

# FOOTLIGHTS

The Newsletter for Barton Theatre Company

Issue 14: June 2012

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### 1. EDITORIAL

Welcome to your slightly delayed June issue of Footlights.

The reason for this is that well, this is supposed to be a newsletter. It's meant have *news* in it. The root word of that is new. The idea is tell you about things that are going to happen.

I knew lots of things that had happened (More about our stunning production of Macbeth shortly) but nothing that was going to.

So I waited until I did. Now I do. So here's your *newsletter*.

Andrew Nevill (Editor)  
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### 2. MACBETH

As most people reading this will know, Macbeth was finally performed at Salford's Arts Theatre from 17<sup>th</sup> May. In short it was a triumph.

This editor will admit to having his doubts. I wasn't sure we could cast Macbeth. I wasn't sure we could do it justice. I didn't think people would come and see it. I was wrong on all three counts.

Not only did we put on a show that everyone one who was involved can feel proud of, but we got some really good

audiences. The most remarkable thing is that this is actually a break from the norm. We're used to the fact that our Christmas play gets bums on seats but the plays through the rest of the year (even quite contemporary, popular pieces) don't always pull in the crowds. But Macbeth actually got some sizable houses, not full ones granted, but substantial nonetheless.

Even better, is the feedback we got off those audiences. I didn't hear one negative comment. Most people really seemed to

enjoy and get our version of the Scottish Play.

### *GUILDING THE LILY*

Following our successful run, we then took a 30 minute extract of the play to One Act Festival at the Wilmslow Guild. It turned out to be a frustrating and somewhat bizarre experience.

As part of the Festival, there is a professional Adjudicator, who at the end of each night is *supposed* to critique each piece and give his considered view. Unfortunately what we got was a lengthy rant about how we'd broken the rules (we added an extra scene without prior notice) with very little feedback about the merits or otherwise of our performances.

What seemed very unfair, and provoked some comments was that the adjudicator had waxed lyrical about the young actors in the Junior production presented before us but said not one word about the young actors in ours. Well, Jamie, Harriet and Sam, we all think you were BRILLIANT!

Thing went from frustrating to downright surreal when we found out on the following Saturday that despite the Adjudicator, we'd actually *won* the Best Production prize. My reaction, like that of many, was to disbelief followed by laughter. Still, a win is a win and it is nice to be recognised for producing the great performance that we all thought we had.

### *MAKING CONTACT*

The day after Wilmslow we were at the Contact Theatre in Manchester performing our extract again as part of their week long Shakespeare Festival. David was keen for everything to go well as he believed that a good performance here might book our ticket to Stratford and a full performance at the Royal Shakespeare Company.

It was a wonderful day. Just the sheer thrill of performing in a professional

theatre and on a stage that was probably five times as large as that at Salford Arts Theatre. And the luxury of a full tech crew. Headed by the wonderful Lucy (who played Queen Victoria in last year's Right Royal Regatta in which Barton took part) our every wish was their command.

More than that there was no snobbery, no hint of you're amateurs, we're professionals. Rather the reverse, everyone at the Contact was so welcoming, and helpful. They were doing all they could to make sure that we did the very best show we could possibly do.

The evening of the performance was very interesting. All of the groups were performing an extract of Macbeth and all it seemed had decided to include the banquet scene. It was fascinating to see different people's interpretations of the same play and indeed the same scene, particularly the varying choices in costumed and performance.

As for our performance. Not only did we rise to the occasion, we seemed to be inspired by it. There was no nervousness about being on a bigger stage; instead we just used it, taking advantage of the extra space. Everyone on stage delivered an outstanding performance, possibly the best one of all.

To celebrate our achievement many of us met at Smiths the following evening for a meal and taking advantage of the extra Bank Holiday for the Queen's Jubilee, there was a well attended apart at Elly's house. It was wonderful to see many people at both Smiths and the party.

It's not *quite* over. Tomorrow is the Post-Mortem meeting where we all it down and discuss the show, including the audience and financial figures. We'll also probably talk about what we might be doing next. It'd be great to see as many

people as possible. The meeting is at 8pm at St Mike's

There is also the possibility that we get to do the show at Stratford. We're still waiting to hear about that. If we get the opportunity (and how amazing would that be?) the performance dates would be between 7 and 21 July.

The last thing to say is a big Well Done to everyone who took part, including all the actors, especially Steve & Cathy who played the Macbeths, Joan for the costumes & props together with Bev who was a super Stage Manager, Elaine for being Assistant Director and offering much common sense. But the plaudits have to go to Dave who wanted to do this so much and nursed his baby all the way.

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### 3. REVIEW: SPAMALOT

Spamalot is the hit musical, as the publicity puts it, lovingly ripped off from the film Monty Python and the Holy Grail. It took Broadway by storm on its premiere followed by the West End. Last year it toured but I missed it leaving me madder than a Killer Rabbit. But happily it's touring again and I made sure I got my ticket when it came to the Opera House.

The plot, such as it is, is loosely based on the legend of King Arthur and has our erstwhile monarch and his ragtag band of knights on a search for the Holy Grail. It's not going to be easy as standing in their way are many obstacles including a very extensive forest, insulting French knights – and that infamous Killer Rabbit

The whole show of course being a comedy is played very much for laughs with the irreverent humour we associate with Python. All the set pieces that people know from the film are there including the French knights, the I'm not dead sketch and many others. They even crowbar in 'Always Look On The Bright Side of Life', easily the Python's most well known song but which is actually from 'Life of Brian'

There are lots of nods to the audience and indeed their participation is at one point crucial to the resolution of the story. As touring productions often do, there are

frequent references to the locale where they happen to find themselves

Leading the cast was comedian Marcus Brigstocke as King Arthur. Interestingly he chose to keep his spectacles on which lent his performance the air of a comedian doing one long sketch. But it works, as essentially that's what *Spamalot* is. Always likeable, with fine comic timing, Brigstocke made a great lead. The foundation for a solid cast.

Next on the bill was Todd Carty as Patsy (Arthur's squire) It's hard not to compare his performance with Tony Robinson's Baldrick, as both roles are on the surface similar. Both are the grubby, socially inferior lackey to someone apparently better than them... But that superficial comparison is unfair as Baldrick is infamously dim whereas Patsy is actually quite intelligent. That said, though, Carty would have given Robinson a run for his turnip as he played the manservant role wonderfully making an excellent and sympathetic foil for Brigstocke's Arthur.

The star of the show though has to be Bonnie Langford as the Lady of the Lake. Always full of energy, singing all of her numbers with gusto, there was no doubting that this show belonged to her. It was a performance so good that I've forgiven Langford for playing the most annoying Doctor Who companion EVER!

Almost stealing the show, but not quite, was Rob Delaney as Sir Robin. His show stopping number, 'You Won't Succeed In Showbiz' was one of the highlights of the whole show

Spamalot is an infectious mix of well known sketches from the film, modern cultural references, gags, and songs all

performed by an ensemble cast clearly having far too much fun – and getting paid for it! The audience was having too much fun, and speaking for myself, didn't mind having to pay for it.

Last time it toured I missed it. This time I didn't. But you did, you silly English person! I fart in your general direction.

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#### 4. RIGHT ROYAL QUIZ

With the Diamond Jubilee going on, and with Macbeth and King Arthur filling these pages, there seems to be a definite Royal theme in the air. So can you earn a Knighthood by answering all these questions? Republicans need not apply.

The answers, as usual, are at the end of the newsletter

1. Shakespeare's play King Henry VIII culminates in the birth of which future monarch

- a) Edward VI
- b) Mary I
- c) Elizabeth I
- d) James I

2. Macbeth's character, Banquo is supposed to be the ancestor of which royal dynasty

- a) Tudor
- b) Stuart

- c) Windsor
- d) Colby

3. Queen Victoria holds the record for longest reigning monarch. In which year would Elizabeth II overtake her?

- a) 2012
- b) 2014
- c) 2015
- d) 2016

4 A multipart question now.

Match the actor to the film in which they played King Arthur

- |                   |                                   |
|-------------------|-----------------------------------|
| a) Sean Connery   | I) Excalibur                      |
| b) Clive Owen     | II) Monty Python & the Holy Grail |
| c) Nigel Terry    | III) Camelot                      |
| d) Graham Chapman | IV) First Knight                  |
| e) Richard Harris | V) King Arthur                    |

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#### 5. NEXT PRODUCTIONS

So Macbeth is over (unless we go to Stratford). This leaves the question of what are we going to do next? Well, we do have *some* plans

First up is the *MONTON FESTIVAL*

Each year Monton Village puts a festival on over a summer weekend. The main road through Monton is lined with stalls and there's a marquee on the Village Green with various entertainments. Last year Barton took part performing a piece about the Bridgewater Canal. It was received so

well on the day, we were asked to do an encore.

Well, it seems they must have liked us as they've asked us back this year. So on July 7<sup>th</sup> at 2:30pm Barton will once more take to a small stage on the Village Green

Elaine McCann has agreed to write a piece for us to perform. Early indications are that this will be a radio play. If you don't know, it means the actors stand in front of a microphone (or microphones if we're lucky) and read their lines from a script. It's like a rehearsed reading – but without the rehearsal and with an audience. The lines are still acted, but it means less rehearsal time as you don't have to be off the book.

Already, there are lots of ideas flying about such as doing it in evening dress – after the style of thirties radio announcers who wore black tie even though they couldn't be seen. Suggestions of plots include a sci-fi adventure or a murder mystery. However, as Elaine is yet to write it, we'll have to wait to see what she comes up with.

After that, probably starting in September, will be the *PANTOMIME*

The theatre has been booked and we'll be performing the pantomime in our customary slot in the first week of December.

The show week this year is 2 – 9 December 2012. We will be set building on Sunday 2 December with the show

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## **6. REVIEW: SMITH'S BITE SIZE THEATRE**

The latest in Smith's popular Bite Size Theatre productions was something different as Theatre by Number's bought

running from 6 – 9 December with the usual matinees on the Saturday and Sunday (8 & 9 December)

Following the resounding success of last year's Rapunzel, we're delighted that Joan Breen has once again thrown her hat into the ring to write and direct. This time around we're doing Pinocchio and like last year, Joan has promised to give it a twist on the fairy tale we all know.

Joan has been enthusiastically telling anyone who'll listen some of her thoughts about the panto but as with Elaine's play for the Monton Festival, it still needs to be written. So let's keep a lid on the speculation.

One thing we do know is that the costumes should be excellent as Bev and Joan are reuniting. On their partnership, Bev commented that 'Joan has bullied me into doing the panto.' But she was smiling when she said this and there were no visible torture marks so it's probably safe to assume she was joking. Or Joan used psychology.

One thing to note is that the radio play will probably have a fairly small cast but that doesn't mean that those of you joined us for Macbeth should feel you're not needed or wanted anymore. Nothing could be further from the truth. With the panto it's very much a case of the more the merrier so please stick around and stay with us.

We'll be very glad you did – and so will you.

us Murder at the Theatre – a murder mystery!

Originally, I thought I wouldn't be able to go as it was scheduled during our run of Macbeth. Happily, though the performance was moved to a different date. I was still

lucky to get a seat though. By the time I booked it was already half full.

The usual format for the dinner theatre is for the guests to eat their meal and then afterwards take their seats in the downstairs performance area for the show. This time however, the show took place between and during the courses.

The conceit was that a company of actors and their director were having a pre-show meal before the first performance of the director's masterpiece *Romeo & Julian* and we other diners were their fellow guests. Through a series of scenes between courses we discover the secrets of this very dysfunctional acting troupe until finally it ends in murder with the audience then challenged to guess Whodunit?

All of the characters were broadly drawn caricatures, the prima donna director convinced of his own brilliance, the fading diva, the spiv and the brash young newcomer trying to make his name. With caricature comes exaggeration so all of the parts were played very much over the top and largely for laughs.

## 7. DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

### Barton Theatre Company Dates:

#### **Macbeth**

*Post Mortem*: Monday 11 June, 8pm, St Mike's

*Stratford (If we're picked)*: Sometime between 7 & 21 July 2012

#### **Monton Festival**

*Performance*: 7 July 2012, 2:30pm, Monton Village Green

*Rehearsals*: To be announced

#### **Pantomime**

*Set Build*: Sunday 2 December 2012, Salford Arts Theatre

The most impressive thing about the evening was the way the various actors stayed in character. They did so all evening, circulating around the tables talking to people during the courses. Never once did they drop their personas.

Mainly the over-the-top, farcical style worked, It made the whole evening uproariously funny and entertaining. It also kept the tone light and not too grim After all, someone was going to die - eventually – and dead bodies can put you off your food. That would be terrible at Smiths!

However, there were moments where I felt some subtly could have been employed. The performances were all akin to each other, all caricature. Let me put it this way. We were in a restaurant having a three course meal. You have different courses in a meal because variety is a good and healthy thing. Eating desert all the time might be fun at first but it soon gets boring. Plus you get fat and your teeth drop out.

By the end of the night, although I had enjoyed my sweet murder mystery very much indeed, my teeth had started to ache

*Performance*: 6 – 9 December 2012.

Matinees 8 – 9 December, Salford Arts Theatre

### Smiths Bite Size Theatre

Organised Chaos presents **AfterWords** by Michael Hart

20-21<sup>st</sup> June 2012

Tables: 6.15-6.30pm

Performance: 8:15

Meals & Drinks as menu.

Theatre Ticket: £8.50

<http://www.organisedchaosproductions.co.uk/afterwords.html>

*Bookings*: Smiths Restaurant

1-3 Church Road

Eccles

Manchester  
M30 0DL  
Tel: 0161 788 7343  
Email: [smithsrestaurant@yahoo.com](mailto:smithsrestaurant@yahoo.com)  
<http://www.smithsrestaurant.net>

Salford Arts Theatre:  
Not Too Tame and Inside Film Present a  
Ragged Collective Production  
**The Condition of The Working Class in  
England** based on the book by Friedrich  
Engels  
5 - 6 July 2012  
Recommended for 16 + years old  
There will be a discussion with the cast  
and director after the show on Thursday  
5th July

**A Changing World**  
Salford Arts Theatre young performers  
company presents An Evening of Devised  
Work

Friday 20th July & Saturday 21st July

*Bookings:* 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.com>

Edgefold Players  
**Habeas Corpus**  
Dates to be confirmed  
Walkden Methodist Church  
Machester Road East  
Walkden  
*Bookings:* Tel: 0161 7028708  
Email: [edgefoldplayers@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:edgefoldplayers@yahoo.co.uk)  
<http://www.edgefoldplayers.co.uk/>

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## 8. THE FINAL CURTAIN

Well, it's been an exciting a month at Barton with lots of happening. And as we've seen, there's a lot of stuff that *will* be happening. Hope you enjoyed reading this newsletter and feel that the delay caused by waiting for some news was worth it.

If you have any suggestions or comments, I'd love to hear them. What makes doing this worthwhile is all the positive feedback that I frequently receive.

If you've anything - articles, reviews, anecdotes or quizzes - that could be used in Footlights, I'd be thrilled to get them. Any contributions you send would be fully credited - unless you asked not to be blamed.

The email address for either feedback or contributions 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.

That's all for now. Footlights will return next month.

### Right Royal Quiz Answers:

- 1 a
- 2 b
- 3 c
- 4 a IV  
b V  
c I  
d II  
e III

### Contact Information:

Email: [nevillandrew@gmail.com](mailto:nevillandrew@gmail.com)

Barton Theatre Company Committee  
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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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