

The Corner Shop Quarterly



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A little over ten years ago Clair, Ryan and I sat down to dinner in the now closed Neal Street Restaurant, the object of the meal was to discuss a name for a new company. After working together on a couple of projects it had become clear to us all that not only did we enjoy each other's company but there was a shared philosophy about how we liked to work. It was time to make it more formal. But coming up with a name that reflected this philosophy was proving extremely difficult. Somewhere into the second (or was it third) bottle of wine, we struck upon an idea. An idea of a place where people knew our names, and we knew theirs; we knew what their preferred tipples were, we knew that we counted them as friends as well as customers. A bit like the old fashioned corner shop where the shopkeeper kept your favourite newspaper aside, and asked after your family. It stuck. We became The Corner Shop. And for the last ten years we have held onto that notion of personal service and customer (not forgetting staff) care. As we celebrate reaching our tenth year, we want to say a big thank you to everyone that has worked for us and to all of our clients. We look forward to keeping a copy of your favourite paper aside for many years to come. BC

EVERY PICTURE TELLS A STORY: Happy Tin-th birthday to us!

Who needs diamond, gold or silver anniversaries? Tin is ten – a milestone to be proud of, and that we are. Perhaps it's not the most glamorous of chemical elements but I think it sums up The Corner Shop nicely. Tin is... full of energy (like a tin of baked beans), it opens doors to new exciting artistic adventures (like a tin opener), and is a vessel for development and growth (like a cake tin in the oven). Not to shy away from a simile too many, one could also say that it is also like the Tin Man: full of heart. FA



Illustration by FA with colour added by JD

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In Conversation With CARO NEWLING



Caro Newling is a founding director of Neal Street Productions, leading the company's theatre arm with current projects including *The Ferryman* in the West End, the Broadway premiere of *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* and the UK tour of *Shrek The Musical*. Caro is also Chair of both Paines Plough and the Linbury Prize for Stage Design. We caught up with Caro as she comes to the end of her three year tenure as President of the Society of London Theatre and the beginning of a new phase in her career. PG

How did Neal Street Productions come about?

Sam Mendes and I ran the Donmar Warehouse for 10 years and I was very content there having spent several years raising the money to get it built, then working out how we could get it funded and stabilised, and then running the programme of work. I was beginning to feel quite comfortable by our 10th year!

Sam, quite rightly, said that the minute things start to feel a bit comfortable is the time to move on. He'd made a couple of films by then and we'd also begun a conversation with Pippa Harris, who, at the time, was Head of Drama Commissioning at the BBC. We all got together and started the company in a couple of empty rooms in 2003. In 2015, we were joined by Nicolas Brown as an Executive Producer on our TV slate.

My job now is to bring on and develop our theatre projects. I am always looking for something that makes me tingle. A project that means you don't have to question why you're doing all that work. Something you believe there's an appetite for.

The challenge, of course, is finding great original material.

Is there a Neal Street achievement you are most proud of?

We've had great times. One of the best and maddest times, I think this was in 2008, we had *Shrek* about to open on Broadway, The Bridge Project - a three-year, global project with the Old Vic Theatre and the Brooklyn Academy of Music, who'd never

'...the minute things start to feel a bit comfortable is the time to move on.'

met before - and, on this side of the Atlantic, *Three Days of Rain*, a play I have always loved, with James McAvoy, Nigel Harman and Lindsey Marshal. It was just brilliant because it was a complete clash of genres and schedules and the worst planning in the world! But it all came together.

What are the benefits of working alongside film and TV producers?

The conversation is much bigger and the landscape is much wider. So, an idea is being developed for a TV series and you might find that just randomly you can put an ingredient in the pot that might make a project turn a corner and develop in a different way: for example, Rupert Goold and Thea Sharrock directing *The Hollow Crown* when, actually, the natural progress of a project like that would have probably been to go to filmmakers with more obviously relevant experience.

If you look closely at Neal Street's slate you'll see that a lot of our writers and actors are working across more than one medium.

You used to work in the RSC's press office before running the Donmar Warehouse. How did the early years of your career prepare you for life as a producer?

With the RSC, there was Stratford and there was the Barbican and also there was touring. I was working on what was then known as the 'Mobile Tour', a 500 seat theatre that went off around the country.

Cut to now and the building of the Roundabout Theatre for Paines Plough. So that's one example.

Press and Marketing is 50% of producing, isn't it?! If you don't have an audience, you haven't got a project. Once the show is up and running Press and

'Working in a press office gives you an insight that is probably as 360 degrees as you can get.'

Marketing teams are probably your closest allies. Working in a press office gives you an insight that is probably as 360 degrees as you can get, unless you're a stage manager, I think.

You are coming to the end of a three-year stint as President of SOLT. How did you come to be President?

Well, you get phoned up and asked if you would be interested in standing and I admit I was quite surprised to get the call. It makes you feel quite senior and older than you thought you were!

Each president brings their own passion to the organisation. My passion has been to pick up on something SOLT was already doing and give it an extra push. We now work a little bit

harder to create internships and opportunities in technical training. Before I was in the press office at the RSC I was a stage manager, so I've always been very aware of how that whole backstage army holds the future of every show in their hands. It's not always apparent to someone who is studying to be an electrician on a City & Guilds course or somewhere miles away from London that they can use those skills in the creative industries.

All my fellow producers have had to get pretty wise about this whole malarkey of ticketing in the last three years too. We've had to be a little bit more collegiate in the way we talk to our audiences. We have to tell the audience that they can go to the Official London Theatre website, and no matter which show they're interested in seeing, they'll find it on there and they won't be charged a booking fee: it's a straightforward process.

I'm going to be Vice President for the next three years so I plan to continue to champion my passions. There are so many great people at SOLT. They're really switched on. It's a zingy place to be.

What is it that you love about this industry? What keeps you going?

I just love this heightened awareness that you're putting together a community around a project and that each time it feels absolutely bespoke.

One particularly fond memory of that community feeling was around the end of Sam and my 10 years at the Donmar. We took a bow together on the final night

of our final run at the Brooklyn Academy. Taking a bow alongside us were some of our favourite actors and the whole Donmar team. It sounds a bit cheesy but they were just the most wonderful people and it was a very sweet moment... Sam and I knowing, just as we were walking onto the stage, that it was the end of our era.

What's next for Neal Street?

The holy grail is to create another television series like *Call the Midwife* and we have three more coming down the lines of different colours and shapes. So we'll see.

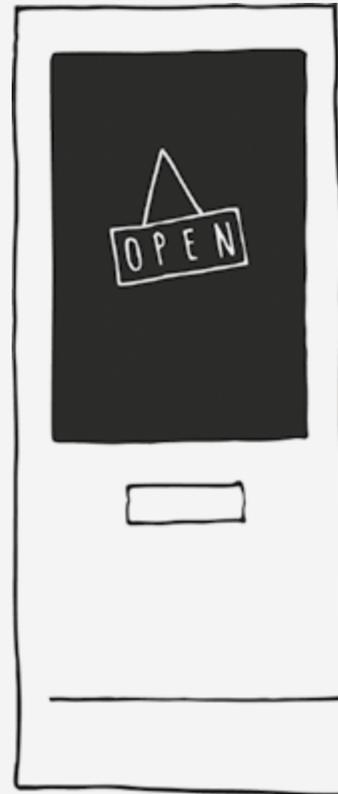
On the theatre side we have five plays and two musicals in development, some of which will be ready next year and some of which will roll out over a longer period.

'I just love this heightened awareness that you're putting together a community around a project...'

If we could see all of the projects we have in development come to fruition and be successful in gaining the audience's love and capturing their imagination then I'll be very happy indeed.

nealstreetproductions.com
solt.co.uk

A New Shop Front



You can sneak a peek through our shop window at thecornershoppr.com and tell us what you think at twitter.com/tcspr

The Corner Shop flung its doors open and served its very first customer ten years ago this month. The jokes about picking up a pint of milk on the way home or popping in when you run out of tea bags soon followed but we settled down to business and grew out of Lexington Street, then Noel Street and now at Great Queen Street there is a real shop front with Stephen Jones Millinery on street level. We couldn't be happier about this!

So, ten years on and hundreds of projects later, we're now giving our own corner shop a shiny new frontage.

A lot has changed since 2007 and now we publicists, who once couriered photo negatives to national newspapers, are WeTransfer-ing b-roll to influencers so they can populate their Instagram stories. OK, maybe the 'tranny on a bike' is thinking back a little further than ten years (!) but the media landscape in which we operate today looks vastly different than it did back when social media was in its fledgling phase.

Our original logo has become a symbol of pride for 'Shoppers' past and present. But now, in 2017, The Corner Shop needs a visual identity that works as well in print as it does online and on social media.

The Corner Shop's evolved branding and new website, courtesy of the Bristol based team at Fiasco Design, is fresh, clean and flexible, enabling us to better represent ourselves and our clients across the full spectrum of editorial platforms that make up the media landscape of today. PG

WITHIN THESE WALLS

The Corner Shop prides itself in hiring intelligent and articulate people - but we all have our off days. As Office Manager I keep a log of all the daft stuff that gets overheard in the office and, at the end of the year, we host a little awards ceremony to commemorate categories such as 'Innuendo of the Year', 'Best Bloop' and 'Most PR Thing to Say'. What happens in the office usually stays in the office so we haven't named and shamed the culprits. FA

10 OF THE BEST

- 1 "What's the time difference between here and Wales?"
- 2 "I like your necklace." / "It's a lanyard."
- 3 "Can you hyperlink your back end?"
- 4 "When the sun's out there's something inside me that's desperate to rumba."
- 5 "I give great word of mouth."
- 6 "I got chased by some foxes last night."
- 7 "I'd be sh*t in The Hunger Games. I'm always hungry."
- 8 "If I wear yellow, I look like a dead canary."
- 9 "I don't see human beings, I see coverage."
- 10 "Is there anything on at the theatre at the moment?"

The Way We WERE/ARE/WILL BE

	2007	2017	2027
LISTENING TO	Mark Ronson Ft Amy Winehouse - <i>Valerie</i> ; Rhianna - <i>Umbrella</i> ; Radiohead - <i>In Rainbows</i>	<i>S Town</i> podcast; Ariana Grande; Frank Ocean; The reunion of Steps; Stormzy	The voices in our heads; Pop songs written by logarithms; Blue Ivy Carter
TECH TO MARVEL AT	iPhone launched; Facebook made available to everyone around the world (hitting 20 million users); Motorola Razrs flip phones are popular	VR goes mainstream; Robots on the rise; Household appliances are hackable; the beginning of driverless cars	OS are now chips in our heads and negate the need for handheld devices; Time travel appears to be possible; 3D printed pizzas
WATCHING	<i>Ugly Betty</i> , <i>Dexter</i> , <i>Casino Royale</i> , <i>High School Musical</i> , <i>300</i>	<i>Bake Off</i> ; <i>The Crown</i> ; <i>La La Land</i> , no wait, <i>Moonlight</i> ; <i>The Handmaid's Tale</i> ; <i>Question Time</i>	Children growing up; North and Saint West's reality TV show; <i>Star Wars: Episode XIX</i>
BUYING TICKETS TO	Daniel Radcliffe's West End stage debut in <i>Equus</i> ; Maggie Smith's return to the stage in Edward Albee's <i>The Lady from Dubuque</i> ; the European stage premiere of the musical of <i>The Lord of the Rings</i>	Holiday on the continent before Brexit; <i>Angels in America</i> ; Edward Albee's <i>Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf</i> ; Glastonbury Festival; <i>Hamilton</i> ; <i>Harry Potter and The Cursed Child</i>	Get into Central London; Trips to Mars; <i>Game of Thrones the Musical</i> ; Agatha Christie's <i>The Mousetrap</i> ; Exciting new playwrights
UK PRIME MINISTER	Tony Blair / Gordon Brown	Theresa May	Sadiq Khan
US PRESIDENT	George Bush Jr	Donald Trump	Michelle Obama
EUROVISION WINNERS	Lordi (Finland)	Salvador Sobral (Portugal)	We enjoy Australia's 6 year winning streak although are still wondering why they are classed as Europeans
CULTURALLY NOTING	Britney Spears shaves her head; Pluto demoted to a dwarf planet	The beginning of the end of the European Union; Vaping; Hull UK City of Culture	Thankfully things are much more pleasant than Charlie Brooker's <i>Black Mirror</i> predicts
COST OF A PINT OF MILK	40p	79p	We are all now vegans and drink almond milk at £4 pint

THE RECEIVING END OF PR: A Journalist's Point of View

Andrzej Lukowski looks back to the start of his career to understand how his journalistic relationships with PRs, and the movements of the arts press industry as a whole, have changed.

order to get their job done: hence, everyone drank a lot more. It was great fun, a sense that we were all happy protuberances of a vastly profitable global industry, junior as we all were.

Fifteen years on and I still keep my oar in with music journalism a little as a freelancer, but for me at least the landscape has entirely changed. Everything is conducted by email, and my music inbox is swamped by hundreds of press releases daily, sent from all across the planet, many by self-employed, semi-professional PRs who will be being paid next to nothing. Advance copies of albums will either be sent out en masse via email, or not at all (because of fear

of leaks). Other journalists will have a very different experience to me (I rarely review gigs, which is where music hacks and PRs traditionally hang out), but for me the intimacy is gone, though I don't miss the scanning.

Fortunately my main job has long been writing about London theatre, which is both a much more localised industry than music, and also a more stable one. In the seven years I've been at *Time Out* my perception is that relativity little has changed in the PR landscape, which is a good

thing as far as I'm concerned.

I'm not really sure what I have to say on the relationship between theatre PRs and journalists that isn't blindingly obvious, but it does often strike me that on the occasions I happen to stray into dealing with a non-arts PR I can suddenly find myself in a strange world of slick, jargon-spouting people with little obvious interest in the thing they're PR-ing.

That's not necessarily a criticism – boring things need PR too – but my world has much more of a family atmosphere, a bunch of people doing what we're doing because first and foremost we all love theatre.

Andrzej Lukowski is the Theatre Editor of Time Out London. timeout.com/london/theatre

'I'd never directly thought about where the CDs we were sent to review came from...'

I can't actually remember my first contact with a PR person, but it would have happened when I was 20 and newly-appointed as music editor of my university's newspaper, the cunningly-titled *Leeds Student*. I suppose in a sense I'd never directly thought about where the CDs we were sent to review came from, or who set up interviews, other than 'the record label', but I soon developed a fairly cordial – if long-distance – relationship with an array of PRs, all passionate music fans, many of whom – I was bemused to discover – were specifically employed to patiently and professionally work with student publications (it actually makes total sense: *Leeds Student* had a weekly circulation of 10,000, so the national circulation of student newspapers as a whole must have been pretty significant, especially in an era where students still actually paid for music).

Because they were all based in London and I was based in Yorkshire, I rarely met them, but it felt like a fairly involved series of working relationships, mostly due to the fact that our antediluvian office dial up meant that our only means of contacting any of them was by phone. Pretty retro, though in some ways it pales into insignificance next to the most madly antiquated but vitally important bit of a music PR's job, which was to post us the official photos of their artists, which we would put away in an alphabetised filing cabinet, retrieving an image as an when needed in order to scan and crop it for use on the page.

They were simpler times. No amount of cumbersome scanning or gossipy phone calls really detracted from the fact that there were fewer things that either journalist or PR was realistically required to do in

PR turns Performer: The Directors' Skits

At The Corner Shop's annual summer away days and Christmas lunches, the directors like to give something back to our hard working team in the form of a little performance. Far from showcasing anything remotely resembling talent, this usually provides an opportunity to laugh at ourselves and play the fool. These 'turns' have taken many forms over the years including:

VERBATIM THEATRE

Metro's 5 Minutes With... The Corner Shop – a playlet commissioned for the 2011 Summer Barbeque.

MUSICAL NUMBER

In Summer 2012 we did our version of the Duloc song from *Shrek The Musical: Things Are Looking Up Here*, at *The Corner Shop* (without the dance routine).

MOTIVATIONAL TALK

Summer 2013 was a close-to-the-bone satirical career coaching presentation called, simply *Be Better*.

TV BLOCKBUSTER

Our Down Town Agency (aka *Downton Abbey*) Christmas episode, complete with Mr Carson's shock conversion to Mormonism.

STAND UP

Christmas 2013 featured *Old PRs Telling Jokes*, inspired by (and totally ripped off from) the TV series *Old Jews Telling Jokes* – complete with PR punchlines.

WORKSHOP

Summer 2014's *Overheard in PR: A lesson in maximising your media potential and growing your reach* included invaluable advice such as checking, 'How many followers do they have? Not on twitter, but in real life. Like Jesus.'

CABARET REVUE

Christmas 2014 saw the director's own version of *La Soiree* with each of us enacting our party piece for the team's viewing (un)pleasure – there was a hula act, a rap act and an alphabet act, you'd never guess who was which.

GREEK DRAMA

At Christmas 2015 we acknowledged the abundance of classic Greek dramas in the city with our own, *Grease* (set in 1958, 'This was the time that coined the term whacky Bakkai; and the Ill E Ad was definitely sexually transmitted'.)

SPOKEN WORD

Last summer we had an epic poem in rhyming couplets which lamented the state of the world and celebrated the power of art to address and overcome our numerous issues. It's a work in progress.

GAME SHOW

Christmas 2016 it was *University Challenge* meets *Cards Against Humanity*: a game show where everyone's a loser.

What will be next? Ideas on a postcard to clair@thecornershoppr.com

CC

THINGS WE LIKE Flower, Eggs & Water

You'll do a double take when you realise that the photographs on the @ivenoven Instagram account are of cakes rather than flower arrangements. Intricate, accurate and beautifully composed these terrarium cakes look too good to eat. Almost. Further research on the Iven Oven bakery's website reveals speciality flavour fillings so it wouldn't take too much to persuade us to cut a slice.

From small beginnings in December 2013, after owner Iven Kawi was noted baking sugar-coated cookies for her daughter's school event, Iven Oven now employs 14 internationally-graduated female pastry chefs.

Indeed, it wouldn't be a celebratory edition of our Quarterly without a cake but unfortunately, for these, delivery is limited to Indonesia where the company is based so, dear reader, do let us know when you're next travelling back from that part of the world and we'll pass over our order.

RR



Instagram @ivenoven
ivenoven.blogspot.co.uk

VARIETY SHOW: A DECADE OF MUSICALS AT THE CORNER SHOP

Like a lot of people I couldn't decide if *La La Land* was genuinely ground-breaking or purely nostalgic. As a movie it had all the ingredients of a great musical, and it left me entertained as well as moved. We like to identify, but we also like to escape. We have had the privilege of working on many great musicals staged in the West End over the past ten years and each has its own balance of all of these ingredients. There's so much variety, and each has been memorable in its own way; here's a snapshot celebration. CC

