

Networking

Network Theatre Company's Newsletter

November 2011

Dear Networkers,

Welcome to the November newsletter.

This month we are delighted to include the review of Family Ties, new writing penned by Network member, Susan Hodgetts. You will also have noticed our fantastic new stage and seating rostra at Network, Paul Lunnon explains how it all happened. Again, a huge thanks to Paul and all the hard-working volunteers for their incredible effort for Network.

Dates for your diary:

Reading and Social on 25th November at 6.30pm.
Here We Go Around the Roundabout by Jane Lockyer Willis.

Tickets are on sale for Happy As a Sandbag
30th November - 3rd December.

<http://www.ticketsource.co.uk/networktheatre>

Work Day 17th December (TBC)

Thanks to all who came to the Necropolis Now launch, the audioplay will be available to download on the website shortly.

Please see p7 for news on the bar, we really need new volunteers, so please get in touch.

Finally, congratulations to Nigel Williams for winning the David Murray Award this year. Well deserved!

Rosie de Vekey & Gaelle Comte
Editors

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FUTURE OF NETWORK THEATRE - UPDATE

You will be aware of the likelihood of Network Theatre being relocated due to our landlord (Network Rail) seeing us as a security threat to Waterloo Station. Network Rail is concerned at the number of people who come into their 'secure premises' as they are unable to control or account for them. The theatre is used almost daily by ourselves and visiting companies, and the threat of terrorism is paramount.

So, with effect from the Spring of next year, the theatre could be in new premises outside the security gates, in an arch off Launcelot Street, just outside the rear gates in Lower Road. At this stage we are in the very early stages of negotiation.

We intend the move to be as smooth as possible, with an overlap to allow us to fit the new arch out as a theatre, and move all our goods and chattels, though we would expect to initially use the new theatre in a basic form, gradually kitting it out as we would wish.

Productions will therefore continue as planned in the programme for next year, either in the present theatre or in the new premises.

Once there is more news on progress, I will let you know. In the meantime we'll carry on as normal!

Kay Murray, Chairman

OBITUARY

It is with great sadness that we have received the news of the death of Nicola Storry (nee Leigh). Nicola was an active member of the old Southern Railway Dramatic Society, appearing in shows in our old theatre, and in British Railways inter-regional drama festivals.

Nicola was such a bright and sunny person and a good friend to many of us. Our thoughts are with her husband and children at this sad time.

Kay Murray



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Family Ties - a review

Family Ties is a new piece by Susan Hodgetts, who has appeared on the Network stage several times in recent years before turning her hand to her first full-length script.



Lisa Clayton as Aunt Maud

The play recounts events prompted when a family comes together to celebrate the 60th birthday of Lucy, the matriarch figure. The gift of a photo album filled with family snaps from through the ages is the device used to introduce a series of flashback scenes that explore the pasts of various family members, both alive and dead. It is a dramatic technique that works well, though occasionally the dialogue in the here-and-now scenes sounded stilted in introducing the next flashback.

The set impressively conjured up an everyday domestic scene in the style of *The Royle Family*. The cast were sparky too. Judith Denwood played Lucy with heart, while Paul D'Orly and Kay Murray as doddery couple Harry and Dot played their lines for laughs expertly. Emma Byrne as troubled daughter Emma gives the character real nuance, rubbing up against her brother,

Jack, acted with gusto by Jerome Quiles (who nonetheless could afford to slow down his delivery because some lines were lost). Lisa Greenwood really got her teeth into Magnolia (Jack's girlfriend), arguably the most fun part in the play. Gary Whittaker as Lucy's brother Tony had a nice line in casual slovenliness, while the supporting cast were strong throughout.

Some scenes undoubtedly worked better than others. For instance, Anna Finnemore as 'tart with a heart' Viviana, and Michael Mayne as King Edward VII provided a classy vignette. By comparison, the scene at a 1960s protest march (which didn't necessarily seem to fall quite where it should in the life spans of the characters) fared less well. But that is all part of new writing – discovering what works and what doesn't.

In the end, this is a play about what family means and how our expectations and reality are not always in sync. Overall, the writer, director (Jordana Berk) and cast should be proud of a job well done. Finding a place for new writing in London is never easy. That the Network Theatre offers aspiring writers that opportunity is to its credit and in return it gets shows like this, never less than original, ambitious and interesting.

Man in the Back Row



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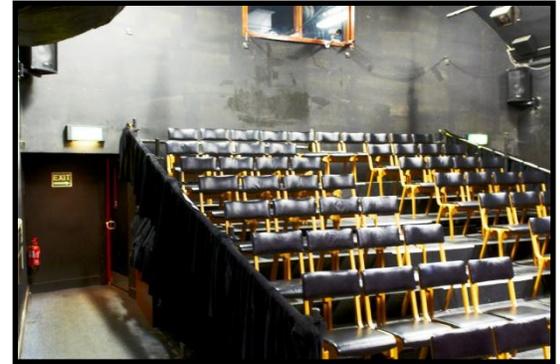
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Network refurbishment

By Paul Lunnon

The job is done

For those of you who attended *Romeo & Juliet* you will have seen your theatre "in the round" for the first time since *Billy Liar* and following this a visit to the *Class* production will have allowed you to see the new improved seating rake for traditional theatre. Having personally visited both productions I am pleased with the result the view of the acting areas is much improved and the leg room allows patrons to get to their seats without the need to stand up to let them past. Your committee made a bold decision to spend a lot of money on this project and I believe they have spent wisely and we now have a very flexible theatre limited only by people's imagination.



How it happened

Planning started in January 2011 following a request from Andy Bradshaw after his production of *Midsummer Night's Dream* in 2009 that he would like to do *Romeo & Juliet* in 2011 "in the round". Our present seating set up would not allow this to be arranged easily. Time was spent working out the best layouts, studying current theatre legislation and finding the ideal product for the theatre and their budget. Finally I made a presentation to the committee and the budget was decided.

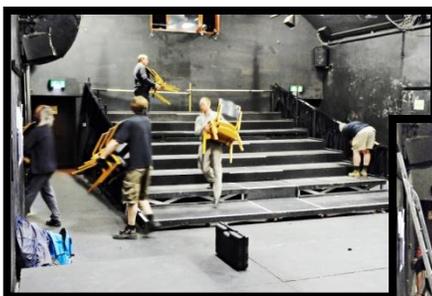
Formal requests to four suppliers were sent out and the team then visited each to examine their products. The final decision was to go with Metrodeck staging and the preferred supplier was chosen Flint Hire and Supply. The orders were then placed and a time table for the work drawn up. During this period Dan had found a web site that sold second-hand marquees, staging etc. and an ad was placed with them and within two days I had sold our old scissor leg staging. This was a relief to our team as we at that point firmly believed we would have to pay a scrap merchant to take them away.

Thank you

During the whole of this project I have had the unstinting support and help from David Harvey, Nigel Williams and Dan Young. It has been a pleasure to work with them and I cannot thank them enough for their support.

Day One & two (Sat & Sun 11th -12th June)

Day One: a very keen group of members turned up and by the end of the two days the whole theatre had been stripped of the old seating tier, the stage had been lifted and the theatre had been given a coat of paint. The final task was to stack the old scissor leg decking in the back arch ready for collection and give the whole empty auditorium a good Hoover.



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Day 3 (14th June)



The company that purchased our old decking arrived as promised sharp at 8:30 in the morning and within the hour all the old scissor leg decking was loaded onto the trailer ready for its journey to York. The team then retired to the greasy spoon for a well-earned breakfast.



Day 4 (15th June)

Our new decking is delivered in a huge truck. With two 8 feet high stacks of decking placed at the very back of the truck it was a long hard job to unload them. Within two and a half hours the job was done and after a well-earned tea break we started to set up the new seating for *Romeo & Juliet* in the round. This took the whole day as we had to solve a small problem with our supplier. At the end of the day the theatre was ready for R&J to rehearse a very good effort by all involved especially members of the R&J cast who came along to help and then had to rehearse in the evening. A big thank you.



Day 5 (22nd June)

After the run of R&J the team returned to Network to reset the theatre from "in the round" to the "traditional theatre" layout. I personally was working on another show in Berkhamsted and travelled in mid morning having worked through the night. I thank the small team who were well into the task when I arrived. After a day's hard work the theatre had been re built the new higher seating tier was installed, the new stage was erected and the new ramp that I had built was installed stage right.

Finally the job is complete

After a few more tweaks that still need to be done Network Theatre starts a new life as a flexible venue with unlimited possibilities. The decking purchased should last a long time if looked after and the rules set down in the Theatre User Manual are followed.

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- Deck tops can only be painted matt black. If a coloured surface is required a layer of hardboard should be placed on top of the decks taped and these can then be painted.
- No screws to be screwed into deck tops.
- Change of seating configurations is only to be carried out by Network personnel.
- Any request for changes to layout must be notified well in advance to allow time and manpower for this operation to be organised.

I wish Network well with the new installation and thank them for inviting me to project manage this installation - I have really enjoyed it.

Paul Lunnon

Happy As a Sandbag - the lowdown

By Director, Michael Mayne

Happy As A Sandbag was devised some 40 years ago by Ken Lee for a cast of ten people. It was first performed at the Theatre Royal, Lincoln in May 1972. The London production opened at the Ambassadors Theatre in September 1975.

The show focuses on the spirit of those who lived through the war at home. The warmth and courage shown by the British people, coping with rationing, the separation of families and the loss of loved ones, is a great testimony to all the people of the time. This show focuses on the nostalgia of the war and the songs that got people through the darkest days.

The radio was the central part of people's lives and gave the only 'window' on the world. News was dominated by the war and, for the first time ever, location reports were part of the bulletins, read by such esteemed announcers as Alvar Liddell. The radio was also a great morale booster, allowing the public access to the stars and music of the time.

When we think of the Second World War now, there are still certain personalities we identify with the period, and many of them are featured in the show.

Happy As A Sandbag tracks the progress of the war from Chamberlain's famous announcement right through to the celebrations of VE day - sixty years ago to this year. We will take you on a journey through air raids, evacuation, life in the forces, the Home Guard, health and nutrition, the roles of women, GI's and more - all dispersed with more than 50 truly great and memorable songs from the era. In the words of one of those songs, there will indeed 'Always Be An England'!



Over 25 famous wartime characters are portrayed in 'Happy As A Sandbag' including The Andrews Sisters, Neville Chamberlain, Rob Wilton, Winston Churchill, Tommy Handley, Lord Haw Haw, Max Miller, George Formby, Rita Hayworth, General Montgomery ('Monty'), Vera Lynn, Gracie Fields, Adolf Hitler, Carmen Miranda and Henry Hall. Also portrayed in the show are Admirals, Air Raid Wardens, American Soldiers and Sailors, Army Sentries, Evacuees, Farmers, Foster Parents, Homeguards, Landgirls and RAF Pilots and Wrens.

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Called to the Bar

Network Theatre has been lucky enough to attract visiting companies to our premises. These visiting companies provide a greater variety of productions we can see and are vital to keeping Network going. They mean that we can maintain and improve everything around the theatre. In order to attract them, we offer a bar to keep their audiences refreshed. It is vital to the success of the theatre that we continue to offer this.

Can we extend a huge thanks to all those regular volunteers who run the bar for our own shows and the visiting companies. We really appreciate your hard work. **We are looking for more people to train up on the bar** (it is easy, we promise!) **who would like to see a show for free and enjoy a complimentary drink as well.** To join our bar team, please contact info@networktheatre.org or respond to one of Moira's emails and she will ensure you have the relevant training and help.



Network Needs...

Are you interested in being an Assistant Director? We are looking for ADs to support the Directors for 2012. If you are interested and wish to find out more, please contact info@networktheatre.org

Network Theatre is looking for a Web-Master who could build and manage an externally-hosted website. Are you interested? If so, please contact info@networktheatre.org

Network Theatre is after a second-hand Apple Mac. If anyone is interested in donating one to the theatre, we would be very grateful. Please contact info@networktheatre.org

Network Theatre is looking for a cleaner. If anyone is interested or can recommend someone, please contact info@networktheatre.org

We are looking for a new Front-of-House Manager:

Duties and Responsibilities:

This is a very important role for Network Theatre. Front of House presents our 'public' face to our audiences. It covers all the audience-facing aspects of our theatre, including box office, auditorium and bar, and involves:

- Coordinating all Front of House activities for Network Theatre Company ('Network') productions
- Arranging bar staff for visiting companies (visiting companies provide their own Front of House, but we operate our bar)
- Representing the Front of House department at committee meetings

You will be the head of the Front of House team, responsible for recruiting and training volunteers. You will not, however, be expected to act as Duty Manager every time the theatre is open. A Production FOH Manager is allocated to each Network production for this purpose, and they are responsible for the smooth running of the theatre during their performances. Visiting companies are responsible during their performances.

Are you interested? If so, please contact info@networktheatre.org



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The Network Committee

Our club and our theatre require a lot of "behind the scenes" work to manage and maintain them. This falls to the committee to carry out, or to coordinate other volunteers to help. The committee is elected at the AGM and, like others who volunteer, give their time willingly to keep Network running. The current committee is:

Kay Murray - Chair
Judith Denwood - Secretary
David Harvey – Theatre Manager
Keith Wait – Diary Manager
Moirá Cane – Membership Secretary
Natalie Mensah - Treasurer
Kirsty Eyre – Programme Manager
Dan Young – Technical Manager
Robin Lansman – Committee Liason/Asst FOH Manager
Rosie de Vekey – Newsletter and Publicity
Gaelle Comte – Newsletter and Publicity

The committee always welcomes ideas and proposals for Network activities, and volunteers to help Network with the various tasks.

All submissions are welcome. Please send to the editor at news@networktheatre.org.
Network Theatre, 246a Lower Road, Waterloo, London SE1 8SJ
For all the latest information go to www.networktheatre.org

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The views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of Network Theatre Company, its committee or its members.

