

# 17%

supporting and promoting  
female playwrights

December 2011

Showcases, blogs and interviews...  
...What has mainly been concerning us this year



Meet the cast and director, *She Writes*:  
Back row: Sarah Davies (director), Neil Sutcliffe, Sadie Hurley  
Middle row: Chris Green, Chyna Graham, Anna Farnworth, Amy Flight, Samantha Pearson  
Front row: Kate Ferrett, Sue Blakesley,  
7 December 2011

## Happy Holidays!

Welcome to the 17Percent newsletter, the last for 2011. We've had an eventful year, working at making new resources for our members, the first of these are our 'Interesting and Inspiring' interviews with women working (mostly) in the theatre, the second are our new 'She Writes' showcase nights.

## Interesting and Inspiring Interviews

We have interviewed playwrights Samantha Ellis, Alison Mead, Van Badham, Gill Kirk, directors Nancy Hirst and Gemma Lloyd, and business guru Dr Suzanne Doyle-Morris on video and asked what advice they would offer to other women who want to work in the theatre industry.

They have come up with a lot of great advice.

Here's my top five to get you started:

- 1) Tap into networks (join us!)
- 2) Never get drunk after a performance of your play. It might seem like a social event, but remember, it's work!
- 3) Go and see plays, read plays, be prepared to talk about what plays and playwrights do it for you.
- 4) Make space and time for writing.
- 5) Always be courteous and respond to people – even if it's an email saying 'no thanks'.

You can find this useful and valuable advice on the 17Percent Youtube channel. If you would like to be interviewed, please email us.

17%

# Introducing our new playwrighting showcase 'She Writes'



We have started a new showcase night in Whitstable at the Horsebridge Centre. The night is currently running approximately every two months and features up to ten short plays. The first two nights on 12 October and 7 December were well-attended, and featured a brilliant range of short plays by women.

One question we received before the night was – why do you need a showcase of plays by women, why not men as well?

As visitors to the 17% blog will know, currently only 17% of the plays which get onto UK stages are written by women. This means that for 83% of the time, plays by men are already having their own showcase – so here's to a bit of positive action! There has been much research about the gender discrimination faced by female playwrights in the theatre (some of it discussed on the 17% blog). Women are simply less likely to have their work performed, especially if they don't have a track record. So how is a (maybe new) female playwright ever to get her work on?

She Writes is a place where this can happen. Writers with little or no experience are as likely to be chosen for the showcase as those with more experience. We are simply looking for voices that sing to us.

The theme for the first two nights was a meal. And why was this theme chosen? One of the reasons often given by the people who commission work (on TV as well as in the theatre) as to why they won't commission a female writer is that 'women only write about the domestic' – as if that is somehow wrong, and that the domestic can't be funny, touching or entertaining.

So, in a particularly mischievous mood, we invited submissions on the theme of a meal for the first two events, and gorged ourselves silly on a delicious menu of writing; featuring cannibalism, aliens, the garden of Eden, a monstrous fridge, and diners obsessed with celebrity chefs' ranges of cookware. Thanks to our director and our marvellous cast of actors.

We hope that the range of styles and stories shown at the events so far prove that women should be allowed to write about the domestic, should be allowed to write about whatever they want; and that they can write about it in funny, touching, dark, unexpected and lyrical ways.

*Photos show: Kate Ferrett, Chyna Graham, Samantha Pearson in 'Cupcakes'; Sadie Hurley in 'The magic ingredient'; Anna Farnworth in 'And so to the main course'; Sadie Hurley, Amy Flight and Sue Blakesley in 'The Mary and Joseph Phenomena'*



The next She Writes event will have an international theme, as it forms part of the wider March 2012 International Women's Day and Month celebrations. The show is on 21 March, at the Horsebridge Centre, Whitstable.

For details on how to submit, please see back page.

You can see photos and videos from the events on the 17Percent Youtube channel [www.youtube.com/user/17percentcampaign](http://www.youtube.com/user/17percentcampaign) and on the She Writes website <http://shewrites.blogspot.com>

# Highlights and lowlights of the year

*A year on the 17Percent Blog*

**January & February:** We were hatching plans to start the 'Inspiring and Interesting' interview series and set out learning how the Flip video camera works and did a lovely interview with the, then, Finborough Literary Manager Van Badham.

**March:** A busy interviewing month, met with playwright Gill Kirk and theatre company founder Alison Mead. We also suggested that as it was International Women's Day and Month, giving up seeing plays by men for Lent. And highlighted 16 plays on in London by women that you could see.

**April:** We suggested our top ten tips for writing, based on the interviews we had done up to then and starting planning the She Writes showcase event format. In the first of the year's sexism rows, David Cameron advised the opposition's Angela Eagle to 'Calm down dear', and sparked a flurry of debate in the press.

**May:** We interviewed playwright Samantha Ellis.



*Sam Hall hosts She Writes,  
7 December 2011*

**June:** Saw a frenzy of interviews with the multi-talented producer Gemma Lloyd, business expert Dr Suzanne Doyle-Morris and Icon Theatre's Nancy Hirst.

We also discussed whether it's a negative thing to identify yourself as a 'female playwright'.

An article by writer VS Naipaul, where he commented that no woman writer was his equal, once again brought sexism to the fore. In Australia, Penny Wong, Minister for Climate Change and Water, got the Cameron treatment as she was "meowed" at during a debate.

**July:** We were joined by guest Blogger Anne-Marie Jordan who wrote about R4's *History of Women Writers*.

**August:** Sam was interviewed on *Brew Drinking Thinkings* theatre section.

**September & October:** We held the first of our showcase She Writes nights, so a quiet few month on the blog - though a new blog for She Writes was born.

**November & December:** Sam was interviewed as part of an article on the Lady-Led season at the Oval House by *A Younger Theatre*. We held the second of our showcase nights, and put out a call for next year! We made a new section on the blog 'She Writes Introduces'.

*17Percent is run by Sam Hall. The organisation is contributing to redressing the current gender imbalance in plays being produced in the UK, by providing women with opportunities to develop as writers, through peer-to-peer networking and educational opportunities, championing women's achievements in the theatre, promoting female writers and providing positive female role models and inspirations.*

*Our blog: <http://17percent.wordpress.com>*

*Email: [17percentcampaign@gmail.com](mailto:17percentcampaign@gmail.com)*

*Twitter: @17percent*

*Join our organisation page on FaceBook:*

*17Percent*

*Youtube:*

*[www.youtube.com/user/17percentcampaign](http://www.youtube.com/user/17percentcampaign)*

*Got something you'd like to share? Send your news and views to:*

*[17percentcampaign@gmail.com](mailto:17percentcampaign@gmail.com)*

*©17Percent, Dec 2011*

# She Writes introduces...

*As a follow-up to the She Writes events, we are creating a more permanent archive*

We have introduced a new section to the 17Percent blog 'She Writes introduces...' This section will have longer profiles of the writers whose plays are performed at the showcase nights, and will form an archive of the event.

<http://17percent.wordpress.com/she-writes-introduces/>

## Submissions for She Writes

For the next showcase, we are looking for 6 minute plays on an 'international' theme, by UK based female playwrights.

- Your play should have no more than 4 or 5 characters, less is better.
- 6 minutes maximum - or about 6 pages of script.
- You can interpret 'international' as you wish.

Deadline: 14 January.

Send your play to [17percentevents@gmail.com](mailto:17percentevents@gmail.com) in Word or PDF.

## Support 17Percent by ordering a She Writes mug or t-shirt!

17Percent receives no funding from outside sources and is run on a shoestring, and a lot of kind voluntary help. You can help to keep 17Percent running and help us improve our services to you, by ordering our new She Writes merchandise.

To order:

Please email your requirements to [17percentcampaign@gmail.com](mailto:17percentcampaign@gmail.com) and we will send you full details.



T-shirt: £15 + £3P+P (UK)  
Sizes - S/M/L



Mug: £10 + £3P+P (UK)

### From Aphra Behn to the Angry Young Women

From Aphra Behn, the first British woman to make a living from writing, to today's new wave of angry young female playwrights.

Are women finally breaking through the theatre's glass ceiling, or have they always been there?

A talk given by Sam Hall, playwright and founder of 17Percent, an organisation to support female playwrights

**17%**  
supporting and promoting  
female playwrights

**Thursday, 8 March 2012**  
**7.30pm**  
**Rochester Community Hub**

Booking is essential for this free event



Follow Medway Libraries on Facebook and Twitter