

*York  
Shakespeare  
Project*

2010-2011 Newsletter No 5 February Issue

**KEITH CARTMELL  
1957 - 2011**



It was with great sadness that we heard of the passing of Keith Cartmell in January 2011, whose glorious Bottom was a joy to so many. Keith and his family, Heather, Emily and Sophie were with us for *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in 2006 in Rowntree Park.

He gave a magnificent performance as Bottom, director Mark France calling it, "the funniest Bottom that I ever saw". He brought enormous wit, humanity and intelligence to the part as well as wringing every last laugh that was to be had from the script, before creating plenty more of his own! When Rowntree Park was full and the laughter rolled down the slope as his Pyramus wooed Thisbe at the Duke's wedding party, there was no better place to be on this earth. Many people most fondly remember the end of the first half when ass-headed Bottom emerged from Titania's bower smoking a cigarette, looking perplexed and suggested the audience took a 20 minute break to recover from recent developments.

Keith was new to the area and to YSP, and with his whole family joining in too, he quickly became the heart of the production both as an actor and a person. Extremely experienced (having acted with John Simm no less), he took direction brilliantly as well as always contributing his own ideas, and like all the best actors realised that great performances are built by working generously and collaboratively with those around you as well as through your own hard work, talent and attention to detail. One of Mark's abiding memories from that Summer was the way in which Keith, along with Audrie Woodhouse, took responsibility for warming the company up every night ready for the show, and getting the whole cast in the mood and up for it. Although Mark wasn't able to attend every performance of the run, he knew that with Keith there leading the company, the show would be brilliant every night. We all greatly anticipated working with him again.

It was a production all of those involved with were hugely proud of, and we were deeply touched that he said it was one of the most enjoyable productions and cast that he had ever worked with, and a lot of this group spirit came from him, and his family. One of the most enjoyable nights of the play was strangely when it was rained off, and the cast decamped to the Black Swan with friends who had been hoping to see it that night and performed it roughly, very roughly after a few pints. Some of Keith's friends were there for that, and still mention it when we meet.

As a friend, he was an utter delight, taking great pleasure in the finest things in life, his family, his friends, telling funny stories and drinking excellent pints of bitter or single malt whisky. It was rare that a visit from the Cartmells wouldn't involve a mysterious find of a bottle of Highland Park, and an equally mysterious empty bottle the following morning. He was a friend to all the cast and crew and provided excellent champagne for the last night party boat ride.

Tragically, he was diagnosed with Motor Neurone Disease before the *Henry VI* plays the following summer, and did not act again. He came to see the shows and was both fulsome in his praise and honest in his criticism, which was greatly valued and respected by the director, Mark France.

Despite his diagnosis he still lived life to the full, visiting New York, seeing Blackpool reach the Premier League at Wembley, remaining devoted to the theatre

with trips to the RSC to see David Tennent as Hamlet and opera at Covent Garden, and raising thousands for the Motor Neurone Disease Association. His family were an amazing source of strength to him, and we hope to see them with us again in future and our love is with them. Keith was a fine actor and a finer person and will be much missed.

*By Alistair Carr and Mark France*

If you would like to make a donation to the **Motor Neurone Disease Association**, please do so [here](#). The Association gave Keith and Heather, and the whole family, a tremendous amount of support over the last few years.

## **Much *Hoo Ha* About A Director (3)**

Out of eleven applicants to direct our next production *Much Ado About Nothing*, six were shortlisted for interview and were also asked to direct a short scene from the play. Big thanks to Robbie Swale, Mark Burghagen, Ged Murray, Alexandra Darlington, Toby Gordon and Jenny Carr for stepping up to be acting stooges for this. Even bigger thanks to the Appointment of Director sub-committee members, Margaret Hillier, Sam Valentine and Julia Atkinson who have organised and managed the recruitment process. We expect to be able to make an important announcement very soon...

### **Coming soon:**

**Pinteresque** Written and inspired by Harold Pinter. 'A potent mix of power games, politics and laughter presented by Old Bomb Theatre'. Theatre Royal Studio. Feat: directing by Cecily Boys & Morag Galloway; performances by Margaret Hillier, Jamie Searle, Matt Pattison, Elaine Innes, Tim Holman, Jenny Carr. Opens 16<sup>th</sup> February. Support new writing!

**The Gondoliers** The University of York Gilbert and Sullivan Society. Central Hall, University of York. Feat: Esme 'The Voice' Wise. 24<sup>th</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup> February. Tickets on sale soon [here](#).

**Ghosts** Ibsen. Presented by York Settlement and Community Players. The Amelia Bullmore version. Theatre Royal Studio. Feat: Andy Love, director, Matthew Wignall and Maurice Crichton. Booking now. Opens March 2nd.

**Pirates of Penzance Singalong** Jorvik Gilbert and Sullivan Company. Joseph Rowntree Theatre. Feat: Esme 'The Welsh' Wise and Sam 'the Money' Valentine. 19<sup>th</sup> March. Tickets on the door.

**The Slipper and The Rose: The Real Story of Cinderella.** York Musical Theatre Company. York Theatre Royal. Feat: all singing all dancing Prince Toby Gordon from 12<sup>th</sup> April.



### UPDATE ON RSC OPEN STAGES 2011-2012

Ian Wainwright, Producer RSC Open Stages, has responded to some preliminary queries we put to him very favourably:

‘We would be very pleased to have all your productions that are occurring within the time scale of the project as RSC Open Stages badged productions.’

The timescale of the Open Stages Project is March 2011 to December 2012. So our plans for *Much Ado, Troilus and Cressida*, and 2 further productions in 2012 would all be within that timescale. A single Open Stages application setting out our detailed plans for *Much* is all that will be required.

‘I would ask you to follow up your application with a more detailed description of each production as you firm up the details.’

As for getting to perform in a Shakespeare ‘showcase’ at The Sage, Gateshead or Contact Theatre, Manchester: the sooner we have an indication of exactly when such a showcase might take place, the more effective our planning can be. In particular we can decide what production we most want to pitch at the showcase event.

‘I will try and let groups know as soon as possible about dates. I’m having a meeting with the partner theatres in mid February when we should get a good idea.’

The challenge now for YSP is to decide what productions to stage in 2012 with Open Stages showcasing sometime between April and June and the York 2012 Mystery Plays in the Museum Gardens in August.

Not yet up to speed with Open Stages? Have a look at what it is all about [here](#).

## ***FUNDRAISER 9<sup>th</sup> APRIL***

### ***Fundraiser Tsar Ben Sawyer writes...***

Our Shakespeare's birthday fundraising extravaganza is now bearing down on the city like a huge iambic juggernaut. The YSP will be taking to the streets on the 9th of April (Not the bard's official birthday alas, but frankly records from that period are sketchy at best...) for a day of public performance in King's Square. Helen Wilson, Lara Pattison, Luca Wollny, Matt Simpson, Tom Straszewski and Mr Shakespeare himself Jeremy Muldowney are all currently hard at work developing their contributions to the big day, so a hearty thank you to every one of them.

And it doesn't end there. Two weeks after that, our fearless leader Janet Looker will be rising at some ungodly hour of the morning to lead a band of plucky souls in a pre-dawn sponsored reading. Spare a thought for them as you sleep off the previous night's debauchery.

But, gentle reader, it is not too late to make your own presence felt. If you have a burning desire to direct or act in a piece of Shakespearean street theatre, feel free to get in touch before the rehearsal time runs out! In any case, we hope to see you on the day, which promises music, drama, merriment and furiously rattled collecting tins (These swanky open-air venues don't pay for themselves you know...)

### ***Helen Wilson writes...***

Helen 'Mistress Quickly' Wilson will be directing a comic extract from *Twelfth Night*. **STOP PRESS** Helen is still looking for men. Apparently.

If you're at all interested, please contact Helen on [helensallywilson@aol.com](mailto:helensallywilson@aol.com) as soon as possible. There will be an informal audition. Rehearsals will probably start at the beginning of March, probably one or two a week. Men still wanted!

### ***Matt Simpson writes...***

Matt Simpson writes: I am looking for actors for a fun segment of the April YSP fundraiser. The actors will prepare several scenes, which are chosen at random by a member of the audience and performed ad-hoc. The segment will be used as a filler between other scenes as well as a couple of longer stints, so actors would need to be available for the whole day.

I'm looking at the moment for **two male and two female actors**, any age, to learn three shortish scenes each (probably two dialogues and a soliloquy - to be decided, so if you have any favourite bits let me know).

In other news... **Carpenter required!** Well, not necessarily a proper professional carpenter, but someone with some spare time, a certain amount of joinery skill and somewhere to build stuff, who wouldn't mind donating a bit of time to knock together something fairly simple for the segment.

In either case, please contact [simpsonj@gmail.com](mailto:simpsonj@gmail.com) Thanks! Matt

### ***Strasz writes...***

I will be directing a production of "The most lamentable comedy, and most cruel death of Pyramus and Thisbe" better known as the Rude Mechanical's play from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. **STOP PRESS** Women still wanted. Ahem.

If you're at all interested, please contact me on [gentleman.tom@gmail.com](mailto:gentleman.tom@gmail.com). We'll start rehearsals in the week beginning 14th March, probably one or two a week. I'd like to get the cast in place by the end of February (at the latest) so lines can be learned in advance. In the case of an overwhelming number of applications, I'll do a quick audition session, but if you have a particular part you want to play let me know. Tom Straszewski.

## **Shakespeare in 100 treasures: Number 6**

### **Philip Henslowe's Props**

Theatrical impresario, Philip Henslowe was a contemporary of Shakespeare. You may know him best as Geoffrey Rush in *Shakespeare in Love*. He left records which are held by Dulwich College including his 'diary', an accounts book which famously includes the list of props owned by the Lord Admiral's Men on 10th March 1598: a key document in any understanding of Elizabethan Theatre and an entertaining read. So if you missed the the RSC Costume sale

(and the opportunity to buy David Tennant's slippers) the closest we can get to what a similar sale might have included in Shakespeare's day is Henslowe's list which concludes thus:

i lyone, ii lyon heades, i great horse with his leages, i sack-bute.  
i whell and frame in the Sege of London.  
i paire of rowghte gloves.  
i poopes miter.  
iii Imperial crownes, i playne crowne.  
i gostes crown, i crown with a sone.  
i frame for the heading in Black Jone.  
i black dogge.  
i cauderm for the Jewe.

# YSP Go To Stratford?



Last year Robbie Swale did some work to see if YSP could take *Henry IV* to perform in an outdoor space at Stratford-upon-Avon known as The Dell.

## **\*\*A Special Moment\*\***

A special moment for Robbie Swale for providing the initial drive for this venture. Thank you Robbie!

In a nutshell The Dell (above) is an outdoor performance space run by the RSC between June and August at weekends only. It is much like the space we are going to use in Rowntree Park. All that the RSC offer is the space itself, some publicity and a vocal warm up. Last year's line up at The Dell, (giving some idea of the publicity arrangements) can still be viewed [here](#). This year, for the first time the RSC will also offer a skills session in Stratford (for our director plus 1) on one of 4 weekends in May. They suggest performances last no more than an hour and a half, without an interval. We can't charge for ticketys but we can take a collection.

So the question for us is - do we fancy it. We do. Indeed we do.

Realistic possible dates:

18/19 June before we open in York

16/17 July or 30/31 July after we close in York

Applications must be in by 14th March though RSC also say 'first come first served'.

We plan to apply and all being well, we will break new ground by taking a YSP production out of Yorkshire for the first time. A weekend in Stratford anyone!

# Is it a History? is it a Tragedy? It's Troilus and Cressida

Keeping an eye on our forthcoming Winter Production we bring you:

## T 'n C the Synopsis Part 2

Outside the city, in the Greek camp, Ajax (stronger than dirt) summons his slave, rough and ready Thersites: he wants him to get the lowdown on Hector's challenge. Thersites refuses and takes a beating. Achilles and Patroclus come upon them and tell Ajax the news of Hector's single combat challenge to any brave Greek warrior. The selection of the warrior has been put to a lottery—otherwise, Achilles says, as he leaves, he would have been a shoe-in for the fixture.

In Troy, King Priam and his sons are debating the wisdom of continuing the war. Hector, supported by his brother Helenus, argues eloquently that while the theft of Helen may have been a brave act, she cannot be worth the great and bloody price they are now paying to keep her. There follows one of the great Shakesperian stage directions: *Enter Cassandra raving*. Daughter of Priam, she is a prophetess who is considered mad. Her message is that if they do not let Helen go, Troy will burn. When she is gone, Troilus dismisses her warning as nuts, and argues that they must keep Helen for the sake of their honour. Hector retorts that this is why young men cannot be trusted to make moral decisions, since "the hot passion of distempered blood" overwhelms their reason, but when Troilus says that Helen is more than a woman, she is "a theme of honor and renown", Hector yields and agrees to continue the war. His hope is that his challenge will bring Achilles to the field.

Alone, Thersites sneers at the pretensions of both Ajax and Achilles. When Patroclus and Achilles appear, he calls them fools; Patroclus moves to strike him, but Achilles holds him off. They see the Greek commanders—Agamemnon, Ulysses, Nestor, and Diomedes—approaching, accompanied by Ajax, and Achilles quickly retires to his tent. When Agamemnon asks to see him Patroclus tells the general that Achilles is ill. Agamemnon grows angry, but Achilles refuses to emerge, and tells Ulysses, who goes in to see him, that he still refuses to fight the Trojans. Agamemnon suggests that Ajax go in and plead with Achilles, but Ulysses declares that doing so would be insulting to Ajax, and then he, with the other Greek commanders, praises Ajax profusely, saying that he is the best of their warriors. They agree to leave Achilles in his tent, and decide that Ajax will be their champion against Hector the next day.

**\*\*The next edition target date\*\*** is Sunday 20th March. Want to plug your show? Paid-up member? Email your plug to the address below before then please. We hope to have our new director Downstage Centre for an exclusive Newsletter interview. There will be more on the Fundraiser. Some exciting news about plans for a *Venus and Adonis* evening. Updates on The Dell, Open Stages, and much more *Much*. Also another instalment of Archive Corner telling the story of our production of Richard III.

Two very exciting opportunities you need to get on to quick:

*Two Planks and a Passion* by Anthony Minghella – this is the curtain raiser for the Mystery Plays 2012. Applications to be involved must be in by 21<sup>st</sup> February. The production will be staged in the round in York Theatre Royal in July this year. The Application Form is [here](#).

*The Troublesome Reigne of John, King of England* – This is to be an extremely rare production of an early history play (probably 1591, probably by one George Peele). Directed by Ollie Jones PhD student at University of York. Auditions are 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> February. Performance will be in Stratford with interesting invitees. Contact Ollie at [oj102@york.ac.uk](mailto:oj102@york.ac.uk) or ring 07971 627 516.

#### **Latest Comments:**

- This thing would be more fun if the comments were invented. *WikiLeaks*
- If you are having problems with receiving this Newsletter or with loading images, using the links, or understanding the humour, congregate in St Helen's Square at your peril. *Janet Looker*
- What about a small part for me, or failing that the poopes miter. *Anon*

*Gentle breath of yours my sails  
Must fill, or else my project fails,  
Which was to please.*

Feedback to:  
[maurice.crichton@ntlworld.com](mailto:maurice.crichton@ntlworld.com)