



2010-2011 Newsletter No 4 A Hot January Issue

Apology to YSP Patron

On 26th June 2001, Dame Judi Dench, greatest ever stage actor and national treasure, wrote to Frank Brogan of the YSP thus:

“Thank you for your letter and invitation to become a Patron of The York Shakespeare Project. I would be glad to accept, although I have to say that I could not be an active patron because of my work commitments. However, if the use of my name would be helpful, then I should be delighted to assist in this way.

All good wishes.”

Dame Judi has given us one precious thing to use: her name. And what a name! So, people, it would be only simple courtesy to get it right, would it not?

In last month's Christmas Newsletter we got it wrong. Twice. Sorry Judi. Sorry.

Judi. Judi. Judi.

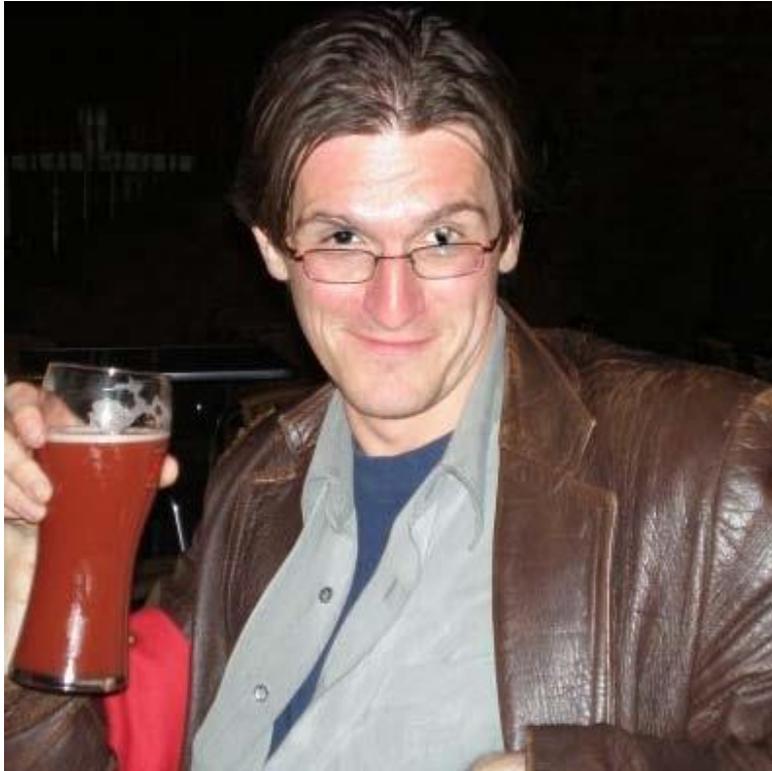
Mea culpa. Mea culpa. Mea maxima culpa.

Much *Hoo Ha* About A Director (2)

[Serious face, sober expression] Here is an official announcement:

Eleven applications have been received to direct our next production *Much Ado About Nothing* to be performed in Rowntree Park in June. The deadline for accepting applications has been and gone. The Appointment of Director sub-committee members, Margaret Hillier, Sam Valentine and Julia Atkinson are now busy working out who among the eleven will be the One. Interviews are being arranged. Watch this space.

***Downstage centre* (our fairly regular interview spot)
Ben ‘the Destroyer’ Sawyer**



Ben Sawyer is a YSP veteran. He has been in 6 of our last 8 shows. Surely some kind of record? Starvelling; Chatillon; Charles (the Dauphin) / Thomas Horner (armourer) / Lord Hastings / Young Clifford / 2nd Murderer; Touchstone; Decius Brutus / Lucilius; Earl of Worcester / Lord Chief Justice.

Ben, how did you get involved in the YSP?

It all began for me in 2006 when I auditioned for *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and was greeted with the ringing endorsement "Might be usable in a small part". It's a description I have strived to live up to ever since.

Best part so far?

Touchstone in *As You Like It*. A part with comedy, romance and somewhat distressed camping equipment.

Best souvenir?

The Earl of Worcester's tartan rebel jacket, sewn together with purest scheminess and exuding raw malevolence.

Can true love be found in Shakespeare?

Yes, but it always involves women in drag or everyone dying at the end. One of these things is more fun than the other.

What is the secret of evil hair?

There are some questions that should not be asked so lightly. I have gambled with my sanity against the forces of the netherworld to learn the ways of evil hair and the terrible knowledge I gained is a burden I would not inflict on another living soul. The things I have seen in the darkness, gentle reader, would haunt your nightmares for ever more. It's an eldritch* sort of business, evil hair.

Do you know *Much*? Do you want to be in it?

I actually know very little, but I do hope to be involved, especially now we're going back to Rowntree Park, where it all began for me. I wonder if my house keys are still there...

Much aside which Shakespearean role do you most covet?

After playing schemy malevolence in *Julius Caesar* and malevolent scheminess in *Henry IV*, I think I may have to throw my hat into the ring for Iago just to get myself thoroughly typecast.

What do you want for YSP in the next year?

As regular readers of the newsletter will know, I have volunteered to organise a day of street theatre for our annual Shakespeare's birthday celebrations in April, so my goal for the year is to make this day spectacular, or at the very least, vaguely competent. And for that, gentle reader, we need you. We want Directors. Actors. Singers. Musicians. Jugglers. Chris Laishley. Whatever talents you can bring to the party, whatever piece of Shakespeare you have always wanted to perform, this is your chance to make it happen in front of the adoring populace of our great city. And gentlemen in England still abed will hold their manhoods cheap while any speaks who fluffed his lines upon St Shakey's Day!

And then we'll go to the pub afterwards.

* Eldritch? Um. No idea what it means, dear. Not in my vocabulary. Nor the Bard's. Will need to look it up...

THE COMPETITION

No sooner do we announce with enormous kerfuffle and a right proper palaver that our next production will be *Much Ado About Nothing* to be staged in June 2011, than some other thespians (and we are not cheap enough to say *Who*) jump on the bandwagon and decide that of all the forty odd plays they could choose, *Much* is the one they have to do, and of all the twelve possibilities June is the perfect month to open a star-studded production in the West End of the very same play at Wyndham's Theatre, Charing Cross Road. A 480-1 shot co-incidence?

Are we bovered?

Nah.

So check out the competition [here!](#)



RSC OPEN STAGES 2011-2012

Remember how we reported in the Christmas newsletter that the RSC have announced a new initiative to promote Shakespeare among adult drama groups? And that the YSP is up for this - big big time?

Take a moment to look at what it is all about [here](#).

Since the Christmas Newsletter, the deadline for submitting applications to participate in Open Stages has been extended to the end of March 2011. We will apply with details of our *Much* production and an outline of the other Shakespeare productions we are planning before December 2012. That will get us into Open Stages.

But we are really hoping that we will be asked to 'showcase' one of our productions between April and June 2012 at either The Sage, Gateshead or Contact Theatre, Manchester.

This is what the RSC say they are looking for when it comes to selecting those productions which will be invited to showcase at their 'partner theatres':

"we are encouraging productions to embrace an exciting new challenge for the group, and/or audience, by following the RSC's own principles of being inquiring, ambitious, collaborative and engaging. For example:

- Engaging with another art form e.g. music, dance or visual arts.
- Collaborating with a new partner e.g. a local amateur orchestra, a youth theatre or school, local Morris dancers or club DJs.
- Show a spirit of inquiry by working with a new practitioner/artist and learning new skills e.g. a choreographer, fight director, artist, circus performer, poet or writer.
- Productions should be ambitious, not necessarily in size but ideas. Performances maybe site specific e.g. outdoors, in the crypt of a church, a castle or a disused factory.
- It will be the quality of the above elements of the pitch which will help us determine whether the productions are programmed to be showcased at a partner theatre or the World Shakespeare Festival."

If nothing else, this is not a bad ongoing brief for YSP?

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: YSP treasures Margaret Hillier and Jamie Searle plus Jen 'The Fearsome Blade' Carr. Opens 16th February. Support new writing!

Ghosts. Ibsen. The Amelia Bullmore version. Theatre Royal Studio. Feat: Andy Love, director. Matthew 'the Love' Wignall. And our very own MCVI, (Maurice Crichton Vanity Initiative). Booking now. Opens March 2nd. We *so* hope to see you there.

Shakespeare in 100 treasures: Number 4

Dame Judi Dench

Born in Heworth, educated at The Mount, and now known all over the globe for her 'M' in the Bond franchise, our Judi appeared as 'the VM' in the 1957 Mystery Plays production in the Museum Gardens (see right) and most powerfully for the RSC as Lady 'M' in the 1977 Trevor Nunn production of the Scottish play providing [here](#), one of *the* great You Tube Shakespeare moments.



The campaign for Dame Judi to appear as God in the 2012 Mystery Plays starts here. (Sources close to Robin Sanger say he may be willing to let her have one night.)

Stuff for 2011

Download: William Shakespeare Complete Works Ultimate Collection: 213 Plays, Poems and Sonnets including the 16 rare, 'hard-to-get' Apocryphal Plays PLUS: Bonus Material and Easy To Use 'Table of Contents'. For the Kindle machine thingy. £1.44 **One pound forty-four pence!**

Film *Shakespeare in Love 2*. Apparently this has been green lighted. **Judi!**

Tickets: RSC *Macbeth* from 16th April
Directed by Michael Boyd this will be **the first new RSC show to open at the nearly all new Royal Shakespeare Theatre**. The stuff before this has come up second hand from London. So this one will be put together with the new space in mind. Ticket sales open on 28th January unless you are an RSC member in which case they are available now.

Much Ado The Globe. Public booking opens 14th February.

Much Ado Wyndham's Theatre. Previews from 16th May, grrr.

Hamlet Northern Broadsides. Full tour schedule to be announced.

'*Cardenio*' The Swan from 16th April. Can you detect the Bard's hand?

Is this one for us, people? And another for the completist -

Rape of Lucrece Stephen Joseph Theatre. 18th March. **One night only.**

2001: a ysp odyssey

The YSP is roughly 10 years old. So when exactly is its birthday? A moot point. Over the Festive Season, the MCVI has been looking into the early history of the Project...

- 17 January **Launch Meeting**, YORtime, 20 Back Swinegate. The Production arm of the Project is apparently to be called 'Poor and Blind Productions'.
- 12 February **Open Meeting**. The Royal Oak. The Mission Statement is presented, a Committee election takes place and £29.40 is donated to the cause.
- 14 February **Steering Group Meeting** (the first to be minuted). The key roles are chosen by election. Chair: Frank Brogan, Treasurer: Alan Lyons, Secretary: Ali Borthwick. It meets weekly (!) at YORtime for a 6pm start and usually ends just after 8pm when Becky throws them out.
- 5 April **Public Launch Meeting**. Main Hall Priory Street Centre. The Committee and 47 others (!) attend. The Committee undertake to bring: 6 bottles of Chardonnay, tortillas and salsa, beer and crisps, wine and food, 2 bottles of wine and stickers, music, pop/fizz/soft drinks, and an OHP to display an image of Shakespeare's head.
- 6 June **Special General Meeting**. The Guildhall. The Constitution of YSP is voted in. Adrian Noble agrees to be a patron.
- 4 July Judi Dench and Antony Sher agree to be patrons.
- 29 August Paid-up membership stands at 54 (!).
- 8 & 15 Sept **Auditions** for *Richard III*
- 26 September **SGM**. Priory Street Centre. The appointment of Holding Trustees: Janet Looker, Adam Myers and Keith Hartland is confirmed. The Constitution is amended to facilitate charitable status.
- 21 December YSP becomes a **Charity**. Awards For All agree to give £5000 to the Project, York City Challenge confirm they will give us £6000. (!!)

At various times during the year:

A YSP website is launched. YSP put on a Mummers play at Rowntree Park festival. A school's competition to design a logo is set up. A Family Learning weekend is held. St Crux fundraising raises £280 profit.

The following venues are contemplated for the first show: Clifford's Tower, Tempest Anderson Hall (Yorkshire Museum), St Martin-cum-Gregory Church Micklegate, The Guildhall, York Story (St Mary's, Castlegate), Theatre Royal Studio and Rowntree Theatre. But by the end of the year the decision has been taken to put on *Richard III* at the Grand Opera House in late April 2002.

Rehearsals are underway at Konflux Theatre, Neville Street under Director, Anthony Bryce. Ali Borthwick is Producer and link to the Committee.

All in all, the efforts put in over the first year are humbling. So much has been achieved. What could possibly go wrong?

Next month we look at the trials and tribulations of the first production, *Richard III*.

A Special Moment

A special moment for Ray Baggaley for hanging on to loads (like 10 boxes) of fascinating old YSP stuff for so long. Thank you Raymond.

We should definitely have a proper YSP Archive. Posters and programmes, newsletters, Committee papers, photographs, newspaper clippings, and of course newsletters. And memories. Perhaps we could even see fit to find a permanent home for such a record...

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 1

The Trojan War has been going on for 7 years.

Inside the city, young dashing Prince **Troilus** complains to slightly creepy **Pandarus** that he is unable to fight because he is so desperately in love with Pandarus's niece, the lovely **Cressida**. Even though Cressida's father, a Trojan priest, has betrayed his city and gone over to the Greeks, Troilus can think of no-one else. Pandarus complains he has received small thanks for trying to bring the two young people together. At which point, the Trojan commander **Aeneas** dashes in, bringing word from the battlefield that **Paris** has been wounded in combat with **Menelaus**. Troilus agrees to join his Trojan comrades on the field.

Meanwhile Cressida is with her servant, who tells how a Greek warrior named **Ajax**, brave but dim, has managed to get one over the great Trojan prince **Hector** on the previous day, and that Hector is now doubly determined to prove himself. Cressida is joined by Pandarus, and they discuss the Trojan princes. As they chat, the leading Trojan men pass by them returning from battle, including Antenor (the silent one), Aeneas, Hector, and Paris. Pandarus praises each one, but tells his niece that none of them can match Troilus who is the last to pass by. He then leaves Cressida, promising to bring her a love token from Troilus. Alone, Cressida remarks that while she returns Troilus's feelings, she is holding him off, enjoying his pursuit of her.

Mean-while, outside the city in the Greek camp, commander in chief, **Agamemnon** is talking to his top brass. He asks why they seem so glum for although their seven-year siege of Troy has met with little success so far, they should welcome the adversity that the long war represents, since only in difficult times can greatness emerge. In response, the brilliant **Ulysses** points out that the Greek army is facing a crisis not because of the duration of the war, but because of a breakdown in authority within the Greek camp. Instead of being united, they are divided into factions—and at the root of this crisis is the greatest of the Greek warriors, **Achilles**, who refuses to fight and instead sits in his tent while his friend (and male lover) **Patroclus** makes fun of the Greek commanders.

The others agree that this is a great problem, and as they discuss what is to be done, Aeneas appears from Troy under a flag of truce, bringing a challenge from Hector. Hector is offering to fight any Greek lord in single combat, with the honour of their respective wives as the issue. As Aeneas is led away to hospitality, Ulysses tells **Nestor** that this challenge is really meant for Achilles, since only Achilles could match the great Hector in battle. But to have Achilles fight Hector would be dangerous, because if Achilles lost, it would dishearten the entire army. Therefore, Ulysses suggests, they should have Ajax fight Hector instead. Even if Ajax loses, they can still claim that Achilles would have won in his place. At the same time, by choosing Ajax as their champion, they will infuriate Achilles and perhaps goad him into rejoining the war, bringing with him all his soldiers. Nestor, impressed with Ulysses's intelligence and, er, 'scheminess', agrees to the plan...

That's quite enough to be going on with.

****The next edition target date**** is Sunday 20th February. Want to plug your show? Paid-up member? Email your plug to the address below before then please.

Latest reviews of the MCVInitiative.

- What this newsletter needs is a bit of interactivity. It's all the rage. That will get these young ones interested. They'll lap it up. How about a quiz? - *Grrr*
- So Maggie runs, the witches follow, wi' mony an **eldritch** skriech and hollo. *Happy Birthday Rabbie Burns 25th January, your other national bard*
- Absolutely delighted to see the MCVI bubble burst so spectacularly with the whole Judigate saga. About time. Is there any substance to the rumour that resignations will follow? By 'resignations' I mean 'resignation.'
Toby 'the part' Gordon
- No more of that! - *La Denche*
- Can we please get back to Shakespeare! - *The Doctor*

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

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