



# The Bancroft Players

Newsletter  
September 2016



*The scandalous world of 17th century London was brought back to life in our most recent show, The Country Wife, directed by Rosemary Bianchi. Photo: Julian Newman Turner.*

## COMING SOON:



**One Man, Two Guvvners**  
Fri 16, Sat 17 and Mon 19 to  
Sat 24 Sept, Main Theatre.



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

## Rory Reynolds

## Artistic Director's blog

# Enjoy the sun: an autumn of drama awaits

Welcome to the new season! With *One Man, Two Guvvners* and *Waiting for Godot* cheerfully cast, we are definitely under way.

Rosemary will very soon be looking for a bumper cast for our Christmas show, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, so do come along and be part of the action

(see this issue for the audition notice).

Welcome, too, to David Lester who takes over from Jon Brown as the new studio Production Manager (formerly the Fringe manager).

David tells me he has lots of exciting ideas about how to develop the Studio production brand so do look out

for announcements in the pages of this august organ.

So, with 2017 heaving into view, I suppose the selection posse that schedules plays for next season ought to start sharpening their quills.

As usual, all ideas will be gratefully received for both main house (major shows) and

studio (fringe shows) productions.

But before all that - let's just enjoy the balmy days of August, shall we, before getting down to more serious dramatic matters in September.

Breathe deeply. Is that factor 60? Pass it over will you?

Rory



# Audition notice: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe

## Large cast needed for QMT Christmas show

This adaptation for the stage of C.S. Lewis's classic story for children is full of opportunities for creating larger-than-life characters, for physical theatre and, above all, for staging a magical show that will appeal to families in the run-up to Christmas.

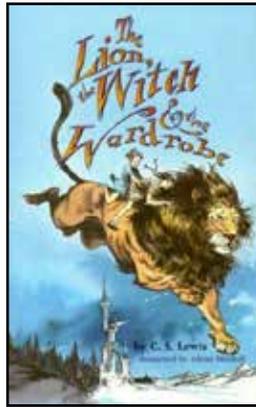
Performances are split across two weekends, to maximise matinee and early evening shows, and finish well before the Christmas rush so the company can enjoy the festive season.

The story follows four children, evacuated to a remote country house in 1939, who stumble across a wardrobe gateway to a strange world: Narnia, a land of creatures both animal and mythological. However, the evil White Witch has cast a spell to create everlasting winter and the children find themselves in a fight to the death against her powerful forces.

There are approximately 50 characters in the script, but several of these will be played by a busy and energetic ensemble. Some of the more exotic beasts will be puppets, so there is an opportunity to learn and use puppetry skills. We will not be using the songs from the show, but there will be music!

The Pevensie children will be played by young adults (Similar to *The Railway Children* and *Swallows and Amazons*).

We are also looking for musicians (singers and instrumentalists) to create sound-effects and a live score, as well as accompanying some singing from the cast.



### The details:

By Adrian Mitchell, from the book by C.S. Lewis, directed by Rosemary Bianchi

**Auditions:** Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> and Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> September at 7.45pm

**Performances:** Friday 9<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> December at 7.30pm, Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> December at 2.30 and 6.30pm and Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> December at 2.30pm

**Rehearsals:** Tuesday and Thursday nights and some Saturdays or Sundays near the show.

**Scripts:** Will be behind the box office shortly.

**Contact:** Rosemary Bianchi on 07979 758561 or rosebianchi12@hotmail.com

### The roles:

**Peter Pevensie:** Confident, heroic, secure that as the eldest, he is the leader.

**Susan Pevensie:** Sensible, generous, warm-hearted.

**Edmund Pevensie:** A tortured soul. A bit sneaky, one of the darker characters.

**Lucy Pevensie:** The youngest and the real hero of the story. Brave, imaginative, fearless.

**Professor Kirk:** Middle aged, mysterious, a bit of a 'mad professor'

**Mrs Macready:** The housekeeper. Fierce, starchy

**Mr Tumnus:** A Faun. A strange but pleasant creature who plays a pivotal role in the action.

**Grumpskin:** A very bad dwarf, right hand of the evil Witch.

**The White Witch:** Beautiful but proud, cold, stern and evil through and through.

**Mr Beaver and Mrs Beaver:** Heroic animals who risk their lives to save Narnia.

**Maugrim the Wolf:** A great fighter and all round bad guy.

**Father Christmas:** Prophet, bringer of good cheer and practical, magical presents.

**Rumblebuffin:** A stone giant. That says it all.

**Aslan:** A great, solemn, heroic lion.

**Ensemble Actors** will play the following, all speaking roles: Ivy, Margaret and Betty, maids of Prof Kirk; Railway Porter, Air Raid Warden, Sightseers, Reindeer, Squirrels, Satyrs, Foxes, Centaurs, Unicorns, Eagles, Leopards, Ogres, Wraiths, Sprites, etc.

## 2016-17 membership subs now due

**Full Membership:** £40 (£30 if paid before 30 Sept)

**Under 18\*, unwaged, student, over 60s:** £20 (£15 if paid before 30 Sept)

\*Please Note: this does not include BP Juniors or Big Spirit Members

**Club Membership:** £20 (£15 if paid before 30 Sept) Applies only to those who do not participate in productions, but carry out the following duties: Box Office, Duty Theatre Manager, steward, coffee or bar.

**Cheques:** Make payable to 'The Bancroft Players'. Leave at Box Office in envelope for my attention, or post to Bancroft Players (Membership), FREEPOST, ANG6544, Hitchin, SG4 9YA. (No stamp required.)

**Debit or Credit Card:** I can take payment over the phone on 07874 025501 - evenings only, please.

**Standing Order:** Paid on the same date each year. To set this up, please contact me and I will send you the necessary information.

**Internet Banking:** Please contact me for the necessary information.

**QMT Website Booking System:** You can use your ticket-booking account to pay your sub by choosing the 'membership' category.

Edith Pratt, Membership Secretary.  
07874 025501 / qmtmembs25@hotmail.com



Keith Swainston directs a tense stand-off in rehearsals for our September show, *One Man Two Guvnors*.

Harpreet Gill speaks to director Keith Swainston about bringing the hit West End farce *One Man, Two Guvnors* to the QMT's stage. Performance dates: Fri 16, Sat 17 and Mon 19 - Sat 24 September in the main theatre.

# One Man Two Guvnors: Proving the old jokes are the best jokes

Sitting in the Green Room awaiting a rehearsal for the Bancroft Players' September show *One Man Two Guvnors*, director Keith Swainston explains how work had to start much earlier than usual for this show.

"The combination of a large cast and the summer holidays meant a military-style rehearsal timetable had to be implemented to work around everyone's holiday," he said.

Grateful for the team effort in rehearsals, Keith has faced other challenges in putting on a play designed for the National Theatre in our much

smaller (but no less important) venue.

"It's far easier to do a comical scene that involves falling down the stairs at The National, where you have the depth of the stage to work with, but much harder on a stage that doesn't have this," he said.

"Also, because this is a farce, pace is everything: you can't have big clunky scene changes, it needs to be seamless to keep the momentum going. I haven't had to change the script too much, but it has proven tricky."

He's also found that comedies can be more difficult than

straight plays: "The hardest thing is that what you think is funny other people don't, or because you keep rehearsing a scene you forget that it's funny and start tweaking it and accidentally take the humour out."

The roots of *One Man Two Guvnors* lie in the 1700s, but Swainston's production shows what was funny then remains funny today. All you have to do is change the costumes and location - and add a dash of QMT military discipline.



Paula Downes spreads the word.

## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

*The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* Auditions

13 and 15 September

*One Man Two Guvnors* (Main Theatre)

16, 17, 19 - 24 September

*Be My Baby* (Richard Whitmore Studio)

12 - 15 October

*Ghost Train* Auditions

18 and 20 October

*Proof* Auditions

25 and 27 October

# Be My Baby: tragedy and strength in 60s London

**Baya Salmon-Hawk previews *Be My Baby*, a powerful and poignant drama revealing the heartache behind the glamour of the swinging 60s.**

**Performance dates:  
Wed 12 – Sat 15  
Oct in the Richard  
Whitmore Studio.**

Mary has got it all. A grammar school girl who works in a bank, she lives with her well-to-do parents and has a bright future ahead of her.

Alas, aged just 19, she makes a life-changing mistake and ends up at St Saviours, a Church of England Mother and Baby home.

In 1964, if you found yourself pregnant and unmarried, you were in big trouble. It is difficult to believe now, but then an unmarried mother was ostracised and received no state support.

She was unlikely to find lodgings or a job and would often be thrown out by her family. Her

only choice would be to have the baby adopted.

In *Be My Baby*, life for Mary is touched by tragedy but her resilience and that of the three other young women in the home shines through a play bathed in the music of the time.

The Summer of Love is a long way away

and reality is hard to accept. As Mary makes friends and learns about life, Matron tries her best to make the inevitable seem acceptable and best for all parties while Mother wrings her hands in despair.

All the characters in the play will have to learn to keep these secrets for the rest of their days.

## Casting news

### *Be My Baby*

Directed by Vivien Kerr

Wed 12 - Sat 15 October, Richard Whitmore Studio

Many thanks to everyone who auditioned. The cast is as follows:

- **Mary:** Grace Reinhold-Gittens
- **Queenie:** Emily Miles
- **Dolores:** Amy Walker
- **Norma:** Amy Chiswell
- **Matron:** Alison Hudson
- **Mrs Adams:** Liz Pybus

### *Waiting for Godot*

By Samuel Beckett, directed by Martyn Jolly

Wed 2 - Sat 5 November, Main Theatre

Thank you to everyone who auditioned. There was a very good turnout with difficult choices to be made, and we are delighted with our strong cast.

- **Vladimir:** Douglas Brooker
- **Estragon:** James Moore
- **Pozzo:** Andy Haig
- **Lucky:** Greg Jones
- **Boy:** To be cast
- **Stage Manager:** David Hillelson
- **ASM:** Baya Salmon Hawk

Informal discussions about character have already started with meetings under the trees of Hertfordshire, and this promises to be a very exciting production.



## Big Spirit at the Edinburgh Fringe

Every year Big Spirit sends an expeditionary force North 'o the Border to the Edinburgh Fringe. This is our 24th year, incredibly, and in that time we've learned a few tricks.

One long-established tactic is 'the leafletting event'. Gone are the days of handing out fliers to disinterested passers-by on the Royal Mile, jostling with hundreds of others doing the same thing. Instead, we take the performance approach.

Not sure who hit upon this cracking technique, but it works every year. We devise a performance piece based on the show that runs for two minutes and then freezes. Everyone stands absolutely still holding out leaflets and when someone takes one the cast member declaims a line from the show. Two minutes later the tableau starts to move again: they sing a song or overact a short scene, only to freeze again - and so on. You have to be

there to get what I'm talking about (and why aren't you?) but anyway it enthralled the crowd and gets us good audiences.

This year ex-Big Spirit member Rob Hughes has written us another humdinger of a show which rejoices under the title *Hey I'm Made in Essex, Get Me Out of Here* about the shenanigans at a mythical but oddly recognisable reality TV show.

Rory



# Taking a show to the Minack

**Rosemary Bianchi has just returned from a stint at the Minack Theatre, an unforgettable venue cut into Cornwall's ironbound cliffs. Here are her top tips for staging a show at this unique location.**

August is the month for Bancroft Players members to go touring and, while Big Spirit has gone on its annual Edinburgh jaunt, others have made the long drive to Cornwall's Minack Theatre to perform on the cliffs at Porthcurno.

This year Natalie Gordon, Martyn and Flora Jolly and Rosemary Bianchi were part of a mammoth production of *Nicholas Nickleby Pt1* while, in the past, Alison Hudson, Stephen Charles, Sam Powell, Cliff Francis and Greg Jones have performed and last year Tamsin Goodwin-Connelly was in the award-winning *Grapes of Wrath*.

It has been suggested that the BPs might like to mount a production there in the future, so here are some tips:

**1 Get fit:** You will climb more stairs than you thought possible. Cold, hard, unforgiving granite ones. Also, because there is no vehicle access to the stage, everything has to be carried

down from the carpark to the stage. It helps therefore if you have a large cast. And at the end, after the last show at 11pm, everything gets carried back up again!

**2 Get used to watching the weather forecast:** It's an outdoor venue, so your weekends will be spent in Hertfordshire gardens rehearsing and then on a rocky headland near Land's End performing. While sunny days are wonderful, Atlantic storms can blow in quickly and conditions can become challenging. And the show always goes on! Sets are not tested for their fireproof qualities but for the ability to withstand a force 10 gale...

**3 Be prepared for crowds:** The theatre seats more than 700 and you have to include everyone in your gaze, from the front row to those dizzyingly, vertically distant specks. During get-in and dress rehearsals you will find people wandering around, taking selfies, while you perform your heart

out. But it is wonderful, exhilarating, inclusive - and very good discipline.

**4 Perfect your karaoke beats:** A post-show visit to the Cable Station Inn is mandatory. This pub depends on the custom of extrovert theatricals and will stay open till dawn to quench their thirst: they really do understand the needs of hungry actors who have just given their all in a raging storm.

**5 Fall in love with this extraordinary theatre:** It's extremely challenging physically, but you quickly acclimatise. The dedicated staff, supportive audiences and, above all, the thrill and privilege of performing in one of the world's most spectacular venues mean you can't wait to come back and do it all over again.

To learn more, visit [www.minack.com](http://www.minack.com) and watch the live webcams to get a taste of what the Minack has to offer.

## 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*

# Welcome to the new Studio manager David Lester

A warm welcome to David Lester as the new manager of The Richard Whitmore Studio.

David paid tribute to outgoing manager Jon Brown for his work in building the excellent reputation and strong audience base of the Fringe.

Having directed *God of Carnage* and *The Weir* in The Studio, David has experience of using the venue both with conventional raked seating and, more intimately, as a thrust with audience on three sides. He hopes to see future

The  
*Richard Whitmore*  
**STUDIO**

directors exploring the possibilities of the Studio, using it as a unique performance space rather than just a scaled-down main theatre, and letting their imaginations run riot.

The smaller scale and more adventurous works also allows the possibility of taking plays on tour, perhaps to pub theatres, Fringe Festivals or more innovative spaces. New writing

and devised work would continue to be encouraged.

David plans a social evening in October for anyone interested to share ideas and suggest projects for the 2017/18 season - so all you budding directors, designers, writers and theatre-makers, get your imaginations going and come along to be part of our own dynamic Studio Theatre.

## QMT graduate Carlyss in Old Vic Groundhog Day musical

It's always exciting to report when someone from the theatre makes the big time. This time the spotlight is on Carlyss Peer who was in the youth theatre about 12 years ago.

Carlyss went on to train at RADA and works pretty regularly at The Globe in London. Now she is taking a lead role in Tim Minchin's new musical *Groundhog Day* based on the film with Bill Murray. She plays the Andie

MacDowell role in this great show which has a limited run at The Old Vic.

This production is due to transfer to Broadway and I guess it might well arrive back in London as well after this current preview run comes to an end on September 17th.

I saw the show recently and must say I absolutely loved it. Lots of Tim Minchin touches, and a script by the original movie



screenwriter which he's tweaked a lot to make the show even better.

There are still tickets available if you'd like to have a great night out. And Carlyss is always happy to meet you after the show - she's such a sweetie!

### 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.

Rory