



PRESS RELEASE 2011

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Dramarama and Beyond: Children's Television Drama of the 80s Throughout April at BFI Southbank



Throughout **April 2011**, **BFI Southbank** celebrates classic Children's Television Drama of the 1980s, with a month long TV Season uncovering the single play strand that was **Dramarama**.

The season will offer both a selection of the unique strand that was Dramarama including **Living Doll** and **Mr. Stabs**, as well a selection of hard hitting episodes from other much loved drama series' of the era including **Grange Hill** and **Press Gang**. Throughout the season, very special guests including **Alistair McGown** (author of *The Hill and Beyond: Children's Television Drama – An Encyclopedia*) and cast members' including **Dexter Fletcher** (*Press Gang*) and **Lee MacDonald** (*Zammo*) and **Erkan Mustafa** (*Roland*) from **Grange Hill** will be welcomed to introduce screenings and share their memories of the 80s.

During the 1980s, the single play strand **Dramarama** ignited a prolific period in broadcasting for Children's Television that many believe hasn't been achieved since. Under the stewardship of **Anna Home** (having recently left the BBC as Executive Producer of Children's Drama), producers from the regional ITV franchises submitted programmes on various themes to be screened under the Dramarama banner. This unique set up often afforded smaller regional franchises the chance to contribute to ITV's schedule.

Dramarama ran for seven years (1983-1989), producing 90 programmes, split between eight seasons. It spanned every genre imaginable with spooky tales that you watched from behind the sofa, to comedic capers that had you crying with laughter. It supported new writing from the likes of **Anthony Horowitz** (*Foyle's War*), **Paul Abbott** (*Shameless*) and **Kay Mellor** (*Band of Gold*), as well as attracting more established writers, such as, **Adele Rose** (*Coronation Street*) and **Bill Oddie** (*The Goodies*). Counted among its cast is everyone from **David Jason** and a teenage **Gary Oldman** to **Joan Sim** and **Pam Ferris**.

Though Dramarama is the focus of our season, there were other examples of quality drama being produced for children during this decade, both in terms of single plays commissioned by the BBC and as part of series that went on to run throughout the decade and into the next. **Grange Hill**, for example, featured some of its most memorable and controversial storylines during the 1980s and a new post 6pm slot opened up on BBC2 for the likes of Grange Hill spin-off **Tucker's Luck** and Glasgow set teen drama **Maggie**. Thames television produced the rarely seen Jukes of Piccadilly and other ITV franchises brought us a wealth of goods with **Murphy's Mob; Into the Labyrinth; Chocky; Luna**; and **The Box of Delights**. Young viewers were spoilt for choice.

- Ends -

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NOTES TO EDITORS

Dramarama and Beyond: Children's Television Drama of the 80s takes place at **BFI Southbank** on **April 11 – 30**.

Dramarama: First and Last

Though seven single plays were broadcast under the title Dramarama: Spooky in 1983, the first official title in the strand is considered to be **Mighty Mum and the Petnappers**, a comic caper about a crime-fighting mum. The last, screened in 1989, **In the Pink** tells the tale of an albino schoolgirl and the prejudice she faces.

Dramarama: Mighty Mum and the Petnappers

TVS 1983. Dir Renny Rye. With Judy Cornwell, Petronella Barker. 25min

+ Dramarama: In the Pink Central 1989.

Dir Geoffrey Husson. With Annah Fitch. 25min

Extended introduction by Alistair McGown, author of *The Hill and Beyond: Children's Television Drama – An Encyclopedia*

Mon 11 April 18:20 NFT3

Heroes and Hooligans Jukes of Piccadilly:

The Corcelli Medallion (Pts1&2)

Thames 1980. Dir Terry Steel. With Nigel Hawthorne, Dexter Fletcher. 2x30min

Running for only six episodes, *Jukes of Piccadilly* followed old-fashioned English gentleman Brinsley Jukes as he divided his time between running a tea shop and his hobby of playing detective. In this two-part mystery, Jukes witnesses the kidnapping of a boy who may have discovered buried treasure.

+ Dramarama: The Halt

Central 1987. Dir Mike Holgate. 25min

A moral tale involving teenage football hooligans who terrorise passengers on a train. When they pass through a tunnel, the group are in for a surprise.

We hope to welcome Dexter Fletcher to introduce this screening

Fri 15 April 18:30 NFT3

Family Affairs

Maggie

BBC 1982. Dir Michael Kerrigan. With Kirsty Miller. 25min

This successful Scottish series ran for two seasons on BBC2, in the 'teen slot' at 18:15. Maggie rebelled against her working-class upbringing, dreaming of attending university and having a career. In this episode, Maggie and her family attend the wedding of a pregnant teenager.

+ Dodger, Bonzo and the Rest (Episode One)

Thames 1985. Dir Derek Bennett. With Lee Ross. 25min

Dodger, Bonzo and the Rest was the only *Dramarama* play made into a full series in its original form. Set in a London children's home, it follows the trials and tribulations of siblings

Dodger and Bonzo.

+ Dramarama: Living Doll

TVS 1987. Dir Keith Washington. With Eric Allan. 25min

Written by Kay Mellor, this *Dramarama* play takes an interesting look at family life through the eyes of a child, who wishes her fighting parents could be as happy as her favourite dolls.

Wed 20 April 18:30 NFT2

School Days

Grange Hill

BBC 1986. Dir David Bell. With Lee MacDonald, Erkan Mustafa. 25min

Largely considered the most controversial storyline in *Grange Hill* history, Zammo's heroin addiction still remains one of its best known. In this episode, we are shown the harsh reality of his addiction when he is discovered unconscious by his friend Roly.

+ Press Gang: Page One

Central/Richmond Films and Television 1989. Dir Colin Nutley. With Dexter Fletcher, Julia Sawalha. 25min

First airing in 1989, *Press Gang* went on to run for five seasons and win many awards. In this first episode, we are introduced to the Norbridge High students who will become responsible for the *Junior Gazette*.

+ Dramarama: Forever Young

Granada 1988. Dir Gareth Morgan. With John Bird, John Fortune. 25min

This gothic comedy follows a group of teachers on a weekend seminar, where what they learn is not what they expected.

We are pleased to welcome Lee MacDonald and Erkan Mustafa to introduce this screening.

Tue 26 April 18:30 NFT2

And Now...for Something Completely Different

A selection of the more absurd offerings from the *Dramarama* strand. Without giving too much away, lest we should spoil the surprises, the offerings below host four chickens, a pop sensation, a magical cult villain and an apprentice devil. Intrigued?

Dramarama: Fowl Pest

TVS 1984. Dir Michael Kerrigan. With Joan Sims. 25min

+ Dramarama: Mr Stabs

Thames 1984. Dir John Woods. With David Jason. 25min

+ Dramarama: The Wrong Button

Central 1988. Dir Geoff Husson. With Christopher Biggins. 25min

+ Dramarama: Purple Passion Video

HTV 1985. Dir Terry Miller. With Bobby Gee (Bucks Fizz). 25min

Sat 30 April 16:00 NFT2

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Tickets for FREE screenings and events must be booked in advance by calling the Box Office to avoid disappointment

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