

CakeLeisure

banburycake.co.uk/leisure

Wuthering Heights is a broolly good challenge

You may have seen five actors clad in black skulking around the town centre with umbrellas.

But no, they are not mourning the death of another British summer.

The mysterious live sculpture is aimed at creating a buzz about Banbury Cross Players' upcoming *Wuthering Heights*.

But enticing director Linda Shaw to explain the broolly enigma is fruitless. "A-ha, people have asked about the umbrellas," she laughs, "but I'm not giving it away any more than saying the five umbrellas play a significant role in the show."

"Also, we must be some of the only people praying for a grey week."

This is because not only will some gloom sit nicely with the dark themes of the Yorkshire moors saga ("I'm not going to lie, the plot is not a barrel of laughs is it?") but summer dates ramp up the challenge for any am dram company.

"July productions are always a struggle; you wonder 'will I have a cast, will I have an audience?' It's a time of year when holiday plans come up against you and you're

By Liz Nicholls

asking a lot of people's time."

Such was the dilemma that, for a long time, Linda thought she'd never find her Heathcliff. But, thanks to spreading the word on Facebook, up stepped Graham Macdonnall, a new member of BCP – but also an experienced TV and film actor. And he needed that experience as the lead role requires him to age along with Heathcliff – playing him from a young child right up to an old man.

Another facet of this innovative production is that the small company share out the roles, with one (namely BCP veteran Andy Allen) playing six characters – surely enough to make his head spin?

"None of the five characters ever go off stage and there are no costume changes so all the changes of character are made by speed of delivery and posture," adds Linda.

"Characters bring on certain props and do their own sound effects too and there is a good strong flow to the piece from the first act.

"If I had to give them a pat on the back for anything, it would be their energy – the action never stops coming and going."

This *Wuthering Heights* uses a script by Jane Thornton which tells the enduring love story between Cathy (played by BCP chairman Tara Lacey) and her Heathcliff and features innovative lighting and original music by Gavin Backhouse.

"If you staged the whole book it would be like some Kenneth Branagh five-hour epic, but this cleverly tells the whole story with chunks of narration," adds Linda.

"Much of the dialogue is lifted from the book so you get that wonderful poetry which makes the book so enjoyable.

"*Wuthering Heights* is such a passionate story; passionate in all the senses. It's the ultimate family saga and we hope people will be as excited as we are by it."

Wuthering Heights runs from Wednesday, July 18, until Saturday, July 21, at The Mill Arts Centre.

Call 01295 279002 or visit www.themillartscentre.co.uk for tickets.



UNDER COVER: The five actors shelter from the rain ahead of *Wuthering Heights*



**Banbury Town Council
Presents....
BANBURY
FOOD FAIR 2012**