

Monday 18th September

In ***The First Modern Man***, we meet Michel de Montaigne, a sixteenth century French nobleman who retired from public to live quietly, in contemplation. It turned out otherwise. As an antidote to his melancholia, he wrote down his thoughts in what he called his (in French) 'try-outs' and so created the genre of essay-writing.

A lot of other things started with Montaigne. The intense individual self-scrutiny which we consider normal fare in our papers, and programmes, and blogs, began with him: as did our contemporary sense of our world being in flux; our scepticism about empire; our interest in other cultures and even in 'world' music.

This remarkable man, never lost his continual curiosity about the world around him, despite the sporadic agonies caused by his kidney stones. Truly a man for all seasons.

Michael Barry wrote The First Modern Man for Johnny Hansler, who will perform it at P-P.

In 2011, Michael Barry gave up looking after the security of courts and judges to concentrate on writing. His site-specific play 'A Kind Bowl' featured in the Transcend Festival in 2013. Set in St.Giles-in-the-Fields, it told the stories of felons who had a last drink there before execution.

His play 'A Start' was one of the joint winners performed in the 2016 One Act competition at the Cornerhouse theatre. His main thing is stage-writing, but he has had screenplays long-listed as part of the Impact 50 competition and is half-way through the first draft of a mildly amusing novel.

He loves the short-play competitions at PP: He won the shield for best ten-minute play in 2014 and held both shield for best ten-minute play and cup for best comedy in 2015 - he hopes this was a unique achievement but isn't sure.