



The Bancroft Players

Newsletter
Summer 2019



Change of dates

Two QMT productions have changed dates as a result of the celebrations for the 75th anniversary of VE Day, which include the 2020 May Day Bank Holiday moving from the Monday to the Friday.

Because this may affect ticket sales, *Urinetown* has been put back a week, with the knock-on effect of *Pride & Prejudice* also moving a week later.

The revised dates are:

- *Urinetown* - May 11-16 2020
- *Pride & Prejudice* - June 22-27 2020

In both cases auditions and rehearsal evenings stay the same.

Work weekend helpers

Volunteers are needed for a weekend backstage clear-up and other useful work on **August 31 - September 1**. If you can help, contact Emma Saunders using the details below, or watch for information on Facebook.

SMs and crew needed

We have filled most SM slots but still require a stage manager for two of the studio productions - *Radiant Vermin* (October) and *Commencing I Nine* (January). We also need stage crew for *The Importance of Being Earnest* (performing late September). To find out more, or to get involved, contact Emma Saunders on 07913 150011 or emmajosaunders@hotmail.com. Support and training will be given throughout if needed.

Harry Harding as King James I in Howard Brenton's 'Anne Boleyn', directed by Nicki Pope. Photo: Julian Newman Turner.

The QMT



The Richard Whitmore
STUDIO

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

Audition notice

Main Theatre

Mojo

Mojo was the first big hit for the playwright, Jez Butterworth, before he went on to write *Jerusalem* and *The Ferryman* and, in its own right, has become a classic of modern theatre. The story is set in the gangland London of the late 1950s. Ezra's night club has been hit by a rival gang and the boss is nowhere to be found. They're at war over a pop singer named Silver Johnny. It's a wickedly dark and comic tale that has been frequently revived on the West End stage. Director Katie Milward plans to cross-cast some of the male characters, so if you want to be part of this November production, don't let anything stop you coming along to the auditions. We'd love to see you!

THE ROLES:

Potts: 20-35. One of the gang's go-fers, best friends with Sweets.

Sweets: 20-35. Supplies the gang's uppers and downers. Twitchy.

Skinny: 25-40. The runt of the gang, sucks up to Micky.

Baby: 20-35. Ezra's son. Appears harmless, in fact is highly dangerous.

Micky: 30-50. Bruiser, Ezra's second in command, wants to take over.

Silver Johnny: 18-25. The pop star. Looks good but hardly speaks.

THE DETAILS:

By: Jez Butterworth, directed by Katie Milward

Auditions: Mon 19 & Wed 21 Aug

Performances: 30 Oct - 2 Nov

Rehearsals: Mon & Wed from Jan 4

Scripts: Available from Box Office

Audition notice

Main Theatre

Cinderella

It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas – Oh Yes It Is! Well, at least it is time to start thinking about this year's Christmas production of *Cinderella*.

For those of you who do not know us, my wife, Dee, and I have been involved in pantomimes for too many years to count and still find them a joy – whether it is a star studded performance at the London Palladium or low budget in a small village hall, they all have something to offer and all entertain.

Cinderella is the top pantomime performed every year, you know the story of how she meets her Prince Charming, copes with her Ugly Sisters, has a wicked Stepmother and a Fairy Godmother and let us not forget Buttons of course. It is a wonderful fairy tale for young and old alike that we will bring to life just before Christmas.

If you would like to get involved then please come along and audition, as well as the principal characters there will be lots of songs and dances that require extra cast members who above all want to have some fun. One of the great things about pantomime is that age is not a restriction – young or old – so come and join the party!

THE ROLES:

Cinderella: Female, 18-30. Our heroine who is loved by everyone – except her wicked Stepmother and her Ugly Sisters. Kind-hearted and long suffering.

Prince Charming: Male, 20-35. A dashing fellow, heir to the throne and seeking a bride who will love him for who he is not what he is.

Dandini: Male or Female, any age. Aide and confidante to Prince Charming, who he finds a bit pompous. Likes to make fun of his master.

Buttons: Male, any age. The fun-loving link man character. Loves Cinderella and only wants only the best for her – so long as it is him. Lots of interaction with the audience required.

Baroness: Female, any age. Absolute bitch who genuinely thinks her daughters are the prettiest girls in the world. Horrible to everyone else and takes no prisoners.

Baron: Male, 40-85. Bullied, hen-pecked, gentle-hearted. Loves his daughter but is battered by his wife and Stepdaughters.

THE DETAILS:

Directed by: Richard and Dee Lovelock

Auditions: Adults (16+) 7.45pm on Mon 2 & Wed 4 Sept; children (15 and under) 2.30pm on Sat 7 Sept.

Performances: 6-8 & 13-15 Dec (Fri & Sat evenings, Sat & Sun matinees)

Rehearsals: Adults Mon & Wed, Mondays will be more singing / dancing and Wednesday will be more for lib; children Sat 2.30pm-4.30pm. Full commitment in the week before we go up.

Required skills: Cinderella, Prince Charming and Buttons do need to be able to sing solo, other characters do not need to be strong singers but be able to get a song across at least in a comedic nature.

Adele and Beyonce, the Ugly Sisters: Male, any age. Step-sisters to Cinderella, thoroughly nasty pieces of work. Dim, daft and dangerous.

Fairy Sparkles: Female, any age. Kind-hearted and all-powerful fairy who will make sure that everyone gets the ending that they deserve.

Villagers and Ball Guests: We need numerous villagers and guests of all ages who can smile - singing and dancing is also required.

'Barcrofters' stand ready to serve

Small changes have had a big impact on the QMT bar in the last year. And over the summer of 2019, more improvements will be made.

Work on the décor has started to introduce colour, drama and a little fun. And there is more to come. Love it or hate it, these changes will bring life to the bar and be a talking point.

In the new season, you will also see a board on the wall with images, descriptions, gossip, props or costume items to shed light on every performance - a series of items about the context or times, the writer or the story.

By popular demand, pictures of performances and performers will reappear and other pictures will be rehung, this time in a gallery to group images that tell the proud story of the QMT.

Signposting in the FoH area will also be added.

The changes are intended to create a theatrical and enjoyable space for visitors, for the team of Barcrofters

who run the bar and for other Front of House staff.

Oh yes - and contactless payment is coming! Wi-Fi will be introduced this summer throughout the theatre. Once we have secure Wi-Fi, we can do a live trial of contactless payment, and also make sure all Barcrofters are trained so we can serve visitors with confidence.

And on that note, the team of Barcrofters may be slowly growing, but an evening of your time once or twice a year when you are not acting will make all the difference.

You don't need to worry that it's too difficult a job for you, either - without beer pumps and with an easy payment system, serving at the bar is simple and straightforward.

A training session is planned for September but individual training is also on offer.

Drop me a line at QMTbarcrofters@gmail.com if you would like to join the Barcrofters team.

Christine Neal



Extra seating

With all the talk of long term plans, there is no need to stand still in the meantime. Interim changes in the bar involve cheering the place up with decorations, and we have found a response to the requests for more seating at the bar end despite the shortage of space.

This conundrum has been resolved by using the bench seats we have around the theatre. All is work in progress and not as yet the final result, but we are inching our way towards 'raising the bar'.

200 Club pieces together another useful contribution to the QMT

As you read this, the AGM will be just a distant memory. As not everyone will have attended, I thought you would like to know how your wonderful contributions have been spent this year.

I did put a plea for suggestions in last month's issue. However, while you were still reading it, Keith Crook suggested new tools for the Workshop (a very mysterious area to me!). Currently Dave Borner is sourcing tools to the value of £500, including a cordless jigsaw - I thought they came in several hundred pieces in a cardboard box with not even the whiff of a cord.

Always looking for new members and indeed I am delighted to say I signed up a new one for July, who attended the defibrillator training and was so impressed as to how we managed to acquire one that she promptly completed the magical Standing Order form.

And lastly congratulations to Bev Bollons, who won the £50 June draw. Bev briefly took over as the theatre's Licensee in 2014 at very short notice, following the death of the previous holder of that title.

For more information on the 200 Club please contact me on 07778 014428 or paula.downes@ntlworld.com.

Congratulations to our June and July winners.

June Winners

£50: Bev Bollons
£25: Mr R Anywl-Hughes
£20: Mr R O'Dell
£15: Leslie Simpkins
£10: Mike Mackenzie

July Winners

£25: Carol Stokes
£20: Lyn Bryars
£15: Bron Martin
£10: Sarah Chapman

Paula Downes

Working with children and young people at the QMT

By Rory Reynolds & Katie Milward, Youth Theatre leaders.

One of the privileges of working at the QMT is that it is also the home to a great Juniors group (up to 13 years) and an inspiring youth theatre (14-20 years). However, if you want to have children and young people in your show there are rules about doing so.

As you are probably aware there are strict safeguarding principles in place that govern the way adults in the Society should work with and behave towards children and young people.

So what are the rules?

General Principles

Within schools and other educational establishments only adults with enhanced DBS clearance are allowed to work directly with students. In the QMT adults, who for the most part are not DBS checked, share the space with the children and young people who are part of the Juniors or Big Spirit. However the same rules about how we interact apply. It mustn't be felt that just because we share a theatre that adults in the society can approach children and young people in a way that would not be allowed within a school setting.

- Children and young people must be safe at all times in the theatre and will be monitored by appropriate adults who are charged with looking after them (for instance a named chaperone or someone who works with children and young people in the theatre).
- Adults whether they are DBS checked or not should not contact young people by email or encourage young people to email them. This rule applies to contact via any social media platform as well.
- Adults are not allowed to arrange to meet with young people from the theatre outside of the QMT

setting, or to invite them into their homes for any reason.

- All children and young people in the theatre are given safeguarding training and have been asked to speak to a trusted adult if they are made to feel uncomfortable or put in a position where they think that the principles above have been breached.

If I can't approach a child or young person, how do I cast my show that requires some children, for instance, to be in it?

It's great to have children in a show but in order to do so you will need to approach either Claudia O'Connell for the Juniors or Rory or Katie from Big Spirit in the first instance and speak to them about the show and the roles you wish to fill. If they feel that it is appropriate they can arrange for children/young people to attend your auditions.

Arrangements will also need to be made for chaperones during the audition process. A chaperone is a suitably qualified person whose only role is to look after the children/young people in their care (so they can't be on the audition panel or be down to audition themselves, for example).

Can children and young people rehearse onstage with adults?

Yes of course they can! Again there will be a chaperone in attendance and they will sit with the children/YP when they are not onstage.

Can children and young people appear in a week's run of a show?

For children the answer is probably no - so you will need to do what they do in the West End and cast two children to each role. A child actor can appear onstage only 3 nights within a given week. For young people above the age of 16 years - this rule does not apply. However they still need chaperoning until they are aged 18 years.

If I need to rehearse separately with a child or young person - can I do that?

Absolutely - as long as the nominated chaperone is always present.

What arrangements do I need to make for cast dressing rooms during the show?

The rule is that children and YP must never share a dressing room with an adult. We usually make the Youth Wing available as a separate dressing room for those under 18 years of age. On the whole you as a director don't need do anything - the staff at the theatre will do this for you.

I like to rehearse until 10pm - are there rules about how late children and young people can stay?

Yes there are. Young people need their sleep and I'm sure you can understand that keeping a child in a rehearsal until late into the evening isn't acceptable. Think about starting your rehearsals earlier (say 7pm) and let the kids finish before 8.30pm. Older children and young people you will need to negotiate with parents as to what is a reasonable time to let them go. Be aware - parents are quick to complain if you keep a child in rehearsal after the time they arrive to pick them up.

Anything else I need to know?

Just a couple of things. We want children and young people to be a part of the whole company so the rules do allow for the cast to chat away together including the youngsters during rehearsals. During the run the young people are welcome to go into the Green Room with the rest of the cast to enjoy their break as long as the chaperone is present.

It goes without saying I hope that children and young people should never be asked intimate or personal questions, be exposed to inappropriate material and the language used should always respect their age.

Bancroft Players AGM report

Christine Neal reports on the BPs' AGM, held June 26 in The Studio.

Ticket sales rise again

QMT tickets sales rose once again this year, showing the best sales performance in five years.

Junior Bancroft Players

A big thank you to Alison Hudson for years of enthusiastic dedication to the Junior Bancroft players. Welcome to Claudia O'Connell as she takes over.

Big Spirit rise to each new challenge

Big Spirit brought a great variety of plays this season. Opening with the *Belles of St Clements*, followed by *Oedipus* and finishing with *Brenda Bly* before a play to Edinburgh this July.

Great shows for mainstream & fringe

The Bancroft Players produced no fewer than six excellent plays on the main stage: *A Bunch of Amateurs*, *Bette & Joan*, *The Nutcracker*, *Blackadder* (sold out), *We Happy Few*, and *Anne Boleyn*. The Studio offered wonderful performances in *The Father*, *Beacons*, *Constellations* and *Bea*, allowing the possibility of adding an additional night next season.

Front of House and backstage praise

A big 'thank you' for support to all in front of house, house management, box office, bar / coffee shop, publicity as well as everything that goes on behind the scene such as costumes, props, stage management and crew, technical and stage design and build.

Investment in flexibility pays off

The flexible stage installed in the Main House at the start of the season has paid off in time, money and creativity. Now The Studio has been given a flexible seating arrangement too.

Weaving a new web

Thank you to Louise Dade who set up the QMT website and maintained it for some years but has decided to step down. The QMT will take some time to look at updating the website and review the best way to sell tickets without wasted resource.

WiFi and contactless payments

The need for contactless payment at the bars has long been recognised. Early trials show that it can work once WiFi is installed. This summer, WiFi will be installed around the theatre for public and for theatre use. Contactless payment will follow early in the new season.

Tooling up thanks to 200 Club

After funding booster seats and a defibrillator, the money raised by the 200 Club will this year fund much-needed new workshop tools that will make set building easier. Thank you to the 200 Club contributors and to Paula for running it

Shining Lights

Many thanks to Alan Bailes for the years of service as lighting manager. Alan is to focus on lighting training in the future, handing his duties for rota

and crew over to Len and production to Chris until new resources can be brought through the ranks.

Back to the future

Thanks to all who filled out the survey to help shape the future of the theatre. A dedicated team has been set up to think freely about the QMT's future as a vibrant place at the heart of the Hitchin community - creative, social, and exciting.

Many hands make light work

The QMT is run almost entirely by enthusiastic volunteers. Join one of the teams; it promises to be fun and rewarding and, as you will be trained, you will gain new skills and experiences.

Feel the love and give your time and enthusiasm to keep things running smoothly in the new season. Stage managers and crew, house managers, box office, stewards, bar and/or coffee staff, sound and lighting and publicity are all looking to bolster their teams. Contact qmtmembs25@hotmail.com to make a difference.

The Bancroft Players Committee

Many thanks to Keith Crook who has handed treasurer duties over to Mark Weatherbed. The EC stay as they are. Zara Schafer and Charlotte Ryan stand down at the end of their two-year committee terms, and Christine and Elliott replace them.

Christine Neal



Here is a lovely picture of *Anne Boleyn* director Nicki Pope with a lady who came from the US to see the show - amazing but true! Nicki said: "I started chatting to these two ladies, Catherine and Trina, in the foyer. Both are fanatical *Anne Boleyn* enthusiasts, and Catherine had seen a post I put onto an *Anne Boleyn* Facebook group about the play. She is from New York State and decided to change her travel dates to England so she and Trina, who is from Nottingham, could come and see it. They absolutely adored it! I introduced them to Terri - our *Anne Boleyn* - and they said she was just how they imagined Anne to be. They are eager for us to tour the USA - shall we?"

Casting news

The Importance of Being Earnest

Jack Worthing: Craig Maddox
Algernon: Saul Bailey
Lady Bracknell: Alison Hancock
Gwendolen: Zara Schafer
Cecily: Merrin Sharples-Moore
Miss Prism: Clare Bailey
Rev Chasuble: Alan Hemming
Lane: James Hart
Merriman: Zolfu Kaplan

Radiant Vermin

Jill: Laura Mead
Ollie: Cameron Fraser
Miss Dee: Emma O'Connell

Members' survey feedback

Bancroft Players Chairman Les Edwards gives an update on the responses to the recent survey on the future of the society.

First and foremost, a huge thank you to David Lester for his hard work in preparing such a comprehensive survey and subsequently collating the responses.

More than half of the membership responded, and the collated individual replies to the 18 questions posed run to more than 38 pages.

The Executive Committee is organising special dedicated meetings to discuss and review the huge range of comments received.

I hope and anticipate this will lead to a settled form of recommendations to place before the membership, in due course, for further input and approval.

Meanwhile, I am sure members are interested to learn of the results of the survey.

With such a wide range of responses it is of course extremely difficult to generalise at this time.

However, suffice to mention that the importance of a long term plan received more than 80 per cent approval with similar importance attached to creating and enhancing our provision for children and young people.

Improvements to the foyer, potentially creating a wing at Stage Left and improving the external appearance also attracted more than 50 per cent support.

I will be discussing with the EC the best means of summarising the more than 500 individual comments for everyone's information.

Again, my thanks to everyone who responded. Your views and comments will be carefully considered as we prepare for the next decade.

Les Edwards, Chairman

Grab an early-bird discount and renew your Bancroft Players membership

It's that time of year when BP members need to renew their annual subscriptions - and if you're quick you can claim an 'early bird' discount for paying promptly.

Anyone who takes part in one of the society's productions must be a full member. 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.

Period covered

1 July 2019 to 30 June 2020

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

- **QMT Website Booking System** - if you open an account, or already have one 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.
- **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** - Can be paid via the Box Office during opening hours.
- **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.

Many thanks,

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

The Bancroft Players