

UoDST FIRST NIGHT

Michaelmas Term Round-Up

2017/18



contents

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Amy Porter in tdtc's *The Last Five Years*
Photograph by Samuel Kirkman

Editor's Note

Welcome to the Michaelmas 2017 edition of DST First Night's Newsletter!

My name is Lucy Knight, and I am an English Literature finalist, when I am not busy being the DST First Night Editor: publishing reviews, features, and this newsletter, as well as sitting on the DST committee.

What a term it has been! This edition looks back at this term's theatrical achievements, including the fantastic Returners' Showcase which set the theatre ball rolling this academic year, and looks forward to exciting opportunities ahead such as the upcoming Durham Drama Festival 2018. We have also included an interview with our Durham Student Theatre President 2017-18, Emma-Louise Howell, and interviews with three of First Night's reviewers, to give you an insight as to how DST and First Night are run, and who the faces behind the names are.

Thanks so much for being part of the Durham Student Theatre community and playing a role in making student theatre as good as it can be – I hope you enjoy this issue! For those of our readers who are part of our alumni network, we would love to hear from you and hear about what you are getting up to post-graduation: please do get in touch.

Happy reading!

Lucy



Photograph by Rosie Dart

03 MEET THE EXEC/MEET THE WRITERS Meet our current DST President Emma-Louise Howell and some of our First Night writers

04 BEYOND MY OWN MIND DST takes its first new writing offering 'Beyond My Own Mind' to the Inter-University Drama Festival in London

05 A FIRST (AND SECOND) TIME FOR EVERYTHING! Revisit our Returners' Showcase

06 ASTRONAUTS, VIDEO GAMES N THAT Read more about this year's DDF programme

07 CATCHING UP We catch up with actor and comedian Alex Macqueen

08 WHAT'S ON Take a glance at our programme for this term

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With thanks to...

Experience Durham
Kate Barton
Emma-Louise Howell
Alex Macqueen
Sophie Wright

Cover Page Photographs: Jasmine Price and fellow cast members in HBT's *Five Lesbians Eating a Quiche*, photograph by Rosie Dart; Ariana Van Biljon in Pitch Productions' *Picnic at Hanging Rock*, photograph by Samuel Kirkman; and the company of DULOG's *Rent*, photograph by Emma Bailey.

Meet the Exec

Verity Kim interviews our elected Durham Student Theatre President, Emma-Louise Howell

Verity Kim (VK): Did you know when you came to Durham that you wanted to perform?

Emma-Louise Howell (ELH): Absolutely! In Sixth Form I was actually looking to apply for drama schools to train to be a professional dancer but I suffered quite a bad back injury playing hockey – so that dream went down like a lead balloon. But before I came to Durham, I had no idea of the scale and standard of DST, so choosing to come here was a very happy accident and one I definitely don't regret.

VK: What is the best thing about being DST President?

ELH: There is no better feeling than watching the thing you love succeed. I really love being able to contribute to making DST become the best it can be and I'm really proud of everything we achieve as a society and as individuals. I was Box Officing for The Durham Revue last term and it had been a long day of doing admin work and replying to emails, but standing outside and hearing the laughter and applause reminded me how much people enjoy what DST does and that's a really special feeling.

VK: What is your biggest challenge as DST President?

ELH: I think the biggest challenge for me is juggling DST, my degree and my social life. I have to constantly remind myself that I am, first and foremost, a student and that it's okay to sit in bed and catch up on *Dance Moms* for three hours or to have a night out with my friends without checking my emails. Maintaining that balance is so important and it's something that I really encourage all members to think about.



VK: What are your plans for the coming year?

ELH: My main priority is maintaining our high standards of theatre in a fun and welcoming environment, but I also want to push these standards even further. The talent available in DST never ceases to amaze me but I think we undersell ourselves a lot. I want us to have a bigger presence around Durham but I also want us to move beyond the Durham bubble. There's some really exciting stuff happening with other universities and I really want to develop these connections further.

VK: Any advice for incoming or current members of DST?

ELH: Be open-minded. Whether it's trying your hand at tech, auditioning for a play you've never heard of, writing a brand new play or taking a stab at reviewing, this is the perfect opportunity to try things you've never considered before. If you do, I'm sure you'll find that you've met amazing people that you may otherwise have never crossed paths with and you will be so grateful that you made that decision. But, above all, I'd say: have fun! Enjoy yourselves!

Name: Francesca Davies-Cáceres

College: Hatfield

Year: 1

Describe yourself in three words: Not good at maths.

Favourite show this term: BTC'S *Othello*. It showed us there's nothing amateur about student theatre, and that you don't need a big expensive production to make good quality theatre when you're working with a text and actors that are so beautifully talented.

What do you love about theatre? It can be so transportive; it's the perfect combination of art and writing that allows human expression, and people's stories, to be performed again, and again, worldwide. Whether you've never been to the theatre before, or you're a seasoned lover, there's always something for you.



Name: Michael Nower

College: St Aidan's

Year: 7 (PhD student)

Describe yourself in three words: Practical, professional, and precise.

Favourite show this term: DULOG's 24 Hour Musical, for the incredible quality of the show, given the extremely limited time they had to prepare everything.

What do you love about theatre? The ability of theatre to connect people from a massive variety of backgrounds and personalities and bring them together to build something incredible.



Meet the Writers

Meet some of First Night's contributors

Name: Anna Marshall

College: Grey

Year: 1

Describe yourself in three words:

Tempestuous, deviant, and gullible.

Favourite show this term: HBT's 5 *Lesbians Eating A Quiche*. A slick, brave show that demanded full audience attention. The absurd plot and eloquent script were confidently tackled to create a comedic, poignant piece. I blooming loved the audience interaction.

What do you love about theatre? The totally unfamiliar can be created and I can be submerged into a situation that can subconsciously challenge my perspective on reality.



Beyond My Own Mind

Finlay Mead interviews Zac Tiplady, a third year Hatfield student, about taking his play 'Beyond My Own Mind' to the Inter-University Drama Festival

We celebrated our student writing at the Inter-University Drama Festival in London alongside fourteen other universities in November 2017. The festival was complete with workshops from Frantic Assembly and Les Enfants Terribles, and a host of Q&As with industry professionals.



Finlay Mead (FM): What is your involvement with DST?

Zac Tiplady (ZT): My first role was in a student written adaptation of *The Great Gatsby* that CTC put on. A guy next to me in my lecture got talking and said that they were casting it that week so I went along. I ended up playing 'Man', a general ensemble type of role. And it went from there really.

FM: Tell us about you as a writer.

ZT: I've been dabbling in [writing] poetry and short stories since school, but I didn't start dramatic writing until I came to Durham. I write in bursts. I usually start with a monologue then slowly start to move outwards. As you move outwards you discover more and build a world around what you discover.

FM: What is 'Beyond My Own Mind' about?

ZT: It's a two-hander, starring Darren and Daisy, and it's about their listlessness as twenty-somethings, not clicking with the job world, and feeling dissatisfied. The play consists of the two of them looking back on their relationship, reflecting on the other person. They multirole and play with temporality, by acting different, imagined or remembered versions of themselves.

FM: How did you find the festival itself?

ZT: The festival itself was great. There were so many different styles of writing and drama there. There was a massive variety of people too. It was really interesting to see how a more varied group of people makes for more varied drama.

FM: How did this differ from a normal Durham production?

ZT: It was impossible to tell how it would be received. That was what stood out: the kind of buzz from the newness of the situation, and then the way we could explore the piece in so much detail and think about things in a way our Durham schedule doesn't always afford us the chance.

FM: What did you gain from the workshops on offer?

ZT: I personally attended two writing workshops, one by Sam Steiner, author of *Lemons, Lemons, Lemons Lemons, Lemons*, and Tanika Gupta, who has a wealth of experience in all kinds of fields of writing. Meeting both these writers was really thought-provoking, especially from the perspective of trying to develop a writing style and identity. I always find these organised opportunities do actually make you engage with the material and what you are writing more acutely.

“Write stuff you want to be doing.
Know what you want, picture it,
and commit to it shamelessly.”

FM: Have you got any advice for aspiring writers?

ZT: My main piece of advice would be to show your writing to people. Get opinions on it, find out what they like or don't like. If they don't like it, don't be downhearted, just think about their tastes, and where they fit in with yours. Secondly, write for you. Write what you want to write. Write stuff you want to be doing. Know what you want, picture it, and commit to it shamelessly. People always say that they don't call themselves a writer for the first five or ten years of their careers, but really, you're a writer as soon as you pick up a pen. Respect yourself and your ability to make work. Respect the opinions of others who can improve your work, and let them do so. I had an incredible team supporting me, and I couldn't have done it without them.

• Special thanks to Experience Durham, Kate Barton, Emma-Louise Howell, Luke Maskell, Matt Turbett and the IUDF Committee, The Hatfield Trust, Kimran Rana, Hamza Rafique, Andrew Cowburn, and Rebecca Cadman, for their support and involvement in taking DST to the festival.

A first (and second) time for everything!

Our first ever Returners' Showcase revisited some of the best shows of the past year

This year, for the very first time, DST kicked off Michaelmas term with a week-long Returners' Showcase in The Assembly Rooms Theatre. This was a fantastic opportunity for our members to put on their previous work one last time: those new to Durham could experience what DST has achieved, and those who missed the performances in their initial incarnations had a chance to see them.

The Durham Revue's 'Laugh Actually'

As is tradition, The Durham Revue were the first to perform this academic year in The Assembly Rooms Theatre. They brought us their Derek-award-winning Fringe show and the 2016-17 troupe performed together for the very last time.

What the reviews said:

"Of the eight players in this show, no performer was comparable to another in style, each drawing on different traits and niches to create a stomping success." – Anna Marshall

Buttered Toast's KEITH.

Durham's newest sketch group, established only last year as part of the new-writing-only theatre company Buttered Toast, performed for the first time in The Assembly Rooms Theatre.

What the reviews said:

"Their connection with the audience was second to none, achieved by breaking the fourth wall and comedic side-glances; we felt truly part of the action." – Ellen Tapp

Wrong Tree Theatre's *The East Wind Rages*
Photograph by Sam Harrison



DULOG, tdtc and DIM's 'Returners: The Musical'

DULOG and tdtc joined forces to presents songs from their musicals last year: *Zanna*, *Don't!*, *Edges*, and *Songs For a New World*. DIM also joined and improvised a musical called 'The Return of Detective Grumble'.

What the reviews said:

"angelic but meaningful."
"I was in awe of the ability for the company to think on their feet and create a piece of theatre there and then."
– Ellen Tapp

Screen 9 by Kate Barton

A verbatim play about the 2012 cinema shooting in Colorado during the premiere of *The Dark Knight Rises*. It won Best Show of DDF 2017, chosen by professional guest judges.

What the reviews said:

"Filled with a powerful script, simplistic direction and emotional performances, *Screen 9* is certainly full of impact, and remains with you long after leaving the theatre." – Ellie Farrell



Screen 9, by Kate Barton
Photograph by Samuel Kirkman

Wrong Tree Theatre's *The East Wind Rages*

Wrong Tree Theatre are DST's only theatre company which solely performs devised theatre. *The East Wind Rages*, based on the short story by Daphne du Maurier, was performed last year in Durham, and then at the Edinburgh Fringe. Their final production was brought back to Durham for us to see it one last time.

What the reviews said:

"The show successfully rises to the challenge of adapting Daphne du Maurier's tale, as her harrowing short story is expressed in an insightful and meaningful way." – Catriona Inglis

Angels in Erotica by Freddie Drew

Another student-written performance from the Durham Drama Festival 2017, *Angels in Erotica*, was also taken to the Fringe after its initial DDF performance under the name *The Not So Divine Comedy*, and the new Fringe version was brought back to The Assembly Rooms Theatre for us all to enjoy.

What the reviews said:

"This show embraced its overtly sexual tone through its quick-witted humour which, although crude, couldn't fail to entertain." – Catriona Inglis

Astronauts, Video Games N That

DDF is back! The 43rd **Durham Drama Festival** features fresh new comedy, drama, and devised theatre



"DDF has come around again!
I'm Sophie - I'm the Festival Director for Durham Drama Festival 2018. There are 9 new pieces, and excitingly for the first time we are kicking off with a scratch night with five more pieces. It's coming soon, so book your tickets and get involved!"
– Sophie Wright (Festival Director)

Site-Specific:

Date: Thursday 8 February
Venue: Various Locations

The Empiricist

by Caspar Bayliss

September 2011: Dr Pavlov and Dr Werner are scientists who discover a particle travelling faster than light. As they discuss their findings, their worlds start to collapse around them as they realise that everything that they had dedicated their lives to is a lie, that their rules about life do not stand up to the reality of the world, and that they have to consider a reality that had previously gone ignored.

Eve

by Carrie Gaunt

"How can I love you to the ends of the Earth when I don't know where this ends? Or where this begins?" The first woman. The second sex. The last word. In a world of silence, poverty, and violence, Eve is finally ready to tell Adam what's on her mind. And she won't hold back.

hypocritical

by Kitty Briggs and Andy Ball

A writer and his roommate are trying to salvage a new script from the tropes of the RomCom genre. Witty and self-aware, these characters get sucked into their own writing, performing and editing their script to create an original feminist comedy.

The Assembly Rooms Theatre:

Date: Friday 10 – Saturday 11 February
Venue: The Assembly Rooms Theatre

AQUA SPECTACULA

by Jasmine Price

It's 1972 again and you're trapped inside the all new Atari game AQUA SPECTACULA. There will be mini-games, rising sea temperatures and never before seen underwater visuals.

Cloudburst

by Zac Tiplady

Alana Marie is successful, driven and smart, and today is not her day; *Cloudburst* follows the hour after she receives some stunning news, while on this of all days, her office is running wild. Life is never easy, and Alana must struggle through this day like any other. Somehow...

The Adventures of Slick Tuffman: a Noir Comedy

by Mike Bedigan

1930s New York City: misogyny is rife, smoking is good for you, and someone is killing off cops. It's down to Detective Slick Tuffman, a renegade cop with nothing to lose, to follow the genre conventions and catch the son-of-a wobbly what dunnit.

Scratch Night:

Date: Sunday 4 February

Venue: The Assembly Rooms Theatre

The shows involved are as follows:

- *Living Room Histories*, concept by Marie-Louise Whorle
- *An Unexpected Reunion*, by Charles Pipe
- *Voices*, by Olivia Ballantine-Smith
- *Death as a Salesman*, by Uday Duggal
- *Writing Left Handed*, by Nick Chapman

Black Box:

Date: Friday 10 – Saturday 11 February
Venue: Caedmon Hall

Flowers N That

by Bróccán Tyzack-Carlin

An unlikely friendship blossoms between a florist and a medium as they meet each year at an annual wedding fayre. This black comedy discusses life, love, loss and Gareth Gates, and explores how relationships can clash with our principles and our past.

Marsistan

by Hamza Adam Rafique

Dr. Aysha Malik has been selected to establish a colony on Mars, though her sister Nasreen may have other ideas. *Marsistan* showcases the struggle of two sisters to maintain their relationship under the shadow of a looming launch date.

The House of Influenza: A Spooky Tale of Frighteningness

by Andrew Shires

Dracula can return to his crypt, Jaws can go back in the water, and the Babadook can Babado one. At the dawning of the zombie apocalypse, as friend and family are torn apart, only The House of Influenza will stand strong.

For more information follow us on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram!

Buy tickets here: durhamstudenttheatre.savoyssystems.co.uk



Catching up... with Alex Macqueen

Luke Maskell interviews actor, comedian, and DST alumni, Alex Macqueen, who offers some stellar advice to budding actors in DST

Luke Maskell (LM): While at Durham you were in The Durham Revue. What was The Revue like back then?

Alex Macqueen (AM): We struggled for really good material because it wasn't our primary focus. We certainly wouldn't meet up three times a week! It was more ad hoc, as and when required. I got into it via a show that one of the guys did. It was a big musical called *The Blues Brothers* in the Nelson Mandela ballroom [now the Fonteyn ballroom in the DSU]. Very extravagant: lots of lights; lots of set; lots of resources, and in it were two or three members of The Revue. I met them and got into the mix; we are still now extremely close friends.

LM: Is getting a script past the commissioners as difficult as it is said to be?

AM: I don't know anybody who, if they've tried reasonably hard, hasn't managed to get a script in front of someone of importance. Actually, there is a deficit – all the producers are crying out for good scripts. You do need some sort of mentor or patron which, frankly, you find if you get yourself into the mix: going to the Edinburgh Festival, joining The National Youth Theatre. You'll make connections that will eventually yield to a door that will open. It looks as if it's a forbidding edifice to get into the industry, but actually, it's not. If you've got the energy and enthusiasm to turn up to as many things as possible then eventually you will get in.

“ You will not get very far by turning work down that an agent gets you in your early days ”

LM: Is it wise to say 'yes' to the first acting job that comes along or could that typecast you for the rest of your career?

AM: You will not get very far by turning work down that an agent gets you in your early days. In the first couple of years as an actor, if you're turning down because you're being a bit snippy about it, they will look upon that very dimly. You need to be getting experience. Just getting a feel for what it's like to be on a film set or TV set, playing small roles, so you've got time to observe how people work. You're not going to be defined by the first role you take by any means! If you're lucky and live long enough, it could be a fifty/sixty year career

LM: Do you think that the best and most successful actors are the ones with no strings attached?

AM: Most of the successful people I know have got the pressure of family, the support of family, and more crucially, the distraction of family. If all you have is your career it can consume you in a negative way and that in its own right will translate into what you bring onto the screen or into the room. Having those pressures is no barrier to entry!



Alex Macqueen with The Durham Revue 2017/2018 troupe
Photograph by Emma Brownlow

LM: Now, you must get recognised a lot. How have you dealt with the fame that comes with being an actor?

AM: I do get recognised quite a lot, but there's quite a big jump between being a famous name and a famous face. It's quite rare for someone to start shouting, "Oh my gosh, there's Alex Macqueen!" It would be nice to be a famous name because with that comes bigger parts, better parts, more interesting roles. I've got no aversion to having a high profile. You need a high profile to do enjoyable work.

LM: What would you say to someone in DST, with no show reel, no professional experience, no credits, no training?

AM: My training came from experience in part. I did lots and lots of plays. In some ways, you don't need formal training. The only good thing about training is, you meet people. My second point would be, you can now put together a show reel yourself. In the past, it would have been an expensive exercise. What you have to do in my view is create your own work, do your own thing. There are plenty of low budget venues. The other thing to remember is that it's not a race. You'll find that there are other people ahead of you immediately, but don't let that put you off. It's a long long long game, which is very frustrating because, if you're like me, I wanted it yesterday. But it could take ten years and if it does, that's not a problem. You're only 20/21, you've got so many years ahead of you, so don't be put off and eventually it will come.

LM: If you're struggling to get work, is it all worth it?

AM: If after two or three years you have not done a stitch of work, then you have to ask yourself, "Am I cut out for it?" You may well want to play for Arsenal, but you might have to come to terms with the fact that you're just not good enough to do so. You have to say, "Okay, I'm going to take my energy and put it somewhere I can thrive."

LM: What's motivating you now? Or are you in work at the moment, and therefore don't need motivating?

AM: I'm in work at the moment, but I'm always looking to do bigger and better things. A constant fear is, "Will I work again?" It's a permanent headache I don't know I've got.

• Alex will appear next year in a remake of *Dirty Rotten Scoundrels* currently called *Nasty Women* alongside Anne Hathaway, and a BBC drama this month about Eric Morcambe and Ernie Wise called *Eric, Ernie and Me*.

What's On This Term

Lela & Co, 18 – 20 Jan Based on a true story, <i>Lela & Co</i> is a harrowing critique of patriarchal violence and commodification.	Guys and Dolls, 14 – 17 Feb The classic musical comedy, full of high-stakes gambling, heart-warming romance and show-stopping numbers.	She Loves Him, She Loves Him Not, 28 Feb Follow loyal servants, devoted siblings, grumpy misers, starry-eyed lovers and devious thieves on the quest for true love.
No Strings Attached, 21 & 28 Jan For two nights only, enjoy the debut performance of The Durham Revue 2017/2018 with an evening of all-new sketch comedy.	The Magic Flute, 16 – 17 Feb Enter a mythical world between the sun and moon in this tale filled with adventure, romance and comedy.	My Fair Lady, 1 – 3 Mar A wager sets in motion a musical escapade in Victorian London with the transformation of Eliza Doolittle from flower seller to society beauty.
Julius Caesar, 25 – 27 Jan Only Brutus and his conspirators stand between Caesar and absolute power, but will tyrannicide be enough to save the republic?	Jerusalem, 22 – 24 Feb <i>Jerusalem</i> tells the story of compulsive liar and drug dealer Johnny "Rooster" Byron and his stand against modern suburban life.	London Road, 8 – 10 Mar This verbatim musical follows the residents of London Road during the Ipswich serial murders and their attempts to cope and rebuild their community.
Inferno, 1 – 3 Feb Invited by Lucifer to see his empire, a young lawyer journeys beyond the Earthly realm. What she finds calls in question everything she believes in.	Fat Men in Skirts, 22 – 24 Feb <i>Fat Men in Skirts</i> chronicles the darkly humorous and tragic disintegration of the Hogan family, as four characters clash with disastrous results.	I Love You Because, 8 – 10 Mar In this modern twist on Jane Austen's <i>Pride and Prejudice</i> , a young, greeting card writer's life is changed when he meets a flighty photographer.
A Murder is Announced, 3 – 4 Feb An announcement in the local paper reads 'A Murder is Announced' – enter Miss Marple to solve the mystery.	Cabaret, 23 – 25 Feb With the Emcee's bawdy songs as wry commentary, <i>Cabaret</i> explores the tumultuous life of Berlin's natives and expatriates as the 1920s draw to a close.	All Shook Up, 8 – 11 Mar In a 1950s American town a colourful cast of characters look to express themselves and find love through the hits of Elvis Presley!
Durham Drama Festival, 4 – 11 Feb Nine new shows and an all-new scratch writing night, DDF is back!	A Doll's House, 23 – 25 Feb Nora comes to evaluate her role in the oppressive patriarchy of her middle class life in this thought-provoking play.	As You Like It, 8 – 10 Mar A son denied, a duke usurped. The players play games of power, politics and love in this Shakespearean comedy.
Feet of Clay, 15 – 17 Feb The City-Watch is forced into action to apprehend the traceless murderer wreaking havoc across their city in this new Terry Pratchett adaptation.	LGBT+ History Month Showcase, 25 Feb By turns comedic, moving and honest, this showcase highlights the experiences of the LGBT+ community in Durham and beyond.	Metamorphosis, 15 – 17 Mar Gregor Samsa wakes up one morning to discover he was turned into an insect in this stunning physical adaptation of Kafka's terrifying tale.

Support DST, become a Patron!

You can support DST and any of our theatre societies by becoming a patron. There are different levels of patronship, so you can pick whichever one is right for you!

www.dunelm.org.uk/donations/DST



Zoe Lawton and Dan Hodgkinson in Ooook! Productions' *The Foreigner*
Photograph by Julia Ryng

If you have any questions, or would like to contribute towards the next First Night newsletter get in touch via theatre.coordinator@durham.ac.uk