

# MEMBERS' NEWSLETTER

In this autumn/winter edition of the newsletter we take a look back to our recent Made at Sherman production, **ODYSSEY '84**, as well as looking forward to our upcoming 2025 season. We also give you a small insight into the inner workings of Sherman Theatre with exclusive backstage photos from the **ODYSSEY '84** set build and an interview with one of our team.

## ODYSSEY '84

Tim Price's new play was a powerful, epic re-telling of the 1984 Miners' Strike, which drew its inspiration from Ancient Greek poet Homer's epic poem, *The Odyssey*. Just as Odysseus' journey home from the Trojan War took 20 years, while his wife Penelope waited at home, miner turned NUM fundraiser, John O'Donnell completed an epic adventure that took him across the globe, whilst his wife Penny stayed at home, supporting other families, understanding the real value of community impact and completing her own journey to political awakening.

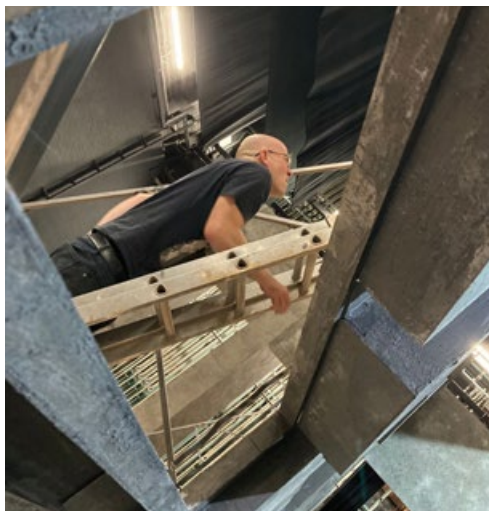
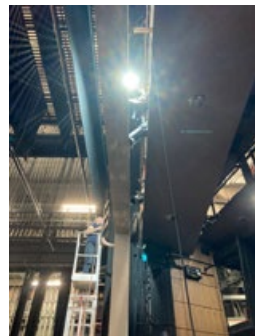
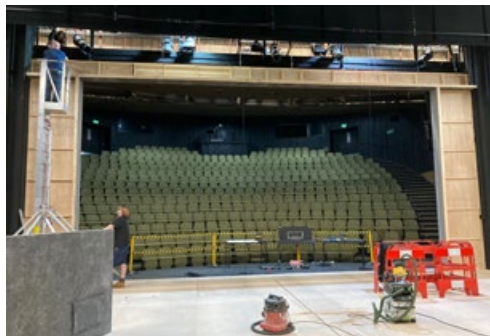
Sherman Theatre's Artistic Director, Joe Murphy, directed a passionate and heartfelt production, at times incredibly moving but with comedic scenes, too, providing some light-hearted relief. The production was a spectacular theatre experience marking the 40th anniversary of one of the most tumultuous chapters in recent Welsh history. Featuring a soundtrack of fantastic and nostalgic 80s tunes, and a dramatic set, which you can see the build of in our photo timeline below, the production shone a light on the role women played in the stand-off with the British government as well as the international support the miners received.

We're delighted to be able to share with you a series of previously unseen backstage images, which catalogue the building of the set for *Odyssey '84*.



*Odyssey '84*. Photos Mark Douet





*Odyssey '84* backstage. Photos Mandy Ivory-Castile



## WORK OFF OUR STAGES

Each Made at Sherman production is an opportunity to widen access and promote participation, to work with schools and communities, and to offer training and development opportunities for new and emerging artists and theatre-makers. The additional activity undertaken across the company to support *Odyssey '84* provides some examples of the real team effort that goes into making theatre.



## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

On the 26th of June we presented a script in hand reading of *Odyssey '84* at Big Pit National Coal Museum to an invited audience of 50 ex-miners and their families, including participants who have been working with our Creative Engagement team during the research stages of the production.

A second reading took place at the Sherman on the 27th June as part of our *Tales & Tea* initiative. Both were extended performances (2 hours 30 minutes), with a cast of nine actors.

Through *Tales & Tea* we provide a daytime performance for audience members who prefer not to venture out to the theatre in the evening. The project aims to promote wellbeing through the opportunity to see a brand new piece of writing, share thoughts and feedback, chat and meet others in a supported, friendly environment. Each performance is comprised of a rehearsed reading in either the Sherman Studio or Main House theatre, a post show Q&A session with the writer, director, and cast, followed by tea, cake and an opportunity to socialise.

The audience age ranges from 50 to 80+. Performances are held on a quarterly basis, both at Sherman Theatre and, where possible, in community venues. All performances have BSL interpretation and are relaxed, Dementia Friendly performances.



*Tales and Tea.* Photos Chris Lloyd

## SCHOOLS' ENGAGEMENT

We offered schools and colleges a number of ways to creatively engage with the production, providing a unique way for learners to explore contemporary Welsh history and a pivotal moment in global politics and economics, with the choice of three different workshops available for students in Year 10 and above. The workshops took place at the theatre, prior to performances.

### Workshop 1 – Art and Protest

This workshop was linked to several curriculum subjects including Art, Drama, English, Media Studies, History and Government and Politics. We looked at how art has been an integral tool in political protest over centuries, giving learners the opportunity to discover the characteristics, impact and history of Protest Art, consider how Protest Art featured in the miners' strike as well as enabling them to create their own piece of Protest Art.

### Workshop 2 – Media and the Miners

This workshop was linked with curriculum subjects including English, Media Studies, History and Government and Politics, and looked at the role of the media in covering the strike and how reporting impacted public sympathy for the miners, or support for the government. Giving learners the opportunity to discover more about the media's coverage during the miners' strike and the role it played in manipulating public opinion; consider the impact that social media would have had on events, had they happened today and looking at the strike in relation to contemporary political movements, as well as giving them the chance to create their own news reports of key events from the strike.

### Workshop 3 – Epic Storytelling

Our final workshop explored the features of Epic storytelling and why it is an effective form, across literature, poetry and drama, which enabled it to link with curriculum subjects including English, Drama, Classics and History. We gave students the chance to discover more about the characteristics of Epic storytelling; consider the impact of using epic devices to elevate contemporary stories, through the context of *Odyssey '84* and create their own piece of Epic storytelling.

## ARTIST DEVELOPMENT

As well as the cast of professional actors, *Odyssey '84* featured ensemble support from members of the Sherman Players, Sherman Theatre's non-professional group for ages 18+. The Sherman Players meet on a weekly basis to learn about theatre making through designing, scriptwriting and acting. Each year members have the opportunity to be part of a full production with a professional director and, where appropriate, have the opportunity to gain experience as part of the ensemble for Made at Sherman productions.



**“I think saying ODYSSEY '84 changed my life would be an understatement, it really was the catalyst for change. I'm personally a newcomer to acting this year, yet I never once felt out of place.**

**That was because of the incredibly talented and hard-working professional cast, community cast, the crew behind the scenes, the writer Tim, director Joe. They all made the working environment so accessible for me to be able to be myself, and to contribute into bringing to life and retelling *Odyssey* was an absolute pleasure and an honour.**

**It has sparked yet another fire within me to continue to progress, continue to inspire just like I've been inspired, which is one of many reasons I joined Sherman Players, so I can continue to be better as a person as much as an aspiring actor.**

**I could go on and on, but to summarise, ODYSSEY '84 made what felt impossible, absolutely POSSIBLE! It will be something I hold onto for the rest of my life.”**

Osian Lloyd, Sherman Player and member of the community cast for *Odyssey '84*

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“Being part of the ODYSSEY '84 production has been an unforgettable experience. The cast and crew were amazing, and it was a privilege to have the opportunity to work with them all. It's one of those experiences that not only challenged me as a performer but also gave me a deeper appreciation for the magic of theatre. Definitely a highlight of my time with the Sherman Players!”

Mike Morgan, Sherman Player and member of the community cast for *Odyssey '84*

If you would like to learn more about the Sherman Players, or are interested in joining the group, please contact our Creative Engagement team [francesca.pickard@shermantheatre.co.uk](mailto:francesca.pickard@shermantheatre.co.uk)

## AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT

Work with Big Pit National Coal Museum during the development stages of the project, alongside running engagement activities with a number of local community groups, helped us to forge new relationships. These relationships continued to develop through the production run, resulting in a number of audiences from across the South Wales Valleys and Swansea Valleys attending performances. We also successfully attracted new audiences to the Sherman, with 35% of the *Odyssey '84* audience visiting the Sherman for the first time.

In the Sherman foyer we installed a food collection point, working in partnership with the Cardiff Food Bank. This will now remain in situ as a permanent place for our audiences to donate when visiting the theatre.



The South Wales Miners' Library banners

## RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

Our Literary team liaised with the Archives team at Swansea University to read committee minutes and look at photographs from South Wales NUM archives. The team found interesting details, that they were able to feed back to writer Tim Price, adding texture and ideas into the production text. Our Creative Engagement manager liaised with The South Wales Miners' Library who lent Sherman Theatre the beautiful banners that adorned the foyer during the performance period.





# MEET THE TEAM

**Name:** Rachel Mortimer

**Position at Sherman Theatre:** Technical Manager

**Length of time with Sherman Theatre:** 21 years

Rachel Mortimer



## What is your favourite Sherman Theatre production and why?

*Housemates*, as I got to do the lighting design for it, and it was a wonderful experience to work on such an amazing show. The story was so important and the audience reaction was amazing, I was in tears every night. It was so moving and uplifting.

## What has been your busiest day with Sherman Theatre since you've been working there?

There have been so many busy days it's hard to pick one! Probably a festival day like National Theatre Connections when we have multiple Youth Theatre groups who will tech and perform their shows one after the other throughout the day. As a production team we will help each group to fit up their set and props, focus and plot lighting and sound, and then do a cue to cue of their show, before they perform to the other groups. We then take it down and start the next one. This is normally a busy weekend as the festival lasts three days, with multiple groups, including Sherman Youth Theatre, performing.

## What do you enjoy most about your job?

No two days are the same, there is always something exciting happening. My favourite

moments are usually in the technical rehearsals for our Made at Sherman shows, when everything comes together and you get to see what the whole show will look and sound like for the first time.

## How do you prepare for a day at Sherman Theatre?

I always have breakfast to give me the energy I need for the morning, and make a cup of tea, which I bring in with me. When I arrive, I'll pick up my radio and generally go straight to the theatre to switch on the lighting and sound for whatever show is on. I tend to do this before everyone else is due to start so I am ready to go.

## How do you relax after a day at work?

If I finish early enough, I will take our dog Ziggy for a walk in the park or around the neighbourhood. Then, I usually relax in front of the TV with either a quiz show like QI or a crime drama.

## What are you most looking forward to in Sherman Theatre's calendar?

*A Christmas Carol*, which we are in fit up for now. As it's the second time we've done the show it is all going very smoothly. I'm looking forward to seeing how the new cast members have fitted in and what is the same, but different, this time around.



*A Christmas Carol* rehearsals. Photos Mark Douet



# SPOTLIGHT ON SPRING 2025 – THE WOMEN OF LLANRUMNEY RETURNS

Azuka Oforka's debut play *The Women of Llanrumney* returns for a second run from 26 April to 10 May 2025. A devastating historical drama, *The Women of Llanrumney*, is set on the Llanrumney sugar plantation in 18th century colonialised Jamaica, and explores the experiences of women during slavery through the story of Annie and her daughter, Cerys.

It was commissioned by Sherman Theatre and made its debut in a run of sold-out performances in May 2024, which were received with critical-acclaim by audiences and critics alike.

If you haven't already seen it, or even if you have, with Azuka Oforka recently winning the prestigious Best Writer Award at the Stage Debut Awards 2024 for this play, it is a production not to be missed. Tickets are on sale now via the Sherman Theatre Box Office on 029 2064 6900 or via [shermantheatre.co.uk](http://shermantheatre.co.uk).

Prior to returning to the Sherman, *The Women of Llanrumney* will transfer to Stratford East in London, from 19 March to 12 April 2025.

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“blistering... marks Oforka as an urgent and important voice in Welsh theatre.”

THE GUARDIAN

“A scorching writing debut... marks the arrival of an exhilarating new voice in Oforka.”

THE STAGE



Azuka Oforka



*The Women of Llanrumney*. Photo Burning Red

# 2025 MADE AT SHERMAN SEASON

HERE. YMA.  
NOW. NAWR.  
Made at • Crëwyd yn y  
**SHERMAN**  
2025

22 November 2024 – 4 January 2025

## A CHRISTMAS CAROL

By Gary Owen

Directed by Joe Murphy

**“Joe Murphy’s triumphant Dickens redo... Brims with an irresistible festive charm, and looks absolutely gorgeous.”**

★★★★ The Guardian

Let us transport you to the streets of Victorian Cardiff this Christmas for a festive adventure unlike any other. Our laughter-stuffed, song-filled, tear-jerking, and utterly life-enhancing re-telling of *A Christmas Carol*, first seen in 2021, returns this Christmas by popular demand. *A Christmas Carol* promises exceptional festive entertainment for everyone aged 7+.

25 November 2024 – 4 January 2025

## LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD YR HUGAN FACH GOCH

By Katie Elin-Salt

Directed by Alice Eklund

The perfect introduction to theatre for children aged 3-6.

21 February – 8 March 2025

## HOUSEMATES

By Tim Green

Directed by Joe Murphy and Ben Pettitt-Wade

(A co-production with Hijinx)

The Housemates are back in 2025 by popular demand. Tim Green’s re-telling of a remarkable story which took place just metres from the Sherman’s doors captured the hearts of audiences and won huge praise from critics in 2023.

21 March – 5 April 2025

## HOT CHICKS

By Rebecca Hammond

Directed by Hannah Noone

(A co-production with Grand Ambition)

Penlan, Swansea. Now.

Teenagers Kyla and Ruby spend their evenings hanging at Cheney’s chicken shop dreaming of being brat, moving to Vegas and going viral. A chance encounter with older, cooler Sadie, means their dreams of pool parties and showering in dollars could become a reality...but at what price?

A story of friendship, exploitation and grooming, Rebecca Jade Hammond’s ferocious, witty and unsettling new play is contemporary Welsh theatre at its sharpest.

*Hot Chicks* will also be performed at Swansea Grand Theatre from 16 – 25 April.

26 April – 10 May 2025

## THE WOMEN OF LLANRUMNEY

By Azuka Oforka

Directed by Patricia Logue

Wales’ colonial past is confronted head-on in Azuka Oforka’s devastating historical drama, which returns in 2025 following its five-star, sold out premiere run in May 2024. *The Women of Llanrumney* will be performed at Sherman Theatre following a run at Stratford East in London.

6 – 8 April 2025

## THE PILOT

By Jennifer Lunn

Directed by Francesca Pickard

Developed by the current cohort of Sherman Theatre’s Introduction to Playwriting programme supported by the Moondance Foundation.

Performed by Sherman Youth Theatre.

An innovative and inspiring new collaboration unites the new voices of our two key creative development programmes (for ages 15-18) with one of Wales’s leading writers; award-winning playwright Jennifer Lunn.



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1 – 10 May 2025

## PORT TALBOT GOTTA BANKSY

*Written and directed by*

Paul Jenkins & Tracy Harris

(A co-production with Theatr3)

**Port Talbot. Now.**

In December 2018, Banksy gives Port Talbot a Christmas present, which makes it an international talking point, when early one morning one of his murals appears on a back lane wall. In 2024 Port Talbot hit the headlines again with the end of the blast furnace steel-making synonymous with the town and the beginning of a new uncertainty.

In the weeks after Banksy's artwork first appeared, Paul Jenkins and Tracy Harris of Theatr3 spoke to people across the town. What began as a project exploring the impact of the sudden arrival of a Banksy original in the town became, over six years, an evolving portrait of a community and a testament to its resilience. Now, the stories of the community take centre stage, their words performed live by a professional cast.

**Port Talbot Gotta Banksy** is an urgent new play about people, about the power of art and a celebration of the strength of communities to withstand everything life has to throw at them. Join us as the people of Port Talbot share their stories in this compelling and compassionate verbatim play.

The play will be performed at the Plaza, Port Talbot following the performances at Sherman Theatre.

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May 2025

## SALEM

*By* Lisa Parry

(A collaboration with Royal Welsh College of Music & Drama for their NEW festival)

**Pentre Gwynfryn. Now.**

The latest play by Lisa Parry (*The Merthyr Stigmatist*) will be Sherman Theatre's ninth collaboration with our close partners, Royal Welsh College of Music & Drama, and is our 2025 commission for the college's NEW festival.

Exact dates to be announced in the new year.

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24 November 2025 – 3 January 2026

## THE FROG PRINCE BIWTI A BROGS

*By* Gwawr Loader

*Directed by* Elin Phillips

(A co-production with Theatr Cymru)

**Tre Melys. A time long ago.**

Step into the Sherman Studio and enter a magical world with Gwawr Loader's new version of *The Frog Prince* by the Brothers Grimm. This is the perfect introduction to the wonder of live theatre for ages 3-6. ***The Frog Prince / Biwti a Brogs*** is performed in English and Welsh at separate performances. Audiences across Wales can experience this enchanting new show as it tours south Wales before the Christmas performances, and across north and mid Wales in early 2026.

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28 November 2025 – 3 January 2026

## ALICE: RETURN TO WONDERLAND

*By* Hannah McPake

**Cardiff. 1947.**

Next Christmas, Hannah McPake (*Tales of the Brothers Grimm*) will take audiences on a brand-new adventure from bombed out streets in post-war Cardiff and into Wonderland, all from the comfort of their Main House seat. Another amazing, joyous and spectacular Sherman Christmas show for everyone aged 7+.



Further productions  
will be announced  
in the new year.



## WIDER PROGRAMME

13 December 2024 **SOLD OUT**

**MARK THOMAS: GAFFA TAPES**

17 January 2025 **SOLD OUT**

**ANDY ZALTZMAN:  
THE ZALTGEIST**

28 February 2025

**ROB AUTON: THE EYES OPEN  
AND SHUT SHOW**

13 March 2025

**RICHARD HERRING: CAN  
I HAVE MY BALL BACK?**

14 March 2025

**ANGELA BARNES: ANGST**

15 March 2025

**JENNY ECLAIR: JOKES,  
JOKES, JOKES, LIVE**

8 April 2025

**JOHN SHUTTLEWORTH**

9 April 2025

**LOU SANDERS: NO KISSING  
IN THE BINGO HALL**

11 April 2025

**JOE KENT-WALTERS IS  
FRANKIE MONROE: LIVE!**

12 April 2025

**DEIRDRE O'KANE: O'KANING IT**

17 May 2025

**GAZ OAKLEY: TALES OF  
THE HOMESTEAD**

For more information on our full programme for 2025 please visit the Sherman Theatre website.

 [shermantheatre.co.uk](https://shermantheatre.co.uk)

## CHRISTMAS GIFTS?

Are you still looking for the perfect Christmas gift for the theatre lover in your life?

Browse our online shop for a selection of scripts of plays premiered by Sherman Theatre and much more. During the festive period you can also buy our very special Santa Letters here.

 [shermantheatre.co.uk/shop/](https://shermantheatre.co.uk/shop/)

Maybe your gift recipient would like a trip to the theatre? Sherman Theatre Gift Vouchers are available to purchase online, over the phone or in person.

 [shermantheatre.co.uk/gift-vouchers/](https://shermantheatre.co.uk/gift-vouchers/)

For a gift that lasts for a whole year, all our annual memberships are now available to purchase as Gift Memberships via our Box Office on 02920 646900.

 [shermantheatre.co.uk/support-us/membership-scheme/](https://shermantheatre.co.uk/support-us/membership-scheme/)

Give a unique and lasting gift by naming a seat in our main house auditorium or donating to the Sherman Studio Appeal. In addition to having their name in situ for 10 years, you and your gift recipient will be invited to join us for a backstage tour of the theatre.

 [shermantheatre.co.uk/support-us/long-lasting-support/](https://shermantheatre.co.uk/support-us/long-lasting-support/)

We would like to thank you for supporting Sherman Theatre this year and send our best wishes for the upcoming festive season.

Our spring / summer edition Members' Newsletter will be sent out in May 2025, so keep an eye on your inbox for that.

**SHERMANTHEATRE.CO.UK**  
**029 2064 6900**  



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ARIENNIR GAN  
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