

The Lady of Burma

**A play by Richard Shannon
with Liana Mau Tan Gould
as Aung San Suu Kyi.**



The Lady of Burma is the story of Burmese leader Aung San Suu Kyi (pictured above), a Nobel Prize winning political prisoner, who has been under house arrest now for more than 12 years.

In preparing the text for the play, Shannon spoke to people who had reportedly been involved with Suu Kyi's struggle for democracy. The drama turns the pages of history from her late father, General Aung San, who helped bring about Burma's independence from the British in 1945 and who was assassinated when she was 2 years old, to her mother's illness, which first brought Suu Kyi back to Burma from the UK. It charts the separation from her two children and the death of her husband, who was refused permission to visit her.

This personal story, along with the political tale, including the uprisings, the unrecognised election victory and the Depayin massacre, all make this a compelling story, but it is the fine acting of Liana Mau Tan Gould that makes it a compelling drama.

The play started in darkness and silence. When the subdued lighting eased in we saw Aung San Suu Kyi, played by Liana Mau Tan Gould (pictured opposite), lying on a bench in a dirty prison cell with a single light bulb and, on the floor, a bowl of water. This is Insein prison, which – we are told – 'was built to last by the British'. The narrative begins.

Greg Ogden

The Lady of Burma is drama at its rawest - bare props and a single performer with a story to tell, but it works. The story unfolds with a power and intensity that leaves you reeling. There were moments when it felt that it was a case of 'and this is what happened next', though this sentiment wasn't shared by my partner, so maybe it's a case of how much you already know of the 'story'. To those who have followed Suu Kyi's story, there wasn't a lot that was new, but what the play does is bring the personal element of the struggle directly before us.

There are times during the play when the actor switches roles in the telling of the tale, and she does this brilliantly. When a general comes to see Suu Kyi and convince her of the 'good' that the dictatorship is doing for the people, it is easy to imagine the visit of this pompous general dressed in military regalia standing before this spiritually powerful but physically frail woman and it sends a powerful message of determination and courage. That is the strength of the play; convincingly acted, it offers hope – hope that one day, the play can have a different ending and the people of Burma a better future.

During the *talkback* session after the play, the actor expressed her concern for the unfolding events in Burma. In reference to the recent cyclone, she said that, tragic as it was, she hoped something good would come out of it. There goes that word again – *hope*, such a small word for such a big dream. When will it be realised?



Burma Update

Greg Ogden

Burma is currently suffering the effects of the cyclone that recently destroyed thousands of homes and killed thousands of people. The dictatorship that rules the country has been slow to react and has made it very difficult for aid agencies to get help through to the people that need it. It looks likely that many more will die.

The regime has continued with rigged elections during this disaster and extended Aung San Suu Kyi's arrest, even though the extension takes them over their own legal limit for detention without a trial. Although Burma has had more media coverage recently, it is starting once again to disappear from the headlines. Meanwhile, geopolitics, dirty politics and dirty profits keep it high on the agenda of those whose interest is increased without conscience.

Anyone wishing to find out more or help in any way can contact www.burmacampaign.org.uk which is actively campaigning for change and which also endorsed and supported the play *The Lady of Burma* (UK tour has just finished).

More action for Burma

Would you like to do something locally to raise awareness of the desperate situation in Burma, or put pressure on TOTAL oil to withdraw its support for and stop profiting from the oppressive military regime?

Day of Action for Burma

On **Saturday 19 July**, Wrexham Women for Peace and supporters will be holding a stall for Burma in Chester from 10.30 am – 12 noon on Eastgate Street, followed by a demonstration outside the TOTAL petrol station on Hoole Road, Chester from 12.30 – 2 pm.
Call **0845 330 4505** or email wrexhamwomen@yahoo.co.uk.

Homage to Radio 4

The voice of caring on the radio,
All day, every day, a soothing flow;
Warmly reassuring voices
Wise advice for you and me
On life style and consumer choices,
On money health and property.

Expert voices on the radio,
Tones of hushed sincerity
That tell us what we need to know,
Not shirking tough reality.
Global warming, big concern,
So much more we have to learn;

Gun crime, that's another issue
Again in depth to be gone into.
Mention too (we must) the war.
The debate has only just begun;
A controversial one for sure
That certainly will run and run.

It's yet another human tragedy
And only history will decide
Whether right was on our side.
Then we can solemnly deplore
The mistakes of those who went
before
(and we've apologised for slavery.)

But coming next is "Quote Unquote".
And here we have a little lad
(to end upon a lighter note)
Lost his limbs, his mum and dad –
The symbol of the conflict he,
So we've decided he shall be,

Receiving expert loving care,
Counselling to assuage his grief,
Writing with a pen in his teeth –
How really good and nice we are.
Smiling voices on the radio,
On and on and on they go.

George Miller

Transition Town News



Guerilla Bagging in Chester

Cheryl Buxton-Sait

Members of Transition Town Chester have formed a *Sociable Guerrilla Bagging Pod*. We are a group of people getting together to challenge people's use of plastic bags by taking practical action and learning new skills in the process. Our pod is part of a global network, founded in January of this year by Claire Morsman, who was becoming increasingly outraged at the number of wild animals harmed by plastic bags after mistaking them for food.

We've been making reusable bags from old material (old dresses, curtains, duvet covers etc.) with the intention of giving them out freely on the street to encourage people to give up plastic bags for good.

For me the activity fulfils two important aims of the Transition movement: taking practical action for sustainability and allowing us to reskill. Cheap Oil has allowed us to become far less practically skilled

than previous generations but as oil becomes more expensive these forgotten skills are going to become more necessary. Many of us younger participants could not sew, the abundance of cheap clothing in our lifetime making it unnecessary. One aim of Transition Town Chester is to develop openings for people to re-learn forgotten crafts and for me, a novice seamstress, this is a most welcome opportunity!

So if you want to join like-minded people sewing, chatting and tea drinking, contact Transition Town Chester by email: transitionchester@yahoogroups.com or on the net: www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=18227221398

More information on Sociable Guerrilla Bagging can be found at: www.morsbags.com

Transition Town Wrexham?

A first meeting to talk about the possibility of Wrexham becoming a Transition Town will take place this month.

Anyone interested in the Transition Town idea of working together to reduce our carbon footprint is invited to come along to **WMTS**, corner of Salop Rd and Rivulet Rd at **8pm on Monday 28 July** to find out more.

Film, speakers, discussion and bar.

See you there!

To put your name on our mailing list or to make a donation to support WPJF, complete and return this form to WPJF, PO Box 661, Wrexham LL11 1QU.

Please make cheques payable to Wrexham Peace & Justice Forum.

If you have a friend who would like to receive WPJN, please fill in their details overleaf.

Name _____	I enclose an (optional) donation of £ _____
Address _____	Please tick below as applicable:
_____	Please add me to your mailing list. <input type="checkbox"/>
_____	I already receive WPJN by post. <input type="checkbox"/>
Postcode _____	Signed _____ Date _____