



# WRITERS' CIRCLE

## SKILLSET'S WRITERS' CIRCLE **INDUSTRY GUIDE**

During 2006, eight experienced and talented writers – poets, novelists, playwrights and TV dramatists – joined The Script Factory to explore their move into screenwriting.

Welcome to the *Writers' Circle*

[www.scriptfactory.co.uk](http://www.scriptfactory.co.uk)



UK FILM COUNCIL  
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In 2006, UK-based filmmaker's organisation, The Script Factory, was commissioned by Skillset, to stage a programme designed to support and develop a group of talented writers as they tried their hand in the film industry. We identified eight people at the top of their own fields to become the *Writers' Circle*, joining us throughout the year to attend screenwriting workshops and to enjoy a series of networking dinners with some of the highest profile figures in the film industry. From Duncan Kenworthy, Mike Figgis, and Deborah Moggach to Stewart Till, Gurinder Chadha and Stephen Woolley, the Circle met and learnt from the best in the industry.



If you would like to talk to any of the *Writers' Circle* about their feature film projects, please contact The Script Factory on +44 (0)20 7323 1414 or email [general@scriptfactory.co.uk](mailto:general@scriptfactory.co.uk)



### Helen Cross

Helen's first novel, *My Summer of Love*, won a Betty Trask Award and became an award-winning feature film. Her short stories have appeared in various magazines and anthologies, and her plays, *The Typist Who Flew to Australia* and *One Day*, have been broadcast on Radio 4. Helen's second novel, *The Secrets She Keeps*, is now published in paperback, and she has just completed a third novel, *Spilt Milk, Black Coffee*. In 2005, Helen was awarded a Lottery Script Grant and Screen West Midlands Grant to develop her original screenplay, *Stratford Road*. In January 2007 she was Writer in Residence at the University of Mumbai, India.

"*Stratford Road* is a contemporary ghost story set between inner city Birmingham and rural Warwickshire. When eleven year old Birmingham schoolgirl, Shahida Patel, wakes to gunshot in the night, and wailing grief in her family home, she is immediately determined to escape the familiar chaos. Tricking her way onto a school trip, Shahida journeys with her troublesome class to Stratford upon Avon. Here she meets and befriends a sinister bereaved father, David Jones. As the pair enjoy and endure a day together, Shahida comes to understand David's spellbound fascination with her – and the reasons behind own troubling feelings of alienation, euphoria and fear."



## Moira Buffini

Moira trained as an actor and has subsequently become one of the UK's leading new playwrights. She co-wrote the monologue *Jordan*, which won the Writer's Guild Award for Best Fringe play. She produced and directed *Blavatsky's Tower* on the London Fringe, and wrote *Gabriel* for Soho Theatre, which won both LWT Plays On Stage Award and Meyer Whitworth Award; her *Silence* was produced by Birmingham Rep and won the Susan Smith Blackburn Prize and she also wrote *Loveplay* for the RSC and *Dinner* for the National Theatre, which transferred to Wyndhams Theatre and was nominated for an Olivier Award for Best Comedy. Her adaptation, *Dying For It*, opened at the Almeida in March 2007. She has just completed *Vampire Story*, a play for young people commissioned by the National Theatre. Her writing for screen includes *Presence* in development for Prospect/Film Four and *Gabriel* for Passion Pictures. She has also written the short film *The Enlightenment* for Julia Ford and is currently working on *Dibbuk Box* for Mandate Pictures, exec-produced by Sam Raimi.

"I am very excited by the thought of finding new collaborators and rewarding work in the British film industry. As well as generating ideas of my own I am looking for adaptations. I also have a 'man gets hit on the head' idea. What I do best in the theatre is dark comedy and I want to find this voice in film. I am also a big fan of stories which explore the metaphysical through the slightly supernatural. So...

A man gets hit on the head and in his state of drunken concussion he imagines that the shadows in his hotel room are condensing into a terrifying darkness. He breathes them in. From then on, every time he falls asleep he has nightmares in which he becomes paralysed. And on waking he finds that he has been sleepwalking, doing things over which he has no knowledge or control. Is his sense of self breaking down or is there a presence inside him? Either way, he has to find a way to keep his body and soul together."



## Lana Citron

Lana is the author of four novels, *Sucker*, *Spilt Milk*, *Transit* and *The Honey Trap*. Other work, including short stories and poetry, has been anthologised and broadcast on Radio 4, adapted into the award-winning short film, *I was the Cigarette Girl*, and produced as a radio play, *Love Saboteur*. She has also dabbled in acting and stand-up comedy, appearing at the Edinburgh Festival in *The Four Queens Poker Show '04*. Her latest novel, *The Brodsky Touch*, is published in May 2007. Lana is currently working on her first feature script, *Dead Dad*, a black comedy set in New Zealand.

"After 18 years, geography teacher John Heath, travels to New Zealand to confront his dying father Joe – only to discover he's too late. Caught up in preparations for the funeral, John is struck by the warm welcome he receives from his newly acquainted though shambolic stepfamily. John's overriding memory of his adventurer father is confirmed when he is confronted with his Dad's corpse dressed in biker leathers and Joe's lovingly restored classic motorbike. A body, a bike and an unfulfilled history – can the rift between father and son be healed from beyond the grave?"



## Alison Penton Harper

Alison worked in advertising for twenty years before being discovered through a publishing competition for Channel 4's *Richard & Judy* show in 2004. Her first novel, *Housewife Down*, reached The Times bestseller list. The sequel was published in 2006 with a third in the *Housewife* series to follow in 2007. Alison is nurturing two original screenplay ideas. The first, an epic tale of love and betrayal set in the last days of the Raj, has been set aside while she writes the novel version. The second, a British comedy heist, tells the tale of a weak man trapped in the wrong marriage until he rediscovers his backbone with the help of an Indian builder and a pile of stolen cash. Alison has also been working on two comedy ideas for television. "The Writers' Circle has opened out a whole new dimension in my writing, I'm looking forward to my first collaboration."



## Meg Rosoff

Meg Rosoff was born in Boston, educated at Harvard and St Martin's College of Art, and worked in New York before moving to London in 1989. She worked in publishing, politics, PR and advertising until 2004, when she wrote her first novel, *How I Live Now*, which won the Guardian Children's fiction prize and the Printz prize, and has been translated into 28 languages. She is also the author of *Just In Case*, which was short listed for the LA Times, the Costa, and the Carnegie book prizes. Her third novel, *What I Was*, is published in August 2007. She is currently working on her fourth novel, and developing a short film with producer/director Kate Sinclair and composer Errollyn Wallen. The film of *How I Live Now*, directed by Thomas Vinterberg, is due to shoot in 2007. Meg is excellent at writing character and dialogue and requires almost-happy endings. She would like to write screenplays requiring subtle, razor sharp characterization and plots a twelve year old could follow – and is glad someone finally got Ian Fleming right.



## Andrew Holmes

Andrew worked as a freelance journalist before writing his first novel, *Sleb*, in 2003, which was shortlisted for the WH Smith New Talent Award. Since then he has published two further novels: *All Fur Coat* and *64 Clarke*. His books are best described as 'funny-dark thrillers'. His fourth funny-dark thriller, *Rain Dogs and Love Cats*, is due out in May 2007. He lives at the top of the Metropolitan Line with his wife and two-year-old son. Andrew is currently working on a screenplay idea, *Friends With Cilla*.

"A comedy about three middle Englanders, the sons and grandsons of war heroes, who believe their grant applications to fund an overseas battlefield trip are being overlooked in favour of more PC causes. Frustrated, they decide to pose as a gay dance group in order to secure their grant, hoping nobody need ever know the deception. But the application is exposed and they find they must carry through the pretence. In doing so, the men are forced to confront and question their own deep-seated prejudices."



## Toby Young

Toby Young is the author of *How to Lose Friends & Alienate People*, a memoir about the five years he spent working as a glossy magazine journalist in New York. It was optioned by FilmFour in 2002 and is currently being made into a feature starring Simon Pegg. Toby has also written three plays, including *Who's The Daddy?* which won Best New Comedy in the 2005 Theatregoers Choice Awards. His latest book, *The Sound of No Hands Clapping*, was published in 2006 and has also been optioned by FilmFour.

"The script I'm working on is *Mixed Doubles*, a comedy about a pair of identical twins. Nigel Ponsonby is a hen-pecked househusband with four children whose brother, Bruno, is a single celebrity chef. Bruno persuades Nigel to trade places with him for one night, but a series of events means that Nigel is unable to swap back the following morning. After five days have passed, in which Nigel has been forced to cook a state banquet at 10 Downing Street, he is able to switch – but Bruno has grown so fond of family life that he no longer wants his old life back.



## Rob Gittins

Rob has written for almost every top-rated UK TV drama series including *Casualty*, *The Bill*, *Eastenders*, *Emmerdale*, *Heartbeat* and *Soldier, Soldier*. He has also created two drama series of his own; *Tiger Bay* for BBC and *In The Company Of Strangers* for ITV. For BBC Radio 4, Rob has written fifteen original radio plays, over a hundred episodes of *The Archers* and a 10-part children's drama series. Rob's radio production, *Losing Paradise* won the 1997 Gold Drama Award at the New York International Radio Festival. Rob has also written a non-fiction account of the last days in the life of Dylan Thomas, based on his own ITV doc *The Far Ago Land*, which won the Documentary Prize at the San Francisco Film Festival. Rob is currently writing two feature film projects; *Cream*, which has secured lottery development funding and *Billy Fenner Is A Pillock*.

"*Cream* is a universal story about second chances and an elephant. Micky Jarrett, early 30's, returns to a home turf that's dying before his eyes. Speculators and opportunist low life have left his once-proud community clinging to their rundown homes by a thread. The love of Micky's life, Kim, has also turned his back on him and even Micky's once-famous scams are now going wrong. It's too late for Mickey it seems. He's an unchanged man in a changing city; out of step, out of place and very nearly out of time – but an opportunity for escape soon lands in his lap, one that descends, literally, from the Heavens; but maybe the Gods have sent Micky this opportunity for a quite different reason. Because – and courtesy of a moon rock, an alcoholic jeweller, a severed foot, a bent cop, a constellation-obsessed hood and a movie-obsessed sidekick, not to mention an African bull elephant – Micky is about to discover that it's never too late – for a second, third – or even fifty-third – chance."

# THE SCRIPT FACTORY YEAR

The Script Factory is an independent filmmakers' organisation which offers a range of activities designed to close the gap between new filmmakers and the established film industry.

- It offers **Training** for industry practitioners looking to get the best out of screen stories, both across the UK and abroad, often partnership with educational organisations like the National Film and Television School, funding organisations like the UK's Regional Screen Agencies, and with a variety of national film funds from Israel and Singapore to Australia
- It stages inspirational **Masterclasses** where the best creative filmmakers take the stage to inspire audiences in a programme that has ranged from Mira Nair to Jim Jarmusch and from Robert Altman to Spike Lee
- It offers development tools for writers, directors and producers including a **Script Feedback** service which provides in-depth coverage reports, **Private Performed Readings** designed to hone scripts and attract finance, and a one-to-one programme which helps feature screenplays move from **Draft to Draft**
- The Script Factory has a **Membership Scheme** which offers opportunities to network, access to exclusive events, and discounts on fees and services
- It offers protection for screenplays with its **Registration Service**
- It has a range of in-house **Facilities** available for hire including a central London meeting space and video projection screening facilities
- It publishes a website at **www.scriptfactory.co.uk** featuring news, views and information for filmmakers

The Script Factory is supported by a film industry Board including Anthony Minghella, Daniel Battsek, Mike Figgis and Eric Fellner. Gwyneth Paltrow is The Script Factory's patron.

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