
AEA DIGEST

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Dorothy Adibi and other students of the New Horizons drama class in performance at the launch of the Campaign to End Loneliness (see page 11)

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FROM THE CHAIR.....

Jo Walker

Dear Friends,

We started the new year with a second issue of the International Journal of Education and Ageing and by going live with new facilities on our website. We can now take orders and payment for membership and journal subscriptions online. This gives greater choice to our members and subscribers and also enables people from non-UK currency areas to join much more easily. We wish to be more fully international in our appeal and our services, so better forms of communication are essential.

The new Journal issue showcases papers from Leicester University's ESRC-funded research seminar series on older people and learning, which took place between 2007 and 2009. Five full papers from the total of 26 given in the series have been revised for journal publication. Professor John Benyon, who organised and hosted the series at the Institute of Lifelong Learning, provides an overall analysis and reflection on the whole series, including the range of its contributors and contents. This gives a fascinating picture of current understandings, practice and policy concerning older learners. Whilst most papers originated in the UK, the series included contributions from Brussels, the Netherlands and the United States.

The Association is delighted to be planning two conference events this year. There will be a day event at the Birmingham Medical Institute, hosted by our colleagues in the Institute for Ageing and Health. 'Learning, ageing and well-being' on 21st July, will look at

professional learning about ageing as well as older people's learning. This meeting will feature plenary speakers, discussion/ workshops, our annual Frank Glendenning Lecture and AGM. More details about the programme will be announced as they become available.

Second, an international residential conference will be held 11th-13th October, at the National University of Ireland Maynooth, which is just outside Dublin but well connected by road and public transport. This has been chosen because of Maynooth's historic role in adult education in Ireland and Europe, and because we have good partners to work with, namely Age Action Ireland and WEA Northern Ireland with whom AEA has long-standing connections. Our working title is 'New Dynamics of Learning and Ageing'; we hope to be issuing initial programme information and a call for papers soon. As with our previous international meeting, in Lancaster in 09, getting the event listed as a Grundtvig training event will enable Europeans to apply for funding to attend (including those travelling from UK).

I hope very much that we will see you at either or both of these events. Please do keep in touch via our website or by sending news or articles for our Digest. And do sign up for the Journal if you have not done so already: it is also now available for subscribers as a .pdf download via the Journal page on www.associationforeducationandageing.org - where non subscribers can view its contents.

The International Journal of Education and Ageing, launched last summer, is now into its second issue. **Trish Hafford-Letchfield**, is Senior Lecturer and Teaching Fellow, Interprofessional Learning, Middlesex University and Vice-Chair of Age Concern Greenwich and one of the new journal's satisfied subscribers.



It takes a lot of work (or so I hear!) to launch a new journal and both issues in the first volume of the newly launched International Journal of Education and Ageing are certainly testament to that. Personally I find that this project has the potential to bring a lot of different disciplines together in a very innovative and creative way and the way in which the journal has brought together some of the best scholars, researchers and practitioners in this unique field is highly satisfactory. As someone with a background as a social worker, manager and educator, I have found the articles and reviews so far, very refreshing and stimulating and I have found something valuable in each, which have in turn enabled me to think ‘outside of the box’

and to bring something new to my work with older people in a particular setting. For example, ageing is often seen as a “problem” in health and social care, so being able to conceptualise and consider the evidence that there are aspirations for people moving into later life is something I think we all need to be engaged with if we are to really transform public services. Secondly, I think that the sustainability aspects of education and ageing are vital when moving through global recessions and economic downturns.

Having made the commitment to sign up for the first volume (at a special rate of £43 for AEA members), I have already perused most of the papers to get my money’s worth so to speak. The first issue touched on issues in higher education; gave an overview of the recent NIACE sponsored inquiry into lifelong learning; considered issues about learning in care homes and there were also some shorter articles on best practice and initiatives across the globe in true international fashion. The five articles in the second issue have been deliberately selected to give a flavour of the ERSC-funded research seminar series hosted in Leicester, UK and these really illustrate how “the proper study of learning in later life will lead us to a more critical understanding” of notions of positive or successful ageing (see the Editorial). There is hardly space to go into detail of each articles here so in other words, I suggest you sign up and find out for yourself. <http://www.associationforeducationandageing.org/international-journal-of-education-and-ageing.html> where a list of articles in both Issues 1 and 2 can be found.

AEA CONFERENCES 2011

Yes, this year we will be hosting not one conference but TWO.

AEA's annual conference, AGM and the Frank Glendenning lecture will be held on 21st July 2011.

The conference will be hosted jointly with the Institute of Ageing and Health (IAH) in Birmingham and held at the Birmingham Medical Institute in Edgbaston, a short taxi ride from the centre of Birmingham. There is ample free parking.

The theme of the conference is 'Learning, ageing and well-being' and it will take place from 10am to 3.45pm, with the AGM following at 4pm. Details of this year's Frank Glendenning lecture are still being finalised.

AEA will then be hosting an international residential conference in partnership with Age Action Ireland and WEA Northern Ireland. This will be held 11th-13th October, at the National University of Ireland Maynooth, just outside Dublin on the theme of 'New Dynamics of Learning and Ageing'. More details to follow – see Notes from the Chair page 2

MORE CONFERENCE NEWS

The International Federation on Ageing. 11th Global Conference on Ageing, Prague, 28th May-1st June 2012.

Under the title 'Ageing Connects', next year's IFA Conference will feature four themes reflecting the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing. These are:

- Older Persons and Development (including access to knowledge, education and training)
- Advancing Health and Well-Being into Old Age
- Ensuring Enabling and Supportive Environments
- Connected Technologies



**ASIA PACIFIC CONFERENCE ON AGEING
“Dignity and Grace of Ageing”**

Venue MARINA MANDARIN SINGAPORE date 24th – 26th MAR 2011



The Gerontological Society of Singapore invites you to the first Asia Pacific Conference on Ageing (APCA 2011) with the theme, ‘*Dignity and Grace of Ageing*’.

For the first time in the Asia Pacific, we have a conference designed for professionals in the field of ageing from various countries to come together to share knowledge and experiences, and exchange ideas to develop opportunities for research collaboration.

The conference programme covers a range of topics like active ageing, healthcare, dementia, depression, economics of ageing, environment and ageing, and medication in the elderly.

These topics will be addressed by leading thinkers, policy makers, practitioners and researchers in the field of gerontology and elderly healthcare.

APCA 2011 Objectives

- To promote collaboration in the study and practice of gerontology in Asia Pacific.
- To create a platform for practitioners to enhance gerontological practice, research and training.

Further details and a link to registration are available at www.apca2011.org and via the events page of AEA website <http://www.associationforeducationandageing.org/aea-events.html>

book. NIACE has a longstanding awareness of demographic change and its implications for later-life learning. Jim Soulsby made a major contribution when he ran the Older and Bolder project and Stephen McNair continues the tradition as a NIACE Senior Research Fellow.

McNair reckons the position is now such that the education system's continuing demographic imbalance raises serious philosophical issues. Retirement isn't just "a few years' holiday"; it commonly lasts about "a third of adult life". This "raises profound questions about what it means to be adult, and about the meaning and purpose of life". Such matters interact with "broader debates about sustainability, the nature of work, economic growth and well-being".

"How do our current models for adult learning for older people address these issues?" McNair asks. Seriously inadequate though learning opportunities now are for people past school-leaving age, he notes that there's already a marked shift towards the humanities. The "arts, history, religion, music, English language and literature [account for] only six per cent of all adult learners, but 22 per cent of those over 55. This clearly reflects a shift with age towards adult learning related to issues of meaning in life and one's place in the world". Moreover the over-55s are more likely to study such subjects for three successive years and more.

These issues could benefit from even more attention from AEA, both at meetings and especially perhaps, as they are beginning to do, in our new International Journal.



***Promises of Freedom** by R.F. Fryer is another recent publication from NIACE, which deals with the issues of and relationship between Citizenship, Belonging and Lifelong Learning and examines the promises for social improvement, a better life and greater freedom that are deeply inscribed in enriched citizenship, a deep sense of belonging, full and open expression of people's identities and extensive engagement in lifelong learning across the lifespan. Review by **Malcolm Ball**.*

Bob Fryer has been centrally engaged in Adult Education for over forty years. He is therefore well placed to offer the thoughts and judgements presented in 'Promises of freedom'. His particular experience speaks to the central message in the book. Adult learning is central to any 'full' definition of citizenship and democracy. Citizenship is essentially about citizens exercising an influence over their own lives. This involves rational reflection over personal choices and conduct and informed accountability of others. Whether it is the accountability of local or voluntary organisations, including the governance of adult and community education or the accountability of politicians and governments, active and informed engagement by the citizen is a defining feature. This book is a consideration of this defining feature and is informed by

the author's intellectual and experiential discovery.

Some of us know Bob Fryer best from his period as Principal of The Northern College for Residential and Adult Education 1983-1998. Before this he was centrally involved as researcher and advisor in the review of NUPE which resulted in its reorganisation and ultimately in the merger of NALGO, NUPE and COHSE into Unison. Much important policy and practical work followed but this was the key experience. As researcher and as Principal he was to work with working women and men as trade unionists or as adult students, supporting their development and their efforts to control their lives.

The narrative of the book offers a focus on the issues of identity and what it means to be a citizen and the author presents some interesting information from the USA. From where do we get our sense of belonging? There is some important attention to recent, post 1945 changes in European values and practice. He notes with regret the decline of trade unions, the retreat from multi-culturalism and the decline of organised 'liberal adult education'. He adds that this decline has undermined our freedoms and democracy. There is an interesting and useful discussion about contemporary instrumental learning. What do we learn, how do we learn and why do we learn? This is usefully structured with the support of many recent contributions including Delors (1998) and Nussbaum (2001). He suggests that we add a fifth dimension, "learning to sustain", to the four dimensions outlined by Delors. This rational humanism is augmented with an

extensive reference to Nussbaum (Fryer, 2010, p.208-209). Nussbaum suggests that for a society to offer a full and just 'account of social justice' it needs to offer as a minimum ten capabilities. Fryer uses this to ask: "how can adult learning help to fulfil each of the capabilities?"

Essentially the book offers the reader a useful journey through the major issues confronting citizenship in the contemporary global world. The author draws extensively on his intellectual and research abilities to construct the journey and adds to the understanding and delight of the traveller with references to his experience. At the heart of this narrative is the assertion that a full and just citizenship can be developed and sustained with the support of adult education. Some readers may be left with a feeling that there is a lack of balance. On the one hand there is an extensive list of appreciations to the great and the good; on the other hand there is scant recognition of the influence of the great unwashed. Aside from this small criticism this is not a book for your library shelf. It is a book to be read and re-read, to be a companion for those who will take up arms in the defence of a full and just society. It is well researched, readable and full of explosive material. Quite appropriate for a noisy and fractious citizenry (Barber, 1998).

Note. References and sources are listed in the bibliography.

Remaking Adult Learning (£23.95) and *Promises of Freedom* (£24.95) are both available from NIACE at <http://shop.niace.org.uk/>

FEATURES

*We are always keen to hear about what's happening in the world of older learning outside the UK. In this first part of a two part article, **Marvin Formosa**, lecturer at the European Centre of Gerontology, University of Malta fills us in on **Late Life Learning in Malta**. This article is a summary of a forthcoming paper titled 'Lifelong education for older adults in Malta' to be published in the *International Review of Education*.*



Malta has no national policy on adult or lifelong learning. However as a signatory to the United Nations' Madrid International Plan of Action in Ageing, Malta has vouched to implement strategies that catalyse the inclusion of older adults in lifelong learning. Malta is also a Member State of the EU, and hence is obliged to promote all learning activity throughout life with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competencies within a personal, civic, social, and/or employment related perspective. As such, the Maltese government state is committed to supporting the inclusion of older persons in lifelong learning policies and programmes to the extent that local studies uncovered a rise in the overall participation of older adults in formal,

non-formal, and informal areas of learning. As is the case in other nation-states, Higher Education policies in Malta include a maturity clause, which exempts older persons from presenting the necessary qualifications. The government also subsidises the local University of the Third Age by paying for the rent of the premises and lecturer fees, as well as coordinating and funding weekly elder-learning sessions in community day-centres. Whilst the present and future prospects for late-life education in Malta seem promising, as implied by the increasing opportunities and rising participation rates, a critical scrutiny of present ideologies and trends finds the field as being no more than seductive rhetoric.

Formal learning avenues open to adults above the age of 16 include the Institute of Tourism Studies [ITS], Directorate for Lifelong Learning [DLL], the Maltese Council for Arts, Science and Technology [MCAST], and the University of Malta [UOM]. Although there is a distinct preference for subjects in the arts and humanities, the range of subjects followed is remarkable. The upward trend in participation is impressive when considering that just half a decade ago no ITS students were over 60 and that the older student body at DLL and UOM consisted of just 119 and 18 students respectively (NSO 2003). Yet, overall the situation is inadequate. Only two percent of Maltese older adults aged 60 and over participate in formal learning avenues. It is also disquieting that older learners in formal institutions constitute very low percentages of the total student

population : UOM (0.6 percent), MCAST (0.8 percent), and ITS (0.8 percent). Although one key reason for low participation rates is the low educational levels of older persons, which imbue them with a lack of a desire to pursue further formal study, it is noteworthy that Higher Education institutions are not passionate about late-life learning. Older adult education does not bring in grants and/or offer much in the way of career training paths in vocational centres. It thus tends to be ignored and not be given any priority in marketing exercises.

Non-formal learning in Malta tends to occur with the ambits of Local Authorities and the Voluntary Sector. Unfortunately late-life learning ranks low on the agenda of Local Authorities. Out of a total of 68 Local Councils, only two claimed to provide learning courses in which adults above the age of 60 participated. The remaining Local Authorities replied that either they do not keep a record of the ages of learning participants, they do not coordinate any lifelong learning events or that no participants aged 60+ had ever participated in learning events. This demonstrates little to no coordination of information, advice, and educational guidance targeted towards older adults at a community level. The Voluntary Sector in Malta consists of a plethora of unrelated and unconnected bodies. Voluntary bodies have limited income and depend for survival obviously on volunteers, so that it is not possible for them to channel enough human resources to maintain a database of information on either the activities or age of participants. Although the different organisations in the voluntary sector invest significant energy in the

promotion of educational activities that promote their respective ethos, a lack of knowledgeable staff on adult and late-life learning, results in few specific opportunities for older learners. On the positive side, older adults tend to form the majority of a number of available learning courses such as for example, 'Culture' which includes seven informative outings (organised twice yearly Academy for the Development of Democratic Environment) and 'EduCafe', in which various professionals from the social, legal, and medical fields conduct informative sessions in a popular central cafeteria (organised monthly by the Fundazzjoni Reggie Miller). The University of the Third Age [UTA] is the only voluntary institution in Malta that caters solely to the learning interests of older adults and which keeps a meticulous record of its membership. Membership can be easily acquired by those who have passed their 60th birthday and willing to pay a nominal fee of €12. Some 643 persons (198 men, 445 women) applied for UTA membership at the beginning of the 2009/10 academic year (NSO 2009c). Despite its positive functions the local UTA is far from an example of democratic learning as its practice is highly biased in favour of the needs of female middle-class urban older persons.

Marvin Formosa is a lecturer at the European Centre of Gerontology, University of Malta, and can be contacted on email at marvin.formosa@um.edu.mt He will be writing further on later life learning in Malta in the Spring issue of AEA Digest.

The Campaign to End Loneliness – Connections in Old Age was launched on 1st February. The campaign is funded by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation and, as the title suggests, its objective is to create and maintain connections in older age. **Carol Allen** was present at the launch.

Behind the campaign are four founder partners: Age UK Oxfordshire, Counsel and Care, Independent Age and WRVS and while ending loneliness per se may sound like a distinctly ambitious project, the campaign is tackling the situation on four very practical fronts:

- Raise awareness – of loneliness and why working to reduce it matters.
- Build the evidence base – gather the evidence, promote what works in reducing loneliness and find the gaps in current interventions.
- Share future-proofing ideas for individuals – helping us all to future-proof our own lives against loneliness in older age.
- Inspire vision and action from all – working with others to create a vision of a society where loneliness in older age is ended.

The extent of the loneliness endured in particular by many older citizens is becoming increasingly apparent in our society. The organizers of a forthcoming conference on *Tackling Social Exclusion in the Big Society*, to be held in London on 22nd March, describes it as “the hidden killer of elderly people and claims that one in ten

feel intense loneliness, while the reason I was present at the launch arose out of another conference held in London in December last year on the subject of *Isolation and Old Age*, where the drama class I teach was invited to do a short drama presentation illustrating that theme. The director of the new campaign, Laura Ferguson, was present and invited us to do a repeat performance as part of her launch.



The New Horizons drama group takes a bow.
©Geoff Wilson <http://www..geoffwilson.net>

Keynote speaker at the launch was journalist Katherine Whitehorn, who lifted our spirits with her wit and moved us with poignant examples of loneliness from the letters she receives as *Saga* magazine’s agony aunt. The students, waiting in the wings to go on, were thrilled to hear her speak in person.

Interestingly many of the examples Ms Whitehorn gave of crippling isolation were referenced in our presentation, in which the actors found themselves trapped in an invisible box of isolation. Then each character delivered a short statement to the audience about their situation – one who was physically trapped in a wheelchair; another who was masking her loneliness with alcohol; a man living alone who feared he was developing Alzheimer’s; a sufferer from mental health problems who was receiving no care at all from the

community into which he had been released; and others who were now separated by death or geography from the friends and family they'd once had and were now alone. Plus one feisty old lady who fiercely rejoiced in her solitude but even she was tempted by idea of a bit of company.

Finally the "Fairy Godmother", a character who described herself as having been isolated until she discovered the benefits of later life learning, freed them all from their boxes with her sonic screwdriver (borrowed from Dr Who!) and tried to persuade them to come on down to the New Horizons centre, take some classes and make some new friends. Interestingly when developing these dialogues many of the actors found their characters instinctively resisted any attempt to stigmatise them with the label "lonely". As the Fairy Godmother says towards the end of the piece: "no-one wants to be thought of as lonely. But if we can just get these people to break out of their boxes and meet each other, that's a good start". Which is what the Campaign to End Loneliness is all about.

Further information about the campaign and some useful links can be found at www.campaigntoendloneliness.org.uk while the launch report will be available to download shortly on the News and Views page of the AEA website.

*One way many older people have "broken out of the box" is through learning IT skills. **Digital Unite** has news of this year's Silver Surfers' day, which has now become a Silver Surfers' week in **Spring Online**.*

Since its inception 10 years ago Silver Surfers' Day has made a real difference to thousands of older people. By extending the traditional Silver Surfers' Day event from a day to a week we aim to support even more older people in engaging with digital technology than ever before. We are pleased and very proud to announce details of our new national campaign to promote the use of digital technologies among older people. Spring Online with Silver Surfers' Day takes place this year on 16th-20th May 2011 and is supported by a whole host of organisations and Government departments.

We would like to invite AEA to get involved with this year's campaign, either by helping us to spread the word or encouraging your members to run or participate in Spring Online and Silver Surfers' Day events in May.



A Silver Surfer proudly shows off her laptop (photo courtesy of Digital Unite)

Anyone who wants to hold a digital taster session during Spring Online week can now register their details at our brand spanking new website, www.springonline.org. Events can be held anywhere, from sitting rooms to boardrooms, classrooms to pubs, communal lounges to libraries. All events will be supported with a marketing toolkit and extensive online resources.

Global research shows that access to information technology and crucially the skills to use it, has a ‘statistically significant, positive impact on life satisfaction’, yet still over 9 million adults in the UK have never used the internet. 1 in 5 people aged 55-64 are non-users and this rises to 3 in 5 of those aged 65+.

Spring Online with Silver Surfers’ Day is designed to encourage and support people and organisations all over the UK to open their doors and run digital awareness events. The main purpose of each event is to involve computers, the internet and older people in some way but each session organiser has the freedom to decide how. Since the campaign’s inception in 2002 over 100,000 older people have been engaged with computers through activities such as Wii parties, Hawaiian days and Skype sessions.

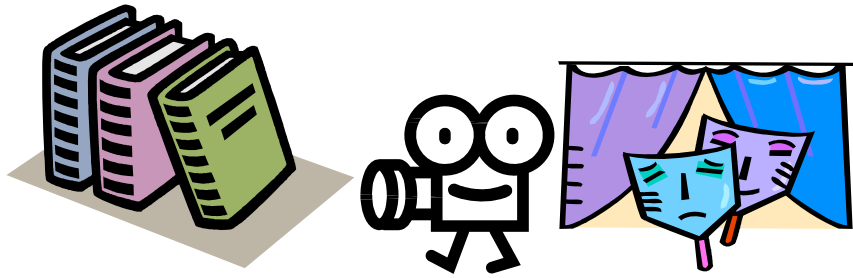
Spring Online with Silver Surfers’ Day is delivered by Digital Unite in partnership with UK online centres, the BBC and Race Online 2012. The campaign is also kindly supported by a number of other organisations and Government departments, including the Department of Work and Pensions, Department for Communities and Local Government, Cabinet Office, Central Office of Information, Department for Food, Environment and Rural Affairs, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, NHS Choices and Job Centre Plus.

Emma Solomon, Managing Director of Digital Unite says: “Through our work

over the last fifteen years we have found that the main barriers for older people in using digital technology are lack of confidence and understanding. All they need is someone to get them started, show them the basic steps, encourage them – and make it fun! That is why Spring Online with Silver Surfers’ Day can make such a difference. Over the last ten years the participation from session organisers, big and small, has been fantastic. We’re aiming to make it even better this year and it’s easy to get involved. Have a look at the new website, and think about what you could do to help more older people ‘spring online’ this May!”

Martha Lane Fox, UK Digital Champion, says: “If everyone in the UK took the time to show an offline family, friend or neighbour the benefits of being online, we’d be very close to enabling millions more people to enjoy life online. You are never too old to get started with the web and Spring Online and Silver Surfers’ Day is a great chance for new users to find out more about how the internet can make their lives easier, cheaper and much more fun!”

For more information about Spring Online and to register an event visit www.springonline.org or call 0800 822 3951



AEA DIGEST CULTURE SECTION

*AEA members Trish Hafford-Letchfield of Middlesex University and George Baddeley of Silver Comedy got a bit of public recognition earlier this year, when a video project they were both involved in to train social care students in developing ways of involving dementia patients was featured in the Guardian newspaper. The writer of the piece is **Mark Gould**.*

A film about the Queen visiting a dementia day centre in north London, could provide lines worthy of Alan Bennett. But the production – starring people with dementia, with one of their wives standing in for HM – is proving not only a comedy hit but a valuable way of improving service users' care and quality of life. For some, it was a glimpse of a younger self, dancing, laughing and having fun.

"I usually see a red carpet when I arrive – why is this one blue?" asks the Queen on arrival at the Grange. Quick as a flash the "Grangers" tell her: "It's royal blue, your Majesty," to cover up for the fact that a red carpet proved elusive. The Queen ends her visit joining in a reggae dance session.

Middlesex University lecturer Trish Hafford-Letchfield came up with the idea of the "mockumentary" as a way of

involving older people with dementia in the education of social workers and nurses. Now a DVD has been produced to train social care students in developing ways of involving dementia patients, helping them give voice to their own feelings and taking more control of their lives. The added bonus, says Hafford-Letchfield, is that the project demonstrates to students that dementia care is "not all doom and gloom". "It shows that carers and people with dementia can have fun together – people were laughing at themselves and each other."



"HM" visiting the Grange day centre

Specialist comedy training company Silver Comedy was hired to run a series of comedy improvisation classes to boost the self-confidence of staff and users of the Grange, a day centre in Haringey, north London. The group looked at the funny side of life in care settings, such as having to prepare for a royal visit when money is tight. When

users were asked about the royals, it evoked long-dormant feelings and memories. "I don't like her. I am going to sit in the loo. She can come in and see me there," says one woman, with a mischievous look.

A man remembers being in the crowd when the Queen was married in 1947. Others sing the national anthem.

Everyone who played a part in the DVD, which cost £200 to produce, received a free copy as a memento. Staff said the whole event stuck in the memories of many users, who were talking about the experience weeks later.

Joyce Manyan, whose husband Winston is a regular at the Grange, says she was "roped in" to play the Queen in purple robes and glittering tiara.

She says her husband, who features as a dancer in a reggae dance session during the visit, really enjoyed taking part. "It was very gratifying to see the way people were able to sustain interest in making the DVD over four weeks. The film is very warm and shows everyone has a real sense of humour and are treated as individuals. One lady never has a word for anyone; to hear her laughing and joking was a nice surprise."

This article was first published in the Guardian on 5th January 2011.

For further information on the DVD or to arrange a viewing for an audience of practitioners, please contact George Baddeley of Silver Comedy on

Tel: 07525 154616

e-mail: george@silvercomedy.co.uk

*In the last edition of the digest **Carol Allen** mentioned that she is currently shooting a short feature film with her drama class of older learners at the New Horizons centre in Chelsea. She now writes further about the shooting of **Miss Threadgold**.*



On location in Chelsea

It all started at the New Horizons summer party in June last year, when the students performed a one act play *Miss Threadgold* written by two of the students, Pat Calder and Dorothy Adibi. It tells the story of a man, known only as the Doctor, who arrives at a residential home looking for the mother who deserted him and his father, when the Doctor was just a baby. The gasp of horror from the audience at the climax of the drama was particularly satisfying to the cast's ears, as a clear indication that the audience was well hooked!

Thinking what a shame it was that the students had worked so hard for just one performance, I asked them if they would like to make a film of the play as a permanent memento of the production. The suggestion was received with such enthusiasm that I set to work to develop the script into a screenplay, advertised for a volunteer crew and we began shooting in October, using Dorothy's flat in Chelsea as the main location for the

retirement home with the New Horizons café on one day playing the part of the home's dining room. It was a day memorable amongst other things for the sight of cast member Greta Trevers having to do many takes, which involved her enthusiastically consuming mountains of toast and marmalade.

The film is being shot on mini DV in the class's own time, mostly on Sundays, and is self financed with the young volunteers generously giving their time. It has also now become an intergenerational and indeed international project, in that the production's young cinematographer Henrie is from Germany, her assistant Jackie is Dutch and sound recordist Aleix is from Spain. Members of the class have been enthusiastically acting as additional crew when not acting, helping out with such tasks as marking up the clapper board, taking continuity notes, dressing the set and making the tea and toast.

In tandem with the actual shooting, the group has been studying in class the technique of film acting and how that differs from acting on the stage with a little help from an expert in the field, Sir Michael Caine (via a training video, I hasten to add!). It has not of course all been plain sailing. We had to take a break when the leading lady went on holiday, work round hospital appointments and such and take another break to accommodate the class's other work on the Isolation project presentation mentioned elsewhere in this digest. And once we moved out of the comfort of Dorothy's flat and went on location, there were the vagaries of the weather to cope with. For example, when shooting at Lauderdale House in

Highgate recently, which was our location for the exterior of the home, we had an enforced two hour lunch break in the café there while the rain bucketed down.



Lauderdale House before the rain came down

One addition I have made to the story is the introduction of flashback scenes of the Doctor's mother Marjorie as a young woman with her husband – scenes which will add poignancy to the tragedy of this story of a now bad tempered and yes, isolated elderly woman, whose youthful decision destroyed her own life and those of two other people. I have now cast two young professional actors, also generously donating their services, and we have been raiding everyone's attics and wardrobes to find suitable costumes and period props for scenes of the young couple meeting at a youth club dance, courting and coping with married life in a shabby one room flat. Two young composers have started work on the music for the film and I have just arranged a first meeting with my editor, who will be helping me cut the material together and supervising the post production process.

So there's still a long way to go but I'm intending to have the film ready for its premiere to an audience of older people in the early summer and to show at the

AEA conference in July. My hope, if I can find a bit of finance, is to make it available as a promotional tool for the value of older learning and a useful demonstration of what can be achieved by older learners in an intergenerational context.

*I have learned a lot from the experience and particularly from the mistakes I have made (like failing to recruit yet another volunteer to supervise the props, sets and costumes!) but more importantly, so have my students. Here is what one of them, **Chrissie Geoghan** recently wrote about her **Learner's Journey**.*

'Take 2 and Action!' – a Hollywood Stage Set? No, a beautiful flat in Chelsea loaned by Dorothy, a member of the Drama Group at New Horizons for the making of a film engendered by the group. I am a member of this group, which I joined in the summer of 2010 and was welcomed by Carol, our tenacious tutor and director of the film. The filming has given me the opportunity to work with a professional actress (Joan Lovelace aged 91 with 75 years "treading the boards") and to be part of the crew. I have had to focus on learning lines, which is a new discipline for me and something I never thought I could do. We all fluff them but on 'Take 3' the clapper board goes down and on the word 'cut' Carol says 'that's a take'. It's pure magic. Then at the word 'action!' we all step into character, and I am part of an extraordinary team.

I had no idea how the mechanics of a film worked nor how laborious it was. The importance of continuity - did we get the right shot with his cravat tied that way or this?' The need for 'silence on

the set', the significance of daylight, precious daylight, and I must remember to look at the tape on the carpet. X marks the spot where I am supposed to stand.

I have been given constant encouragement and importantly I have made new friends. We have also worked on a piece, which involves improvisation. Inspired by Marcel Marceau and created by Carol, in this piece we each represent a character trapped in the metaphorical box of loneliness. Each character has been developed using our own words - and the 'Isolation Project' is now a sophisticated piece of theatre.



Chrissie Geoghan as the Fairy Godmother in the *Isolation Project* telling Greta Trevers as Evelyn about the benefits of later life learning. ©Geoff Wilson <http://www.geoffwilson.net>

I have never before performed in front of an audience, and it was a delight to receive the applause. I have learned the vital difference between theatre performance and film. The hours of work required for just a few moments of film, compared with the 'acting in the moment' of a stage performance. And the importance of trusting your fellow actors.

Our class is well structured, involving breathing exercises, and speech practice. Each project is worked on and taken to

the completion of performance. However, there is always time for laughter in class as we endeavour to become thespians. I have improved my confidence and achieved far more than I expected. I have always wanted to act, and the class and the projects have allowed me to fulfil this lifelong ambition as well as learning new skills. As far as the community is concerned, apart from the any benefit there has been to my own family and my fellow classmates, our performances to other students at New Horizons appear to have been greatly enjoyed and the opportunity we have had to perform to a wider audience at OpenAge, the conference on Isolation and Older People and now the Campaign to End Loneliness has enabled us to make a contribution to the wider community, as indeed will the film, when it is finished.

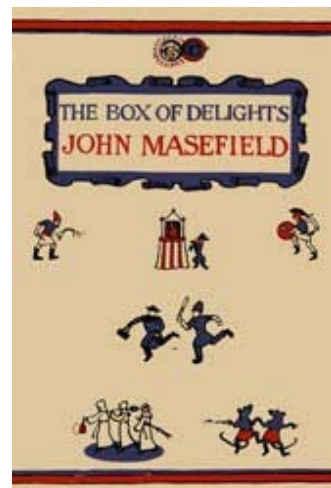
New Horizons motto is 'Age Stage and Experience.' I have benefited from all three. My family are happy I am now going out again, and my confidence has improved. Drama has been both challenging and enlightening. I have learned a lot about myself and being part of a group. Performance is now a part of me, but of course it has to be as the song goes - which we use as a cathartic end to our Isolation Project - "with a little help from my friends"

Although Spring is fast approaching, it's still wintry enough outside to tempt you to curl up with a good book or two – as Alex Withnall has been doing.

With a comparative absence of any decent new books that have aspects of ageing as a theme, I have to confess much of my reading of late has been from the school of Scandinavian crime

fiction. Stieg Larsson's Lisbeth Salander has a great deal to answer for here especially since she started appearing on the silver screen. Not to be outdone, television has given us the compelling Danish thriller *The Killing* in a prime Saturday night spot in the UK, just as we'd taken the troubled Swedish detective Wallander, the literary creation of Henning Mankell, to our hearts. Now Jo Nesbø, Anne Holt, Arnaldur Indridason and others who are still just names are gradually starting to impinge on my consciousness with the promise of a whole new literary journey ahead.

In the midst of all this northern darkness and brutality, it was something of a relief to accidentally come across a recent edition of one of my favourite childhood books, *The Box of Delights: or When the Wolves Were Running*, first published in and actually set in 1935. A companion volume to the earlier *The Midnight Folk* (1927), it is one of many novels produced by Masefield who was of course UK Poet Laureate 1930-67.



First edition cover

It has been dramatised several times for radio and was also televised in 1984, although I have not encountered anyone

who can recall seeing it. A wonderful magical fantasy to read with your children (or grandchildren), it is a forerunner of the *Famous Five*, *Narnia*, even *Harry Potter*. It has all the ingredients that young readers have always loved – children home for the Christmas holidays, snow, mystery, lots of magic, genuinely frightening moments and a particularly unpleasant villain in the shape of Abner Brown and his simpering and ultimately treacherous wife, the wicked Sylvia Daisy Pouncer as well as his rather stupid sidekicks, human and otherwise. But just in case things get too scary, all is satisfactorily resolved at the end.

Although there are five children, the story is focused on young Kay Harker, who is given the magical Box of Delights by an old Punch and Judy man he meets at the station on his way home from boarding school. He is immediately caught up in Abner's attempts to get hold of the box and embarks on a series of breathtaking adventures, sometimes with the assistance of the other children. Indeed, a favourite character of mine is the feisty Maria, (surely a model for Enid Blyton's 'George'), who has proudly been expelled from three schools and, having been kidnapped by the villains early on in the action, announces confidently that "they won't scrobble Maria Jones a second time". But plenty of others get 'scrobbled' including the Bishop and all his staff; it is up to Kay and his magical friends to come to the rescue in an engrossing and heart stopping climax. Modern children may find the narrative slightly old fashioned but this in no way detracts from the lyrical writing that is sometimes full of unspoken menace, particularly in descriptions of the winter

weather. Magical episodes involving all kinds of people, animals and insects are full of movement and colour and the villains are genuinely terrifying but also reassuringly dim. This new edition is also greatly enhanced by Quentin Blake's familiar style of illustrations and the print is sufficiently clear to engage enthusiastic readers from nine to ninety. It is a wonderful treat for a cold winter's afternoon.

John Masefield (new paperback edition 2008). The Box of Delights: or When the Wolves Were Running, London, Egmont UK Ltd, pp 389. £7.99

*In her theatre round up **Carlie Newman** reviews two current productions and looks forward to some of the good things promised for the summer season.*



Michael Gould in Greenland. Photograph: Tristram Kenton for the Guardian

Greenland (National Theatre booking until 2nd April) is a very well meant play about climate change. The difficulty is that for much of the show, the audience feels as though it is being lectured at. While the speeches are all interesting, it is not exactly riveting to watch, as one often feels that the matter could be more succinctly expressed or that we want more information and therefore need to pause and take it in, or even read further on the subject.

It has been put together by four playwrights – Moira Buffini, Matt Charman, Penelope Skinner and Jack Thorne. While the various components are seamless, it might have been better to have had one voice here. The sets and production effects however, with a huge polar bear and snow falling on the audience, are all terrifically managed by director, Bijan Sheibani.

Whether you are into buying shoes or not, *Shoes*, a delightful, sexy (in the *Sun* Page 3 sense) musical, which was originally at Sadler's Wells, is now at the Peacock Theatre (until 3rd April) and is worth a visit. Richard Thomas has written and composed the various sketches, which include songs and dancing, and the director and principal choreographer is Stephen Mear. We find a group of musicians seated on a raised platform and with singing by four singers and dancing undertaken by another 14 are introduced to a full albeit brief history of shoes, moving on to a full description of the different types of shoes we have today. All this is illustrated in a variety of song styles and in particular a complete cross section of different types of dancing from classical to tap to jazz.

The standard of song and dance is high, although some of us found it hard to understand the words sung by the soprano and, as the words are very important here – mainly humorous in a satirical or straight on jokey fashion – it is important to understand everything. The shoes are all interesting with some very strange styles and others new to me with obviously famous names, to whom eulogies are given. The costumes also vary from lovely and appropriate to a rather strange flesh coloured corset-type

body cover worn by the male dancers, which is neither erotic nor to my eyes attractive. Extra choreographers include Sidi Larbi, who uses great movement for two pieces called Salvatore Ferragamo and Old Shoes, and Aletta Collins in her inimitable modern style. The show should appeal to those who enjoy quirky musicals and/or dancing and of course to those obsessed by shoes!



Shoes – A Sadler's Wells Production
Photograph Hugo Glendenning

A must-see for the summer months in London is to see a play at Shakespeare's Globe Theatre. Its 2011 theatre season *The Word is God*, celebrating the 400th anniversary of the King James Bible and the enduring power of dramatic language, commences with a cover-to-cover reading of *The King James Bible* (17-25 April) plus a touring production of *Hamlet*, giving a rare opportunity to experience the two foundation stones of the modern English language back-to-back. The Bible will be recited by 20 actors - including many Globe regulars – in five teams of four over the course of 69 hours, spread across eight days between Palm Sunday and Easter Monday. The small-scale production of *Hamlet* (on tour from 13th April; at the Globe from 23rd April), directed by Dominic Dromgoole, stars Joshua McGuire and opens at the Globe on Shakespeare's birthday, 23rd April,

before travelling to Theatre Royal Margate, Georgian Theatre in Richmond and Bath and finishing in Elsinore.

The first large-scale production at the Globe will be the premiere of *All's Well That Ends Well* (27 April - 21 August), directed by John Dove, followed by *Much Ado About Nothing* (21 May - 1 October) from acclaimed director Jeremy Herrin with Eve Best as Beatrice and Charles Edwards as Benedict. 'The Word is God' theme will continue with Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*, the greatest tragedy in English before Shakespeare. Directed by Matthew Dunster, with Paul Hilton as Faustus. In August, the Globe will celebrate the British medieval tradition with *The Globe Mysteries* in a new version by poet and playwright Tony Harrison, directed by Deborah Bruce. *Anne Boleyn*, directed by John Dove, returns to the Globe following its 2010 sell-out run. The season will be brought to a rude and rowdy climax with *The God of Soho* by Chris Hannan, directed by Raz Shaw - a wild satire on modern living, set in contemporary, suburban England. Box office: 020 7401 9919 or online: www.shakespearesglobe.com Worth going just for the lively young audience – groundlings stand for only £5.00 with hundreds of tickets available.

The other real winner for summer theatre in the capital will be the 2011 season at Regent's Park Open Air Theatre. William Golding's gripping drama, *Lord of the Flies*, directed by Timothy Sheader opens the season. (19th May-18th June). Lucy Bailey injects her unique visual dynamism into John Gay's original text of *The Beggar's Opera* (23rd June – 23rd July). This comically corrupt satire is packed full of lewd

songs and low ballads recreated from the original pastoral score and played on authentic instruments by The City Waits, led by Roddy and Lucie Skeaping. Continuing the successful series of Shakespeare plays for younger audiences, *Pericles* will be re-imagined for everyone aged six and over (2 July - 23 July). The final production is George and Ira Gershwin's hit musical comedy, *Crazy for You* (28 July - 10 September) which is packed full of Gershwin classics including "I Got Rhythm", "Someone To Watch Over Me", "Embraceable You" and "Nice Work If You Can Get It." Timothy Sheader directs, with choreography by Stephen Mear. Box office: 0844 826 4242 or online: www.openairtheatre.com

On the film front, as the fanfares and frocks of the Oscars came and went, members of the British Film Institute were collectively beaming with pride, when veteran British documentary director John Krish was honoured in another awards ceremony.



*Scene from **The Elephant Will Never Forget***

At the recent Evening Standard Film Awards veteran film maker John Krish was announced as the winner of the award for Best Documentary for a theatrical release entitled *A Day in the Life: Four Portraits of Post-War Britain*.

The award was presented by Jean Marsh to a delighted John Krish who was up against Banksy (*Exit Through the Gift Shop*) and Vadim Jean (*In the Land of the Free*). In his acceptance speech Mr Krish, aged 87, holding his award high, quipped, "I was discovered by the BFI at 80, by the critics at 87, and this is so much better than an obituary".

The films in *A Day in the Life: Four Portraits of Post-War Britain* are: *The Elephant Will Never Forget* (1953), a poetic farewell to London's trams; *They Took Us to the Sea* (1961), a poignant record of a seaside outing for disadvantaged children; *Our School* (1962), charting the beliefs of educators, and the aspirations of the decade's young school-leavers; and *I Think They Call Him John* (1964), a deeply moving account of the life of an elderly widower.

The films were greeted with rapturous reviews by critics when they were released by the BFI last year:

'They are heartstopping social-realist monochrome visions of the way we lived then, and immersing yourself in these beautifully photographed and sparsely narrated films is a fascinating experience'
The Guardian

I Think They Call Him John is the most touching film I've seen this year. Hail

John Krish, and the BFI for rediscovering him'
The Independent



I Think They Called Him John (1964)

'The British Film Institute has unplugged the wells, releasing a memory flood... these films have a defining power – and poignancy – as portraits of a moment. The revelation among directors may be the little-sung documentarist John Krish... Whether depicting the end of London's trams or the loneliness of a widowed pensioner, Krish brings a compassionate eloquence and a stoical discerning gaze that are, in the best of senses, British'
Financial Times

'John Krish is one of our finest documentarists... Seeing [these films] is like opening a series of time capsules'
The Observer

A Day in the Life continues to play in selected cinemas across the UK and will be released by the BFI in a Dual Format Edition (DVD and Blu-ray discs in one box) on 28th March 2011 with two previously unreleased titles: I Want to Go to School (John Krish, 1959, 30 mins): a charming portrait of a typical day at a primary school, made for the NUT; Mr Marsh Comes to School (John Krish, 1961, 28 mins): a distinctly

unorthodox film for teenagers, featuring a supernaturally talented Youth Employment Officer.

*More film news of recent and forthcoming releases **On Screen** from Carol Allen.*



Rawiri Paratene as Arthur

The Insatiable Moon is an unusual story from New Zealand with a magnificent central performance from Maori actor Rawiri Paratene (best known as the heroine's grandfather in *Whale Rider*) as Arthur, who believes he is the second son of God – "I'm just a relly" he says modestly in the Kiwi manner. To the outside world though he's just one of a group of men with mental health problems who've been, as in the UK, "released into the community" and who wander the streets of Auckland during the day, returning at night to the hostel run by the foul mouthed but kindly Bob (Greg Johnson), who looks after his charges like a masculine mother. As Arthur, Paratene has the role of a lifetime and he seizes the opportunity with gusto and compassion, giving the character a delightful, straightforward, childlike cheerfulness and humour in his

conviction regarding his relationship with the Almighty. He also shows great strength in one of the film's pivotal and very moving sequences – the funeral of one of the men, a paedophile, who has committed suicide rather than submit again to his personal demon, when Arthur preaches his vision of a just and caring world, where everyone receives love and compassion whatever their sins. Paratene is supported by an impeccable collection of supporting performances, including Matthew Chamberlain as the vicar who at first dismisses Arthur as harmlessly mad but then begins to question whether his simple delusion is saner than the mad world in which he lives.

The recently released *Never Let Me Go* is based on Kazuo Ishiguro's novel, set in an alternative England, where a medical breakthrough in the fifties has resulted in a society, where previously incurable diseases have been conquered and the normal life expectancy is over a hundred years. But there is a human cost. This is not though a science fiction story but one about three young people and their normal human need for love, played out against the chilling and unethical circumstances that dictate what is to be the cruelly short course of their lives. It is constantly engrossing, thought provoking and melancholy and also chillingly indicative of the way human beings can be manipulated into assenting to the most appalling of situations.

Carey Mulligan is strong as Kathy, the central character with good support from Andrew Garfield and Keira Knightly. As the premise behind the story is gradually revealed, the implications are horrifying. But what touches the heart and makes the film hauntingly memorable is the

story of these three touchingly young human beings and their short lives.



Never Let Me Go. Photograph:
FoxSearch/Everett /Rex Features

If you were a follower of the Beat generation of poets in the fifties, you may well be interested in *Howl*, described by its makers as a poem-pic and built around Alan Ginsberg's famous poem. Rather than using a straight narrative approach the film makers intercut between four themes using a different visual style for each, including black and white footage of Ginsberg (James Franco) reading *Howl* for the very first time to a dedicated and

enthusiastic audience in a sub culture basement venue and re-enactment scenes of the trial for obscenity of the publisher of the poem, where the prosecution (David Strathairn) fights to protect respectable America from what his side of the courtroom sees as obscene filth, while the defence (Jon Hamm) puts the case for truth and freedom of speech in literature. Franco is very good as Ginsberg, a young man troubled by his insecurities and homosexuality – something which was illegal at that time – and yet totally articulate and confident when it comes to his work. The film has all the appearance of being a devoted labour of love made on a shoe string budget with generous support from its star names, who believed in what it was doing. And as an examination and illumination of an important piece of American literary history and its context, I don't see how it could have been done any better.

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