

Between the lines of The Libertine

The first full production of the sedos season opens tomorrow night. Rumour has it this really is a show with a difference - we know the script is set in Charles II Restoration period and about the Second Earl of Rochester - but it isn't so Restoration as you might think! The Grapevine snuck backstage to find out why this is a must-see on the fringe theatre circuit and to find out if the hearsay, about a props list that includes items that only certain 'Soho retailers' would display, is really true

When is a play not just a play? When it's not what you expect.

Take one "normal" script, but add direction by Anne-Marie Leigh, movement by Leigh Tredger, costumes designed by Angus Jacobs (and assisted by our own Mistress Lister and the Sedos seamstress extraordinaires), hair and make-up by Chloë Faine, lights by Ben Pickersgill and a top secret set design by Brian Tucker and you've already got the makings of something unusual and no doubt visually startling. Then add a soundtrack as diverse as White Zombie, Oasis, Mumford & Sons, Velvet Underground, Green Day and Britney, and the mind begins to boggle.

Let's not even begin to talk about the mysterious Grotesque Chorus. Oh okay, let's! Take nine people, put them into movement and improv rehearsals, tell them they are "characters" and "not characters" (say what?!)... apparently they are deliberately ambiguous enough to allow the audience to decide for themselves who and what they are. This is definitely something not seen in known recent sedos history. But the initial inspiration did indeed come from that fabulously creepy lurking omnipresence of the Sweeney ensemble. Words cannot describe the work that these nine have done. Pushing their own personal boundaries, a huge learning curve taking them beyond their instincts.



Then you take these weirdo nine and plonk them into the world of the other nine who have been working equally as hard. And watch the two come together and create atmosphere and story and intrigue and questions. They've worked at a furious pace since early January and, together with their production team, the passion and dedication is explosive.

To look beyond the page, beyond the obvious. To see beyond the veil of existence and read between the lines. This is what this production will do. It looks beyond. It has challenged our performing membership - 18 actors pushing themselves beyond comfort and instinct, our production membership - and now finally our audience.

Suffice it to say that this production runs the gamut from the gutter to the parlour rooms, playhouse stages and royal gardens; from bawdy comedy to exquisite tragedy; from the lewd to the divine.

How can you resist the challenge (to paraphrase from the words of the opening monologue): *"You will not like me. No, I say you will not. The gentlemen will be envious and the ladies will be repelled. Oh yes, I shall do things you will like but do not warm to me, it will not serve. I am John Wilmot, and I do not want you to like me."*

Will you? There's only one way to find out.

(All photos: © Nick Chronnell Photography)

The Libertine is at the Bridewell Theatre, 2-6 March at 7.30pm, plus Saturday matinee at 2.30pm. Bohemian gala night on Friday, 5 March. Don't miss it, buy tickets at www.sedos.co.uk

New sedos marketing subcommittee

Dedicated readers of The Grapevine will notice that this edition has a different style to previous ones

That's because Dan Chasemore - Sedos's marketing guru, whose many jobs included compiling The Grapevine - has left for New Zealand.

Anyway, with the departure of Dan, it was decided to set up a new Sedos marketing subcommittee. Frankly, we can't work out how Dan not only did all this work by himself, but also hid it from his boss, so the idea is that six or seven mere mortals will replace the one marketing marvel that was Dan Chasemore. We drained every drop of information from him before he left, and now we are boldly stepping out alone.

The marketing committee is led by the intrepid Becs Weymouth, and the other members are (strictly in alphabetical order): Amy Daw, Angharad Davies, Lauren Mole, Nick Chronnell, Pippa Roome and Stephen Beeny. We meet about every five weeks and if anyone would like to join us or has any ideas, please do contact Becs (rebecca.weymouth@gmail.com).

Have your say in sedos

The AGM is just around the corner, which is the time to relive those wonderful moments from the 2009 season, glance our eyes over the financials (how much does it really cost to put on a show?), vote in the new committee who will take up the Sedos reins into 2010/11, and generally all catch up over a glass of something chilled and boozy.



Another type of grapevine that Sedos members know very well

We don't just talk about the hot spots for handing out flyers - recent meeting topics have included the new-look Sedos website (see *Stephen's update right*), Facebook, Sedos branding, audience and member research, and The Grapevine, as well as plugging current shows.

And finally, if anyone would like to contribute material or ideas to The Grapevine, either regularly or occasionally, please do contact Pippa (pippa_roome@ipcmedia.com), who has taken on co-ordinating the content, while Nick is now responsible for the layout.

When: Tuesday, 20 April 2010. From 18:30.
Where: Hoop & Grapes
 80 Farringdon St. London EC4A 4BL
Why: because your voice and vote counts

Dates for your diary

Directors' workshop: Saturday, 15 May
 Playreading social: Thursday, 18 March

sedos online

Have you checked out <http://www.sedos.co.uk> in the past few weeks?

The new-look Sedos website - welcome revisions courtesy of the tireless Stephen Beeny

We've recently raised the curtain on an enhanced website with a new homepage, simplified navigation, production images, audition info and all the latest news. It's still in previews (we've a few more tweaks to make and getting the archive packed with photos will take some time), but we'd love to know what you think - send your thoughts to webmaster@sedos.co.uk.

As part of our expanding online presence we also have a new fan-page on Facebook where we'll be posting news as it breaks. Become a fan and visit the Sedos Facebook page at <http://www.facebook.com/sedostheatre>. Invite your friends to do so too and get chatting on the wall.

Sedos likes this

Let the taming begin

sedos's annual *Shakespeare in the City* show has just been cast - we reveal who'll be strutting their stuff in the workplaces of London

This year's Sedos Shakespeare in the City production is *The Taming of the Shrew*, and it will be performed in offices all over London at the end of April, with two public performances at the London Stock Exchange.

The auditions were two weeks ago and the full cast list is below. Congratulations to everyone who made the cut.

Director Luke Simonds said: "There was heaps of talent and lots of surprises... auditions are by nature a nerve-wracking process (for actors and director alike!) but that didn't stop some great little performances shining through. I have gathered together a wonderful cast with lots of energy, who will make 'Shrew' great fun to prepare and to watch."

Cast list:

Kate	Alix Hearn
Vincenzio	Bernard Doogan
Gremio	Daniel Brownridge
Bianca	Emma Knott
Petruchio	James Newall
Lucentio	Keith Arrowsmith
Grumio	Liz Hogan
Tranio	Nick Mouton
Baptista	Simon Hill
Hortensio	Wayil Eisa



A shrew being tamed ... "owned", more like. Have at thee, shrew!

And, for comedy value, here are three things you didn't know about shrews:

- The common shrew has red-tipped teeth (ouch).
- Baby shrews will form a chain following their mother, using their mouths to hold onto the sibling in front's tail (aaaahhhh).
- The Malaysian pentailed tree shrew would be able to give Sedos's most devoted bar-goers a run for their money - weight for weight, it drinks the equivalent of nine glasses of wine a night in bertam palm nectar - and no hangover (geez, hard core).

Matted Hair

sedos's big summer musical *Hair* is auditioning this week. The Grapevine speaks to the men in the hot seat, Matthew Gould and Matthew Prince

Grapevine: *I've heard a rumour that the production team is changing - what's the story?*

Musical director and co-producer MG: Well, sadly because of work commitments, Paul Taylor-Mills has had to withdraw from the production, but I am delighted that Matthew Prince, fresh from his *Laramie* success, has agreed to step up from co-producing duties to take on the directing responsibilities.

GV to MP: *Wow, that's fantastic of you to step up. It's a real challenge at such short notice?*

MP: I'd been on the production team already, so was already pretty versed with the show. I am hugely excited to be directing such an iconic piece - it is a wonderful ensemble show. The themes speak for now - harmony and understanding! But it is going to be a fabulous challenge to get it on the road - particularly making sure we don't lose the story amongst the amazing score and the choreography.

GV to MG: *What drew you to *Hair* in the first place?*

MG: It's a show that I've been wanting to do for ages - and particularly after the success of *Rent* and indeed the vibe and enjoyment we had doing it, I thought that it would be great to do another "rock" musical. As Matthew said, it's about creating an ensemble, a company - the songs are fabulous to sing, the cast are all on stage pretty much all the time, the harmonies are great - I can't wait to get going!

GV to MP: *I think some people are worried *Hair* contains nudity - what would you say to anyone who is put off auditioning?*

MP: As we discussed at the workshop, it's actually such a short moment, but a hugely liberating one. It is when the "tribe" decide to stand up to the US authorities and burn their draft cards - an angry moment - a moment of defiance, passive resistance. It is a short but powerful moment and we will be staging it with great sensitivity to the actors, as well as working closely with the cast during rehearsals to ensure everyone feels they can express themselves during this scene and maintain their dignity. I was really pleased to see so many people at the workshop willing to accept that this is just one very tiny part of a fantastic show.

GV: *Good luck - we can't wait to see it.*

Show dates: 16-26 June 2010

Auditions: 4, 5 and 7 March 2010

To book an audition slot, please e-mail: hairauditions.sedos@googlemail.com



sedos on speed

On 31 January, sedos put on a workshop performance of *The Laramie Project* - a play about a brutal homophobic murder in the American mid-west - after just 48 hours of rehearsals. Cast member Tracie Laurinaitis, who works in career services at London Business School and is originally from Michigan, recounts her first Sedos experience

Having just acted in a play in which I attempted a Chicago gangster accent, a fellow cast mate passed along the information on *The Laramie Project* and thought I was ready to use my natural mid-western American accent... to challenge myself creatively. I am rather fresh to the amateur theatre scene in London and *Laramie* was only my second project. I was curious to get involved in a project that required you to get it right in one shot.

Friday: in an evening spent gathered round an industrial heater (which looked like a rocket jetting flames and gas permeating the room), we read through *Laramie* at a tortoise pace in almost four hours. It could have been the gas, but how were we going to pull this off in a little over 48 hours?

Saturday: feeling the wine and karaoke from the evening before (not in the *Laramie* script), we were at it again. With swift direction and clear vision, Matt (Prince, the director) was able to get us where we needed to be. His vision was

clear, but his memory, not so much, as he had trouble remembering our names as well as the characters we played. Luckily we did for the most part. Keeping track of a large newly formed cast proved a challenge, however, and one member was locked in the rehearsal space that evening... but was let out eventually. It proved to be character building.

Sunday: *Laramie* is known to be cold in the winter, and the rehearsal space simulated *Laramie* in it's worst winter in 40 years. Pace was no issue at this point. Then it was off to the venue (*The Winterflood Theatre*, City of London School), where the "dressing room" was a careers services office... perhaps a sign for us to take a look at what we were doing with our lives at this point. A hint from the director?

I think the cast and crew of *Laramie* would agree that we all surprised ourselves during the performance. Somehow this motley group was able to come together, shine, and support on and off stage within a matter of days. The audience laughed, cried, and even applauded. The final bow was bittersweet as we all hoped to do it again...

This was my first experience with Sedos, and I absolutely plan on working with the group again... I would perform on a boat, I would read through on a goat, I would audition in the rain, and in the dark and on a train. And in the cold and on a tree - I would do it again and again - hopefully you'll see!

Tracie played Amanda Gronich, Marge Murray, and Tiffany Edwards in The Laramie Project.

A glass of wine with... Will Harrison-Wallace

The Grapevine puts sedos's chairman on the spot

When did you join Sedos and what was your first show?

1989 and I was a pirate in *Pirates of Penzance*.

Are you in a Sedos show at the moment?

No - but will endeavour to see all this year's shows and will certainly be there for *The Libertine*.

What do you do in "real life"?

For 22 years I worked in the stock market. I left in July last year and am currently on a one-year actor training course at ALRA (The Academy of Live and Recorded Arts).

What's the worst thing that has happened to you on stage?

Actually not a Sedos production, but having to ad-lib for three minutes whilst waiting for an actor to re-enter the scene during *Babes in Arms*.

Bearing in mind Sedos's roots, have you ever owned any stocks? And if you could exchange one thing, what would it be?

Yes, have owned stocks - sadly not all have been worthwhile investments. I'd exchange my mortgage.

If you had to represent your country in international competition, what would it be for?

Does acting count? If not then tennis.

Have you had any unusual dreams recently?

Don't remember dreams that often - although



Will Harrison-Wallace, before his smashing new haircut

about four times a year I do have that dream about not having learnt my lines and then realising I have to be on stage in 10 minutes for the opening night.

If you were a kangaroo what would you keep in your pocket?

My iPhone.

Finish the sentence: a good production begins with...?

The right production team.

And ends with....?

A standing ovation.

Becky Smith and Chloë Faine sent to the Tower

Becky Smith directed Anthony Minghella's *Cigarettes and Chocolate* for Tower Theatre Company in January. She tells us about the experience.

Why did you decide to work with Tower?

I was approached by the artistic director who had come to see *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* last year as he had heard on the grapevine (AKA at the bar) that I was interested in directing one or more of the Anthony Minghella shorts which he had been looking at for Tower. A combination of flattery and good timing meant I agreed to sign up to direct them for Tower.

What would you say are the main differences?

Tower has a more prolific output than Sedos with over 20 shows per year. This allows them to take on smaller and sometimes less popular plays, which wouldn't fall into the usual Sedos artistic remit. The age range in Tower is also broader which is interesting for a director (I found myself directing actors in their 20s and 30s, whilst Chloë's cast were in their 40s and 50s). Tower spent many many years with its own theatre, whereas Sedos has always led a peripatetic lifestyle, which I think is reflected in the production style of the two companies, Sedos working very much from a top down (director and producer) process whilst Tower works from large technical committees upwards.

What did you learn about yourself?

I learned - or possibly remembered - how much I enjoy working one on one with actors on really in-depth script work - a show like *Cigarettes and Chocolate* is a real gift to any director who enjoys that part of the process.



*Sedos's Luke Simmonds appears in juicy role for Tower Theatre
(Photo: © Nick Chronnell Photography)*

Did you learn anything that Sedos could use in the future?

The organisation of the Tower set, costumes and props stores is really something we Sedos committee types can only dream of. Ah, one day...

Bridewell vs Teatro Technis. Discuss.

Well, bearing in mind my show was on during what felt like the bleak midwinter it is possibly an unfair comparison, as I have been to Teatro in the summer and it is a very pleasant space. That notwithstanding, my heart remains with the Bridewell...

How did you choose your play?

As mentioned, I'd been mooted the idea of pitching it for Sedos' Edinburgh slot and was approached around the time I realised I wasn't able to direct for Edinburgh for 2010 anyway; so fate intervened, it seems.

So, would you work with Tower again?

Yes, absolutely, if the play and timings worked. I have rarely laughed so much as during rehearsals for *Cigs and Choc*.

Chloë Faine directed Conor McPherson's *Shining City* for Tower Theatre Company in February. Tell us more, Chloë...

Why did you decide to work with Tower?

I'd thought about directing for Tower a few times - I like their ability to do smaller scale plays than Sedos can typically budget. I then got drunk with the artistic director at a wedding and agreed to direct two!

What would you say are the main differences?

Tower members have a bigger age range and come from perhaps more varied walks of life, so their productions cover a broader range of styles and interests. Sedos has distilled what we do well in recent years, and come up with a more definitive "house-style", of which I am proud. Neither is better - being able to draw on both of those areas of strength is a real bonus.

What did you learn about yourself?

Tower don't use "producers" in the way that we do in Sedos - for us, producers are effectively production manager, accountant, team coordinator and company stage manager (and hence should be treated like minor deities...) I have rather a chaotic personality - I should never never do a show without a Becky Smith or an Angharad on my shoulder!

Did you learn anything that Sedos could use in the future?

It's great that Tower have a big stock of set basics (flats, steeldeck etc) and a workshop for building stuff.

Bridewell vs Teatro Technis. Discuss.

Technis is a funny old venue. Having directed at the Bridewell for the past five years it was exciting to



*Tower's Peta Barker thinks he's seeing things in *Shining City*
(Photo: © Alexander T. Knapp Photography)*

work in a new space. Technis offers a more intimate experience, but playing on three sides presents its own challenges. The Bridewell will always (hopefully) feel like home - the bar is so much more comfortable than 99% of other amateur theatre bars!

How did you choose your play?

Shining City was actually "gifted" to me... i.e. directing that was a condition of directing Patrick Marber's *Don Juan* in Soho at the Bridewell this summer. I fell in love with the play on a first reading however and it was a very happy "compromise"!

Will you direct for Tower again?

As we speak I am drafting the casting notice for *Don Juan* in Soho - one of the funniest, darkest, filthiest plays (how very out of character for me!) I've ever read - and hoping some more Sedossers will audition for me ;-)

*Auditions for *Don Juan* in Soho are the weekend of 20-21 March, with a read-through the preceding Sunday - <http://www.towertheatre.org.uk> for details.*

Swinging, baby. Yeah!

Any Swing Goes - the 18 piece big band from the heart of London.

Join us at the Bridewell Theatre for one night only in a swinging Fundraising event, with all proceeds going to help the St Bride Foundation carry on its splendid work in The City.

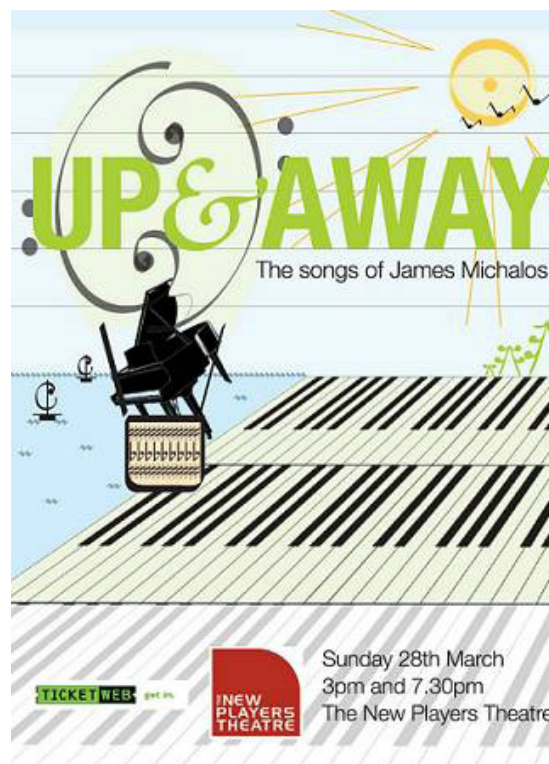


30 March at 7.30pm
 Tickets £20
 Cabaret Seats £25
 Tickets @ www.stbridefoundation.org

Cabaret seats only available by
 telephone or from the reception at:

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 Bride Lane,
 London.
 EC4Y 8EQ.
 020 7427 4742
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Up, up and away!



Up & Away - an anthology of memorable melodies to lift you up and inspiring lyrics to take you away from it all.

Songs about everyone from housewives to superheroes, interviewers to sightseers. Songs about everything from ravens to dream pregnancies.

Tired of revivals and tributes? Then come and enjoy a selection from a fresh and exciting collection, penned by one of the unsung champions of British music theatre. Featuring fifteen of the most talented West End performers, Up and Away will take place at The New Players Theatre, under The Arches at Charing Cross, on Sunday March 28th at 3pm and 7.30pm.

Tickets are a recession-busting £15, £12.50 if you can muster up a group of eight song lovers, and £10 if you are a student or an OAP or a convincing fraud.

Tickets can be booked through the New Players box office on 020 7930 5868

Online at www.ticketweb.co.uk (0844 477 1000)

Or through Soho Theatre on 020 7478 0135

There will also be some £10 tickets available on www.lastminute.com on a first come first served basis.

Leaving on a jet plane

Long-standing Sedos stalwarts Bridget Cross and Dan Chasemore have left for New Zealand, after a great send-off party on 5 February.

For contributions over the years too many and varied to mention on this deadline, Sedos salutes you. This crazy place just won't be the same without you. You will be missed. xx



Bridget (right) with Andy Mac (Photos: Charlotte Price)



Chase (left) with his usual tippie

60 seconds with Lord Rochester

After hunting high and low around the watering holes of The City, The Grapevine managed to grab a minute with the infamous John Wilmot, the Second Earl of Rochester, in-between lampoons and over a glass of fine wine. With his bio-play on this week at the Bridewell Theatre, here's what he had to say...

It's a bright, cold February morning, how are you today?

Bright and cold!

It was Valentine's Day at the weekend, do you enter into the spirit of this?

Every day is Valentine's Day... the pleasures of love have no set hour or place.

You're a playhouse creature and lover of all arts, what's your "must-see" production in the West End right now?

Sweetie, obviously my event, but I suppose if pushed Priscilla would be a divine night out.

Do you have a favourite artist?

Georgia O'Keeffe - she captures the delicacy of the female form and all the splendour that comes with nurturing them!

Your work, and personal antics are regular features in the press and celeb rags, do you read them?

No. Next question.

How does it make you feel?

Darling, people are always trying to find a method in my supposed madness and I feel they don't need me to validate their opinions.

Did this apply to "Monkey-Gate" (ref to the time Lord Rochester bought a monkey from a street seller and had a portrait painted with it, instead of his wife)?

(Laughs) If the truth be such a scandal, then so be it (laughs again, then drinks).

Your illicit, booze fuelled romps with London call girls made front page news a few years ago yet you bounced back stronger than ever, how did you manage this?

With style and a smile.

Big Dolly went on to make a doc-u-series on Sky about her life on the streets of St James, and promptly made a fortune in magazine deals and a film is rumored. Are you involved at all?

I've been "involved" with Dolly, but not with this supposed movie... some whores make up lies or twist the truth... I doubt very much Sky will show what really happened in St James as it is technically classed as pornographically indecent material, and sadly not the single human act with which we all find meaning. Mankind must question that which makes him happy, especially if it is as easy and natural to us as animals... other animals needs make noises to announce they are fertile and desired... We have all heard the foxes late at night in London... (smiles).



You split your time between London and your residence in the country. Which do you prefer?

Impossible to say - depends on the time of day you ask me, right down to the quality of the company I am keeping.

It's very on-trend to have interests and business in the country these days - debauched Blur guitarist Alex James claims cheese-making saved his life. Do you have any similar aspirations? Goat herding or wine making perhaps?

Wine making? Hmmmmmm, I am rather partial to hiding things in the grounds of Adderbury (Lord Rochester's country manor house) then forgetting about them. Perhaps you could come and help me look my dear... I seem to remember

placing one in the master bedroom somewhere - underneath something soft I think it was.

What's on your ipod?

A lot of NIN (nine inch nails), some Richard Cheese, Portishead, Bloodhound Gang... and Elton John.

Any regrets?

Non, je ne regrette rien! Are we done? I have to see a man about a dog... (kisses my hand and sweeps out of the room leaving his personal number behind).

John Wilmot appears in the self-titled The Libertine at the Bridewell Theatre THIS WEEK.

Don't miss it, support Sedos, buy tickets at <http://www.sedos.co.uk/>