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## Word Matters

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# Welcome to *Word Matters,* Winter 2014

From the Editor

Thank you to those of you who wrote to say how much helpful information you found in the Spring issue of *Word Matters*. I hope this issue will be equally stimulating and enjoyable.

Indeed we have some intriguing articles about two renowned playwrights: Christopher Marlowe whose anniversary we celebrate this year, and WB Yeats. Priscilla Morris gives us an insight into speaking on cruise ships and one of the founders of The Voice Care Network provides an overview of its history. If you have ever needed some help refining and teaching accents, particularly American ones, Catherine Weate explains how she developed and researched her recently released accent app.

If working on a cruise ship is not for you how about a more permanent position in Asia? New Era Academy has some very exciting news to share on page 25. They are recruiting teachers for work in China and Hong Kong for The Dramatic English LTD.

I recently visited The National Portrait Gallery to see the exhibition of the tapestries, sculptures and pots that Grayson Perry created during his remarkable series of programmes entitled *Who Are You?* In these works, Perry explores the identities of



a diverse group of people from members of the deaf community to a transgendered person...all of the subjects were trying to establish their identity and define who they are. The artist ultimately concluded that we are all in a constant state of flux as far as identity is concerned, we are always redefining who we are. In these works of art, I found many similarities to the art of performance and speech. We use our voice and our acting to change how we appear to others; through drama we explore a marvellous variety of identities. Three articles in this issue describe theatre groups (Propeller, Bingo Dragon Theatre and The Other Place) which take the idea of identity - particularly that of gender - and explore an alternative theatre.

There is an article on the changes to the LAMDA syllabus and a welcome submission from one of our Sri Lankan members, Chathuni Udewela on Forum theatre.

My thanks as usual go to our stalwart book reviewers who have a mixed bag of books for you to consider adding to your resources.

So an eclectic assortment of reading material and plenty of food for thought.

If you have any ideas for articles or lesson plans to share do not hesitate to contact me by email at the address on page one.

# Forum Theatre as a Vehicle for the Development of Actor-Activists

Chathuni Uduwela describes how Forum Theatre can be a useful educational tool

Combining the virtues of the many activities, exercises and games used by teachers, Forum Theatre serves as a novel experiment in dramatic training. Here, performances cannot be blindly executed – the ‘stop and think mode’ calls for acute awareness of the circumstances portrayed in each scene and dialogue; and the dynamic character of the plays require spontaneity, discipline, and complete immersion in one’s character. Forum Theatre further demands for *consistency* of performance – irrespective of whether actions are scripted or improvised. Actors, therefore, gain more familiarity and control over the fate of their characters, thus providing greater creative input than typically required of them. In suggesting that Forum Theatre be employed as a single comprehensive approach to equipping students with a series of essential skills in stagecraft, this essay seeks to elaborate how Forum Theatre can contribute to actor development: not only in terms of technique, but also in terms of social awareness.

Where Forum Theatre is employed in the form it was initially intended: as a stimulant for social awareness, discourse and action, it allows the actor to work towards the greater good of society. This effectively transforms his task from entertaining an audience, to informing and empowering its members, creating what economists call an ‘externality’: a situation where the actor creates a positive by-product that benefits society in general. Thus, the actor is freed from conventional constraints of popular performance and given a new sense of purpose. Familiarity with the genre may also prove to be useful where students feel the need to adopt alternative career paths parallel to their theatrical pursuits. For instance, Forum Theatre is a useful tool for Drama in Education, rapidly gaining popularity in schools and in programmes designed to train counsellors, teachers or even customer service personnel.

Forum Theatre originated as a ‘branch’ of Augusto Boal’s Theatre of the Oppressed. Boal describes these genres as having combined the personal nature of drama exercises, most of which involve self-scrutiny; with the

more expansive notion of a collaborative drama game. Accordingly, practitioners find Forum Theatre to be open to extensive experimentation and adaptation; so much so, that today it has gained recognition as one of the most versatile forms of Applied Drama.

Boal initiated the Theatre of the Oppressed in the early 1970s as part of an attempt to empower the Brazilian people to resist mounting pressure from the military regime that prevailed at the time. Forum Theatre arose under less politicised circumstances: Boal recounts the effort made by an audience in Peru to assist a native woman resolve a domestic conflict as having helped shape Forum Theatre. Here, the distinction of actor and audience blurs as the play progresses; an initial scripted performance is followed by a less formal session which the spectator may interrupt, thereby altering its plot. In breaking the imaginary ‘wall’ that distinguishes actors from spectators and allowing spectators to not only dictate the course of the play but assume a role as well, Boal creates a ‘spect-actor’. This distinguishing characteristic of Forum Theatre is perceived as one which empowers the audience, which is granted reprieve from passive observation and allowed to voice its opinions.

Forum Theatre may be employed for educational purposes from the most elementary of stages – beginning with a reproduction of the most basic quality inherent to the genre: *the ability to initiate discussion*. Using simple, age-appropriate examples, even beginners in acting may be encouraged to question the many different choices made during the course of a day, and alternative outcomes they could generate. For instance, younger students may be requested to re-enact a quarrel between siblings – discussing not only how it began, the different stages at which other family members could have intervened, and, finally, how the problem may have been resolved. Another possible example of putting Forum Theatre to practice in foundation level English lessons involves the performance of popular children’s stories, for example, ‘*The Hundred and One Dalmatians*’ by Dodie Smith.

Students may explore what would have conspired if Cruella De Vil did not visit Mr and Mrs Dearly, if her crooks had failed to capture Pongo and Missis, or if any of the dogs' escapades on their way back home had failed. Older students could also use Forum Theatre as a way of understanding historical figures and decisive moments in national politics, by exploring the reasons behind historical milestones, as well as the many alternative outcomes that may have resulted, under such circumstances. In fact, Forum Theatre, when employed as an educational method, may be applied across an entire spectrum of subjects: including not only History and Modern Languages, but Business Studies, Personal and Social Education, Religious Education, Law, and selected segments of Science, as well.

To assume that Forum Theatre is a form of improvisation is incorrect: the consistency expected between the original, uninterrupted performance, and subsequent rounds of intervention makes exhaustive rehearsal a necessity. Thus, Forum Theatre calls for the ability not only to memorise a script, but also to amend it instantly, so as to suit the events unfolding before one's eyes; to 'become' the character one portrays; and reproduce identical emotions on several consecutive occasions. To effect quick deviations from the script on audience request is particularly challenging, as actors are expected to replicate the sincerity and authenticity of the scripted word.

Forum Theatre challenges the actor to rise above the task of speaking what is set out for him or her, and assume the role of playwright in an instant. In spite of it being of shorter duration than conventional productions the genre demands for discipline, without which repetitive performance becomes difficult and strained.

Forum Theatre is also an exercise in cooperation among members of the cast, spectators and spect-actors. The performers must create an inclusive atmosphere in which the spect-actor, to whom the enactment of his suggestions is typically a novel experience, may comfortably design, direct and develop the play without inhibition. The ability to gauge an audience's reception of a given performance through actively encouraging feedback provides an actor with a new impetus; to gauge and deliver what people consider 'good theatre'. Each of these skills will be instrumental in the improvement of an aspiring actor's education, competence and eventual success, irrespective of what genres of theatre he or she may be inclined to perform in years ahead.

Forum Theatre provides students with valuable third-party perspectives on real-life dilemmas faced by

everyday men and women. Illustrating this fact, Boal points out that Forum Theatre 'should be a rehearsal for action in real life, rather than an end in itself'. Thus, Forum Theatre prepares students to deal with particular hazards present in the society they live in. Where contemporary art is closely associated with the fabric of society itself, theatre becomes a suitable medium through which the actor may gain social awareness.

Passion for theatre, therefore, becomes a catalyst for the transformation of an actor into an activist; a man or woman of inherent artistic ability, moved by the circumstances of the people around him or her, and propelled towards dramatic action. In Sri Lanka, credit for popularising Forum Theatre is attributable to the British Council, whose youth initiative in the greater Indian subcontinent, 'Beyond Borders', employed the genre as part of an HIV/AIDS awareness campaign. The actor-activists found themselves capable of revolutionary change by virtue of a form of acting that was entirely novel to them. The young undergraduates began their work as the first generation of local Forum Theatre groups, conducting performances in English, and catering primarily to young people in urban areas. They were soon joined by People's Theatre groups touring the length and breadth of Sri Lanka, speaking the native languages of Sinhala and Tamil, and steering clear of controversial cultural taboos. They chose, instead, to appeal for the environment, to champion for the rights of women and the inadequately-compensated working class, and, at times, even for the political change. Here, too, the Bole precedent was followed and implemented in schools and marketplaces, community centres and hotels – any and every willing establishment.

Doris Somer, Professor of Romance Languages and Literature at Harvard University, contends that this phenomenon furnishes a heartening response to one of the primary concerns of students interested in the Humanities, where students become 'discouraged because they don't see the contribution they can make.' Forum Theatre helps to reaffirm that the Performing Arts are 'social investments' that will 'develop a web of cultural activities that weaves together civil society'. In spite of the fact that Forum Theatre was conceived, perfected, and performed by activists elsewhere in the world, in Sri Lanka, it was pioneered by actors and directors, themselves.

Exposure to Forum Theatre may also prove to be useful for students of acting who select alternative career paths. For instance, Dr Anne Hewson, Associate Professor at the Education Department of St. Thomas University, Canada, cites Forum Theatre as suitable

for exploring classroom management issues with pre-service teachers, the majority of whom had not been previously acquainted with theatre.

In practice, Forum Theatre is incorporated into theatre training activities in stages. Discussion of real-life occurrences is encouraged in the earliest stage: for example, the activities undertaken during the course of a lesson; a mime enacted by a classmate; or even a recent experience at school may become the basis for conversation in the classroom. Here, young children learn to exchange ideas, in the sense that they not only speak up, but also learn to listen to their classmates, be open to new ideas, and be able to reason, to some extent, as to why they adopt certain points of view. As students learn to become more vocal about ideas and feelings, they are also taught to express themselves as *politely* as possible – so as to not create tension.

As students become acquainted with the concepts of mime and improvisation, they are requested to enact familiar, yet fictional incidents: for instance, those arising in popular culture. In the meantime, scripts and excerpts of scripts are used as well, to emphasise the need to memorise and recreate a scene detailed solely on paper to resemble reality. As students progress towards more imaginative work, in terms of both scripted and unscripted performances, the concept of simultaneous dramaturgy is introduced, with students initially assuming the role of an audience. Here, they may observe proceedings, and later contribute to the resolution of the conflict depicted. Initial performances will be limited to small audiences in a classroom environment, where students are ideally assigned a script or encouraged to write one with a number of decisive moments - any of which may alter the outcome of the play.

Once students have rehearsed sufficiently, another 'audience' is introduced. It is best to limit early performances to familiar concerns which students may relate to, with frequent revision of themes; and to later graduate to public performances, and voluntary work, wherein students will address a wider spectrum of concerns. In Sri Lanka, Forum Theatre discusses mainly issues that are perceived as 'sensitive' or 'adult': HIV/AIDS, Domestic Violence, Child Abuse et cetera, whereas Politics, Corruption and Conflict Resolution concerns are discussed to a lesser extent. As students grow, they will form opinions and realise that certain causes move them more than others. With this, they will embark on their own paths of activism, addressing grave social realities by theatrical means.

### Chathuni Uduwela, LLCM ATCL

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# SPEAKING ON CRUISE SHIPS

*by Lynne Collinson*



Priscilla Morris preparing for her audience in the theatre on board The Queen Victoria

**Are you looking for a change in direction? Do you want to travel the world in luxury and see new places? Would you like to perform in a beautiful theatre? Cruise holidays are gaining in popularity as prices become more competitive and Speech and Drama teachers have a broad range of skills that can encompass such work. A key feature of sea days on prestigious cruise lines, is always the guest speaker; either an enrichment or a destination lecturer.**

Topics for speeches can range from flora and fauna of the areas visited (destination), to military history (enrichment). Of course there are always talks of a nautical nature and sometimes topics that are just a little bit different. Later in this article I will relate the experiences of one of our members, Priscilla Morris, who has developed speaking on cruises into a very rewarding aspect of her career.

Firstly some background information from Peter Rushton who runs P and R - the leading cruise recruitment agency.

<http://www.cruiseshipspeakers.net/>

P and R was founded eighteen years ago and now has around a thousand speakers on its books. It does not have to advertise because it is besieged constantly by would be enthusiasts willing to talk on anything and everything. If Peter likes the sound of what the potential speaker has to offer, he invites them to audition and he says he is always on the lookout for something different. The key factors he looks for in a speech are that it is informative, authoritative and above all, entertaining. Above all speakers must be passionate about their subject area. Some of the more popular subjects are aviation, maritime history and the history of the places where the ship is scheduled to visit. The destination of each cruise ship dictates the type of speeches that will go down well. Of course many cruise lines no longer offer speakers as they are trying to cut down on cost, but the more prestigious lines are still keen to recruit good speakers who are confident and have something new to offer. The main perk is of course the free inclusive place on a cruise for you and your partner and the fact that you only speak on sea days.

To celebrate her Silver Wedding Anniversary, Priscilla Morris went on the cruise of a lifetime. One of the highlights was listening to speakers on sea days and after one lecture, Priscilla engaged the speaker in conversation and he encouraged her to apply for the role herself as he thought she had the right personality and experience. About nine years ago Priscilla contacted P & O cruise lines stating her interest in becoming a speaker about her favourite subject area: literature and theatre. She was subsequently invited to Southampton for an audition and was invited to work on a cruise the following month. Unfortunately the date conflicted with an examination session and she was unable to go. Several months passed and she heard no more—she later found out the person who interviewed her had gone on long term sick leave the day after she saw Priscilla and had left no record of her work.

Undaunted, while holidaying on another cruise some time later, Priscilla talked to the entertainments director about her desire to become a speaker. P & O were now owned by Carnival, a huge company with many ships, meaning a lengthier and more complex recruitment process. The entertainments director enabled her to take a short cut through the bureaucracy which speeded up her application. Nevertheless, it was still nine months before she was invited to Southampton for an audition. This

was a whole day event for which seven people were shortlisted out of hundreds of applicants.

There are three or four audition days a year and these days the candidates are shown films and given explanations about contracts and requirements. These vary according to the cruise line, and speaking work is generally unpaid. For her audition Priscilla gave a lively talk about Joyce Grenfell and observed that the talks from other candidates were of varying quality. These talks are expected to last forty five minutes and be accompanied by a powerpoint presentation. Speakers who pass the audition phase are sent a list of cruises to choose from and the company will eventually come back with an offer. Then follows a trial cruise for one week to see what feedback is like from the audience. Speakers are expected to have at least nine topics that they can talk about authoritatively.

In 2013 Priscilla undertook her trial cruise round the Norwegian Fjords, her talks were very well received and so her speaking at sea career took off. Her repertoire includes talks on Oscar Wilde, Noel Coward and writers she finds humorous.

In 2014 she spoke on several cruises about theatre history and other topics from her portfolio. The best talks as far as Priscilla is concerned involve some aspect of performance such as poetry, or a script using the voice and face. She says there is no need to invite the audience to ask questions but often a speaker may be approached afterwards for more information or just a comment.

On a practical level the cruise is free for speaker and partner but the bar bill is not covered. P & O also pay a small amount per day. Cabins are usually located with other entertainers and tend to be the less popular ones. The theatres are usually large and well-appointed and audiences are always well behaved and can be as large as several hundred people.

For Priscilla this is an ideal job, combining three of her favourite activities: performing, cruising and enjoying the sunshine.

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**Has Priscilla's story piqued your interest? You can contact Peter Rushton or go on any cruise ship website and fill in the online application form there.**

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# ACCENTS

## WORD MATTERS interview with Catherine Weate

*The Accent App was featured in the reviews section of the Journal in the Spring. Here the developer, Catherine Weate, explains how it came about.*



### **Tell us a little bit about your work as a voice/dialect coach.**

I'm a freelance coach who works with any area of vocal need or accent/dialect, continually exploring ways in which we communicate as human beings. However, my area of speciality is working with actors as part of a creative process (I'm particularly interested in how a character's voice can be brought to life for an

audience). My clients are often high-profile celebrities and there have been some very special actors whom I'm proud to have worked with on specific projects.

### **What is *The Real Accent App*?**

*The Real Accent App: USA* and *The Real Accent App: England* are the first in a series of ground breaking *Voice Coach in your Pocket*® apps that link recordings of real people with a 10-step accent learning programme. In other words, native speaker samples are used as a teaching tool, taking the user through a step-by-step process in much the same way that a voice/dialect specialist would do when coaching an actor.

### **Where did you get the idea for developing an app?**

The original idea came from an app developer friend, Gavin Howard, who convinced me of the need. There's very little source material available for actors and even less that explains how to go about working on specific accents. Previously, the only options were to conduct your own 'hit-and-miss' research from the internet or employ the services of a coach. Often, actors without work can't afford the latter option and actors in work don't have the time. We also wanted to help amateur actors, who might be untrained and need some help. So Gavin and I formed a company, Howard Weate Productions, and created the apps together.

Our primary target demographic is the acting community. We developed the apps to be user-friendly for professional trained actors, professional untrained actors, amateur actors and student actors. However, producers, directors, coaches and teachers also find the apps incredibly useful. Meeting the needs of all was a challenge so the apps were rigorously tested across the community before release. We were blown away

by the excitement of our testers and ploughed their feedback into the final design.

### **Did you employ technical people?**

The best part about Howard Weate Productions is that all our work is done 'in-house'. The combination of my voice/dialect knowledge and Gavin's app/software knowledge means that we don't have to outsource the work. We collect the material together then I turn my intellectual property about particular accents into training programmes and Gavin codes the apps. Essentially, however, we both work on the overall design. It's an incredibly creative process and, most importantly, we're in control every step of the way.

### **What new skills did you have to learn?**

I've always prided myself on being technology-savvy however there's been a fairly steep learning curve as well. I've absorbed an enormous amount about the app world and continue to do so. Plus, Gavin has learnt all about accent/dialect coaching. His original background was in technical theatre so he wasn't coming to the business uninformed; although I did give him a coaching session before we even started the first app just so he knew what I was on about.

### **Why US accents first?**

We thought long and hard about where we wanted to start and the US kept coming up trumps. The majority of my coaching work is in American accents for Brits. This is partially because of high-profile British actors carving out careers in Hollywood, the rise of American material in British theatres (amateur as well as professional) and the sheer volume of British actors now flying over to try their luck during pilot season in LA each year. We also looked at the global market and there are similar needs in Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Canada as well as the US (where actors need to build up their knowledge of regional American dialects). Armed with this knowledge, we ended up taking three trips to the US in 2013 to get what we wanted. It was an expensive start but well worth it as the quality of our recordings is extraordinary. For our second app, we concentrated on home soil: England. A less expensive option but we still managed to rack up the travel miles to find our native speakers.

### **How did you undertake your research?**

Extensive research and preparation went into each trip in order to find the 'right' recording subjects. Even so, it wasn't easy, given our strict criteria. Ideally, we look for people born, raised and still living in their original communities. Accents





adjust when people move away from their birth environments and although 'hybrid' accents can be useful they're not a great starting point for working on character. Also, we try not to use actors who are too 'aware' of their own accent. Ultimately we need two to four people from each place with at least one male and one female subject (because occasionally there are gender differences).

We start by asking people we know who have links in our target town or city, which usually leads us to another set of people, who then introduce us to potential subjects. For example, a contact we knew in Boston emailed friends and colleagues in the Boston Symphony Orchestra and Blue Man Group. Eventually, their involvement led us to Kent, a theatre security guard with a pitch perfect South Boston accent.

Once potential subjects get in touch via email or our website then we call them to informally 'test' their accent. Even at that stage they might not be quite what we're looking for and we have to start all over again.

Sometimes, despite extensive research, we aren't able to find anyone. Oklahoma City was hair-raising because after weeks of work, nobody with a strong enough accent had turned up and there was only 24 hours between our arrival and departure flights to seek out appropriate people. Luckily, we found a young cowboy (Jesse) and cowgirl (Jessica) working at Stockyard City.

Our trips have also helped us understand more about the cultures we're representing on the app. For that reason alone the experiences have been invaluable: we've conducted research at the Texas State Fair in Dallas, a 'cattle roping' party north of Oklahoma City and behind the scenes of the Tennessee State Capital in Nashville. We've recorded in homes, restaurants, cars, taxis, hotels, offices and conference rooms: we've even recorded in the presence of a sleepy python and a couple of live hand guns. None of it easy if you could see the amount of recording equipment we carry around.

Once the USA app released, excitement grew and we were contacted by an extraordinary number of people who wanted to record for the England app after our appearances on BBC Radio London, BBC Liverpool, BBC Manchester and Radio 4 Midweek. However, there were still pubs to trawl and parking attendants, police, tour guides and waiters to approach when we were on the move through English towns and cities. Everybody responded with interest and everybody had something to say about their home accent.

### **Describe some of the features on your app.**

Our unique step-by-step programme is an important feature on our apps as it breaks the process of learning an accent into manageable bits. Each 'step' is attached to native speaker recordings: sometimes a word, sometimes a sentence, sometimes a chunk of conversational speech. Plus there's a 'help' section to guide you through and a 'definitions' section that de-mystifies some of the technical terms associated with learning an accent.

Another important feature is the interactive recording/ comparison function. Throughout the app you can listen to a native speaker sentence, record yourself speaking the same sentence and then compare your progress by listening back to both samples side by side. This speeds up learning because once the comparison is in your ear, it's so much easier to transfer to your mouth.

There's also a 'Test Your Ear' quiz that provides an extra boost to your listening skills. Learning an accent is all about co-ordinating the brain, the ear and the mouth. The more you listen, the more you absorb.

### **How has it been received by actors?**

We've been overwhelmed with positive responses from both professional and amateur actors. That's because there's nothing else like it out there and, for those who've downloaded already, it's become an invaluable part of their rehearsal process. There's also been incredible interest from the press, particularly about our accent-finding tours and the riveting personal stories that our recording subjects have contributed.

### **What do you plan to do next?**

The ultimate goal is to keep travelling, keep recording and keep releasing new apps with more accents. Next on the list is *The Real Accent App: Celtic Nations* and *The Real Accent App: Europe*. Then, of course, there's the rest of the world. Not only that but we're keen to release other types of *Voice Coach in your Pocket*® apps to help everybody, not just actors, make the most of their voice.

*The Real Accent App: USA* and *The Real Accent App: England* are available in the App Store and on Google Play. For more information visit [www.realaccentapp.com](http://www.realaccentapp.com) or follow us on twitter [@realaccentapp](https://twitter.com/realaccentapp)

# W.B. YEATS AND THE JAPANESE NOH



When we think of W.B. Yeats, we think of the poet who has written such magnificent lyrics as ‘The Lake Isle of Innisfree’, ‘The Wild Swans at Coole’, ‘Broken Dreams’, ‘The Second Coming’. And yet Yeats also thought of himself as a playwright and devoted a major part of his life to creating highly innovative dramas that contain some of his finest poetry.

Among his early plays was the one-act *The Land of Heart’s Desire*, in which a Faery Child entices a young bride to go with her to the land of faery, leaving behind her family and broken-hearted husband. It is, of course, a theme also explored by Yeats in his poem, ‘The Stolen Child’. Another early play is *The Countess Cathleen*, a full-length verse drama, set in famine times, which tells the story of a noble Irishwoman who sells her soul to the devil in return for food to feed her starving people.

These and other early plays such as *Deirdre*, *The King’s Threshold*, *The Hour-Glass*, and *On Baile’s Strand*, were successfully produced in London and in Dublin, and did much to establish the reputation of the Abbey Theatre, which Yeats founded with Lady Gregory in 1904.

Yet, despite the success of these plays, Yeats was dissatisfied. He felt they were modeled too much on 19<sup>th</sup> century verse drama and he was desperate to find a new form, a lyric form that would complement his lyric poems. By chance, while he was staying with the American poet Ezra Pound in Sussex, he read a series of Japanese Noh plays, which Pound was editing. To say Yeats was blown away by these plays would be an understatement; he had found what he was searching for and they dominated much of his work as a playwright for the next twenty-five years. It is these plays that as a theatre practitioner, I find especially exciting and challenging to direct. To that end, I have studied the Japanese Noh and taken the opportunity of seeing them performed by one of Japan’s finest Noh companies—it was an experience I cannot easily forget.

Like Greek drama and the medieval mystery plays of Europe, the Japanese Noh, which dates from the 13<sup>th</sup> century, has a religious origin, but unlike Western theatre, which has developed as an essentially secular form, the Noh retains its connection with the Shinto religion. Its audience was originally the Shogun and his court but today the

plays are performed for general audiences, although, unlike the plays of Shakespeare, which have been subject to many adaptations and interpretations, any major deviation from tradition is unacceptable in Noh. The plays are short and have only one central action. For example, in the play *Hagoromo*, an angel has lost her wings—“that which makes her an angel”. When the wings are returned to her by a traveller, she dances her gratitude to the Buddha for his benevolence.

In the Noh, there are usually only two major players—the *Shite* (pronounced *Shee-tay*), and the *Waki*, equivalent to the protagonist and antagonist in western theatre. The role of the *Shite* is dynastic; it is passed down from generation to generation, and only when the father is no longer able to perform, does his successor, who has been training from he was a child, assume the role of *Shite*. Thus the *Shite* is usually of advanced years and yet he plays the roles of young men and women, angels, gods, etc. principally through the use of the mask.

The Noh is presented on a wooden stage, open on three sides, and the only decoration is a twisted pine tree, painted bright green, on the back wall. It is a symbol of permanence in an unstable world. There is no stage curtain but on the left hand side of the stage is a walkway or bridge along which the leading actor, the *Shite*, makes his long, slow entrance from off-stage. The entrance to the walkway is covered by a decorative cloth,

## The Guardian of the Well



which is raised on two bamboo poles by attendants to allow the *Shite* to enter. A chorus, usually eight in number, is seated at right angles to the audience, and musicians are seated along the back wall. Stage props are not realistic (a fan, for example, has many uses, the most usual being a sword, a shield or dagger) and are presented by the attendants, in full view of the audience, to the major actors.

As in the Greek drama, masks contribute to the stylized quality of the presentation. In the Noh,

they are worn by the *Shite* for the different characters he may be called upon to play, among them hero, villain, angel, demon, mad woman etc. These masks may each weigh at least two pounds. Delicately carved and painted, they may be works of art, hundreds of years old. The eyes in the masks are narrow slits and difficult to see through; thus, the *Shite*, after he assumes the mask, is almost blind. Before a performance, the attendants lead him to a special room at the side of the stage to prepare for his entrance; it's a

sacred space that only he may enter. The mask, lightly fixed on the head, necessitates slow movement, and with the blindness, intensifies the *Shite's* concentration throughout the dramatic action.

Although the stage is simple, the costumes, made from the most gorgeous patterned brocades, are exotic and colourful. Dating from the Shogun dynasty, they, too, are passed down through the generations. They are never hung but folded very precisely in cedar trunks, and like the masks, they are treated with enormous respect and care.

The plays feature a chorus, which sets the scene and comments on the action, and musicians who accompany the stage action with drums and Japanese flute. Initially, the musical exposition is slow, supporting the chorus who intone the words to create a haunting, mesmerizing mood, but in the course of the action the rhythms of the music become more complex until the sound builds into an emotional climax as the *Shite* dances the final dance. This dance is unlike any Western dancing form. There are no jumps; the dance consists of slow, deliberate steps, the angling of the body, the placing of a foot, a gesture with a fan, punctuated with faster movements and the occasional turn. It may last up to twenty minutes and is hypnotic and compelling. Most often it is a dance of thanksgiving for the beneficence of the Buddha, as in *Hagoromo*, in which the angel gives thanks to the Buddha for the return of her wings

For me, watching a Noh performance was like being present at a religious ceremony. To begin with, I was on the edge of my seat, noting every detail; the stage, the costumes, the chanting of the chorus, the extraordinary drumming, the shrillness of the

## Young Man--Cuchulain



flute, the mesmerizing entrance of the *Shite*. Once the initial impact had passed, however, I became less interested; I didn't know Japanese and the monotony of the sound and the visual action caused me to focus on my own thoughts. Before I realised it, however, I was being transported into a place of reverie or dream, a timeless world in which all my senses were alive and I was seeing and hearing as if for the first time. I sat in stunned silence at the end, unable to move, unwilling for the spell to be broken.

Yeats was so energised by his discovery of the Japanese Noh that he immediately began work on *At the Hawk's Well*, based on the Noh model. It's a landmark play in modern European theatre. It was first staged in Lady Cunard's Drawing Room in London for an audience which included T.S. Eliot and Sir Thomas Beecham, and it tells the story of a young Irish mythological hero, Cuchulain (pronounced *Coo-hull-in*), who comes to the Well of Immortality hoping to drink of its miraculous waters. There he meets an Old Man who has spent his life waiting by the well but to no avail. The well is guarded by a mysterious woman, who, when the water is about to

bubble up, transforms into a hawk and leads Cuchulain from the water, while the Old Man sleeps. At the end of the short play, the chorus remind us that nothing can be gained without sacrifice; Cuchulain must achieve immortality through his own actions and not by drinking from a miraculous well.

Delighted with the success of *At the Hawk's Well*, Yeats continued to write other plays modeled on the Noh, including *The Only Jealousy of Emer*, *The Dreaming of the Bones*, and *Calvary*. On his death bed in France, he was working on his final play based on the Noh, called, ironically, *The Death of Cuchulain*.

Although I have described the Noh at some length, Yeats did not write Noh plays; he wrote plays which are modeled on the Noh and which still have a Western sensibility. He has followed the form of the Noh to tell stories principally from Celtic mythology, taken the opportunity to write beautiful lyrics, and to create a theatre of the imagination in which many theatre artists may collaborate to produce what he would have called the "Theatre of Beauty." The Yeats plays based on the Noh are ideal for an imaginative director but once you encounter them they become a challenge, a quest, which you might find difficult to escape.

Each summer, my wife, Joan, and I conduct a drama workshop at the Yeats International Summer School in Sligo, Ireland. For two weeks, students of all nationalities and ages (16-75) have, each morning, lectures on Yeats's poetry by major academics, and for four hours each afternoon they work with us and a choreographer on one of Yeats's plays for presentation in the Hawk's Well Theatre, Sligo, at the conclusion of the summer school. It is an experience neither Joan nor myself would ever want to miss.

**Sam McCready, Professor of Theatre, University of Maryland, and author of the *W.B. Yeats Encyclopedia* (Greenwood Press, 1997)**

Details of the Summer School may be found at: [www.yeatssociety.com/drama-workshop.html](http://www.yeatssociety.com/drama-workshop.html)

Sam McCready is an internationally respected actor, theatre director, teacher, painter, adjudicator, published author. Born in Belfast, he was a leading actor and founding member of the Lyric Theatre, and later a Trustee and Artistic Director of the company. He emigrated to the United States in 1984, when he was appointed Professor of Theatre at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC), a position he held until his recent retirement.

He has directed in New York City and appeared as an actor in regional theatres in the US and Europe. His publications include: *Lucille Lortel: The Queen of Off-Broadway* (Greenwood Press, 1993), *A William Butler Yeats Encyclopedia* (Greenwood Press, 1997); *Coole Lady: The Extraordinary Story of Lady Gregory* (Lagan Press, 2005); the memoir *Baptism by Fire: My Life with Mary O'Malley and the Lyric Players* (Lagan Press, 2008); and *The Great Yeats!* (Lagan Press, 2010).



Old Man

# GIRLS WILL BE BOYS

## A PLAYER'S POINT of VIEW

by Christine Burn

Christine Burn the first female continuity announcer



Whilst the audience suspends disbelief as the curtain rises - the Player must sincerely engage to do the same.

Pantomime, school plays, and pre-Restoration performances ask us to go one stage further in this bubble of belief, and not only to believe each character, but also to accept a possible change in gender.

Players will draw on their imagination and intelligence: in turn we must allow our audience space to do the same – so that this becomes a two way experience.

Whether or not a Player is portraying a male or a female character it is surely essential that he or she believes in that character.

Historically the term Player defined both an Actor and an Actress and we know that in Shakespeare's day female roles were played by young men - as women were not allowed on stage until the 1660's. Apart from Pantomime, where we have the tradition of a *Principal Boy* being played by a girl and a *Dame* being played by a man, it appears that women playing serious male characters did not, perhaps, happen until *Sarah Bernhardt* played *Hamlet*. However, contemporary theatre allows, and possibly encourages, a gender switch to add a dash of creativity whilst permitting women to take on some of the best male roles as a challenge.

As a Player, it is always the script that attracts me first – in my time as a professional I have turned down serious money because the writing was poor – I'd sooner learn

a sonnet and speak it out to the stone walls of my barn than stand on stage mouthing mediocrity. I can, therefore, fully understand why some actresses feel the need to form all-female companies in order to get their hands on some of the world's best writing. I have never sought to set up, or join, such a company but, by chance, in the last couple of years, I have found myself taking on some fantastic male roles on their behalf. Most recently I have acted with *The Rose Company*, an all-female group dedicated to performing classical drama – particularly that written or translated by women. Their highly successful, adaptation of *Iphigenia*, by Euripides, has played to a variety of audiences around the UK and has recently found a particular niche in the academic arena where the piece has been recorded on film for educational purposes. Actresses playing male roles with strength and panache have the audience sharing the bubble of belief, rather than questioning or commenting on their ability to change gender.

My first public performance, aged seven years old, was in another drama of Euripides, *The Trojan Women*. I was asked to play the part of the young Greek prince *Astyanax*, in an open-air production, with one of Britain's greatest actors, *Nicol Williamson*, playing a lead in the students' showcase at the *Birmingham School of Speech & Drama*. Two outstanding exponents of Greek theatre and movement, namely *Ruby Ginner* and *Irene Mawer*, were engaged to direct the piece and were originally looking for a young lad to play *Astyanax* – they gave me the part and told me not to grow any taller, suggesting that I put a book or a brick on my head. (I did!) This was also recommended for 'Good Department'.

I truly believed that I was the little prince who was torn from his mother and thrown over the battlements. I did not for one moment question the fact that I was a girl playing a boy.

In March this year I was invited to join an exciting young company called *Bingo Dragon Theatre* which uses cross-gender to great effect. Here I was offered the role of *Baptista* (Kate's long-suffering, Father in the *Taming of the Shrew*). I decided to 'bloke up' and become a man – wearing my father's waistcoat and tails, trousers and

boots, and I spent time watching, and often mirroring, the movements of the other male characters on stage (being played by men). Again, like little *Astyanax*, I somehow believed and enjoyed being the father doting on *Bianca*, whilst doing my paternal best to deal with the fiery *Katharine*.

But perhaps the piece-de-resistance for me was the chance to play *Lear*, in a compilation devised by the Director of Shakespeare Studies at Lancaster University, Professor Alison Findlay. As a founder member of *The Rose Company* she created *I have a Speech of Fire*, an evening of Shakespeare's 'best' which was performed in the old prison at Lancaster Castle. Instinctively I felt that I wanted to play *Lear* as a woman - *Mrs Lear* or *Queen Lear*. I took advice from a director/writer that I worked with in the past - Ben Benison - renowned for his improvisation techniques with the RSC and The National and for his own adaptation *Jack Lear* of the Bard's play. What an amazing standing ovation piece, which he set in a NE fishing village, with *Lear* and his daughters working on a trawler and *Lear* himself later being relegated to an old folk's home so that they can spend, spend, spend! It's a moving and hilarious script written in blank verse - originally available only to professional theatre companies. However, the rights have recently become available for amateur productions. Ben Benison agreed that to play *Lear* as a woman was possible - as he (aptly) pointed out: '*Lear* is a single-parent', so why not? I based the first scene on my mother's 80<sup>th</sup> birthday party during which she bequeathed various heirlooms to the family. Unlike *Mrs Lear* she did not withhold part of her kingdom. I felt that *Queen Lear* worked well, especially given the female capacity for cunning and bitchiness. I would now like to play *Jack Lear*...

For me, the key to success as a performer, is to love the character that I am playing - even if she or he happens to be a serial killer. I always write up a back-story - create a credible childhood - so the actions of characters like the Glaswegian lifer, *Fay*, in *Rona Muro's IRON* or *Mrs Danvers* in *REBECCA* would be fully understandable (embellished with a deeply disturbed past) and the character loved rather than loathed. For me it doesn't matter much what the gender happens to be - far more important is what has previously happened to this person that makes them who they are now - on stage. More recently I was asked to play a lead in Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* - I was reluctant to accept knowing that the playwright did not want the script played by an all-female cast - the idea of Beckett turning in his grave bothered me somewhat. Since then a male actor has been engaged to play *Pozzo* and I am

Runaway at Reedley TES, Chris Thomond



now relishing learning the outpourings of *Lucky* - the production will be staged by *The Company* in May 2015.

As long as I have a good script and believe in the character I am not particularly bothered about gender - my approach to performance would be similar.

Some years ago I set up *Lunchbox Theatre Company* devising Historical plays using Ben Benison's improvisation techniques to create a script. *Lunchbox Theatre* was commissioned to write a play based on archive material from Quarry Bank Mill in Styal, Cheshire. I engaged another actor and between us we created a play that was to put the Mill on the map as a major tourist attraction. We played a range of parts from teenage apprentices to elderly mill owners and overseers. *Escape to Styal* (with costumes made by the inmates of HM Prison, Styal) was a huge success and we were asked to return a couple of months later, when over 2,000 seats were sold in less than two hours.

Macclesfield Silk Museum also saw the value of documentary drama and *Lunchbox Theatre Company* was commissioned to devise a play called *Silk, Satin, Muslim, Rags* based on the history of silk. Another 2,000 people bought tickets and the Museum soon became a

popular attraction due to the Drama created from their archives. At the time I was able to pay above Equity Rates to a fellow actor but when the recession took hold 'unnecessary' outings, particularly school trips, dwindled and by chance I ended up on tour as a one-man-band (sic) – taking an adapted show into schools around the UK. I could no longer afford to pay another actor so, on the advice of a film director, I played all of the 9 characters myself (from *Apprentice Girl* to *Richard Oastler*, the *King of the Factory Children* – plus a *Chinese Princess* and a wicked *Emperor*). Where dialogue was essential I engaged a willing member of the audience – giving them a postcard-sized script to perform. In many ways it was more fun both for me and for the audience.

Necessity being the mother of invention, *The Runaway Apprentice* was born into the education arena. For the past 12 years this show, with a selection of young and old characters, both male and female, seems to fascinate both children and adults alike. Some people tell me that they see two characters on stage – the *Mill Owner* and the *Apprentice girl* – both characters being played by me at the same time. At the end of the day I am a 'Player' and, as long as I have a credible past, underpinning my character, the gender doesn't really matter – I will always believe in her or him.

**The Trojan Women, Birmingham School of Speech and Drama**



## Christine Burn

For more Information please contact Christine Burn via the website

[www.LunchboxTheatreCompany.co.uk](http://www.LunchboxTheatreCompany.co.uk)

or

Lunchbox Theatre Company Box Office number

Tel/Text: **07866-500-289**

Christine Burn won the Victrix Ludorum Prize for Verse-speaking and the Poetry Society Gold Medal whilst training with Molly Topliss, who had worked with the legendary Shakespearean Director, Tyrone Guthrie. The Birmingham School of Speech & Drama (fondly known as 'Chappies' after its founder Pamela Chapman. Patricia (Patsy) Yardley became Principal and was made an Honorary Professor by Birmingham University.

In 1975 Christine became the first female voice-over announcer on BBC1 and BBC2 – breaking in to a department of 18 men.

She works as a Voice-Over and has recorded over 1,000 commercials including Cadbury's, Rolls Royce, Reebok, M&S.

She is currently on a UK Tour with Poetry & Drama Workshops including 'The Runaway Apprentice' and 'WWI in an Afternoon'.

Her script for 'Four Divorces and a Wedding' is soon to become available for Amateur productions.

# WOMEN at THE OTHER PLACE

*Elizabeth Oakley describes  
'a brief shining moment in the long history of  
the Royal Shakespeare Company'*

(Alicia Smith-Howard)



**Of the three RSC theatres that went dark in the mid 2000s, the only one not yet to re-emerge into the light has been The Other Place, unless the brief flare of the recent Midsummer Mischief Festival on the TOP site signals the final phase of the RSC's Transformation Project.**

Mary Ann (Buzz) Goodbody (1946-1975), the first female director at the RSC, was the inspiration behind TOP which opened its doors in 1974. Her theatrical career began in student days at Sussex University where she soon found herself a frustrated actress, the best parts –as she put it –being 'written for blokes'. This dissatisfaction with the limitations of female roles was the trigger for her switch to directing in order to

find the artistic freedom she craved. Her stage adaptation of Dostoyevsky's *Notes from the Underground* won the National Student Drama Festival. Sometimes referred to as the first existential novel, this was an enormously challenging text to tackle. The success of the production immediately marked Buzz as a strikingly original and promising stage director. The play soon transferred to the West End and not long after this she joined the RSC in Stratford where she worked from 1967 until she tragically took her own life in 1975 a few weeks after her production of *Hamlet* opened in Stratford.

Always a rebel against the British establishment, whether as a member of the Communist party or as co founder of the Women's Street Theatre Company, she found herself uneasy with certain aspects of the RSC in Stratford which were failing, she considered, to bring in a socially diverse audience and part of the problem why people living in the vicinity did not support the RSC was the rather grand and formal Shakespeare Memorial Theatre itself. A smaller, less intimidating venue was needed, Buzz felt, and a more accessible style of production for those without a theatregoing background.

Therefore, at the end of 1973 she proposed, in an eloquent seven page memo to Trevor Nunn, the creation of a totally different theatre in Stratford: a low budget studio where artistic risks could be taken, tickets would be cheap, and the barrier of the proscenium arch between actors and audience would be removed. In her view the main theatre in Stratford was not attracting enough local people from nearby Coventry and Birmingham: some were even 'hostile to us', she felt. Into this new studio (called 'Place' rather than 'Theatre') she hoped the RSC would draw an audience from a wider economic range –especially young people –who might well feel the main Stratford theatre so steeped in tradition that it was not for them. However, while wishing to promote new plays



with relevance to the lives of those who came to see them, she was firm in her belief that Shakespeare should be in the repertoire of the new venture: he was not to be sidelined as an elitist speciality capable of appealing only to those steeped in academic study. Shakespeare had been a popular playwright from groundings to royalty in his lifetime, Buzz argued, so why not in late 20<sup>th</sup> century Britain also? She felt the time had come for the RSC to try a new approach which would not intimidate new theatre goers.

The result of Buzz's persuasive argument was the opening of *The Other Place* in 1974, a corrugated tin hut in Southern Lane which had served as a rehearsal room. She was given charge of productions there and in a few short months her *King Lear* (1974) and *Hamlet* (1975) stunned both critics and audiences. For actors and co-directors there was a sense, as her colleague Ron Daniels expressed it, of 'a real pioneering feel'. The atmosphere of this black-curtained box enclosing actors and audience in a shared acting space created an intensity that made productions there over the next 15 years some of the most memorable in the RSC's history. (One spectator recalled to me in recent conversation the sensation of being so near Shylock's knife in a production

of *Merchant of Venice* that he had the impression that he could have reached out and touched it.) In 1989 the tin hut was condemned on safety grounds and reopened in 1991 as a more substantial, conventional structure but with the same aims: to offer a classical and contemporary repertoire. It was a sad day in 2005 when there was a final closure and the old TOP site became the foyer of the temporary Courtyard Theatre.

What was it that made Buzz Goodbody's productions so ground-breaking? As a feminist dedicated to an 'alternative' theatre which probed social problems and played wherever it could in church halls, pubs and on the street, she felt more comfortable with such ad hoc venues rather than a traditional theatre where the proscenium arch separated stage and auditorium. There was no such barrier in TOP but rather a blending of actors and audience in a shared space. Elaborate historical costumes and scenery were also dispensed with. While they may have invested Shakespeare's plays on the Stratford main stage with a certain dignity and beauty which were pleasing to those who knew the plays well, they could be alienating to an audience new to Shakespeare. TOP productions bore out the truth of Peter Brook's assertion in

his book *The Empty Space* that for 'real' (rather than 'phoney') theatre to happen no more was needed than an empty space, an actor and a spectator. Another benefit of this intimate studio was that a quieter, more natural acting style could be adopted which would draw an audience more fully into whatever play was being performed and the theatrical intensity generated there was extraordinary.

It comes as a surprise, therefore, to realize that Buzz directed just two productions at TOP. Though controversial in some aspects (as had been her 1970 *As You Like It* with its provocative Rosalind in blue jeans) both her *King Lear* (1974) and *Hamlet* (1975) were enormously successful with audiences. Just a few details about these productions show Buzz's mission to revolutionize the RSC in action. In each play a small ensemble, taking more than one part, was at the core of the production which avoided focus on star performers. Those who acted in her productions have remarked on the democratic approach in rehearsals: they were listened to and their ideas often adopted.

Given Buzz's passionate concern for social justice, it seems fitting that her *King Lear* should begin with a prologue on vagrancy laws

in Elizabethan England which made links with poverty and neglect of older people in the 1970s. Careful not to stretch her audience's attention too far, she was not a slave to full text and made drastic cuts. The playing time of *Lear* was reduced to one and a half hours while some minor characters such as Oswald were omitted. Finally, to include the forum element she believed in, the audience were invited to join in a post performance discussion. The production heavily focused on inter-generational family relationships, the most affecting being that of Cordelia and Lear. John Peter in his Sunday Times review (21 July 1974) commented that three teenagers sitting near him were in tears during the scene where Cordelia is reunited with her father.

Buzz's production of *Hamlet* also had the family at its centre, using masks to emphasize the pretences and disguises adopted by the characters. Both actors and audience vividly remembered the creative use of the theatrical space which drew the audience into the action. The door through which Claudius, the Ghost and Fortinbras enter and disappear was also the one used by the audience. When Hamlet commanded 'Let all the doors be locked' it was the main theatre door which banged, trapping both cast and audience. Ophelia's letters to Hamlet were not just returned to her but at one point scattered, to be picked up and even read by the audience. Ben Kingsley even briefly abandoned the theatre during his soliloquy 'O what a rogue and peasant slave am I', leaving the audience in doubt about whether the actor had left the play or Hamlet the character had opted out of his duty to avenge his father's death!

Four decades later much has changed at the RSC which Buzz would have approved, especially the remodelling of its main theatre to remove the proscenium arch and the addition of the thrust stage Swan Theatre in the 1980s. However, its plans to rebuild TOP on the Courtyard theatre site remain in the air until more money can be raised. The RSC web site expresses the intention to create a multi purpose venue to take in education, conferences, performances and workshops, thereby developing Buzz Goodbody's vision to bring in a wider, more varied audience.

To mark the fortieth anniversary of the opening of TOP and Buzz Goodbody's contribution to the RSC, Erica Whyman (Deputy Artistic Director at RSC) has spearheaded a TOP Midsummer Mischief Festival devoted to women: four contemporary female playwrights have written short plays in response to the provocative observation that 'Well-behaved women seldom make history'. In each play women step out of line in a refusal to do what society expects of them, as Buzz herself did. The Festival complements the Swan's Roaring Girls season of Elizabethan/Jacobean plays that puts women, either behaving badly or as victim, at the heart of the action. Included is *Arden of Faversham* (a play that Buzz Goodbody herself directed) described in the RSC's publicity as a 'gender bending thriller'.

During the four week long Midsummer Mischief Festival an exhibition exploring Buzz Goodbody's work and life was displayed in the Courtyard foyer but unfortunately was not available for viewing except when the theatre was open for

a performance. Conditions for reading and giving the content the attention it merited, therefore, were less than ideal. Appropriate though it may have been to place the exhibition on the site of the original TOP, it will have been missed by many visitors passing through the main theatre –especially young people in their summer holidays. And they are precisely the audience that Buzz Goodbody was desperate to attract.

It is to be hoped that the RSC makes the exhibition on Buzz Goodbody more easily available for viewing at a later date and does not lose sight of its goal to re open The Other Place. Without the full reinstatement of this legendary studio theatre the legacy of its founder will be lost and the RSC's Transformation project will be incomplete.

### Further Reading:

Alycia Smith Howard, *Studio Shakespeare: The Royal Shakespeare Company at The Other Place* (2006)

# CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE

## in Canterbury Once Again

*In his anniversary year Joanna Labon reminds us  
of Christopher Marlowe's achievements*



It strikes me as one of the mysteries of the universe that we can't seem to do anything without an anniversary. Why, I wonder, do we need to wait for someone's birthday to show how much we like them with a card or present? Why is someone's husband standing at the flower stall, wearing a slightly anxious expression as he compares the notes in his wallet with the sizes of bouquet? Because the wedding anniversary looms, of course. Very often we only appreciate artists when a round number of years has passed since their birth or death. And, as you'll know if you have ever raised funds to do something, an anniversary is almost essential to justify anything unusual. I don't know why this is, and I am not going to speculate here (answers on a postcard, please), but instead I plan to tell you why and how Christopher Marlowe came alive again in Canterbury this year – four hundred and fifty years after his birth here in 1564.

I have taught at the University of Kent since 2005, and have often brought our students of Elizabethan Drama to see the streets where Marlowe walked,

the Queen Elizabeth Guest chamber built for the occasion of her fortieth birthday, and the site of the old Chequers of Hope where, it is said, Shakespeare performed on tour. We have read aloud speeches from King Lear in the wind and rain while looking out from Dane John mound towards Dover, and we have checked out a particular textual query about *A Midsummer Night's Dream* against the version in the 1632 second folio at the Cathedral Library. Although, regrettably, Canterbury does not do for Marlowe what Stratford-upon-Avon does for Shakespeare, there is much to see if you know where to look.

Marlowe was born just a few months before Shakespeare, early on in the reign of Elizabeth I (1558-1603). His father, John, was a bit of a rogue, imprisoned for debt, but most of the time making shoes in his trade as a Canterbury cobbler. The family lived in Best Lane, where you can still find timber-framed Elizabethan houses, just up the road from St George's Church where Marlowe was baptised, and around the corner from St Mary's where his mother was later buried. This small city had been busy, prosperous and important from the 1220s when pilgrims came in their thousands to see the shrine of Thomas Beckett, and to spend their money on bed, board and relics, until 1538 when Henry VIII had it destroyed. Buildings once stayed in by pilgrims were now a welcome refuge for persecuted Huguenot Protestants from the continent, especially after the St Bartholomew Day Massacre in 1572. Marlowe went to a first school, possibly the one run by Archbishop Parker at the Eastbridge Hospital - a lovely building which stands today, lived in and cared for by an Anglican Franciscan community. What was once the schoolroom is now an upstairs chapel. A bright boy



although poor, Marlowe went on to the Kings School, whose buildings about the Cathedral Close, and which is today one of the foremost ancient public schools in England. Marlowe's long school day comprised verses, psalms and dramas, all in Latin.

From King's, Marlowe went up to Cambridge to study for the priesthood, with a scholarship from Archbishop Parker. As an undergraduate, he travelled abroad on special service, assisting Queen Elizabeth I by gathering intelligence on Catholic plots. His missing so much time annoyed the University, and Marlowe's degree was awarded only after intervention by the Privy Council. He then made his way in London, and became a successful playwright for the theatre. His life was cut short in 1593 when he was 29. After an argument at Deptford in London, shortly after his last visit to Canterbury, and in an episode which is still the subject of controversy, a fight ended up with him being stabbed through the eye. He left behind a short but impressive canon of seven plays (*Dido Queen of Carthage*, *Tamburlaine I and II*, *Dr Faustus*, *The Jew of Malta*, *The Massacre at Paris* and *Edward II*), and poetry including *Hero and Leander* and *The Passionate Shepherd*.

To his contemporaries Thomas Kyd, William Shakespeare and Ben Jonson, Marlowe was known for his "mighty line" – for eloquence, for atheism and for a certain hedonism, and was quoted by the informer Richard Baines as saying, "All they that love not tobacco and boyes are fools." This reputation as a "bad boy" might explain why, although Canterbury commemorates him by naming a shopping arcade, a university building and a theatre after him, it is quite rare to see his plays performed here.

If you are interested in Marlowe, you can do no better than to look up the wonderful Marlowe Society which meets annually in or near Canterbury with a programme of talks, plays and discussions. It has also

been subtly encouraging theatres to put on more Marlowe. When I gave a talk there some five years ago, they were looking forward to the renovation of The Marlowe Theatre, but were concerned that Marlowe's plays might not be performed there. Surely there should be some Marlowe at the Marlowe? I agreed but, as an academic, did not have much influence on the theatre programme. I gave another talk on Marlowe at the city Library, on the occasion of the newly built theatre opening (the librarian is also a fan), but still nothing much. Until the auspicious looming of... you've guessed it. The Anniversary.

This long-awaited wish finally came true by a coincidence of the 450<sup>th</sup> anniversary and some young blood at the theatre, in the shape of Daniel Lipman and Andrew Dawson. Last summer at a University of Kent Public Engagement event led by Drama Professor Paul Allain, I met Dawson, who had just started working at the theatre, and learned that he is very keen on the plays of Christopher Marlowe. I promised to show him Canterbury and its Marlowe landmarks as soon as the holidays were over. So, one lovely day in early September, we set off to look again at Marlowe's Canterbury, accompanied by Ken and Irene Pickering. Both are veterans of the Marlowe Society and Ken, now Professor at Kent, is recognised as a leading director of medieval theatre. Our tour took in Jewish Canterbury, some Huguenot houses, Kings School with its "dark entry", the cathedral including the Chapter House where Ken had directed T.S. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral*. All these sites came to life again. We finished our walk in Greyfriars gardens, a walled medieval garden which lies behind Eastbridge Hospital and has a tiny chapel, built by Franciscans in the 1220s, at one end. It is open only once a day and is one of the most peaceful treasures in the city. We were just idling on a small bridge, because the afternoon weather was still warm, and chatting before we all went our separate ways. Ken mentioned that he had been doing some

voice work with an interesting young London company called Fourth Monkey, and that they had plans to do some Marlowe plays. Andy said how he would like to put on some Marlowe plays at the theatre. I asked, "Is there any chance Fourth Monkey could bring their plays to Canterbury?"

Fourth Monkey is both a repertory theatre company and an actor training provider with a hundred students, based in London but touring their productions throughout the UK and abroad. Ken soon put Andy in touch with its Artistic Director, Steve Green, and soon the Marlowe Society and the Cathedral, as well as people from the University of Kent and the Marlowe Theatre were all involved with the project we called Marlowe450. Fourth Monkey actors came to Canterbury and explored the historic spaces of the city, visiting the Cathedral archives to be shown the "Marlowe Rose" (a rosebud found pressed among court records of Marlowe's case with the taylor). What had started as three plays ended as a busy mini-festival of Marlowe. On each opening night, invited guest speakers talked about aspects of Marlowe's work or their own. These included novelist Louis de Bernieres, whose Huguenot ancestry chimed well with *The Massacre at Paris*; Charles Nicholl author of *The Reckoning: The Murder of Christopher Marlowe* and *The Lodger: Shakespeare on Silver Street*; and Ros Barber, whose prize-winning book in verse, *The Marlowe Papers*, explores in fiction the idea that Marlowe authored some of Shakespeare's plays. Filmmaker Gavin Carver was brought in to document the process. We arranged a Schools Day for GCSE and A-level students at The Marlowe Theatre, in which teenagers from across Kent came together to experience a physical theatre workshop, a text analysis session, two lectures and a tour of the historic city and its archives. Up the hill at the University of Kent a Marlowe symposium brought together academic experts from the universities of Kent, Oxford, Warwick, Roehampton and Exeter, and the Shakespeare Institute. We garnered support, not

just of the main institutions in the city, but also from the local community, in the shape of Hedger's butchers who cheerfully lent us their second best butcher's block as a key bit of set in *The Massacre at Paris*.

Each of the three plays struck its own, individual note. Alin Connant's *Dr Faustus* was a modern version with two female leads and a dark punkish violence. By contrast, *The Massacre at Paris* was performed in cathedral crypt, by candlelight and in period costumes, directed by Andy Dawson and Paul Allain. *The Jew of Malta* directed by Justin Audibert emphasized Marlowe's talent for bitter comedy in an ultra-modern set using a metal scaffold to indicate the nunnery and the city walls. At last Canterbury had embraced its contrary son.

On behalf of all the Marlowe lovers who came together to make the Marlowe450 season such a success, I can say it was a happy anniversary. Let's not wait another fifty years before we do it again.

Joanna Labon, Canterbury 2014

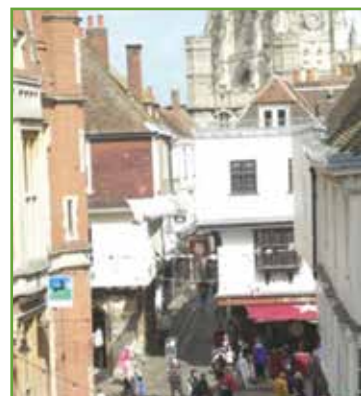
#### Recommended reading and websites:

<http://www.fourthmonkey.co.uk>  
<http://www.marlowetheatre.com>  
<http://www.marlowe-society.org>

Ros Barber, *The Marlowe Papers*,  
 Charles Nicholl, *The Reckoning: The Murder of Christopher Marlowe*

Ken Pickering, *Drama in the Cathedral*  
 William Urry, *Christopher Marlowe and Canterbury*

**Dr Joanna Labon lives in Canterbury. She worked in London publishing before writing a PhD on Rebecca West, Storm Jameson and Europe in the 1930s (Birbeck College, London University, 2000), and has taught at the University of Kent since 2005.**



HMCA are delighted to offer **STSD** members and their families our range of medical health cover and related products. Hospital and Medical Care Association are specialists in offering voluntary benefits exclusively to members of professional and trades associations and membership groups. The plans are available exclusively to members of an Association and not available to the general public ensuring and maintaining competitive rates for you and your family.

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## Getting the best out of Private Medical Health

The majority of STSD members will be aware of private health plans, and will more often than not question if they really need it when they receive their annual renewal every year. In most cases, the answer will be no, but the knowledge that it provides you with peace of mind when faced with a medical problem will encourage you to keep it. The next question you ask yourself is can you get it cheaper, and then you start to hunt out other providers on comparison sites and trawling through adverts, which in all probability will make you wish you had not started.

The truth is that trying to compare medical plans is nigh on impossible because of the various clauses, jargon and rules that apply to different providers and plans. Do you want in-hospital and overnight stays, or in-hospital outpatient cover and choice of hospital. You will be inundated with moratoriums, excess, and so the list goes on. You want simplicity and a full understanding of what you are buying. In order to try and simplify the process for you, the first step towards getting a plan is to make a list of what YOU want from your plan and one that best suits you, your state of health, lifestyle and cost.

If you spend a lot of time abroad or have sporting hobbies, you may want to consider a plan that covers you for travel and interests. What if you want to change from your current plan, does your potential provider offer you a free Transfer facility which has no breaks in your cover. Once you have made your list, you can start to research and compare the various providers and plans. A good tip is to balance what you need with the amount you want to pay.

One of the key factors of taking out a private medical health plan is to give you peace of mind when faced with the prospect of surgery or medical condition. We interpret peace of mind as being able to talk to your provider about any concerns you have and being treated in a personal, sympathetic and professional manner. The last thing you want is to be connected to an automated service and pushing buttons to get through to someone.

Ok, so you have done your research and now deciding who to choose. Quite simply, pick up the phone and call each provider. Speak to their Claims Department and assess their handling of your enquiry. Having to claim on your health plan is the reason for joining. You need to know how their system works, including how approachable the staff are, what is the claims procedure and how quickly will your claim be settled.

These few simple steps can help ease the stress of taking out a private medical health plan, and bring you the peace of mind that prompted you to provide it for yourself in the first case. You can call HMCA on 01423 866985 for further advice and information or visit us at [www.hmca.co.uk](http://www.hmca.co.uk).

# THE BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE LIBRARY

I am delighted to be able to reassure Elizabeth Oakley, and all our STSD members, that the BDL Library was NOT lost! It was transferred to the Drama Association of Wales and has been available to DAW members ever since. Unfortunately in 2013 the Arts Council saw fit to withdraw their funding from DAW and this led to the library being transferred to the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama in April 2014. The College have been carrying out a full audit of the library which will enable it to be sorted into three categories:

a) Play text lending library

b) Research materials

c) Surplus – badly damaged books, those with no research value and those which should not form part of the new lending library.

The transfer will be completed shortly with the assistance of an Advisory Group of suitably qualified librarians and academics. It is hoped that the Library will re-open in September this year.

It will remain possible for DAW members to borrow books from the collection. Membership details can be obtained from DAW at: Room 108, Titan House, Cardiff Bay Business Centre, Lewis Road, Ocean Park, Cardiff CF24 5BS. Telephone Number: +44(0)29 2045 2200 email: [office@dramawales.org.uk](mailto:office@dramawales.org.uk). I can assure everyone that the membership fees are very reasonable.

**Penelope Charteris**

## **Correction:**

In the title of the cover photo from the last issue the name should be GERVASE Phinn. This year's conference was held in Cork, not Dublin.

We apologize for the error in misprinting Bailey Lock's name ('The Lyric Story') in our Spring 2014 number.





## **GREAT OVERSEAS TEACHING OPPORTUNITIES IN HONG KONG AND CHINA. FOR NATIVE UK DRAMA TEACHERS**

For ‘**The Dramatic English LTD**’, the leading organisation, providing English Language Education in Hong Kong providing over 14 education services in over 80 primary and secondary schools.

The company is opening in 2015 with the first Dramatic English Education Centre in the Greater China Region of Dongguan that is the production hub to over 60% of the world’s consumer products and the home for millions of new middle class families of China.

Preference will be given to candidates who possess Speech & Drama qualifications for NEA (New Era Academy).

Please Contact for further details:

**Miranda Jacobs**  
**Exam Director/ NEA**  
**Free call 0800 999 4550 or 01903 246790**  
**or Email [Miranda.jacobs@neweraacademy.co.uk](mailto:Miranda.jacobs@neweraacademy.co.uk)**

# THE FOUNDING OF THE VOICE CARE NETWORK UK

*by Roz Cummins*

The Voice Care Network UK has been active now for over twenty years. This article looks back over its development, teacher response and how local idea became a national initiative.

When voice professionals get together they talk about the voice. Human beings enjoy talking; it is a natural human activity and we all have a unique voice by which we are recognised. Voice is our sound. As we talk language flows: a river of vowel sounds banked by consonants revealing how we feel and what we think. Listening to voices is fascinating. Why do people sound the way they do? What has happened to them? What frees their voice and lets it flow? What prevents them from making an easy sound? Why do they talk so well, or so much, or remain withdrawn or silent? Many aspects of ourselves and our lives are reflected in the sound of our voice. In the introduction to "More Care for Your Voice" Cicely Berry wrote, "How we use our voice is fundamental to the way we communicate".

In the late 1980s Speech and language therapists (SLT) and voice teachers (VT) met together to

discuss the number of teachers suffering with voice difficulties. They realised there was work to be done with teachers who had disordered and inefficient voices which inevitably affected the quality of class teaching. SLTs had clinical experience of voice disorders, and the VTs in the development of voice for actors, speakers and presenters. As they began talking and sharing their knowledge, both groups of professionals extended their understanding of the voice. They agreed to call teachers "professional voice users" because their voice was a "tool" of their profession. No voice - no work. Teachers lose a part of themselves when their voices are damaged and they are excluded from easy, everyday talk. An actor would receive voice training for more than one year, but a teacher at that time was rarely given one hour.

Both SLTs and VTs were convinced that voice training would benefit teachers and so the Voice Care Network (VCN) evolved to develop this. Their mission statement is "helping people to keep their voices healthy and to communicate effectively" and the aim is to establish voice care and skills as an essential part of all teacher training.

In 1984, Coventry's newly established Centre for the Performing Arts set up a successful voice workshop for the city's teachers. At the follow up the teachers had reported how useful this had been especially the voice warm ups. One primary school teacher applying what she had learned spoke quietly to her class for three days after which the children also talked quietly, the noise was reduced and teaching more effective.

At that time a speech and language therapist, who specialised in voice disorders, joined my colleague's evening drama class. We both listened to her practical advice on voice care and realised it applied to us. When we had colds we needed to drink more water, suck fruit pastilles, (not those with thymol) breathe warm steam and reduce our throat clearing. We integrated her advice into our workshops particularly as some of the teachers who attended our 'Saturday Voice Workshops' some of the teachers who attended had extremely hoarse voices. Very soon, the Directors of the Centre and the Coventry Health Board had a meeting and regular Voice Care and

Development workshops were set up each term for Coventry teachers

Later that year my neighbour introduced me to her son who was working with voice researchers in Oxford. I visited the Radcliffe Infirmary Voice Clinic, and observed Tom and Sarah Harris at work. They were members of a working party involved in setting up the Voice Research Society (VRS), later to become British Voice Association (BVA). Shortly after, Sarah referred a lecturer to me who was discharged from therapy and needed vocal stamina. He was keen to learn, did well and I was invited to join the VRS Working Party. Here I met laryngologists, opera singers, singing teachers, speech and language therapists, voice scientists and a number of voice teachers and coaches. When the VRS discussed a suitable topic for its first project Janice Chapman suggested "Voice for teachers" with Roz to lead it. The next five years became an invaluable incubation period for the development of the project and for gathering members. Funding for three years from the Inchcape Charitable Trust enabled VTs and SLTs to deliver workshops at Teachers' Centres in cities that included Manchester, Middlesbrough, Bristol and Nottingham. We were reaching out and receiving positive responses from teachers but there was room for more.

In 1993 the group became independent with 21 professionally trained and highly experienced voice teachers and speech and language therapists. Voice Care Network UK started with three hundred pounds, a room with

a desk and a neighbour helping me once a week. Much later we afforded some secretarial help and finally everything moved into a small office. Nowadays our efficient and hard working part-time administrator manages all enquiries, sales, workshop requests, book-keeping, subscriptions, trustees and members' meetings as well as regular office duties.

The first committee of three included Alan Lyne voice teacher (VT) whose idea it was to make a new organisation, Nicole Woodyatt speech therapist (SLT) and me-VT and we eventually became a working party of nine.

### Teachers' needs

There were around 450,000 teachers in the UK when the work began, and every year 32,000 trainees completed their qualifications. As co-ordinator I began cold-calling Teachers' Centres and found no one knew what was meant by "voice work" or "voice training". No, it was not elocution and we did not aim to change teachers' accents; saying it was voice care for teachers who lost their voices got a response.

The majority of teachers we met had no idea of how their voices worked and how to control them, including those with good voices. Losing a voice was an "occupational hazard". Some teachers lost both their voice and work; others reported opening their mouth to speak and nothing emerging, many continued teaching with laryngitis, or endlessly cleared their throats and became permanently hoarse. Some primary school

teachers pitched their voices at the same level as their pupils and consequently lost their singing voices.

In a Midland Study of voice clinics SLTs collected evidence which showed that teachers formed up to 30% of patients. The SLTs thought that half of the teachers would not be there if they understood how to produce their voices efficiently. A later study suggested that 1 in 10 long-serving teachers would expect to have a voice disorder needing clinical treatment at some time in their career. We used this evidence to encourage our work to be taken up.

At the end of our teacher workshops we used questionnaires to verify their needs and work out how to meet them.

Here are some examples of comments received from teachers and trainees at the end:

**"at last someone is doing something to help", "learning to project and not to strain", "building confidence", "laying the foundation for reducing harsh use of voice", "...actually made me feel I could speak well in front of the class", "control of breath", "monotony – how to overcome", "the warm-ups", "helped me explore mouth and words", "how to stand in the classroom, gain confidence, presence", "varying tone of voice".**

Before workshops the older teachers wanted to learn how to protect their voices and to prevent problems. Some trainees were concerned about their accents, or wanted to present themselves more effectively, and many were concerned to know how to avoid “yelling” and “shouting”.

Some teachers were referred for further therapy. “As I sit here now, my throat is aching from teaching all day!” Said one teacher - one of seven out of twenty-six who needed therapy. We were unable to help a male music teacher whose voice was permanently damaged from shouting. But a Middlesbrough teacher arrived with a happy smile as she said “Thank you for giving me my voice back!”

An example of how stress affects the voice is seen in this example. A teacher who had to deal with three difficult boys, suffered from tension and rigid neck muscles. She needed help to get to the end of term - a fortnight away. The SLT and the group working together managed to ease her tension and calm her. We helped one teacher (who sent us a thank you card) to retain her relaxation “...even in Sainsburys” and another who was unable to attend our workshop found herself “completely refreshed!” after relaxation and breathing.

### **Delivering Voice Workshops**

We devised the following workshop plan at Practical Interactive Meetings (PISM) with the help of much authoritative literature.

- **information on how the voice works and voice care**
- **physical ease and balanced posture, centred breathing,**
- **exercises to free the vocal tract, flexibility in tone of voice, use of optimum pitch**
- **awareness of the sounds in words**
- **consider the voice and delivery in teaching**

We found it challenging to introduce what is most useful so that it has impact and is relevant and memorable, particularly when faced with a lecture theatre of a hundred trainees expecting an hour’s session to get their voices ready for the term starting the following week.

Trainees often talk too much and too fast and do not value language. When three of us took the work to Australia to deliver ‘Free Papers’ at a Voice Symposium we met a voice coach from Sidney with a useful exercise. On the last morning of her students’ course she lets them wander for three hours, without speaking, in any part of the campus. On return they can speak one word. I believe it is important to manage silence, make it work, use pause, speak slowly, have time for what is spoken to be supported by the “intention”.

The original tutors were very experienced and set high workshop standards. The VCN does not offer accreditation but Practical Interactive Study Meeting (PISM) for professionally trained aspiring tutors

are used to moderate knowledge and share skills and ideas.

We have adapted our workshops for call centres –these are planned to focus tightly on voice care, clarity, and managing behaviour. At the moment VCN is working with teachers in mainstream schools whose classes include students with Additional Educational Needs (AEN). For this the tutor delivers a regular voice workshop and an SLT with AEN experience provides the specialist input.

### **Spreading Awareness**

In 1993 I received a surprise invitation to lunch at The Financial Times. The journalist questioned me, listened to my replies and offered the following advice. The VCN needed several things: a good brochure which clearly stated what we did and who we were: a symbol to catch interest and a well-known person whose name would support our cause. Lastly, I was to watch the papers for a “link” to our work, and write responses to the Editor. The brochure we created had a small town crier calling “croak” on the back page and Cicely Berry kindly agreed to become our Patron. A few weeks later the Education Guardian had an article about a male primary schoolteacher who had become irreversibly deaf as a result of classroom noise and the following week the Editor printed my letter about teachers’ voice loss. Over the following three months the VCN received around 200 letters and phone calls requesting more information.

In the first few years VCN was featured or mentioned in magazines and the press over thirty times.

Since then members have been interviewed by the press and local radio, and have written articles for professional magazines. More recently we have become involved in social media.

## **Institutions and Organisations**

During its existence the VCN has made contact with four main groups of organisations. The trainers of teachers: the supporters of teachers: the employers of teachers: the controllers of teachers.

We have also made contact with teachers' unions. Both the National Association of Teachers and Association of Teachers and Lecturers have voice care advice and use VCN workshops. The Professional Association of Teachers now renamed: Voice: the Union for Education, involved us when they won a Department of Social Security Tribunal in 1994 for a primary school teacher member who lost her voice and her work.

All the national newspapers reported this, so did Radio 4 Six O'clock News and TV. There was an enormous spread in Times Educational Supplement (TES) and as a result Caroline Cornish joined us. She had trained like me at Central School and had delivered voice work to trainees in Exeter. In 2005 members ran a stand at the Education Show and later at Health and Well-Being at Work Exhibitions.

VCN has been encouraged by STSD and ESB and was honoured to be with them in 1996 at the Joint Conference "Speaking with one Voice" in Stratford on Avon. All of us signed a Resolution and sent it to the DfE and the TTA.

VCN members keep in touch with changes in Education Policy, and with voice research. The head of the Teacher Training Agency (TTA) agreed to recommend voice training to training institutes. We became involved in BB93 Environmental Conditions in Schools and a paragraph was added recommending school

builders to consider the teacher's need to be heard, when planning teaching spaces.

The VCN also provided information for the first Open University PGCE trainees and has organised workshops for School Centred Initial Teacher Training (SCITT) and Teach First.

The VCN office deals with all enquiries and bookings for workshops from all levels of Education and interacts with the trustees and tutors. It is the hub around which we work

## **The Infrastructure**

David Comins became the first chairman of the VCN, the VCN became a charity, then a company limited by guarantee with a Board of Trustees that meets four times yearly. Much goes on in between. David was deeply interested in innovation and by observing what we did, he prepared VCN's mission statement and classified the objectives.



- **to identify the training needs of voice users, by gathering data, sharing skills and co-operating on research and with other professionals:**
- **to develop services to meet those needs by designing workshops and building a network:**
- **to deliver the services through its tutors by administering sessions for clients:**
- **to support the services with constructive relationships with Government departments, agencies, trade unions and professional organizations, with study meetings for members' expertise.**

He saw informed people meeting, talking together, sharing ideas and developing new ones. He saw conviction and awareness and high standards working with rigour and flexibility. He saw a stable foundation being laid on which others could build, and relationships based on mutual respect.

He also took care of the accounts, eased VCN into using computers, backed up the plans of websites, and prepared the text of Voice Matters for printing as well as VCN's modest range of publications. He had high standards, aimed for precision, but was always ready to offer friendly advice and supply useful photographs of VCN events.

So what began with a voice workshop for teachers in an industrial city brought like-minded professionals together

and provided vocal freedom and relief to thousands of people at all levels of education, and from many walks of life. I hope the flow of new members who join the VCN will find satisfaction and a sense of achievement in carrying on the work.

As a result of some members clubbing together I was awarded an OBE. I think it is a tribute to everyone the VCN.

### **Rosamund Cummins OBE**

Founder and Former Co-ordinator of the Voice Care Network UK



# AS THE BARD WOULD HAVE KNOWN IT?

An Introduction to Propeller Theatre Company  
Touring production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*,  
Spring/Summer 2014

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**Athletic, authentic, articulate - Shakespeare would surely have recognised and been at home with the all-male Propeller Company's production of *A Midsummer night's Dream*. Yes: no women in the cast.**

**That fact, plus respect for the integrity of the text would, one hopes, have commended this energetic production to the Bard - though he may have been a little fazed!**

**Mixing a rigorous approach to the text with a modern and very physical aesthetic, Propeller bring influences from mask work, animation, classic and modern films and music from all ages.**

**Founded 17 years ago, Propeller offer reimagined versions of the canon in ways that 'aim at a more engaging way of presenting the play and the relationship between text and performance.'**

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Engaging? Certainly. Whether with a very familiar play (as here) or one of the less well-known, the action is brisk, the approach uncompromising (especially in *Rose Rage* - their takes on the three *Henry VI* plays). Getting the message across is the priority and the actors' vocal projection is a model of clarity - neither audibility nor meaning is ever in question. This recently-toured production of the *Dream* would have gladdened the heart of any drama teacher looking for a production to put before students. And for those more familiar with the play there was also lots to admire and learn.

The obvious question thrown up by an all-male interpretation of a play that includes female characters is: what does the playing of the women's roles by men do to the play and specifically to the interaction of those characters?

Director Edward Hall writes: 'We don't want to make the plays 'accessible', as this implies that they need 'dumbing down' in order to be understood, which they don't. The *Dream* is a beautiful and soulful story. One of only two that Shakespeare largely made up, and we have embraced the magic and surreality of the work.'

Surreal is indeed one of the words that spring to mind on seeing the production, with its array of black lace tutus, basques and padded groins reminiscent of

Kubrick's *A Clockwork Orange*. These fairies are not so much fey as formidable. The word faerie (sic) has been reclaimed by some in the contemporary gay community from the realm of insult and contemptuous dismissal to signify a range of 'other', alternative, overlapping and indistinct 'takes' on sexuality, identity/ies and self-realisation of the discovered self which are 'out and proud', unapologetic and uncompromising.

All-male productions lend an obvious homoerotic tinge to the scenes between the lovers (Matthew McPherson, Hermia; Andrew Wilson, Lysander; Dan Wheeler, Helena; Arthur Wilson, Demetrius); and gives an extra (or at least different) edge to the cattiness between the two women.





So in a Propeller production are we looking simply at the *dramatis personae* or at travesties of them (bearing in mind the original use of travesty to mean cross-dressing) - travesties which reveal new insights into character or relationship possibilities? What does this signify? Is it meant to alert us to the likelihood of startling, unexpected, counter-intuitive happenings or are we rather being invited into a sub-culture of the theatrical world where 'divergent' sexuality has often been disguised and sublimated?

As well as the decisions that any producer has to make about interpreting the text, a Propeller production has to answer the inevitable questions about changes to the dynamics of the action by the introduction of a 'foreign' element in the playing of females by males. Shakespeare cast his plays with the younger and presumably, softer-faced members of the troupe who still retained their boyish (= girlish?) good looks in the women's roles.

But what was convention in Shakespeare's time is counter-intuitive and challenging to a modern audience. When women have long been on the stage, there has to be a distinct purpose in all-male casting. The downside - loss of realism, especially in the lovers' scenes - may seem obvious, so what is gained by making this seemingly perverse (some might say redundant) artistic decision?

Part of the answer has to be that the subversive effect (to us) of having men play the female characters moves us simultaneously both a step further away from conventional ideas of modern performance and a step nearer to the world of the dramatist himself.

The rediscovery of all-male companies (and a few of all-female performance) puts a totally different slant on plays which are at risk of being too familiar. Of course the tradition of cross-dressing is vibrant, (especially but not exclusively males playing females). There are the ridiculous grotesques (pantomime dames, balanced out by the Principal Boy role); highly made-up, costumed and coiffured men 'passing' as females (Danny La Rue) or the denizens of a crazy, essentially male world where to have the men playing caricature women simply adds another layer of comedy to the prevailing lunacy (Monty Python's Terry Jones' high-pitched squawk, Tim Brooke-Taylor glammed-up in the Goodies).

Each of these types opens a range of possibilities for comedy based on gender stereotyping. Propeller is not operating in any of these spheres, though naturally aware of all of them.

Edward Hall comments: 'We want to rediscover Shakespeare simply by doing the plays as we believe they should be done: with great clarity, speed and full of as much imagination in the staging as possible.'



Well, for clarity they score a bull's eye. The action is brisk, the articulation exemplary, the poetry spoken, as it were, without quotation marks round the famous speeches. This is down-to earth Shakespeare, immediate, fun, bawdy and totally engaging. The *Mail On Sunday* critic wrote: 'I'd go as far as to say this production is touched by genius'.

Roger Warren, joint text editor with Edward Hall comments: 'The play technically, takes place in Athens and the fairies have come "from the farthest steppe of India", but a more English play would be hard to imagine.' Those who remember the wonderful 1959 production at Stratford with Charles Laughton and Mary Ure, will recall the magical and somehow wonderfully English atmosphere created by the idyllic leafy bower, the gauzy, ethereal fairies and Mendelssohn's music, plus of course the way the actors spoke their words.

Propeller's approach could hardly be further from that classic production. By contrast, Propeller's fairies clump rather than float, and while intentionally androgynous, are brisk and physical, gambolling and stomping from the very first moment that Puck (Joseph Chance) appears, springing up into the action from a trap door into, as it were, the attic of our imaginations, a truly mischievous, capricious and unpredictable sprite.

For his fairies' costumes, designer Michael Pavelka draws on a whole range of inspirations, from punk and goth to athletic gear and the typical attire of a Victorian schoolmistress. Apart from the gender issue itself, the costumes are the most obviously striking thing about this production, and a pure delight. Basques and tutus are married with the padded pants of the thugs in Kubrick's *A Clockwork Orange* and heavy black eye that surely owes something to Dusty Springfield (herself a gay icon).

In marked contrast to the cliché of pastel costumes and gauzy wings, the fairies are almost entirely in black and white. Pavelka comments: 'The spectrum of the palette was de-saturated - do you dream in colour? I don't.' Be that as it may, the monochrome look is very striking and serves to suggest a different place or plane of consciousness (compare the Ascot Gavotte sequence in the London production of *My Fair Lady*, where the same technique implied a different world of riches and privilege).

Propeller photos by Dominic Clemence

The set, an attic with boxes and other junk, gives the players possibilities, as Pavelka says '... of running, climbing and perching - Propeller's hallmark physical style. I borrowed from the aesthetic and surreal worlds of Jan Svankmajer's stop-motion animations (and that resonated with my Anglo-Czech upbringing). In turn, this was echoed at times in the performers' doll-like choreographic movements.'

Roger Warren writes of the discord which results when the pairs of lovers and the mechanicals blunder into the realm of faerie with disastrous results for both: the disharmony between Oberon and Titania is rapidly replicated in the lives of the humans.

Titania's early speech in which she laments a climate gone awry not only strikes a highly contemporary note but establishes a context of things being out of kilter: 'The spring, the summer/The chiding autumn, angry winter change/Their wonted liveries, and the mazed world/By which their increase now knows not which is which. . . '

The mayhem that rapidly follows confuses all relationships - which an all male cast goes halfway to doing anyway. When all is done, the fairies' benison signs the re-establishment of harmony in a night of sweet dreams, and a return to an unenchanted (sexually conventional?) world.

*Michael Rowberry is a retired Anglican priest and former journalist, living in Leicester. He studied English at Sussex University in the 1970s and has been a keen observer of gay culture and politics over the last 40 years.*

{The touring partnership takes in Harlowe Theatre, Canterbury; Everyman, Cheltenham; Belgrade, Coventry; Festival Theatre, Edinburgh; Theatre Royal, Newcastle; Theatre Royal, Norwich; Theatre Royal, Nottingham; Theatre Royal, Plymouth; The Lowry, Salford; and Lyceum, Sheffield.}



# ROSE READATHON

by *Linda Shannon*

**Twelve plays read aloud in twelve hours? Crazy!**

**Impossible!** Well, you might think so, but on Saturday 31<sup>st</sup> May the Friends of the Rose Playhouse achieved just that. Through a fantastic amount of enthusiasm and teamwork, five plays by Marlowe and seven by Shakespeare, edited to last one hour each, were read and enjoyed by both actors, audience and volunteers [who were sometimes all three in one person!]. This coincided with the 450<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the births of Shakespeare and Marlowe, both of whom had their plays put on at the Rose.

**And why did such madness take place?**

It's because the Rose Playhouse Bankside, currently an archaeological site which also doubles as a fringe theatre, is trying to raise funds to fulfil the plans being developed with the aid of a Heritage Lottery Fund grant. The plan is to excavate the remaining third of the ruins of the Rose [built around 1587 and abandoned in 1605], preserve them further and provide an improved performance space, with an exhibition area and – possibly the thing that excites the volunteers the most! – toilet facilities.

**So how did it work on the day?**

Beginning promptly at 10 am, Marlowe's *'Tamburlaine'* was read first, followed by *'Twelfth Night'*, *'Henry VI part 1'*, *'Macbeth'*, *'Edward II'*, *'Titus Andronicus'*, *'Dr. Faustus'*, *'As You Like It'*, *'The Massacre at Paris'*, *'Romeo and Juliet'*, *'Dido, Queen of Carthage'*, and lastly *'Hamlet'*. Promptly on the hour, each play was

stopped, the actors and audience moved on, and the next play begun. Just occasionally, the play finished ahead of the allotted hour, so several of us were on hand to read some sonnets. With a couple of exceptions, parts were allocated by drawing them out of a hat – you never knew whether you'd have a main role or be the equivalent of 'third spear carrier on the left'!

We were privileged to have two distinguished guests who participated in the readings. Dame Janet Suzman, a patron of The Rose, kindly agreed to come and read 'Rosalind' in *'As You Like It'*, a part she played and made her own years ago; her energy and consummate skill immediately raised the excitement level for us all and gave us a boost to continue until 10 pm. We finished with *'Hamlet'* – ending at "The rest is silence" – the main part read by Lord Taylor of Warwick. I think those of us who had been involved for the whole 12 hours, whether as actor, audience or volunteer behind the scenes, felt a tremendous sense of achievement which brought us all together in a unique way.

**Will we attempt it again? Yes,**

**possibly.** This was an experiment and there are lessons to be learned, but the total amount raised was significant and certainly provides an incentive all the while that fundraising is required. So look out for the next one – maybe in a slightly different format and with different plays – because you, too, could have the chance to perform with professionals on the boards of the Rose Playhouse!



**Linda Shannon taught English and Drama/Theatre Studies at a London comprehensive for 24 years, and remains an Examiner for the latter subjects. Now retired, she indulges her passion for theatre by volunteering at The Globe and the Rose Playhouse, as well as running a Shakespeare study group and by teaching the history of theatre, both for the U3A. Her other passion is travelling and so far this year has been to Mexico, Guatemala and Laos.**

# LATEST NEWS FROM LAMDA

We are delighted to announce the arrival of LAMDA's new syllabus specifications in Communication, Performance, Group and Introductory examinations, as well as brand new Speaking Verse and Prose and Acting Anthologies and an updated edition of *Knowledge Matters* (Volume 2). The quality and individuality of the qualifications we offer is absolutely at the heart of what we do and with over 130 years experience offering examinations in speech and drama to the public, we are committed to ensuring that we update our examinations periodically, so that they remain current and continue to offer new challenges and opportunities for teachers and learners, encouraging them to explore as diverse and exciting a range of material as possible, furthering their skills and knowledge. The new specifications came into effect on 1 September 2014 and we are excited to introduce some of the key updates.

As part of the qualification development process, the LAMDA syllabus team conducted research directly with customers, gathering feedback on everything from specific examination content and requirements to the potential layout and design of the new publications. As a result the new texts are more succinct, with clearer assessment criteria and learning outcomes. There is less repetition and subject sections can quickly and easily be found by looking at the reference tabs at the side of each page, making navigation simpler. There is a glossary of terms at the back of each syllabus document, explaining in more detail the meaning of various words and phrases used throughout.

Examinations Regulations, which are the key examination requirements, will now be separate from notes and guidance, which do not directly affect the assessment decision. More extensive teaching guidance on the communication and performance examinations will now be available online on the LAMDA website at [www.lamda.org.uk](http://www.lamda.org.uk). Our intention is to make the examination requirements as clear and unambiguous as possible in order to support teachers and students and to reduce errors in the preparation process.

One of the most significant overarching examination content changes and one that we hope will illustrate that LAMDA has responded pro-actively to customer feedback, is that pieces/speeches will now be marked separately, increasing the transparency within each written report. Each grade and subject will have its own marking system as outlined in the syllabus and reflected in the new examination report design.

We are confident that our teachers will enjoy working with the new, more user-friendly specifications – please read on for an outline of some of the most significant changes, keeping in mind that these are the main changes only and that the syllabus specifications should always be checked thoroughly.

## Introductory

Learners will now receive a mark for their Introductory examination, increasing parity with other subjects and recognising specific levels of attainment within the different bandings. The Introductory examination specifications, including the Group Introductory requirements, are now found in their own syllabus. The set pieces for the examinations will still appear in the current *Verse and Prose Anthology* (Volume 18). The three examinations within Introductory, formerly named Introductory, Preliminary and Preparatory, are now called Stage One, Stage Two and Stage Three respectively. In Group Introductory examinations, three

to ten learners will now be permitted and there is also a new drama game for Group Introductory Stage Three (formerly Group Preliminary). The game involves learners passing around and responding creatively to an imaginary 'box' and was introduced in response to feedback that the previous game was too word-based.

## Speaking Verse and Prose

As well as the pieces, the sight-reading element of Speaking Verse and Prose examinations will also now be marked separately. In response to feedback, the total time allowance for Grade 3 and Grade 5 has been increased and at Grade 7, the chosen sonnet can now be by any writer except Shakespeare. There have been numerous, smaller changes made to the knowledge requirements for these examinations and we would recommend that all those using the syllabus check the relevant subject/grade specifications.

## Reading for Performance

The new marking scheme applies to Reading for Performance in much the same way as it does with the other subjects, with readings and links now marked separately under the Interpretation heading. There will be one overall mark for Technique. Additionally, the time allowances for Grades 7 and 8 have increased and sight-reading will now be required at Level 3.

## Speaking in Public

Using Spoken English no longer exists as a separate qualification, having been incorporated into Speaking in Public examinations, which are now available from Entry Level through to Grade 8. There has been growing interest in this subject and recognition of the tangible life skills it gives learners and we have focussed on the examination requirements in order to ensure that the qualification reflects the needs of our customers. Teachers working with this subject will find separately marked speeches, increased time allowances for Grades 4 through to 8 and a requirement to use visual aids from Grade 2 onwards. For Entry Level through to Grade 5, the conversation element of the examination has been retained, but learners will now be required to answer questions on the preparation of their speeches. The knowledge questions at each grade have been refined, the most significant change occurring at Grade 8, where learners will be required to discuss the steps they took in preparing their impromptu speech.

## Acting

We are thrilled to introduce revolutionary Polish theatre practitioner, Jerzy Grotowski, into our Level 3 Acting examination requirements. Grotowski replaces Edward Gordon Craig as one of three practitioners learners choose to study for at Grade 8. There has been enthusiastic feedback from teachers and learners and increasing interest in the tenets of physical theatre within the performance industry. We hope that this update will inspire learners to deepen their understanding and interest in this area, increase their engagement across a wide range of performance disciplines and encourage imaginative responses to movement in performance. Exploring Grotowski's experimental style also fosters an appreciation for the value of devised work and increases a learner's confidence and security in their own ideas, encouraging a more profound exploration into the world of the text they are studying.

## Devising Drama

Those that enjoy unleashing the imaginations of their students will be pleased to see improvisation included in Level 3 Devising Drama examinations for Solo/Duo learners. Working from a stimulus word provided by the examiner, learners will have one minute to prepare a spontaneous scene of between one and two minutes length. The benefits that individuals can gain from this kind of work are numerous, including increased confidence and improved listening, observation and decision-making skills.

As with all other subjects, scenes will now be marked separately. The time allowance at Grades 6, 7 and 8 has been increased and there are new stimuli provided for the devised scenes at each grade. We now allow a technician into the room to operate sound equipment at Grade 5 and at this grade learners will now be required to know the working stage areas. For all Level 3 examinations they will need to understand the difference between improvisation and devising drama.

## Miming

We have introduced a practitioner study requirement at Grade 8 Miming, to increase parity and to encourage a deeper exploration of the subject. Learners will choose to study Charlie Chaplin, Marcel Marceau, Etienne Decroux or Jacques Lecoq and will need to consider their influences on the development and presentation of mime. Those studying Miming will also see at Grade 7 that study of commedia dell'arte is now included, with a requirement to perform prepared scenes as one of the stock commedia mime characters. This is another new area of study that we have introduced and we are excited to see what our customers come up with in response to the new scope for research.

## Group Acting

Groups will now be allowed to consist of three to 15 learners. The total time allowance for exams at Grade 7 and Grade 8 has increased and at Grade 1, Grade 2 and Grade 3 the set themes for the scenes have been removed.

## Group Devising Drama

Groups will now be allowed to consist of three to 15 learners. At Grade 1, Grade 2 and Grade 3 the set themes for the scenes have been removed. At Grade 5, where music and/or sound effects are required, a technician will now be allowed into the exam room to operate the sound equipment.

## Group Recital and Choral-Speaking

There is a new marking scheme for Group Recital exams: pieces and links will be marked separately under Interpretation and there will be one overall mark for Technique. The total time allowance for Group Recital and Choral-Speaking exams at Grade 3 has increased. At Grade 3 Choral-Speaking three pieces are now required (two poems and one prose extract).

Please note that Group Recital and Choral-Speaking examinations will now only be offered up to Grade 3. Unfortunately we had very few entries beyond Level 1 in these subjects during the past academic year. Should LAMDA receive significant feedback suggesting that these qualifications should be re-introduced, we will of course look at re-adding them.

## New Anthologies

There are new set pieces for Introductory, Speaking Verse and Prose and Acting examinations and these are now allocated per grade, rather than level, meaning that there are now significantly more options for learners to choose from. *The LAMDA Acting Anthology* (Volume 3), which includes the set selections for Acting examinations from Grade 1 to

Grade 5, features an introduction by actor and LAMDA Vice President, David Suchet, and includes works from a range of sources, including new dramas such as *Blue Stockings* by former examiner Jessica Swale, film adaptations such as a piece from *The Wizard of Oz* by L. Frank Baum, adaptations of classics such as *Alice in Wonderland*, *Black Beauty* and *Vanity Fair* and modern pieces from works such as *Cloud Busting* by Malorie Blackman and *Howl's Moving Castle* by Diana Wynne Jones.

*The LAMDA Verse and Prose Anthology* (Volume 18) is introduced by UK poet laureate Carol Ann Duffy and includes the set pieces from Speaking Verse and Prose examinations from Entry Level to Grade 8. It offers a breadth of material with a strong international dimension, including writers such as Katharine Kilalea (South Africa) and Derek Walcott (Caribbean). Learners will find prose selections from *I Shall Wear Midnight* by Terry Pratchett, *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and *Jamaica Inn* by Daphne Du Maurier. Work by poets such as Brian Patten, Siegfried Sassoon and Coral Rumble add to a rich and diverse mix to choose from.

## Knowledge Matters (Volume 2)

LAMDA *Knowledge Matters* (Volume 2) presents succinctly the information that learners are required to engage with in order to fulfil the requirements for the knowledge section in their Speaking Verse and Prose examinations. It also provides key biographical details for the authors listed in the *Verse and Prose Anthology* (Volume 18), including for example Al-Saddiq Al-Raddi, Charles Dickens and Joanne Harris.

## Musical Theatre, PCertLAM and LSDE

Please note that LAMDA Musical Theatre examinations, The LAMDA Certificate in Speech and Drama: Performance Studies (PCertLAM) and The LAMDA Diploma in Communication, Speech and Drama Education (LSDE) are not yet due for re-accreditation, so you should continue to use the current syllabus specifications for these qualifications.

There are a number of other, more minor changes in the examination regulations for all other subjects, so if you are preparing learners for LAMDA examinations, please do check the syllabuses thoroughly to ensure that all requirements are understood. Syllabuses can be ordered from LAMDA's online store -or downloaded in PDF format for free from the website: [www.lamda.org.uk](http://www.lamda.org.uk). As always, if you have any problems or require any support or assistance, please contact us by emailing [exams@lamda.org.uk](mailto:exams@lamda.org.uk) or calling 0844 847 0520. We hope all our teachers and learners enjoy the new requirements and look forward to seeing the results!



## The Oberon Book of Modern Monologues for Men 2

Edited by Catherine Weate

Oberon Books 2013,  
ISBN: 978-1-84943-436-2

Teachers should buy this book if only to get their students to read the good advice that Catherine Weate gives in her introduction to these monologues from authors published by Oberon Books and therefore readily available to read as texts.

Weate has sensibly authorised her choice of scenes into age-specific groups although some characters may cross these boundaries as they are not “fixed”. The groupings fall into “Teens”, “Twenties”, “Thirties” and “Forties Plus”. They are there to provide a starting point to explore the richness of the assembled texts.

Controversial content cannot be avoided in contemporary theatre texts. As all of Weate’s choices are taken from contemporary texts written in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, they replicate the attitudes and speech patterns of modern society. These are monologues which closely identify with the (often disturbing) world around us. The whole of Life’s experiences are crafted into these scenes. They give actors an incredible choice of texts. Different accents, genres and locations are all brought together in these age groupings.

In the “Teens” section *Desert Boy* introduces one to a teenager from South London gang culture. Homophobic bullying is explored in *Fit* and *Blackberry Trout Face* takes the audience to Liverpool as three teenagers struggle to cope on their own as their heroin addicted mother has abandoned them. This collection offers powerful characterisations for teenage boys to explore.

The final section is as diverse as the previous choices. The Tottenham riots of 2011 are recorded through spoken evidence dramatized by Gillian Slovo in a powerful and compelling monologue spoken by a man who was living with his family in a flat above the Carpetright Store which was set on fire by the rioters.

In this section too is a multi-faceted

monologue spoken directly to the audience by an African slave. Named Sancho, he eventually becomes an actor. This scene cleverly combines physical theatre with heartfelt reminiscences. It would make a compelling audition choice.

Weate has imaginatively brought together in her second volume over fifty new speeches written over the last fifteen years or so. This collection is a unique and useful resource for teachers involved in acting classes, festivals, Speech and Drama exams and workshops. Weate sets the plays and individual speeches in their dramatic and performance context. Teachers, search no more. Here are monologues to suit a variety of students and their interests.

Jeffrey Grenfell-Hill trained for the theatre at the Bristol Old Vic Theatre School and was chosen as student director in his final year. An examiner for LAMDA since 1972, he is an experienced teacher of A Level Theatre Studies.

### Shakespearean Verse Speaking, Text and Theatre Practice

By Abigail Rokison

Cambridge University  
Press 2010  
ISBN: 978 0 521 76434 6

Following a variety of often highly readable publications on performing and speaking of Shakespearean text, Abigail Rokison, herself a former highly successful professional actress and now a lecturer at the University of Cambridge, challenges in this scholarly book assumptions of recent theatre practitioners into Renaissance theatre performance. These include such notable worthies as John Barton and Peter Hall, Cicely Berry, Patsy Rodenberg and Giles Block whose most recent book we reviewed earlier this year.

All of these people have made invaluable contributions for actors striving to give life and inner vitality to the speaking of Elizabethan and Jacobean dramatic texts, most notably that of Shakespeare’s work. There is a tendency in human nature, however, to enthrone such experts to such an extent that their ideas and opinions no longer remain suggestions and possibilities, but become

unassailable dogmas, as immovable as a leaden adolescent from its bed at ten in the morning.

Hall acknowledges that “there is no one correct way of speaking the line” yet Tirzah Lowen suggests in her account of his directing of Antony and Cleopatra at the National Theatre, that he betrays rigidity in his views in practice with comments in rehearsal such as “*the rule is*”, “*wrong!*” Van Tassel in *Clues to Acting Shakespeare* asserts “*some directors believe that there are no rules applicable to performing Shakespeare, but that is certainly untrue... Specific skills needed to handle the language must be thought of as rules.*”

Rokison’s argument is that establishing rules in verse speaking is essentially reductive.

So what are these various “rules” and is there any evidence that they should be observed? One of the most frequently stated assertions is concerned with how shared pentameter lines should be delivered, that it is always necessary for the second actor to jump in right on cue without delay. Hall categorically states in his book *Exposed by the Mask* that “*the demands of these lines are absolute .....two actors have to make one line out of them – in tempo, tonality and rhythm irrespective of the mood and motive of each character.*” It is frequently asserted that the shared line is indicative of hasty interjection or heated emotional response and this may often seem a reasonable assumption.

However, Rokison, in examining the differences between Shakespeare’s early writing and his later, more developed use of the metre where enjambment becomes much more frequent, often leading to the caesura, or shared lines linking two longer speeches, there is a different effect aurally. In examining the later plays, where these shared lines become much more the norm, they appear more to maintain an easy flow of dialogue. As Patsy Rodenburg suggests, rather than indicating heated exchange, there is more a suggestion here of the two characters sharing a close connection between each other.

Another rule concerns line endings. Hall sees the single line as “an organic poetic unit” stating that each pentameter line as “a unit of poetic sense” and that the end of the line is

always the place to breathe. Rodenburg however, bemoans the tendency to stop at the end of the line even if the end of the thought continues through to the following one. She asserts that the thought is “signposted by punctuation.”

The problem is that the practitioners often provide conflicting advice, often in a misleadingly doctrinal way. They are immensely influential around the world, especially in the UK and the USA and it is important that this does not become confusing. There may well be reasonable assumption of shared lines and short lines intimating a character's inner turbulence but this, as Rokison's thorough research into nine plays which span the development of Shakespeare's work from *Romeo and Juliet* (1595) and *Richard II* (1596-7) through to *Coriolanus* (1608) and *The Winter's Tale* (1609) demonstrates, is by no means consistent. Similarly she charts the development of use of metrical irregularity which may indicate a character's emotional or mental state.

As Rokison observes in this book, there are inherent dangers to succumbing to the tyranny of punctuation since most of it may be compositionally imposed by the printer (even in some of the very earliest printed texts) as an aid to the reader rather than to the actor, and is very unlikely to be of any definitive authorial guidance to feeling or meaning. There is substantial variation in their observation of performance possibilities in the lineation and punctuation of their texts.

Some practitioners assume that the first folio editions are closest to Shakespeare's original guidance to actors in the way they should be interpreted, and ignore the quarto editions. Even these may very well be corrupted versions of the “foul” copies, none of which have even been discovered. The known compositor Crane, for example, in his printing of Middleton's play, *A Game of Chess*, increases the authorial punctuation by approximately one mark in every two lines, mostly in the use of commas. Crane also changes Middleton's colons to commas, which Middleton never used and adds parentheses of his own. On this assumption, we can therefore expect Crane to have altered the punctuation of Shakespeare's scripts by some 50%!

Much of this may seem academic to the general teacher helping their students to perform their Shakespearean pieces. However, I certainly would suggest that any directors of Shakespearean productions acquaint themselves with this well researched and illuminating book. Those teachers who wish to look deeper into the interpretative possibilities inherent in Shakespeare's work will be richly rewarded in reading it.

But wait... There's more.

There is much else of interest such as a review of what influences young Elizabethan schoolboys received in their education and study of prosody, the classical authors, notably Virgil (a great exponent of the short line) Horace, Ovid and Plautus.

There has been a recent tendency for such authors of books on Shakespearean verse speaking to write in a rather folksy, conversational manner, possibly to engender a less formal and off putting approach which might intimidate the those actors and readers disinclined to dry study. Rather similar, you might say, to a glass of Pina Colada in a Spanish bar. Rokison resists this approach. Her style is highly readable and yes, scholarly. Rather similar you might say, to a Hendricks gin with a slice of fresh cucumber and a dash of Fever Tree tonic.

**Paul Bench** (Reviews Editor for *Word Matters*) is an experienced voice and performance consultant who has specialised in literary theory. He is a tutor for the Voicecare Network, UK. A widely travelled examiner, he is an adjudicator with the British and International Federation of Festivals.

## Shadows in Deferment

By **Birgit Bunzel Linder**

**Proverse Hong Kong, 2012**  
ISBN: 978-988-8227-4

“Some people” my mother once said,  
“must journey far to know themselves.”  
But here, language and identity undress  
the heart.  
(From: A Mother Tongues in Exile)

And Birgit Bunzel Linder, a German born poet, has certainly journeyed far from her native land, via Taiwan and America and now a lecturer in Chinese and

Comparative Literary Studies at the City University, Hong Kong.

Yet, as the mother is implying in this poem, the journey is in both directions of the human continuum, inwardly as well as outwardly, if Wisdom and perception are to be savoured.

In this collection of poetry, Linder's poetic tentacles do indeed suggest that she has made inner excursions, imbibing cultural seascapes and landscapes from her journeys to far lands.

Let's take some glimpses:

*Sweet anise seed from Madurai,  
its taste a sudden surge of exultation,  
like milkweed butterflies in March.  
India, my imagination!*  
(From: India)

*Rain from the Imperial City  
falls on the just and unjust alike.  
(But I can still the past alive  
in your eyes).*  
(From: Imperial City)

*Our children now play  
Framed by square shadows.  
And the robin twitters in its wooden cage.*  
(From: How Hong Kong Was Made)

The majority of this poetry is in Free Verse and has an alluring delicacy of phrasing which, as with much good poetry, leaves a palimpsest on the verbal mind.

The book is an unusually captivating one, and illustrated with some compelling paintings.

## KINDERTRANSPORT – an author's guide to the play

**Diane Samuels**

**Nick Hern Books 2014 £9.99**  
ISBN – 978 1 84842 284 1

When I first saw Diane Samuels' play “Kindertransport” I was both fascinated and moved. I have subsequently used it successfully with students, so I welcomed the opportunity to read the author's own account of the play and its background.

“Kindertransport” explores the experiences of a young Jewish girl, Eva, who, at the outbreak of the second world war, is sent by her parents to the safety of England. Here she is cared for and finally adopted by the warm-hearted

Lil. We also see the adult Eva, now Evelyn, with her own daughter Faith, who searching in the attic, discovers her mother's background. Then there is Helga, Eva's mother, who finally comes to try to re-establish her relationship.

Diane Samuels writes about how she came to write the play, her research and choice of format. She also draws on the experiences of some of the actors who have performed the different roles and two directors who have staged the play. It makes fascinating reading, particularly if you are teaching or studying the play.

There is a wealth of information here, shared with an author's sense of involvement in her subject. For a student, it could be tempting to take the comments on the characters as definitive, but this is countered by the views of more than one actor on the main roles. I found the section on the Ratcatcher, the only male character in the play, particularly thought-provoking, and also appreciated the chapters on music and design. Students will find the ideas for approaching essays on the play helpful not only for "Kindertransport" but other texts.

Altogether an illuminating book and very accessible. But make sure you read the play first!.

Mia Ball

## The Performer's Anthology by Ken Pickering

Janus Publishing Company  
ISBN – 9 781 857 566437

Around the world in 144 anthology pieces! This is quite a compendious collection which will intrigue all the people author Ken Pickering wants to attract: he says it is "recommended for use in auditions, festivals and examinations in speech, drama, communication and theatre arts at all levels" and I would concur with this, with a few caveats.

Pickering also says that those who use the anthology will find additional help in the handbook *From Page to Performance*, by the same author. This is helpful, because, flawed treasure trove as it may well prove to be for many, this anthology comes across as perhaps more than the usual hotch

potch: (mixture, mixed bag, many meats, assortment, assemblage, collection, selection, jumble, ragbag, miscellany, medley, patchwork, pot-pourri, stew), and any help with its navigation will be useful.

Mr Pickering's collection of performable, read-aloud, work is a little difficult to follow – it lacks, to my mind, a simple editorial lay-out providing us with more thought-through categories and I think this may be the result of a degree of self-publishing without enough editorial in-put. But, saying that, I would definitely delve into this attractive little book, but delve is the word - fishing would also be apposite – delve away because that will define the ad hoc process of working out what to look out for, and where.

Foundation, Intermediate and Advanced are really the only defining categories – and the rest is left to you. Many of you may say: really, with an anthology, why not? However, if your students need material from a published source it is vital to be clear about which pieces meet exam or audition criteria. Some of the pieces are 'stand-alone' in that they are rather random in authorship: and some do, like Olivia Coleman's 'Grubs' stray rather dangerously near to doggerel.

And I'm not mad about such transatlantic phrasing as "from out your bovine heart" – M James, 'To A Cow' – this verges dangerously close to 'cowggerel'.

I continue to think that humorous verse for the young should still be brilliantly written and I was left with the impression that some of the work in this anthology is a little uneven. Placing the experienced writer beside the amateur risks making the latter show up quite garishly at times. I would add that quite a few excerpts are not attributed, and a poem like "In the Mirror" – a satire on anorexia, needs careful handling by teachers and mentors a like, so that it is not taken at 'face value' by a younger (female) readership. That said, the discerning teacher will find a great deal to ponder here, and I certainly found new and inspiring material, much of it with a truly international flavour.

Jo Murphy is an experienced drama teacher and youth theatre director of many years standing, she worked

at Bedales School and was Artistic Director of The Bedales Olivier Theatre for a decade and is now a GP Educator in Communication Skills for the NHS and teaches Speech and Lamda at the Sylvia Young Theatre School.

## PUTTING ON PANTO TO PAY FOR PINTER Henry Marshall Pantomimes at Salisbury Playhouse 1955 to 1985

By Chris Abbott

Hobnob Press 2012  
ISBN 978-1906978-26-6

I am afraid I found this a huge disappointment. The title suggested that it would be dealing with the background of Repertory Theatre as well as the pantomimes themselves but this is hardly mentioned. Instead it consists of 167 pages of reminiscences by actors who took part in the pantos, which frankly give one very little idea of the pantos themselves. There is some brief history of pantomime and the Harliquinade, then there are 24 pages of cast lists which will have little interest for the general reader and the book concludes with the Henry Marshall Gag Book, a reprinting of the original held in the Henry Marshall Archive which forms part of the Theatre Collection at the University of Bristol.

After thirty years many of these gags are frankly so dated that it would have little use as a source for the contemporary scripter of pantomime. The book may have local interest – I noted that Hobnob Press is based in Salisbury – and any actor who took part may indulge in a few moments of nostalgia.

I was left feeling that this was an opportunity which had frankly been wasted but I hope it brings back memories to some.

Penny Charteris is an adjudicator with The British and International Federation of Festivals, actress and previously Guildhall examiner. She is the membership registrar for the STSD. Penny spent seven years at The Palace Theatre, Watford, and played in the Jimmy Perry pantomimes there.

**The Society will be participating at  
“Inspire: Perform”**

**in February 2015 at Olympia Earls Court London.**

This event is on Friday 13th February, Saturday 14th February and Sunday 15th February. It is the STSD's second year taking part.

This year the aim is to focus on Teachers. The content will be to discuss curriculum needs and how to improve the learning experience of the student and other adults assisting in the classroom. As a Society it is planned to give workshops and seminars to inspire the classroom experience for all.

HELP will be requested from colleagues to ensure the STSD presence will be seen and felt at this Event.

**contact:**

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**www.stsd.org + www.performshow.co.uk**

**STSD  
LONDON DEVELOPMENT WEEKEND**

**Friday 21st and 22nd August 2015**

at two venues

**Friday 21st August**

All day workshop followed by evening performance at the National Theatre.

**Saturday 22nd August**

Morning workshop followed by a matinee performance at the Shakespeare Globe.

\* Should numbers increase a second workshop will take place in the afternoon at one or other of the venues.

The cost of this Conference includes all workshops and theatre performances.  
£125.00 per person approx.

This is a non-residential conference giving you the opportunity to book the type of accommodation and location you prefer. For your convenience a list with some hotels and university accommodation not far from either venue will be attached.

**\* Further details of Workshop and Theatre programmes will be available early 2015.**

**Contact:**

**Conference Organiser: Helena Duncan**

**email: helena4duncan@gmail.com**