

Interplay Theatre present **Precious Bane** Adapted by Jonathan Davidson

The Story

“There is nothing quite like it in English Literature” *Independent on Sunday*

Written by Mary Webb in 1924, *Precious Bane* is the story of Prue Sarn, a free spirit cursed with a hare lip (her ‘precious bane’), living in the 19th Century wilds of Shropshire.

A victim of malice and superstition, she is locked into a life of rural toil, relieved only by her love of the countryside and her seemingly hopeless love for Kester Woodseaves, the weaver. Prue’s story is of innocence on the brink of ruin, saved by the redemptive powers of nature and human love.

Her brother, Gideon’s, story is more tragic. Driven by a lust for wealth and Gideon attacks nature and its harmony. Destroying those close to him and eventually himself, he is a metaphor for the disaster we may unleash if we subvert nature’s will.

This adaptation will focus on the parallel stories, one of betrayal and destruction and one of innocence and reward, and highlight the experiences of young people with disabilities, as outsiders in their communities, subject to gossip and ignorance.

Music and song will be central to the production to communicate the epic nature of the stories and convey emotion and drama. The piece will be performed in one of Interplay’s ‘dome’ giving the opportunity to create a dedicated theatre environment and interactive experience. An array of multi-sensory props and techniques, previously researched and developed through residencies in special schools will enhance the potential for the show to communicate across the senses and enable PMLD and SLD pupils to enjoy and benefit from the performance.



Photo from Interplay’s *Sita and Rama* show

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The Team

Steve Byrne – Director and Producer

Steve is Artistic Director of Interplay and has been the director of the previous 5 shows performed nationally for specials schools. He has been the inspiration behind the creation of the 'domes' in which all our shows are now performed and has undertaken considerable creative research to develop sensory techniques and production values to encourage communication across the five senses. Steve has been at Interplay for 10 years, but previously worked nationally and internationally as a music and theatre director, writer and musician. His shows have been staged at The National Theatre, London, theatres across Germany and in the United States.

Jonathan Davidson – Writer

Precious Bane will be adapted by the writer Jonathan Davidson. Jonathan is a poet and playwright, whose work to-date has featured mostly on national radio. He has had five afternoon plays (45 minutes each) broadcast on Radio Four, including a play based on the seminal text book of local history, *The Making of the English Landscape*, by W G Hoskins. His most recent radio play, *Icarus Falling* (BBC Radio 4, 25th July 2007), is a contemporary re-telling of the Icarus myth using the figure of a visual artist and glider pilot as a main character. He is currently working on a retelling of *King Lear* for broadcast by Radio Three in winter 2008.

Jonathan has worked closely as a producer with Interplay's Director, Steve Byrne, in the development of three touring contemporary poetry shows, *Staying Alive* (2004), *Being Alive* (2006) and *Changing Lives* (2007).



Photo from Interplay's *This Land, the story of Woody Guthrie show*

Performers

Interplay works with a pool of performers who take part in workshops and residencies with pupils from local special schools, prior to the performances. They have experience of working collaboratively to develop the sensory techniques used throughout the show to increase the possibility and effectiveness of communicating the narrative to PMLD and SLD children. Interplay's performance team includes performers with disabilities for some productions.

Performers are trained to 'expect the unexpected' during shows and will try to respond to individual audience members. They will be used to children leaving during the performance for behavioural or medical reasons.