid Certificates: renewal course

According to my calendar our First Aid Certificates run out in January - my, how time flies. So, if you attended the last course I ran, that means YOU!

With the EC's permission, I hope to run a renewal course during January or February, ideally on a Saturday afternoon at the theatre.

Assuming I get the go-ahead, the course will be financed by the theatre and open to all members who work front of house or back stage.

I appreciate it is early days, but would like to find out who is interested. If you have shown interest in the past, please assume I have forgotten and contact me again!

I can be contacted at paula.downes@ntlworld.com or leave a message on 07778 014428.

I hope to include more definite details in the next newsletter, but will probably also start contacting individuals as soon as I am able.

Paula Downes

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.