The Shepherd’s Life
by James Rebanks
adapted by Chris Monks

Fri 25 March – Sat 23 April 2016

THE SHEPHERD’S LIFE COMMUNITY CAST

We’re looking for 26 local performers to join us in creating the world premiere of The Shepherd’s Life, a new play adapted from James Rebanks’ best-selling book, to be performed in the Main House at Theatre by the Lake in Spring 2016. Anyone over the age of 10 is invited to come and audition.

If you’re interested, read on to find out more.

We want to provide you with the fullest possible picture of the project and the commitment it will involve, so please check through all the information before applying and do get in touch if you have any questions.

Best wishes,

Tess Ellison
Theatre by the Lake Production Assistant

Email: tess.ellison@theatrebythelake.com
Phone: 017687 72282, extension 258
THE SHOW

In 2015 James Rebanks published a book about his life working the land in the Lake District fells. It was a hard-hitting family saga; a Lakeland history that tore up the rule-book; a celebration of shepherding and a publishing sensation that topped The Sunday Times best-seller list.

It’s a story of hard graft, passion and dogged determination to stay rooted and connected to the land that generations of James’ family has farmed and shaped for more than six hundred years. A far cry from the idealised portrayal of the Lake District, this story cuts to the quick of modern rural life - punctuated throughout by the dry, dour wit of a Cumbrian hill farmer.

Following the shepherd’s year through the seasons, from gruelling winters digging sheep out of the snow through to the heady excitement of lambing time in the spring, this new adaptation features film, puppetry and music, with professional actors performing alongside members of the local community in a story that will fascinate and enlighten as much as entertain.

THE PROJECT

Following our productions of Cumbrian stories The Hired Man (2004), The Maid of Buttermere (2009) and Rogue Herries (2013), we want The Shepherd’s Life to again be a collaborative project between the theatre and the Cumbrian community. A cast of six professional actors and two puppeteers will work with 26 local performers, led by Theatre by the Lake’s professional creative team.

We’re looking for committed and talented local performers of all ages over 10 to play members of James’ family, school students, farmers, Cumbrian characters and (perhaps most importantly) sheep. The show will feature a flock of puppet Herdwicks animated by the Community Cast.

THE CREATIVE TEAM

Chris Monks is writing and directing the show. Chris is an experienced theatre director who’s just finishing his time as Artistic Director of the Stephen Joseph Theatre, Scarborough. Theatre by the Lake’s Resident Designer, Martin Johns, will design the show, the Musical Director is Richard Atkinson and the Puppetry Director is Jimmy Grimes, who was Associate Puppetry Director on hit show War Horse.

ROLES

We’re looking for a Community Cast of 26 performers of varying ages. We’re seeking:

a) **Six children:**
   - two boys aged 10-13 to share the role of young James and James’ son Isaac
   - four girls aged 10-13 to share the roles of James’ daughters Molly and Bea

b) **Six teenagers** aged 14-17 of either gender

c) **14 adults (over-18s)** of all ages and either gender

No acting experience is necessary, but you should be aware there will be some singing in the show and that the puppeteering will require relatively good mobility.
OVERALL DATES

The Community Cast will start weekend rehearsals in January 2016. They will then join the professional cast for rehearsals on weekday evenings and Saturdays from Monday 29 February for three-and-a-half weeks. The production previews on Friday 25 March and runs until Saturday 23 April 2016.

REHEARSALS

Auditions will be held on Sunday 13 December 2015 at Theatre by the Lake.

Successful auditionees will attend introductory weekend rehearsals in January and February 2016 on:

- Saturday 9 January, 2-5pm and Sunday 10 January, 10am-1pm: Focusing on puppetry
- Saturday 23 January, 2-5pm and Sunday 24 January, 10am-1pm: Focusing on puppetry
- Sunday 31 January, 2-5pm
- Sunday 7 February, 2-5pm
- Sunday 14 February, 2-5pm (reserved as a contingency session)

Attendance at these rehearsals is essential, as this is when the most important ground work on puppetry, singing and character will take place.

There will then be rehearsal sessions with the professional cast on Monday, Wednesday and Thursday evenings and Saturday mornings between Monday 29 February and Saturday 19 March 2016. Further details to follow. Not everyone will be needed all the time.

PRODUCTION WEEK

Production Week is when the show goes from rehearsal to performance. Rehearsals during this week will be in the auditorium on the set. The Community Cast will be required on:

- Tuesday 22 March: evening Technical Rehearsal
- Wednesday 23 March: evening Technical Rehearsal
- Thursday 24 March: evening Dress Rehearsal
- Friday 25 March: afternoon Dress Rehearsal and evening Preview Performance
- Saturday 26 March: afternoon Rehearsal for full Community Cast and evening First Performance

Please note that attendance at rehearsals during Production Week is vital.
THE PERFORMANCE SCHEDULE

Performers who are under 18 will be split into two teams so will not be required for every performance. Performers aged over 18 will be needed every night (Monday to Saturday). You should also note that there are six matinees during the run, and we appreciate the extra commitment these matinees will demand from Community Cast members.

March 2016

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>Fri 25</td>
<td>The Shepherd's Life</td>
<td>7.30pm</td>
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<td>Sat 26</td>
<td>The Shepherd's Life</td>
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<td>Sun 27</td>
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<td>Wed 30</td>
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April 2016

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<td>Sat 2</td>
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<td>Sun 3</td>
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<td>Fri 8</td>
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<td>Sat 9</td>
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<td>Mon 11</td>
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We realise this is a lengthy and demanding commitment, so please think carefully about the level of involvement before applying. Let us know in your application of any concerns or availability issues around the rehearsal and performance period.

A note about ‘poaching’: we realise that many amateur performers in the area may already be committed to productions with their own societies during this period and, of course, we have no intention of ‘poaching’ such performers.
AUDITIONS

Auditions for the Community Cast will be held on Sunday 13 December at Theatre by the Lake. They will involve groups of people working with the show’s director on simple puppetry exercises, drama games and singing. No preparation is required. Auditionees should wear casual/comfy clothes and shoes.

Auditionees will also be measured for costume and photographed for our records. Auditions may be filmed for selection purposes.

There will be five audition sessions during the day; two in the morning and three in the afternoon. Auditionees will attend one of these sessions.

If you would like to audition for The Shepherd’s Life, complete the enclosed form and return it to Tess Ellison, Theatre by the Lake, Lakeside, Keswick, Cumbria, CA12 5DJ or to tess.ellison@theatrebythelake.com by Wednesday 2 December 2015 at the latest.

In the week following the closing date, we will contact you to confirm your audition time. If you require any additional information about this project please contact Tess on 017687 72282, extension 258, or on the above email address.

Many thanks for your interest in this project and we look forward to meeting you!

Chris Monks
Director, The Shepherd’s Life

Ian Forrest
Artistic Director, TBTL

Tess Ellison
Production Assistant and Community Cast Manager
The Shepherd’s Life
by James Rebanks
adapted by Chris Monks

COMMUNITY CAST AUDITION APPLICATION FORM

NAME

ADDRESS

CONTACT TEL
Daytime: Evening: Mobile:

EMAIL ADDRESS

We would ordinarily email you about arrangements for auditions and rehearsals. Please let us know if this is a problem:

I do not use email □

GENDER
(Male / Female)

AGE
(please state)

EXPERIENCE
Please provide a brief outline of your theatre experience to date

Have you participated in any other Theatre by the Lake shows as a Community Cast member? If so, please state which ones.

AUDITION TIMES
Please indicate your first and second choices of audition time by marking the boxes ‘1’ and ‘2’.

SUNDAY 13 DECEMBER

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>SESSION</th>
<th>Time</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
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<td>B</td>
<td>11.15am – 12.30pm</td>
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<td>C</td>
<td>1.30pm – 2.45pm</td>
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<td>D</td>
<td>2.45pm – 4pm</td>
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<td>E</td>
<td>4pm – 5.15pm</td>
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OR, I AM AVAILABLE FOR ANY OF THE AUDITION TIMES □
### AVAILABILITY FOR REHEARSALS

It is important that Community Cast members can attend all rehearsals. However, we understand you may have pre-existing commitments. To help us plan for these we need to know about them at the earliest opportunity.

**Introductory Weekend Rehearsals** (9, 10, 23, 24, 31 January; 7, 14 February 2016)

I AM AVAILABLE FOR ALL INTRODUCTORY REHEARSALS □

Please let us know of availability issues:

**Evening/Saturday Rehearsals** (Monday, Wednesday and Thursday evenings and Saturday mornings from Monday 29 February – Saturday 19 March 2016). Not everyone will be needed all time.

I AM AVAILABLE FOR EVENING/SATURDAY REHEARSALS □

Please let us know of availability issues:

**Production Week Rehearsals** (from Tuesday 22 – Friday 25 March 2016)

I AM AVAILABLE FOR PRODUCTION WEEK REHEARSALS □

Please let us know of availability issues:

### AVAILABILITY FOR PERFORMANCES

The play runs from Friday 25 March – Saturday 23 April 2016 inclusive

I AM AVAILABLE FOR ALL PERFORMANCE DATES □

Please let us know of availability issues:

Return this form to Tess Ellison, Theatre by the Lake, Lakeside, Keswick, Cumbria, CA12 5DJ no later than WEDNESDAY 2 DECEMBER 2015.

If you require any additional information about this project please contact Tess on 017687 72282, extension 258 or email tess.ellison@theatrebythelake.com