

# FOOTLIGHTS

The Newsletter for Barton Theatre Company

Issue 12: April 2012

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### 1. EDITORIAL

Welcome one and all to April's issue of Footlights.

I'm a terrible person. I break promises. No, it's true! I promised you that this issue would not be on time because I was on holiday; that if you received it at all it would be at least a week late. Yet here as I sit typing, it is March 31<sup>st</sup>. barring disaster, you'll get this newsletter tomorrow, maybe even today.

I am truly sorry for my perfidy. In my defence, it's not my fault. Due to circumstances beyond my control, I had to cancel my holiday and stay in Manchester. This means that I have been able to do the newsletter.

However, there's no excuse for breaking a promise. I should have put it off, procrastinated like I always do, and made you wait for your monthly fix of Footlights.

In hope, Dear Reader, of earning your forgiveness, I offer you the latest news on Macbeth, together with an interesting article I've found regarding that infamous curse, a tale of how Barton got into the movie business (kind of), a slightly different quiz and the usual dates for your diary.

Am I off the hook?

Andrew Nevill (Editor)  
[nevillandrew@gmail.com](mailto:nevillandrew@gmail.com)

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### 2. MACBETH

Rehearsals for Macbeth continue apace. David continues to be really pleased with how things are going

At the time of writing, we have now rehearsed and blocked the WHOLE PLAY!

Next up is the full run through from 2-6pm on Sunday April 1<sup>st</sup> at St Mike's, which

may or may not have already happened depending on when you're reading this.

As well as rehearsals other aspects of the production are also rapidly getting ticked off the 'To Do list'.

These include one of the filmed sequences being used in the play which was completed this week. Apparently it involved lighting a bonfire. Does Guy Fawkes get a cameo, David?

Also Mistresses of Costume, Bev and Joan were at rehearsal on Thursday getting people to try out their outfits.

On the props front, Dave has got the major prop he was after – the hospital trolley and we've also found the spinning top we were after.

If you've been reading David's email updates, you'll know by now that he's currently very happy as we have been asked to perform an excerpt of Macbeth at the Contact Theatre - RSC's regional partner for Open Stages – the week after our production. This will be on the Thursday or Friday.

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### 3. PORTAS PILOT

You may have seen in the news that retail guru, Mary Portas (she of the knickers) recently produced a report for the government on ways to halt the decline of the traditional High Street. Following this, the government has made funding available, in a scheme called Portas Pilots, which towns can bid for in order to help give their high street a much needed kick-in-the-pants. Eccles is one of the towns after the cash.

Thing is the bidding process doesn't just require applicants to fill in a form. Oh, no! They also had to make and post a YouTube video

So Salford City Council did the right thing. They called in the Professionals. But Bodie and Doyle weren't available so they asked Barton instead!

Seriously, though it is a testament to all the work we've done in the community in the last couple of years, such as the Eccles rail station anniversary and the Bridgewater Canal 250, which the Council would ask us to be involved in something like this.

Although, as we've come to expect, the request was made on relatively short notice, Joan and I, nevertheless, volunteered.

It was requested that we dress in Victoria costume so at Monday's rehearsal Joan rooted through the wardrobe to find suitable outfits. A Victorian lady's dress for Joan and a dashing soldier's uniform for yours truly (BTW, thanks Scott for lending the trousers)

On Wednesday morning, we met at the Old Town hall for the filming. First of all we got our photos taken and then we filmed a scene walking up the Town Hall stairs.

After that it was across to the library. Whilst we were waiting for some other filming (that we weren't in) to finish, we sat on a bench outside and enjoyed the sunshine. And the puzzled looks from the locals who were wondering why two Victorians were sat in the Town Square!

We then got to so some filming on the balcony of the wonderful Carnegie Library. Usually the public aren't allowed

there but when you're working for the Council doors literally open for you.

Finally, we filmed a scene on Church Street outside St Mary's Church

And so in just under two hours we wrapped (I believe that's the word) I have to admit I had fun. It was something a little different that I wouldn't normally have the chance to do otherwise. And I did look good in the uniform.

The finished video is now up on YouTube. You can see it at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X2qhWFz30b0>.

Also it's not just Joan and I who've got our Fifteen Seconds of Fame! They've used a photo from the Eccles Station anniversary event in the video. If you were there, see if you can spot yourself.

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#### 4. THE CURSE OF MACBETH

##### **Is there an evil spell on this ill-starred play?**

By DINA TRITSCH  
Showbill, April 1984  
(Retrieved from [http://pretallez.com/onstage/theatre/broadway/macbeth/macbeth\\_curse.html](http://pretallez.com/onstage/theatre/broadway/macbeth/macbeth_curse.html))

In 1604 Will Shakespeare in his zeal to please King James I, an authority on demonology, cast caution and imagination aside and for the opening scene of Macbeth's Act IV he reproduced a 17th century black-magic ritual, a sort of how-to to budding witches. Without changing an ingredient, Old Will provided his audience with step-by-step instructions in the furtive art of spell casting:

"Round around the cauldron go;  
In the poison'd entrails throw.  
Toad, that under cold stone  
Days and nights has thirty-one  
Swelter'd venum sleeping got.  
Boil thou first i' the charmed pot"  
...And so on.

The ritual's practitioners were not amused by this detailed public exposure of their witchcraft, and it is said that as punishment they cast an everlasting spell on the play, turning it into the most ill-starred of all theatrical productions. It is so

unlucky that by comparison to Macbeth's nearly 400-year history of unmitigated disaster, Murphy's Law appears exceedingly optimistic.

Here are some of the gory particulars:

Beginning with its first performance, in 1606, Dear Will himself was forced to play Lady Macbeth when Hal Berridge, the boy designated to play the lady with a peculiar notion of hospitality, became inexplicably feverish and died. Moreover, the bloody play so displeased King James I that he banned it for five years.

When performed in Amsterdam in 1672, the actor playing Macbeth substituted a real dagger for the blunted stage one and with it killed Duncan in full view of the entranced audience.

As Lady Macbeth, Sarah Siddons was nearly ravaged by a disapproving audience in 1775; Sybil Thorndike was almost strangled by a burly actor in 1926; Diana Wynyard sleepwalked off the rostrum in 1948, falling down 15 feet.

During its 1849 performance at New York's Astor Place, a riot broke out in which 31 people were trampled to death.

In 1937, when Laurence Olivier took on the role of Macbeth, a 25 pound stage weight crashed within an inch of him, and his sword which broke onstage flew into the audience and hit a man who later suffered a heart attack.

In 1934, British actor Malcolm Keen turned mute onstage, and his replacement, Alister Sim, like Hal Berridge before him, developed a high fever and had to be hospitalized.

In the 1942 Macbeth production headed by John Gielgud, three actors -- Duncan and two witches -- died, and the costume and set designer committed suicide amidst his devilish Macbeth creations.

The indestructible Charlton Heston, in an outdoor production in Bermuda in 1953, suffered severe burns in his groin and leg area from tights that were accidentally soaked in kerosene.

An actor's strike felled Rip Torn's 1970 production in New York City; two fires and seven robberies plagued the 1971 version starring David Leary; in the 1981 production at Lincoln Center, J. Kenneth Campbell, who played Macduff, was mugged soon after the play's opening.

Of course, no explanations have been given for the seemingly inevitable toil and trouble that is part and parcel of this unlucky play. You don't, in fact, ever refer to Macbeth or quote from it unless rehearsing or performing it. You also don't, as explained to me by countless brave and talented actors from Glenda Jackson to Ian McKellen, refer to this haunted play by name, but instead you call it That Scottish Play or simply That Play; everyone, it seems, will get the message, in a flash.

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## 5. APRIL FOOL'S QUIZ

A slightly different Quiz this time. As it will soon be April 1<sup>st</sup>, I have, in the tradition of all periodicals, told a deliberate lie somewhere within this newsletter. All you have to do is spot the falsehood.

The answer is, as usual, at the end of the newsletter

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## 6. DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

### Barton Theatre Company Dates:

#### **Macbeth**

*Rehearsals:* Monday & Thursdays,  
7.45pm, St Michael's Community Centre,  
Liverpool Road, Eccles

*Run Through:* Sunday 1 April, 2pm-6pm,  
St Michael's Community Centre,  
Liverpool Road, Eccles

*Performance:* 16-19 May 2012 Evenings  
(Thurs-Sat): 7:30pm Matinees (Sat, Sun)

2pm

Salford Arts Theatre  
Kemsing Walk

off Liverpool Road

Salford

M5 4BS

*Bookings:* Phone: 0161 799 4685

0161 925 0111 (Theatre)

E-mail: [boxoffice@salfordartstheatre.co.uk](mailto:boxoffice@salfordartstheatre.co.uk)

<http://salfordartstheatre.co.uk>

*Contact Theatre:* TBA

### Smiths Bite Size Theatre

Theatre By Numbers presents: '**Death at the Theatre**' – Smiths 1<sup>st</sup> Murder Mystery Evening

Thursday 17 May 7pm.  
*Bookings:* Smiths Restaurant  
1-3 Church Road  
Eccles  
Manchester  
M30 0DL  
Tel: 0161 788 7343  
<http://www.smithsrestaurant.net>

Salford Arts Theatre:  
Family Secrets  
30-31 March 2012-03-03  
Doors open 7pm / Performance starts at  
7.30pm  
ADVANCE tickets £10 Full / £8  
Concession  
ON THE DOOR £12 Full / £10  
Concession

How To Relax In Andalucia  
26-28 April 2012  
Doors open 7pm / Performance starts at  
7.30pm  
Full £7 / Concession £6 (OAP, Students,  
Friends of the theatre & benefits)

Salford Arts Theatre  
Kemsing Walk  
off Liverpool Road  
Salford  
M5 4BS  
*Bookings:* Phone: 0161 925 0111  
E-mail: [boxoffice@salfordartstheatre.co.uk](mailto:boxoffice@salfordartstheatre.co.uk)  
<http://salfordartstheatre.co.uk>

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## 7. THE FINAL CURTAIN

And so that's the end of the Newsletter for this month. Hope you enjoyed reading it.

Any comments, suggestions or – better still – contributions greatly received. The email address is below.

If you know someone who you think might like to receive this newsletter, please email me with their email address (Please ask their permission first).

Equally, if you're getting this and don't want to, please email me and I will remove you from the mailing list.

### **April Fool's Quiz Answer:**

The Quiz was the lie. As far as I know, everything in the newsletter is TRUE. So if you thought you'd caught me out  
**APRIL FOOLS!**

(However, that said, the story about Macbeth stabbing Duncan with a real

dagger is thought by many as likely to be untrue. They point out that Duncan is not actually killed *onstage* by Macbeth so there would be no need for Duncan to be stabbed with any dagger – real or false)

### **Contact Information:**

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Barton Theatre Company Committee  
Chair: Brian Cogswill, Treasurer: Elaine Hayton, Secretary: Andrew Nevill  
Officers: Joan Breen, Beverley Greenhalgh, David Milne, Janet Johnston, Val Ridings  
Web: <http://www.bartontheatre.co.uk>

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