

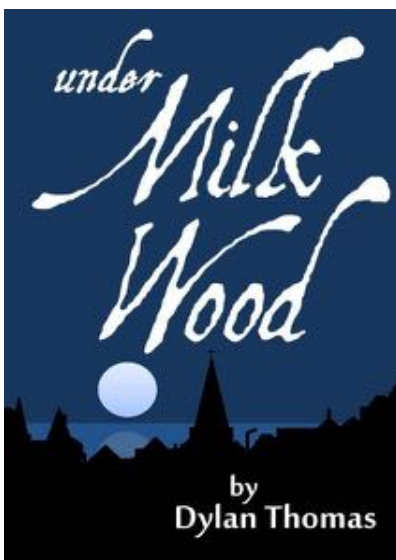
# The Prompter

The newsletter of Workington  
Playgoers and the Theatre Royal



Welcome to an Under Milk Wood special which will arrive in your eager inbox just in time for the production. In this issue you will find out more about the play with a contribution Geoffrey Hall on the subject. Elsewhere there is an update on our blossoming Film Group and an overview of the rest of the season at the Theatre Royal.

## Our next Playgoers production!



'To begin at the beginning' our next production is a rehearsed reading of a radio masterpiece capturing 24 hours in the lives of the inhabitants of the small Welsh seaside village of Llareggub. (Read the name backwards!) It features a cast of unforgettable characters, from Polly Garter to Organ Morgan, from Reverend Eli Jenkins to No Good Boyo.

This much-loved 'play for voices' by one of the greatest poets and playwrights of the twentieth century is both funny and deeply moving.

Visit our website for a full list of productions:

[www.theatre-royal-workington.co.uk](http://www.theatre-royal-workington.co.uk)

# 2018 Programme of plays



## FEBRUARY:

Thursday 22nd - Saturday 24th

**Under Milk Wood** by Dylan Thomas  
*A Playgoers Production*

## MARCH:

Tuesday 20th - Saturday 24th

**The Lady Killers** by Graham Linehan  
*A Playgoers Production*

## APRIL:

Saturday 21st - Sunday 22nd

**Alice In Wonderland**  
by Brainerd Duffield  
*A Theatre Royal Second Star Youth Theatre Production*

## MAY:

Tuesday 22nd - Saturday 26th

**Snake in the Grass**  
by Alan Ayckbourn &  
**Bosom Pals**  
By Carol Donockley  
*A Playgoers Production*

## JUNE:

Friday 1st

**Roald Dahl's B.F.G.**  
*A Theatre Royal Second Star Youth Theatre Production*

## JULY:

Tuesday 17th - Saturday 21st

**The Tempest** by William Shakespeare  
*A Theatre Royal Shakespeare Players Production*

## AUGUST:

Wednesday 1st - Friday 3rd

**Cat in a box**  
by Morgan Sweeney  
*A Playgoers Production*

## AUGUST:

Saturday 18th - Sunday 19th

**SUMMER PROJECT: OLIVER TWIST**  
adapted by Millie Hardy-Sims  
*A Theatre Royal Second Star Youth Theatre Production*

## SEPTEMBER:

Wednesday 26th - Saturday 29th

**TWO**  
by Jim Carwright  
*A Playgoers Production*

## OCTOBER:

Tuesday 16th - Saturday 20th

**Murder in the Studio**  
by Agatha Christie  
(A collection of three spine-tingling radio plays)  
*A Playgoers Production*

## NOVEMBER:

Saturday 10th—Sunday 11th

**A Christmas Carol**  
by Charles Dickens  
*A Theatre Royal Second Star Youth Theatre Production*

## DECEMBER:

Tuesday 4th - Saturday 8th

**Brassed Off!**  
By Paul Allan adapted from the screenplay by Mark Herman  
*A Playgoers Production*

Also, don't forget every other Sunday there is a chance to watch a movie in the theatre with the Dancing Lights Film Club.

## Need to send us a cheque?

If you need to pay your subs or want to send a donation to support the theatre, here's how:

Please make cheques payable to:  
**Workington Playgoers**

And send to:  
Theatre Royal  
Washington Street  
Workington  
CA14 3AW  
Tel: 01900 603161 (Answer-phone)

Email:  
**membership@theatre-royal-  
workington.co.uk**

Prompter Email:  
**news@theatre-royal-  
workington.co.uk**

Don't forget to provide details of what the payment is for in any correspondence.

## Film Group News!

"Reflection," the Theatre Royal Film Group's first short feature is slowly coming together. The group are planning to film the spooky story of a boy, his sinister uncle and a big scary house during March. The screenplay is by Ben Brinicombe with contributions from the wider group and Ben is also on directing duties. The cast features Will Tillotson, Morgan Sweeney, Sarah Delorme and Stuart Evans. At the time of writing, the group are hopeful that Higham Hall, near Cockermouth will be doubling as "the house." The Film group has a page on the Theatre Royal Website, so get in touch if you are interested in getting involved in any capacity—either in front of or behind the camera!



## Whispers from the wings: Other news for February

The Technical Director (Geoffrey Brinicombe) is looking for new volunteers to form working teams for all of the plays.

If you feel you can give up some time to help prepare for a play - for example to build sets or help organise lighting and sound, please get in touch indicating any time of year you are available. He will then put you on the volunteer rota.

The Allerdale Forging Links meeting took place in the Theatre foyer on Friday 9th February. Amy Johnson Allerdale Amenity Officer, and Chairman of the group welcomed the 15 organisational representatives. The minutes of the meeting are available for perusal on the notice board in the foyer. The next meeting will be held at the Helena Thompson Museum the date of which is yet to be decided. All are welcome.

Finally, here's a quick reminder from the chairman that Under Milk Wood was chosen by Peter Inglis and is dedicated to his memory.

## Further...Under Milk Wood!

### By Geoffrey Hall



*To begin at the beginning...* I first encountered the writing of Dylan Thomas when I was about 14. My school held an end of year drama contest, and I was roped in to perform the role of the narrator (wearing my father's overcoat and trilby, but with no 'conscious Woodbine' dangling from my lips) in a staged version of Thomas's poignant radio play, 'Return Journey', an imagined account of his returning to his blitzed hometown of Swansea after the war, in search of his younger self. (The play is often referenced as the forerunner of 'Under Milk Wood'.) I still remember lines from it to this day. I also remember the adjudicator of the contest said I was 'a little Dylan' (at least, I *think* she said 'Dylan').

Thomas decided on becoming a poet in his earliest years, to the abandonment of most of his schoolwork other than English (his father was head of English at the school, and reputedly read Shakespeare to the two year old Dylan). A significant part of his total poetic output was already written by the mid-1930s - by which time he was barely into his 20s - in the small bedroom at his parents' home. Apart from a short stint as a cub reporter in Swansea, his only career was that of poet and writer, latterly a broadcasting one in memorable sessions for the BBC.

Like Oscar Wilde before him, Thomas largely invented and then acted-up to his public persona which, in his case, meant the excesses and self-destructive lifestyle of a bohemian poet; his early role model was the pioneering 'wild child' of French Symbolist poetry, Arthur Rimbaud. He had little truck with the consciously political and socially concerned poetry of the inter-war years, as represented by the likes of Auden and Spender. Thomas was often unreliable, mostly impractical, sometimes unfaithful, and occasionally untruthful – but, hell, nobody's perfect; he once failed to turn up at his best friend's wedding, at which he was the Best Man, an easy oversight in my opinion. He was forever short of money, cadging loans from friends and literary figures to the end of his days. He acquired at an early age a legendary appetite for cigarettes and, in particular, alcohol ('Comrade Bottle'), morphing from the cherub features of his youth to the famously 'unmade bed' look of his last years. He died in New York on a speaking tour, at just 39 years old (the actual cause of death may have been the misguided administration of a dose of morphine by a doctor). If ever a poet died for his art, it was Dylan Thomas.

For me and many others, Thomas was the twentieth century's greatest English-speaking poet of the microphone and the recital platform, the exception to the seeming rule that a great poet must inevitably be a poor performer of his own work. He had been a keen amateur actor in his teenage years, and (as pointed out to me by a Swansea tour guide and Thomas fan, who had once owned and restored his childhood home) he had clerical relatives who must have impressed him by their presence and delivery of fiery sermons from the chapel pulpit. When as a teenager I first heard one of the many recordings available of Thomas's voice, I was astonished. Elocution lessons as a boy (arranged by his father to rid him of his Swansea accent) had given him a portentous and orotund style of delivery (his own description of it was 'cut-glass', which may explain the naming of Lord Cut Glass in 'Under Milk Wood'). He sounded to my ears rather 'posh' and Anglicised (no doubt his father's intention), but with a distinctive, mellifluous lilt. (Richard Burton's South Walian speech was similarly elocuted, of course, by his 'adopter', Philip Burton.) His first proper girlfriend described it as a 'rich fruity old port wine of '06 voice'; not just the self-described 'Rimbaud of Cwmdonkin Drive', then, but a touch of the 'Noel Coward of the Rhondda'.

His father, a native Welsh speaker, had declined to teach his children the Welsh language, and Thomas never learned it; he nevertheless brought to the English language of his poems and other writings, the Welsh love of the mysterious power of the spoken word, the sounds sometimes going head to head with meaning (listen out for Captain Cat's 'roly poly bum' tribute to Polly Garter, and the interchange between Captain Cat and Rosie Probert, and you'll hopefully hear what I mean). 'Under Milk Wood' has no plot as such. It is often as discursive and as lively as an evening in the pub with the great man himself; just as Thomas the raconteur, performer and joker would happily cast into the air his word-magic to entertain his drinking companions, the play, too, sustains our attention and interest by a virtuoso storming of the ears with the music of English words played on a singular Welsh harp. **(Continued overleaf)**

Set in the fictional Welsh seaside town or village of Llaregyb (substitute a 'u' for the 'y', then read the word backwards), 'Under Milk Wood' opens out into the wide ocean of humanity: sometimes raging and raucous, sometimes funny, sometimes peaceful or becalmed, sometimes darkened by sad and lonely skies, the flotsam and jetsam of ordinary lives floating past in unforgettable images and sound pictures. We come to recognise in this constantly revolving selection of 'God's plenty', that we are each of us unique variations on a theme of the eccentric. (Indeed, Thomas's original idea was for the inhabitants of Llaregyb to have to prove their sanity to the outside world.

The first public reading of 'Under Milk Wood' was in New York with an all American cast, apart from Thomas himself. A little known fact about the famous 1954 BBC radio performance with Richard Burton as First Voice, is that it had more amateur and semi-professional actors than professional ones in the cast; all of the actors in it (apart from the canny Hugh Griffith who performed the role of Captain Cat) signed away their right to benefit financially from the subsequent audio book sales, to assist Thomas's financially straitened widow and children.

Playing Captain Cat in our current production has meant the pleasure of getting to grips with speaking Thomas's poetic language again after many years. I was so intrigued by one of my lines ('Seas gliding with swans' - was there a play on words about 'Swan-sea' in it?), that in a moment of bravado, I wrote to Professor Walford Davies, the great authority these days on all things Dylan Thomas, who kindly replied as follows:

*'Given Dylan's perpetual delight in playing with words, and playing on their different meanings, even the rogue resonance between swan and sea in 'Swansea' as a place-name would not have escaped him...*

*'The words in the interchange between Captain Cat and Rosie Probert ('Seas gliding with swans') and the Narrator's description in 'Return Journey' of 'the snow still sailing . . . where swans had glided . . . in the suddenly gentle wind' take wonderful advantage of poetic licence in the best sense. What in each respective context they have in common is an emphasis on calming. Captain Cat, at the end of what would have been nothing but a sea-stormed life, honours the dead Rosie Probert with a colourful Romantic calming.'*

Poetic imagery is intended to trigger suggestions and associations in our minds, of course. So let my final word of advice to anyone attending our performance of this famous 'Play for Voices', be the instruction given by the First Voice at the start: *listen*.

### Geoffrey Hall



After Under Milk Wood we move into the Ealing Comedy genre with Graeme Linehan's adaptation of The Lady Killers. This farcical comedy charts the exploits of 'Professor' Marcus as he attempts to mastermind the perfect heist. The only thing standing in his way is a delightful little old lady. What could possibly go wrong? See it from 20th—24th March 2018.

## deFiniTive tHerApY

If you would like your very own copy of the Definitive Therapy Movie, get in touch with Ben Brinicombe (benbrin@talktalk.net). They are £5 each -with proceeds paying for printing costs and any surplus will go to club funds.

Facebook @definitivetherapy

