

Neil Marcus' speech at the MMD AGM on 15th February 2011

Since the last AGM, Mercury Musical Developments has overseen a number of initiatives to help develop writers and their work through on-going opportunities and showcases, and these will continue.

I'm delighted to say that David James has not only had a successful year launching the UK's first on-going bookwriting development programme, but has secured funding from the Arts Council to do the same for composers and lyricists, something even more remarkable in this time of swingeing cuts and an indication of ACE's newfound support for Musical Theatre. David is here and if anyone wants more details I'm sure he'd be happy for you to collar him after the AGM.

Nuts and Bolts – Our on-going practical craft sessions have continued with evenings focused on touring a musical, securing an agent, securing rights and workshop techniques.

Michael Bruce was the first composer in residence as part of the trial resident composer scheme at The Bush. MMD have applied for portfolio funding together with Musical Theatre Matters to roll out this programme. We find out on March 30th if this has been secured and if so, The Gate, Dergate and the Finborough will be accepting composers, lyricists and librettists in residence over the next few years.

The Lionel Bart Memorial Masterclass series has seen members present work for feedback to Maria Freedman, John Caird, Chris Walker, Sam Buntrock, Gareth Valentine, Charles Hart and Jenna Russell with Tim Rice, Jeanie Tresori, William Finn and Richard Stilgoe planned for later in the year.

The Works Readings are set to take place in April and May 2011, and selection by an industry panel is underway. There will be two readings. They will take place in the Grand Saloon at The Theatre Royal.

The Stiles and Drewe Best New Song Prize will go ahead on 22nd May. Submissions are currently being accepted, and the event is supported by Cameron Mackintosh, who is providing the Queen's Theatre. The event will have a £1,000 prize and this will be the 5th year that the competition has taken place.

The MMD revue, Beyond The Gate was a great success and it is intended to make this an annual event. The CD from the show will be out at the end of March. Thanks go to Rex Bunnett and Simon Greiff for their funding towards the costs of the CD production.

Revised guidelines for writer expectations in relation to agreements would be up on the website shortly.

We will hear whether we receive portfolio funding from Arts Council England at the end of March (jointly with MTM). We have a twenty to thirty per cent chance of obtaining this funding. If we are successful we will be emailing members at the end of March to inform them.