



# The Bancroft Players

Newsletter  
September 2017



Rory Reynolds

Artistic Director's Blog

## Celebrating a deep pool of creative talent

I was struck while watching Emma Allerton's prize-winning play, *One Sweet Kiss*, at the QMT Studio earlier this month by how lucky we are to have such a pool of talented people here at our theatre.

Emma had just won the QMT playwriting competition 2017 and her prize was – we put it on.

You know it's a rare treat for any playwright to see their work on the stage so it's a special thing.

The show was brilliantly directed by Brian Seal in just four weeks - and it worked so well.

By the way, the Writer's Group meet the last Tuesday of every month at 7:45 at the QMT if you fancy coming along.

Talking of great talent, have you seen the cast line-up for David's production of *The Ladykillers*? It's a veritable Who's Who of the BP's best-loved actors.

I've watched it in rehearsal and it's so funny you might just want to slip into some Tena's before taking a seat. Great set too, courtesy of Clive, Dave and Rosemary, showcasing our new stage set up (which enables directors to chose to work on the floor if they need extra height).

Even now, in September, the play selection committee are thinking of next year's productions for the Main House and Studio. We've had some great shows submitted already but we could always do with more – let us have your suggestions.

Finally – look carefully through your BP News for the auditions coming up over the next month. Make a note in your diaries and down even if you think you might not want to be in the show – they're great fun and you never know, you just might be headhunted! We'd love to see you!

Rory

*Big Spirit members leaflet Edinburgh's Royal Mile in support of their show 'Shakespeare's Big Brother'. See page five for a review of their trip by Seb Creasey (front, kneeling).*

### COMING SOON:



**Reasons to be Pretty**  
11-14 October,  
The Studio.



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



# 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.

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

## THE ROLES:

There are three roles, two female and one male. The actors will need to be open-minded to explore the themes and scenes.

**Adam:** As the play starts Adam is getting ready for a night out with "the boys" but has bought new jeans, shirt and body spray and is receiving and sending illicit text messages. He assures Ruth that it's just a boys' birthday night out, but he will probably drink too much and not be back that night.

**Ruth:** Adam's girlfriend, they have a flat and she is planning for their future, what furniture and fittings to buy and ironing his new shirt. A concert violinist, she is a homemaker but not entirely convinced Adam is telling her the truth.

**Grace:** She is out for the night with her friends, it's routine. She will drink too much and go home with someone, it's just sex. She has not dressed up, just casual and comfortable.

### THE DETAILS:

**By:** Stefan Golaszewski,  
directed by Cliff Francis

**Auditions:** Mon 23 & Wed 25  
Oct at 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 twentysomethings in 21st century Britain, all characters need to have playing ages in their early to middle twenties.

## Last chance for 'early bird' subs discount

Bancroft Players membership subscriptions for 2017-18 are due: renew before the end of September and save money.

**Full Membership: £40** - £30 before 30 Sept.

**Under 18, unwaged, Student, Over 60s: £20** - £15 before 30 Sept. **Please Note:** this does not include BP Juniors or Big Spirit Members

**Club Membership:** for those who do not participate in productions. This applies to someone who *only* carries out the following duties: Box Office; Duty Theatre Manager; Steward; Coffee or Bar. The subscription is **£20** - £15 before 30 Sept.

**Cheques** - should be made payable to The Bancroft Players, placed in an envelope marked for my attention and left in the box office, or send to **Bancroft Players (Membership), FREEPOST, ANG6544, Hitchin, SG4 9YA. (no stamp required).**

**Debit or Credit Card** - Please contact me and I can take payment over the phone on 07874 025501 evenings only.

**Standing Order** (paid on the same date each year). If you would like to take up this option then please let me know and I will send you the necessary banking information.

**Internet Banking** - if you bank online let me know and I will give you the necessary information for you to pay this way.

**QMT Website Booking System** - if you have an account for booking tickets then you can use the membership category on the website to pay your sub. If you have any difficulties then please let me know.

*Many thanks,*

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

## Bancroft Players' 200 Club

Two winners lists this month as I did the September draw early - yep, off on holiday again!

As ever I am still desperately seeking new members. It is so easy to join - just drop me a quick line, I will send you a Standing Order form to complete and next month you could be a lucky winner - only £12 a year and you will be helping our wonderful theatre.

In the meantime, many congratulations to our August and September winners - and always embarrassed to see my name there. The draw was done in front of members of the theatre, even if I did pull my own number out!

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

### August Winners

£25: Emma Northcott  
£20: Hugh Mulholland  
£15: Paula Downes  
£10: Geoff Griffiths

### September Winners

£25: Janet Houghton  
£20: Barbie Gardiner  
£15: Keith Johnstone  
£10: Peter Russell

# 'Reasons to be Pretty': A firestorm of a play to open the new Studio season

How obsessed are we with how we look? Magazines, TV, Facebook, Instagram etc feed us an endless stream of advice on how to improve ourselves with visions of the perfect face and body, an avalanche of tips on diets, nips and tucks, Botox, size zero, clean eating, all conspiring to make us feel worthless.

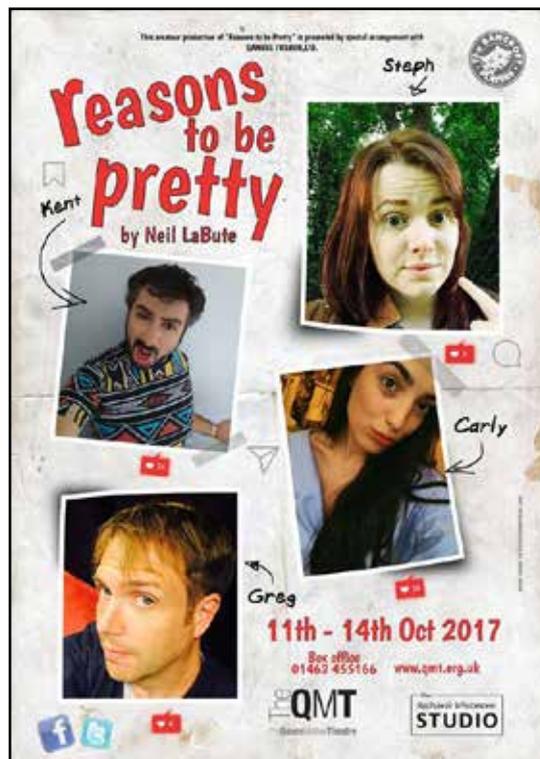
Playwright Neil LaBute seizes this obsession with physical beauty by the throat in a firestorm of a play, *Reasons to be Pretty*, this season's opening production in the Richard Whitmore Studio. In this contemporary comedy, LaBute dissects how relationships can founder on chance throwaway remarks about appearance, and asks whether it is as much of a curse to be conventionally attractive as it is to be considered 'regular.' Isn't there more to life, he asks, than simply how one looks?

Studio productions have a well-deserved reputation for excellence, often featuring challenging works that confront issues and leave audiences with plenty to discuss in the bar afterwards.

*Reasons to be Pretty* will certainly excite discussion, with its sharp dialogue, closely observed characters and visceral impact.

When asked in a *Guardian* interview if he thought theatre had become too cosy, LaBute replied: "Some people don't want to go to the theatre and be challenged. But theatre at its best doesn't care so much about that. There's no other mass experience quite like it. So for me, it's not provoking for the sake of it. It's to bring the audience there and to remove some of the safety net. These things, I think, are really the great backbone of theatre."

Rosemary Bianchi



'Reasons to be Pretty' by Neil LaBute, directed by Matthew Gray. October 11-14 at 7.45pm in the Richard Whitmore Studio.

## Casting news

The cast for the Big Spirit production of *Earthquakes in London* in the Main Theatre from November 22-25 is as follows:

**Grace:** Molly Phillips

**Freya:** Molly Hughes

**Steve:** Charlie Preston

**Jasmine:** Ylana Schafer-Thomson

**Tom:** Seb Creasey

**Colin:** Stepan Mysko von Schultze

**Sarah:** Georgia Head

**Simon:** Amy Shields

**SW:** Emma Fisher

**Peter:** Molly Astill

**Attendant:** Sian Lawrence

**Businessman:** Felix Elliott

**Robert:** Ewan Morris

**Mrs Andrews:** Ella Burns

**Carter:** Amy Chiswell

**Daniel:** Emily Illott

**Roy:** James Skull

**Young Man:** Tyge Burns

**Barman:** Louis Bailey

**Old Woman:** Rayen Gonzalez

**Receptionist:** Jade Newman Turner

**Dr Tim:** Joseph Wilkins

**Sally:** Violet Morris

**Marina:** Isobel Lawther

**Jogger:** Stan Taunt

**Policeman:** Henry McElroy

**Person 1:** Millie Hurn

**Person 2:** Lily Simpkins

**Casey:** Emily Smith

**Fruit Seller:** Leo Stewart

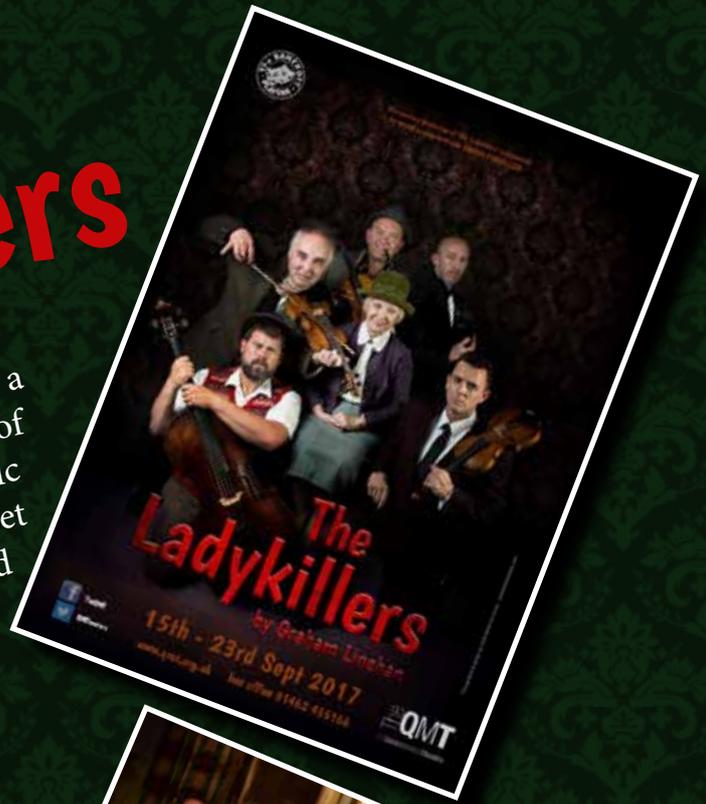
## Theatre keys - do you have one?

We are doing a check on keys for security reasons. It's not a move to withdraw keys but we would request that if anyone has a key to the external doors or any part of the theatre please send an email to davidlester46@gmail.com or let him know so we can keep the register up to date.



# Scenes from The Ladykillers

The new season at the QMT opened in style with a near-sellout run for David Lester's production of *The Ladykillers*, a new stage adaptation of the classic Ealing Comedy. The show featured an ambitious set that took full advantage of the extra height offered by the newly rebuilt main theatre stage.





# “Exciting, affecting, crazy”: Big Spirit get the authentic Edinburgh Fringe experience

In August Big Spirit made their annual pilgrimage to the Edinburgh Festival, taking in the atmosphere and staging a show of their own. Seb Creasey tells the tale.

It was another amazing year for Big Spirit at the Edinburgh Fringe, a great success that was just as crazy and brilliant as always. The bond built between all of us as we lived together is stronger than ever, and I simply cannot wait for next year.

As this was my fourth year at the fringe I was familiar with how things worked but each time the experience finds ways to surprise me and be more exciting and amazing than I ever imagined.

This year we performed *Shakespeare's Big Brother*, a satirical comedy that puts some of Shakespeare's greatest characters together in the Big Brother house.

It was conceived and written by former Big Spirit member Rob Hughes and I found it one of the funniest scripts we've been given over the last few years. We were all so excited to get going once we saw the script so the rehearsal period was great fun as we could work and twist the script quite a lot, to make as good and streamlined a performance as possible.

Once we were in Edinburgh and had begun performing the show we could tell that people really enjoyed it, often coming to congratulate us after the performance, I like to think that we may have been considered a hidden gem of the fringe by some, and hope that people remember us for all the right reasons.

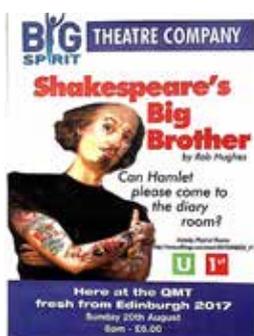
As always, our creative leafletting technique on the Royal Mile helped to create quite the buzz for our show and gather more people to fill more seats, this was of course when we weren't moved on for being too loud (or just too good at our jobs in my opinion).

But of course, Edinburgh isn't just about the show we take up there. In fact I'd argue that is a relatively small part of the experience, as the entire festival is brimming with excitement. From the street performances to the joking about the worst shows you have seen, it is all required for an authentic Fringe experience.

The focus for me, as I think for most people, always tends to be the shows. You try to see as much as possible, choosing shows that are as varied in their themes and moods as possible.

Often some stand out, affecting you as a person. One of the greatest shows this year in my view was *Good Girl*, written by and starring Naomi Sheldon, which is a one-woman show with amazing energy that was as brilliantly funny as it was heartfelt and poignant.

*Auntie Donna: Big Boys* was the other show that really stood out for me, an mile-a-minute Australian sketch comedy group that I've been following online for some time, so it was really great to see them live.



Photos: Leafletting the Royal Mile (top) and this year's Edinburgh expedition team (right), with Seb Creasey second from left at front.)



# A View from the Bridge

**A** *View from the Bridge* is Arthur Miller's tragic masterpiece - the story of a man fighting against himself.

The play is set in the 1950s. Eddie Carbone is an Italian-American longshoreman who lives with his wife Beatrice and his orphaned niece Catherine in an insular, self-ruled neighbourhood in the shadow of Brooklyn Bridge.

Eddie is protective and kind toward Catherine. However, as the play develops we learn that his feelings are something more than that of an uncle. His attachment to her is brought into perspective by the arrival from Italy of Beatrice's two cousins, Marco and Rodolpho. They have entered the country illegally, hoping to leave behind hunger and unemployment for a better life in America.

Whereas Marco is a physically strong man with a starving family back home, the charming Rodolpho is young, good-looking, blond, and single. He sings and dances. Catherine instantly falls for him and the wheels are set in motion for a dramatic climax.

## THE ROLES:

Some of the smaller parts can be doubled up, but there will be plenty to do as it will not be conventionally staged.

**Eddie Carbone:** Age 40+. A longshoreman. Eddie lives with his wife Beatrice and orphaned niece Catherine in Red Hook Brooklyn. He struggles to understand his feelings and the world he inhabits, and is powerless in the face of his tragic fate. His secret love for Catherine causes his eventual destruction.

**Catherine:** Age 17. Niece of Eddie and Beatrice. A young girl, very popular among the boys in the community. She seeks approval from her uncle and struggles when he does not approve of Rodolpho, the man she plans to marry

**Beatrice:** Age 40+. Wife of Eddie and aunt of Catherine. She raised Catherine from when she was very young and acts as her mother.

**Marco:** Age 40+. Cousin of Beatrice who comes to the US to work and send money back to his wife and children in Italy. He is a hard-working Italian man and a powerful, sympathetic leader.

**Rodolpho:** Age 20s. Beatrice's young blond cousin from Italy. Prefers singing jazz to working on the ships and seems effeminate to Eddie and the other longshoremen because he cooks, sews and loves to dance. Rodolpho's desire is to be an American, with all the privileges of Western society - including wealth and fame

**Alfieri:** Age 40+. An Italian-American lawyer and the narrator of the story. He speaks directly to the audience and makes clear the wider social and moral implications of the story.

The following parts are small but very important to the play:

**Mike and Louis:** Both age 30. Two longshoremen, friends of Eddie's who often hang out together outside the Carbone home.

**Tony:** Age 30+. A friend of the Carbones who assists Marco and Rodolpho off the ship and brings them safely to Beatrice's home.

**Two Immigration Officers:** Two officers from the Immigration Bureau who come to look for Marco and Rodolpho at Eddie's request.

## THE DETAILS:

**By:** Arthur Miller, directed by Edith Pratt

**Auditions:** Tue 10 & Thu 12 Oct at 7.45pm

**Performances:** 26 Feb - 3 Mar

**Rehearsals:** Tue & Thu evenings

**Scripts:** From the lobby behind the Box Office.

**Age:** Guidelines only - I will be very flexible.

**More information:** If you are interested in auditioning but cannot make the audition dates please contact Edith Pratt on 07874 025501 or qmtmembs25@hotmail.com.

**Mr Lipari:** A butcher who lives upstairs from the Carbones. Eddie blames him for the arrest of Marco and Rodolpho.

**Mrs Lipari:** The upstairs neighbour of the Carbones. Mrs. Lipari agrees to give Marco and Rodolpho a room in her home when Eddie kicks the men out of his house.

**Two "Submarines":** Illegal immigrants hiding in the Lipari house.

## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

### Playwriting group

(John Coxall Room)

26 September

### 'One Act Bites' launch

(New directors opportunities)

29 September

### End of 'early bird' discount for membership subs

30 September

### Auditions: *A View from the Bridge*

Tue 10 & Thu 12 October

### *Reasons to be Pretty*

Richard Whitmore Studio

11-14 October

### Auditions: *Sex With a Stranger*

Tue 23 & Thu 25 October

### *The Thrill of Love*

Main Theatre

30 Oct - 4 Nov

## The QMT Writers Group: Everyone has a story in them...

It's true - they really do. But sometimes people just need help to tell them.

So, if you've always fancied writing but don't know how to start or you already write but you always get stuck or maybe you want to develop the scripts you're already working on - come along and join us!

We are a monthly workshop group for local people interested in script writing. It's friendly, constructive and fun.

We do a mixture of writing exercises, share work and discussion. The Writers Group is led by Rory Reynolds and local writer, Sally Abbott. Sally's a playwright, and a screen writer who created award-winning drama *The Coroner* for BBC1.

Between September and December, we will hone our skills and concentrate on writing short monologues - several of which will be performed in a Monologue Festival at the QMT. After Christmas, we'll start work on longer plays. More news on that in January!

Please come along - or feel free to just drop in and try it. When? 7.45pm, the last Tuesday of every month (not December or August).



Above: Writers Group member Emma Allerton receiving her award for her winning play 'One Sweet Kiss', which was performed in The Studio by the Bancroft Players earlier this month (below).



## 'One Act Bites': cut your teeth on directing in The Studio

*David Lester reveals more details about the new scheme to encourage first-time directors*

Hot on the heels of the success of the One Act Play *One Sweet Kiss*, here's a reminder to drop into the Richard Whitmore Studio on Friday 29<sup>th</sup> September for an informal evening to talk about how you might stage a production like that.

We have a space in the diary reserved for next June 2018 to present up to four one act plays over two nights in The Studio - and new directors will be offered plenty of support as they learn their craft.

The ground rules are quite simple:

- The play should be a one-hander to three-hander

- Require no set structure
- Conform to a straightforward lighting plot
- Use only simple moveable props
- Be up to about an hour in length
- Please note that rehearsing on site at the QMT is unlikely to be possible on a regular basis.

Beyond these simple ground rules it's wide open. Your play could be 10 minutes long, improvised or written especially for the occasion.

David Lester, production manager for The Studio, said: "One of the people that inspired the idea for 'One Act Bites' was Steven Berkoff who wrote

many and said 'a one-act play is like a confession'.

"He was highlighting the strengths of the form - what he called 'the bare-knuckled immediacy of its form and the fatal but inevitable blow'.

"So, come along with your ideas, and there will also be a list of suggested plays. We expect to have the bar opened too!"



## 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.



### *Rosemary Bianchi explores what the new staging in the Main Theatre means for technical rehearsals*

The new, flexible staging in the QMT's main house is creating superb opportunities for innovative productions, as audiences for *The Ladykillers* will agree.

But with that flexibility comes new responsibilities: artistically, in using the space creatively, but also in ensuring a safe environment for actors, crew and audience. Along with risk assessments, the spotlight is now thrown on the purpose and importance of the technical rehearsal.

Techs in professional theatre can take several days, but our busy seasons, overstretched technical teams and short turn-around times mean we have the luxury of only one or, at best, two nights. This means that we are forced to use the time effectively.

Everyone dreads the tech, and recently spirits were lifted when Nicki Pope created a relaxed party atmosphere (with beer) for her *Flare Path* tech. For the actors it can be boring and seem pointless, but it's an opportunity to see the production being put together for the first time and understand how all the elements interact. It is also essential, when the production doesn't use the conventional stage, for actors to experience lighting (and darkness!) on the set in non-performance conditions, so they can slowly and gradually get used to different levels and voids. It's very different rehearsing in the dull glow of the auditorium fluorescents, then having to negotiate the same set in a blackout.

*The Stage* newspaper recently ran interviews in which actors, technicians and directors debated the pros and cons of the tech. They agreed about the importance of the Stage Manager, whose calmness when running the tech should create a focal point which takes the pressure off the director, allowing them to concentrate on the things they're looking at.

In an ideal world the final tech when the actors are called has been preceded by a couple of sessions where the director has been able to work with the technical and creative team plotting effects and scene changes, so that by the time the full cast and company are called, it is simply a matter of moving from cue to cue, numbering cues and gradually, systematically and calmly building the show. There may be adjustments to moves to accommodate the set and scene changes, but all creative work with the actors will already have been achieved, so that the focus is purely on the technical. Experienced hands advise setting aside at least triple your play's running time, which is a bit terrifying!

Our horizons have been extended with the new staging: for directors, set, lighting, costume and sound designers, backstage crew (oh, and actors) the possibilities are endless.