

York Shakespeare Project Newsletter



March 2009

“Beware the ides of March!”

Julius Caesar

It's started! Mark Smith, our esteemed director says “rehearsals have got off to a good start! It was exciting to see our cast of thousands at the readthrough, which clocked in at a nice pacy 2hrs15. So far we've been doing character and text work with some of the conspirators - working on building up the conspiracy from grassroots level. Things are really going to kick off this weekend, when Julius gets properly involved.

“We still need to fill the role of Lucius, Brutus's servant boy, so if anyone knows any reliable, young-looking (13- to 17-year-old?) boys, preferably with some musical ability, please let me know (mkdsmith@gmail.com).

“I've been developing set design ideas with our designer, and we'll also soon have images ready to go for advertisement purposes. It's all rather thrilling!”

Exciting news!

Spring Fundraiser

As you know by now, the YSP are having our annual fundraiser on Saturday 25 April, and this year we're OUTSIDE and IN TOWN and ACTING IN FRONT OF THE PUBLIC!

We're gonna be just outside St Michael-Le-Belfry and the timetable is approximately as follows

6-9 readathon

9 - 9.30 Musical Shakespeare

9.30 - 10.15 witches from MacBeth's agony hour, ask them anything, don't be tricked by the answer

10.15 - 10.30 Julius Caesar trailer

10.30 - 12.30 Romeo and Juliet actathon

12.30 - 1.30 busking Shakespeare

1.30 - 2.00 Midsummer Night's Dream, War of the Roses

2.00 - 2.10 Julius Caesar trailer

2.10 - 2.45 The return of the MacBeth Witches and Musical Shakespeare

2.45 - 4.00 slack time if running late and then busking Shakespeare

4.00 - 6.00 Macbeth actathon

6.00 - 6.30 Midsummer Night's Dream, War of the Roses

6.30 - 12.30 White Swan, and saying 'I'm not going to the Willow whatever happens'.

12.30 - going to the Willow and oblivion

The actothons will be us, and passers-by reading from the scripts of plays, but acting them as well, so entering, exiting, kissing, killing and all that malarkey. It'll be fast and lively. The Julius Caesar bits will be like cinema trailers to entice people to come and see it, so if you can think of any fab taglines for it let us know. Busking is anything you want to do! If there's a scene or a speech you've always wanted to do but never been cast or can't be bothered with the rest of it, this is your chance! Bring along a script, grab anyone else you need and let rip! Musical Shakespeare: if you play an instrument or sing and have time for a couple of practices, come belt songs from the plays to the unsuspecting public. We'll find Shakespearian themes for the classics too; Juliet sings her version of 'I Will Survive', Iago is Mr Brightside, etc.

What we need to know now, is which bits do you want to be involved in? The more people we have the more fun it'll be for all, so we want everyone there for a bit, and certainly the post-match drinking. Please email me on mr.alistair@talk21.com and let me know either the hours that you want to do, or any parts that you'd like to do, or if you have any questions to ask. And then come along, bring a costume, bring props, bring yourself, bring me a present as it's my birthday that day and we'll all be putting the FUN into FUNDRAISER, YEAY!

Julius Caesar himself

It's Robin's turn to sit the Newsletter Examination...

What are you most looking forward to about playing this part?

I remember like Harry Secombe, I always longed "To rule the World" and put everything to right and I suppose Caesar was like that; only he damn nearly did!! So what better role could there be for a young school boy to go for. I first tried for the part at age 11 only to be cast as 4000th pleb in dirty Toga stage left, while my Friend and "Head Boy" John Bull (What a ludicrously jingoistic name for a 12 year old) got cast as Caesar and nightly got gloriously slaughtered, covered in Kensington Gore and was then carried, yes carried, offstage at shoulder height by the First Fifteen scrimmage pack. I'm not bitter.

Later I had to do Caesar at "O" level and this meant a trip to the local Theatre to see a professional touring production of the Bard's Work. It was glorious and once again I ate my heart out, but this time I wanted to be a conspirator, Brutus at least, so that I too could drive the point home and let the damned dictator know what I felt. I suppose I was leaning towards Socialism in those halcyon days. A good deal later I auditioned for and much to my surprise got, Marc Antony with a "Settlement" production here in York. Wow, I had finally arrived, Cassius was no lesser an Actor than the great late "John White". Determined to put in a creditable performance, I learnt the whole of Antony's part before first rehearsal. After 2 rehearsals the production was cancelled as the Director had, for personal reasons, handed in his notice and no other Director could be found!!

So finally, perhaps finally, I will be able to lay Caesar's Ghost to rest. Probably quite literally.

What are the biggest challenges you see in being Julius Caesar?

I expect this will prove to be the Death Scene. Will I get to rant and rave, thrashing ignobly around the stage liberally daubing the conspirators with my noble blood and drawing out a heart wrenching, tear jerking, show stopping, standing ovation of a ne'er-to-be-forgotten "ET TU BRUTE"....? I doubt it. In fact, I shall very much be in the capable hands of our Director, Mark, and can only pray and trust in him to ensure I do not die to gales of laughter and in any way campily. Also the portrayal of a man so sure of his divine right to rule will be quite a big enough challenge on its own.

I wonder if, between Senate and Sardiis, I could sample every one of the Tap and Spile's real ales over the performance period.

Are there any other parts you want to play in your career and why?

After acting for more than 50 years now I would have expected to have been able to say that there were no particular parts left I want to do, but that ain't necessarily so. Authors keep on writing and the "To Do" parts keep appearing.

Of the Bard's works, I would still like to play Lear and also Sir John Falstaff. However I expect the learning they entail could prove rather a daunting challenge these days.

So perhaps Quasimodo, the Hunch Back of Notre Dame would be more my forte. All he has to remember is "Sanctuary, Sanctuary" in whatever accent he likes. Bliss!

I should like to get my teeth into the part of Hannibal Lector in the musical version of "Silence of the Lambs" on ice. God in the York cycle of Mystery Plays has a certain attraction still and, having played quite a few biblical characters already, I expect God would be nearer my age group!

I do like the pre, inter and post war heroes such as Hannay, Biggles, Sexton Blake and Bulldog Drummond. All the parts played by Guinness in "Kind Hearts and Coronets" would be a delightful challenge.

But actually I would like to play the Psychiatrist Martin Dysart in Equus - any one fancy directing it?

Meanwhile, those of us reclining languidly and loudly in Robin's fanclub WILL NOT REST until we've seen the excellent Mr Sanger play Mr Toad in "The Wind in the Willows!"

Gentle advance reminder

Next month in April it's subs time, so if you're going to see Sally (at rehearsals? fundraiser?) make sure you have your cash/chequebooks at the ready....

I've never felt so alive

Usual thing, any comments, contributions or requests for photos of my legs, please email me at mr.alistair@talk21.com.

Pip pip!