

NETWORKING



Network Theatre Company Newsletter
Winter 2006

<http://www.networktheatre.org>

Network theatre CompaNy, Lower rd, LoNdoN

Reviews: Murder in the Cathedral



From the Editor

Happy New Year!

Here's hoping Santa brought you exactly what you wanted for Christmas and that 2006 has all the makings of an absolute cracker.

Got any New Year's resolutions? For those of you who haven't hit the stage for a while, why not dust off your auditioning shoes and give one of the 2006 productions a whirl? Or may be now is the time to try your hand at something completely different. Costumes? Scenery? Bar tending? Or even face painting for the Eurostar pantomime?

We have staged one production since our last newsletter: Murder in the Cathedral (by T.S. Eliot), which was directed by Trevor Harvey. The review included in this edition and audience feedback declares it a huge success. Congratulations Trevor!

You'll find a letter from the chairman in this edition, which gives us some information regarding our newly established bar in the green room. It's important that we all respect the regulations and inform other members given everything that goes hand in hand with the licensing agreement.

All the best for 2006.

Kirsty Eyre

Newsletter Submissions

Please send any submissions to editor- Kirsty Eyre at: newsletter@networktheatre.org
The views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of The Network Theatre's committee or it's members.

All submissions are welcome.

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Murder in the Cathedral: Review

Review by Ian Smith

Although Eliot's "verse play" *Murder in The Cathedral* is beautifully written, it cannot be easy to put on or to watch. It remains grave, static and humourless, some of the dialogue is awkward, there are several large parts (none of them easy) and after all we all know the story of Thomas Becket and Henry II-the priest dies right?

That Trevor Harvey took such a beast and entertained us with it for an hour and a half speaks loudly for both his ambition and ability. It also highlights the three things, which this production got very right; the style, an imaginative technical display and the binding together of things by an outstanding chorus.

Style owed more to a wonderfully punchy delivery and swiftness of movement than to the suitably grim look which was big on black and emptiness. Steve Moles' lighting design was excellent- strangely making best use of darkness, shadow and half light and often leaving the person speaking unlit. The word perfect chorus (Carole Holland, Jayne Jones, Sheila Murphy, Claire Robinson, Angela Schooley and Sue Small) were the frame upon which everything else was hung. They drove the pace, varied their pitch and intonation thus avoiding the trap of delivering communal verse like daleks.

Although not over-powering, a major irritation was the gratuitous use of anachronistic images of modern day "issues" and "martyrs" such as AIDS, Iraq, Dr King, Gandhi and Bono from U2 (?). Presumably the purpose was to tell us that, now as in the twelfth century, peace and tolerance are "good", prejudice and war "bad".

This sold a very complex play a bit short and other more erudite and text based themes such as definitions of faith, piety versus passion and the social tension between the Commoner Archbishop (the merchant's son from Cheapside) and the petty aristocratic thugs were left largely unexplored.

The acting was universally good as difficult lines and speeches were delivered with routine discipline and aplomb. In particular diction and projection, essential for such a play, were very strong.

Much is written as rhyming couplets and it must be so easy to stray into limericks when the pattern of words takes over from their meaning. Oodles of

sympathy goes to Matthew Griffiths, as Becket himself, who made a praiseworthy attempt at a difficult part. Denied the safe harbour of assonance or just plain English for most of his many lines, it was easy to let the metre run its own course and it did.

Other performances (most notably Jenny Rich's third tempter, Nigel Williams and Andrew Barrett as the earnest and animated priests and Barry Clarke's offstage fourth tempter) found the best solution by simply reading through the rhyme. The dialogue is strong enough to accommodate this and it was an intelligent approach for which they deserve much credit.

There was excellent detailed support from the flesh (Pauline Kennedy), avarice (William Barklam) and the frightening knights (Michael Mayne and Julian Rivas). All seemed confident and comfortable with the text whether it was driving through (Michael) or stressing its musicality (Pauline).

Overall this was an imaginative and highly creditable stage production of a play better suited to voices. At times it was gripping, particularly the whole section flowing on from the entrance of the Knights and it was always handled and acted with experience and competency. We should be grateful that Network attempts plays like this.

I'm sure Eliot would be happy with this production but wouldn't feel his Nobel Prize was threatened by the quality of the "poems" in the programme!

Ian Smith



Fairtrade comes to the Network theatre

What is Fairtrade?

Fairtrade is about better prices, decent working conditions, local sustainability, and fair terms of trade for farmers and workers in the developing world. By requiring companies to pay above market prices, Fairtrade addresses the injustices of conventional trade, which traditionally discriminates against the poorest, weakest producers. It enables them to improve their lot and have more control over their lives.

Network has decided to switch to Fairtrade. The products are a bit more expensive as they ensure that the producers get a price that covers the costs of living and sustainable production. A premium also goes towards community development. However, it is a really good way of helping out those in the developing world.

As Network uses up its current supplies we will replace them with Fairtrade products. The last of the Twix were sold at 'A Family Affair' so 'Murder in the Cathedral' will be the first show selling Fairtrade chocolate. Look out for the Dubble bars! We will also be doing coffee and tea in the near future. We sold Fairtrade filter coffee at 'A Family Affair' and it seemed to go down really well.

Spring Clean

Spring-cleaning is happening early this year – in winter, in fact. We need members to muck in on **Saturday 28th January** for a hearty tidy up from 10am onwards. As the theatre relies on the good will of its members to keep the place clean, we would be very grateful for any time you can spend helping us out.

Network's Rent

Network has to pay £4,128.10 a quarter to Spacia. We are coming up to a rent review and it is highly likely to go up again. The rent is by far and a way the biggest outgoing, although we also have to pay for electricity, insurance and other outgoings. It's nearly always a struggle to pay the rent. There have been a couple of times this year when we've had less than £10 left after writing the rent cheque.

Everything you do for the theatre really helps – whether that is paying your membership on time, selling tickets for the shows to your friends and family, or coming along and supporting the shows yourself. Making sure the heating is turned off when not needed and saving electricity in whatever way you can while at the theatre helps too. Please keep it up, and do all you can to make sure the upcoming shows sell out.

Thank you for helping Network Theatre has a theatre to perform in.

Katy, the treasurer.

Dates for your diary: Winter/ Spring	
Fri 13 th Jan: 7pm	Karaoke Wedding audition
Sat 28 th Jan: from 10am	Spring clean: theatre tidy up
13 th – 18 th Feb	Cattle Class: Eurostar Pantomime performances
23 rd - 26 th Feb	Karaoke Wedding performances: 7pm Thursday & Friday, 2.30pm Saturday & Sunday
28 th Feb: 7pm	CLASS reading
7 th Mar: 7pm	CLASS auditions
26 th – 29 th April: 7.30pm	Blue Remembered Hills performances

Please note that there has been a slight change of dates to Blue Remembered Hills and Karaoke Wedding performance dates since the last newsletter.

Blue Remembered Hills cast list

- Willy Tom Martin
- Peter Oliver Gearing
- John William Barklam
- Raymond Ben Robb
- Donald Nigel Oatway
- Angela Katy Robb
- Audrey Emma Howcutt

The network theatre looks forward to welcoming Emma and Oliver on stage as new network theatre members.

KARAOKE WEDDING:

A brand spanking new musical

Gabby Vautier will be directing Karaoke Wedding at the end of February and is looking for **you** to get involved! The script for Karaoke Wedding involves a whole array of characters. There are parts for all ages (18+) but it would help if you are not tone deaf and have two left feet as the show involves movement and singing. Find out more on Friday 13th January at the auditions for parts and chorus.

There will be an intensive rehearsal period. The cast will be expected to be at all rehearsals and work really hard. For more details, please contact Gabby.

Gabby: <number removed>

What's on next?

Interview with the Production team on "**Cattle Class**" by Kirsty Eyre

Cattle Class is another piece of new writing by Kirsty Eyre. It is a musical fairytale written for Eurostar cast members to perform as their annual pantomime... so what's it all about?

An evil force has cast a spell on the heavens above. It starts raining in Great Britain and it doesn't stop. On the 21st day of flooding, Farmer Noah, his family and their farm animals decide their only chance of escape is the Eurostar shuttle to France. Once they board **Cattle Class**, they discover an evil force is on board and their adventure has only just begun. Will good conquer evil? Or will the baddy get his wicked way? You'll have to come along and find out.

1. There are nine animal characters in this play. How will you create them for the stage?

The idea is to build animal characters using stereotypical mannerisms, costumes and of course, animal noises. The script lends itself to the personalities of each animal, whose character is built in to the dialogue. The challenge is to make each animal physically credible whilst being able to recognize the cast member playing the part. The temptation was to go with face-masks to create a more elaborate animal face but this idea compromised facial expressions and sound quality. Face paints seem to be the way forward. Lets just hope the animals don't sweat under the lights!

2. How does this year's pantomime compare to last year's Eurostar Academy?

It's a completely different kettle of fish. Whilst Eurostar Academy was a parody of Reality TV talent competitions, Cattle Class returns to the more traditional style of fairytale goodies and baddies- with an original twist of course.

3. The cast is a mixture of Eurostar employees and Network members. How does this mix work?

Very well. It's great to see lots of new faces too. Cattle Class sees six newcomers to the Network theatre. The multi-cultural aspect of the cast also brings an added dimension to the Eurostar productions. The challenge of delivering panto gags in a second or third language should not go unnoticed. Could you get the intonation of sarcasm right in Russian?

4. It's a fairytale. So is it suitable for children?

Very. Obviously panto wouldn't be panto without plenty of double entendres and cheeky gags aimed at adults... but this year's production is suitable for children too. We are sure they will love the animals although they might be a bit frightened of the baddy.

5. What are the show's main challenges?

Getting the show ready on time! It's the dancing and singing that requires a lot of coordination, especially when the dancer has four legs. We're at the stage where publicity, line learning, choreography, song practice and set building seem quite overwhelming. But we'll get there.

6. Can we expect to see singing & dancing?

Cattle Class is packed full of songs and a mixture of dance and choreographed scenes. We're not aspiring to deliver the new Chicago but we are hoping to raise some chortles from the audience. We're going for fun factor. So on the song front- bring your hairbrush to have a sing a long yourself – that or some ear plugs!

7. How can Network members support you with this production?

We're looking for help on the face painting front (as per the ad on the other page) and if anybody has any animal costumes (pig, chicken, horse, cow, sheep, rat, hamster) in their wardrobe, per chance (we won't tell, honest!), we would love to borrow them.

Help on Front of House and the bar would obviously also help us out... but most of all... **We really want you to come and see the show and take it for what it is: FUN!!** It's the perfect remedy for riddance to the January blues ☺

8. When can we come and see it?

It's on from **Monday 13th until Saturday 18th February.** Tickets are available through the usual channels!!

Cattle Class cast list

Farmer Noah	Crispin Owen
Betty	Lou Vincent
Fair Maiden	[Name deleted]
Pat the Cow	Dorothee Mariotte
Gianni the stallion	William Barklum
Pork Scratching	David Brookes
Lamb Brusco	Dorra Mahjoubi
KFC	Sheila Murphy
Baddy	Claire Labat
Rat 1	Kara Livingstone
Rat 2	Carol Croenne
Rat 3	Eve Dautremant
Prince	Nigel Oatway
Hamster	Francois Lopez
Newsreader	Robin Lansman
Director	Kay Murray
Producer	Michele Hanssens

Come along with your friends & family to see this production:

Network Theatre Box Office

Tickets for all Network Theatre productions

Email: tickets@networktheatre.org

LETTER FROM THE CHAIRMAN

JANUARY 2006

It is now 16 years since we moved into our brand new theatre in Lower Road as the Network Theatre and I think 2005 has been one of the most momentous of those years. It has been a year packed with action in the theatre with more new members appearing in ever higher standards of production before what appears to be increasing audience numbers. In addition, new Companies are using the excellent facilities we have developed over the years, and this helps us all to keep amateur theatre alive in London. I would like to particularly welcome the Civil Service Groups and I hope that they will become regular users after the sad loss of their own theatre in Northumberland Avenue.

The real change to how the theatre operates was brought about by the Licencing Act of 2003, which came into effect from the 24th November last year. The theatre now has to have a licence to perform plays, music or dance. These regulations were designed to ensure that the premises in which audiences are present are suitably equipped and designed for this purpose. This includes such important things as fire exits, fire extinguishers, free and uncluttered escape routes, hygienic conditions in kitchens, bars and toilets and good management of these areas generally.

A "bonus" for us contained in the Act was the inclusion, if required, of an alcohol licence for the sale of drinks to audiences on the basis of a private members club. We have taken full advantage of this and can now sell alcohol to our members and their guests during shows, rehearsals or social events. This has already proved a huge success during the run of *Murder In The Cathedral* and the subsequent parties and will, I am sure, make a difference to the finances of the Theatre.

As with all changes, there is a "downside." There are things we now have to do differently in the way in which we manage the theatre. In a lot of respects these are common sense changes, the difference is that they are now enforceable by the law and subject to inspection by outside agencies. These include the Fire service, the Police and the Local Authority in a number of guises including Public Health, Health & Safety and Weights and Measures. These people have a job to do, however, in ensuring that the operation of our theatre is carried out in the safest way possible.

Your Committee have been working hard to ensure that the way in which we do things complies with the Law and there are a number of areas we have identified where we need the help of all members and users of the premises. In summary, these are: -

1. As the Network Theatre is now a private club, valid membership or associate membership is now required for all people who use the premises when taking part in a production, whether it be acting, backstage or front of house.
2. All guests, including people who come to see shows as audience must sign in when arriving at the theatre
3. Only members or their guests over 18 years may purchase alcohol at the bar and only designated people may serve alcohol.
4. We all need to make a special effort to keep the theatre clean and tidy, especially in the kitchen, bar and toilet area.
5. The workshop arch is especially prone to being left untidy and as it is part of the fire exit route from the auditorium, it must be kept clear at all times.
6. Our non-smoking rule applies to all areas of the theatre and must be rigidly observed.
7. After show parties and other social events must end by 1 am and the theatre must be in a clean and tidy condition before being left.

I hope this illustrates how we have had to change to encompass the new law. This is not intended to place restrictions on people although it does mean more effort by all of us from time to time. It is however, a way of making a visit to the Network Theatre a more enjoyable experience. It will enable members and their friends to enjoy theatre in a safe, clean and comfortable environment and with the knowledge that their support is helping to keep this very active Company alive.

Thank you for your continued support and may I finally wish you all a very Happy New Year. May it be a successful one for us all, both personally and also in the life of the Network Theatre.

David Murray
Chairman.

January 2006

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Shows for 2006

Blue Remembered Hills by Dennis Potter

This show has now been cast.

Performances – 26th- 29th March

This apparently simple tale relates the activities of seven year olds on a summer afternoon during World War II. The children (all played by adult actors) and their world become a microcosm of adult interaction. Willie tags along as burly Peter bullies Raymond and is challenged by fair -minded John. Audrey is over shadowed by Angela's prettiness and wreaks her angry frustrations on all the boys. All of them gang up on the terrified Donald Duck who, abused by his mother and ridiculed by his peers, plays his own dangerous game of pyromania, which ends in tragedy.

Class by Kirsty Eyre

Reading –28th February 06

Auditions- 2nd March 06

Performances- 31st May to 3rd June 06

Another piece of new writing by a member of Network. Kirsty's play explores what class means today. As 'class' becomes more of a mentality than a category of social hierarchy, interpretations of 'classy' become ever more subjective and more fascinating. And whilst some may not find it classy for a 'working class' (if there is such a thing) woman to take her clothes off for money, is it any classier for the 'middle classes' (ditto) to go and watch? And does an understanding of dinner etiquette and a posh accent also buy you a gold card to class, regardless of whether you cheat or lie? Rather than preach what is morally right or wrong, this play looks at exploring different interpretations of class through a handful of characters whose lives come together through Class, a strip joint.

CAN YOU FACE PAINT?

If you are a dab hand (literally) with a tub of face paints– those of you with kids? – why not help out with the Eurostar pantomime: Cattle Class?

We're looking to bring to life a mixture of farm animals and pesky rodents... and could do with some help.



For dates and details, please contact:
Michele.Hanssens@eurostar.co.uk

How are your promotion skills?

Directors are always in need of help when it comes round to publicising and promoting forthcoming shows.

If you are interested in poster design, web design, general publicity (programmes, flyers etc) and have access to the right tools, we would love to hear from you.

Please contact Kirsty Eyre at:

newsletter@networktheatre.org

Membership: You can become a member of Network for the annual fee of £25.00. Please contact the Membership Secretary, Graham Harris, for more details.— *membership@networktheatre.org*

How to find us: The theatre is by Waterloo Station, near the entrance to the Jubilee Line. If arriving by train/tube, leave Waterloo station by EXIT 2, down escalator & turn right onto Waterloo Rd. Lower Rd is off Waterloo Rd between the Station & the Fire station pub. Moving down Lower Road, you pass a security gate. The theatre is past the Euro-despatch centre & is no. 246a, on your left.