

# BELVOIR PLAYERS Amateur Dramatic Society

Incorporating Belvoir Players Theatre Academy

## Curtain Call July 2011

**POPULAR**

“Northern Ireland’s got a whole new set of Trothies?”

“For the girls of Belfast, the only way is Malone?”

Aimed specifically at Over 15 year olds  
*Comedian using strong language*

**Belvoir Players Studio Theatre**  
September 28<sup>th</sup> Sat 8th & 10th at 8.00pm  
Matinee on Saturday 10th at 3pm  
Tickets £8.00 (Concession £2.00)  
Tel 028 9049 1210

HAVE YOU GOT WHAT IT TAKES?  
*Gareth Russell*



Belvoir Players Presents

**NO HOPE HERE**  
EISI ANACH RA CASCA

**YOU ARE NOW ENTERING LOYALIST SA HEARTLAND - NO ULSTER-FREE**

A Hilarious Ulster Comedy by Viv Brennan

Belvoir Players Studio Theatre Presents

**MARRIED BLISS**  
A Hilarious Ulster Comedy by Sam Cree

Belvoir Players Studio Theatre  
Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> to Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> March at 8.00pm  
Tickets £8 Concession £7  
Seats, please telephone: 9049 1210 or 9064 9835

Belvoir Players Senior Theatre Academy Presents

**Disney's BEAUTY AND THE BEAST**

Music by Alan Menken  
Lyrics by Tim Rice & Howard Ashman  
Book by Linda Woolverton

In Belvoir Players Studio Theatre  
28th June to 2nd July nightly at 7.30pm  
Matinees on 1st & 2nd July at 2pm  
Admission £8 (Concession £7)  
Tel: 9049 1210 or 9064 9835

An amateur production presented by permission of Joseph Weisberger  
Licensed on behalf of Music Theatre International of New York

Belvoir Players Junior Theatre Academy Presents

**Disney's The Jungle Book**  
MIDS

In Belvoir Players Studio Theatre  
14th to 18th June nightly at 7.30pm  
Matinee on Saturday 18th June at 2pm  
Admission £8 (Concession £7)  
Tel: 9049 1210 or 9064 9835

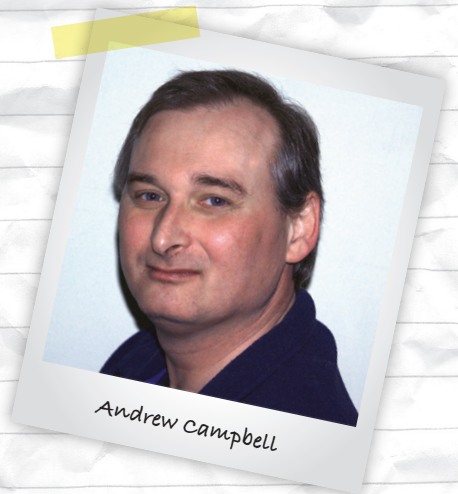
# Belvoir Players Presents ...

A long, long time ago, in deep and darkest Drumbo, I was encouraged to direct a one act. I had never thought of myself as a "director" but I have now directed two shows - namely "The Donaghue Sisters" and "Hughie". Looking back on it now I can safely say I've learned a tremendous amount. Apart from anything else, I've realized that Richard Mills produced both shows (and I now know how much administration and finance is involved) and that Michael Gorman stage managed both shows (set design, construction, transport, and more).

A long, long time ago, in deep and darkest Drumbo, a group of people used to congregate in an isolated barn to rehearse strange theatrical rituals.

At the tender age of 28, I had decided to join a drama group because I wanted to be a writer. The theory was to go backstage and learn about what "works". By the end of the night I walked out of the Belvoir Players with a script in my hand. Richard Mills had offered me the part of Buttons in the pantomime "The Other Cinderella".

I had never thought of myself as an "actor" and looking back on it now I can safely say I've learned a tremendous amount. I've appeared in more plays than I can recite off the top of my head, and I'm happy to say that I've enjoyed every one of them. As if learning by experience was not enough, the Belvoir Players has also sponsored me to attend several acting courses, including a week at Gormonston summer school.



Karl Smyth and James and Sandy McAllister took care of the lights and sound, so all I had to do was work with the actors. With support like that I was determined to succeed. I am now on the prowl for a new script.

Not so long ago, I was encouraged to edit the new edition of "Curtain Call". I have always wanted to think of myself as a "Writer" but I've never really had the confidence to go public. It seems that I have Belvoir Players to thank for launching my acting, directing, and now writing career. If I'm true to form, I've a tremendous amount to learn, so thanks for your patience, because we're in it for the journey.

**Andrew Campbell**

## Rachel Brown Production Report "Jungle Book"



*(Rachel is seen here demonstrating "jungle tactics".)*

"All you need are the bare necessities, right everyone?" This phrase alone describes the Belvoir Players Youth Academy! These kids don't need much help to put on a cracking show, that's for sure. With the support and advice of the irreplaceable Olivia Brennan, and the choreography of Conor Anderson and Robbie Irwin, our team may have set up the foundation, but the kids brought the talent needed to build an unbelievable performance!

From the very start of our audition process, enthusiasm and passion oozed from our junior group, as they skipped in, week after week, with lines learned and a thirst to work hard! As a young director, it was a pleasure to work with such a cast and crew.

Although we missed our senior section, it was apparent that the juniors were going to show everybody everything that they had learned. And that they did! The entire cast did us proud by projecting, standing at the right angles and reacting. The entire cast did me proud!

'Jungle Book' was an outstanding opportunity, not only for the kids, but also for the parents and other group members to witness the young talent rising up through the ranks. Anyone who saw the show, I'm sure will agree that, with that kind of growth, the Players can only get bigger and better!

The outstanding performance of the principals complemented the excellent performance of the chorus members. Each child brought their own interpretation to their character, making the show extra special. One parent left the opening night in tears claiming: "They all looked so happy. I felt so proud..." What a lovely comment for us to hear!

Personally, directing the 'Jungle Book' was an unforgettable experience. The talent of the children both amazed and inspired me. I look forward to working with them again as they move forward into new challenges. Watch this space folks!"

## Andrew Campbell “Jungle Book”

When talking about *The Jungle Book*, Rachel has described it as a 'reminder that children are more than just kids but future adults'. Indeed, Rachel personifies her own observation, being a graduate from our Youth Academy herself.

Pamela Mills tells me that she “can remember directing a very young Rachel Brown in the title role of *Annie* back in

2002, and it’s wonderful to see how she has blossomed into a highly talented young lady, directing her first production with the Academy of *Jungle Book* to great critical acclaim”.

Like Rachel, Pamela Mills has been a member of the Belvoir Players for most of her life. In fact, she is one of the founder members, and now leads the Youth Academy. Last year saw our 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary (of the Studio) when she staged a production of *Les Miserables*. This year Pamela is directing *Beauty and the Beast* along with Shane Johnson and Faith Stevenson as choreographer.

## Pamela Mills Production Report “Beauty & the Beast”



Pamela Mills

“I feel privileged to have worked with so many in the Academy over the last 10+ years and believe that, together with Olivia Brennan, we have been on a wonderful journey of plays, music and dreams.

Since I last wrote an article for the Curtain Call, our Academy now boasts over 200 young members who attend rehearsals, workshops and performances diligently, and who are remarkable ambassadors for a generation that is all too frequently poorly represented on the media. Too often we hear about under-age drinking, vandalism and other

anti-social behaviour yet here, in Belvoir, we have children and young people from a wide variety of backgrounds – social and religious – working with each other for the benefit of our audiences. They love all aspects of Drama and have developed great friendships, respect and an enormously valuable work ethic. These are kids who can juggle the challenges of school work, family life, part-time jobs and the Academy with positivity and focus. They have already learned how to prioritize and manage their time and still remain highly motivated and engaging young people.

We are very lucky to retain the magnificent services and expertise of Wilson Shields as Musical Director and over the last few months have had a lot of fun – as well as hard work – trying to get a version of this very well known story together.

It was my intention right from the start not to try and reproduce Disney’s animation mainly because you can’t possibly bring an animation to the stage. I told my very patient team on numerous occasions that if you want to see *Disney’s Beauty and the Beast* then get the DVD. I wanted to do something slightly different, to focus more on the *story* which I believe is very relevant in an age when so many – especially young people – are obsessed with image and celebrity.



(I think you succeeded Pamela –one of my favorite scenes was a tin pot production.)

I think we are in an age of very shallow thinking – as if size zero and the right face, hair etc means everything. We've tried to focus on this aspect – beauty is skin-deep and in the eye of the beholder etc – and so we've encouraged the cast to communicate much more through gesture, body and facial expressions. Obviously vocal expression is still extremely important but I want the cast to show and be their characters physically rather than relying on costume to do the work for them.

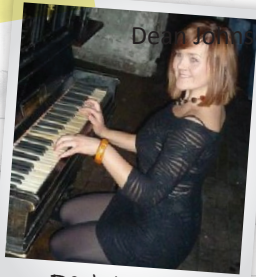
This is still a magical show and I haven't wiped away *all* of Disney's stardust! But through minimal setting, symbolic and representational costume I hope the true meaning of *Beauty and the Beast* is revealed, instead of just a lovely spectacle.

I have, as is the case every year, a wonderful cast whose enormous talent never fails

to leave me speechless (believe it or not!) Thankfully, the majority of them have already joined us in the 'wrinklies' although some of them will be leaving us this year, having reached the grand old age of 18.

Even though I am sorry to see these older members leave the Academy (I will miss them terribly), we are extremely lucky to have a wealth of talent coming behind them and, as *The Jungle Book* has shown, the future remains bright for the Belvoir Players Youth Academy.

A few will be heading off to pastures new as they embark on furthering their education in Drama. Like Rachel Hume a few years before, and Emily Dunwoody last year, Dean Johnson is about to embark on a 3-year course in musical theatre at the very prestigious Guildford School of Acting.



Rachel Hume



Dean Johnson



Emily Dunwoody

I will always remember Dean joining us at the tender age of 6 and his special talent was evident even then. He is an incredible young man, having performed in every single production with the Youth Academy, from the Munchkin Mayor in *The Wizard*

of Oz to Javert in *Les Miserables*. He is ending his time with us as one of the Beasts in this year's show. I know he will be hugely successful at Guildford and beyond. Remember that name – Dean Johnson”.

## Andrew Campbell Production Report “No Hope Here”

Luckily Dean has agreed to play one more part before he embarks on his new course - Big Sam - in our production of *No Hope Here*, an Ulster Comedy by local author Viv Brennan.

The farce begins when Rab Devlin, a streetwise householder on the peace line, realizes that his abuse of Housing Executive improvement Grants is about to be discovered. He hatches a plan to claim intimidation and thus avoid paying back the grant money (and going to jail). As this is around the time of the IRA ceasefire, he finds himself in a no-win situation when the Loyalist, the Republicans, and The RUC decide to protect him. Add to the mix the Housing Executive and a couple of drinking



buddies and watch the situation boil over as everybody assembles in Rab's home for a fateful night, when fantasy and reality finally collide.

Initially produced by the Belvoir Players last year, *No Hope Here* is currently entered into the prestigious West Belfast Festival, which was established in 1988 to celebrate the positive side of the community in Northern Ireland. This play certainly allows us to laugh at ourselves.

The cast of *No Hope Here* reflects the level of opportunity that Belvoir is in a position to offer. I think a special mention should go to Nina Penny. Like husband to be Karl Smith, Nina joined the Players vowing never to go onstage. Since then both have become invaluable members of the stage crew. In the face of years of goading, teasing and encouragement, Karl conceded years ago, and appeared on stage in our production of *Widow's Paradise* (touring Florida no less). Nina has been a much tougher nut to crack. However persistence pays, and last year Nina even dyed her hair to make her debut performance as *The Poppy Seller*. Well done Nina.

It gives me great pleasure to wish you and Karl every future happiness together on

behalf of all your friends at Belvoir Players. Love and best wishes to you both, and we look forward to seeing you for the evening party in the studio on your big day.

The ceremony will take place on 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2011 at 1pm. The reception will be followed by drinks and dancing from 8pm at the Belvoir Players Studio (where bar facilities will be provided) and all members of the Belvoir Players are invited to join in with the celebrations.

Unfortunately marriage arrangements have meant that Nina is otherwise "engaged". Other previous cast and crew members have also made new commitments.



**Karl Smith**



**Nina Penny**



For example, parents Ricky and Rebecca, and big brother Jake are proud to welcome a new arrival. Ricky describes Christian as "the happiest, hungriest bouncing baby boy, who never stops eating"...and he means NEVER! Sorry Ricky, I've lost your invitation to the barbecue, but please accept the love and best wishes from all your friends at Belvoir Players.

Fortunately we have a wealth of talent to call upon, and new cast members have filled the breach admirably.

Chris Girvin joins us to play *Pius O'Connor* and Tanja Jennings follows her one act festival performance with her new festival role as *The Poppy Seller*.



Chris Girvin



Tanja Jennings

We are also fortunate to be able to call upon previous cast members. Tony McGurk joined The Players last year and participated in our winter theatre workshops. Tony felt he was too old to start a new hobby but within a few weeks of stagecraft he was hooked and couldn't wait to tread the boards. Delighted to have made his stage debut in *No Hope Here*, he describes his experience:

"Hi. My name is Tony. As a birthday present for myself, I decided to join an Amateur Dramatics Group, because it was something that I had always wanted to do, but never really felt that I had the confidence. I made some enquiries about different Groups and was pointed in the direction of Belvoir Players.

After making a phone call, I was invited to

come up to the studio and look around, and I must say that I was made to feel very welcome. After joining, I attended several Workshops, which gave me the confidence to go on stage for the first time (at the age of 50!). Since then I've been in two stage plays, helped backstage and front of house, and I have also auditioned and appeared in a few short films.

I am enjoying my time with the Group and can't believe the opportunities that have become available, once I decided to just "go for it". I am now doing something that I've always wanted to do, so if you want to act, work backstage, front of house, or even direct, then as far as I'm concerned, this is the place to be."

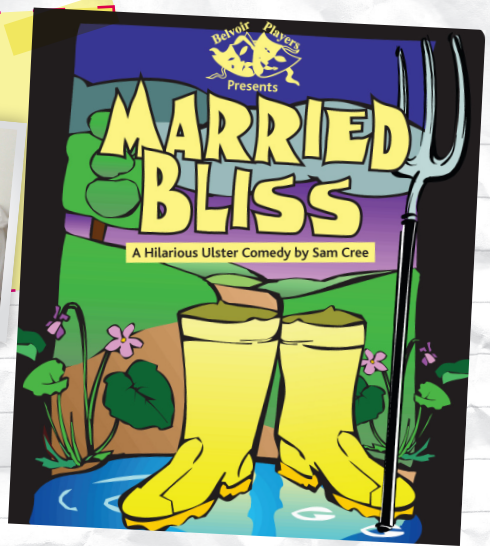
**Tony McGurk**



Tony & Roberta McGurk

Since joining Belvoir Players, Tony has been a busy man. He can be seen here tying the knot with Roberta on 4th May 2010. Happy anniversary! (Thanks for looking after him Roberta). We are pleased to see Tony return in his role as Detective Sergeant Lewis in *No Hope Here* and, to show that he is still "going for it" he is also playing James Ramsey in *Married Bliss*.

# Ciara Loughran Production Report "Married Bliss"



"Colin and Grace Ramsay hope to have a quiet holiday in a country cottage near Ballymena, but all does not run smoothly. First the cottage is not as luxurious as stated in the advert, and comes complete with a parsimonious landlord and his love struck daughter; and then numerous relatives arrive to disturb their peace. How will poor beleaguered Colin cope with his irate wife, his tearful daughter, and his mother without an all out war?

It all adds up to a hilarious evening of fun and laughter, expertly performed by one of the best am dram companies in the business."

Ticket sales bear witness to our reputation, since the Saturday night show is already sold out, but what the publicity for the Burnavon Arts Centre does not say, is that Belvoir Players is the best am dram company in the business when it comes to providing opportunities for new and aspiring actors. Just ask Ciara Loughran.

Having joined Belvoir Players last year, Ciara landed the part of Fairy Coral in last year's pantomime. "Married Bliss" is her first experience of a Sam Cree Comedy – according to Ciara:

"Having had no stage experience, outside of the usual primary school nativity play, I believed my performing days were behind me, and that any acting aspirations would remain unrealised. However, after being introduced to the Belvoir Players by my sister in September 2010, I have received training, encouragement and the confidence to partake in something that I have thoroughly enjoyed, and something which I know I will continue to enjoy in the future.

Stepping onto the stage as Janet in Sam Cree's 'Married Bliss' was an intensely heady moment. Buzzing with excitement and trembling with nerves, I momentarily questioned my sanity - why did I put myself so far outside of my own comfort zone, and in front of so many strangers??"

But by then it was too late! I was committed. There was no going back. I ignored the instinct to turn and flee, and drew on the huge amount of sage advice and guidance from the many talented and inspirational people I have met since joining the Belvoir Players. And it worked!

As that first night progressed my nerves remained, yet my enjoyment soared. The final curtain call on the third and last spring performance left me elated – buoyed up by adrenalin and a sense of achievement, with an undeniable feeling of fulfilment. And it isn't over. I'm still looking forward to a reprisal of my role as Janet during the summer tour.

A big thank you to everyone in Belvoir who has helped me, from the many experienced thespians, to those like myself who have recently found a great opportunity to be involved in something exciting, challenging and fun."

**Ciara Loughran**

Thanks Ciara for your contribution so far, and we look forward to seeing your return as Janet in the months to come. Please pass on our best wishes to your sister Karen, who has appeared in numerous productions with the Belvoir Players. Karen has taken a break from her acting career to look after the men in her life: Ollie (the little one); Charlie (the bigger one); and Gerry (the biggest one).



Gerry & Karen with Charlie (standing) & Ollie (Pram)

## Members' Contributions

I thought I'd get the ball rolling with a poem of my own, but the idea behind this section is to promote creativity among the general membership. I am hoping for contributions which could range from short stories, poems, articles, cartoons, you name it - recipes even (go on Evelyn, show us your buns!). Please forward your contribution to:

[agecampbell@ntlworld.com](mailto:agecampbell@ntlworld.com)

## Freedom of Speech

To be free to feel and to give full vent,  
To my thoughts, dreams and devotion,  
To tell all the others what I meant,  
And to really live the emotion!

I tried to speak, but the words fell flat;  
Their content lost or unreceived;  
And to hear them all reported back  
So twisted round and misperceived!

I want to speak, but the words are gone,  
Their meaning sinks in diffusion,  
So I blurt them out in words outshone  
And their telling swells the confusion.

Such compelling thoughts,  
so poorly expressed,  
Are bound to be ignored!  
So I shut them in and remain obsessed  
By wonders unexplored...

But I'm free to feel, and I must give vent  
To my thoughts, dreams and devotion,  
So I tell all the others what I meant  
And really live the emotion.

**Andrew Campbell**

## Belvoir Players Themost active drama group in Northern Ireland!



Chairman &

Artistic Director: Richard Mills MBE

Vice Chairman: Shane Johnson

Deputy

Artistic Director: Pamela Mills

Hon Secretary: Barbara Girvin

Hon. Treasurer: Olivia Brennan

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