



# “Curtain Call”

**Our bi-monthly publication with news from the RHTC**

**December 2016 – welcome to the 11th edition of our bi-monthly newsletter all about the RHTC. This month’s issue has a photographic tribute to some of the stars of stage and screen we have sadly lost this year.**

**May we take the opportunity of wishing you all a Happy Christmas and a Prosperous New Year**

The first play next year is the comedy **‘Ladies Down Under’** by Amanda Whittington, from 24<sup>th</sup>-28<sup>th</sup> January. It will be a year since we produced **‘Ladies Day’** which sold more tickets than any other play last season. For those who saw it this new production is a chance to see what happened a year on when the four fish packers from Hull go to Australia to spend some of the half million pounds they won at the races on a luxury holiday. If you missed **‘Ladies Day’** this second play quickly catches up and rushes you on into this finely balanced mixture of laughter and tears as the ladies take on the long distance journey, surfing, the outback and Sydney’s Mardi Gras parade.

Geoff Morgan directs again with the same team of female characters, Sally Williams, Liz Morgan, Kerri Saxby and Lindsey Follen.

Just like their trip to Ascot, their trip down under doesn’t go to plan either. This fast paced sequel follows four friends against the world on the opposite side of the planet and is guaranteed to make you laugh a lot.



*Sarah-Lee Taylor*

On March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> the Stroke of Genius Community Theatre Company will stage a new musical, **‘Ton of Bricks’**, written by Carolyn Drury with music and lyrics written by Cliff McArdle. With a large cast, this story of a woman’s task to save a school from closing down is full of fascinating characters. She battles difficult neighbours, wealthy NIMBYS and the local landowner. The leading character is played by Sarah-Lee Taylor who worked as a professional actress before taking leave to raise a family. Blessed with a wonderful voice Sarah-Lee will take you on her difficult journey with plenty of laughter on the way. There are familiar Robin Hood actors in the cast as well as some newcomers of all ages. Cliff McArdle’s songs include **‘The School Dinners Calypso’**, **‘Paperwork’** and **‘The Cleaner’s Lament’** and in true musical tradition there are a couple of romantic ballads as well.

Tickets for both these shows are now available from [www.robinhoodtheatre.co.uk](http://www.robinhoodtheatre.co.uk).

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## Message from our Artistic Director

Hi everyone, I have recently taken up the role of Artistic Director at the Robin Hood Theatre and firstly would like to introduce myself to all our members and audiences and to talk a little about what I hope to bring to this role.

Having been an active member of RHT for over 30 years, both acting in and directing many of our plays, I feel very much part of the fabric of the building and passionate about its future. The Board of Directors works tirelessly to ensure that the theatre is run as professionally as it can be and that the building is kept in good repair and my predecessor in the role of Artistic Director, Jean Lebeter, has set the bar very high in respect of the quality of performance that our audience has now come to expect. I feel privileged to have

the chance to contribute to the development and continued success of this lovely, unique little theatre with its fascinating past and am totally committed to maintaining these standards of professionalism.

One of the first things that I have initiated is an audience questionnaire. Great way I optimistically thought to get your feedback on the plays you have seen, on the sort of plays you would like to see and how you found out about the RHT. Only problem is that the questionnaires sat on the foyer tables during the last show and were unsurprisingly largely ignored, as everyone was too busy drinking and chatting - which is exactly as it should be! So my hope is that you will just take a couple of minutes next time you come to the theatre, to complete one of these and give us the opportunity to ensure that we are putting on the sort of plays that you all want to see - or at least to provide an eclectic mix to suit everyone.

If possible we will put the questionnaire on our website, so that those of you who want to contribute your thoughts and ideas can do so on line. So .... with that in mind, on to next season 2017 -2018. We would love to hear from you with suggestions for plays. We can consider most things – bearing in mind the size of our stage we might not manage Blood Brothers, but all ideas are gratefully received.

We are always looking for new actors, experienced or not. We are hoping to run some more acting workshops, so why not come along and see if you can pave your way to a career in the West End - or at least Averham. There are often very small parts to start you off and plenty to do backstage if that's more up your street.

The unseen role of the Director is very often overlooked by an audience. However experienced, talented and competent an actor may be, a strong Director is needed to bring to the audience a cohesive, well timed and visually pleasing piece of theatre. Could you fill this role? If so, we would ask you to submit a play with some supporting narrative of how you would stage it and what ideas you would bring to it. If you are new to this, you could shadow a more experienced Director to see what it would entail before making a commitment.

I would love to hear from anyone who has **any** ideas that you would like to bring to our attention. It doesn't matter if they are grandiose or small – we would still like to hear from you. As much as I would like to tell you all that the RHT is all about our audiences - and largely that is true - we are just a group of people who are passionate about the theatre, love what we do and want to make your experience of our little theatre the best it can possibly be.

Please get in touch with me at [oneilpeck@aol.com](mailto:oneilpeck@aol.com) with all and any suggestions that you feel will enhance your enjoyment of the theatre. I promise to get back to you as soon as I can. I look forward to the growth and future development of RHT and hope that you will all continue to support and enjoy being a part of this lovely venue.

**Karen Peck**

Tickets for all productions are available on our box office number 07733 179986



It seems that we really can't get enough of the Tudors and we think we are familiar with the happenings and characters in Henry V111's court. Howard Brenton's play was particularly fascinating because it gave us a different thesis about the downfall of Henry's Queen Anne. It wasn't only her supposed immoral behaviour that caused her disgrace and beheading, something she always denied and her 'lovers' confessed to only under the cruellest torture, but her Protestantism as well. We hold Henry V111 responsible for his assumption as Head of the Church of England and the dissolution of the monasteries but the play tells us that it was Anne who planted the idea in his head. Influenced by the translation of the New Testament into English by the protestant William Tyndale, Anne told Henry that he had the right to rule the church in his own kingdom. The play has King James 1 finding a trunk belonging to Anne containing the Bible and another book by Tyndale and it is James who comes to believe that Anne is an important factor in the spread of Protestantism in England. It is suggested that he was prompted to create his King James Bible by this find.

The production of the play at the Robin Hood was not only thought provoking: it was highly enjoyable too. An excellent cast of well-defined characters, ably directed by Jill Morris took us into the courts of Henry and of James, displayed in David Piper's magnificent set of pillars and steps and Jackie Roger's superb costumes. Rebecca Crowe in the title role was convincing as the doomed Queen and Joseph Denman as Henry was suitably majestic. David Baliol –Key was brilliant as King James and his antics, always controlled, added humour to the production. He and his lover, George Villiers played by Andrew Tallis had the honour of the first homosexual kiss on the Averham stage that I've ever seen. There isn't room to mention all the actors who made this production such a success. Suffice it to say that there wasn't a weak link in the casting and performance of this difficult play. Congratulations to all.



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## MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD

### Building and maintenance work

We have spent a considerable amount of time working on how we proceed with the works to the extension building. In November we dedicated the whole meeting to considering the longer term plans to get a better perspective on how the works contribute to the improvement and development of the theatre. This process is not finished but it has enabled us to start preparing the next 3-5 year business plan and to agree a priority list of 10 packages for the work. The Board is still not clear at what pace we should proceed towards opening the Studio Theatre

Even if we were not constrained by funding. However the works so far agreed are about completing the building to a minimum standard for its current usage. In the meantime we can explore how the fully completed building might work and we have asked our architect to make proposals for preparing an outline design. This will help us to have a clearer vision of the future so that we are not doing any work that has to be undone later.

- We understand that building contractors in the area have charitable programmes as part of the Considerate Contractor Scheme and we are making some approaches to see if any are able or willing to help with some of the work packages we have identified. We shall also be undertaking some of the simpler work ourselves so look out for pleas for working parties in the coming months!
- We thanked David and June Horton for the incredible achievement in making the garden along the drive so much better. They had some help for the heavy work from another Vodafone working party and with the plants in place the future maintenance should be easier. Hopefully you will never have to use the auditorium exit ramp constructed over the summer by Dave Lebeter and Michael Jeffrey which will enable a safe and easy exit for all in an emergency;
- We purchased a Carpet Cleaning Machine to avoid hire charges and to enable us to deep clean the carpets more often. The number of event hirings and accidental spillages meant that the carpet was looking very sorry for itself. A couple of sessions with the new cleaner already has the carpet looking much better.

### Plays and Acting

- We decided to form a Casting Committee to support play directors with casting if they need it. The committee will consist of Karen Peck, Jean Lebeter and Carolyn Drury.
- We will be conducting an Audience survey to inform our future programming.
- We agreed to a Rehearsed Reading of a new play "Peter" by local writer Fiona Theokritoff with a view to developing it for a studio style production.
- We decided that we should no longer charge cast members for scripts.

### Lighting and Technical Issues

- We accepted an offer by new member John Leventhall (who is a qualified lighting designer) to review our lighting system..
- A generous donation by a member recently has enabled us to buy new computers for the technical team and for FOH including a new multi-purpose printer so that we can print more leaflets and other materials in house. The Board is now seeking advice on developing an IT strategy.
- We purchased a ticket printing machine so that customers who buy tickets by phone, post or on the door will have their tickets purpose printed just like at professional theatres.

### Finances

- Our finances continue to be reasonably healthy with enough reserves to commit to some of the development work.

### AGM

- We have set the date for the next AGM on 9 February 2017 – please make a note in your diaries!



## Can You Help?

The Robin Hood Theatre is run entirely by volunteers who do all kinds of things to help keep the theatre vibrant and sustainable. We need people to assist with Front of House duties such as selling programmes, making interval refreshments, acting as ushers and fire marshals and helping behind the bar. Because we are short of parking space we have to use parking attendants to ensure that cars are parked properly. Occasionally we have a big clear up day which might include cleaning inside and outside, tidying up and general maintenance.

It was brought home to us that we needed more volunteers during 'Anne Boleyn', when we had twelve men in the cast and a large backstage team. It seemed too that it was a week when several volunteers had succumbed to colds and flu so it was a struggle to find enough people to help. If you feel that you would like to volunteer at this theatre us please contact Martin Williams on martinwilliams22@virginmedia.com

We promise you our full support, a drink at the end of the evening and our gratitude.

### Message from the Board continued . . . . .

Over we mentioned an offer by a new member John Leventhall (who is a qualified lighting designer) to review our lighting system. He recommended that we increase the number of lighting channels using the power packs we used on tour, via a "deMux" unit which enables analogue kit to be used by digital systems, and noted that we had no profile spotlights. He has since helped us acquire 30 second hand lanterns for minimal cost (new they would have cost over £5,000) through his contacts. In particular he learnt of and persuaded Hawthorns (to whom we are very grateful) to give us 24 lanterns and associated kit from their surplus stock. This has increased our lighting capacity by 30% and reduced the dark spots that used to plague our productions. In the meantime Mike Dobbs (our other qualified lighting designer) overhauled and reconditioned 6 of our old lanterns that we thought we only good for scrap.



### Watch out for our Village Venture production on 25<sup>th</sup> February 2017

Inspired by the Horror movies of the 1950's, The Thing That Came From Over There is a fast-paced rollicking ride, mixing paranoia, suspense and hilariously gruesome deaths.

It's 1912, and as Scott and Amundsen begin their race across Antarctica, the hapless explorer, Captain Reginald Cranston, has accidentally landed on the wrong side of the continent. As Cranston and his motley band set up base camp, a meteor crashes nearby. Deciding to investigate, they set out towards the crash site - unaware of the danger that awaits not just them, but the whole of planet Earth.

What ancient evil lurks inside the crater? What is the dark secret of the slimy fungus? And what is the horrifying fate of those who encounter the parasitic space worms?

Join three daring actors as they play over 15 roles in 75 minutes of shocks, spine tingling silliness, and blood curdling terror. With comedy and thrills galore, the show features visual gags, verbal wit, giant puppetry, and even a little bit of live music.

For further information visit our web site – [robinhoodtheatre.co.uk](http://robinhoodtheatre.co.uk)



## SPOTLIGHT

**Each Month we Spotlight on performers or supports of the Robin Hood Theatre.**

**This month we find out more about Mike and Lindsay Follen. Mike starred in Brief Encounter and has just directed Rent and Lindsay will be in our January production of Ladies Down Under.**

In 1993, Mike moved to Newark to start his teaching career at John Hunt Junior School in Balderton. I arrived two years later and we soon began to enjoy our shared love of theatre. Initially we were both members of the Palace Theatre Company, which is now Argent Theatre. I remember working under the direction of Ray Dicks in 'Under Milk Wood' at the Palace Theatre and we were both committee members too. Since then, we have performed in various Argent productions. I loved being part of the Calendar Girls cast – I had two small parts (no pun intended) and didn't have to take off my clothes, thank goodness and Mike enjoyed playing the lead in Argent's production of 'Honk' at the Robin Hood Theatre.

My first involvement with the Robin Hood Theatre Company was in the 2008 production of 'An Inspector Calls' and since then I have been lucky enough to take on all sorts of different characters, and worked alongside some brilliant people. I particularly enjoyed playing a piano-playing, boiled sweet-eating pensioner in 'Ten Times Table' and am currently having fun reunited with the 'Ladies Day' cast rehearsing for the sequel in the new year. Mike's latest involvement with RHTC was in 'Brief Encounter' and Scarlett, our daughter, is a member of the youth theatre.

In 1997, Mike joined the cast of the Operatic Society for their production of 'Singin' in the Rain' where he learnt to tap dance and thoroughly enjoyed getting wet every evening! I was roped in to play the piano for rehearsals too, and we have both been involved with the Operatic Society ever since. Our daughter, Scarlett, is appearing in her third Operatic show next year and our son, Jordan, is looking forward to being part of the technical crew now he is old enough.

After years of directing school productions, Mike took on the challenge of directing 'Little Shop of Horrors' at the Robin Hood Theatre for the society and followed on this year with 'Rent'. I was playing in the band for Little Shop and it was great to see our Operatic and Robin Hood families come together.

Theatre is a real escapism for us, whether it's watching it, rehearsing for it, or performing it. The quality of productions by local amateur companies is excellent and we are privileged to belong to them.

