

Note: back issues of the weekly e-bulletin can be found on our website.

# The Writers' Guild Weekly e-bulletin No. 299

## Friday 7<sup>th</sup> December 2007

This week on the Guild's blog, [writersguild.blogspot.com](http://writersguild.blogspot.com) :

- [US strike talks continue](#)
- [MPs call for tax credits for kids TV](#)
- [Thanks from the WGA](#)
- [Pegg wins Guild Comedy Award](#)
- [Increase of minimum rates for TV writers negotiate...](#)
- [Polly Stenham interview](#)
- [Channel 4 schools moves online](#)
- [The relevance of sci-fi](#)
- [BBC cues up new Aussie soap](#)
- [Derby Playhouse closes](#)

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## What Members Are Getting Up To

### Guild News

#### 1. British Comedy Awards

Simon Pegg won the Writers' Guild Ronnie Barker Award at the British Comedy Awards on Wednesday night.

Peep Show (written by Sam Bain and Jesse Armstrong) was named Best TV Comedy, while Gavin & Stacey (written by Ruth Jones and James Corden) took the award for Best New British Television Comedy. See Gail Renard's report on <http://writersguild.blogspot.com/>

#### 2. Increase of minimum rates for TV writers negotiated with the BBC

The minimum rates for writers commissioned under the WGGB / PMA / BBC TV agreement have been increased by 4% as a result of negotiations between the three parties. The Guild is delighted to announce this increase, which was effective from 1 November 2007.

The following per minute minimum rates for TV writers will now apply:

	<b>Past</b>	<b>New</b>
Teleplays:	£160.07	£166.47
Series/Serials	£145.19	£151.00
Dramatisations	£104.34	£108.51
Adaptations	£63.52	£66.06
Educational Drama	£97.54	£101.44

The minimum attendance fee has been increased from £85.32 to £88.73.

This rates increase is in line with that of the BBC's in-house staff.

### WGA Strike News

#### 3. WGA STRIKE PART ONE

## **BIG THANK-YOU FOR GLOBAL SOLIDARITY**

As negotiations continued in the fifth week of the US screenwriters' strike, the Writers' Guild of America spared the time to thank sister guilds around the world for their support on the International Day of Solidarity, 28 November 2007.

The letter from the WGA reads:

Dear Members of the International Writers' Community:

We at the Writers Guild of America extend our heartfelt thanks to members of the international community for your unprecedented and robust outpouring of support for our cause on International Solidarity Day on November 28.

We were moved and inspired by the hundreds of scribes who marched in front of the Eiffel Tower in France, at the Brandenburg Gate in Germany, and on the streets of Canada, England, Australia, Spain, Portugal, The Netherlands, Wales, and Mexico.

Clearly, our fight to win fair compensation from global media corporations has struck a chord with writers everywhere.

The scope of the protests was truly impressive: In Berlin, over 100 German writers carried WGA picket signs at the Brandenburg Gate. Hundreds of writers marched in freezing temperatures in Montreal and Toronto. In Amsterdam, an auditorium full of writers cheered our cause. We have heard from the Portuguese Screenwriters Guild, the Writers' Guild of Great Britain, the International Affiliation of Writers Guilds, the Writers Guild of Canada, the Screenwriters Guild of Germany, and the Federation of Screenwriters in Europe. Members of the Irish Playwrights and Screenwriters Guild marched for our cause dressed as leprechauns!

At home, WGA members with international backgrounds marched at NBC Studios in Burbank, California. Jean-Yves Pitoun, a French native and WGA West member, stressed that the fight in the U.S. has an impact abroad: "Europeans are very carefully watching the writers, actors, and directors in the U.S. because Rupert Murdoch is everywhere."

We thank you for reinforcing that fair compensation for writers is a worldwide cause. Together our voices will be heard.

Sincerely,  
Board of Directors  
Writers Guild of America West

## **4. WGA STRIKE PART TWO**

### **ARE THESE TALKS GETTING ANYWHERE?**

The Writers Guild of America and the US networks and studios were back in negotiations on Tuesday 4 December 2007. The question in everybody's mind now is whether they can reach agreement before Christmas or whether the strike will carry on into the New Year . . . and perhaps beyond.

The initial news as the talks reconvened was that the studio and network bosses had "changed their position" but this soon turned out to be a false judgement. One insider told the WGGB: "You were reading their PR. They haven't moved an inch."

It now seems that there have been four days of serious talks without a real breakthrough. Commentators are beginning to wonder if the strike will continue for several more weeks. Some say the negotiations are rocky because while the studios and networks could settle with the writers, they would then have to offer the same terms to the actors and directors, whose union deals expire in June 2008.

If this becomes the issue, the present strike could last as long as the last one, in 1988, which went on for 22 weeks – or five months.

For the latest information about the WGA strike, you should look at [www.wga.org](http://www.wga.org) and <http://unitedhollywood.blogspot.com/>.

## **5. WGA STRIKE PART THREE**

### **THAT T-SHIRT – THIS YEAR’S MUST-HAVE RADICAL XMAS PRESENT**

Owing to popular demand we have ordered another batch of those great red Writers’ Guild On Strike t-shirts. They come in men’s sizes small, medium, large and extra large and cost £15 each (inc. post and packaging). See them modelled at the TUC demo on 28 November here:

<http://writersguild.blogspot.com/2007/11/we-support-writers-guild-of-america.html>

If you want your t-shirts to arrive before Christmas please make sure your cheque gets here before 18 December. Please send cheque payable to Writers’ Guild of Great Britain and mark the envelope T-Shirts.

## **Industry News**

### **6. New Theatre Museum in Blackpool**

After the V&A-run Theatre Museum in Covent Garden, London was closed earlier this year the V&A is to go ahead with a full feasibility study for a new National Museum for the Performing Arts in Blackpool. The museum’s theatre and performance collections maybe merged with material from the Blackpool Council as well as from private collections.

## **Guild Events**

### **7. Writers' Guild and Bournemouth University Writers' Circle**

The Writers’ Guild of Great Britain and the Media School at Bournemouth University have collaborated to form a new Writer’s Circle in Bournemouth. The group is being set up to provide writers with a forum to discuss and develop their work.

All kinds of writing will be read and discussed, from scripts to plays and from poems to prose. John Foster, Guild member and Screenwriter in Residence at Bournemouth University will be chairing the circle and a showcase of work produced by Circle members as well as rehearsed readings by actors are planned as upcoming activities .

The Guild would like to encourage members living within the Bournemouth area to join the group. The Circle will meet every two weeks and admission will be free. It is possible that the circle may branch off into smaller groups so that writers of specific genres can get together to have their work read. The circle will be based at Bournemouth University.

Please email John Foster at [jfoster@bournemouth.ac.uk](mailto:jfoster@bournemouth.ac.uk) for further information.

We are keen to have groups set up in other regions too, so that members who live all over the UK have the opportunity to be part of the Writers' Guild Circles. Please get in touch with Moe Owoborode at [moe@writersguild.org.uk](mailto:moe@writersguild.org.uk) if you would like to be involved in establishing a circle in your area.

## **8. Event for Writers of BBC Long-Running Drama Series**

Do you write for a long-running drama series? Would you like to write *Holby City*, *Casualty*, *EastEnders* or *Doctors*? Do you have experience of working on any of those shows? If so, this is a unique opportunity to hear about how the BBC have been adapting their shows - and the working conditions on them - to make them more writer-friendly.

John Yorke, Controller Drama Production Studios for the BBC will be talking about changes he's made to the BBC's working practices and ways in which he is working to put writers back at the heart of the creative process. He will also be taking questions on this subject.

Other senior BBC drama executives will also be attending this event and will be available for questions.

This event is intended primarily for professional writers working in the TV industry and not as an opportunity to learn about ways in. Speakers will focus on current working practices in the BBC and ways in which the role and profile of writers on long-running drama series are changing.

The session will be chaired by Gail Renard, Chair of the Writers' Guild TV Committee on Wednesday 12 December, 7 - 9pm at the Writers' Guild Centre, 15 - 17 Britannia Street, London WC1X 9JN.

If you would like to submit questions anonymously in advance of the event, please send them to [naomi@writersguild.org.uk](mailto:naomi@writersguild.org.uk). There will be an opportunity to have a complimentary glass of wine and socialise after the event.

Tickets cost £5 for Guild members and £7.50 for non-members. To book, please send a cheque to 'BBC Long-running Series Event', Writers' Guild, 15 - 17 Britannia Street, London WC1X 9JN. Cheques should be made out to the Writers' Guild of Great Britain or email: [moe@writersguild.org.uk](mailto:moe@writersguild.org.uk)

## **Events**

### **9. Annual Storytelling Week**

From the 26<sup>th</sup> January until the 2<sup>nd</sup> February, the Society of Storytelling will have its eighth Annual Storytelling Week. For more information and to take part, please contact Del Reid at [reidthewords@hotmail.com](mailto:reidthewords@hotmail.com).

## **10. Stanza Poetry Festival, Scotland**

From the 12<sup>th</sup> until the 16<sup>th</sup> March, the Stanza Poetry Festival will be held in the university town of St. Andrews. To find out more about the contents of the festival go to [www.stanzapoetry.org](http://www.stanzapoetry.org).

## **Courses and Workshops**

### **11. TAPS CYMRU 2008 courses**

Do you have a story to tell about Wales?

Are you finding it difficult to find the right job for you?

Have you had periods in and out of work?

Are you seeking to return to work after having brought up a family?

Would you like help with using information technology?

Are you a Welsh resident?

Would you like to attend a FREE writing course?

If your answer is yes to the above questions we can help you.

TAPS CYMRU in association with the Welsh Assembly Government through the European Social Fund is offering places on its training courses to find and train new writers for film, television and other media. Courses will be held in January 2008 in Newport, Wrexham and Abergavenny. Travel Costs, Child Care and Out of Pocket Expenses will be met.

If you would like to write in English or Welsh for film and television and believe you have what it takes, why not get in touch with TAPS CYMRU for more information and an application form A.S.A.P.

Address: TAPS Cymru / It's My Shout - ITV Wales, Culverhouse Cross, Cardiff, CF5 6XJ

Tel: 02920 590 540

E-mail: [admin@tapsnet.org](mailto:admin@tapsnet.org)

### **12. Finding the Writer's Voice**

Open to all writers for scripts over 60 minutes (features, two-parters, mini-series), this is the ultimate script development programme.

An intensive weekend workshop will begin your training before three months of personal script coaching from a leading industry professional who will hone your script and unlock your unique potential. Writers will complete the scheme with a

range of advanced writing tools and an industry-standard calling card script as well as insider knowledge of what broadcasters are looking for right now.

The workshop will run Spring 2008.

If you would like an application form please email [gemma@tapsnet.org](mailto:gemma@tapsnet.org)

### **13. Script Editing Workshop**

The longest-running script editing scheme in the UK. This workshop has quickly established itself as the leading course for industry professionals hoping to work in script editing.

A comprehensive two-day workshop will guide you step-by-step through the editor's role, from searching for original talent and script analysis to a detailed exploration of the relationship between writer, script editor and producer. Guest tutors have included script, story and series editors from *The Bill*, allowing you access to unseen script drafts and storylining documents.

The workshop will run on the 22/23rd February 2008 in London.

If you would like an application form please email [gemma@tapsnet.org](mailto:gemma@tapsnet.org)

### **14. Euroscript Development Workshops**

Put theory into practice, and work with experienced industry professionals to take your individual project to treatment, first draft or further. You can start with an initial idea, or with work in progress. Whatever stage you are at, the Euroscript script consultant will work with you to help you create a strong, marketable script. Group size is kept to no more than six participants per consultant for maximum personal discussion and feedback.

#### **PRICES PER SESSION:**

Participants with projects: £40 (concessions £36)

Observers: £25 (concessions £22)

Booking is essential as workshop sizes are kept deliberately small.

You will need to send any written material for discussion no less than four full days in advance.

Euroscript is committed to providing sustained and on-going training for writers, directors and script developers at all levels of experience. We often have news of bursaries available to writers to attend our courses. When making your booking check on our website to find the latest on what help might be available to you.

The workshops are being held at:

The Diorama Arts Centre,  
3-7 Euston Centre,  
London,  
NW1 3JG

Monday 10<sup>th</sup> December, from 6:15pm until 9:30pm (registration begins at 6:00pm)

To book a place, please email [charles.harris@euroscript.co.uk](mailto:charles.harris@euroscript.co.uk)

Or phone on 0207 435 1330

## **15. Two-Day Course For Screenwriters**

Thursday 17 & Friday 18 January 2008

The Script Factory is designed specifically for screenwriters who have completed or are working on a first draft screenplay but have yet to break into the film industry. Screenwriting UK aims to provide participants with the understanding they need to turn a strong idea into a well-crafted screenplay that has the potential to attract interest from producers, developers and funders.

In-depth teaching on the principles of good screenwriting, planning the rewriting process and approaching the industry with a spec script is offered alongside invaluable insider knowledge from working writers and producers.

January's guest speakers will be screenwriter Tony Grisoni (*Brothers of the Head, Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*) and producer Kevin Loader (*The History Boys, Enduring Love, Captain Correlli's Mandolin*).

The fee for this course is £160 + VAT (total - £188). Writers' Guild of Great Britain members are eligible for a 10% discount (reducing the total to £169.20). To book by credit / debit card, please call 0207 323 1414.

## **Opportunities**

### **16. The Sitcom Trials... Under New Management**

Just as Virgin Megastore is bought out by the management and called Zavvi...

Just when you thought sitcom couldn't get any better...

Just when you thought it was safe to come out from behind Homer Simpson's sofa...

Just when you thought "blimey, they're not remaking Love Thy Neighbour and bringing back To The Manor Born for a one-off Christmas special..."

...The Sitcom Trials is back! And we're under new management

Taking over from Kev F Sutherland, producers Declan Hill and Simon Wright present a new, improved, industry showcase of four 15-minute sitcoms which have gone through two rounds of a knockout tournament and emerged victorious.

November saw The Sitcom Trials' biggest venture yet - sixteen fresh, new comedies battling for the prize of Best Sitcom 2007. Each Thursday night for four weeks, four different situation comedies went head to head. The audience voted for their favourite, and the top two from each night went through to the Semi-finals. After further voting and whittling, it's down to the last four. It's just like Strictly Come Dancing and The X Factor rolled into one...

The Grand Final is at the Soho Theatre on December 13 before a specially invited industry audience.

And you're specially invited to join us...

Venue: The Soho Theatre, 21 Dean Street, London W1D 3NE

Date: 13th December 1.30pm

Please RSVP to

Declan Hill [declan\\_hill@hotmail.com](mailto:declan_hill@hotmail.com)

Mobile: 07808 776914

Simon Wright [simonwright49@ntlworld.com](mailto:simonwright49@ntlworld.com)

Mobile: 07910 844699

## **17. The BBC National Short Story Award 2008**

Entries for the BBC National Short Story Award 2008 are now being accepted. The winning author will receive £15,000. The runner up prize is £3,000. The shortlist of five stories will be announced during May 2008 and will be broadcast on BBC Radio 4. The winner will be announced at the Award Ceremony in June. The Award is open to authors with a previous record of publication for their creative writing who are UK nationals or resident in the UK. Entries may be stories published during 2007 or previously unpublished. If you would like to read the short listed stories from 2006 or to find out more about the Awards, please go to [www.theshortstory.org.uk](http://www.theshortstory.org.uk). For details of eligibility and how to submit a story, please go to either [www.theshortstory.org.uk](http://www.theshortstory.org.uk) or [www.bbs.co.uk/radio4](http://www.bbs.co.uk/radio4).

## **18. Theatre Grand-Slam**

[Zeitgeist Theatre](http://www.zeitgeisttheatre.com) are looking for very short, witty, imaginative scripts to perform in a Grand-Slam theatre event in February.

Scripts need to be short (max. 8 minutes), require no more than four actors and have very basic lighting/sound direction.

One group of actors perform each play then the audience votes for their favourite. The emphasis is on originality, variety and entertainment. Apart from a lot of fun, this is a good way to try out ideas on an audience before developing further. The winner works with Zeitgeist to produce a one-act play for a week-long run at a top fringe venue next year and there's a prize for the runner-up!

ALL writers must be available to come to the event itself in South London on 10th February.

Please send script and a short writer biog/CV to [info@zeitgeisttheatre.com](mailto:info@zeitgeisttheatre.com)

## **19. Menagerie Theatre Company**

Menagerie Theatre Company creates, supports, and inspires new writing in the East of England, working with artists at all levels from first-time writers to nationally recognised playwrights, designers, actors, and producers.

A winter weekend of 'bare bones' productions of new short plays by three talented writers, Rough Diamonds will showcase new voices whose promise is evident in the passion, intelligence, and originality of their writing.

Menagerie are inviting writers to send in original scripts of unproduced plays which are between 20 and 30 minutes in length. They are particularly trying to encourage young and early career writers to apply and will prioritise writers who are based in the East of England - however, they will consider all applications, regardless of location.

To find out more and apply, visit [www.menagerie.uk.com/writer\\_development.htm](http://www.menagerie.uk.com/writer_development.htm)

## **20. Dumb Funded Theatre**

[dumbFUNDED theatre](http://dumbFUNDEDtheatre) is launching a sketch writing competition, to be judged by [James Henry](#), a writer for Green Wing, Smack The Pony, and ManStrokeWoman. Winning sketches will be performed as part of The dumbFUNDED Comedy Showcase! in the Falmouth area in early March 2008. Winners will also have the chance to direct and workshop their scripts with actors, and receive a free DVD of the show.

The competition for original sketches is themed around 'Town and Country', though the organisers are keen to root sketches in Cornwall where possible. Scripts can be submitted by post or email.

To find out more and to submit your sketches visit [www.dumbfunded.co.uk](http://www.dumbfunded.co.uk).

## **21. Graeae Theatre Company**

Graeae Theatre Company are looking for talented writers with an original and entertaining voice to take part in an expenses-paid, week-long residency on writing audio drama that will take place between 25th February to 1st March 2008.

To apply please write a 5 - 10 minute drama - for radio, screen or stage inspired by the title 'LOVE BITES'. The scheme is aimed at disabled writers.

Applications must reach us by email or post by 7th December. Please also include your contact details and a short biography of your writing experience.

Successful applicants will be notified by December 21st. We regret that we are unable to give feedback to unsuccessful applicants.

Please email scripts to: [graeae@bbc.co.uk](mailto:graeae@bbc.co.uk) or send to:

BBC Writersroom  
1st Floor, Grafton House  
379 Euston Road  
London  
NW1 3AU

Please mark the envelope clearly with GRAEAE.

The residency will be based at The Hurst in Shropshire

## 22. A New Member of the Guild is Looking for Collaboration

A new member of the guild is looking for collaboration

Kevin Hayes is a Polish-speaking actor/ director working on a project relating to a very interesting Polish artistic figure. As part of this project, to be realised for 2009, he is developing the following:

- A documentary for Channel 4, BBC, Discovery
- The staging of two original plays about the figure
- He would also like to develop something for radio 3 or 4

If there is anyone out there who is interested in becoming involved in the development of these projects or connecting Kevin with other parties who might be interested please contact him at:

[kevinhayes@op.pl](mailto:kevinhayes@op.pl)

Or call 07050 1960 77

## What Members Are Getting Up To

RAY BROOKING wrote the episode of *Doctors* “*Where Angels Fear to Tread*” going out on BBC1 at 1:40pm on Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> December.

GARY BROWN wrote *Take-Away* going out on BBC Radio 4 at 2:15pm on Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> December.

RICHARD CAMERON wrote the episodes of *Midsomer Murders* “*Midsomer Rhapsody*” going out on ITV1 at 4:00pm on Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> and Friday 14<sup>th</sup> December.

PAUL COATES wrote the episode of *Hollyoaks* going out on Channel 4 at 6:30pm on Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> December.

MARY CUTLER wrote the episodes of *The Archers* going out on BBC Radio 4 at 7:00pm from Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> until Friday 14<sup>th</sup> December with each episode being repeated at 2:00pm the day after the original broadcast.

STEVEN FAY wrote the episode of *Hollyoaks* going out on Channel 4 at 6:30pm on Monday 10<sup>th</sup> December.

CHRIS FEWTRELL wrote the episode of *Coronation Street* going out on ITV1 at 7:30pm on Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> December.

SHEILA GOFF wrote *The Doppler Effect* going out on BBC Radio 4 2:15pm on Friday 14<sup>th</sup> December.

ISABELLE GREY wrote the episode of *Midsomer Murders* “*The Fisher King*” part 2/2 going out on ITV1 at 4:00pm on Monday 10<sup>th</sup> December.

JONATHAN HARVEY has written this year’s panto, *Jack and the Beanstalk*, at the Barbican. It opened this week and will run until 12 January. [www.barbican.org.uk](http://www.barbican.org.uk).

STEVE HUGHES wrote the episode of *Emmerdale* going out on ITV1 at 7:00pm on Monday 10<sup>th</sup> December.

ROB KINSMAN wrote the episode of *Doctors* “*The Big Issue*” going out on BBC1 at 1:40pm Monday 10<sup>th</sup> December.

ANDREW KIRK wrote the episodes of *Emmerdale* going out on ITV1 at 7:00pm on Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> and Friday 14<sup>th</sup> December.

JIMMY MCGOVERN wrote the episode of *The Street* going out on BBC1 at 9:00pm on Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> December.

CAROLINE MITCHELL wrote the episode of *Emmerdale* going out on ITV1 at 7:00pm on Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> December.

JONATHAN MYERSON’S Dramatisation of *Dr. Zhivago* is going out on BBC Radio 4 at 3:00pm Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> December.

DAVID NOBBS wrote the episode of *The Maltby Collection* going out on BBC Radio 4 at 11:00pm on Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> December.

JULIE PARSONS wrote the episode of *Emmerdale* going out on ITV1 at 7:00pm on Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> December.

GEORGE POLES’ adaptation of *School For Scoundrells* “*The Scoundrells’ Return: a history of Lifemanship*” is going out on BBC Radio 4 at 11:30pm on Monday 10<sup>th</sup> December.

TIM PRICE wrote the episode of *Sold* going out on ITV1 at 9:00pm on Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> December.

MARGARET SIMPSON wrote the episode of *Emmerdale* going out on ITV1 at 7:00pm on Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> December.

PETE SINCLAIR co-wrote the episode of *Lead Balloon* “*Sick*” going out on BBC2 at 9:30pm on Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> December.

CATH STAINCLIFFE wrote the episode of *Blue Murder* “*Desperate Measures*” going out on ITV1 at 9:00pm on Monday 10<sup>th</sup> December.

JOHN SULLIVAN wrote and created *The Green Green Gras*. The next episode, “*Final Curtain*” will go out on BBC1 at 8:30pm on Friday 14<sup>th</sup> December.

HEIDI THOMAS adapted Elizabeth Gaskell’s *Cranford* for television. The next episode “*April 1843*” going out on BBC1 at 9:00pm on Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> December.

