

# The Writers' Guild Weekly e-bulletin No. 398, Friday 20th November 2009

On the Guild's blog this week at [writersguild.blogspot.com](http://writersguild.blogspot.com):

- [The British Comedy Awards](#)
- [Digital Economy Bill](#)
- [UK Film Council consultation](#)
- [Mark Lawson on BBC censorship](#)
- [Guild condemns Silver Street axing](#)
- [Fox TV's low-cost model](#)
- [ALCS backs Google Book Settlement](#)
- [Enid Blyton's BBC rejections](#)
- [American sitcom writers come to UK](#)

## **Guild News**

**Writers' Guild attacks axing of Asian Archers**

**Artistic director of National Theatre Wales talks to the Writers' Guild**

**West Midlands Writers' Guild training needs survey**

## **Industry News**

**Dickens 2012**

**National Theatre Wales**

## **Events**

**Environment in TV and Media Awards evening**

**Getting started in games**

## **Courses and Workshops**

**Weekend workshop for dramatic writers**

**Masterclass - pitching with power and persuasiveness**

## Opportunities

### **New Playwright Awards**

### **BigVillage Fringe Show Competition**

### **Munich International - call for entries 2010**

## What Members Are Getting Up To

## Guild News

### **Writers' Guild attacks axing of "Asian Archers"**

The threatened axing of the BBC Asian Network soap opera Silver Street would lead to a significant reduction in opportunities for writers and actors in the West Midlands and beyond, says the Writers' Guild of Great Britain.

The ending of the programme next March would also further undermine radio drama production in Birmingham. Launched in 2004 as a 10-minute-a-day radio soap set in a diverse community in a fictional West Midlands city, the "Asian Archers" was cut from 10 to 8 minutes in 2008, and from eight to five earlier this year. Having axed Silver Street, the BBC proposes substituting ten 30-minute plays per year – fewer than one a month – representing a cut from over 21 hours a year to five hours of drama on the Asian Network.

Past writers for Silver Street include Sonali Bhattacharyya (now writing for EastEnders, Doctors, Casualty and Holby City) and Tanika Gupta (whose stage plays include Gladiator Games for Theatre Royal, Stratford East, and Sugar Mummies for the Royal Court, London). The ten writers currently working for the soap include Amber Lone and Gurpreet Kaur Bhatti, both of whom have had work presented by the Birmingham Repertory Theatre.

Writers' Guild President David Edgar, who is a member of the Guild's West Midlands Branch, commented: "The axing of Silver Street would represent a significant loss of opportunity for talented writers from many backgrounds – as well as actors and producers – in the West Midlands.

The decision represents a further threat to radio production in Birmingham, which has already suffered from the loss of one of its two dedicated drama producers. Birmingham's state-of-the-art radio studio is great for the Archers, but it should also create work which reflects the wide diversity of the region. New half-hour drama from the Asian Network is a highly welcome idea, but it should be in addition to rather than instead of Silver Street.” The BBC should retain its commitment to drama which reflects the diverse communities it serves, says the Guild, as well as maintaining drama production across all regions.

### **Artistic director of National Theatre Wales talks to the Writers' Guild**

Members of the Writers' Guild will be able to hear John E. McGrath (the artistic director of National Theatre Wales) talk about his company and its new writing policy at a special Writers' Guild meeting at Chapter Arts Centre, Cardiff, on Wednesday 2nd of December at 7pm.

The meeting will be held at the dance studio on the first floor and will run from 7pm - 9pm.

Further information available from [rogwilliams@mac.com](mailto:rogwilliams@mac.com) or via WGGB Cymru on Facebook.

### **West Midlands Writers' Guild Training Needs Survey**

Earlier this year the West Midlands branch of The Writers' Guild ran an online survey into training needs of writers in the region. Here is a summary of the results.

#### **Respondents**

- 164 people took the survey
- 35% classified themselves as 'professional writers'
- 25% classified themselves as 'emerging writers'
- 40% classified themselves as 'aspirational writers'
- 55% claimed professional credits

- Over 25% of respondents had professional credits in theatre

It's clear than writers in the region are working across genres – listing credits in theatre, radio, novel, TV, poetry and online. Many writers work in more than one medium.

### **Training undertaken**

Our survey showed the primary importance of SCRIPT as a training provider in the region. Over a third of respondents reported receiving training/support from SCRIPT in the last three years.

A third of respondents were members of one of the many writers' groups across the region. Other training suppliers included the Birmingham Book Festival (at 15%, with particular appreciation of the Industry day last year). Arts Council West Midlands were mentioned tangentially by 6%.

### **Training wishes**

Writers at all stages of their careers (from aspirational to full-time professional writers) wanted support of different kinds.

The survey was answered by people with a wide range of experience and at different levels in their professional development. Clearly, professional writers need a different sort of support to 'beginner writers'. The needs of professional/experienced writers were more complex and specific than less experienced writers.

In general, respondents wanted focussed and time-limited training. They want one-off sessions (either weekend/daytime or evening) rather than on-going courses lasting for a term or a year. This may be because regional writers generally have good access to writers groups who can give this sort of on-going support.

### **Other wishes**

Two-thirds of respondents wanted mentoring. Half wanted the brokering of relationships with producers. About a third wanted information on agents (and other professional advice).

The demand for mentoring, relationship brokering and information seems to demonstrate a desire to be connected into the creative/writing infra-structure of the

region (and nationally). Relationships with producers, other writers and industry professionals were valued and sought.

There was a strong demand for information about activities and opportunities in the region. There seems to be no central database detailing writing activity and development opportunities. Some people were asking for training that clearly other respondents are managing to access. Many respondents felt that opportunities and activities were un-coordinated and some felt 'out of the loop' in terms of finding out about them. Some respondents felt that opportunities were all based around Birmingham.

These responses seem to demonstrate the need for some sort of co-ordinating or umbrella group, pointing individuals to the most relevant sources of support and flagging up opportunities as they arise.

## **Conclusion**

The West Midlands is rich in writers working across a wide range of genres.

Until recently, SCRIPT has provided a good level of support and information, although largely geared to writers in the early stages of their careers.

Whilst there is quite a bit of literary and dramatic activity in the region (Birmingham Book Festival, Screen WM, the Rep's writing initiatives), this can be patchy and fragmented. Writers feel that other regions have better and more co-ordinated support.

## **Industry News**

### **Dickens 2012**

**London** has been revealed as the gateway for [Dickens 2012](#) - a worldwide campaign created to commemorate one of the greatest authors of all time. Coinciding with the world premiere of Hollywood's latest **Dickens adaptation - *Disney's A Christmas Carol*** - which premiered in the capital last week, **Dickens 2012** has been unveiled as the biggest commemoration of the author yet. A host of national and international cultural and educational activities for all ages are expected to be announced.

## **National Theatre Wales**

[National Theatre Wales](#) has announced its [first year programme](#) (pdf):

National Theatre Wales is all set to create invigorating theatre in the English language, rooted in Wales, with an international reach... Twelve new shows, one each month, plus one spectacular finale – in amazing places and unique spaces across Wales.

As Mark Brown reports in [The Guardian](#), getting to the launch has been a long journey:

Dai Smith, the chairman of Arts Council Wales, said: "We have been putting our toes in the water for too long. It was inexcusable, outrageous, that we did not have a national theatre for Wales. It may be 100 years late, but better late than not at all."

Guild member Gary Owen is among those commissioned for the launch season - his new play, [Love Steals Us From Loneliness](#), will premiere in Bridgend in October 2010.

The National Theatre Wales website has a [community section](#) which operates as an online social network for anyone with an interest in their work.

## **Events**

### **Environment in TV and Media Awards evening**

7.00pm, on Monday 23rd November at the IET, Savoy Place, London WC2

Following a BAFTA style presentation of clips and prizes from the best productions from across Europe, there are talks and voting on key issues about climate change and public attitudes.

Keynote Talks:

**Lord Puttnam of Queensgate**

**Professor Mark Maslin**, Director the Environment Institute, UCL

An innovation this year is an audience voting session on the way ahead in tackling climate change, moderated by Joanna Yarrow, of beyond Green and author of the book *Eco-logical*. Before voting, people will have a chance to ask questions of an expert panel:

**Kate Bellingham**, Broadcaster and Educationalist

**Ed Gillespie**, Director Futerra Sustainability Communications

**Dr Jim Watson**, Head of the Energy Group, Science Policy Research Unit at Sussex University.

All are welcome to this free event, run by PAWS at OMNI Communications, by registration at:

[PAWSOMNI@btconnect.com](mailto:PAWSOMNI@btconnect.com) or tel: 020 7483 4545

## Getting started in games

The WGGB in association with IGDA Writers' SIG are presenting 'Getting Started as a Games Writer'. A panel of four experienced games writers talk about how they got into the industry, how they've stayed there and some of the oddities their jobs have thrown into their working lives.

The panel will be composed of James Swallow (*Deus Ex 4, Maelstrom*), Tom Jubert (*Penumbra, Lost Horizon*), Rhianna Pratchett (*The Overlord* series, *Heavenly Sword*) and Andrew S. Walsh (*Prince of Persia, Risen*). The panel will take place in London on Thursday December 3<sup>rd</sup>. LSBU, Keyworth Theatre A in the Keyworth Building on Keyworth Street (<http://www1.lsbu.ac.uk/about/maps.shtml>) Doors open 6.30PM, for 7pm start.

## Courses and Workshops

### Weekend workshop for dramatic writers

**Want to improve your dramatic writing? *Away With Words* is an inspiring weekend workshop which explores the techniques of scriptwriting and encourages you to 'find your voice' as a writer.**

Held in Nottingham, the two-day course enables new and emerging writers to turn their ideas into script form. In a professional yet friendly environment, playwright Amanda Whittington and director Esther Richardson will lead sessions on creating strong characters, developing plot and identifying the story only you can tell.

Suitable for beginners and experienced writers, *Away with Words* explores the elements of writing drama through exercises, discussion and one-to-one mentoring. It will also give valuable insight on making your way in the writing business.

“Our focus is on writing for the stage but the course will cover techniques you can also use for radio and television drama,” says Esther, the former Artistic Director of Theatre Writing Partnership, who has a well-established track record in working with new writers. “Practical exercises will also inspire anyone interested in the creative writing process”.

The weekend workshop will be held the stylish setting of Nottingham’s Harts Hotel on February 28-29th, 2010 (10am - 4pm). The cost is £175, including a buffet lunch each day and refreshments. Harts is also offering an excellent accommodation rate for guests who wish to stay overnight.

More information and details of booking can be found at:

<http://www.weekendsawaywithwords.com>

## **Masterclass - pitching with power and persuasiveness**

### **Euroscript in conjunction with The Discovering Latin America Film Festival**

Sunday 29th November 2009

10.30am-5.00pm

Tutor: Charles Harris

In his acclaimed one-day masterclass Charles Harris will work with ten selected independent filmmakers to help them make their movie pitch as strong and compelling as they possibly can be.

Observers will be able to take part in exercises, ask questions about their own pitches and learn from watching the selected filmmakers work with Harris to fine-tune their pitches prior to pitching to industry representatives at a separate DLAFF event on Saturday December 5th.

#### **VENUE**

Odeon Panton Street

11 Panton Street

London SW1Y 4DP

Leicester Square/Piccadilly Circus

**DATE**

Sunday 29 November 2009  
10.30am to 5.00pm

**PRICE FOR OBSERVERS**

£5

**FURTHER DETAILS**

[Click for information on the festival](#)

**TELEPHONE BOOKING**

0871 224 4007.

**IN PERSON**

On the day, subject to availability, from the venue. For further information please contact the box office - 0871 224 4007.

## **Opportunities**

### **New Playwright Awards**

Deadline: 15th December 2009

£1,500 bursary and mentoring available for new Scottish playwrights

[http://www.bbc.co.uk/writersroom/opportunity/new\\_playwright\\_awards.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/writersroom/opportunity/new_playwright_awards.shtml)

### **BigVillage Fringe Show Competition**

Deadline: 27th November 09

BigVillage Theatre Co. are looking for an original play to take to Edinburgh in 2010

[http://www.bbc.co.uk/writersroom/opportunity/big\\_village\\_fringe\\_competition.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/writersroom/opportunity/big_village_fringe_competition.shtml)

### **Munich International - call for entries 2010**

Munich International is pleased to announce the call for entries for next year's short film festival which will take place from June 17th through 23rd of 2010. The festival will showcase the world's best contemporary short films at the historical Gloria Filmpalast in the heart of the Bavarian capitol.

Submissions are open to non-German language films of all genres (fiction, animation, documentary, experimental, etc.) from any nation of the world. Films must not have been shown in Bavaria at a festival, in a theatre or on Bavarian television before, and must not exceed a length of 15 minutes. All non-English films must have English subtitles. The festival only screens 35mm prints and progressive HD data files. The deadline for submissions is February 28, 2010, but we kindly ask that you send your film in as soon as possible rather than waiting until the deadline. Please check the complete submission requirements at <http://www.muc-intl.de>

To submit a film, please register at [reelport.com](http://reelport.com) – after registering, you will be guided through the necessary steps, from the entry of simple data requests to the automatic upload of a video file. You may also send a DVD preview copy to the address mentioned on the reelport website. Please do not send your preview copy directly to the festival.

Please feel free to share this information with anyone who may wish to submit a film. Thanks in advance for your interest and collaboration.

### **What Members Are Getting Up To**

\*\*\*

JESSE ARMSTRONG co-wrote the episode of *The Thick of It* going out on BBC2 at 10:20pm on Saturday 21st November.

\*\*\*

RAY BROOKING wrote the episode of *EastEnders* going out on BBC1 at 8:00pm on Monday 23rd November.

\*\*\*

GUY DUCKER'S short film *Missed* is having a screening at 00:25am Sunday 22nd November and at midnight Monday 23rd on the BBC HD channel.

\*\*\*

GREGORY EVANS'S radio play *Shirleymander* is going out on Radio 4 at 9:00pm on Friday 27th November.

\*\*\*

PHILIP GOULDING has written the libretto for *Wonder: a scientific oratorio* about the origin of the universe (composer Alan Williams) - performed by BBC Philharmonic/BBC Singers/Salford Choral Society at Maxwell Hall, Salford on Friday 27th November 2009 and Saturday 28th November 2009.

\*\*\*

JONATHAN HARVEY wrote the episode of *Coronation Street* going out on ITV1 at 8:30pm on Monday 23rd November. The third episode in Jonathan's second series of *Beautiful People* "*How I Got My Water Feature*" continues on BBC2 at 10:00pm on Friday 27th November.

\*\*\*

JAYNE HOLLINSON wrote the episode of *Coronation Street* going out on ITV1 at 7:30pm on Monday 23rd November.

\*\*\*

MARK ILLIS wrote the episode of *Emmerdale* going out on ITV1 at 7:00pm on Monday 23rd November.

\*\*\*

LIZ JOHN wrote the episode of *Doctors* "*New Dawn*" going out on BBC1 at 1:45pm on Monday 23rd November.

\*\*\*

DARAN LITTLE wrote the episode of *Coronation Street* going out on ITV1 at 7:30pm on Friday 27th November.

\*\*\*

GARRY LYONS' new mainstage adaptation of *The Secret Garden*, with music by Tim Sutton, opens at the West Yorkshire Playhouse on November 28th and runs until January 23rd.

\*\*\*

JONATHAN MYERSON'S radio drama series *Number Ten* continues with the episode *The Visigoths Are Coming* going out on Radio 4 at 2:15pm on Friday 27th November.

\*\*\*

JULIE PARSONS wrote the episodes of *Emmerdale* going out on ITV1 at 7:00pm on Tuesday 24th and Wednesday 25th November.

\*\*\*

SUE PIERLEJEWSKI wrote the episode of *Doctors "Hurt"* going out on BBC1 at 1:45pm on Thursday 26th November.

\*\*\*

CHRISTOPHER REASON wrote the episode of *EastEnders* going out on BBC1 at 7:30pm on Thursday 26th November.

\*\*\*

HEATHER ROBSON wrote the episode of *Hollyoaks* going out on C4 at 6:30pm on Monday 23rd November.

\*\*\*

PAUL ROUNDELL wrote the episode of *Emmerdale* going out on ITV1 at 7:00pm on Friday 27th November.

\*\*\*

TONY ROCHE and JACK THORNE co-wrote the episode of *Cast-Offs* a new series starting on C4 at 11:05pm on Tuesday 24th November.

\*\*\*

KATHERINE WAY wrote the episode of *Doctors "The Perfect Face for Radio"* going out on BBC1 at 1:45pm on Wednesday 25th November.

\*\*\*

PETER WHALLEY wrote the episode of *Coronation Street* going out on ITV1 at 8:30pm on Friday 27th November.

\*\*\*

*Writers' Guild of Great Britain, 40 Rosebery Avenue, EC1R 4RX; [erik@writersguild.org.uk](mailto:erik@writersguild.org.uk); [www.writersguild.org.uk](http://www.writersguild.org.uk); tel +44 (0) 20 7833 0777; fax +44 (0) 20 7833 4777. This email bulletin is a service to members and associates of the Writers' Guild of Great Britain. Comments, suggestions and requests to be removed from the distribution list should be sent to [erik@writersguild.org.uk](mailto:erik@writersguild.org.uk). Items are included from a variety of sources. The Guild does its best to check everything and make corrections when necessary but we will not accept responsibility for mistakes and omissions. You are advised to check terms and conditions before entering any commitments. Copyright Writers' Guild of Great Britain and suppliers of items 2009.*