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# ALL-ENGLAND THEATRE FESTIVAL

Reaching out to drama groups throughout England



*The only nation-wide  
eliminating contest  
for one-act plays  
in performance*

Chairman  
The Clove Hitch  
Iron Acton  
Bristol BS37 9UG

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[www.aetf.org.uk](http://www.aetf.org.uk)



#### England

2012 looks to be another interesting and busy season and I wish all festival organisers, secretaries, and stage managers and teams a successful and happy time.

I mention festival stage managers - and their trusty time-keepers - because I feel that they are often somewhat neglected. To be sure, they are always thanked from the platform as they lurk in the wings on the final night. However, I am not sure if it is appreciated how much their attitude, as well as their expertise can contribute to the atmosphere and well-being of a festival. A positive 'can do' and helpful approach may make all the difference to often tense and nervous teams and tact and diplomacy will often keep theatre technicians on our side. Not a role for a jobs-worth - but definitely a job worth doing.

Festival organisers also need diplomacy and a flair for appreciating the other parties - teams', theatres', caterers', adjudicators' points of view. This may be especially necessary in 2012 with Open Stages making numbers of teams in succeeding rounds sometimes uncertain. Do make sure your adjudicator knows the possibilities. At preliminary rounds if you are oversubscribed and have to put in a Saturday matinee let your adjudicator know as soon as possible. Fine, it is an extra fee and they have accommodation booked for them - but it is also extra work and they may have allocated that afternoon to catching up on paperwork or visiting an ancient aunt!

Looking at our brochure it becomes apparent that the time scale between rounds doesn't in some instances allow for the contracted time for delivery of scripts. If this is the case it needs to be sorted out with the adjudicator at the very beginning and it is often helpful if nearer the time they are told what is in the pipeline. Three possible productions of Last Tango in Little Grimley will not provide such a reading task as three original plays.

With a little forethought and planning many potential hiccups can be sorted out and I hope you all manage to do this so we all enjoy as successful season. I am looking forward to meeting as many of you as possible during the year.

Ann Aplin



We do hope that you will join us in Worcester over the weekend of 9<sup>th</sup> & 10<sup>th</sup> June for our flagship event of the year, the unique joint AETF English Final and Open Stages Final of the National Shakespeare Competition.

The plan is to intermingle the Finals with 4 plays taking place over two sessions each day; there will be an AETF Area winner and an Open Stages winner in each session.

The weekend promises to be so much more than the usual English Final -

**For those who wish to improve their  
Shakespeare skills -  
and for those who have never dared to  
try...**

#### A WORKSHOP

**'Shakespeare Voice and Text' run by  
the RSC**

will be taking place in the Studio from 10.00-12.00hrs each day. Advance booking will be necessary for this event as the number of places is limited cost £8 (contact Jean email: [cunnington@talk21.com](mailto:cunnington@talk21.com) or telephone: 0121 707 6684)

For those of you who like to eat between the sessions, a buffet meal will be available but this should also be booked in advance via Jean prior to 3<sup>rd</sup> June.

On the Saturday there will be an open forum where you can air all your views and a quiz at the theatre following the adjudication so get those brains sharpened up and lets make this a real celebration of theatre.



# All-England Theatre Festival

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## Northern Area

What, I wonder, do all Festival Organisers – National, Regional and Local – wish for at this time of the year? My bet would be that they wish for two things; (a) increased entries to their festival – who doesn't want our movement to sustain and increase? – and (b) an influx of new blood to help with, and eventually take over, the running of the festivals of this land.

Last season's Northern Semi Final was, I think, unique; not just for its content – it was unique in my 40+ years in festivals because the theatre's liaison stage manager and lighting man were 15 and 13 years old respectively. Mostly, of course, we turn out the "usual suspects" to staff our festivals; few of those suspects are now the right side of 60; many drama groups have the same issues – the set built by 3 or 4 stalwarts, the youngest of whom is 60-something (I was at my own group's theatre just last night – 5 of us there to get out the flats and rostra for our next production, and I'm the youngest at 63).

The lads that night at Todmorden did a fantastic job, and were rightly acknowledged from the stage at the end of the evening; these are young men who are doing their apprenticeship in amateur theatre, and will get a lifetime of friendship and pleasure from it; but how many "apprentices" do you have, or know? Very few, I guess; we all know plenty of "Actors", but few technicians, set-builders and background helpers. Without them, the future is bleak. So my wish for the New Year is simple; please can we have lots of people joining our ranks who want to learn, help, and run things in their turn? Thank you Santa .....

The start of the year is the opening of the new season, of course; the North will hold steady on number of Festivals – seven preliminary rounds, eight if we're lucky, leading ultimately to the Northern Semi, which this year is in the fantastically safe hands of the astonishing Ian Clarke, and which will take place at the Bishop Monkton Village Hall, adjudicated by Russell Whiteley. One of the best things of the last year or two has been that we've found good new venues, staffed by remarkable people who are committed to the cause, and smaller venues which can step up and run later rounds of the Festival with style; a few years ago Bishop Monkton wouldn't have had the Northern Semi Final, but I'll tell you what – I've been there a good few times, and every time it's been brilliantly run, and superbly organised, and I know now that the 2012 Northern Semi will be a night to remember!

I hope you all get what you want for the New Year, whether it's more people to learn the craft and share the load, or simply a great time theatrically for your societies and your festival; on behalf of the North, may I wish all the other areas, their organisers, teams and supporters, a very Happy New Year for 2012, and a phenomenally successful year of theatre.

Jeff Brailsford  
Northern Area Chairman



## Western Area

I'd like to introduce myself as the new Chairman of Western Area, my name is Dennis Dunford and I live in Weymouth with my wife Cathrin. I have been involved with the AETF since my mid-teens when I attended the Dorset Drama League Festival in the Corn Exchange in Dorchester, but not taking an active part until I joined Weymouth Drama Club in 1958. I have recently directed "The Cemetery Club" followed by "Far From The Madding Crowd" for the Drama Club. In 1962 I directed my first festival play Act 1 of "The Return" and since then I have directed 31 more plays and reached the Western Area in 1967, with Act 2 of "The Kingdom of God", '87, '88, '89, '90, '92, '98, '99, 2001, '07, '08, '10. The plays in 1987, 2001 and 2005 went to the English Final, they were "Sufficient Carbohydrate" Act 1, "P.V.T. Wars" and "Effie's Burning" respectively. I have been on the D.D.L. committee for many years and likewise Southern Division, latterly as Secretary, and Western Area, latterly as Vice-Chairman and now delighted to be Chairman and looking forward to an exciting festival season in 2012 with Shakespeare and all that. Is it a case of 'out of the frying pan into the fire' I ask? My secondary hobby is flower arranging and have obtained place cards in the National Competitions and last year I was delighted to arrange the four pedestals for the stage at the British Final at Swindon.

In 2011 we welcomed the Woolstore festival, how good it was and welcome, but it is only run biannually so we look forward to their presence in 2013.

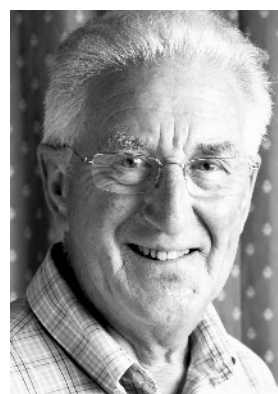
This year Western Area is returning to the Redgrave Theatre in Bristol a very exciting venue.

It was good news to hear from the English Committee that the dreaded PERX has disappeared and that there is now a fixed amount to be paid into the national coffers.

Now the British Final is past the Area has to start thinking about the English in 2013, perhaps Southern Division will come up with a suitable venue, who knows?

Finally I would like to express my thanks on behalf of all involved with AETF to Mike Linham for all his efforts for the festival scene and particularly the British Final 2011, and wish him well with all his future endeavours.

Dennis Dunford  
Western Area Chairman



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## Central Area

With the hope that you all have had a good Christmas and are looking forward to a good and happy New Year, especially within the festival scene.

You will already be aware of this year's ambitious target which involves the RSC's 'Open Stages' festival and I am sure that we will have a worthy representative for that event as well as our more normal One-Act competition. The Central Area has the honour of hosting the "AETF & Open Stages English Final of the National Shakespeare Competition" on the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> June at the Swan Theatre in Worcester. This co-incidentally is the "85<sup>th</sup> English Final".

We were honoured that Arthur Aldrich agreed to present the "David Campton Trophy" to the runner-up at our Central Area Semi Final last year. We, as a new Area, now have three trophies which we present each year, these all presented by people who were involved with the formation of the Area and we hope that future winners will remember their names with pride.

Things have moved on since this time last year in regard to the shape of the three Divisions within our Area. In fact this year will be the last time that Nottingham PRF has a bye straight to the Semi-Final. At the Area AGM in September the decision was made and subsequently preparations have been taken to formally create the Eastern Division. This will mean that as from the 2013 festival season the Area will have three Divisions each with three PRF's feeding into them. Western-Division; Herefordshire, Worcestershire and Birmingham. Central-Division; Shropshire, Tamworth and Stoke. Eastern-Division; Nottinghamshire, Leicestershire and Warwickshire. 2012 will be the same as last year, except of course that we have the English Final within the Area and in 2013 we will have the inaugural Eastern Division Quarter-Final taking place.

This year looks as if it is going to be a good one, no festivals have closed and all is in place for the three finals within the Area. The English & RSC Open Stages Final is on track and the Swan Theatre, Worcester is giving us very good support. There are a couple of slight concerns on the horizon, we have not as yet managed to raise much of the budgeted sponsorship. This means that as an Area we could do with a little more help. If you are able or have contacts that could be persuaded to help financially please get in touch we have a number of options that we could discuss. The other concern is that we believe there is a race meeting on this weekend and whilst this could be fun during intervals and breaks it does mean that hotel accommodation could be tight. So get booked in early.

Jean and I hope to see as many of you as possible during the festival season, your Area committee hope that you will give consideration to the requests for help within the Area. A little help from many can easily mount up. Last year I asked on behalf of the Area that none of you put this Newsletter down until you had started organising a party to attend the Quarter and Semi-Finals that were due to take place in the Central Area. It is even more important this year especially thinking of the ENGLISH FINAL in Worcester, an event which I would suggest should not be missed.

Roger. Cunnington.  
Central Area – Chairman.

## Geoffrey Whitworth Competition

Geoffrey Whitworth founded the British Drama League in 1919. He was heavily involved in drama for many years and encouraged original work. His philosophy was to ensure that writers would benefit from seeing their plays performed and adjudicated.

The Geoffrey Whitworth Competition is administered by the Scottish Community Drama Association on behalf of the:

- All England Theatre Festival
- Association of Ulster Drama Festivals
- Drama Association of Wales
- Scottish Community Drama Association

Scripts are read 'blind' by a panel of judges and the author of the winning script is awarded the Geoffrey Whitworth Trophy at the British Final of One Act Plays.

Writers are encouraged to revise their scripts following performance to benefit from the experience of seeing their work performed.



Any new play that has not been publicly performed or published prior to the date of its performance in a preliminary round festival, is eligible to enter the competition. The closing date for entries is 30<sup>th</sup> April 2012 so, if your Adjudicator and Festival Organiser feel that your script has promise, all you need do is forward two copies of the play without the author's name, along with an entry form (available from the editor or from [www.aetf.org.uk](http://www.aetf.org.uk)) to the SCDA.

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## Eastern Area

As you may remember from the Annual Report I spent a fair time rambling around the Area and met and talked to many people, it was good to report that the majority of Preliminary Round Festivals last year performed well. In other words our independent festivals are not only surviving but also providing a needed and worthwhile outlet for drama in the Area.

We have lost some good friends to the Area during the course of the year, including Richard Davis in September. In saying goodbye to a Richard, a stalwart and long serving Chairman of the Elmbridge Festival we also lost a good supporter of the AETF. Our AGM in October proved to be another turning point for the Area; we knew that we would be saying goodbye to our retiring Treasurer, Beryl Smith; we wish her and her husband Arthur, many years of a happy retirement, and we thank them both for the many years of service to the Association. We were not ready for Chris Hepher's departure as secretary however, and we are grateful to Ian Thomas from the Elmbridge Festival for taking this role on and wish him every success in his new venture. Along with Ian and our new Treasurer, Jackie Huke we are confident that the new members who are replacing our old stalwarts of the organisation will move the Area forward with new vigour.

It has been said that we appear not to be providing the strong support to either the Area or the AETF that is required to make the AETF family the strong united organisation that it is supposed to be. This based on, or due to the decision made by the Area to do away with Quarter-Finals last year when we decided to take the winner from each of the Preliminary Round Festivals straight into the Semi-Final. This reduced the learning curve that Quarter-Finals provide and did not prove to be of financial gain to the AETF. Although this saved effort for host Preliminary Round Festivals, at the AGM it was felt that this was in fact a retrograde step. The decision was thus made that we should reinstate our four Quarter-Finals although to do this for 2012 was almost impossible, therefore we are looking to do so in 2013. This means that we are looking for four Preliminary Round Festivals to put their heads above the parapet and offer to host a Divisional Quarter-Final. Please get in touch with Ian Thomas ASAP.

In contemplating the future I extend our special congratulations and thanks to Woking College for their support by bringing a small coach load of people to the English Final at Harrogate, we are hopeful that this initiative will be taken on by others. It would be great if other entries from the Area could support in a similar way.

As has been previously reported we, as an Area do not have the responsibility of hosting the English Final this year. We are however hoping that the Area will be active in supporting the event which will be taking place in Worcester on the 9<sup>th</sup> & 10<sup>th</sup> June. From personal experience I can say that this event is always worth attending.

Following on from these points, particularly the changes at the AGM we are hoping to be able to start looking at ways of rejuvenating the Area as a whole and launching our plans for hosting the British Final in four years time. A surprisingly short

time (did I say four!) half a year has already gone, sponsorship and a suitable venue are the first priorities. To that end the Area trustees are pleased to report that a team is in place and they are making progress in regard to the British Final 2015, further updates will follow.

Brian Freeman  
Eastern Area Chairman



## Drama Festivals Conference 2012

The 2012 Drama Festivals Conference is to be held for a second time at the Lighthouse Theatre and Conference Centre in Kettering, Northants.

The biannual event will take place on Saturday 15 September, and by popular demand the weekend activities will include a theatre trip and celebratory concluding dinner. Organisers are also in the process of putting together an accommodation package at a nearby hotel.

The Drama Festivals Conference returns to the East Midlands following overwhelming positive feedback about the event from delegates who attended the highly successful conference in 2010.

Conference content will reflect the major events happening in the UK in 2012 and beyond – particularly the Open Stages project highlighting the amateur theatre's celebration of Shakespeare and his legacy.

There will be keynote speakers, workshops, forums and networking sessions aimed at creating an event of interest to everyone involved in the drama festivals movement.

The first speaker to be confirmed is Rebecca Storey, Senior Press and PR Officer at Shakespeare's Globe Theatre.

Once again teams participating in drama festivals will have the opportunity to win a free delegate place at the Conference. Full details of this offer will be announced in the New Year along with more information on the conference programme.



THE ENGLISH FINAL  
2012  
and the  
AETF/OPEN STAGES FINAL  
of the  
National Shakespeare Competition



Saturday & Sunday  
9th & 10th June  
2.30pm and 7.00pm

The Swan Theatre  
The Moors  
Worcester WR1 3ED

Box Office: 01905 611 427

## 2011 PERFORMANCE STATS

A slightly disappointing year, as 5 festivals have, for whatever reason, failed to make a return. This has still however given us an 89% success rate.

Within the family there are 31 Independently Organised Festivals, together with 22 AETF Preliminary Round Festivals &/or Finals. Of these 53 festivals 6 were not actually scheduled to take place this year.

Nevertheless there were some 129 performance evenings, &/or matinees, which took place in 47 venues, overall 326 groups took part cast and crew numbering over 3,550, they were watched by an audience of some 9,573.

In regard to programmes and the promotion of the AETF, there were only 3 AETF festivals that appeared not to have used the AETF programme covers provided. However there were a number of Independent Festivals who did not appear willing to use the AETF logo & advert - this not only helps the AETF but also acknowledges your interest within the AETF family.

## THE PLAY STATS

With regard to the plays produced in Preliminary or First Round Festivals, which make up the AETF family. We find that: -

The most popular authors this year were: -  
Alan Ayckbourn with 3 titles being performed at 6 First Rounds.  
David Campton with 4 titles being performed at 5 First Rounds.  
Harold Pinter with 4 titles being performed at 5 First Rounds.  
anon with 7 titles being performed at 5 First Rounds.

As has been the case over the last few years there is not 'a most popular' play, at first round festivals. In fact this year no single title received more than three performances at three different festivals. This may not however be accurate, as ten festivals did not provide programmes this season.

This year taking part at our 34 First Rounds there were 197 different play titles, (The following figures in brackets are from last year.), of which 35 (56) were original plays; there were some 171 (185) different authors. The most prolific one being 'anon' with 7 (14) different productions. Interestingly out of the 318 (320) performances in the First Rounds, 23 (21) were monologues or duologues and 33 (35) were three handers. Out of the remaining there were 88 (98) with over 8 characters. It would also appear from the returns that of the 318 performances 259 (236) wanted to be considered as part of the ongoing AETF festival whilst 34 (34) adult and 25 (50) youth entries did not.

In conclusion, overall there were some 259 competitive entries into the AETF ongoing National Festival of One-Act Plays this year, all vying to represent England at 'The British Final of One-Act Plays'.

## SUMMARY & CONCLUSIONS

With regard to promoting the AETF via festival programmes we appear to be winning. The support that we receive from our independent festivals is strong and we hope that by the extra effort in the returning of a copy of their programme and the stats return sheet, we are able to give a strong indication of how the festival movement is continuing to support our local communities.

From the performance figures for 2011 we are down to our previous lowest figures in 2002. But I am convinced that if we had the figures from the five festivals that are still outstanding, we would in fact be considerably better represented. The shortfall was of course compounded by the loss of four semi finals this year in the Eastern Area.

Looking to the POSITIVE, we are now ready to embark on this years season, and we should be looking forward to a good year, hopefully the involvement with the RSC is already paying dividends. As custodian of the stats, "I hope that next year's season will produce a bumper yield of Festivals and Returns". Again I reiterate that your continued support in motivating entries not only for your own Independent Festivals but also as a part of the AETF Family is paramount to ensuring the continuance of the national festival scene. As the AETF is the national organiser of the only competitive 'on-going one-act play festival' we look forward to your continued support and to seeing you all at the 'AETF English & Open Stages Final of the National Shakespeare Competition' at the Swan Theatre, Worcester in June.

AETF National Treasurer.  
Roger Cunningham.



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## Conflict of Interest

GoDA is strengthening its advice to adjudicators about how to avoid the conflict of interest caused when teams that they have some connection with – either as current or past members – are scheduled to appear before them in a festival. The problem is even more complicated, of course, in the various rounds of the AETF when the adjudicator might have been booked for over a year whereas the teams competing are not known until very close to the date.

GoDA has had representation from festival organisations who feel that it is an unwelcome complication in their work to remain viable and that everyone would accept the adjudicator's professional impartiality as long as the connection was openly announced from the stage.

Equally, they have been made aware of strong feelings from other organisers that there should be no room for compromise on this issue. On the other hand, many GoDA members are adjudicating precisely because they were active in the amateur movement.

If you have an opinion on this thorny issue, GoDA Secretary, Jo Crossley, would be very glad to receive it so that it may be considered by the GoDA Council. (25 The Drive, Bengoe, Hertford SG14 3DE or email: [jo.godasec@talktalk.net](mailto:jo.godasec@talktalk.net))



## ScriptSwap

Make money, save money - you have NOTHING to lose and a lot to gain.

ScriptSwap is a brand new website that we hope will become the eBay of the theatre world. It's totally free to join and there are no hidden fees, and we hope it will quickly become the place to go if you have old scripts or need scripts for a future production.

What do you do with your used play scripts? Put them on a shelf? In a box? Worst of all, do you throw them away?

What about when you need scripts for your next production? You pay the full price? You loan them from a library? You don't photocopy, of course!

With ScriptSwap, you can post FREE advertisements for your scripts, whether you want to sell them, loan them or give them away.

With ScriptSwap, you can search for the scripts you want.

And all for FREE.

ScriptSwap is sponsored by some of the leading lights in the amateur theatre world. There's Amateur Stage magazine (the country's only monthly magazine for the Amateur Theatre world), the website [www.amdram.co.uk](http://www.amdram.co.uk) (an absolute Aladdin's cave of everything AmDram, New Theatre Publications (whose catalogue of over 800 plays offers free evaluation copies) and the huge ebook site Fiction4All.

We all hate to see waste, especially if it affects the environment. Now, you can help too, with absolutely no cost to you or your theatre.

We have reworked the site to allow you to trade in scripts in your region or, optionally, to look at scripts from anywhere in the world.

We have enhanced the features and soon you'll be able to download the entire list of adverts, perhaps to take a copy to your play selection meetings, and to (optionally) sign up for weekly or monthly updates on adverts.

The new website address is [www.script-swap.com](http://www.script-swap.com) - (but the old address [www.scriptsrap.co.uk](http://www.scriptsrap.co.uk) will still work for the foreseeable future). Membership remains totally free, as it always will be.

All scripts traded so far and all adverts at the time of writing are from the UK, but we hope people from other regions will start to use the service in your region and the list of wanted and for sale adverts will grow.

Regions available are UK/Eire, USA/Canada, Rest of Europe, Australia/New Zealand, Asia, Africa and South America. At present we do not know of any theatres run by penguins or polar bears but we can add other regions as and when necessary if the above list is too broad.

We are keen to attract sponsorship in any form (for example banner and classified advertising), so contact us if you want your organisation's name to be seen by the thousands of people who browse the free ads.

Make money, save money - you have NOTHING to lose and a lot to gain. Go to <http://www.script-swap.com>



## GoDA Assessment Forms

The GoDA Council have recently revised their assessment forms and would like to encourage all Festival Organisers to return a completed form with the views of their committee. The forms are of great value as a means of monitoring the professional standards set by the Guild.

Written comments, however brief, are extremely valuable especially in highlighting excellence. The Council have discussed the scale of marks but feel that a comment is more useful than a wider mark range.

A check on the revised form is whether matters of concern have been raised with the adjudicator at the time, during the festival, as this is often the most productive action. GoDA do advise their members to take the initiative in asking the organisers if all is well.

If you would like to receive an electronic copy of the form, which can then be returned electronically please contact Jo at [jo.godasec@talktalk.net](mailto:jo.godasec@talktalk.net)

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## The Treasurer's Ramblings

Last year I rambled on about 'Audience support, ticket prices and finance', you will be pleased to know that nothing changes. Unfortunately this year a number of festivals failed to make returns relating to their festivals and because of this the audience support figures are somewhat lower. Being ever optimistic I suspect that if those returns had been forthcoming we would have at least met last year's figures. From the lack of feedback it appears that everybody is more than satisfied with the price of festival tickets and, as I believe all festivals have survived the year, we should all be happy. With regard to finance, as far as the AETF is concerned we appear to be holding our own, some winners and some losers. As you are already aware our English Final held in Harrogate made a substantial profit as did the British Final held in Swindon. Our thanks to all involved who have made that possible.

It was raised at the English Final "that the AETF should have its own membership", that is to say people, groups or organisations who wish to offer their support to us. This was discussed at the trustees June and October meetings and it is hoped that it will be launched at or around the 2012 English Final. So the plea will have to be that you come to the English Final with cheque book ready, hopefully membership forms will be available. At this point in time it is the intention that the membership year will be from 1<sup>st</sup> July through to the 30<sup>th</sup> June, thus taking in the Competitive Festival Year. If you have any thoughts on this subject please feel free to contact me.

Another area that has been a part of the AETF's long standing role was CCAT. As you are probably aware The Central Council for Amateur Theatre (CCAT) has ceased to exist, I have been involved with the organisation on and off since 1980, but AETF in its former guise as the British Theatre Association was I believe one of CCAT's founder members in 1977. CCAT was a "Talking Shop" a federation of umbrella organisations who met regularly to keep abreast of trends within the amateur world. Not only were drama and musical groups represented but also religious societies and the many groups within the armed forces and government organisations, not forgetting the National organisations from the other three nations making up the United Kingdom. CCAT's ability to instigate reports and provide government with quick accurate answers at short notice will I suspect be missed.

The AETF is a unique organisation, as stated previously it currently has no membership. Our mission "To organise an annual one-act play festival, open to any amateur drama group in England". Within our organisation with its large extended family in the form of the independent Preliminary Round Festivals plus our own three preliminary round festivals we are pretty much able to achieve that. Nevertheless, it must be remembered that out of the fifty three festivals making up the AETF, twenty two are organised and run by volunteers for and on behalf of the AETF. It is through their efforts and dedication that the AETF can continue to flourish, because it is through their endeavours that festivals are developed, these festivals in turn generate the income which in this day and age is the fruit by which the AETF can grow and prosper.

AETF National Treasurer.  
Roger Cunnington.

## MAIDENHEAD FESTIVAL

We are just starting on preparations for our 2012 Festival which is quite late as it runs from 1<sup>st</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> May 2012. It is our 65<sup>th</sup> Festival and we are very lucky to be able to use our local Arts centre – Norden Farm – for it. Many of you will have visited us for various rounds of AETF and all have praised the excellent facilities.

I have been thinking back to the time I first became interested in Festivals, in about 1960. At that time we used the local Town Hall and had to make do with poor lighting, sound effects that had mostly to be done manually, very bad acoustics and an auditorium that was flat, therefore restricting the view of half the audience. How times change!

What I do remember of that time was the enthusiasm of the competitors and the final night being packed to the roof with standing room only. We are not allowed to stand in the aisles now due to



health and safety concerns. We never burnt the place down by using a lighted match on stage and didn't have to have someone standing by with a fire extinguisher. We didn't have to provide a chaperone for every child in a play.

The Chairman gave a very long speech at the end and made sure he thanked everyone including the car park attendant. He did not have good voice projection so was mostly inaudible, but no-one minded and he has left us with a legacy. The award to the AETF winner is in his name.

At that time we had many All Women groups (mostly local W I's) so the local newspaper provided us with a trophy for them. Now we have to call it the Single Sex Award and it has sometimes been presented to all male groups who do look a little embarrassed being presented with a statue of a naked woman, standing on one leg with the other stretched out behind her. Her bottom has a very bright shine to it. I wonder why?

Now, of course, we have professional lighting and sound, real dressing rooms, a roomy foyer, bar and refreshments, a green room, raked seating, public address system, stage manager's desk, stage door, showers, lifts, communication with FOH and lighting gallery, plenty of storage area, car park, publicity in the Arts Centre's brochure and we don't even have to sell our own tickets!

As I've already said "How times change", but I wouldn't have missed a second of any of it!

Carolyn Morley  
Chairman. (Or should it be Chairperson?)



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## Stage Management Association

At the Stage Management Association (SMA) we look after professional stage managers – mostly. Over the last few years, a number of amateur stage managers and groups have joined us, too. But what part of our offering may be of interest to non-professionals?

One popular reason are our backstage tours. This year, for instance, we were able to talk to the stage management team, sound and LX staff behind the Railway Children currently at Waterloo, even walking through the famous Gentleman's Carriage. We were also offered discounted tickets to the show.

Earlier in the year we had a day out at the RSC in Stratford where we toured the new building from grid to understage, taking in dressingrooms, offices and backstage areas. The tour was led by a member of the RSC stage management team and by the rebuild Project Co-ordinator, himself a former stage manager.

There are less 'glamorous' get-togethers: free tickets to trade shows such as PLASA, PLASA Focus in Leeds and the ABTT Theatre Show, with all they have to offer in terms of information and networking opportunities, seminars and talks.

Then there are the SMA's information resources. Our website has an extensive members' area where our publications are available FREE to members – from factsheets on the use of weapons to the rules on smoking on stage. There is also a members' forum; and a page of rehearsal room listings, amongst much else.



Our quarterly membership magazine *Cueline* is highly rated for being both informative and fun, and has been complemented recently with a monthly e-Cueline as we always have so much of interest to stage managers to pass on between editions! Information is as vital to the amateur as to the professional: as regards licensing children, for instance, we are subject to the same legislation, so why should non-professionals not buy into the resources the SMA can offer?

What else? The SMA organises short courses and seminars, and is happy to do so on request. We are also, specifically for the amateur sector, able to act as a 'broker' between our professional members and non-professional groups that may seek to buy in short-term professional advice, or a professional stage manager for a particularly difficult or large show, or someone to mentor a new stage management recruit in their society/theatre/group.

Stage management can be a lonely job when you're a professional, but even more so for a volunteer who may be the only one in their group with a passion for backstage. Who can they talk to about their favourite subject? How can they learn anything new? Or connect with other stage managers? Through the SMA of course!

There's more information about us on our website, [www.stagemanagementassociation.co.uk](http://www.stagemanagementassociation.co.uk). You can become an individual member – a Friend (£40 a year) – or you can join as a group (Company Friend) for £50 a year. The SMA is only funded by its members and by joining it you make it stronger and more able to deliver not just useful support services but also a loud voice for that most essential of backstage professions: the stage manager.

So I hope we may look forward to welcoming you to the SMA soon!

**Barbara Eifler, Executive Director**

*"There is that smaller world  
which is the stage,  
and that larger stage which is the world."*

Isaac Goldberg

## Who's New in GoDA?

Congratulations to Colin Dolley on his election for the next three years as the Chairman of the Guild of Drama Adjudicators.

At a recent selection weekend Bev Clark, Anna Beaney and Alan Haslett were accepted as Associate Members – they look forward to adjudicating at your festivals. Graham Bill, Ben Humphrey and Michael Poyner became full members throughout the year.

The revised GoDA fees are £85 per session for full members and £75 per session for associate members.