

Queen Margaret University and Brunton Theatre collaborate on the stage



Community drama specialists from Queen Margaret University have joined forces with The Brunton Theatre to bring to the stage a moving musical black comedy about local ned culture.

Following the success of the previous production 'The Battle of Pinkie Cleugh', the University has, once again, been working with local drama groups to bring to the community 'The Beggars' Opera – A Ned's Lament' by Ronan O'Donnell.

The production, which is set in shadowy Leith and focuses on a gang leader and his team of thugs, captures the essence of John Gay's satirical ballad play 'The Beggars' Opera'. The story focuses on hard man gang leader Macheath and his involvement in a dangerous love triangle. Both Macheath's professional and personal affairs are closely watched by Mr Crombie, the most crooked lawyer in town. The play captures the manipulation of the poor by the corrupt rich with the poor being punished and the rich getting off scot-free.

Irvine Allan, community drama lecturer at Queen Margaret University, explained: "Through the creation of the set and the fabulous costumes designed and constructed by our costume design students, 'A Ned's Lament' skillfully fuses the 18th century with modern day Leith. The costumes capture present day fashion but with a hint of the old 'Beggars Opera'. The result is a hilarious and moving production which highlights Scots' language and culture."

With a strong community focus, 'A Ned's Lament' involves QMU students and an enthusiastic team of people from The Brunton

Players, The Brunton Senior Youth Theatre and The Prestongrange Players. Following their recent success in 'The Battle of Pinkie Cleugh' there was no hesitation from the community drama groups to get involved in another combined production.

Irvine Allan, said: "It's wonderful to see our students working with a mix of community groups and people of all ages. The cast involves young people from the local youth theatre, as well as more experienced people who have spent many years in amateur dramatics. We are especially delighted to have East Lothian woman, Kate Potter, taking part. Kate, who is in her 80s, plays the role of a young ned and she is absolutely fantastic. In addition, the music for the libretto has been written by Jane Gardener and Hazel Morrison, both musicians from Portobello. Jane has a PhD in Music Composition from The Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama, and singer songwriter, Hazel, is about to release her second album. The libretto and the play were both written by Ronan O'Donnell, also from Portobello."

Irvine concluded: "This latest collaboration builds on the existing established relationship between Queen Margaret University and the Brunton Theatre. It provides an excellent platform for community theatre to grow within Musselburgh and the surrounding area, and we really hope that the local community will come along and support the production."

'The Beggars' Opera – A Ned's Lament' will take place in the Brunton Theatre's modern art Venue 1, Musselburgh on Friday 11th and Saturday 12th April 2014, 7:30pm. Tickets are priced at £6.75 (£25 family of 4). Box Office: T: 0131 665 2240.