

# The Writers' Guild Weekly e-bulletin No. 411, Friday 5th March 2010

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## Guild News

### **Writers' Guild response to BBC announcement**

The Writers' Guild of Great Britain has issued its response to today's announcement by Mark Thompson, Director-General of the BBC.

Statement by Bernie Corbett

General Secretary, Writers' Guild of Great Britain

2nd March 2010

In eight plain words – “The BBC should not attempt to do everything” – Mark Thompson has overturned a philosophy that has been central to the BBC since it was founded 87 years ago.

If it sticks, the new policy that the BBC can no longer provide something for everybody but must instead concentrate on high quality and areas where others can't or won't provide, will have profound implications.

While we take no pleasure in the destruction of Radio 6 or the Asian Network (both of which would appear to be high-quality services that no one else will provide), nevertheless this is a revolution that could have its sunny side for writers.

If it is true that £600 million will be freed to go into more and better programmes, then the Guild can make some immediate and obvious suggestions.

**Original drama:** For several years everyone has been asking why Britain can't produce brilliant series like *The Sopranos*, *The Wire*, etc. Here is a chance for the BBC to create its own in-house HBO.

**New writers:** Fresh talent and new ideas don't have to be developed to death – here is an opportunity to take some risks. Five out of every six TV drama scripts commissioned and paid for by the BBC never get made – now that ratio can be radically improved.

**Make me laugh:** We long for brilliant new sitcoms. Use some of this money to give them room to grow. Many of the true greats were into their second or third series before they achieved classic status.

**Something for the kids:** Build on the success of CBBC and CBeebies by reinventing real, meaty drama and comedy for kids – there is more to children's TV than running-around-shouting-and-playing shows and endlessly repeated animations – brilliant though they are.

**Rescue radio:** A tiny fragment of the money would not only restore but reverse the shameful cuts in BBC Radio drama that in recent years have seen the abandonment of World Service drama, the crazy cancellation of terrific soaps like *Westway* and *Silver Street*, the imminent demise of the Friday Play and the dumbing-down of the Woman's Hour drama slot into little more than a reading with interludes of dialogue.

**Comedy:** While we're at it, let us have the reintroduction of topical sketch shows like *Week Ending* or the *News Huddlines* – these shows have enabled generations of brilliant writers to get started and write their way out of their bedsits and into the ratings.

**Britain's broadcasting heritage:** At long last here is a realistic source for the huge sums required to digitise the BBC archive and put it online, where everyone can access every TV or radio show that was ever made in the UK (or at least, those that still survive). And please will the BBC not give our heritage away for nothing, but charge a reasonable pay-per-view or subscription price. Doing so will avoid the iPlayer mistake of setting up impossible competition for other, commercial providers, and it will bring in revenue to fund even more programme making and to ensure fair payment for the writers and other creators who made those shows. Never forget, the BBC did not buy or pay for these rights at the time the programmes were made and it cannot rewrite history now.

**Appointment of General Secretary of the Writers' Guild of Great Britain**

The Writers' Guild is the Trade Union for writers working in Film, Television, Radio, Theatre, Books and Video Games. Applicants for the post of General Secretary of the Guild should have relevant experience in one or more of these fields. Excellent negotiating skills and familiarity with UK and EU media law are required.

To comply with the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation Act) 1992 the post of General Secretary must be advertised every five years.

The annual salary for this post will be up to £52,000.

A full job specification is available on the Guild website [www.writersguild.org.uk](http://www.writersguild.org.uk)

The closing date for the receipt of applications is noon on Friday 19th March 2010

Interviews will be held on Tuesday 30th March 2010

The Writers' Guild of Great Britain

40 Rosebery Avenue

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An Equal Opportunities Employer

## Industry News

### **The future of drama on BBC Radio 4**

At a meeting with representatives from the Writers' Guild and the Society of Authors last week, Jeremy Howe, Commissioning Editor for Drama at Radio 4, and Mark Damazer, the Controller of Radio 4, emphasised their commitment to retaining single plays on the network and outlined some upcoming changes in scheduling.

The biggest change concerns the Friday Play, which will be cut to 12 new commissions this year and then disappear altogether (with one or two exceptions) next year as a result of budget cuts. 'We decided to cut an entire slot rather than take a slice out of everything,' Jeremy Howe explained.

Elsewhere across Radio 4 the volume of drama will remain about the same. 'Radio 4 drama reaches almost 6.5 million people per week,' Howe said, 'and a single

Afternoon Play reaches almost as many listeners as could see the plays at the National Theatre in a whole year.'

Radio drama, though cheap in comparison with TV drama (about £24,000 per hour rather than £500,000 for an episode of *Casualty*) is much more expensive than other radio genres. At a time of widespread budget cuts across the corporation, Howe and Damazer insisted that the continued volume of drama across the schedule was a demonstration of their commitment to it, and to writers.

To read the rest of this article, please go to

[http://www.writersguild.org.uk/public/003\\_WritersGuil/420\\_WGGBNewsThe.html](http://www.writersguild.org.uk/public/003_WritersGuil/420_WGGBNewsThe.html)

## Guild Events

### WGGB Cardiff Event

The Writers' Guild of Great Britain is pleased to announce a meeting with Kate McCall, Senior Producer, Radio Drama BBC Wales.

Kate will be talking about her work at the BBC, her relationship with writers and the current radio drama market. There will be an opportunity to ask questions.

The meeting will take place on Wednesday 17th March at Chapter Arts Centre, Cardiff, at 7.30pm prompt. (The venue is Platform 1 on the ground floor of Market House opposite Chapter's main entrance.)

## Events

### Loves Me, Loves Me Not

DATE / TIME: Thursday 11th March, 7 pm.

PLACE: Central library, Westgate, Oxford

Tickets £1-50p, from Oxford Central Library (tel. 01865-815509 or 01865-815549)

EVENT: Talk by Katie Fforde and her sister Jane Gordon-Cumming, chaired by Guild member Jean Buchanan, about *Loves Me, Loves Me Not*, the anthology celebrating 50 years of the RNA (Romantic Novelists' Association), in which they all have short stories, and much else besides.

## **Getting it Good, Getting it Right**

An evening with David Edgar and Bryony Lavery.

### **Thursday 29th April, 7:00-9:00pm at Derby Theatre Studio**

To launch the revival of this famous studio venue (formerly Derby Playhouse), the Theatre Arts department at Derby, in partnership with the Writers' Guild of Great Britain and in association with Theatre Writing Partnership, presents this event.

Ironically, at a time of economic recession, the theatre seems to be thriving. And with the recent British Theatre Consortium survey revealing just how widely newly commissioned writing figures in this success, the challenge of what the playwright can bring to the contemporary stage has never been more relevant.

From their different personal perspectives, these two accomplished playwrights will talk about how they approach this challenge (both creatively and structurally), including discussion of David Edgar's new publication *How Plays Work* and Bryony Lavery's latest collaboration with Frantic Assembly Theatre Co.

(N.B. *How Plays Work* will be on sale and signed by D.E. at the end of the evening).

### **ALSO on Wednesday 5th May, 7:00pm...**

**Penny Dreadful** – a theatrical reading of Richard Pinner's black comedy about the controversial, final chapter of Charles Dickens's life.

**Both events all-ticket @ £5, £2.50 concessions. But FREE for Guild members!**

**BOX OFFICE 01332 255800, [www.derbylive.co.uk](http://www.derbylive.co.uk)**

**For enquiries/ reservations contact Richard Pinner at [r.a.pinner@derby.ac.uk](mailto:r.a.pinner@derby.ac.uk)**

## Nottingham's Screenlit Festival

The 2<sup>nd</sup> ScreenLit Festival of Film, TV and Writing will take place at Broadway Cinema, Nottingham from 21st – 29th April 2010. The festival celebrates writing for the screen and explores the intersection between writing for page, stage, film and television. It offers a space for audiences, including writers, to discover the finest scripted films and television and to engage with the writers. Please see last year's website to get a better flavour of the festival: [www.broadway.org.uk/festival/](http://www.broadway.org.uk/festival/).

## Courses and Workshops

### Last Call for Comedy Crossing the Boundaries – NEW names announced!

Workshop Dates: 19<sup>th</sup> 20<sup>th</sup> 21<sup>st</sup> March 2010

Workshop Venue: Hammersmith, West London

As well as working with script legends Laurence Marks and Maurice Gran, creators of *Birds of a Feather*, *Goodnight Sweetheart* and the recent West End smash hit *Dreamcoats & Petticoats*, Sharon Horgan, co-writer of the BAFTA-nominated BBC 3 hit *Pulling* and who also won a British Comedy Award for the same programme, will also be running a session.

- Develop your own sitcom from scratch
- Hear YOUR words come to life (or death) by professional actors
- Question industry practitioners on the future of comedy on multiple platforms

Network with other writers & industry professionals. Not to be missed opportunity!

\*\*Skillset bursaries still available – apply soon to avoid disappointment!

Call 01932 592 151 for more information

## **Media Mavericks: Transform your creative writing skills into journalism**

Tailored coaching and one-day courses from £75 for writers wishing to raise their media profile or find extra writing avenues -- from highly experienced journalism coach, postgraduate tutor, and journalist with extensive track record in national and popular press. [www.lornav.com](http://www.lornav.com) Contact [lornav.com@gmail.com](mailto:lornav.com@gmail.com) for more information.

## **Opportunities**

### **Sitcom Saturday**

**RealDeal Theatre** is looking for six 15-minute sitcoms for *Sitcom Saturday*, a professionally directed and acted script-in-hand rehearsed reading, open to the public, at Westminster Reference Library, off Leicester Square, Central London.

The next *Sitcom Saturday* will be held on June 12th 2010. Fifteen-minute sitcom scripts should be emailed to [scripts@realdealtheatre.org.uk](mailto:scripts@realdealtheatre.org.uk) between **Monday, March 1st and Wednesday, March 31st 2010**. Please see the rules for *Sitcom Saturday* submissions on the events page at <http://www.sitcomsaturday.org.uk>

They allocate a director for each of the selected scripts and the directors then liaise with the writer(s) before a casting session, rehearsal and the performance on Saturday, 12th June 2010. Entries are welcome from anywhere as long as the writers can liaise with the directors beforehand. Writers must also attend the June public rehearsed reading in London.

<http://www.realdealtheatre.org.uk>

RealDeal Theatre held its first *Sitcom Saturday* in January 2009. The June 2010 event will be its fourth *Sitcom Saturday*.

### **The John Brabourne Awards**

The John Brabourne Awards are a stepping stone for up and coming talent driven to further their experiences and careers in all aspects of film and television. The awards

also seek to help those disadvantaged in some way, either through lack of funds or set-backs due to illness or accident.

There are two types of award, the CTBF Awards and the Sponsored Awards.

The CTBF Awards provide cash sums of between £1,000 and £5,000 to assist with training, rental of equipment, or the costs of travel, rent, bills or childcare.

The Sponsored Awards offer new talent direct access to essential industry experience, through paid work experience at leading companies and/or access to training, equipment or materials, and in some cases a mentor. Additionally the CTBF and UK Film Council are offering a substantial cash prize of up to £10,000 to a talented individual to achieve their goal in film. The award can be used for an education programme, relevant scheme or a significant opportunity for work experience.

Since the May 2007 launch of the awards the CTBF has been able to secure substantial support from the film and television industry, with companies such as Kodak, Arri Media, UK Film Council, Endemol UK and Turner Classic Movies all contributing to the awards.

Please visit the website <http://www.ctbf.co.uk/johnbrabourneawards/> for more information.

Applications can be downloaded directly from the website.

## What Members Are Getting Up To

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MARTIN ALLEN wrote the episode of *Coronation Street* going out on ITV1 at 8:30pm on Thursday 11th March.

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Congratulations to TRACY BRABIN, who has been chosen to go on the Script Factory/Birds Eye View year-long mentoring programme SHE WRITES. It has been designed to address the remarkable statistic that only 12% of British films are written by women. The programme, catering for eight emerging women writers, will take place over a year, during which time participants working on a feature screenplay will enjoy a residential retreat, attend specialist workshops, meet with mentors, gain a better understanding of the industry, have exclusive access to the Birds Eye View Film Festival, and workshop their projects with actors.

<http://www.birds-eye-view.co.uk/1741/bev-labs/she-writes.html>

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SIMON BRETT wrote the episode of *People in Cars "Sat Love"* going out on Radio 4 at 11:30am on Friday 12th March.

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JEAN BUCHANAN'S short story in *Loves Me, Loves Me Not* (published in p/b in February 2010) is called *The World's A Stage*.

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RICHARD BURKE wrote the episode of *Hollyoaks* going out on C4 at 6:30pm on Monday 8th March.

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MARTIN DAY wrote the episode of *Doctors "Bleeding"* going out on BBC1 at 1:45pm on Tuesday 9th March.

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TIM DYNEVOR wrote the episode of *Emmerdale* going out on ITV1 at 7:00pm on Friday 12th March.

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DARREN FAIRHURST wrote the episode of *Shameless* going out on C4 at 10:00pm on Tuesday 9th March.

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BILL GALLAGHER wrote the episode of *Lark Rise to Candleford* going out on BBC1 at 8:00pm on Sunday 7th March.

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CAROLINE HARRINGTON wrote the episode of *Beyond Black "Allison's Good Action"* going out on Radio 4 at 7:45pm on 8th March.

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LISA HOLDSWORTH wrote the episode of *New Tricks "Fresh Starts"* going out on BBC1 at 9:00pm on Monday 8th March.

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JAYNE HOLLINSON wrote the episode of *Coronation Street* going out on ITV1 at 7:30pm on Friday 12th March.

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ROB JOHNSTON wrote *Head Space*, which is being produced as part of Short Sharp Shocks at Studio Salford Wed 3rd - Sat 6th March @ 8 PM. £7/£5. Tickets from [www.studiosalford.com](http://www.studiosalford.com)

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JOHN KERR wrote the episode of *Coronation Street* going out on ITV1 at 8:30pm on Monday 8th March.

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RON KINSMAN wrote the episode of *Doctors "My Best Effort"* going out on BBC1 at 1:45pm on Wednesday 10th March.

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DAVID LANE wrote the episode of *Coronation Street* going out on ITV1 at 7:30pm on Monday 8th March.

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DOMINIQUE MOLONEY wrote the episode of *Doctors "Hell Hath No Fury"* going out on BBC1 at 1:45pm on Friday 12th March.

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PAUL ROUNDELL wrote the episodes of *Emmerdale* going out on ITV1 at 7:00pm and 8:00pm on Thursday 11th March.

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FREDERICK E. SMITH, as of the first of this month, has had two books published by Emissary Publishing. One is a novel called *The Mysterious Affair*, which is his forty-first published novel, and the other is the first part of his autobiography. It is called *A Youthful Absurdity* and there is both a hardcover and soft-cover available of this latter book.

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CHRIS THOMPSON wrote the episode of *Emmerdale* going out on ITV1 at 7:00pm on Monday 8th March.

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JOE TURNER wrote the episode of *Coronation Street* going out on ITV1 at 8:30pm on Friday 12th March.

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NICK WARBURTON'S radio play *Not Bobby* is going out on Radio 4 at 2:15pm on Wednesday 10th March.

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MATTHEW WESTWOOD wrote the episode of *Hollyoaks* going out on C4 at 6:30pm on Wednesday 10th March.

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KARIN YOUNG wrote the episode of *Emmerdale* going out on ITV1 at 7:00pm on Wednesday 10th March.

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