



cymdeithas ddrama cymru
drama association of wales

February 2016

Hello Everyone,

As this our first Newsletter in 2016 I would like to start by wishing everyone a healthy, happy and successful 2016.

This is such a special year for DAW as we are hosting the British Final at The Sherman Theatre, Cardiff on 1 + 2 July, 2015 so plans are well underway for this.

Lots of information in this Newsletter so I won't take up too much of your time except to say, please, please support us as much as possible. If you would like to volunteer to help in any way then please get in touch.

Leon is waiting to receive all your updates so don't forget to let him know what you are doing, you can email him at newsletter@dramawales.org.uk

On a much sadder note we were really shocked to hear that Allan Williams, a founder member of Loose Cannons and of the Anglesey One-Act Festival, passed away in November (obituary on page 10). He will be a great loss to the festivals all over Wales and especially in Anglesey. RIP Allan.

Best wishes,

Jeri

If you would like to support our campaign to raise £25,000.00 and make Wales the outstanding hosts, please go to our Virgin Money page by clicking on the link below and give whatever you can, everything will be appreciated. Please remember we get 25% extra if you are eligible for Gift Aid. Thank you.
[SUPPORT DAW](#)

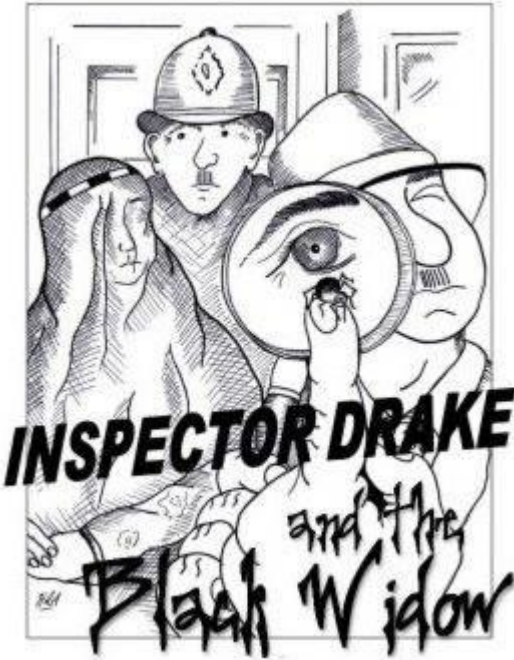
The poster features a photograph of the Sherman Theatre building in Cardiff. The text is overlaid on the image. At the top left is the Cymdeithas ddrama cymru logo. At the top right is the Sherman Theatre logo. Below the Sherman Theatre logo is a small logo for the British Final of One-Act Plays. The main title is 'The 83rd British Final Festival of One-Act Plays' in large, bold, pink letters. Below the title, it says 'Adjudicator: Jan Palmer Sayer GoDA'. To the right, it says '7.00pm 1 & 2 July 2016'. Below that, it says 'Sherman Theatre Senghenydd Road Cardiff CF24 4YE'. At the bottom, it says 'Tickets: £15 per night Box Office: 029 2064 6900 www.shermancymru.co.uk'. At the very bottom, it says 'www.dramawales.org.uk #DramaFest16 Registered Charity No. 502186'. There are also social media icons for Facebook and Twitter.



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COASTLAND PLAYERS' DEBUT PRODUCTION



Coastland Players, based in the village of St Ishmaels, near Haverfordwest, presented their first production under their new name.

Until recently they were known as Johnston Country Players, but a change of venue necessitated a change of name so Coastland Players came into being.

The hilarious farce – *Inspector Drake and the Black Widow*, by David Tristram – was accepted by Pembrokeshire audiences in the way we all hope and pray that our plays will be received.

This play is a hoot to perform and the end result is well worth the hard work that needs to be put in, to do it justice.

Not only is it a learning marathon – especially for the two main characters of Inspector Drake and his bumbling Sergeant Plodd, but also from the

woman to play all 7 female parts, it worked very well using 3 actresses performing the roles between them.

The character of Inspector Drake was played by Andy Rowlands, Sergeant Plodd by Adrian Duggan, Lady Devonshire by Carol Strutt, The Maid, Doctor Foster and Amy Mallard by Lynne Gumage and Miss Marble, Lolita (a triplet) and The Zoo Lady by Barbara Harston.



Adrian Duggan as Sergeant Plodd & Andy Rowlands as Inspector Drake

The play was directed by Carol Strutt, (who stepped into the part of Lady D at short notice.)

Stage Management, Sound, Lighting and Set Building were all outstandingly dealt with by Malcolm Smith-Gosling and Peter Dunn. Without their innovation and tireless work on a shoe-string budget it would not have been possible for this small society to stage the play.

But stage it they did and were rewarded by the best production to date, with audiences not only appreciating all the brilliance of David Tristram's writing and Coastland Players acting, but are also still being praised in the local shops, pubs and in the street.



If you are looking for a play to delight your audiences, then Tristram's adult humour farce is a must.

This play caused one large problem –

HOW DO WE FOLLOW THAT????

We'll just have to cross that bridge when we come to it!

Inspector Drake and the Black Widow is available from [Flying Ducks Publications](http://FlyingDucksPublications.com)

THE 2016 PINT-SIZED PLAYS WRITING COMPETITION OPENS IN JANUARY!

Now in its ninth year, Pint-sized Plays has grown to become a premier international competition for short plays. So how much drama or comedy can be packed into a five or ten-minute play? Pint-sized Plays is your opportunity to show just how imaginative and original you can be. It can be funny, it can be poignant... if it can be performed in a pub, with two or three characters, you could be one of the six winners (or four runners up) of

Pint-sized Plays 2016!

The closing date is May 31st 2016 and scripts can be uploaded as WORD docs or PDF files with payment by PayPal (£5.50 per script).



Pint Sized Plays

The winning plays will be announced by late July and will be performed in pubs throughout Pembrokeshire, starting 26th and 27th September during Tenby Festival week. All ten plays will then be performed at the Script Slam in 4U, Fishguard on October 1st, where the audience get to vote for their favourite script - and the winner gets to walk away with the coveted 'Pint-Pot' award - with a 'Half-Pint' award for the runner up!

On top of which, selected plays will be considered for publication in the next volume of Pint-sized Plays and for performance at the Brighton Fringe Festival!



Further details are available at
www.pint-sizedplays.org.uk



AGATHA CRUSTY AND THE MIGHTY MIDGET MURDERS

DAW member Derek Webb has achieved enormous success with his murder mystery comedy 'Agatha Crusty and the Village Hall Murders'. It has already notched up over 40 productions including the US and Australia. The follow up comedy is now available. Called *Agatha Crusty and the Mighty Midget Murders*, it's a full length comedy for 5m and 6f.

In it, Geoffrey and Caroline Robertson are having a dinner party to celebrate ten successful years of Mighty Midget Vacuum Cleaners, the company he jointly owns with Tim McArthur, and to add spice to the evening they decide to make it a murder mystery dinner. They are joined by a variety of employees and their partners. And Geoffrey has a special surprise – he has invited the well-known crime novelist Agatha Crusty (pronounced Croosty) to join them. She is in the area promoting her latest book and agrees to be guest of honour.

But on the evening of the dinner, their remote Victorian house finds itself in the centre of a storm so bad that the river floods and they are cut off. Worse, the power fails and in the darkness one of the guests is murdered. But since everybody else was together when the murder was committed, they are as perplexed as they are worried. And when another murder happens in the same way it is no laughing matter... except this is an Agatha Crusty murder mystery so there are laughs a-plenty. And also a genuine mystery that will keep an audience guessing as well as laughing.

Further details are available at
www.derekwebb.co.uk

MURDER IN THE CATHEDRAL



Phoenix Theatre Company

On November 21st 2015, Phoenix Theatre Company of Mold, performed their most challenging play to date, T.S. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral* at St. Asaph Cathedral. It was done in partnership with the Vale of Clwyd Rotarians who were responsible for the publicity/ticket sales. It was a huge success, with an audience of over 350 patrons. The evening made over £2000 profit, which was divided equally between two local hospices.

The director of the play, Richard Jones, said, 'We started doing work on this over eighteen months ago. When I first had the idea, I knew I would only do it if I could get Robert Fox (Ex Mikrokosmos Theatre) to join us as co-director and to compose the music and sound effects needed to create a memorable theatrical experience. Bob's soundtrack made such an impact and brought to life this gripping play. We used a chorus of eight women, along with the three priests, four tempters/knights two attendants and Becket. We did some preliminary work with the cast in April, but rehearsals proper did not start until September.



We had twelve weeks to get it ready. This proved to be quite sufficient as the early rehearsals broke down into manageable sections-chorus, priests and Becket, tempters/knights and Becket. It was only by the middle of October that we had to get the whole cast together. This has always been one of my favourite plays, but I know it is not to everyone's taste, so I was slightly worried that some of the cast might not share my enthusiasm. Early on, one or two of the cast did find the language difficult, but my fears were unfounded and the whole cast found it a wonderful experience.

Helen Phillips, my stage manager and in charge of costumes-most of which she made-did a wonderful job. The most expensive items were the four swords needed for the knights. They cost us over £300, but looked so good and authentic. It was a lot of hard work, but well worth it to see the Cathedral packed with an appreciative audience.'

If any other groups are interested in performing this play and need any advice, then contact Richard through the DAW.

RADYR DRAMA SOCIETY PRESENT
BONAVENTURE

When I was first told that the Radyr Drama Society was going to put on 'Bonaventure' by Charlotte Hastings – a play I had never come across – I immediately researched old reviews. I was not assured. Apparently the play is considered out of date, slow moving, farcical at times, and a rather poor parody of Agatha Christie



The cast of Bonaventure

The poster for the play described it as 'The absorbing human drama'. I did not have high expectations.

I was wrong. Cleverly set 'in the round' by the Director Ian Ogden (assisted by Gill Evans) – apparently to allow space for the 'Great Hall' – the play had depth, humour (a slightly unresponsive audience were slow to pick up on that), wisdom and good pace. Bonaventure is set in 1947 in the convent of Our Lady of Rheims, a nursing order near Norwich. The play follows Sister Mary Bonaventure and her plight to clear the name of Sarat Carn, a young artist convicted of murdering her brother. Sarat and her two police officer chaperones, Melling and Pierce, are forced by severe flooding to take refuge at the convent, delaying Sarat's seemingly inevitable trip to the gallows. Bonaventure and Sarat meet and the nun's overwhelming certainty of the girl's innocence kick-starts the narrative and the play begins to unfold.

I attended on the first night and felt there were a few 'first night nerves' at the start. Two nurses, Phillips (Jane Sinclair) and Brent (Hayley Jenkins) convinced me that we were in for an episode of Call the Midwife.

Their 'good cop bad cop' routine was a little shaky but settled down with the entry of Sister Josephine (Pauline Watson). Pauline's portrayal of the homely, very domesticated sister with a hoarding instinct for old newspapers was lovely and bubbly, although her accent did seem to slip occasionally from Ireland to Scotland. We were introduced to Willy Pentridge (Fraser Smith-Jaynes), a simple-minded local with a penchant for sweets. Fraser was superb, with a convincing accent and awkward mannerisms.

The entry of Sister Bonaventure (Julia Hallinan) was wonderfully set using the height of the normal stage; you just knew she was the key player. I loved Julia's portrayal of the part – soft, calming, logical, with just a touch of ruthlessness; more Miss Marple than Poirot. Dr Jeffreys (Brian Willis) was supremely confident and overbearing. Nicky Webber, as the Mother Superior, gave a solid portrayal, if lacking a little in gravitas.

Roger Page (Melling) and Sian Williams (Miss Pierce) accompanied Sarat Carn (Helen Blundell) into the Convent. They were totally convincing and again I have to compliment Roger on his accent. Helen's portrayal of Sarat, a tormented soul resigned to her fate, reticent but willing to be coerced into repairing a valuable tapestry, was quietly understated. Beautifully observed. The interaction between all three throughout the play was wonderful. Finally, we were introduced to the magnificent Zoe Pearce playing Martha Pentridge as 'Mrs Mopp'; again a superb bit of character acting – and it is she who ultimately has the key to the solution of the play. Sarat was innocent, of course, all revealed in a rather overdone finish, but I won't spoil the secret if you don't know.

The play was far more than the normal whodunit. It explored themes of theology, commitment and team work, making do and managing in difficult times, how to see the best in people, how to get the best out of them, and even home cooking. I think this was Ian Ogden's first go at directing a play and he brought out all these themes, and more. Apologies, but I didn't really care at the end who had murdered Sarat's clearly very nasty brother Jack. I just loved the characters and how they interacted. Ian's masterly direction was most amply supported by a comprehensive set constructed cleverly by Raymond Rivron, although the two scene changes in both acts could have been a bit slicker; but it was a first night. The lighting and sound, by David Burgess and Tony Watson, were as accomplished as ever.



Brian Willis as Dr Jeffreys & Nicky Webber as Mother Superior

Overall, a thoroughly good show by a strong cast. Again I say, if you missed it, you missed a treat. The standard of the Radyr Drama Society is incredibly high. I don't understand why they do not attract bigger audiences. Perhaps that lacklustre poster dun it? Review by Nick Hawkins

P.O.D.S. PRESENTS
MURDER ON THE NILE

Murder and intrigue are on the table for the next play being performed by P.O.D.S., the Penarth Operatic and Dramatic Society. Set in the 1930s, Agatha Christie's "Murder on the Nile" sees a host of privileged passengers making their way down the Nile on a luxury paddle steamer. All of them have their secrets and resentments... and when one of them is found shot, it's anyone's guess who may have pulled the trigger.



Flora Kerridge, Kayleigh Watts and Carl Harrison
rehearsing for PODS' *Murder on the Nile*

P.O.D.S. are fortunate to have been able to gather a fresh young cast for this production, with three complete newcomers to the society, very welcome at a time when companies are struggling to maintain membership levels. Kayleigh Watts, Carl Harrison and Paul Smith will be lending their talents to the key roles of Kay, Simon and Smith respectively, and Flora Kerridge is returning after a three-year break to take on the role of Christina.

And with experienced set designer Tim Tyson looking to present something rather different from the normal boxed set, this is set to be a sumptuous experience, as the opulence of a Nile cruise is presented on a Penarth stage!

Everyone is enjoying the challenge of this play and look forward to presenting it at the Paget Rooms, Penarth, from 16 to 19 March 2016.

Further details available at
www.pods-penarth.org

NEATH LITTLE THEATRE AT 80



Change by J.O. Francis, performed May 2012

Neath Little Theatre is proud to be in its 80th Season.

The group held its inaugural meeting at the MC Café on 26th September 1935, when the existing Neath Amateur Dramatic Society joined with local professionals to form Neath Little Theatre.

A month later, the first headquarters opened in Water Street on 31st October. Members aimed to learn about all aspects of stage craft. Money was short, and out of necessity, the first 'Major' production was staged for three nights at the Gwyn Hall in January 1936.

Having survived the hardships of the Second World War, members worked tirelessly to raise funds for an improved headquarters. As a result, the current building in Westernmoor Road



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opened in February 1955.

To open its 80th Season, it was decided to celebrate the Theatre's past by presenting *See How They Run* by Philip King, a classic comedy that had been performed many years before. NLT's original production of the play in 1968 featured a young Michael Dickerson in the cast as one of the vicars. In October's production 47 years later he finally received his promotion to Bishop!

In March the Theatre will be continuing its look back in time with the award winning play *Dancing at Lughnasa* by Brian Friel. Set in Donegal in 1936 it tells the sad but heartwarming story of the Mundy family. Directed by Gerald Roderick the cast gives new and established members the opportunity to tread the boards.

Neath Little Theatre is proud to have a founder member of the Theatre, Margaret Ormrod née Billings as its President. Margaret joined with her family when she was just six years old. She met her husband, David, at the Theatre when they played opposite each other in a production of 'Berkeley Square' in 1955. Married within 6 months, they still take an active role and will be directing the May Major, the appropriately named *When We are Married* by J B Priestley. This is another look to the past as it was first performed at the theatre in 1970.

Neath Little Theatre is well aware of the need to look to the future whilst celebrating the past, and has an active youth department who regularly attend drama workshops and take part in youth and major productions.

Now with over 290 full length plays to its name, NLT continues to aim to provide a wide variety of plays for its audiences.

Neath Little Theatre produces three major productions as well as a number of youth, seasonal and one act plays during the year. Youth workshops are held on Saturdays. Club nights on Thursdays throughout the season are open to everyone. The Theatre is also pleased to host a number of professional touring productions through the Night Out Scheme, as well as some very successful Music Nights arranged by the Neath Music Academy. Full details of all events can be found on the Theatre's website www.neathlittletheatre.co.uk

CONGRESS YOUTH THEATRE
presents
THE WELSH PREMIERE
of
Urinetown
A Musical Comedy

Congress Theatre
16th - 19th March 2016
7:15pm
Tickets: £9.00 Adults
£8.00 Concessions
Box Office : 01633 868239

URINETOWN - THE MUSICAL
Music and Lyrics by Mark Hollmann
Book and Lyrics by Greg Kotis
URINETOWN was produced on Broadway in September
2001 by the Araca Group and Dodger Theatricals in
association with Theatre Dreams Inc. and Lauren Mitchell
This amateur production is presented by arrangement
with Josef Weinberger Ltd.
on behalf of Music Theatre International of New York.

www.congresstheatrecwmbran.co.uk

DAW PUBLICATIONS

New Place and Time



a play in one act
by Richard Macaulay

Published by
Drama Association of Wales
Registered Charity Number: 502186

The play supposes a fold or overlap in time between a spring afternoon in our present world and Will Shakespeare's last days in his garden at New Place. Bartholomew Green and Thomas Kemp are two aged actors, earning a pittance as fringe performers in a Shakespeare birthday festival.

They are joined by Ann Barker, a journalist with ambitions, and her photographer fiancé Nick Cooper. Their present-day concerns are interwoven with those of a past age, when Ben Jonson and Michael Drayton arrive from London to visit an ailing Shakespeare, cared for by Anne his wife. Thus we have a playwright at the end of his journey, his work done but questions still unanswered, and a young woman at the beginning of hers, with her own doubts, looking for guidance. Green and Kemp find themselves acting as links between the two worlds, and as voices of resolution in both. Their afternoon is a gentle comedy of frustrations, puzzlement within time's overlap, and finally a decision at their own journey's end.

Cast: M4 F2 Price: £4.50 Performance Fee: £38.00

DAW PUBLICATIONS

**Gentlemen
and
Players**

a play in one act
by Vic Mills

Published by
Drama Association of Wales
Registered Charity Number: 502186

Just when the Shakespeares were finally getting a coat of arms and becoming 'gentry' at last, William was performing in a play for Ben Jonson, in which a country family gain a coat of arms with the comic motto, 'Not Without Mustard'. This appears to be a jibe at the Shakespeare's motto of, 'Not without Justice'. In this hilarious comedy, Will takes his revenge on his best friend, Jonson. The play features an angry and troubled Will, a bemused and tormented Jonson and, with echoes of Hamlet, the touching appearance of the ghost of Will's father, John Shakespeare.

This is robust, bawdy comedy, but there are levels of complex enjoyment – with many references to the works and life of the playwright for members of an audience who know and love Shakespeare – and a strong plot and comedy for those for whom all this is less familiar

Cast: M3 Price: £4.50 Performance Fee £38.00
Both plays are available to purchase now from

[DAW](http://www.dramawales.org.uk)



OBITUARY



Allan Williams

As many of you may now be aware, Allan Williams, stalwart and founder of the Anglesey One-Act Festival passed away peacefully at his home on the 28th November, 2015.

I had personally only known Allan for a few years, which in DAW terms is quite a short time. During this period I swiftly came to realise that Allan was a steadfast and dependable champion of amateur theatre in Anglesey.

Whilst he was a man of many talents, he always had a strong interest in the performing arts. After retiring from the aluminium industry, Allan spent 10 years with the Holyhead Male Voice Choir. In the late 1980s, Allan was invited to join the Parish Players. After initial bouts of stagefright, he discovered that his true calling was on stage. When this group was dissolved, Allan joined Ucheldre Repertory Company, where he first performed Shakespeare. In 1999, he and four friends decided to form the 'Loose Cannons' drama group, a wonderfully successful company to this day.

Allan was an award winning playwright, director and actor, and could often be seen at Festivals. He would jokingly and lovingly refer to Loose Cannons as 'the smallest Drama Group in Anglesey, even Wales'. However, this did not deter Allan

who went on to win many Festivals and awards for his playwriting. Allan leaves behind his wife, Carol and their daughter Emma.

Allan will be a great loss to his family and friends in Anglesey and to those involved in Festivals. He will be particularly remembered by the DAW with fondness and respect for his contribution to the One-Act Festivals.

DAW wish to convey their most sincere condolences to his family and friends.

Teri McCarthy, Chair.

FESTIVAL DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Montgomeryshire 1-2 April, Berriew Community Arts Centre

Gwent 8-9 April, Abertillery Metropole Theatre

Conwy 14-16 April, Church House, Church Street, Glan Conwy

Glamorgan 27-30 April, The Welfare Community Arts Centre, Ystradgynlais

Wales Final 3-4 June, Theatr Colwyn, Colwyn Bay

British Final 1-2 July, Sherman Theatre, Cardiff

Further details are available on the [DAW website](http://dramawales.org.uk)

If you have any news items you would like us to highlight on the website or in the next newsletter then please send articles & photos to newsletter@dramawales.org.uk

The deadline for submissions for newsletter items will be **13th March 2016**

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