

# RADA

THE  
MAGAZINE

Issue No 15

*The new view from  
Malet Street*

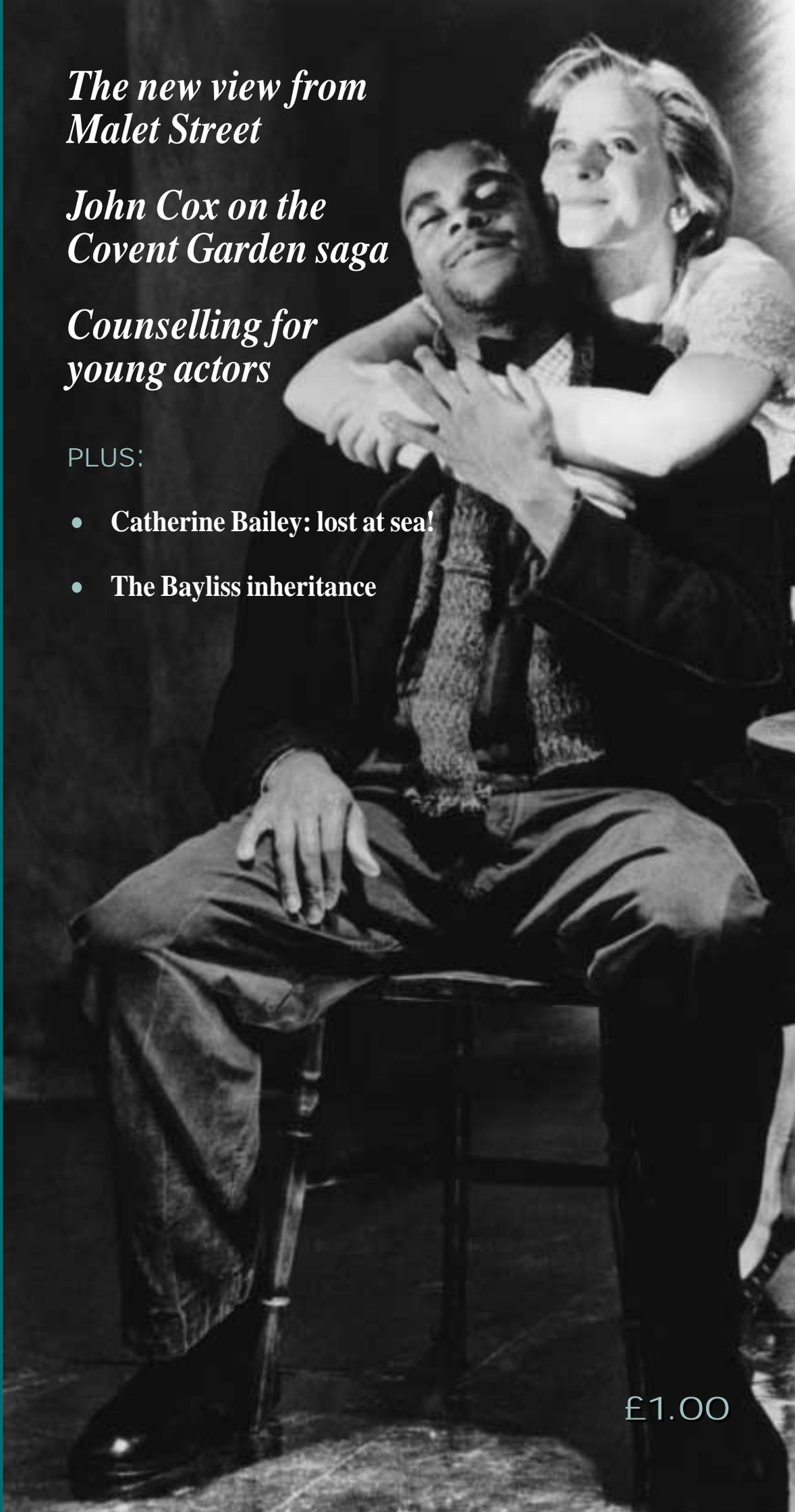
*John Cox on the  
Covent Garden saga*

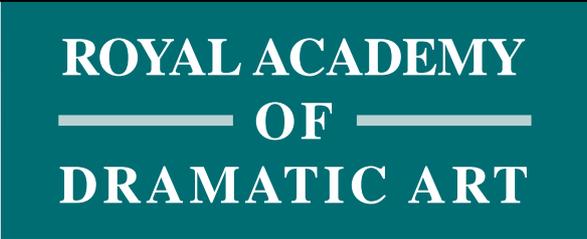
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PLUS:

- **Catherine Bailey: lost at sea!**
- **The Bayliss inheritance**

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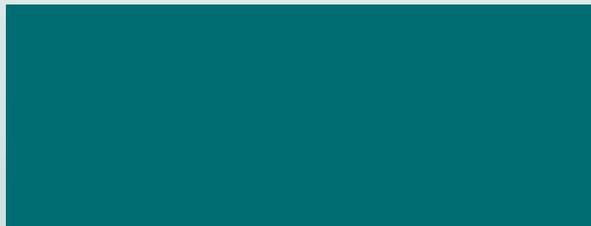




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# RADA

## THE MAGAZINE

### Issue No 15

We are the magazine of the Friends of RADA. We aim to provide a forum for new writing about the performing arts, to reflect the opinions of artists, technicians and administrators, of students and critics. And we hope to demonstrate the excitement of RADA's own work. The Friends include both graduates and others who wish to support the work of the Academy. We hope we will help you keep in touch with RADA and with each other. Please renew your links – or make new ones – by visiting the Academy and seeing the work of the present students. Write to us with your comments and opinions, or if you would like to make contact again with your contemporaries. We look forward to hearing from you.

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London WC1E 7EX. Tel: 020 7636 7076.

EDITOR: Peter Fiddick

COVER: Ysobel Gonzalez and Robert Moore in *The Shelter*  
COVER AND RADA PHOTOS COURTESY OF  
Mick Hurdis

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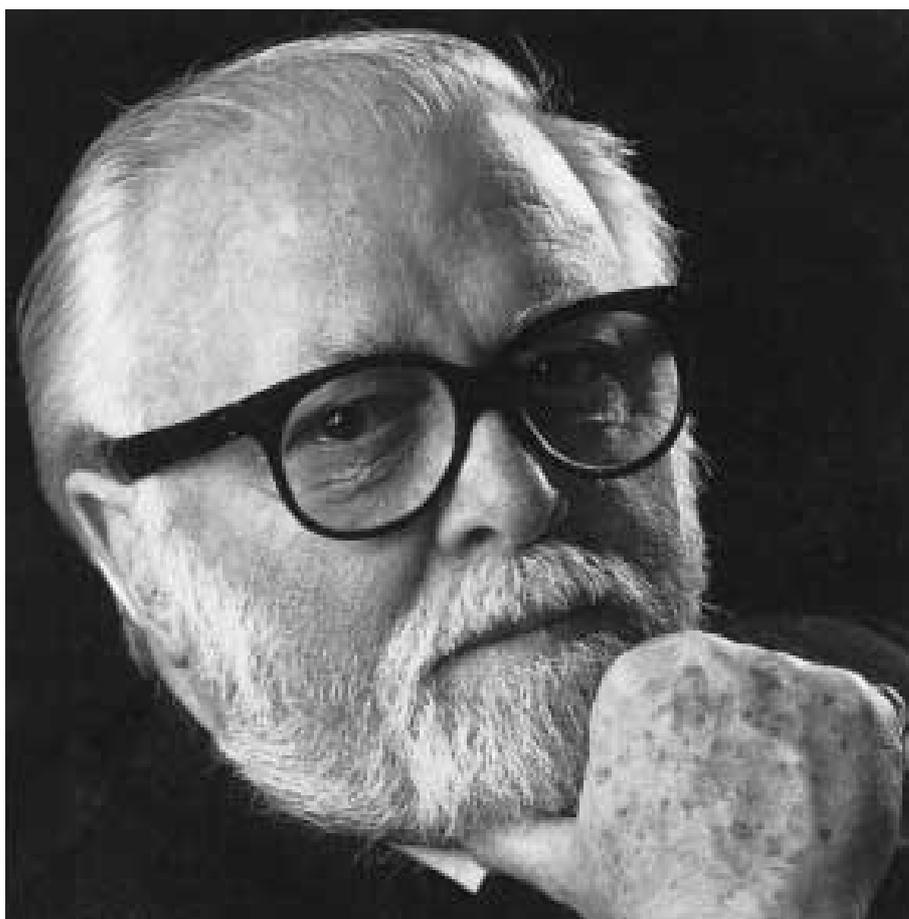
# *Friends, Patrons...*

As you will be aware, the government's new scholarship scheme has sadly failed to reduce the very worrying gap between RADA's income and expenditure. Since we are determined to maintain the quality of training that has made us renowned throughout the world and are committed to accepting only the most talented of students, regardless of individual means, it is imperative that we now find new ways of placing the Academy on a secure financial footing.

Moving into higher education seems to promise a greater contribution towards student fees than is possible at present under the aegis of Further Education. But the best drama training, such as ours, necessarily incorporating a high tutor/student ratio and very particular facilities, currently costs some £12,000 a year, so it is clear that government funding can never fully cover the actual cost of RADA training.

For this reason we are in the process of setting up several ongoing fundraising initiatives, foremost amongst them is a plan to recruit a number of individuals and companies to join our Royal Patrons, Their Majesties The Queen and Queen Mother. Each of our new Patrons will be asked to make an annual donation to the Academy through the Giftaid scheme and will receive in return, a unique package of benefits which will give them an insider's view of the world of drama. We are hoping that this will bring in upwards of £300,000 a year.

With the actual construction of our new building now nearing completion, we will also be launching a seat-naming scheme for our three new theatre spaces, giving graduates, Friends and supporters an opportunity of purchasing a plaque bearing their name or that of someone



Lord Attenborough

they wish to commemorate in this way.

Further information about these schemes will appear in future editions of this magazine, as will details of another exciting new development which, thanks to members of our Business Committee, will grant the Academy a commercial arm to work on its behalf.

I should like to take this opportunity of sending thanks to the Friends who supported RADA by buying tickets for the Gala Celebrity Screening of Kenneth Branagh's latest film, *Love's Labours Lost* on 15th March. The Academy is extremely grateful to Ken for arranging this fundraising event and our special

thanks go to those who were unable to attend but nevertheless sent a donation.

We expect the proceeds of the screening to be in the region of £10,000 and, at the request of the Friends of RADA, this will be put towards our Partnership Funding requirement for the new building. We have now raised over £5.7m towards our £8m undertaking to the Arts Council of England and are intensifying our efforts to make up the shortfall.

Finally, our most sincere and repeated thanks go to Bass plc whose continuing and most loyal support of RADA, *The Magazine* is profoundly appreciated.

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Geoff Heppell, Buro Four's project manager, reports on the reality of the new RADA

# ... *and the vision*

**A**s some of my colleagues at RADA know, the word marathon is one that I am reasonably familiar with.

Whilst I may not be as fast (or as fit) as I used to be, I can still recognise that enormous sense of well-being that every runner experiences as the half way point of any tough assignment is reached.

However, that well-being normally only lasts, at best, until the three quarter mark – you then start to decline as you realise that the really hard work is only just about to begin. Unless you have trained hard to build the stamina, mental and physical strength begins to ebb rapidly away.

This could be a very appropriate and apt analogy for the demeanour of the Centenary Project 'team' as we enter the final, gruelling stage towards the point of completion. However, in spite of the need for a strong work ethic in the next few months as we approach completion, we are all looking forward to the exciting times ahead as the full potential of the project begins to come sharply into focus.

Since my last report the works at Gower/Malet Street have achieved some notable successes and have both lost a tower crane and gained a weatherproof skin.

However, this status would not have been possible without an enormous effort by the entire project team. RADA has indeed been blessed with a dedicated team who, in spite of sometimes working under incredibly difficult conditions and seemingly impossible odds, have pulled together to secure continued progress. From Lord



The striking new facade above RADA's public entrance rises over Malet Street

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*“To have taken the Academy from the old analogue to the new digital age in an almost seamless transition is a major achievement for the BBC staff”*

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Attenborough and Nicholas Barter “at the helm” right down to the support and backroom staff, the efforts have been enormous.

After a very frustrating time towards the completion of the new building’s frame, fitting out operations are now thankfully well on their way. The first of the doorframes have been installed and in all three theatres – Vanbrugh, GBS and Studio 14 – the ductwork and air-conditioning systems are now nearing completion.

The massive ‘cable pulling’

operation to install the production lighting, sound and communication ‘spaghetti’ is also well advanced. Indeed Richard Elliott from the Oxford Sound Company, currently employed by Laing as their specialist cable co-ordinator, tells me that the new premises will have close to 175 miles of new cable installed by the time it is finished – that in itself is a major achievement for the workforce at Rosser and Russell and the other specialist cable installers who are now pulling it through the many wire-ways

and ducts. On the finishes front, joinery fitments continue to be manufactured in various factories around the country ready for final incorporation.

Some notable features are also now evident in the new premises, including the moveable floor to the stalls area of the Vanbrugh auditorium and the tensioned wire grid to the upper auditorium area – these features will eventually bring flexibility and added value to RADA’s operations in the new building.



The new Vanbrugh auditorium – the actors view from the stage with moveable stalls floor structure in the foreground



The new Vanbrugh Theatre – view towards the stage



There's an auditorium in there somewhere!



The vast temporary structure over the barrel vault roof

The theme of added value within the project, however, could not be better emphasised than through examination of the work being undertaken by the BBC, lead by the “excellent” Keith Harte and David Seditas. Colin Brown (CB to most of us) RADA’s Head of Sound, called me recently to emphasise just how enormously grateful he was for all their efforts and to confirm that RADA really was achieving its brief for Sound Studio technical facilities – these, incidentally, will be installed on the third floor of Gower Street in late May.

In this regard, it is worth a reminder that the BBC’s extensive resources have been provided to RADA at no cost as part of their partnership funding pledge. To have taken the Academy from the old analogue to the new digital age in an almost seamless transition is a major achievement for the BBC staff, one from which RADA will soon benefit and be justly proud.

Other exciting developments to come about since my last report include the installation of technical facilities in the theatres. In addition to the extensive mechanical and electrical installations, a walk round the site will encounter:

- The safety curtain in the Vanbrugh Theatre
- The paint frame located behind the GBS Theatre
- Flying systems
- Orchestra pit lift, also in the Vanbrugh
- Lighting grid and bars

Much of these new technical facilities have however only been possible by very careful space planning and technical guidance

from theatre projects consultants.

Andy Hayles of Theatre Projects has been working alongside RADA’s production manager Giles Favell to ensure that all of RADA’s needs fit the tight special constraints of the Gower/Malet Street site. Giles has benefitted enormously from this close working relationship and I have to say is blossoming into a more than competent project manager. He has even developed, quite worryingly, some “management speak” – “I will have to take a rain check on this issue” he has been overheard saying at design development meetings!

Continuing on this light hearted note, I am pleased to share with the readers of *RADA, The Magazine*



Mike Routledge, Laing's project manager, trying to convince the Chairman of his acting ability

the fun and frolics of the now annual Project Christmas Party.

As evidenced from the party snaps the Chairman himself and the site team entered into the usual high jinks. In addition to Giles receiving a mounted and engraved brass u-bend from the temporary site toilet facilities that resided for a time in his new office location in Gower Street, Mike Routledge, Laing's project manager appears to be up to no good behind the Chairman's back – someone said that it was Mike's attempt to get into the movie business, but I can assure you that on the basis of this performance he will not be giving up the day job!

Returning to the Gower Street site and other exciting developments, the extensive work undertaken by Bryan Avery's team continues to show just how good the final product is going to be.

In addition to the work Garry Reynolds has been overseeing in the Vanbrugh Theatre – and yes the Principal has sat on most of the new seats in various locations to confirm an acceptable "comfort" factor and sight-lines – Amanda Henderson



Not quite an Oscar!

has masterminded an extraordinary level of co-ordination, the outcome of which is now starting to show its true value.

Whilst much of Garry and Amanda's day to day work will not appear obvious to the layman once the project is complete, I can personally vouch for the enormous contribution they have made to the project's successful outcome.

Sadly, I could not complete this article without expressing enormous gratitude to Colum McDonnell who very sadly died just after the start of the new Millennium.

Colum, Laing's senior construction manager, who devoted his considerable energy and enthusiasm to the supervision of the main superstructure for the Gower/Malet Street building, was one of the most likeable, dedicated and sincere men the RADA project team will ever have the privilege to work alongside. Everyone has cherished memories of Colum and these will be with us as we commit to completing the redevelopment in his memory. RADA's new building in Gower Street is all the better for Colum's commitment and I know just how much he is missed by his Laing colleagues. Our sympathies are with his family who should be justifiably proud of Colum's achievements at RADA.

Finally, we should now look forward to the final 'push towards the line'. Laing are pressing ahead with the remaining construction works, following which the

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*“The essential running in, commissioning and staff orientation will take place before the students experience the new landmark facilities for the first time ”*

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essential running in, commissioning and staff orientation will take place before the students experience the new landmark facilities for the first time as the Autumn Term gets underway.

We should then, and at long last, be able to celebrate what has undoubtedly been an enormous collective effort. Given all that I know has been overcome to achieve this, it will truly be a most memorable occasion, when the trials and tribulations associated with all that has gone before can be forgotten and RADA can begin to enjoy the benefits of the flexible and purpose-built training environment that it so richly deserves.



Early days on Malet Street

The glazed open lightwell – with inset showing the underside of barrel vault roof

# *Learning to walk with an*

**M**y production company, which I set up after leaving Hampstead Theatre, was mainly to produce film and television. However, I was still attracted to the theatre and when Alan Rickman and Thelma Holt invited me to join them in taking over the Riverside Studios it seemed a great opportunity to continue in the world I knew and loved.

Thelma is a fearless theatre producer who is always ready to take a gamble on productions in which she believes. I was encouraged to learn that she, like me, enjoys her outings at the races. My brother and I have always been regular race-goers and some of my earliest memories are of going to the Derby with him. Unfortunately, the Riverside bid did not materialise and we did not get our chance to put our plan into action.

Soon after this, I was a co-producer on Deborah Warner's production of *Footfalls*, which caused a stir at the Garrick Theatre when the production was abruptly closed by the Beckett Estate. I had personally risked nothing financially because the French theatre company, Bobigny, paid for it all. It is hard to imagine a theatre company here paying for a French director to do a play, in Paris, but Bobigny believed in Deborah and that was enough reason for them.

Fortunately, I still retain my links with the theatre, as I am now a director of the Hampstead Theatre Foundation for the new building and I have also become a member of the board of Theatre de Complicité.

I proposed my first documentary to Channel 4 having attended a producer's course at The National Film and Television School. It was a

strong story which they liked, but they said they wanted someone with a track record to actually produce it. I dug my heels in. I had to be the producer or not at all. They said they would think about it. I remember putting the phone down and feeling sick, but 20 minutes later they called me back and agreed. I had gambled, but I had no choice because of the importance of that first credit. The first commission is the hardest.

Other documentary films

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*“I had gambled,  
but I had no  
choice because  
of the importance  
of that first credit.*

*The first  
commission is  
the hardest”*

---

followed, two for the BBC, and then I was offered the chance to film on board the salvage ship in the Arabian Sea that was in charge of retrieving 250 tons of silver from the US liberty ship John Barry, torpedoed in 1944 by a German U-boat.

No cargo had ever been retrieved from the inside of a steel ship at a depth of one and half miles before and a converted drill ship had been

recruited for this task. The crew was made up of men from all nationalities who had an interest in treasure. The risks for them were high but then, potentially, so were the rewards.

I proposed the film to Channel 4 but without a guarantee that we would find the silver, they refused to finance the project. At the very last minute I was telephoned from Muscat and told that if my film crew was not in Salalah (a remote port in the Sultanate of Oman on the border with Yeman) within three days it would be too late. It was too good an opportunity to miss. I bought a Hi-8 camera and some hard shoes (I was told high heels wouldn't be any good on deck) and caught a night flight to Dubai, Muscat and finally Salalah – which gave me plenty of time to read the instruction book on how to operate the camera.

In Salalah I joined three Americans and a Frenchman, part of the salvage team, and the following morning we were taken to a small fishing boat to take us to the ship, 180 miles offshore. All of us had grave doubts about the boat – the open wooden dhow made the African Queen look superior – but none of us said anything, something we all lived to regret.

I know that, as a woman, I felt that I could not be the one to protest. A useful lesson: never be concerned about gender when your life is at stake. We set off, without a compass, with two Omani sailors who had up until then only navigated by the coast, hit a squall, got completely lost, took in water and ended up presumed dead. We were, however, alive, floating around for 32 hours before sighting land, oblivious to the

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# *independent air*

fact that the French air force were searching for us.

The British embassy in Muscat had been informed that one of their nationals was missing but decided it was too expensive to do anything about it and that we would probably turn up.

The French Embassy was subsequently informed and all hell broke loose. Always travel with a Frenchman if there is likely to be an emergency. As it turned out they could not find our little boat, which had no flares, no radio, no reflector and by this time, no rudder. We limped into port, hot, thirsty and tired. Later I was to learn that a similar fishing boat nearby lost all its crew that night.

Twelve hours later the crew of the salvage vessel were staring down at me in silence as I came aboard, I was so tired and bruised that the last thing I cared about was a cool reception. It had taken a week from leaving London to reach my destination, where I was to spend the next six weeks with 75 men.

By the end of these six weeks I had filmed some tense moments as the men searched the various holds of the John Barry, culminating in 1.4 million silver coins showering onto the decks and total euphoria.

I returned with 30 hours of footage, only to be told by Channel 4 that the story was now “out of date”, as it had already happened. But it was a journey I will always remember – and I would recommend anyone to spend six weeks alone with 75 members of the opposite sex, an interesting and valuable experience.

Some of the footage went out on

news bulletins all over the world and the salvage company then asked me to make a half hour video of the expedition to promote their company – but would I please leave out the “lost at sea” bit!

On my return, by way of contrast, I produced a film for Channel 4’s *Cutting Edge* strand about women who married into the aristocracy called *Great House Wives*. Then last year we made another *Cutting Edge*, *Safari Strife*, directed by Edward Hall, and plan to make another documentary together.

It was Maria Aitken who said to me that I should produce radio drama and Jeremy Mortimer at the BBC gave me my first chance to supply the BBC with an independent production. From the beginning our approach to each play has been the same as it would be in the theatre. We rehearse away from the studio, to allow time to explore the text as thoroughly as possible. We invite theatre directors to direct for us as well as established radio directors and we are now in the fortunate position of being one of the main suppliers of independent drama to both BBC Radio 3 and 4.

I have also taken the opportunity to direct again, although with a busy schedule it isn’t possible very often. We recently commissioned Timberlake Wertenbaker to write a new play for us, *Dianeira*, and I co-directed it with her for Radio 3. It was one of the best new plays I had ever read and it attracted a terrific cast.

We have built up a reputation for commissioning new plays and for bringing established foreign plays into the English language for the first time, *More Sinned Against Than Sinning* by Ostrovsky, adapted for



Catherine Bailey

us by Frank McGuinness, and Dürenmatt’s *Frank the Fifth*, an operetta set in a Swiss bank. Neither play had ever been heard before in English.

Soon we will do it again with a Thomas Bernhard play and we have also commissioned several new plays from talented writers. I am excited by a great season of plays we have planned for the next twelve months on radio.

Early on in my company’s career I started to develop several feature films and also some interesting television dramas. Of course, it is too hazardous a business to bank on any of them, but we have a good cross section of material in development, so I remain optimistic.

Two years ago I went on a film producer’s course in Spain and I am now in a better position to expand the company to accommodate these other activities. Of course I would never be able to achieve my goals on my own and I now have a small committed and talented group of people working with me. And, unlike the early part of my life, I have plans as well.

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# *Spring Term 20*



WESTMINSTER  
THEATRE

BIRDS ON  
THE WING

Written and directed by  
Guy Slater

Songs and lyrics by  
Ken Howard &  
Alan Blaikey

Designed by  
Matthew Wright



THE GBS  
NO END  
OF BLAME

By Howard Barker

Directed by  
Gadi Roll

Designed by  
Douglas Heap

# 00 Productions



BATTERSEA  
ARTS CENTRE

PRESENT  
LAUGHTER

By Noel Coward

Directed by  
Robert Chetwyn

Designed by  
Peter Rice



THE GBS  
TROILUS AND  
CRESSIDA

By William Shakespeare

Directed by  
Robin Midgley

Designed by  
Julie Nelson

# *Can the House be*

**A**rriving for rehearsal at the Royal Opera House one morning a decade ago I noticed a ruck of reporters and photographers outside, their attention focused on Bow Street Magistrates' Court opposite. Presently the security van drew up and the assembled hacks closed in on the celebrity miscreant, one of the many big-time fraudsters who by then bestrode the Thatcherite scene. "Don't say anything," remarked Jeremy Isaacs, alighting from his taxi, "it's probably one of our big sponsors." Our laughter was slightly hollow and a bit nervous; that of the ghosts of Brecht and Gay much more hearty.

At this time the government's policy of throwing the arts to the private sector was still paying off, especially at Covent Garden, which offered all the grace and elegance of traditional theatre-going in pursuit of high cost, high profile, international opera and ballet. An impoverished Arts Council may have slashed the subsidy, but the City was awash with spare cash and sponsorship was a new route in the arriviste progress.

The chandeliers glittered on the just and on the unjust, on those who knew Mozart from Wagner and those who didn't. But it's important to educate the rich isn't it? After all, they have influence and now we depend on them (indeed, rumour had it that another distinguished guest of Her Majesty was let out on parole in recognition of his donation to a Royal fundraising Gala).

Wasn't it all a bit dubious? True, Covent Garden had never been exactly for and of the people, but it was a National Institution. However, in the real world the show must, and did, go on. The Garden flourished.

Predictably, with the inevitable return of hard times, the private sector cut back on sponsorship and the government on subsidy, again. In order to meet its contractual obligations, the ROH had to raise prices over and over, in excess of £250 top on some occasions, in a vain attempt to make ends meet. At these levels even the prosperous middle class was priced out.

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*“The chandeliers glittered on those who knew Mozart from Wagner and those who didn't. But it's important to educate the rich isn't it?”*

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Meanwhile the political clamour for greater accessibility, educational projects and outreach programmes fell upon groaning budgets. With dwindling resources the company was being required to square the circle, no less.

Then came the closure for redevelopment. By the time Mary Allen departed her post as chief executive officer of the Royal Opera House, after only seven cruelly exposed and highly charged months,

the situation had come to a head and burst open. Her diary of this stressful stewardship, born in acute crisis and never really delivered from it, is contained in *A House Divided*.

In her introduction Allen artlessly asks, "So why publish this diary?" If there are any regrets at her decision to do so, they are only because the subject is so important, and her authority as a major player so undeniable, that those who care would have been better served by a more structured, analytical format than the diary.

The twenty-one introductory pages present in a robust and lucid style a concise summary of the situation as she found it and left it, with guidelines essential to the understanding of an inevitably confused narrative amidst sprawling, formless procedures. This is undoubtedly the most valuable part of the book.

The diary which follows often seems like a farrago of chaotic fragments, veering from the tedious to the amazing, precisely reflecting the quotidian surface of the job without often exposing the bone and sinew of the issues. Diaries have a subversive life of their own in which the allure, to reader and diarist alike, of the kitchen, the garden, the hospital, the social scene, challenges too strongly.

Our heroine swings with insouciance from putting a hard hat on Princess Margaret to currying a chicken, and this, I admit, allows an amiably original personality to shine through. Then again, a person who prepares the gravy a day in advance of the roast but neglects to book a taxi for one in the morning raises legitimate doubts.

The most irritating feature of all is the way the clarity of the Dramatis

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# *reunited?*

Personae tabulated at the front of this book is squandered in a welter of undifferentiated Anthonies, Richards, Jameses, Peters and Johns, stranding the narrative somewhere between the New Testament and New Labour.

The result overall is detrimental. Allen writes that she soon felt she was “wrestling with a miasma”. We would have been grateful for a more defined substance eventually. The obsessive snarling at the infamous Sadler’s Wells contract (water under the bridge, surely?) was perhaps a vain attempt to achieve this, but small potatoes compared with the \$64,000 mystery (yes, a low estimate!) of “the almost total absence of proper financial information and controls”.

Likewise, she claims passionately to have had a vision for the company but again no definition of what it was. Such complexities do not readily emerge from crisis-tuned diaries, but a more considered analysis would have taken time.

On the other hand, the cliff-hanging escape from bankruptcy, with its lurid insight into a kaleidoscopic power play (just shake for a fascinating new configuration!) is well served by the brief, eminently time-conscious word-bite, as is the sharp poignancy of the gradual drift towards dismissal – and these after all are the two principal dramas that keep you reading.

Lurking below the surface detail, or looming through the miasma if you like, is the issue of where power will lie if the current funding balance continues, and the retreating Allen slyly sows a clever crop of hints which are there to be harvested by the attentive reader.

As the privatisation of the company has advanced, so has the importance of

the Chairman of the Board. This is now a political appointment to a greater degree than ever before because it is essential to have someone with the financial and social clout to get, and keep, enough big spenders.

This leads to power-broking on a scale which inevitably affects the artistic as well as the financial management of the company. For as the high tide of both public subsidy and corporate sponsorship has, variably, receded, the principal funders now tend to be very rich individuals with even richer trust funds to deploy who do not subscribe to the arm’s length principle so cherished of old by the Arts Council. Why should they?

Allen spells this out explicitly in her introduction when commenting on the shortcomings of the Eyre Report:

*“The Royal Opera House is caught between two types of master. On the one hand it receives more public subsidy than any other arts organisation in the country: it is held to account for that money and must meet various obligations towards the public in order to justify continuing to receive it.*

*On the other hand, because the public subsidy is not large enough to run an international opera house the ROH needs to raise substantial funds from companies and individuals. These people, quite rightly, care about what is happening to their money and are entitled to express their views. However, at present they have a direct role in how the organisation is run, which creates a tension between the demands of public accountability and the demands of donors.*

*Until the issues this raises, such as whether donors should be represented*

*on the Board, or be able to place constraints on management’s capacity to manage are resolved, this tension will continue to undermine the organisation.”* (p13)

One solution would be for the government to restore the funding balance in favour of the public sector, repossessing the Royal Opera House and its companies for the nation. Then it could will the means as well as the ends to accessibility. But all the signs are negative. The way they caved in to threats from individuals over the future of the Royal Ballet and the ENO are clear evidence of that. Besides, they are wedded to a much more populist agenda for the arts and opera is not a populist art form.

The ROH affair seems to have entered a relatively calm phase under Allen’s successor, and the fact that he has a company to run is in no small way thanks to her. The redevelopment of the building looks like emulating the British Library in silencing its detractors. There are grounds for a cautious optimism.

But within the structure of the organisation, as a result of all this anguish and despair, the superhuman efforts by Allen and others, the dismissals, redundancies, betrayals and tarnished reputations, to say nothing of the vast expense of public and private funds, how much has changed? Will we have a shining phoenix on the Piazza, or still the same old behemoth in Bow Street?

*John Cox, formerly director of production at Glyndebourne and chief executive of Scottish Opera, was production director of the Royal Opera House, 1988-94*

# *The beneficence of Miss Bayliss*

Lilian Baylis and the Old Vic are synonymous with pioneering, quality theatre. The Royal Victoria Hall Foundation is historically bound to them both. It is the trust which Miss Baylis used to run the Old Vic until the theatre was sold in 1982. Proceeds from the sale, together with a number of subsequent gifts, have allowed the Foundation to become a grant making body dedicated to making good theatre available to people in London who might not experience it otherwise.

The Foundation offers two kinds of sponsorship. Firstly, eleven Lilian Baylis Awards are given annually to individual students nominated by each of London's accredited acting schools. The scholarship, currently of £1,200, is made to second or third year drama students who show exceptional promise, but who are struggling financially.

This year, Robert Mountford, who played Ulysses in *Troilus and Cressida* in February, was RADA's talented recipient. "I am so grateful to the RVHF," he explained. "Their help enabled me to finish working in the evenings after a day at RADA, so I could focus solely on my intensive training." Next year's award winner will be Lyndi Smith, who enters her third year in September.

The second kind of grant, generally up to £2,000, is made to theatrical organisations or groups which provide education in the performing arts, or to help people go to the theatre. Dilys Gane, the outgoing chairwoman of the RVHF, explained, "it's all about professional theatre. The emphasis is on attracting both audiences and aspiring actors to enrich the whole experience of theatre." She added, with

the conviction of the truly dedicated: "Our grants are designed to make a difference to whether a production goes ahead, to its quality and to the audience attending it."

The Foundation is a charity and makes its awards exclusively within London. Its beneficiaries are diverse and might include, for example, school parties or disabled groups, which need financial help to visit the theatre or to have a production visit them.

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*“Their help enabled me to finish working in the evenings after a day at RADA, so I could focus on my training”*

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A small production company needing assistance to stage a new play on the fringe, or an established theatre like the Polka in Wimbledon, whose productions are exclusively for children, may also apply.

The RVHF is clear about its criteria for giving: "Grants will only be considered for projects which aspire to good professional standards and which involve drama professionals or students taught by drama professionals," states a letter replying to general inquiries.

The RVHF is run by a dedicated clerk, Carol Cooper, and its trustees, a diverse group of people whose different backgrounds add great value to the charity's work. Dilys Gane, for example, is a retired civil service administrator. Other trustees are theatrical professionals, business people, and a lawyer, each contributing particular experience and knowledge to the work of the organisation.

Like many other bodies responsible for funding the arts, the RVHF is preoccupied with adapting to the leaner, meaner world of the 21st century. Discretionary grants for acting, theatre management and dance students are few and far between, while mandatory ones are history. Finding sponsorship to cover a three year course at an accredited school is becoming harder each year.

Valerie Colgan, head of the City Lit's drama department and trustee of the RVHF for nine years, says the whole issue needs a radical overhaul. "Nowadays it's virtually impossible for a young, working class actor to go to drama school. It is a great loss to theatre." Ms Colgan is clear that a defined structure must be established to nurture young talent and breathe life and form into new ideas.

"In my view, Equity should take responsibility, perhaps by taxing foreign earnings on film and videos. It's all so hit and miss now. Talent should not be abandoned to luck. If we're not careful, students will be taken for their money, not their promise, and the whole profession will be undermined."

Although Val Colgan was keen to point out that her views were offered as an individual and not a representative of the Foundation, she and Dilys Gane both agree that the theatre is one place

**Simon Needs** on his work as RADA's performing artists' counsellor

## *Offering an expert's ear, when special help is needed*

where you have to get on and do things for yourself – no one else is going to ease the way. As successive governments continue to squeeze arts budgets, the need for the acting profession to take care of its own becomes ever more urgent.

The Old Vic, with its proud history and dynamic future, is perhaps the obvious place to return for inspiration. The sheer energy and abiding influence of Lilian Baylis provide a terrific legacy, which the Royal Victoria Hall Foundation continues to draw on. Val Colgan's first professional role was on its stage. The Royal Victoria Hall Foundation trustees are very appreciative of the theatre's generosity in playing host to the Foundation's award ceremonies, and of the way it continues to build on its reputation for nurturing young talent.

In April, Dilys steps aside as Chairman to make way for one of the other trustees. Her successor will continue to ensure that the criteria for awarding grants are kept under constant review. The Foundation remains determined to carry on the work which Lilian Baylis began at the turn of the last century. Good theatre is one of the most important indicators of a civilised, cultured society.

"If we want the best – the best actors, the best plays, the best audiences – then we have to sponsor the young aspiring professionals of tomorrow," concluded Val Colgan with passion.

The work of the Royal Victoria Hall Foundation, together with that of many other arts charities all over the country, is essential to the continuing survival and vitality of the British acting tradition. Those within the profession have to decide whether such dependence is healthy or desirable for either.

I have been buried in the bowels of Chenies Street, next to the lift shaft, for over three years now, so I thought it was time to share some observations about my work as the counsellor for RADA.

Any student who has seen me, or wants to, or is about to, need have no fear of being 'outed' in any way. The service is totally confidential. I would only ever break that agreement in extreme cases such as acts of terrorism (I do not mean terrorising the staff with awesome acting ability) or a suicidal tendency, and even then it would be with the knowledge and consent of the 'client'.

So whom do I see, and what do I do? I see any student on any course at RADA. It is that simple. You do not have to be mad, bad or dangerous to know to book an appointment. I have seen a huge variety of issues brought to the tiny consulting room, from anorexia to xenophobia. People sometimes come once and I never see them again, or regularly for a fixed period, or on and off for the full three years of their training.

The gender divide is very similar to the 'outside world', with the majority of clients being female. This surprises me, as I would have thought that male actors would tend to be more emotionally articulate and less restrained at talking about themselves than the general public.

I am a founding member of a new organisation called Performing Artists' Counsellors. Counsellors from most drama schools and some universities meet once a term to discuss various issues, share presentations and network. Our aim is to organise a conference and publish our work.

We try to concentrate on particular issues related to performing, such as performance anxiety, body image, or inappropriate acting out of psychological distress via the performer's medium – eg using a musical instrument as an extension of the personality or, for actors, the 'acting out' of inner distress either on or off the stage.

This 'acting out' can manifest itself in many ways. A typical example would be an eating disorder. I have been particularly surprised at the large number of students at RADA with an eating disorder. This, however does parallel other performing arts students.

We at Performing Artists' Counsellors are also trying to promote therapy as part of the whole process of becoming an actor and not just left to those who have a defining mental health issue. I believe that as actors you need to have a deep understanding and empathy for yourselves before you can fully enter the psyche of a character you are playing. If you are able to accept and understand yourself, it is easier to be able to put your own drives, conditionality and prejudices aside and enter the mind and world of another human being 'character', without your own 'acting out' creating a screen between you, the actor, and the character you are playing.

I have learnt a lot from working at RADA over the last three years and some students have learnt more about themselves from the therapeutic relationship. I am at Chenies Street every week, in term time, so anyone who needs me just has to speak to Judy and book an appointment.

# On the attack

It was in September 1945 that I finally crossed the portals of 62 Gower Street as a RADA student. It fulfilled a lifelong ambition. As a five year old I balanced on a coffee table in the lounge of a genteel Morecambe hotel and lisped “What is the matter with Mary Jane?” As the old biddies clapped their hands, I wanted more. I knew I would one day be an actress.

When I left school, in 1942, bombs were falling on London and my mother refused to let me leave Cheshire. So I volunteered for the Woman’s Royal Naval Service and spent the next couple of years decoding at one of Bletchley Park’s outlying stations. And very boring it was too. When the war showed signs of ending, in the early spring of 1945 I applied to RADA for an audition.

I saw that the set pieces in the qualifying test included Shakespeare, Sheridan, Shaw and the gospel according to St. John. So on the bare Bancroft stage, in my Petty Officer’s uniform, I tore into *Pygmalion*, and had the temerity to follow it with my own choice of Cleopatra. I think the principal, Sir Kenneth Barnes, and co were so stunned they offered me a place.

I also cunningly entered my name for the London University Diploma of Drama. If you could prove you were doing a university course you were demobbed from the services in Group One, instead of hanging about in uniform till your proper demob group was due for release. So that is how I got into RADA in the autumn term.

I was twenty one years old and the intake of students was sharply divided. There was a shortage of boys, but a gorgeous clutch of pretty 15 year-old girls. This bunch included Elspet Gray,

Chris Pollen, Denise Bryer, Jo Crombie and Josephine O’Sullivan. Then there was a big gap and the rest of us were demobbed old age pensioners in their early 20s. Our lot included Brian Wilde, Donald Hewlett and future writer and dramatist Tom Kneale, soon to be joined by John Neville, Robert Shaw, Peter Sallis, Zillah Tomlin, Peter Barkworth and Fulton McKay. One of the snags was that girls often played

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*“In the 40s,  
regional accents  
were out and  
we solemnly  
intoned ‘How  
now brown cow’ ”*

---

men’s parts and I was never cast as a juvenile – the teenagers played the daughters and I played Mum.

In the 40s, regional accents were out and we solemnly intoned “How now brown cow,” and how rain from Spain fell mainly you know where. Mime was my favourite class. I was impulsive and bossy and the minute the subject was mentioned I leapt into action, bullying a couple of hapless 15 year olds to be my stooges.

Our teachers included Winifred Oughton, Lilian Harrison, Alice Gachet, and Mary Phillips, with Ronnie Kerr, Hugh Miller and Fabia Drake popping in to direct when they

were free. We had Charles Hawtrey directing us in *School for Scandal*, in my first term. I cannot imagine how he coped with us.

In my second year I was president of the Student Council. As I don’t remember anything about it, I cannot think that I was much good!

We sometimes played to the public and in the summer vacation we did open air productions for the LCC in Finsbury Park. I see from my programme of *The Devil’s Disciple* that Brewster Mason and Donald Hewlett were in the cast. Brian Wilde played General Burgoyne and Romany Evens, Mrs Dudgeon. The following summer I was cast as the Thane of Cawdor’s wife, but dramatically went down with mumps days before the opening night. Aaaaagh!

Ronnie Kerr ran two small theatres during those years, the Intimate, Palmer’s Green, and the New, Bromley. Chosen students appeared there during the summer and I featured heavily in domestic service, playing the maid in *Blithe Spirit* and *Sweet Aloes*. In the latter, my dark skinned make-up took twice as long to apply as my entrance and single speech.

In 1947, the annual Awards performance took place at the Lyric Theatre on 1 April. I should have noted the date. I am ashamed to say I made no note of the winner of the Gold Medal either. But in a cast of three, my two chums Carmel McSharry and Harold Goodwin appeared with me in Fabia Drake’s production of Charles McEvoy’s *The Likes of ‘er’*. He took the Silver Medal, the Best Male Performance and Kenneth Kent’s Five Guinea Prize for Attack. You can guess which was mine. My family assure me it was entirely appropriate.

# *Young at heart*

76 years ago Alfred Denville, actor, manager and MP, bought Denville Hall to provide shelter for 'aged thespians'. He was no mean publicist and his appeal leaflets, written in the flowery language of the time, are a delight to read – though these days non politically correct!

The hyperbole, however, was used to raise the money needed, then and now, to provide a home where the needs of a very special group of professionals could be catered for.

The tradition of care that he founded has continued for over 70 years. These days the home is funded and run by The Actors' Charitable Trust, who have maintained it since the 60's. As the needs of our residents have changed, the Trust has responded and we now provide both residential and nursing care as well as convalescence and respite breaks.

As well as the caring side we all feel that life here should be fun – actors mostly have wide ranging interests and retain a curiosity and open mindness regardless of age. The many visits from fellow pros who give talks, poetry recitals, concerts, and so on are greatly appreciated, but probably the most popular events are the twice yearly visits by the RADA students.

There is intense curiosity to see the new students at the Christmas concert. The wish then to know what progress the group have made by the summer show gives a real buzz to the house. The residents are genuinely interested in these newest recruits to their profession and informed comment and advice is freely given.

The innovation last summer of readings and excerpts from plays gave great pleasure to the audience.



RADA students entertain at Denville Hall

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*“ There is a distinct feeling of torches being handed on to a new generation ”*

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After the show the students join the residents for lunch and a chat. This is quite a time for theatrical lore and advice to be passed on, questions asked and hopes and ambitions discussed. There is a very distinct feeling of torches being handed on to a new generation, as stories of working with – or being – one of the legends of this century told. There is always an excitement about that hour and some difficulty in dragging the visitors away to their coach at half-past one.

We are all grateful to RADA and particularly to Andrew and Pat for organising these shows, not only because of their entertainment value but because we need you to know about us. As a charity we depend on the generous help of the profession that the students are entering. And, as the years go on – unthinkable thought when young and beautiful – the students themselves may one day be glad that Denville Hall exists.

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**RADA GRADUATES: 1999**

**GRAEME MEARNS**, *Inspector Rebus*, for John Hannah's production company; *Comedy of Errors* and *Romeo and Juliet*, RSC. **FENELLA WOOLGAR**, *Charley's Aunt*, Sheffield Crucible. **KEITH DUNPHY**, *Romeo and Juliet*, RSC. **LISA MCNAUGHT**, *Cold Calling*, Riverside Theatre. **ROHAN SIVA**, Tybalt in *Romeo and Juliet*, Leicester Haymarket. **RACHEL SIEGEL**, *Death of A Salesman*, Birmingham Rep. **SARAH QUIST**, *Pinnocchio 2000*. **EVE BEST**, *Casualty*, BBC, RNT. **FENELLA WOOLGAR**, *Poirot*, ITV. **SHARLENE WHYTE**, *Other People's Children*, BBC, Burnside, ITV. **STEPHEN MACKKEY**, *State of the Party*, film by Irvine Walsh.

**RADA GRADUATES: 1998**

**CANDIDA BENSON**, *Pygmalion*, *Clavigo* and *Cavalcade*, Citizens Theatre, Glasgow, radio play and a short film. **SOPHIE BOLD**, *Rosalind*, Royal National Theatre tour of *As You Like It*. **GARY CARGILL**, *Masked Man* in the feature film, *Killing Time*. **JAMES HILLIER**, *Lucy Sullivan is Getting Married*, ITV. **TOBIAS MENZIES**, *Summer in the Suburbs*, BBC, *The Way of the World*, Royal Exchange, Manchester, *Longitude*, Granada films. **HELEN GARDINER**, *Baby Doll*, NT, *London's Burning*, ITV. **AMANDA HABERLAND**, *EastEnders*, BBC. **JOANNA PAGE**, *David Copperfield*, BBC. **MAXINE PEAKE**, *Coronation Street*, ITV, *Miss Julie*, at the Haymarket, London, RNT. **PHIL SHEPPARD**, Started his own company, Wagbeard which opens with a production of *The Emigrants* at Camden People's Theatre. **SALLY**

**HAWKINS**, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Much Ado About Nothing*, Regents Park. **MATTHEW STOREY**, *Christmas 2000*, Coventry. **ROBERT WILFORT** did a St David's Day Special for BBC Wales, *Sense and Sensibility*, Northolt Theatre and tour. **PHILLIPA WALLER**, *Hard Times*, Watermill Theatre. RSC, **BEN ELLIOT**, **ISRAEL ADURAMO** and **ANDREW BONE**.

**RADA GRADUATES: 1997**

**CARLI NORRIS**, *Mrs Bradley's Mysteries*, BBC, *Grafters*, ITV, *Doctors*, BBC. **EMMA KAY** Sheffield Crucible, *Longitude*, ITV. **TANYA MOORIE**, *The Bill*, ITV.

**RADA GRADUATES: 1996**

**MARTIN LEDWITH**, *Heartbeat*, ITV. **BRUCE MCGREGOR**, *Casualty*, BBC. **AMANDA PERRY SMITH**, *Brookside*, Channel 4. **ROB WHITELOCK**, *Macbeth*, RSC, exhibition of his

More news of the film inspired by RADA friendships

# Dream on

**Fresh from Venice Premiere, *Between Dreams* screened in London, September 30th 1999. Irish and New Yorkers Re-Unite in Follow-Up To Last Year's Acclaimed Short, *Stranded* – agency report.**

WOMACK, *Liverpool 1*, BBC, *Playing the Field*, BBC. DAVID WESTHEAD, *Grafters*, ITV. ADAM LEVY, RSC.

## STAGE MANAGEMENT

### GRADUATES: 1999

MAIA LUZ BUSCHMAN, follow spot op, Salisbury Playhouse. KATIE CRAGGS, SM, Mountview Theatre School. KEN MADDEN, producer for a new Brendan Behan play. LOUISE MANSFIELD, ASM, Greenwich Theatre Company, SM, London New Plays Festival, DSM for RADA Productions *Troilus and Cressida* and *No End of Blame*. PAULA MCQUILLAN, ASM, Birmingham School for Speech and Drama. LORNA SEYMOUR, SM, TIE tour of *Macbeth*, SM/Designer, Pentameters Theatre Company. JENNY VILA, Lighting Designer, Edinburgh Festival, Technical Manager, Singapore Symphony Orchestra. PETER WARD, Technical Assistant, The Barbican.

### AND...

CORRINE SHARP, Technical Training Co-ordinator, The Royal Opera House. GWEN THOMSON, Sound Technician, Orbital Sound. ANNA HOWARTH, Artist in Residence, Royal Holloway College. EMMA PLOWRIGHT, part of team setting up North Music Trust which will be home to the Northern Sinfonia and Folkworks. ABHILASH PILLAI, awarded Arts Council Bursary for a residency at the Theatre Royal, Plymouth as Assistant Director, now working as Artistic Director of Abhinaya Theatre Group.

Following its world premiere at the prestigious Venice Film Festival where it was screened in competition, *Between Dreams*, a new short film by Ian Fitzgibbon, had a special screening at Sony's Columbia TriStar Theatre in London. The film, produced by Eoin Holmes, is Fitzgibbon's second as a director, following last year's critically acclaimed short, *Stranded*.

*Between Dreams* is a story of a young man facing death on the oncology ward of a London hospital. Dramatic images of past and present intertwine as he slips from one state of unconsciousness to another. The film is based on the memoirs of English actor/screenwriter Stephen Tredre, who died of cancer in 1997. While in hospital, Tredre also created the BBC drama series, *Fish*, starring Paul McGann (*Withnail and I*).

The cast of *Between Dreams* includes Lloyd Owen of the Olivier-winning *Closer*, David Westhead, featured with Academy Award winner Judi Dench in *Mrs Brown*, and David Harewood, who starred opposite Vanessa Redgrave in Broadway's *Anthony and Cleopatra*. Joining them are the three actors from *Stranded*: Paul Hickey (*Saving Private Ryan*), Michael McElhatton (*I Went Down*), and Barry Cassin.

The actors made room in their schedules for this film as a personal tribute to Tredre, with whom they attended drama school at London's Royal Academy of Dramatic Art. Says director Fitzgibbon: "We were wonderfully lucky to attract such great actors to this project. This was truly a labour of love, and the fact that most of us knew each other and Stephen so well just raised everything to another level."

The project also offered an opportunity for *Stranded*'s production team to work together again. Michael Garland, following the successful Cannes Film Market premiere of his new feature, *Accelerator*, executive produced the film. Cinematographer Ronan Fox also returned, as did New York-based composer Art Labriola and associate producer Benjamin Patton, who produced the score. Joining them was Jo Homewood, John Boorman's production manager on *The General*.

*Between Dreams*, which runs 14 minutes, was funded by the Irish Film Board and Ireland's RTÉ network as part of the Short Cuts programme.



Shown in the photograph: 2nd from left – Lloyd Owen, 4th from left – Jane Gwilliams Akuwudike, 5th from left – Ian Fitzgibbon, Central figure – former RADA Principal Oliver Neville, the three on far right (working left to right) David Westhead, Michael McElhatton, and Helen Patton Plusczyk.

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# *Can you help RADA's work?*

**T**he demise of Local Education Authority funding for drama training and the limitations of the Department of Education and Employment's new Dance and Drama Awards have increased the need for the Academy to offer Scholarships/Bursaries to students in genuine financial need who are unable to raise sufficient funds through either their family or sponsorship.

The Academy is therefore becoming increasingly dependent on raising new funds each year through its own fundraising activities. Legacies are an important means of the Academy ensuring that it can maintain the required level of Scholarship support required by the students in the future. **A bequest to the Academy**, as a registered charity, is free from Inheritance Tax as the gift is deducted from the total net value of your estate when assessing tax liability. For further information regarding arranging a bequest in the favour of the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, please contact the Registrar.

The Academy welcomes the opportunity of entering into **partnership with companies** to support a wide range of its activities, including student productions, short courses, special projects and *RADA, The Magazine*.

Charitable Trusts, Foundations and philanthropic individuals are playing an increasing part in ensuring that the Academy can continue to provide Scholarship and Bursary support to those

students in genuine financial need. It is only with this support that the Academy can maintain its broad selection policy and continue to offer places on the basis of an individual's ability to act and not the ability to pay. For this we are extremely grateful: see pages 22-23.

Throughout its history the Academy has been fortunate in benefiting from the support of individual donors, both named and anonymous, who have made substantial contributions to the Student Scholarship and Bursary Funds. As we approach the millennium the need for financial support for our students has never been greater. Should you wish to make a contribution to the **Student Scholarship/Bursary Fund** there are various opportunities available:

**Life Membership of the Friends of RADA** – All Life and Corporate Membership subscriptions are held on deposit and the interest is used annually to provide a Friends of RADA Scholarship to a third year acting student.

**Gift Aid** – As a registered charity, the Academy is eligible for a donation through the Gift Aid scheme which now has no lower limit. Tax relief will apply to all donations made through the Gift Aid scheme whether £1 or £1000. Donations can be directed towards the support of individual students towards their fees or maintenance costs and the Academy can claim tax relief from the Inland Revenue.