

# Chickenshed Newsletter

Winter 2007 Edition

CHICKENSHED

Welcome to the winter edition of the Chickenshed newsletter. In this edition we talk about the new Bursary Fund which was launched at our Gala in October by Lord Attenborough. We also bring you exciting news about our ambitious global project for the first half of next year, SeaChange, as well as the usual information and events. May I take this opportunity on behalf of everyone at Chickenshed to wish you a very happy festive season. We look forward to seeing you soon - it's not too late to book tickets for 'A Christmas Carol'!



David Balcombe, Chief Executive

We are enjoying a happy autumn. The event which James Murdoch supportively called a 'celebration of a partnership' took place on October 10th in Jack Barclay in Berkeley Square. The huge windows ensured we had an audience all day for the crews get in and all rehearsals. It was a great success and the showroom even sold a car during the day despite the fact that the elegant showroom looked more like Woodstock than a place to sell Bentleys. Approximately 110 nightingales sang in Berkeley Square and the end of this phase of our relationship with Sky was celebrated with style and no little emotion. We are delighted that this partnership was ended in a friendship we will treasure.

I know more information about the Gala will be forthcoming in the rest of the newsletter, but I want to reiterate our gratitude to Lord and Lady Rayne. They were prepared to share our vision way back in 1988 and Jane is still supporting us long after their original offer of building us a theatre has been achieved. The vision and philanthropy of the Rayne's are legendary and we are lucky to be a small part of their life.

We are approaching technical rehearsals for A Christmas Carol with all the hard work, laughter and tears inevitably involved in a production which has a cast of 600 (albeit in four rotas). This is a traditional story done in a way which we hope combines the essence of the story with our own core values. Charles Dickens deplored the poverty and despair in the world he knew. How sad that we appear to have a young generation without hope. How can we repair the damage? How can we give our young people back their self worth so they regain their desire to dream? In the

spring we embark on a new journey. One that will take us across the continents. We call it SeaChange: conversations across continents. We have started by asking children all over the world to tell us what needs to be changed. We are weaving their answers into a story which will be performed in several different countries in the summer. More news of this in the spring but once again thank you for believing in us and for giving us the confidence to continue with our work. Every life that is enhanced is thanks to you and we never take that for granted.

This is a magical time of year at Chickenshed. It's the time when we spend lots of hours in The Rayne and, when I say we, I mean all of us because it is the time when the whole of Chickenshed works together in one glorious co-operative product. The theatre is full of the sounds and visions which have happened in previous years and this year it has struck me how important it is to look at the names on the seats. Some of these people have passed away and their relatives have done us the huge honour of allowing us to have their names and inscriptions as inspiration. Perhaps when you come to the show, have a look at some of these and know how much we appreciate that support. Please also glance up at the sound desk. This year we lost our Number Two sound man, Peter Stevens, to a cruel cancer. However Peter will always be in The Rayne and his photo is there with Saul as he strives to make the quality of the sound ever more beautiful. I suppose all the inscriptions are summed up by the one on the seat of the great Michael Varah. It simply says "For Michael Varah who loved it here".

Mary Ward - Artistic Director



## An interview with Sheila Hancock



The John Thaw Foundation gave us money recently to begin what we are going to call John Thaw Everyone Theatre Days. The funding enables Chickenshed to offer free tickets to children who would not otherwise be able to come to see a show.

The first John Thaw Everyone Theatre Day took place on the opening public performance of A Christmas Carol and John's widow and Trustee of the Foundation, Sheila Hancock, was present at the inaugural event. The theatre became a magical place where children from all cultures and backgrounds experienced the Arts, something often seen outside of Chickenshed as for the privileged few.

Here we talk to Sheila about why The John Thaw Foundation supported this event and her views on what the Arts can do for young people.

When asked about The John Thaw Foundation, Sheila tells me how it came about. "The Foundation was set up by John to start with. Then after he died, his daughter Joanna took over the Chairmanship and myself and three other women are involved. What we aim to do is to help people, almost exclusively young people, that need a helping hand. It's as simple as that. We have no end of projects that we're involved with and very often they involve the Arts." The list is indeed long, including financing a half term drama project for local school children from underprivileged families in association with the Young Vic; supporting a small community in the Cotswolds that deals with kids that have suffered a trauma in the past; and paying for a garden to be created for children with limited or no sight.

In relation to Chickenshed and why they specifically funded this project she says, "We normally only involve ourselves with quite small projects, usually at the beginning of their life. Once they start getting successful and can get funding elsewhere then we drop out. Chickenshed is an exception to this rule, because in this instance we funded a specific project. Because we can only give a small amount of money we like to know that it is going straight to the objective for which it's aimed rather than be lost in a lot of administration costs. I do like the work that Chickenshed does. It very much comes under the umbrella of the sort of stuff we like to be involved with."

Sheila attended the opening performance of A Christmas Carol as part of this initiative and says of the production: "I thought it was very good indeed. It was the first performance so there were some shaky moments: things that needed tweaking, sound that needed adjusting. But being a director as well, I knew those things were going to be changed and when I talked afterwards {to the Directors} they were. But I thought it was beautiful. I have to say, whenever you see Chickenshed you absolutely can't tell that anybody is at a disadvantage, so immersed are they in the whole that you forget completely that there may be children who have had difficulties."

Children from various schools and groups across London were invited to the theatre for free as part of the John Thaw Everyone Theatre Day. Sheila spent a lot of time with the children before and after the performance, getting a real sense of what this opportunity meant to them. She says "I think they got a lot out of it. What was interesting was there were a lot of Muslim children there that I spoke to afterwards and of course A Christmas Carol is focussed very much round a very Christian festival, so they were comparing it with their Muslim festivals and that was interesting for them. Certainly it was interesting for me talking to them and comparing what they do and what we do as a Christian festival."

Sheila clearly loved being with the children and couldn't help but get caught up in their sense of enthusiasm. "They were very excited by it although I think some of them were a bit confused! It's very difficult to take in live theatre. There's so much going on whereas with film and TV you have close-ups and you know where you should be looking at any given moment. But with live theatre it's almost too much for little people to absorb in a way. But they were very thrilled and excited. And I think they very much got the feeling that I love about live theatre, where it's a shared experience. It's a group of people watching something together and reacting together and I think they enjoyed that very much."

The majority of the children who saw the show had never been to the theatre before. The money provided by the Foundation meant that we could open up this experience to the very people who could benefit most. Of the importance of keeping the Arts accessible for young people, Sheila was very clear. "I think it's essential, not

even so much just being in the audience, but participation. I think the Arts: music, drama, and dance, can be used to bring people out of themselves; to give them self respect. A lot of the organisations we're involved with have children who've been in a great deal of trouble - they're on the 'at risk' register or have been in trouble with the police. It's amazing how you can use drama and dance to let people express what they feel and also, they learn discipline. If you're going to be in a show or be in the theatre in any way you have to be disciplined. You have to work with other people; you have to understand other people's problems - things that some kids find difficult because they've been badly treated when they were young. So I think it's absolutely essential to involve people in the Arts. It enriches their lives. I don't necessarily want them to be on stage professionally - it's a hard old business, but to enrich their leisure time I think it's invaluable."

Asked why she wouldn't encourage others to work in the Arts fulltime and what advice she would give to someone who wanted to, Sheila is adamant in her response. "Don't!" she says. "Don't would be my advice! If someone really wants to, then they'll do it. But the first word I would say would be "don't"! It's a very tough business. 80% of the profession are out of work at any given time. Hardly anyone makes a living wage, and so they have to do other jobs. You have to be very strong to stand up to constant criticism both from directors and teachers, and later from the audience and critics. You have to deal with long periods of unemployment and not having a lot of money; you deal with very long, hard hours when you're doing a show and a difficult social life. You work in the evenings when other people are out enjoying themselves and it's very difficult to make friends outside of the profession as your hours are so unsociable so you have to be absolutely obsessively dedicated to want to do it. It's not a lovely, lovely glamorous life by any means."

Despite all her misgivings for this life, asked if she always wanted to be an actress, Sheila ponders, "I suppose I did. Yes, looking back I guess I did. In my day, women didn't have many opportunities to do other things. There were very limited jobs open to women. I'd probably think quite differently if I were young again. I couldn't afford to go to university and the theatre was a good way of doing my own thing. I'm not a person who particularly likes regularity in my life so therefore I can deal with the insecurity of the business. My temperament is alright for it. I have seen many, many people having a rather sad time in our profession because they're

temperamentally not suited to it. Unfortunately television gives a very false impression of what it's like. It really does. Everyone's looking for fame without any talent. They think you can be famous if you want to be famous and seem to forget you actually have to be able to perform. You have to be able to do a lot of things nowadays. It's a very demanding business and the competition is huge. And it never stops. Even when you get success you're still only as good as the last job you've done. If you have a flop suddenly, it's very difficult to get your next job. It's a tough old life. Only the people who really, really want to do it and are really, really talented will succeed."

Although Sheila's warnings are stark, she's one of the lucky ones. Her illustrious career, spanning over 5 decades, includes film, TV and stage credits as well as two BAFTA nominations for Best Actress. On her most recent stage exploit as Frau Schneider in Cabaret for which she won an Olivier Award she said, "I enjoyed it thoroughly. I love working with dancers and musicians. If you're going to do a long run it can be really boring doing the same thing every night and it's very difficult to keep it fresh so the audience get their money's worth. But if you have an orchestra, it really helps. When you hear the overture it just gives you a lift and dancers and musicians are usually good fun as well so you have a good time! It's easier than doing a long run in a stage play, that's for sure. Imagine if you have to do a year or two years, that's a long while, particularly with mid-week matinees. You have to try and be as good as you can every night as people have paid the same amount of money every night. You have to make it look as though it's the first time you've done it; the first time you've ever said those words."

As for the future, Sheila's thoughts turn to keeping the Foundation going. The money which the Foundation uses comes from her earnings and repeat fees from John Thaw's work. She says simply, "I hope I keep on earning money in order to have the money to spend on other people. A lot depends on that. I was lucky enough to have a best selling book last year [The Two of Us - My Life with John Thaw, an autobiographical account of her and late husband John Thaw's childhoods and lives together] which provided a great deal of the money. I just hope I go on having enough money to keep it going, let's put it that way."



'SeaChange' is a year long global creative communication project run by Chickenshed from August 2007 - July 2008 which aims to bring young people in every continent together via inclusive theatre.

It will involve Chickenshed's own community of inclusive theatre workshop members, ShedLink members (our Outreach Sheds) and up to twelve countries spread between each continent around the world. Partners are either performing arts companies or schools, and Chickenshed would like to visit some or all of these partners to deliver workshops during the coming year. The project will culminate in a performance-led showcase of the outcomes of these workshops during July 2008, in London, but will have a global reach via multimedia platforms. Live music, dance, theatre, audio-visuals, songs and words will capture the experiences and resolutions of the young people involved.

The aims of the project are:

- To make a measurable difference in the lives of children facing life changing issues globally by drawing them together with others to create a conversation across continents, sharing issues and emotions about the way we live today and solutions to promote change.
- To give young people, often with no other form of communication methods, a creative vehicle through which to express their feelings with their global counterparts.
- To empower all who participate to understand, practice and communicate Chickenshed's core philosophy - equal value, equal respect for all human life - and 'be the change'.
- To get Chickenshed's work known and acknowledged throughout the United Kingdom and beyond.

The process is now underway and we are seeking funding for the involvement of each country. If you think you can help and would like to get involved, please contact [JessicaC@Chickenshed.org.uk](mailto:JessicaC@Chickenshed.org.uk)

## Chickenshed Bar Events

### Jo Collins & Friends

Sunday - 30 March

Chickenshed's inimitable Director of Music kicks up a storm with her hugely talented band

Doors 7.30pm Music 8.30pm-11.30pm

Admission £9.00 / £6.50 conc

Evening Menu available

### Jazz Shed

Fridays - 25 Jan / 8 Feb / 21 Mar

Berny Stringle invites you to an evening with the cream of London's top jazz players.

Doors 7.30pm Live Jazz 8.30pm-11.30pm

Admission £10.00 / £7.50 conc

Evening Menu available

### Band Nights

Thursday - 7 Feb / 24 Apr

The best up and coming bands in London brought to you by Double A Productions Ltd

Doors 7.30pm Music 8.30pm-11pm

Admission on door: £6.50 / £5.50 conc

Admission in advance:

£5.50 / £4.50 conc - £3.50 to

Chickenshed members and students

Sandwiches and snacks available

(All information correct at time of going to press December 2007)



## Tales from the Shed

Tales from the Shed brings stories, both original and traditional, to life in a land of colour, characters and fun. Each show is different, and looks at different themes and subjects within the early year's world. There are two shows per day at 9.30am and 11.15am and each show lasts approximately 50 mins to an hour.

Friday 25 January

Saturday 26 January

Friday 1 February

Saturday 2 February

Friday 8 February

Saturday 9 February

Friday 15 February

Saturday 16 February

Friday 22 February

Saturday 23 February

Friday 29 February

Saturday 1 March

Friday 7 March

Saturday 8 March

Friday 14 March

Saturday 15 March

#### Tickets:

£5.30 (adults) £3.70 (child)

Concessions: £4.20 (adults) £2.60 (child)



For further details on all of the events listed above please contact the Box Office on **020 8292 9222**.

Please email [AccessBookings@Chickenshed.org.uk](mailto:AccessBookings@Chickenshed.org.uk) if you have any specific access queries relating to one of our shows or events.

**Remember - you can book tickets online for all of our productions. Go to [www.chickenshed.org.uk/shop](http://www.chickenshed.org.uk/shop) to find out more.**

## A Christmas Carol on Sky Arts

We are delighted that A Christmas Carol has been filmed by Sky Arts as part of our ongoing broadcast relationship with Sky. It will be aired on the following dates on Sky Arts (Channel 267):

**Wednesday 26th December at 3pm**

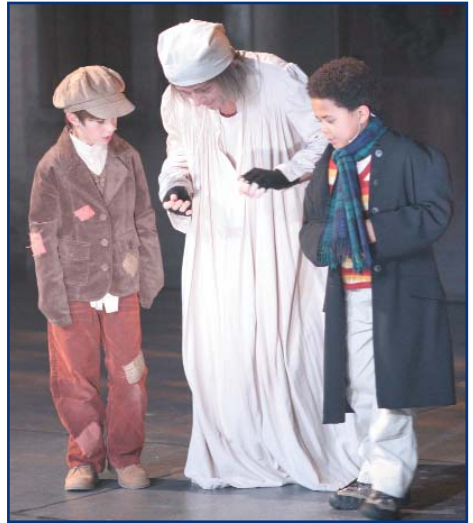
**Thursday 27th December at 12noon**

**Friday 28th December at 8.30am**

**Sunday 30th December at 11.30am**

Make sure you tune in on Boxing Day!

And don't forget, A Christmas Carol CDs and T-shirts are available to buy from the Box Office now.



## Cabaret 2007



Chickenshed held a week of Cabaret Performances in October which were a phenomenal success. Two of the evenings were bought by our corporate supporters, strengthening our relationship with them further. Performances included a number from "as the mother of a brown boy...", a Beatles medley and Take That's Shine.



We are pleased to announce that in conjunction with our long-standing supporters, Hard Rock Cafe, we will be performing two Cabaret evenings at Hard Rock Cafe, Hyde Park Corner, on 4th and 5th February. To discuss tickets or buying tables for staff or client entertainment, please contact Rachel Lee: [HardRock@Chickenshed.org.uk](mailto:HardRock@Chickenshed.org.uk) or 020 8351 61 61 ext 250.

## Lady Rayne's Gala

On Monday 29th October, Lady Rayne hosted a spectacular Gala for Chickenshed at the Guildhall. The evening consisted of a compelling performance by Chickenshed, a three course dinner for the guests, as well as a host of fundraising initiatives.

We were delighted that Lord Attenborough was the Guest of Honour for the evening. During his speech he launched a new bursary fund for Chickenshed's Children's Theatre. With a fundraising target of £300,000 per annum, this fund will ensure that Chickenshed's Children's Theatre is fully funded year on year.

Should you wish to contribute to this fund, please contact Beverley Ward at Chickenshed by email [BeverleyW@Chickenshed.org.uk](mailto:BeverleyW@Chickenshed.org.uk) or phone 020 8351 6161 ext 211 or simply fill in your details on the back page and send it back to us.

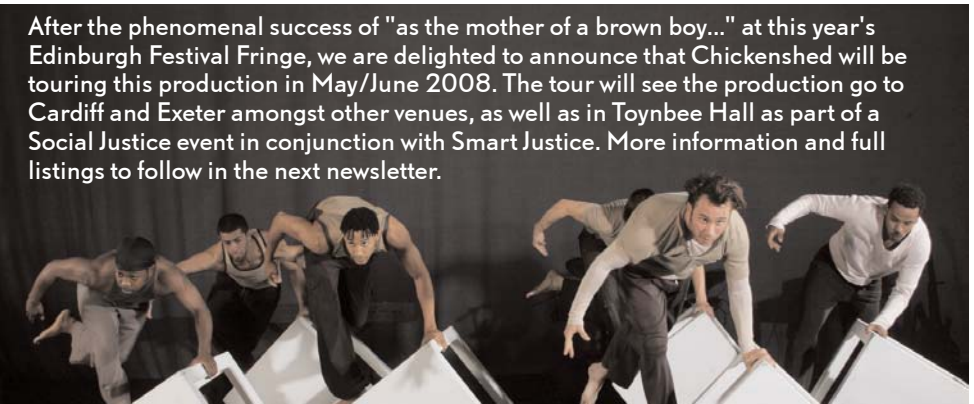
Lord Attenborough will host a special evening at Chickenshed to thank all those who have made a contribution to this Fund - so donate and be a part of it.

We are delighted to announce at this stage that the Gala raised in excess of £300,000 which surpasses previous years. This was due to the generosity of the guests, in particular during the stunning 'money can't buy' auction, conducted by



Lord Dalmeny of Sotheby's. The auction featured Lots such as a trip to the west wing of the White House in Washington, exclusive tickets to the BAFTA British Academy Film Awards and front row tickets to next year's Paris Fashion Week. A silent auction for a designer dress also had the guests bidding and raffle tickets for a new car were snapped up. The pièce de résistance of the auction was a beautiful necklace donated by De Beers which won over the bidders, attaining the highest bid of the night! Our sincere thanks to Lady Rayne and her Gala Committee for making the evening such a success; their enthusiasm and energy is hugely valued by all at Chickenshed.

**After the phenomenal success of "as the mother of a brown boy..." at this year's Edinburgh Festival Fringe, we are delighted to announce that Chickenshed will be touring this production in May/June 2008. The tour will see the production go to Cardiff and Exeter amongst other venues, as well as in Toynbee Hall as part of a Social Justice event in conjunction with Smart Justice. More information and full listings to follow in the next newsletter.**



## Magic Maker Gift Packs

We are proud to announce the launch of a new range of merchandise for Chickenshed - Magic Maker gift packs. We believe that magic happens at Chickenshed, on stage and off. By buying one of these new gift packs, you could help make some of that magic happen. Whether it be enabling someone to join in our workshop sessions; helping to provide specialist equipment and essential repairs behind the scenes; or making it possible to open up our theatre to everyone, each gift bought will help us to create extraordinary, beautiful pieces of theatre for you to enjoy.

A range of gift packs are available from £5 to £50. Each pack contributes to a different part of the theatre so you can choose how you want to support us. In return, you receive a certificate, in a presentation folder, which can be personalised. Whether you're buying for yourself or a loved one, a Magic Maker gift is the perfect creative present this Christmas.

### **£5 - Play a part**

Your gift will go towards funding a workshop session at the theatre for children and young people to benefit.

### **£10 - Spotlight**

Your gift will pay for a coloured gel to flood our stage with light during a performance.

### **£15 - Access all areas**

Your gift will contribute to providing necessary assistance to a member of our audience who needs wheelchair access, enabling them to enjoy one of our shows.

### **£20 - Set the scene**

Your gift will enable us to produce a script summary and workshop notes for one of our productions in Braille, helping set the scene for a visually impaired member of our audience.

### **£25 - Greasepaint**

Your gift will enable us to purchase specialist theatre make-up and wigs for our performances.

### **£30 - Dressing up**

Your gift will go towards keeping our costumes repaired or replaced so they're always in tip top condition.

### **£40 - Painting the town**

Your gift will go towards buying paints, brushes and rollers for our sets so our productions always take your breath away.

### **£50 - Picture this**

Your gift will mean we can provide a visually impaired member of our audience with an audio headset so they hear all the action being explained, even if they can't see it for themselves.

**Magic Maker gift packs available to order now at the theatre or online.**



## Chickenshed's New Children's Theatre Bursary



Chickenshed has launched a new fund in conjunction with Lord Attenborough which will support Chickenshed's work with children.



The Fund will support Chickenshed's Children's Theatre where over 300 children explore their creativity, learn to support each other and build their self confidence and self esteem.



Chickenshed currently subsidises the cost of attending these workshop sessions so that they can remain open to everyone, irrelevant of background. Money which is given to the Fund will go towards this cost of around £300,000 annually.



To donate, please fill in your details overleaf and return it to the theatre at the address provided. All those who make a donation will be personally invited to a special event in 2008, hosted by Lord Attenborough, where the Fund will be officially named.



Name: .....

Address: .....

.....

Postcode: ..... Telephone: .....

Email address: .....

I enclose a cheque for £..... made payable to Chickenshed Theatre Trust or  
please charge £..... to my Visa/Mastercard/Maestro/Delta

Card No:

3 Digit Security Code:   
(from back of card)

Valid from ..... Expiry date ..... Switch issue no:

Signature .....

## *giftaid it*

To help Chickenshed maximise your donation, it can be given with Gift Aid which will enable an extra 28% to be reclaimed from the Inland Revenue. To Gift Aid your donation, sign the following declaration:

I am a UK taxpayer and pay income tax and/or capital gains tax to cover the amount of tax Chickenshed will reclaim. I want Chickenshed to Gift Aid all donations I make from the date of this declaration until I notify you otherwise.

Signature..... Date.....

Please return to Beverley Ward, Chickenshed, FREEPOST, BBT 510, London N14 4BR



# PIONEERING INCLUSIVE BEAUTIFUL THEATRE

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[Info@Chickenshed.org.uk](mailto:Info@Chickenshed.org.uk)

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