



# The Bancroft Players

Newsletter  
October 2017



Rory Reynolds

## The rumble of continuing future development

Anton Chekhov said that people don't mind whether it's winter or summer - as long as they're happy. How true! And are we happy? You bet your life we are!

What with the *The Thrill of Love* about to explode on the main stage and *A Christmas Carol* getting ready to charm the family at Christmas - who could be other than absolutely nickcumnockerated?

But before all that there's the rumble of *Earthquakes in London* by our talented youth theatre. If you liked *Dr Foster* on TV, this too is by Mike Bartlett so you know it'll be good - and very dark.

Autumn is the time I start checking on rights for productions we might do next season. Oh they play their cards close to their chests these agent types.

I phone and ask if the rights to say *Ben Hur The Musical* are available and I'm told 'please email me with that request Mr Reynolds'. I do as I'm told only to receive the instant reply: 'the rights to this play are NOT available to amateurs at the present time'. Why couldn't they just say that to me over the phone?!

Well, I guess I'm doing the same as Artistic Directors all over the UK - trying to book the best plays before anyone else gets the rights. By the way - if you can think of a play or musical you'd like to see on our stage, no matter how unlikely, do write to me at [bigspirittheatre@hotmail.com](mailto:bigspirittheatre@hotmail.com).

What's CPD? Anyone? CPD? It stands for continuing professional development. As I work in the NHS my

Artistic Director's Blog

CPD never stops and you know what - I like it, it keeps me fresh. Now I want to start something called CAD - continuing amateur development - along the same sort of lines.

I'm arranging for a short series of workshops for new and experienced amateur directors with professional director coaches. No matter how many or how few plays anyone has directed, there is always stuff to learn. And how better than with someone who earns their money doing it? I'll contact all directors in the QMT offering them places. If you're an aspiring director, do contact me. Spaces though are limited and the first workshop date is TBA.

See you at the QMT soon I hope.

Rory

Matt Gray directed Paul Boichat, Merrin Mae Sharples-Moore (both pictured), Jenna Kay and Divyesh Thakerar in Neil LaBute's 'Reasons to be Pretty', in *The Studio*.  
Photo: David Lester.

### COMING SOON:



*The Thrill of Love*  
30 Oct - 4 Nov  
Main Theatre.



*Earthquakes in London*  
22-25 Nov  
Big Spirit, The Studio.

*A Christmas Carol*  
8-10 & 15-17 Dec  
Main Theatre.

The QMT

TheQMT

@QMTweeters

[qmt.org.uk](http://qmt.org.uk)

The Richard Whitmore  
STUDIO

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

# Bartlett Sets Off Earthquakes in Hitchin

Rosemary Bianchi previews Big Spirit's upcoming show 'Earthquakes in London'

When Big Spirit Youth Theatre chose *Earthquakes in London* as their November play, they picked a work with well-drawn characters, a powerful theme (climate change) and an opportunity for exciting physical theatre.

But the added bonus was that it is a Mike Bartlett play. Those who have watched *Doctor Foster* or *King Charles III* know that, as one of his friends observed,

'Nobody gets out of a Mike Bartlett work unscathed.'

Bartlett is part of the post 'In-Yer-Face' generation of writers that include Jez Butterworth and David Eldridge. After university, where he read English and Theatre Studies, he joined the Royal Court Young Writers Programme, which has produced playwrights of the calibre of Debbie Tucker Green, Simon Stephens and Laura Wade, all of whose writing has featured at this theatre.

His new play, *Albion*, which opened at The Almeida this month, explores British identity, showing a nation deeply divided between the urge to preserve the past and to radically reform it. But it is set in a country house and garden, those most English of settings. And he is not afraid to

apply classical themes to domestic scenarios. While *Dr Foster* channelled Greek tragedy and specifically Medea, here Bartlett gives us a British, Chekhovian Cherry Orchard.

While his work can be an intense experience for an audience, Rupert Goold, artistic director of The Almeida says, 'What marks him out is he writes brilliantly for women - he writes properly complex three dimensional women of different ages.' And although he is a political playwright, all of his plays have family at the core. With a psychologist father and headteacher mother, Bartlett admits that he grew up observing how people behaved and the reasons behind that. While he writes 'state of the nation' plays, these are always written

from the human viewpoint.

This is particularly true of *Earthquakes in London*, which centres on three sisters and their distant but famous climatologist father. The play poses the question that if climate change is happening, are we at 5 minutes to midnight, and is it fair to bring children into a world where mankind is dancing merrily towards the brink of extinction?

Bartlett says 'If people want to spend a night out at the theatre, they don't just want 'good'-we can watch box sets for that-they want totally remarkable.' Aficionados of Big Spirit will know that that is guaranteed.

*Earthquakes in London* runs at the Queen Mother Theatre from Wednesday 22 to Saturday 25 November at 7.45pm



## Audition reminder

# Sex With a Stranger

Adam meets Grace in a club. They go back to hers. Earlier that day, Adam's girlfriend Ruth watches as he prepares for his big night out 'with the boys.' Bleak, funny and excruciatingly accurate, *Sex with a Stranger* examines what it is to be your twenties, lonely, hollow and uncertain in 21st century Britain. It tells the

story of an illicit encounter from the point of view of all three protagonists. Moving back and forth in time, it explores how they all met, what happened and what are the consequences. The play is set in present day North London, but could be Hitchin or anywhere. It is a play that is by turn funny, moving and uncomfortable.

## THE ROLES:

Two female, one male. Actors will need to be open-minded to explore themes and scenes.

**Adam:** He's getting ready for a night out with "the boys" but has bought

new gear and is exchanging illicit text messages. He assures Ruth that it's just a boys' birthday night out, but he will probably not be back that night.

**Ruth:** Adam's girlfriend, she is planning for their future and ironing his new shirt. A concert violinist,

she is a homemaker but not entirely convinced Adam is telling her the truth.

**Grace:** Out for the night with friends, it's routine - casual and comfortable. She will drink too much and go home with someone, it's just sex.

## The Studio

### THE DETAILS:

**By:** Stefan Golaszweski, dir Cliff Francis

**Auditions:** Mon 23 & Wed 25 Oct, 7.45pm

**Performances:** 17 - 20 Jan

**Rehearsals:** Tue & Thu at 7.45pm

**Scripts:** Available from Box Office. In the auditions we will look at some of the scenes, performing short extracts.

**Age:** As this is a play about 20somethings in modern Britain, all characters need to have playing ages in their early to mid 20s.

# A tragic tale with a local connection

*'The Thrill of Love', the next play to feature in the main theatre, tells the story of Ruth Ellis, infamous as the last woman to be hanged in Britain.*

On 11 April 1955, Easter Sunday, Ruth Ellis shot and killed her lover David Blakely outside Hampstead's Magdala pub. Her trial followed swiftly, with the jury taking only 14 minutes to deliver a guilty verdict.

Amanda Whittington's play *The Thrill of Love*, directed by Jon Brown, recreates brilliantly Ruth's world and the complexities of her life. As in her earlier work *Be My Baby*, staged in The Studio last year, Whittington explores a situation from a female perspective, probing beneath the surface to overturn received opinion.

It is difficult nowadays to imagine the scenes outside Holloway Prison where, as the BBC reported, the Prison Governor was "forced to call for police reinforcements as a crowd of over 500 massed outside the prison's gates, singing and chanting for Ellis for several hours", with people breaking through cordons to bang on the doors.

On the morning of her execution, 15 July 1955, the BBC reported that a silent crowd including

women with prams gathered at the gates. When the notice of her death was posted the crowd surged forward, blocking the road and stopping traffic.

Thousands had signed petitions asking for clemency. A strong editorial in *The Spectator* lamented: "Hanging has become the national sport: While a juicy murder trial is on, or in the period before a murderer is executed... even Test matches are driven from the place of honour on the front page of the popular press."

It continued: "The execution of Ruth Ellis may do good. Not even the thickest head could have remained unmoved as the monstrous drama moved to its ending in the still summer heat of Wednesday morning."

There is also an unexpected Hitchin connection to the story. After her execution, Ruth's young son went to live with his maternal grandparents. They arranged for the 10-year-old to become a boarder at St Michael's College, Hitchin, a Roman Catholic school for boys situated off Grove Road.



He enrolled as Andrew Hornby, taking his grandfather's original surname.

Unfortunately he failed to thrive under the challenging regime of the headmaster, Father Killeen, and was remembered as a strange, fragile boy who often played truant, escaping into his own private world. After five years this led to his expulsion. He continued to question his mother's conviction, and committed suicide in 1982.

*The Thrill of Love* runs from Mon 30 October to Sat 4 November at 7.45pm. Tickets from [www.qmt.org.uk](http://www.qmt.org.uk).

Rosemary Bianchi

## Casting news

The cast for *A View from the Bridge* is:

**Alfieri:** Brian Seal

**Eddie:** Keith Swainston

**Catherine:** Lauren Tillbrook

**Beatrice:** Sian Spencer

**Marco:** Matt Gray

**Rudolpho:** Seb Creasey

**Louis/Tony:** Diveyesh Thakerar

**Immigration officers:** Keith Warren, Andy Darley

**Mr Limpari:** Ian Mutton

## Joy Carroll

It is with sadness that I have to inform you of the death of Joy. She was a loyal member of BPs until she became ill with Alzheimer's some years ago now.

She passed away on 8th October. Her funeral will take place at St George's Church, Letchworth on Tuesday 24 October at 2.30pm.

I apologise for the short notice but have only just been given the information.

Edith

## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

**Auditions: *Sex With a Stranger***  
23 & 25 October

***Thrill of Love***  
(Main Theatre)  
30 October - 4 November

**Playwriting group**  
(John Coxall Room)  
31 October

***Earthquakes in London***  
(Big Spirit, Richard Whitmore Studio)  
22-25 November

**Christmas Cabaroke**  
2 December

## Who's who in the Bancroft Players

<b>Executive Committee</b> 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>
<b>Appointments</b> 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 15<sup>th</sup> of the month. We aim to publish the next issue by the 26<sup>th</sup> of the month.

## Save the date: Cabaroke returns

bigredfunbus | productions presents

Christmas  
**cabaroke**  
@The QMT

### SPECIAL MEMBERS EVENING

Cabaroke returns to The QMT for our 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary, with a special Christmas Cabaroke - live musical theatre cabaret where **YOU** are the star!

**Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2017  
at 7.30pm**

**@ The Queen Mother Theatre**

More information about Cabaroke can be found at  
**[cabaroke.com](http://cabaroke.com)**

## Bancroft Players' 200 Club

Back to my brief reports – mainly because not a lot to say, although the Club has signed up a new member this month – hooray! Welcome to Tom Power.

Also I'm not the only one drawing out their own number – Sue Lambert did the same this month, when I held the draw during a performance of *A Funny Thing...* - an outside booking in case you think you have missed a BP production. All level and above board, I assure you. There were other witnesses. So congratulations to this month's winners.

And I should point out that both Bev and Helen have more than one number, which could mean something! So why not increase your chances of winning and take out another number.

*Paula Downes (paula.downes@ntlworld.com)*

### October Winners

£25: John Butler  
£20: Bev Bollons  
£15: Sue Lambert  
£10: Helen Huson