



Newsletter – March 2012

Hello. Hargreaves at your service. I'm afraid that upon hearing that we are to have not one but three ladies paying us a visit this month my perennially-infuriating, mincing fop of a master has withdrawn to the bathroom to make himself 'presentable'. So, while that cricket-obsessed, half-witted, flannel-wearing buffoon irons his fringe and bathes his chin in *Eau de Cologne* it leaves yours truly to announce the cast for Tom 'Strasz' Straszewski's forthcoming production of *The Merry Wives of Windsor...*

Falstaff- Clive Lyons
Mistress Ford- Clancy McMullan
Mistress Page- Victoria Delaney
Page- Tony Bower
Ford- Ben Sawyer
Anne Page- Katy Devine
Shallow- Jeremy Muldowney
Slender- TBA
Caius- Richard Johnston
Fenton- Glen Collier
Hugh Evans- Sam Valentine
Host- TBA.
Quickly- Kayleigh Oliver
Bardolph- Brenton Spyker
Pistol- Mark Simmonds
Nym- Dave Malinsky
John Rugby- Sarah Redhead
Simple- Joseph Bower

Hargreaves! What are you doing at my writing desk?! Take your hands off my quill this instant you despicable cur! This is England not Europe! Well, is everything ready? Have you washed the carpets? The curtains? Polished all the glassware? Have the windows been cleaned? Inside and out? What about the banisters? Door handles? Window frames? Skirting boards? Good. Well it seems...wait a moment...why are there teeth-marks on the chaise longue?! Has Freddi been in here?! There are bite-marks on the sideboard as well! And my Great-Aunt Agatha's occasional table! Oh, this is all too much. I can feel my life ebbing away as I speak. Here I am, preparing to entertain three ladies only to find that my furniture has been used as a three-course meal. What do you mean nervous? I'm not in the least bit nervous Hargreaves you arrant rogue! I am not sweating! What you see glistening upon my brow is not perspiration but beads of anticipation. Was that the doorbell?! I think my heart just skipped a beat! Well answer it you fool! No, not my heart the door! Right then. Deep breaths. Think only of Michael Atherton in Johannesburg in the winter of 1995. 185 runs. 492 balls. 643 minutes. Think fortitude. Think resilience. Think coolness under pressure. And remember, they're probably more nervous than... footsteps on the hall floor! Getting closer! Getting quicker! Almost in mockery of my racing heart! The door opens. Slowly. So very slowly. Hargreaves appears and coughs gently to gain my attention. I meet his gaze and nod with a nobility that belies my inner-turmoil.

Hargreaves: "*Miss Katy Devine*"



Miss Devine! Welcome to the YSP newsletter. May I say that you're looking quite... divine this evening. No, please don't apologise for being late. To tell you the truth I'd completely forgotten that you were coming. Can I get you a drink? Why of course. Hargreaves, bring us a small gin and tonic and a pint of super-strength ale. Pop a slice of lime in my g&t would you? Please take a seat my dear Miss Devine. I apologise for the wood-chippings. Yes they do look a little like teeth-marks don't they? Such is the modern world of interior design. Ah, thank you Hargreaves.

Well then my dear Katy. You don't mind if I call you Katy do you? Oh. Miss Devine you will be familiar to many of our readers (love and kisses to you all) for your multiple roles in *Troilus and Cressida*. But pray tell us a little about your other performances. On the stage that is.

I love performing (not sure if you've noticed!), and enjoy doing lots of different things. But I loved playing Portia in *The Merchant of Venice* and Mercutio in *Romeo and Juliet*. I've also done a few musicals, I played Nancy in *Oliver!* And have been in *Kiss Me Kate*, *Tommy* and in *Joseph and his Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*. But more recently I was in York Horror Tour's production of *Jekyll and Hyde* where I had my guts pulled out every night! Draco Malfoy in *A Very Potter Musical* (which was awesome!!) and in Six Lips' production of *Tilling*.

Quite a CV. What, another? Already? Oh very well. Another pint... two... three pints of unfeasibly strong ale for our guest if you please. Now where was I? Oh yes...like the aforementioned Greek-Trojan epic, *Merry Wives* is one of Shakespeare's lesser known works. Sell it to us Devine!

Well it's hilarious! (Mad French doctor, Falstaff dressing up as a woman! – what more could you ask for).

No one dies – Always a positive!

There are dancing fairies in the forest.

And a wedding!

Something for everyone!

Thank you Hargreaves. Yes you'd better open another crate. She's worse than Gordon. Well Miss Devine, in your time you've played quite a few... how can I put this delicately... ladies of easy virtue. Anne Page must be a pleasant departure for you? Or have you discovered a darker side to her character?

Well it does make a pleasant change – and I feel I'm defiantly climbing the social ladder!

But she's a great part because she's sort of a practical Juliet. She definitely knows that her parents' choices for marriage are ridiculous, but she also knows that Fenton is poor and is probably after her for her money. Despite being in love with him, she decides not to elope – so I like that she's sensible.

But I also love it at the end of the play, when she's had enough of her parents plans to have Caius and Slender steal her away, she sort of says 'screw it!' and elopes with Fenton.

Really Miss Devine! I know that you've had a few but try not to spoil it. In the last few months you've been disembowelled by Mr Hyde, seen your friend and mistress used as a bargaining chip between the Greeks and Trojans and are now being chased by a country yokel and an insane French doctor. Did you do something awful in a past life?

I don't think so!

It must be my innocent face that people love to put in a bad situation (maybe!?!?!)

Indeed. And what are the three best things about performing Shakespeare in the open air?

That you get to take it out of the confines of a theatre makes it a bit different. I saw an outdoor performance of *Othello*, being outdoors just added to the whole play – it was wonderful!

You can bring a picnic to the performance.

The beautiful weather – hopefully!

Well, thank you for that my dear Devine. Bring the lady some more ale Hargreaves. She's starting to twitch. But is that the doorbell I hear? It certainly is. Time to turn to another page (ahem).

Hargreaves: "*Victoria Delaney*"



Salutations my dear Delaney! Welcome to my humble abode. I have to say that you look positively enchanting. Can I get you a drink? It would be a pleasure. Hargreaves, could you bring us two large glasses of Merlot. And for myself? Another gin and tonic. And please inform Devine that if she must sing rugby songs could she please go out on to the veranda? Please take a seat Victoria. May I call you Victoria? Oh. Well, please take a seat my dear Delaney. Yes, they do look a little like teeth-marks don't they? But in fact they are a rare period detail. Ah, thank you Hargreaves.

As a YSP debutante you carry with you the pervading, seductive aroma of mystique. But pray tell us a little about yourself and your theatrical background?

I am sorely tempted not to answer this question. The intrigue of the unknown is much more fascinating than anything I could divulge... So divulge I will not...

A woman after my own heart. Isn't it a positive delight when enigmas such as our good selves get together? What is the collective noun for a group of enigmas? A fascination perhaps? Yes, a fascination of enigmas. But I digress. Please tell us a little about *Merry Wives* and why we would be fools to ourselves to miss it.

It will be a treat for the senses. A feast for eyes and ears. We will warm the cockles of your heart with some good old fashioned classic comedy.

Sounds like a Phil Tuffnell over. This I have to see. What? More wine? Very well. You heard the lady Hargreaves. But what of Mistress Page? Disseminate at your will.

I am honoured to be one half of the merry wives duo. The scenes played out with the gorgeous Mistress Ford, Falstaff and myself are my absolute favourites, I haven't got through a rehearsal yet without dissolving into fits of giggles.

Thank you Hargreaves. Yes, you'd better get another bottle from the cellar. Well, my dear Delaney is your newly adopted daughter the *divine* Katy *Divine* Devine behaving herself?

Katy is as divine as her name would suggest. Being born of the merry stock, her merriment does need tailoring from time to time, but she wouldn't be my beautiful Nan without such a quality.

I'll take your word for it. For at this very moment she's swinging from the chandeliers and singing "Swing low, Sweet Chariot". And to conclude what are the three best things about performing Shakespeare in the open air?

Music, Birdsong and laughs-a-plenty (if we do our job properly!)

Thank you my dear Delaney. Yes, of course you can have another two glasses. Do the honours would you Hargreaves. Ah, there goes the doorbell. Time for our third visitor...

Hargreaves: "*Clancy McMullan*"



My dear McMullan! Delighted you could make it. May I say that you look quite pulchritudinous this evening. Why you've brought a bottle of Scotch! How kind of you! Oh, I see. Are you sure you wouldn't prefer a glass? No? Oh well. Just another gin and

tonic for myself then Hargreaves. Please take a seat my dear Clancy. May I call you Clancy? Oh. Well, please take a seat my dear McMullan. Yes, they do look a little like teeth-marks don't they? No, those are marks inflicted during the storming of the Bastille. Thank you Hargreaves.

You shall soon be gracing the stage as a rather merry wife, but pray tell us a little about your previous theatrical exploits.

It's all quite eclectic really! I've had great fun with Shakespeare – having played Mark Anthony, (*Julius Caesar*); Viola, (*Twelfth Night*); and most recently the fabulous Cassandra in YSP's very own *Troilus and Cressida*. I spent more years than I care to mention dancing, which ultimately lead to my cavorting around the stage of *Much Ado* last summer with a somewhat bewildered Ben Sawyer, (aka Ford, my hubbie in this – at least he knows what he's let himself in for!). The Mock Turtle, in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*; Clare in *Daisy Pulls it Off*; a few comedy sketches; poetry recitals and a dash of street theatre.

Tell us a little about Mistress Ford.

In rehearsal the other day, Victoria, (Mistress Page), said to me: 'You wouldn't want to take these two on, would you?' And she's right! The Mistresses Ford and Page are an invincible pair – heaven help Falstaff and Ford!

Mistress Ford is spirited and smart. She is both demure and gregarious – depending on the company she keeps. She prizes her reputation and, therefore, is outraged at Falstaff's audacity. As a result, she uses her feminine wiles to play him whilst teaching her husband a lesson he's not likely to forget too!

Needless to say, I'm having a ball!

Hargreaves! What was that violent report?! Well please be so kind as to tell Delaney that if she must play with my blunderbuss I can suggest several more apposite targets than my prize marrow. Freddi springs instantly to mind. Well, my dear McMullan, what's it like being married to Ben *The Sauce Sawyer*?

Great fun – although I think that's pretty one-sided as he does lose face at my hand a number of times!

After your exploits on *Troilus and Cressida* you have gained something of a reputation for daredevil stunts. Is it true that *Merry Wives* will see you flying through a ring of fire on a Harley Davidson while juggling half a dozen copies of Steve Waugh's classic autobiography *Out of my Comfort Zone*?

Well, I'm afraid you've been a little misinformed. All I'm at liberty to say is that it is true I've managed to contact Evel Knievel from beyond the grave and we're working on a truly death-defying stunt for *Merry Wives* that does involve a ring of fire; a steep trajectory; and a fat man in a basket.

I shall look forward to it! And what are the three best things about performing Shakespeare in the open air?

There is nothing more ‘English’ to me than a glorious summer’s day; so combining the bard with picnics; sunshine; and brollies(!) is the perfect summer cocktail.

A cocktail you say? What a splendid idea! Well, if you can’t beat them join them that’s what I say. Hargreaves, four pints of gin if you will. Now, who fancies a game of Twister?

*Dialogue So Delicious It Could Have Been Written By The Bard
Himself*

Number 4: Sir Henry Rawlinson in ‘Sir Henry at Rawlinson End’

“If I had all the money I’d spent on drink, I’d spend it on drink”

April’s Fundraiser

There’s one month to go to until the YSP’s Shakespeare’s birthday fundraising event, but it’s not too late to get involved. We have King’s Square booked for a day of performance on April 22nd and if you’d like to direct an extract from a Shakespeare play, perform a speech, recite a sonnet, sing something Shakespearean or anything else you can think of, we have an open stage waiting for you.

Please get in touch at b.sawyer@btinternet.com if you want to be involved in this rather special occasion.

He’s Off To The Beeb

Don’t miss our very own precocious Patroclus James Osman who will be appearing in BBC 2’s *Off by Heart Shakespeare* on 24th April. More news to follow next month...



“Well, if it’s not BBC 1 I suppose BBC 2 will have to do”

**A date for your diary: *Venus and Adonis* at Pocklington Arts Centre on
25th April 2012**

Julia Atkinson writes:

I’m delighted to announce that YSP’s production of *Venus and Adonis*, our first foray into the world of Shakespeare’s narrative poems, will be performed at Pocklington Arts Centre Studio on Wednesday 25th April. Readers Andy Curry (Richard of Gloucester in *Henry VI*) and Gemma Sharp (Beatrice in *Much Ado About Nothing*) will be joined by lutenist Nicki Andronikou, and the show also features projected images drawn from 3000 years of Western art. Tickets are £10 – which includes a glass of wine and a canapé – and are available from:

Pocklington Arts Centre Box Office: 01759 301547

Or online at: www.pocklingtonartscentre.co.uk

Written between 1592 and 1594 when the theatres were closed due to an outbreak of plague, *Venus and Adonis* was by Elizabethan standards a huge bestseller. It went through sixteen editions and was widely praised and imitated, yet wasn’t included in the iconic *First Folio* of 1623. But by the middle of the seventeenth century public and critical interest in Shakespeare’s non-dramatic works had waned; although the *Sonnets* came back into favour during the nineteenth century, it seemed that *Venus and Adonis* was doomed to languish unread – or at least unappreciated – in the back of the *Complete Works*. However, in the 1940s the poem was rescued from obscurity by a revival of interest in Shakespeare’s previously neglected early works such as *Love’s Labours’ Lost*.

I have to admit that I hadn’t read *Venus and Adonis* until 2006, when I had the good fortune to see the RSC/Little Angel Theatre co-production of the poem as a Japanese-inspired “Masque For Puppets”. For the first time I realized that the poem, most of which takes the

form of a dialogue between the protagonists, is in fact a play in miniature. Its ornate language and mixture of comedy and tragedy is echoed in several early plays, most notably *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Romeo and Juliet*. Venus' passion for the mortal Adonis, who is totally indifferent to her seductive wiles and would much rather go hunting with his friends, is reminiscent of Titania's magically-inspired love for Bottom; yet her grief over Adonis' abandonment and eventual death is as heartfelt as that of Juliet for Romeo.

My first task when adapting *Venus and Adonis* for performance was to cut the poem to a manageable length and concentrate on drama rather than exposition, which inevitably meant that many wonderful lines had to be discarded. Fortunately there is no lack of wonderful lines in *Venus and Adonis*! The result, which has a running time of approximately one hour, is a distilled version of the original to which I've added projected images and the music of John Dowland (played live by our lutenist Nicki Andronikou). I hope to see you at Pocklington for what promises to be an unusual and enjoyable evening!

Julia Atkinson

Breaking News

Did you see Paul Toy's *Troilus and Cressida*? Were you, like so many, utterly enchanted by the music? If so you'll be delighted to learn that many of your favourite Greeks and Trojans have joined forces to record a full-length album! "Now That's What I Call...*Music*?" is currently available on wax cylinder in all good record shops.

Full Tracklist:

The Myrmidons – "The Boys Are Back In Town"

Menelaus – "The More You Ignore Me, The Closer I Get"

Agamemnon – "He Ain't Heavy... He's My Brother"

Pandarus – "She Loves You"

Thersites – "The Fool On The Hill"

Ajax – "Pretty Vacant"

Nestor – "If I Could Turn Back Time"

Achilles – "Mad About The Boy"

Paris – "Love is a Battlefield"

Helen – "Orinoco Flow"

Cassandra – "I Can See For Miles"

Aeneas – "Knockin' On Heaven's Door"

Troilus – “Love Will Tear Us Apart”

Cressida – “Ever Fallen In Love (With Someone You Shouldn’t’ve)”

Diomedes – “Tainted Love”

Patroclus – “Carry that Weight”

Hector – “The First Cut is the Deepest”

Andromache – “Stand by Your Man”

Ulysses – “The NeverEnding Story”

The Myrmidons – “The Boys Are Back In Town (Reprise)”



Dancing Queen. Ulysses has his copy. Have you?

Hello. Hargreaves here once again. I'm carrying the newsletter this month aren't I? Needless to say that my feckless master's pathetic attempts at seduction proved to be the very quintessence of futility. The ladies have long since gone and the gin-soaked fool is now trying to console himself by recreating Sir Ian Botham's unbeaten 149 at Headingley in 1981 with a stick of rhubarb, three baguettes and some strategically-placed garden gnomes. Pathetic really isn't it? Goodbye.

“Why, sir, for my part, I say the gentleman had drunk himself out of his five sentences”

The Merry Wives of Windsor, Act I Scene 1

Feedback, questions, propositions and general abuse to mwignall79@hotmail.com