

Network
Theatre
Company

NEWS

Christmas brings families together

Wherever they are

Alan Ayckbourn's

Life and Beth



News

Editorial

Hello and welcome to the latest Network Theatre Company newsletter! Our final production for 2013, *Life and Beth* opens in early December and is a bit of a coup for Network, with it being the London Premiere of Ayckbourn's most recent Christmas play. That's right -a play by Sir Alan Ayckbourn has its London opening, not in the West End, not at the National or the old Vic, but at our own Network Theatre! Director Emma Byrne tells of why she chose it and her vision of the piece in her preview in this newsletter.

2013 was the end of a phenomenal year for Network with six very different yet wholly remarkable shows. 2014 promises to be no less exciting opening as it does with Bernie Byrnes' production of *King Lear*. All full preview of this will appear in our next newsletter, but the audition details can be found below.

One stop shop: Reading & audition for *King Lear*

Reading and Audition: November 30th 2013 at 4pm

Performances 19 to 22 February and 26 February to 1 March 2014

Rehearsals start 6 January 2014

Does coalition government work? Is power sharing a viable form of government? Bernie C. Byrnes (whose previous work with Network Theatre includes *The Tempest* and *Doctor Faustus*) examines these questions in her inimitable way.

This production of *King Lear* will take a new approach to auditioning. On Saturday 30th November, you will have the opportunity to read and audition for Bernie's adaptation all in one day! Auditions will be held after the reading and will take the form of informal workshops and group auditions on stage. We promise there will be nothing scary or nasty while we look for a cast of 25 people.

As always with Bernie's shows the chorus are integral to the production, will have a large on-stage presence and get a lot of director's love and attention. Named parts are below (note some gender swaps - great parts for the ladies). Some text will be reassigned to the chorus. This is very much a production requiring team effort and a strong company working together.

King Lear - (M - 50s)

Gloucester (F - 30+)

Kent - (M - 50+)

Regan - (F - 30+)

Cornwall - (M - 50+)

Oswald - (M - any age)

Edmund - (M 20 - 30)

Goneril (F 30s - 40s)

Edgar (M - 30s)

Albany (M 40s - 50s)

Cordelia (F 20s - 30s)

What is a director for?

Also on November 30th, Network Theatre Stagecraft Guild will host past, present and future Network Theatre directors. The panel discussion "What is a Director For?" will introduce you to the role of a director and help you decide whether directing at Network is for you. It will also help cast and production staff understand how they can get the most out of a director.

Kirtsy Eyre will chair a panel that features Frances Bruce (Antigone), Emma Byrne (Life and Beth) and Bernie Byrnes (King Lear). The panel is free to attend and the bar will be open. Doors at 2pm. Panel starts at 2:30.

Preview

Life and Beth

By Alan Ayckbourn; directed by Emma Bynre

Everyone thinks they know Ayckbourn. He writes cosy, suburban comedies, right? In reality, his comedies have a dark heart and his darker plays always have a rich vein of humour.

Everyone knows what Christmas is supposed to be like, too. It's Slade and jingle bells and snow and homes that look like a John Lewis advert, right? In reality I don't know anyone whose Christmas looks exactly like that. Whether the sprouts are too hard or auntie's too drunk or money's too scarce, it's easy to feel like you're the only one having a less-than-perfect time.

Which is why Rosie DeVekey chose an Ayckbourn play for the Christmas slot. I saw Season's Greetings at the National couple of years ago - in a run so successful it was extended until March. A sell-out crowd at the Olivier laughed itself sick every night at infidelity, infertility and a near-fatal shooting. Absurd Person Singular - a play older than I am - still packs a cathartic punch with its Christmas suicide attempt that begins as tragedy and ends in farce.

Life and Beth is the latest of Ayckbourn's Christmas plays; here at Network we are privileged to be staging the London première. It, too, has a darkness at the heart of it. Memories of three deaths - one recent, one receding and one long ago - drive the relationships in this play. But in those relationships we see our own embarrassing failures and secret hopes. The laughter that this play provokes is, I think, fonder than in Season's Greetings or Absurd Person Singular. Nevertheless it acts as a humane antidote to the pressure of a John Lewis advert Christmas.

Suzie Delezameta makes a very welcome return to the stage as Beth while Network veterans Susan Small and Mike Wyer play sister-in-law Connie and the Rev David Grinseed respectively. Newcomers Ros Morris, Neil Bird and Peter Holmes complete the family and Jennie Rich lays down the law as an unseen but unmistakable member of the constabulary. We have an incredible design team too, with Dan Young (lighting) and Mike Wyer (sound.) We also have Helen Mason, David Harvey and this year's David Murray Award winner, Paul Lunnon on set and effects design. Finally, newcomer Clare Upton has joined us as seamstress.

Life and Beth is acidly funny, beautifully Christmassy and anything but cosy.

Tickets for Life and Beth are available from

<http://www.ticketsource.co.uk/Networktheatre> priced at £ **12.00**

Coming up

King Lear

By William Shakespeare

Directed by Bernie Byrnes

Audition and reading: 30th November 2013

Performance dates 19-22 February 2014 and

26 February 2014-1 March 2014

All our play readings and auditions are open to non-members and are very relaxed and informal. So if you fancy trying out for a play or are just interested in the network theatre why not come along? We welcome new members. If you would like to become a member please contact membership@networktheatre.org