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Thanks

The first thanks must go to **Michael Wheatley-Ward** for co-producing the play and his generous patience in helping us realize our vision and for encouraging new writing. This simply could not have been performed without his continued support.

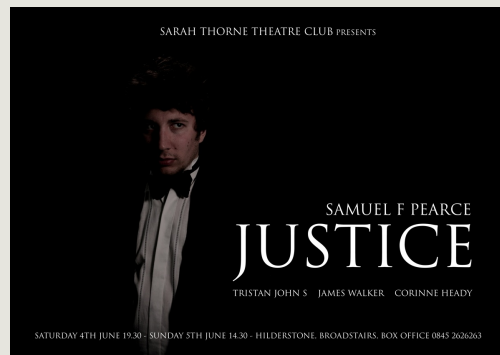
To all the **cast** – those who have been with us since before January (only Sam, in fact!) and those who have joined us at the last minute – I couldn't ask for better thespians!

Julie Barnett – for loan of props

Jenny Stone, **Christine Pearce** and **Vic Todd** – for rehearsal space.

OUR PARENTS – for giving birth to us and putting up with us!
And finally, to **YOU**, the audience – without whom, the play would not live.

NEXT WEEK: a new play by Samuel Pearce



www.sarahthorne.blogspot.com
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The Sarah Thorne Adult Drama Group presents
An **Inkling Media** Production:

FIFTY WAYS TO LEAVE YOUR FATHER

- a black comedy by **Tristan John S**

SOUVENIR PROGRAMME

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Programme

ACT I

Scene i: The Youngs' Living Room

Scene ii: Sarah's Flat

ACT II (one month later)

Scene i: The Youngs' Living Room.

Scene ii: The Youngs' Living Room – *the next morning.*

Scene iii: The Youngs' hall – later that evening.

Scene iv: *The Stanton Arms* – a restaurant.

Scene v: The Youngs' Living Room / A street.

INTERVAL

11 Inspiration: Philip Larkin

*"They f**k you up, your mum and dad,
They may not mean to but they do;
They fill you with the faults they had
And add some extra – just for you.*

*But they were f**ked up in their turn
By men in old-style hats and coats
Who half the time were soppo stern
And half and one another's throats*

*Man hands on misery to man,
It deepens like a coastal shelf,
Get out as early as you can
And don't have any kids yourself."*

Philip Larkin's infamous poem *This Be The Verse* suggests that our parents are largely to blame for all our strife. Because we cannot know our parents as persons in their own right, but how they relate to us, it is difficult to empathise with them. Only when we recognize that our parents are children and adults themselves, can we take the first steps towards reconciliation. This is why the character of Thomas at the end of the play is so crucial, thematically: he is not a Deus Ex Machina, for nothing is truly repaired – but the first steps are made.

I think the most profound line in Larkin's *Verse* is the first line of the second stanza and when Thomas remarks "yes, they were", we begin to see that the deep-seated psychological problems extend beyond the scope of our knowledge.

Of course, Larkin's poem is somewhat depressing – or negative – whereas I hope the audience goes away with a glimmer of hope for mankind!

10 Inspiration: Death Of a Salesman

I first read this play for A level English and was transfixed by its pathetic portrayal of a man who has worked his entire life and yet thinks he has achieved nothing (yet convinces himself he is an important person and “well-liked”). When Willy Loman’s grown up sons, Biff and Happy come back, they, once more, revert to the familial roles they had as children and adults.

Only Linda, Willy’s wife, has the courage to face up to reality and tell her boys – her men – some home truths. “A philandering bum” is a quotation I use in *Fifty Ways*.

One thing I love about *Salesman* is Millar’s stagecraft: the way he blends realities and allows us to see ‘the inside of his [Willy’s] head’ (the original title for his play). The character of Ben, Willy’s brother, who appears as a sort of ghost or projection, is another influence for the character of the Woman/Florist in *Fifty Ways*, (as well as Hamlet’s Ghost, of course) and I adapted Millar’s idea of using lighting to bring the two realities together as we start to see the inside of Sarah’s head in the fourth Act.

Salesman is widely regarded as a modern tragedy and if the two main theatrical influences on this play are in that vein, you might wonder why I have produced a comedy – albeit, one with ‘dark’ humour. There are tragic elements to the story and, of course, not all ends well. I try not to write to genre but rather borrow codes and conventions from a variety of genres.

Programme

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ACT III (some months later)

Scene i: A Street /

Scene ii The Youngs’ Living Room

ACT IV (some weeks later)

Scene i: The Youngs’ Living Room /

Scene ii: A Street , outside a Florist.

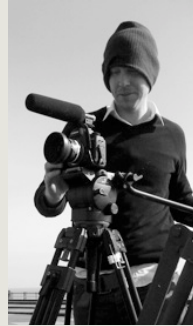
Scene iii: The Youngs’ Living Room

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The Cast

Samuel Pearce (Jason Young)

A playwright himself, Samuel and Tristan have been collaborating on creative projects for well over a decade and Sam is Tristan's business partner in *Inkling Media*. Samuel read English at Manchester University and, since graduation, has undertaken acting courses and is currently working as a freelance cinematographer in London.



Vicki Moody (Sarah Young)

Vicki is a seasoned performer, whose stage credits include *Trench Kiss*, *Gotcha* and *Comedy of Terrors*. She works for film company *aTrap* and is Head of Year 7 at Chatham House Grammar School where she teaches Theatre and English.

Vicki read English and Drama at Kent University.

Tristan Stone (Richard Young)

Tristan has enjoyed acting since his stage debut as a child playing the Hitler Youth in *Cabaret*. (Somewhat ironic – Tristan's father is Jewish). He played Mitch in *Streetcar Named Desire* at Sarah Thorne earlier this month and will be back here next week acting in Samuel's new play *Justice*.

Tristan had to take on the role of Richard at the last minute, owing to unfortunate casting problems.



James Walker (Kai)

James has always been a keen theatre practitioner, ranging from a very memorable performance as a sheep in the nativity, aged 6, to roles in *Lord of the Flies* and *Les Miserables* in a collaboration between 5 schools in south west of England. He studied Theatre with Visual Practices at Dartington College of

Arts before moving to Bristol where he acted in various shows and appeared in the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, getting 4 out of 5 for his performance with the Pleasant Banter Theatre Company. He is currently appearing in three shows in Thanet

9 Inspiration: Hamlet

Hamlet is probably Shakespeare's most renowned tragic hero (and I find him infinitely preferable to the sniveling, fickle-minded Romeo). Since I first watched Kenneth Branagh's 1996 film version, I have read and re-read the play – both for pleasure and as a work of Imaginal Theology par excellence.

The idea of avenging your progenitor's death is a theme picked up in *Fifty Ways* and there are several theatrical allusions to *Hamlet* – from the 'play within a play' – in the re-enactment of Hamlet Act III.iii, to the appearance of the apparition towards the end of *Fifty Ways*. In many ways, I wanted Sylvia (Jason and Sarah's mother) to be a ghostly presence throughout the play and a catalyst for their murderous intents.

The main distinction, of course, between Richard and Claudius is that Richard is innocent of his wife's death, however much his children might blame him.

I always thought it would be interesting to re-interpret *Hamlet* where King Hamlet's Ghost couldn't not be trusted and Claudius was innocent. This was an idea echoed in an imagined conversation between CS Lewis and JRR Tolkien told in Humphrey Carpenter's biography of *The Inklings*, in which they propose re-writing Hamlet to show that Claudius is really a 'nice chap' after all. This inspired me to write a prequel, in verse, called *The Mischief of King Hamlet*, which I shall hope to stage at a future date.

The other nod to Hamlet is in the placement of the interval, after Sarah quotes, "from this time forth, my thoughts be bloody, or be nothing worth" – the peripetia which changes thought to action and sets the third and fourth acts as an inevitable conclusion to the problem presented in the first two. Branagh also places the cinematic intermission after this line in his film adaptation.

8 Notes on the Production

Producing a play is frenetic at the best of times and we have had several setbacks – mainly owing to time constraints and cast availability (the drawback of amateur dramatic societies where actors have day jobs!) The wonderful people you will see treading the boards on Saturday and Sunday have given absolutely freely of their time, energies and expertise with grace, humour and professionalism. I cannot thank them all enough.

As a writer, directing my vision of the play has been exciting. Of course, Theatre is a collaboration and we have enjoyed playing things out in rehearsal. James made several excellent comedic suggestions which have found their way into the performance – from the toothbrush to the waiter with a dodgy French accent – a way to explain a doppelganger for Kai on stage in consecutive scenes?

The set was designed by myself initially with Michael Wheatley-Ward and it is minimalist – but then I believe the joy of theatre (and its magic) comes from the audience's imagination. I must crave the indulgence in this for my portrayal of a man twice my actual age but, I did not want to postpone the performance a second time.

Michael has been truly magnificent in helping out with the lighting and sound and we would not be here without his generous support of new writing.

The Cast (continued)

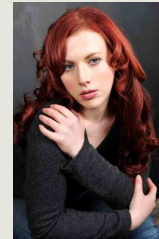
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Jon Carr (Thomas)

Jon has been performing in local comedies, musicals and the occasional drama since these other young whippersnappers were in nappies. Recently he was in Pinter's 'The Birthday Party' at Sarah Thorne for Hilderstone Players (who will be returning next February), he directed his first play at the Granville for the Broadstairs Dickens Players (Ayckbourn's 'Way Upstream') and has continued to enjoy himself with Hags Ahoy Theatre company. Over the years you may have seen him as (amongst other things) a parrot, a punk transvestite, the Devil, a spotty youth on a toilet, George W. Bush as a Roman Emperor or Gussie Fink-Nottle, the newt fancier - or you may not.



Corinne Heady (Alison / Florist)



After attaining a First Class BA Hons degree in Performing Arts from Canterbury Christ Church, Corinne set up her own theatre company *Rubrix Productions*, which has enjoyed an extended tour of Tennessee Williams' *A Streetcar Named Desire* with Corinne at the helm as lead actress, producer and director. Corinne completed a short course at the Oxford

School of Drama with Distinction and is currently preparing for her new, self-penned musical *Longing To Fall*

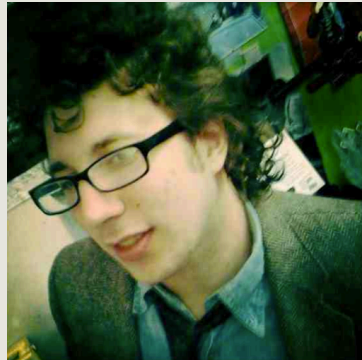
Aileen Christodoulou (Victoria) - Saturday's Performance

Ailieen is no stranger to the theatre and writes as well as performs. Ever a patron of the arts, locally and abroad, Aileen has also taught adults and children all over the world. She has kindly taken on the role of Victoria at the eleventh hour.

Vanessa Culliford (Victoria) - Sunday's Performance

Another veteran of the Sarah Thorne theatre and director/playwright, Vanessa kindly stepped into the role of Victoria at five minutes past the eleventh hour (two minutes after Aileen). Vanessa has run several businesses from home and, when she isn't dog walking or horse riding, can be found in various theatrical endeavors.

Born the eldest of non-identical twins, Tristan's first ambition at the age of five was to become a writer. Having trained as a classical pianist and violinist at the Royal College of Music, where he was a Junior Exhibitioner from 1995-2001, Tristan decided to concentrate on his academic studies, and went up to Homerton College, Cambridge, to read Theology and Religious Studies. It was there that he really began to explore his passion for literature again and started to develop an idea of *Imaginal Theology* – that is, that, in order to speak meaningfully of the divine (or even the moral) we must use our Imagination. Thus the creative arts are particularly suited to the work of theology.



The aim of Tristan's writing, therefore, is not necessarily to overtly discuss theology, but rather to explore moral and philosophical issues and themes as they naturally arise through the discourse of human experience.

After Cambridge, Tristan returned to Broadstairs and trained as an RE teacher at The Hereson School. He currently works at the amalgamated Ellington and Hereson School, teaching Religious Studies and Music.

In 2008 he formed *Inkling Media* with fellow collegiate Warren Drew, and Samuel Pearce came on board soon after. Last year Tristan co-wrote the screenplay and directed a feature film adaptation of the book *Blitzed* by Robert Swindells, in collaboration with Newlands Primary School. *Inkling Media* work closely with Blues Band *Nine Below Zero*, and produce their music videos.

In addition to writing for theatre, Tristan composes choral works for St. Andrew's Church Choir, Reading Street, where he is Organist, and writes prose and poetry. He also teaches an annual Playwriting Course for Adult Education at Hilderstone.

Tristan still finds time to perform on the piano and has recently formed a duo with his pianist friend Lana Higgins. They performed together for the first time at the opening of the Turner Centre and can be seen in concert at the *Sarah Thorne* in September.

There was a parody of the Paul Simon song *Fifty Ways To Leave Your Lover* performed in the BBC sketch show *Goodness Gracious Me!* some years ago, called *Fifty Ways to Leave Your Mother*, which gave me the initial idea for the title of this play.

After graduating from university in 2006, most of my peers found they had little choice but to move back into their parental abode. Only the privileged few can afford to buy property and, unless one has a partner, striking out on your own – even renting – can be prohibitively expensive.

When children return home to live with their parent(s) as adults, new strains are put on relationships (as my long-suffering mother will attest to!) This is something quite alien our parents' generation, who typically left home as young adults, were able to get affordable mortgages and married sooner rather than later. Our society has changed much in thirty years.

The overarching theme of *Fifty Ways* is reconciliation. Because we are only given snapshots of this family, we cannot expect the journey to be complete – and yet it is precisely this point that I am making – reconciliation, be it between humans or man and God – is a process: a process best described in a narrative. The Bible is one great narrative of such reconciliation and this, as well as other themes, is something I wanted to explore in a comic way.

Comedy is difficult to write because everyone has their own sense of humor so I tried to incorporate a variety of different comedy styles.

In earlier drafts of the play, there were several jokes punning on Kai's name being a Greek conjunction (the word for "and") but, after initial read-throughs, these seemed a bit too labored so they were taken out.

I have mentioned several influences for the play which you can read about in subsequent pages.