

SHOWBAIT 2026

TEN NEW SHORT PLAYS BY
CROWBAIT UK WRITERS



27 & 28
JUNE 2026

THE LENS AT
PORTSMOUTH
GUILDHALL



CROWBAIT

SHOWBAIT 2026

TEN NEW SHORT PLAYS
BY LOCAL WRITERS FROM CROWBAIT UK

BREAK A LEG Written by Elliot Sergejew

ACT
ONE

BACK IN THIS ROOM, AGAIN Written by Rhys Chant

LOOKING OUT Written by Jacquie Penrose

WASHED UP Written by Joan Horton

NEW BEGINNINGS Written by Dylan Gover

ACT
TWO

LEFT ON READ Written by Raj Khan

FATHER Written by Dylan Gover

SUPER FAN Written by Sophie Nickerson

DELIVERY DRIVER Written by Iain Banachowicz

SEASON FINALE Written by Bradley Barlow

FROM PORT(LAND) TO PORT(SMOUTH)!

The Crowbait Club began in a small pub called Mama's Crowbar in Portland, Maine in 2011. It began with three people and now is an international organisation founded to cultivate the work of artists and new theatrical writing.

The Crowbait Club UK was founded by one of its original founders in 2022, and is now offering workshops, classes, and monthly meetings in order to celebrate the talent and voices of actors, theatre makers, and writers in Portsmouth.



CROWBAIT UK COMMITTEE

Co-Artistic Director and Founder
APRIL SINGLEY

Co-Artistic Director
BRADLEY BARLOW

committee members
CHRISTIAN MASTERS
CHRISTINE LAWRENCE
ELLIOT SERGEJEW
GRAHAM BROWN
JAM LACEY

CROWBAIT UK: HOW IT WORKS

STEP ONE: PLAYWRIGHTS WRITE!

We meet on the first Tuesday of every month at 7.30pm, with a pile of scripts and a bevy of actors (and usually a beer in hand). Anyone can bring in a script they've written which can be performed in eight minutes or less - if you're struggling for inspiration, check out our social media channels for that month's writing prompt.

STEP TWO: ACTORS ACT!

Performers are randomly selected from our virtual wheel.

STEP THREE: MAGIC!

After a couple of minutes with the playwright, the actors put the scene on its feet. We perform a total of nine scripts and take a break after every three performances.

STEP FOUR: THE PLAY IS THE THING: SHOWBAIT SHOWCASE!

Every month, attendees vote on a script that will be performed at our annual showcase Showbait, where ten scripts will be fully rehearsed, teched, and staged.

It's open to all from all levels of experience so please join us at our next meeting on Tuesday 7 July at 7.30pm at The Nut Bar at Keppel's Head Hotel.

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US**



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NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR

I've now spent ten years working with writers on new work and I never fail to be surprised by the process. Exploring never before seen characters with actors, together discovering their motivations and intentions, peeling the words from the page to find the nuance beneath.

This year is no different - it's been a real pleasure to investigate these ten new plays with this brilliant cast, who have dedicated their time, energy and resources to put together a diverse selection of plays.

I'm honoured that for some of this year's writers this will be the first time they've seen a full production of their writing. For more seasoned writers, I'm grateful that you've entrusted me with your reputation - I hope it's not left in tatters by the end of the show...!

A huge thank you to the cast for all your hard work, for going along with my flights of fancy and ultimately being bloody brilliant people. A special thank you to Jessica for your incredible hard graft while juggling multiple jobs, a lack of food and just minutes of sleep every night - I literally couldn't have put this show on without you.

A massive thank you to Keppel's Head Hotel for the free rehearsal space, as well hosting our monthly meetings. Thank you to the Lord Mayor of Portsmouth's Appeal for their grant, and a big thank you to everyone who took part and donated to the 500K Your Way fundraising challenge - putting on a show like this isn't cheap so your contributions really do help us to keep theatre alive.

BRADLEY BARLOW

PRODUCTION CREDITS

Showbait Director
Marketing, Programme and Graphic Design
BRADLEY BARLOW

Stage Manager
JESSICA JONES

Lighting and Sound Operation
THE LENS STUDIO, PORTSMOUTH GUILDHALL

With thanks to
**CROWBAIT CLUB UK ATTENDEES,
COMMITTEE AND FUNDRAISERS,
KEPPEL'S HEAD HOTEL,
LORD MAYOR OF PORTSMOUTH'S APPEAL**

BACK IN THIS ROOM, AGAIN

BY RHYS CHANT

RHYS CHANT is a Director and Theatre-Maker based in West Sussex, specialising in devised theatre and new works that platform underrepresented communities, particularly the LGBTQ+ community and young people. Their work explores queer identity, socio-economic and political structures, and intergenerational relationships through a focus on anomie and naturalistic narrative performance.

EMILY WILLIAMS as Alex
IZZY TARRANT as Harry

BACK IN THIS ROOM, AGAIN was selected in April 2025.

ELLIOT SERGEJEW has been blending in as a local since 2015 when he arrived in Portsmouth for university. He loves being part of the Crowbait community and describes it as a welcoming, supportive and incredibly creative space.

Elliot says: "'Break a Leg' explores backstage of a theatre production with a new actor being introduced to the concept of the phrase 'break a leg'. I love taking simple ideas and concepts and twisting them into over the top ridiculous situations while also trying to create believable characters."

ANNA LENG as May
CHRISTOPHER FOX as Stevie
JORDAN JOURNEAUX-BROWN as Man
RAJKHAN as JJ
ROSS WOOD as Sam
SUZANNE MARIETAYLOR as Oscette

BREAK A LEG was selected in October 2025.

BREAK A LEG

BY ELLIOT SERGEJEW



IAIN BANACHOWICZ has worked as a Stage and Technical Manager for over 20 years working on various projects large and small, currently as Technical Manager at Groundlings Theatre.

ALEC SLADE as Driver
ANNA LENG as Flirty Customer
CHRISTOPHER FOX as Annoyed Customer
JORDAN JOURNEAUX-BROWN as Controller
VIN ADAMS as Storeman

DELIVERY DRIVER was selected in March 2025.

DELIVERY DRIVER



BY IAIN BANACHOWICZ

FATHER



BY DYLAN GOVER

DYLAN GOVER has been acting since he was 16, with his first show being Bugsy Malone at Groundlings Theatre. He's a member of @phoenixplayersuk and is a part of their committee.

JORDAN JOURNEAUX-BROWN
as Sam

FATHER was selected in May 2025.

LOOKING OUT

BY JACQUIE PENROSE

JACQUIE PENROSE is a retired drama and theatre teacher who has been writing and directing plays for many years. She has been a member of Bench Theatre in Havant which has staged a number of her plays.

VIN ADAMS as Man

LOOKING OUT was selected in January 2025.

DYLAN GOVER has been acting since he was 16, with his first show being Bugsy Malone at Groundlings Theatre. He's a member of @phoenixplayersuk and is a part of their committee.

Dylan says: "I'm still in disbelief! I'm looking forward to people seeing my scene in Showbait as it is the very first thing I have ever written."

ANNA LENG as Susan

CHRISTOPHER FOX as Rich

EMILY WILLIAMS as Tiffany

RAJKHAN as Waiter

ROSS WOOD as Charlie

SUZANNE MARIÉ TAYLOR as Sky

NEW BEGINNINGS was selected in February 2025.

NEW BEGINNINGS



BY DYLAN GOVER

SEASON FINALE



BY BRADLEY BARLOW

BRADLEY BARLOW is a writer, director and performer based in Southsea. His play 'A Stranger in Our House' was described as "a brave vision of modern life". Later this year, he's returning to Groundlings Theatre at Portsmouth's Historic Dockyard to write and direct their professional pantomime 'Pinocchio', having directed their pantos for the last three years. As co-Artistic Director of Crowbait UK, he directed Showbait 2025 and has returned again to direct this year's showcase.

ALEC SLADE as Writer 1

IZZY TARRANT as Writer 3

ROSS WOOD as Writer 2

SUZANNE MARIETAYLOR as Writer 4

SEASON FINALE was selected in July 2025.

SUPER FAN



BY SOPHIE NICKERSON

SOPHIE NICKERSON says: "I am born and bred in Portsmouth but I have recently taken a challenge by relocating to Turkey to become a holiday rep. Super Fan was inspired by having a conversation with a friend in the pub about how people can get completely obsessed with one actor and becoming involved in their whole life. Superfan Elara is convinced that she is in love with my actor Jaxon Vale. Will they have a happily ever after?"

IZZY TARRANT as Elara

SUPER FAN was selected in August 2025.

WASHED UP

BY JOAN HORTON

JOAN HORTON's comedy is about a bickering couple. She has previously had scripts selected at Crowbait for performance in our showcase.

IZZY TARRANT as Jane
RAJKHAN as Peter

WASHED UP was selected in June 2025.

RAJKHAN says: "I am thrilled to be a part of a fantastic local group of writers and actors where creativity flourishes. 'Was Left on Read' delves into the challenges of having honest conversations with your friends and the impact it can have on you if you become distant with someone you were once close with. It's an experience a lot of people go through and I appreciate the helpful feedback and support from the group"

ALEC SLADE as Waiter
EMILY WILLIAMS as Liv
SUZANNE MARIE TAYLOR as Mandy

SUPER FAN was selected in September 2025.

WAS LEFT ON READ

BY RAJ KHAN



ALEC SLADE



Alec trained at the Identity School of Acting. His first theatrical role was as the lead in a production of Simon Stephens' *Birdland*, which ran at the 2017 Edinburgh Fringe. Since then, other productions have included: *Hamlet*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *As You Like It*, and *A Yorkshire Tragedy*. He has also collaborated with our director Bradley Barlow before, appearing in his original plays, *A Stranger in Our House*, and *Dead Leaves*.

He returned to the Edinburgh Fringe in 2023 for *The Misunderstanding*, and again in 2024 for *The Comings and Goings at No 10*, which enjoyed a sold-out run. Last year, he took a turn behind the scenes, directing his original play, *Pro Patria*. This October, he'll be appearing in a production of *2:22 A Ghost Story* at Maskers Theatre in Southampton.

ANNA LENG



Anna grew up in Portsmouth and has loved performing from a young age. From the age of 12, she was involved with Victoryland Theatre, taking part in a variety of productions through her school years until the age of 19.

After taking a long break from acting, Anna is excited to be back on stage and rediscovering her passion for performance. Alongside this, she is a member of Kailani Dance Company, performing as part of Team Emily, and has recently taken part in Portsmouth and Southampton Pride.

Anna is thrilled to be part of this production and hopes you enjoy the show—she's just happy to be back doing what she loves!

CHRISTOPHER FOX



Christopher is delighted to be working on Showbait, having a passion for local and original work, and for working with friends Alec and Bradley. The money definitely had nothing to do with it.

He has appeared in several amateur and professional productions locally and elsewhere, including at Groundlings Theatre, Titchfield Festival Theatre, and Trinity Theatre, Southsea. His hobby has allowed him to hone various accents and discover a creative niche playing damaged Scandinavian men, from a secretly soft Viking warrior to an unhinged but grief stricken Norwegian pig farmer. He hopes this will eventually translate into televisual success as a murder victim in the latest Scandi drama.

When not treading the boards, Christopher works at UCL as a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Anthropology. He is an award winning game and immersive experience designer. He has two cats named Zelda and Link, plays guitar, sings opera, enjoys rolling a natural 20, is a voracious reader, and likes crosswords.

EMILY WILLIAMS

Emily has been acting and singing since childhood. Inspired by her love of all things theatre and the encouragement of her GCSE Drama teacher, she achieved a 2:1 BA honours in Performing Arts at Winchester University and later went on to qualify as a Secondary Drama Teacher. Emily has taught Drama and directed plays and musicals in Hampshire and Dorset for over a decade.

She made a return to acting a few years ago as an immersive actor of Anglo-Saxon characters in 878AD Museum for Hampshire Cultural Trust. Emily is excited to be part of Showbait 2026 and has enjoyed working with the Crowbait crew, exploring the characters and plays created by local writers.



IZZY TARRANT

As her mum's unofficial script-reading partner, Izzy has spent countless hours helping to test out dialogue, bring characters to life and refine new plays around the kitchen table. Inspired by those experiences, she jumped (with a nudge or two from her mum) at the chance to be part of *Showbait*. She's delighted to help showcase the work of talented local writers and be part of bringing their stories to life on stage.



JORDAN JOURNEAUX-BROWN

I have had creative interests ever since I was younger and have in the past attended college to study film and TV as well as attending acting classes with Groundlings Theatre and Mary Rose Productions, and I attend the Crowbait Club UK monthly meetings.

My theatre credits include *Titanic 100* at Groundlings Theatre (2012) and the Groundlings Umbrella Festival (2014).

My TV and Film credits include *Titanic: Southampton Remembers* for BBC South (2012) and *In His Name* for Lemon Top Pictures (2024).

It's been a long time since I have performed in front of a theatre audience and am excited to see how this will be received!

I just wanted to thank April for reintroducing me to acting, Bradley for giving me this opportunity, Jessica for being the best stage manager and to my fellow cast members for being great!



RAJKHAN



Raj is an actor and writer with a passion for theatre. He is excited to perform with a talented and creative group of actors and crew for Showbait. A member of the local community theatre group Phoenix Players, he has performed in various productions with them. His previous roles include Justin Lazenby in *RolePlay*, Mort in *Mort*, Scarecrow in *The Wizard of Oz* and the Narrator in *Blood Brothers*. As well as acting, his short play *Was Left on Read* is part of the showcase this year and he hopes the audience will enjoy it.

ROSS WOOD

Ross Wood is a working actor based in Portchester with a Degree in English Literature from Anglia Ruskin university in Cambridge. His background in theatre includes performances at the King's Theatre and New Theatre Royal in Portsmouth and at Sadler's Wells Theatre in London. As a teenager, he attended Victoryland Theatre and Performing Arts school in Southsea. For the past two years he has been pursuing work as a voice actor and has done voiceover work for Portsmouth City Council and Farnborough Aviation, among others.

He has also done screen acting including extra work for car commercials and social shoots. His main role, currently, is as an improvisational actor for various Murder Mystery companies – including local company Killer Events. This also includes being a simulation actor for Real Sim Solutions in Andover, portraying multiple roles including military personnel and casualties in a highly improvisational, realistic, training simulation.



SUZANNE MARIE TAYLOR



Suzanne is originally from Vancouver, Canada and moved to London to study classical acting at the London Academy of Performing Arts. Suzanne performed in numerous productions with the Tower Theatre Company in London and Paris and later went on to become the Honorary Artistic Associate of the archaeological site of the 1587 Rose Playhouse on Bankside, London. In 2019, Suzanne was awarded her Masters degree in Archaeological Practice at Birkbeck University of London and in 2024 was awarded her doctorate in the School of Art, Design & Performance at the University of Portsmouth.

Suzanne's PhD practice-research project involved creating two new methodologies 'archaeodrama' and 'archaeotheatre' to empathetically excavate the archaeological remains of an abandoned WWI submarine chaser [ML286] through storytelling. Most recently, Suzanne's archaeodrama was part of the Portsmouth BookFest2025 and the 2025 Portsmouth Fringe Festival and will be performed again later this year at the Royal Garrison Church in Old Portsmouth. Suzanne would like to thank Crowbait, Bradley Barlow, Jessica Jones and the wonderful cast for this joyful experience of being part of Showbait 2026, especially in the centenary year of Portsmouth 100.

VIN ADAMS

Vin is an actor, writer and educationalist, based in Havant. He was a founding member of CAST, and has written and directed work for the Edinburgh, Brighton and London Fringes, as well as for the Hampshire rural touring circuit. Vin works with local writing groups T'Articulation and Pens of the Earth, and is a Doctor and Lecturer at the University of Portsmouth. Recent work includes *A Summons in the Night* and *The Oyster House* for People and Stories, and *Besieged* at The Square Tower.



BRADLEY BARLOW

DIRECTOR



(he/him) Bradley trained at University of Chichester. He is the Co-Artistic Director of Crowbait UK and the former Artistic Director of Sussex-based Pitchy Breath Theatre Company (2016 – 2020).

Previous writing and directing credits include tours of *Monsters: A Modern Frankenstein Story* (2018), *The Last Time We Saw You* (2017), *Dead Leaves* (2014) and *143 Seconds* (2011), all for Pitchy Breath. His debut play *The Family* (2009) won a NODA Accolade of Excellence and was described by Surrey Mirror as “a gripping portrait of Britain”.

His play *The Legend of Grimms’ Tales* (2022, Groundlings) was performed by a cast of professional and local performers, while *A Stranger in our House* (2023, Titchfield Festival Theatre) was described as “an unforgettable evening of theatre” and “a brave vision of modern life”. He directed Groundlings Theatre’s professional pantomimes *Puss in Boots* (2023) and *Rapunzel* (2024), returning to write and direct *Cinderella* (2025) and this year’s *Pinocchio* (2026).

Bradley directed four short plays for Crowbait’s annual *Showbait* showcase in 2024, returning last year to direct all ten plays and is back again this year. In 2024, he directed a ten-year anniversary revival of his 2014 play *Dead Leaves* and a new production of *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time*. In 2025, he wrote and directed *Pompey Dogs*, an immersive cinema experience at Staggeringly Good Brewery, and is Creative Director for a Portsmouth 100 immersive Centenary Banquet next month.

Theatre performance credits include *Calendar Girls* (2023), *Gaslight* (2023), *Family Matters* (2023) and *Macabre: Tales from Edgar Allan Poe* (2021), all at Titchfield Festival Theatre, the Cheshire Cat in *Wonderland* (2021, Groundlings), *The Flats* (2019, Pitchy Breath), *Dinner* (2019, MADS Theatre), *Bouncers* (2018, DDOS), *Julius Caesar* (2017, Pitchy Breath), *Trinculo in The Tempest* (2015, Polesden Lacey Shakespeare), *Inheritance* (2015, Pitchy Breath), *Mokita* (2011, Pitchy Breath).

Bradley presents for Express FM, covering live events including Portsmouth Comic Con and Portsmouth Pride, and recently took over the station’s prestigious Local Music Show and Chart. bradleybarlow.com

JESSICA JONES STAGE MANAGER



Jessica is a Hampshire and London based Assistant Stage Manager/Deputy Stage Manager/Stage Manager that has worked on operas, pantomimes, plays and musicals. Gaining her degree in Drama and Performance last year, she has been working professionally within Technical Theatre and Stage Management for two years, travelling with touring productions, working in some of the UK's biggest venues and facilitating art with some of the theatre industry's biggest names in the UK.

She is a Theatre Green Book Initiative advocate and works on all productions with the goal of improving environmental awareness and sustainability. A Technician and Stage Manager, Jessica is also a singer and actor with over a decade of on stage experience before falling in love with the backstage.