

COMING UP AT THE BARN



6th – 9th April AT 8PM IN THE STUDIO

30 YEARS OF LOVE & ARGUMENTS IN NOT-SO-SUNNY BLACKPOOL

September in the Rain is an evocation of a lost working-class way of life, with something a little darker below the surface. The play follows the life and holiday of Liz and Jack, John Godber's own grandparents, based on the stories they told at length, over and over again.



22nd – 30th April AT 8PM

THE LAST DAYS OF MARY, QUEEN OF SCOTS

1588. Mary Stuart is held in captivity. She fled to England nineteen years ago, after being deposed in Scotland. Her cousin, Elizabeth I of England, gave her assurances of support, but no help came. Mary dwells in the squalid Chartley Manor with only Claude Arno, her loyal French secretary, for company. Their jailer, strict Puritan Sir Amyas Paulet, watches their every move.



24th June – 2nd July AT 8PM

A FRESH LOOK AT JONSON'S CLASSIC COMEDY

When the plague hits London and the gentry flee to the country, a butler is entrusted with his master's townhouse – which soon becomes the perfect hub for all manner of criminal scams.

Expect a colourful band of rogues and victims, plus a generous helping of biting satire.

HANGMEN

WHAT IS ENGLAND'S SECOND-BEST HANGMAN GOING TO DO NOW THEY'VE ABOLISHED HANGING?

A superbly funny dark comedy
by Martin McDonagh

FROM THE DIRECTOR

It's genuinely difficult to comprehend the amount of work that goes into staging a production; not just at the Barn but at any of our wonderful local non-professional theatres. It's a huge undertaking and the number of volunteers involved is eye-watering.

Although back in the 90s when I ran the Barn's Senior Youth Group, I did direct a few studio and festival productions, I've not directed any 'main house' productions at the Barn and have actually done very little 'on' stage for over 20 years. I work as a professional actor when I can and as an on-call firefighter when I'm needed and all of this, and my family life, has been put on hold for a while whilst in the final stages of this production. I must say huge thank-you to my wife for keeping the wheels of shopping, after-school-clubs, homework, meals and bedtime routines well and truly oiled for the last few weeks! It makes things much easier!

Hangmen is a great play. Belly-laugh funny yet provocative and challenging on many levels - a Director couldn't ask for a better piece. It requires a large cast and a large and difficult set that allows for live hangings! Obviously we have a full reserve cast ready to go in case of... well...any odd mistakes or misdemeanours that could occur with these dangerous technical effects but let's pause to remember that they're only 'actors' not real people - so don't worry too much about them!

Joke as I might, the fact that the Barn is prepared to stage these demanding productions and finance them is wonderful and believe me they are not cheap to produce. When you have difficult effects to stage as we do and with safety as an obvious priority, the pounds mount up and ticket sales become more and more important. We have been very fortunate with our ticket sales for *Hangmen* so thank you for that, but please do use the bar before, during and after the show to help our finances just a little bit more and also look at the up-coming productions and try and support them if you are able to. All and any help and support you can give to the Barn is greatly appreciated and please don't forget to spread the word to your friends, colleagues and family.

Finally I'd like to say thank you to the entire *Hangmen* team - disposable actors to the indispensable backstage team; from properties to box office, set builders to the wardrobe team and of course the admin, bar and front of house staff: **ALL** volunteers and it's a list of people that goes on and on. It really has been the happiest of companies to work with and I hope that positivity shines through and rubs off on you, our audience. We all truly hope you have a great time watching *Hangmen* and thank you again for all your support.

John Cook | Director

FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Welcome to this performance of *Hangmen*. I don't, of course, know how much any audience member knows about the plays the Barn Theatre presents but, judging by the way ticket sales have gone for this latest offering, I suspect you all know a thing or two about this one.

Reading plays can be tricky - trying to picture how the lines will sound is always a challenge, especially with comedies, but when I read this script I was genuinely laughing out loud.

The author, Martin McDonagh once told the Observer's Sean O'Hagan that he considered theatre "the worst of all the art forms". Perhaps he should see a few more plays. Starting with his own! First performed in 2015 it has been shown all over the world to great acclaim - and not surprisingly; it is unquestionably a dark, hilarious masterpiece.

Brought to us by director John Cook and his cast and crew this is, I suspect, a show that is going to live long in the memory, so sit back and enjoy.

Simon

Simon Parr
Chairman, Barn Theatre Club



We wish to extend our huge thanks and appreciation to our local business supporters.

Sainsbury's

The Howard Centre
Welwyn Garden City Shopping



CAST

in order of appearance

HENNESSY.....	Tallan Cameron
GUARDS	Nick Jackson, John Keogh
HARRY WADE.....	Roly Taylor
SYD ARMFIELD.....	Paul Russell
GOVERNOR.....	Pete Dawson
DOCTOR	Barry Grossman
ALICE WADE	Emily Fairman
BILL.....	Barry Grossman
CHARLIE.....	Siobhán Hill Elam
ARTHUR	John Keogh
DEREK CLEGG	Steve Hartill
INSPECTOR GEORGE FRY.....	Ian Colpitts
MOONEY	Michael Curry
SHIRLEY WADE	Alice Croot
ALBERT PIERREPOINT	Pete Dawson

Special thanks go to Craig at A.S. Handover Ltd and David Pullen for their help with the mahogany woodwork finish and The Chequers Inn of Wareside and HDOS Hertford for the loan of some bar paraphernalia.

The play takes place in the mid-1960s in Oldham, Lancashire, when capital punishment was still available as a sentence and was considered a 'deterrent' for serious crime.

Interestingly Albert Peirrepoint, the most infamous executioner in Great Britain, concluded in his 1974 autobiography that...

“*Hanging is said to be a deterrent. I cannot agree. There have been murders since the beginning of time, and we shall go on looking for deterrents until the end of time. If death were a deterrent, I might be expected to know. It is I who have faced them last, young lads and girls, working men, grandmothers. I have been amazed to see the courage with which they take that walk into the unknown. It did not deter them then, and it had not deterred them when they committed what they were convicted for. All the men and women whom I have faced at that final moment convince me that in what I have done I have not prevented a single murder.*”

CREATIVE TEAM

PRODUCTION MANAGER.....	Carol Bush
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR.....	Kizzie Hopkinson
STAGE MANAGER.....	Michael Merry
DEPUTY STAGE MANAGER.....	Sharon Francis
ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER	Nick Jackson
SET DESIGN	John Cook
SET CONSTRUCTION	Norman Merry, Ian Bage, Keith Lambert John Sear, Eddie Washington, Bob Cameron
SET DRESSING.....	Kris Moore, Peter Moore
SET PAINTING.....	Colin Hickey, Sue Walters, John Cook
SOUND	Rob Wallace
LIGHTING DESIGN	Trevor Wallace
LIGHTING OPERATOR	John Cude
PROPERTIES.....	Sheila Grimmant
WARDROBE	Yvonne Bartlett, Margaret Wallace, Sue Talbot Louise Wallace, Anne-Marie Austin, Anne Mawer
REHEARSAL PROMPT	Anne Woolmington
PRODUCTION PHOTOGRAPHY	Simon Wallace, John Davies
BACKSTAGE CAKES.....	Sheila Grimmant, Anne Woolmington
POSTER DESIGN.....	John Cook

FINDING A CHARACTER

It would be very easy to assume that in non-professional theatre little time is available for researching and understanding the characters within a play. Certainly for this production that assumption would be a mistake. Each and every cast member has worked very hard on their characters and a short time after we started rehearsals one of our actors came up with a great suggestion and a striking story. Although McDonagh wrote 'Charlie' as a man we wanted to get another female in the cast as it is a very male-heavy play. Siobhán agreed to take it on and she then came to me with the story of Margaret Allen.

Trans-gender issues are prevalent in today's world and often make the headlines. Most recently, for all the amazing good she has done with the Harry Potter books and films, J K Rowling has perhaps been one of the highest-profile people to get embroiled in the often heated and difficult discussion around gender, gender fluidity and equality thereof. In today's world nuanced debate is a treasured and dwindling commodity sidelined by the black and white brigade who fail to understand that in all areas of discussion the important thing is not necessarily to find agreement or to battle to be right, but to listen, communicate and to understand each other's point of view in order to find a kind and sensible way of disagreeing.

Trans-gender issues have been around for decades and this is clearly demonstrated by Siobhán's discovery of Margaret Allen. Interestingly Margaret's surname is the same as that of the real person that Harry Wade, our main protagonist, is based on, Harry Allen. Both Margaret and Harry come from the Oldham area of Lancashire but we have not uncovered any physical links between them.

Margaret Allen was a lesbian who dressed in men's clothes and preferred to be called 'Bill' - she was the 20th of 22 children and from an early age preferred the stereotypical exploits and activities of men. She dressed as a male and performed tasks that were generally reserved for men due to the strength and stamina required to perform them. From an early age, she denied her own femininity and strove to act in a masculine manner. Allen preferred the company of burly male workers in her home town Rawtenstall (in Lancashire, England) and took on jobs usually given to men. She loaded coal, repaired houses and became a bus conductor. Unfortunately, her desire to adopt 'male traits' led her to swear, act aggressively and resort to physical violence. The bus company fired her for abusing passengers; customers who didn't take their seats quickly enough were likely to be verbally assaulted, shoved and cuffed.

She also claimed to have checked herself into hospital to have a 'delicate' procedure performed on her in order to make her biologically a male. This claim has been disputed due

to the fact that in 1935 it is considered highly unlikely that a surgeon could be found who would perform such a procedure.

On 29th August 1948 Nancy Chadwick, an elderly, cantankerous widow, was found dead in the street outside Margaret Allen's house in Manchester. The old woman had been battered with the pointed end of a coal hammer. Bloodstains led back to Margaret Allen's house and the police suspected her from the start. She was very talkative with reporters and customers in her local pub whenever the subject of the murder was raised. She was also the first to point out Mrs Chadwick's shopping bag floating in the River Irwell that ran behind the house. The police, however, were playing a waiting game.

'Bill' Allen, as the 42-year-old lesbian preferred to be known, did not know when to keep her mouth closed and, after several pints in her local, she was boasting that she was the last person to see the victim alive. She also let it be known that Mrs Chadwick had been wearing an underskirt with a hidden pocket sewn into it. She was visited by police on 1st September and quickly confessed saying that "I was in a funny mood".

Allen's trial, in which she appeared dressed in men's clothing, only lasted five hours with the jury taking just 15 minutes to find her guilty. A petition was raised to try and save her but there were only 162 signatures on it and she was hanged at Strangeways Prison on 12th January 1949 by Albert Pierrepoint.

The murder of Nancy Chadwick still interests many criminologists. What led her killer to brutally end her life? Was it greed?, uncontrollable anger? Or a mental disorder? Perhaps all of these factors contributed to the crime? Some authors have described the slaying as 'mindless' and 'motiveless'; others suggest that Mrs Chadwick was 'killed on a whim' and see it as a baffling enigma - the work of an unstable and erratic person who is beyond rational evaluation.

Margaret Allen was indeed a troubled and 'gender-confused' individual. In more modern times, she would have been seen as a transsexual and could have sought appropriate help for any problems she was encountering; but Allen was born in 1906, part of an immense working class family and lived in an age when people like herself were not understood or accepted.

Our Charlie is NOT a murderer but a welcome regular in our Oldham pub and the fact that we have chosen not to disguise her with makeup, hair pieces or prosthetics is just a small cap doff to the need for acceptance, understanding of everyone regardless of their race, religion, sexual orientation or gender...or indeed their views on any given subject of the day! We must learn to listen!

