

# Stratford The ~~Baneroft~~ Players

Newsletter  
September 2018

BELL ALES AND THE STRATFORD PLAYERS PRESENT  
HOLLYWOOD LEGEND  
JEFFERSON STEELE!!!

KING  
LEAR

DIRECTED BY DOROTHY NETTLE  
ALSO FEATURING NIGEL NEWBURY

Sponsored by Bell Ales: Suffolk's Finest!

Big Spirit leafletting for their  
Edinburgh Festival show  
'Monday at Golden Oak High'!

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



The Nutcracker  
and the  
Mouse  
King

### Membership subs due

See back page for details  
of renewal discounts until  
end of September

### Shakespeare Workshop

Wed 19 Sept: Workshop  
'Acting in Shakespeare'  
with Carlyss Peer

#### Auditions

<i>Blackadder</i>	<i>Beacons</i>
8 & 10 October	29 & 31 October





## Members' Nights begin with a tune: next one coming soon

On a Saturday night in September  
 There was "a Tune and a Tipple" to enjoy as a member  
 For no other reason  
 Then to kick off the season  
 To listen to everyone's favourite song  
 And the reason that they brought it along  
 Tunes chosen, just for the fun  
 Like 'Carwash' and 'Here Comes the Sun'  
 A naughty girl's choice wielding a whisk  
 Who sang the blues after beating too brisk  
 Simon & Garfunkel's labour pain killer  
 Melodies that make you feel chiller  
 Tunes played again and again when you travel  
 Songs that wake you up, when you unravel  
 Dance numbers by Panjabi MC and Grace Jones  
 Songs with deep meaning that go through your bones  
 Records that that really do console  
 Or are simply the best ever 'Love' by Nat King Cole  
 'Never Too Much' with strong memories of family  
 Or live performances seen by Matt and Emily  
 'From a Distance' which takes you back  
 'As Times Go By' from Casablanca's film track  
 (accompanied by a wild Bogart impersonation  
 American slang of Rory's creation)  
 Such a varied repertoire  
 Enjoyed with a tipple from the bar

Christine Neal

## SOCIAL DIARY

**Wed Sept 19:** Workshop 'Acting in Shakespeare' with Carlyss Peer (Carlyss runs workshops at Shakespeare's Globe and co-directed our summer show, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*).

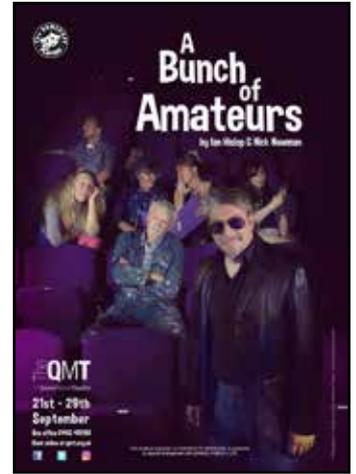
**Wed Oct 17:** The Secrets of 'Cold Reading' and Instant Acting (and you get to put on a show within 30 minutes!)

**Thu Nov 29:** Poems, Pints & Performance (bring along some poetry or a piece from a play and share it with the group)

**Tue Dec 18:** The Famous Christmas Quiz!! - yes you get your fave quiz-master and lots of jolly japes in a must-attend Yuletide Celebration!

Each workshop lasts around an hour and takes place in the QMT bar, beginning at 7.45pm

## Man of Steele arrives at the QMT, scattering Hollywood stardust in his wake (sort of)



Mel played Hamlet, Al played Richard, Dustin played Shylock. Can Jefferson play Lear?

The QMT plays host to Hollywood royalty later this month, when Jefferson Steele, star of the *Finity* series, joins the Stratford Players in their production of *King Lear*.

The A-list legend has generously agreed to star in the Players' production to raise funds to save their theatre from council redevelopment.

At least - that's the set-up of the season-opening QMT Main Theatre show, *A Bunch of Amateurs* by Ian Hislop and Nick Newman.

A classic fish-out-of-water comedy, it imagines what might happen if the big personalities of Hollywood meet the big personalities of amateur theatre.

And to get into the spirit of the show, we have turned over the cover and page three of this newsletter to the cast, crew and star of the Stratford Players' *King Lear*.

Our intrepid reporter sat in on a rehearsal to get the inside story - see page three for what she uncovered.

**You can judge Jefferson's performance for yourself when *A Bunch of Amateurs* airs at the Queen Mother Theatre. It runs from 21-29 September and is directed by David Lester.**

## Remembering Burt Reynolds

The cast and crew of our upcoming production of *A Bunch of Amateurs* were sad to hear of the death of Burt Reynolds who starred in the film version.

Matt Grey who plays Jefferson Steele in the play (the role Reynolds played) said: "Burt Reynolds was a massive A-List star when I was growing up.

"I was a bit obsessed with Burt - his autobiography is amazing - but my favourite film of his is probably *Hooper* which I watched endlessly on VHS.

"*Smokey and the Bandit* will always be the film that I remember my Dad loved and again had the honour of being a vhs no one was allowed to record over."

# The Stratford Players: 'King Lear', 21-29 September

*The Stratford Players are proud to present JEFFERSON STEELE in his amateur debut as King Lear. Sponsored by Bell Ales.*

*Also featuring Nigel Newbury*

## The Star

I started by asking 'What do you feel you, as a Hollywood star, are able to bring to the world of amateur theatre?'

**Jefferson Steele:** "There's a difference between acting and Acting - and with Jefferson Steele you get Acting with a Capital A. These people bring 100 per cent Stratford St John, but I bring 100 per cent Hollywood. Everyone has been really nice but I do miss my trailer. Incidentally, I heard this Shakespeare guy wrote pretty good plays, but I hadn't realised he used quite so many words."

At this point Mr Steele sent me to bring him a skinny soy latte decaf.

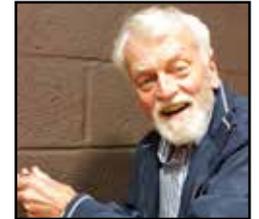


## The Cast

I asked some of the Stratford Players what it was like working with a global superstar?

**Denis,** who plays Gloucester and builds sets:

"It's been eyebrow-raising! He's got a lot of chutzpah and also a lot of requirements which, for a star of his stature, he needs. I have to provide fresh flowers every day, and restock the mini bar for him, and we had to fit a pool table in his dressing room. That wasn't easy."



**Nigel,** the Stratford Players' established leading actor, who is Kent in the production:



"I'm completely pissed off. I should have got that part. I always get the lead roles. It was to be my crowning glory, the highlight of my career with the Stratford Players. This 'has-been' from the colonies is a disgrace to the amateur stage and the noble name of Stratford St John. I'm considering my position in the light of this event, after all I have a certain reputation and I refuse to be treated in this manner."

## The Crew

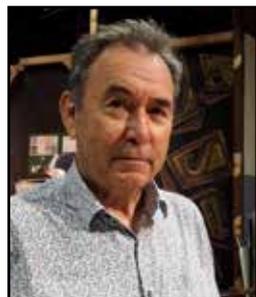
**Dorothy,** the director of *King Lear*: "It's been like a dream come true. I mean, who doesn't love Jefferson Steele movies? Having the leading man coming from the action hero genre has breathed new life into *Lear*, and his lasting legacy will be the survival of our lovely little theatre."



**Nicola,** costume designer and wardrobe mistress: "I've designed a special Stratford Players T shirt, but unfortunately I haven't been able to persuade him to wear it yet. Generally he's been all right, but we've had to get lots of costumes. He's very fussy and we've had a bit of discussion about whether *Lear*

would wear sunglasses and a gold chain. He has certain standards as a global superstar which is fine. It's just they're not necessarily the standards of the Stratford Players."

**David,** producer/manager: "Oh dear, where do I start? The pills, the tantrums, the lines? He'd never acted in the theatre before, and I thought we'd made a BIG mistake. But then I saw some elements of talent, and although he thought Shakespeare a touch melodramatic, he has certainly grasped the nettle of *Lear*. Would I do it again? Tackle the rollercoaster ride? Let's hope 'All's well that ends well!'"



## The Sponsor

I've been particularly asked to make sure everyone knows that Jefferson's time in Stratford is kindly sponsored by Bell Ales.

**Lauren,** sponsor's wife: "Oh, he's lovely. And very handsome. He's got a lovely posture. You know, I have to give him Physio, and I must



say, he has very nice pants. He's brought some pizzazz because he's a proper star. I've never worked with the Stratford Players before, but I've really loved the experience and I'd do it again."

## Important notice

We kindly ask fans who gather at the Stage Door after the show to please respect Mr Steele's privacy.

*We apologise for the use of Comic Sans. The Stratford Players insisted.*

# 'The new season's just starting - so send us your ideas for the next one'

Hey-ho my hearties! So here we are on the starting blocks waiting for the first show of our new season, *A Bunch of Amateurs*.

The director, David Lester, has worked his usual magic and the cast, tech and backstage crew are prepped and ready to deliver a top-notch comedy.

Meanwhile in the Studio, Brian Seal and his team are working hard on *The Father*. This is a gem of a show and I can't wait to see Charles Plester as the eponymous father strutting his stuff.

There are some great members' nights in prospect too, so please look at the programme in this issue and come along. They are all open to members and friends and are quite free.

It's a great way to network and find out what everyone is up to!

This is the time of year too when we start looking for shows for next year. We love to hear from you about shows you'd like to direct, be in or even to see at the theatre.

The suggestions can be aspirational (e.g. *The Rocky Horror Show*) where the rights aren't yet available or something that you know we could and should be doing (e.g. *The Crucible*) where the rights are fully available.

Here's the address - now let rip!  
bigspirittheatre@hotmail.com

Hope to hear from you and, even better, see you very soon!

Rory

Show	Director	Audition dates	Rehearsals	Show dates
<b><i>A Bunch of Amateurs</i></b> <i>Ian Hislop/Nick Newman</i> Main Theatre	David Lester	19 & 21 June	Tues / Thurs	21-29 Sept
<b><i>The Father</i></b> <i>Florian Zeller</i> The Studio	Brian Seal	25 & 27 June	Mon / Weds	17-20 Oct
<b><i>Bette and Joan</i></b> <i>Anton Burge</i> Main Theatre	Elliott Bunker	9 & 11 July	Sun / Weds	31 Oct - 3 Nov
<b><i>The Nutcracker and the Mouse King</i></b> <i>ETA Hoffman</i> Main Theatre	Rosemary Bianchi	4 & 6 Sept	Tues / Thurs	7-9 Dec & 14-16 Dec (Sundays Matinee only)
<b><i>Beacons</i></b> <i>Tabitha Mortiboy</i> The Studio	Vivien Kerr	29 & 31 Oct	Mon / Weds	16 -19 Jan
<b><i>Blackadder</i></b> <i>Richard Curtis</i> Main Theatre	Sally Hull	8 & 10 Oct	Mon / Weds	25 Feb - 2 Mar
<b><i>Constellations</i></b> <i>Nick Payne</i> The Studio	Grace Reinhold	11 & 13 Dec	Tues / Thurs (After Xmas)	13 - 16 Mar
<b><i>We Happy Few</i></b> <i>Imogen Stubbs</i> Main Theatre	Charles Plester	4 & 6 Feb	Mon / Weds	6 - 11 May
<b><i>Bea</i></b> <i>Mick Gordon</i> The Studio	Seb Creasey	TBA	TBA	5 - 8 June
<b><i>Anne Boleyn</i></b> <i>Howard Brenton</i> Main Theatre	Nicki Pope	5 & 7 March	Tues / Thurs	17 - 22 June

# What works for me... THE PERFECT SCRIPT

*At any given time, the Queen Mother Theatre is usually home to at least one production in rehearsal - and, often, many more. With so many actors on hand to give advice, we're running a regular series of articles in which the cast of an upcoming production share their knowledge. This month: what sets a script apart as one any actor would love to be cast in.*

Some scripts just grab you from the first page. For Brian Seal, who is directing *The Father* as the next QMT Studio production, Florian Zeller's award-winning play about a man whose world is clouded by dementia was one such script.

Despite its seemingly-unhappy subject matter, both he and his cast have found working with the play to be powerful and inspiring.

He said: "It is brilliantly written so that the audience see everything through the father's eyes. Different actors turn up as the same character so confusing him, and the room changes constantly so it is unclear as to whether it is the same room or somewhere else. I guarantee that anyone who sees it will talk about it for a long time afterwards."

Here, Brian and some of his cast discuss what makes a script like *The Father* stand out for them.

*'The Father' runs in The Studio from 17-20 October. A collection will be held after each performance to raise money for the Alzheimer's Society. Tickets available from the Box Office or [qmt.org.uk](http://qmt.org.uk).*



## Amy Walker

A lot of it is to do with whether the script speaks to me at that particular point in time. I love doing real drama - I've been in plays where there's been real emotion and a connection with the audience. One of my favourites was *Be My Baby* - it's the sort of play that makes the audience leave talking about what they saw, and I like plays that make people do that.



## Brian Seal (director)

It's the same as with a good book - when you get to the bottom of one page you immediately want to find out what happens on the next. As soon as I started reading *The Father* I didn't want to put it down. It's a sad subject but it's written in such a way that the words jump off the page and I loved it.



## Charles Plester

Page turners - where you want to know what happens on the next page and so on - make for an intriguing play to watch and be in. This is very much like that - you think you've got it sussed from scene one, he's a cantankerous old man. But it's not like that, he's genuinely ill and the things that happen to him aren't quite as they seem.

## Olivia Gatliff

I'm a sucker for dark comedy - I don't know what that says about me - and this play has a sprinkling of humour through what is a dark and personal topic. Showing it from the point of view of the person with dementia is very interesting and not something I've seen before. I also like strong female characters, plays that make you think about something you wouldn't generally have thought about, and ones with a lot of back and forth where you can get reactions from the other people and can get really involved in a role.

## Doug Brooker

I like the disjointed timeline, as it offers a challenge - you get to the end of scene eight and then have to reset everything to scene five and go back. It keeps the audience on their toes, and the cast too. There are bits I have to repeat, and bits of mine that other characters repeat. And, even though it's about a serious and gloomy topic, there are moments where you have to laugh at the silly old duffer.

# Blackadder

I am delighted to announce that the Bancroft Players have agreed to my “cunning plan” to direct three episodes of Blackadder in Tudor times. The episodes I have chosen are “Bells”, “Head” and “Money”. The seven actors/actresses cast in the principal roles of Blackadder, Baldrick, Percy, Queenie, Nursie, Melchett and the Balladeer will feature in all three episodes.

It is my intention to cast the other 18 smaller parts between eight or so further performers who will have a different role in at least two episodes each. I will give details of this part of my “cunning plan” at the Auditions. See you there - should be fun!

Sally Hull

## THE DETAILS:

**By:** Richard Curtis, directed by Sally Hull

**Auditions:** Mon 8 & Wed 10 October at 7.45pm

**Performances:** 25 February - 2 March 2019

**Rehearsals:** Mondays and Wednesdays from 22 October.

**Scripts:** Available from Box Office

# Beacons

*Julie:* It's a funny time of year

*Skye:* Is it? What d'you mean?

*Julie:* It's getting colder. Autumn setting in.

*Skye:* Does it make a difference?

*Julie:* Sometimes. Some years

*Skye:* So the Autumn and Winter – they make it worse?

*Julie:* It's not - they can do.

*Intrigued? Come along to the auditions – and do please read the play first! Copies will be available for the auditions – at the moment they are in PDF form so, if you are interested, email me and I will happily forward one.*

This is a play which looks at loneliness and aloneness, experienced in different ways by its three characters. It is set on Beachy Head at the end of the Summer and beginning of Autumn. Julie owns an ice cream van, Bernard was homeless and now keeps Julie company, and young Skye struggles to understand why her father left her. The characters are complex but not complicated and will reward any actor with their warmth and sincerity PLUS there are some absolute crackers of speeches! It is a lovely play, sad at times, but with the thread of hope never far away. I look forward to hearing from you all.

Vivien Kerr

## THE ROLES:

**Julie:** Playing age 45-50+

**Bernard:** Playing age 45-50+

**Skye:** Playing age 16

## THE DETAILS:

**By:** Tabitha Mortiboy, directed by Vivien Kerr

**Auditions:** Mon 29 & Wed 31 October

**Performances:** 16 - 19 January 2018

**Rehearsals:** Mondays and Wednesdays

**Scripts:** Will be available at the audition - email Vivien for a PDF copy in advance.

**Contact:** Vivien Kerr at v.j.kerr@live.co.uk or on 01462 437898 or 07913 500042 (do note that I do not carry my mobile around when at home but I will return your call if you leave a message).

**A**fter a most enjoyable series of Audition workshops, we are pleased to announce cast and company for *The Nutcracker and the Mouse King*.

We will need help with costume, both in making and sourcing as well as managing during the show, so if anyone is interested, please contact Rosemary at rosebianchi12@hotmail.com.

**Marie:** Terri Hyde

**Hoffman/Drosselmeyer:** Jon Brown

**Nutcracker Prince:** Russell Hurn

**Lady Doray/Mouse Queen:** Graeme Bussey

**The Hon Charlotte Doray:** Tia Shenton

**Pettigrew/Mouse King:** Andy Darley

**Snotgrumble:** Lisa Hutchins

**Escobar:** Vicky Wonham

**Cook/Sugar Plum Fairy:** Rebecca Kemish

**Ensemble:** Oliver Hughes, Andrew Robinson

**Mice / Candy:** Junior Bancroft Players

**Director:** Rosemary Bianchi

**Stage Manager:** Helen Ashworth

**DSM:** Charlotte Ryan

**ASM Props:** Clive Hall

**LX Team:** Dan Barnicott (Designer)  
David Hillelson



Liz Pybus (left) and Natalie Gordon face off as silver screen legends Bette Davis and Joan Crawford in rehearsals for 'Bette and Joan'

With the new season almost upon us, the theatre is full of shows at different stages of rehearsal. Rosemary Bianchi previews the next-but-one production in the Main Theatre, Anton Burge's tale of Hollywood rivalry 'Bette and Joan'.  
Performance dates: 31 Oct - 3 Nov.

## Bette and Joan: Expect fireworks as two formidable screen legends clash

By 1962, Bette Davis and Joan Crawford were has-beens. The women - both famed for playing strong characters, both with difficult personal lives and both a long way past 40 - had been replaced by a new breed of perky blonde stars.

Then they got an unexpected opportunity: playing opposite each other in what was to become a cult classic, *Whatever Happened To Baby Jane?*

The play *Bette and Joan* is set in the adjoining dressing

rooms of Davis and Crawford on the back-lot of the Warner Bros Studio where *Baby Jane* was being filmed.

What really happened between the women off-screen? Why did they hate each other so much? Only one way to find out!

Elliott Bunker, the director of this play, said: "Davis and Crawford lived and worked in a pre #MeToo world and used their talent and feminine wiles to get to the top of Hollywood, winning Oscars and millions of fans all along

the way, but through it all they stayed sworn enemies.

"*Baby Jane* brought them together for the first and only time and this play allows for the fireworks to fly and the insecurities they each had to surface.

"As it only features the two characters, it's a brilliant opportunity for two actors to represent these strong and formidable women."

If you saw the recent TV adaptation of *Feud* then you'll love *Bette and Joan*.

## Volunteer reward scheme launched

Anyone who volunteers to help with the Bar, Coffee Bar, Front of House and/or Box Office will now be entitled to a Front of House Voucher entitling them to free entry for any one of our amazing Bancroft Players productions.

You will be able to come on any 'concession night' - i.e. Monday to Thursday - you just need to get your ticket from the Box Office.

Those brilliant members who have already volunteered their valuable services for *A Bunch of Amateurs* will become the first to be able to enjoy their voucher at a time and a play to suit them.

So... we are eagerly awaiting the deluge of interest from all members and friends who can spare a little time to help our theatre thrive.

You can contact us by emailing [qmtmembs25@hotmail.com](mailto:qmtmembs25@hotmail.com) and letting us know what you would like to do - we will pass on your offer to the right people.

We are so looking forward to hearing from you.

Vivien Kerr

Membership fees for 2018-19 are now due

# Renew your Bancroft Players membership before the end of September to catch the 'Early Bird' discount

It's that time of year when BP members need to renew their annual subscriptions - and the good news is that there's still a chance to catch the 'early bird' discounts for paying promptly.

Anyone who takes part in one of the society's productions must be a full member, and there is also a club membership level for the volunteers who help keep the theatre running but don't want to venture anywhere near the stage itself (see elsewhere for details of the reward scheme that's just been launched for these vital people).

## Period covered

1 July 2018 to 30 June 2019

## Fees and discounts

**Full Membership: £40.** £30 if paid before 30 September.

**Under 18\*, unwaged, Student, Over 60s: £20.** £15 if paid before 30 September.

*\*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, with an 'early bird' discount of £5 if paid before 30 September, making £15.

## How to pay

- **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 pay your sub through this system. There should be a Membership category. If you try this and have any difficulties then please let me know.

Many thanks

*Edith Pratt, Membership Secretary*  
07874 025501 - [qmtmembs25@hotmail.com](mailto:qmtmembs25@hotmail.com)

# Bancroft Players' 200 Club

After a few quiet weeks over the summer it is time to start again. The period between seasons does mean that all my wonderful House Managers do get to have a break. My team has grown this year by two and we are all well established.

May I take this opportunity to thank all of them for their loyalty and hard work, I do so appreciate it.

So to the 200 Club, I am always batting on that you are perfectly entitled to have more than one number in the draw and this month, one of you took notice of this and has taken out an additional THREE numbers. I won't embarrass them by naming names but a huge thank you.

Why don't some of you follow suit?!?! It's so easy and whilst you have to complete another Standing Order, if you want more than one number, you only need one form and complete it for multiples of £12 - go on then!

Finally, congratulations to our July and August winners.

## July Winners:

**£25:** Ann Mulholland

**£20:** Sue C Mason

**£15:** Alison Hudson

**£10:** Doug Brooker

## August winners:

**£25:** Maureen Sibley

**£20:** Wendy Whitmore

**£15:** Peter Russell

**£10:** Ann O'Dell

*Paula Downes*

[paula.downes@ntlworld.com](mailto:paula.downes@ntlworld.com)

## Newsletter: Last date for copy

Items for publication should be submitted to the Editors at [newsletterqmt@live.com](mailto: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.