

BLOC BAILIWICK



IAN FLEMING'S
CHITTY CHITTY BANG BANG

**SPECIAL
POINTS OF
INTEREST:**

- Meet the creative team.
- Recommendations from the Baron
- Early days of BLOC at the Hippodrome
- Which musical has a "Blonde Cult Leader"?
- Meet the Children of Chitty.

Bumper Summer Issue

BLOC BAILIWICK

EDITORIAL BY JACK BLACKMORE

Hello all! We may have missed a month but we are back for your reading pleasure with the latest issue of the BLOC Bailiwick. What a time it has been: unbelievably hot weather, a world cup, and, personally for me, I've graduated from university!

But, enough about me, I believe a few congratulations are in order. Firstly, congratulations to our very own Eliza Doolittle, Charlotte Hunter, who has given birth to a wonderful boy, Herbie Jack Hunter. Secondly, congratulations to our matchmaker, Amber Scales, who has also given birth to a marvellous boy, Ralph Jonathan Scales. Thirdly, congratulations to our Caractacus Potts, Craig Rees-Cavendish, on getting married to his partner, Jeremy Rees-Cavendish. Fourthly, congratulations to Chris Hobbs who is off to study a Masters in Musical Theatre at the Royal Academy of Music. Fifthly, congratulations to everyone, friends old and new, who have been nominated for a Rose Bowl Award - especially to Courtney Jackson (Choreography), Chris Parslow (Supporting Actor), and Simon Vardakis (Supporting Actor) for their work on BLOC's last production of *My Fair Lady*. Fingers crossed!

You may noticed a few changes to this month's edition. As the editorial team, we like to think of Bailwick more like a parish magazine, than a newsletter, so this month sees the introduction of a front cover and contents list. For those of you who don't want to read everything at once, you will notice the article titles are blue; this is because they are links that will take you direct to the article so you can pick and choose what you read and in what order. I hope you like these changes and enjoy reading it as much as we enjoy putting it together.

I'd like to say a big thank you to everyone who contributed to this bumper issue: Lily Beacon, Agatha Camerson-Kettle, Tom Creswick, Teresa Davey, Lauren Davies, Sam Davies, Russel Erwood, Jaleelah Galbraith, Gerri Gregory, Emma Griffiths, Donna Podesta, Richard Lennox, Grace MacDonald, Chris Parslow, Ewan Poole-Gleed, Craig Rees-Cavendish, Jack Spencer, Adele Stitch, Anna Sutton, Peter Sutton, Ian Taylor, Charlie Thould, Alex Turasiewicz, and Lizzy Westney. We always appreciate every feature that comes our way, so thank you for everything.

Finally, as always, if you have an idea for an article, want to contribute (whether that's writing, showcasing, or just helping out), or even if you just want to say your piece on something you agreed/disagreed with in a previous issue – we would love to hear from you at bailiwick@blocproductions.co.uk. But for now, enjoy reading!

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GETTING TO KNOW YOU – MEET THE CREATIVE TEAM



Alex Turasiewicz -
Director

Dogs (alright it's only one dog now but originally it was going to be ten), children, and a flying car. What Director would not want to be involved with such a production. As Robbie Burns said several times last year, it is a fantastic privilege to be given an opportunity to perform and work on the Bristol Hippodrome stage. As a director, it gives one endless possibilities and one is only limited by one's own imagination and, of course, the inevitable budget. Do you want ten dogs or Grandpa to fly? We can achieve both but not afford both. So, part of my role is to meet Mr. Lewis and make artistic choices based on their financial implications. The excitement of the production for me is being part of such an amazing team.

Firstly, there are the other Creatives who bring their amazing

skills to the production – a key one is trying to understand what I mean a lot of time (surely, they can mind-read by now!). Then, there is the pleasure of working with a very talented company who bring their own creativity to the production. However, behind all this, there is a huge group of people who are working on the set, lighting, sound, costumes, etc. designed by James Hartland; it's really exciting to be involved in its development rather than hiring one that is being used by every other club doing the show. It is being built by James and Peter Sutton's Stage Crew Team which means they will feel much more ownership. The Costume Department are having to coordinate over two hundred costumes as most members of the cast have at least three changes. The props list that I've given looks really daunting with hundreds of props as many are for the whole company. At the last meeting they were still smiling (just). The positive

can-do attitude of those involved backstage is a real tonic and very inspiring. So much of the job is meeting with members of the team to discuss and plan and, as Jaleelah says after the third or fourth meeting of the week, I love a good meeting.

Finally, there is the further background work undertaken by the Committee acting as Producers to ensure the show goes on the Hippodrome Stage. So gradually, alongside the cast rehearsing, the show is coming together behind the scenes as well. It really is exciting – and very humbling when you see the hours of work that people put into the show - to be involved with all the aspects of production and see it gradually take shape. All this is going on to produce the successful show that we are all aiming to achieve, and it is very exciting, and a privilege to be part of it.



Donna Podesta -
Choreographer

I hail from the North West where I grew up in a village called Poulton-Le-Fylde not far from Blackpool with my mum, dad, and younger brother. I started dancing at four years old but that didn't last long before I told my mum I didn't want to go dancing anymore and "pretend to open up like a flower". That was that. I started ice-skating instead. When I was eleven years old, I made my own decision to return to dancing and haven't stopped since.

I spent many years making happy memories performing at the Grand Theatre in Blackpool. I trained in ballet, tap, and modern before moving on to study Performing Arts at College. I was lucky enough to perform with Ken Dodd and the Roly Poly's, dance on the *BBC Saturday Picture Show*

with Mark Curry and perform in the touring company of *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat*. I then embarked on my professional career. For the next ten years, I performed in Blackpool summer season shows, cabaret, and on-board cruise ships, including time spent as a magician's assistant.

My past teaching & choreography experience includes Stagecoach Theatre Arts Preston, running a 'Dance Development Programme' for local primary schools, and 'Dance for Health' classes on prescription. I have also enjoyed teaching and promoting dance, along with its benefits to health and well-being, to people with learning disabilities within my role as an Occupational Therapist.

When I moved to Bristol nine years ago, not wanting to hang up my dancing shoes, I joined BAOS and performed in many

productions before choreographing *Fame and Seussical* for BAOS Youth and *Legally Blonde* for the adults in 2017.

I am very excited to have been given the opportunity to choreograph their 2018 production of *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*. I am looking forward to moving everyone around the biggest stage yet and to work with such a talented cast and production team.

Did you know?

As *Chitty* is being driven around the English countryside in the film, it passes vineyards - this is because the scenes were filmed in France for the sunshine.

GETTING TO KNOW YOU — MEET THE CREATIVE TEAM



Lauren Davies—Musical Director

Rehearsals for *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* have kicked off and we are well and truly on our way to creating an amazing show. The sixteen piece orchestra consisting of strings, brass, woodwind, and rhythm section have been booked. It will be exciting to be able to conduct from the pit this year instead of back stage as we were the previous year for *My Fair Lady*. Although it was fun seeing all the movement from behind the scenes, I can have a lot more control from the front of the stage

and it will be great to hear the audiences' reactions (not to mention seeing Chitty fly!). Alex has even promised me a spotlight on the orchestra for the Entracte at the start of Act Two!

The chorus numbers are shaping up nicely with some beautiful harmonies. We have almost perfected 'Toot Sweets', 'Bombie Samba', and the Act One Finale; the next task is to tackle the opening number, which goes into a six part harmony, so we're looking forward to the challenge!

I am thoroughly enjoying working with the Chitty family,

both sets of Jeremy and Jemima's are working so hard and it shows in their performance. I love the upbeat style of the show and I can't wait for it to all come together. Thanks to everyone so far for putting in so much effort!

Did you Know?

The musical number 'Toot Sweets' took three weeks to film for the 1968 movie and involved 38 dancers, 40 singers, 85 musicians and 100 dogs.



Jaleelah Galbraith - Assistant Director

Hi I'm Jaleelah and I am the Assistant Director of *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* and I am very excited to be a part of the Creative Team.

This is a little bit of information about my experience: I gained my BA (Hons) Drama and English degree at UWE and was a recipient of one of their Performance Awards upon graduation. I, then, trained as an actor at The American Academy of Dramatic Arts in New York (AADA) as well as in repertory theatre in the UK.

Since then I have worked as both an actor and director. I am the Principal of the Pauline Quirke Academy Bristol; a performance academy for those aged 4-18 teaching Comedy and Drama, Musical Theatre and Film and TV. I am also the ESL LAMDA teacher and Director of Productions at Monkton, a private school in Bath.

I'm have been working with EAT Company and have just performed in their debut Repertory Season this July, at the Alma Tavern, in the play *The Girl's Guide to Saving the World* and I have just finished filming *Cherry* which was my first screenplay to

be produced. I am currently in Edinburgh performing my own one woman show *It is a Truth* at the Fringe Festival. I've have been performing this in warm up gigs around Bristol over the last couple of months.

I was a member of BLOC during my university days and I have loved being on the production team for this family classic so far; I really believe this will be a showstopper of a production.



Adele Stitch - Dance Captain

I have been dancing since the age of two. I now run my own dance school called 'The Adele Stitch School of Dance' and this year it celebrates its tenth anniversary. There are three branches located in Nailsea, Backwell, and Easton in Gordano. Over 300 pupils attend the schools and we teach the RAD and ISTD Syllabus. During the year our pupils dance at different competitions and events. Our most prestigious event is being invited each year to dance for the charity Banardos at The Royal Albert Hall. Miss Holly, who is also in BLOC, is one my amazing and very talented teachers. I absolutely love my job and quite a few of my students continue to

go on to dance schools in London.

For *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* I am your Dance Captain so have your Jazz Hands at the ready! I'm really looking forward to the show as it's right up my street. It is full of energetic fun and there's also a flying car. I feel very lucky to share the stage with some of my pupils from my dance school in particular Lily, who is playing one of the Jemima's. I feel very proud of her for being cast in this role.

My job as Dance Captain is to help you if you have any problems with any of the steps, reassure you and fill you with buzzing confidence. So please, don't hesitate to come and ask me if you need any help or want me to go over any steps or routines.

My other main task is to give you a good work out before every show and push you to your limit! This 'work out' will be on stage and will get you ready to deliver an outstanding performance! I love working with the production team and I know Donna will do an amazing job as we both clicked when we first met each other.

I hope you all have a fantastic time working on *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* and enjoy every minute of it. Remember: Sparkle and Shine wherever you go. ✨ ✨ ✨

GETTING TO KNOW YOU — MEET THE CREATIVE TEAM



Richard Lennox— Assistant Musical Director

Over the years I have worked extensively in Theatre, Cabaret, and major concert venues across the UK and Europe including the world famous Royal Albert Hall. Also, I have performed in many of the the UK's Cathedrals delighting venues and audiences alike with the Lennox spin to piano and organ performance. Classically trained, I've had a wide ranging career between solo performing, musical direction, and playing for various productions including Wedmore Operas *A night at the Opera*, *Carmen*, *The Pirates of Penzance*, *Wicked*, *Beyond the Barricade*, *Starlight Express* UK tour, and the light operatic musical *I want to sing Opera* as well as various other musical society productions. I am Pianist and Organist for Langham Arts Prom Praise concerts at the Royal Albert Hall for Integrity Music as well as a regular recitalist in Wells cathedral concerts.

In March 2015, I took an on a stage role, as well as Musical Director, in the operatic musical *I want to sing in Opera* performed at the Lancaster Grand and Fairfield Halls Ashcroft theatre. I've presented my own evenings of Popular Piano Classics, Films and Musicals, as well as one evening of paying tribute to various Piano Legends at Weston's Blakehay Theatre.

Performing for cruise liners including P&O, Swan Hellenic, and Cruise and Maritimes' Marco Polo has also been a regular part of my work.

TV work has also included musical directing Talent Trial, arranging and playing on two episodes of *Songs of Praise* for BBC TV and recording the piano tracks for Tim Fywell's 2003 film *I Capture The Castle*.

Alongside all this, I work with BTEC students and play for various dance company classes and workshops including New Adventures and Ballet Cymru.

Over the years I have recorded 6 CD'S, including *Virtuoso Piano*, *Ivor Novello*, *Calm beneath the Storm*, *Organ Favourites* and my latest is a Jazz standard album entitled *Foggy Day*.

Gradually I am gaining a reputation for performing classical crossover concerts using multi genre

repertoire both as a solo artist and with various ensembles.

I am a huge animal lover and my biggest ambition is to own two Great Danes and two St Bernards.

Chitty Chitty Bang Bang is a challenging fun show for everybody and I'm really excited to be involved with in it as my first show with BLOC productions.



Gerri Gregory— Children's Coach

I am writing this article after spectating an extremely tense football match: England vs Columbia.

I felt physically sick for most of the match. Those who watched it will understand why! Having analysed my feeling a little, I guess it was bags of pent up nervous energy! Could England pull together as a team and take us through to the next round...? The nerves I felt were similar to those felt on the day of an audition or opening night of a show that I have directed when I am sat in the auditorium and have no control over the 'players'! Will they believe in themselves and commit to the characters we have spent months creating? I just have to trust that everything will run smoothly and that the players will bring home the glory! England did (for this match anyway!) and the junior cast are working towards that glory; my job is to ensure they get there (and that they enjoy it!).

Once BLOC announced *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*, I knew immediately the role I wanted to play. I have two strong passions in life (aside from my husband Simon of course!): theatre and children! Combining the two is just perfect! I wrote to the committee requesting the position of 'Children's Coach', and whilst I had to wait a while to have the role confirmed (yet more pangs of nervous energy), I was welcomed into the team and haven't looked back since.

For *Chitty* I see myself not as Gareth Southgate (as I didn't select the players or choreograph the moves), not as Harry Kane (as I don't get to lead the team on stage) but more as Steve Holland (the person that coaches the players and puts them through their paces to ensure they are match

fit!). I have the privilege of working with a large group of children, shaping and drilling them to be the best they can. Whilst they are children, it's extremely important to me they are NOT the 'cute' factors of the show, but performers in their own right, fully focused on the task in hand and delivering a performance that will make us all proud.

One of the songs not in the film is, 'Teamwork', which is precisely what we all need in life! Throughout rehearsals I continually drill the young people on this, albeit most of them are naturals and need little reminding.

Already many have bonded and become firm friends. They could certainly teach a few adults how to support each other and work together for a common goal, that's for sure!

I LOVE what I do, even if I do, at times, need to raise my voice during rehearsals to be heard! Musical Theatre has so much to offer young people in all areas of their development and I see it as my responsibly to aid their progress and feed their growth. Anyone who has worked with me before knows how passionate I am about any project I am responsible for, "*Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*" is no exception. The ensemble children (affectionately known to the Production team as the 'Vulgar Children') and our four Principle children, (Aggie, Charlie, Lily and Jack), are great to work with. I feel certain that together "we can do it, together we can do anything" because as quoted in the song, "Teamwork can make a dream work, can make the greatest dreams come true."



GETTING TO KNOW YOU - MEET THE CHILDREN



AGATHA CAMERSON-KETTLE (Jemima)

Hello! Most people call me Agatha but my friends call me Aggie. I also have various nicknames at home! I live with my parents and teenage siblings (a brother and a sister). There are no other relatives who live near us. I attend Christ Church Primary School in Weston-super-Mare. My best subjects are Literacy, Maths, Art/DT, French, and Music. However, I do not like PE and some of the teaching staff.

My favourite things in life are dancing, singing, acting, craft activities, and reading. I especially love ballet. As well as my regular classes, I get up at 6am every Saturday to travel to Birmingham as I am on the Young Dancers Programme at Elmhurst Ballet School in Association with Birmingham Royal Ballet. I am also a Cecchetti Associate.

I have been very lucky to have made my screen debut playing Rachel Crowhurst in the film *Crowhurst* which was directed by Simon Rumley and is named in the best films of 2018. My hands are famous too as they have had some unexpected modelling work!

All of my immediate family have a special party trick. My sister can forecast the weather with her hair; my brother can wiggle his hair and his ears; my dad can wiggle his mouth into strange positions; my mum can touch her nose with her tongue; and I can make my eyebrows dance, fold my tongue into peculiar shapes, fold my eyelids inside out, pop my knuckle on my middle finger on my left hand, and suck my stomach in so far that I look like Golem.

I am absolutely loving the rehearsals for *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*. I was very nervous at the first audition but really enjoyed preparing for the Jemima audition. I particularly like the 'Bombie Samba' and wish I could

be in it. Another of my favourite songs from the show is 'Doll on a Music Box'.

I am very excited to have the chance to fly in *Chitty* - thank you to everyone at BLOC for this fantasmagorical opportunity.

CHARLIE THOULD (Jeremy)



My name is Charlie Thould, I am nine years old, and I live with my mum, dad, and little sister. I am a Year Four pupil at Gilwern Primary School.

Ever since I can remember I have wanted to be on the stage. I love performing and making people smile. I have been a member of a musical theatre group for two years and have taken part in a number of shows, including *Aladdin*, *The Railway Children*, *Joseph and The Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat*, and, most recently, *Oliver!* Playing the part of Oliver was fantastic, I loved every second and as this was my first principal role I learnt a lot. Apart from acting, my favourite hobby is tap dancing. I have weekly lessons and drive my parents crazy by tapping around the house and scratching the tiles. They say they always know where I am because they can hear my feet before anything else. My idols are Gene Kelly and Charlie Stemp and one day I would like to tap dance in *42nd Street*, *Singin' in the Rain* or *An American in Paris*. Or maybe I could tap dance on the ceiling like Bert in *Mary Poppins!* Singing also makes me happy and I recently passed my Lamda Stage 2 Solo exam. I was chosen to sing a solo with the Welsh Musical Theatre Orchestra in a concert in the summer so I am looking forward to that.

As well as acting on stage, I also enjoy filming. When I was six years old I auditioned to be part of a commercial for The Dinosaur Park in Tenby, and was thrilled to be given the main part of a superhero. Who wouldn't want to

be a superhero in a dinosaur film?! I loved filming and since then I have filmed a Moonpig advert, a Visit Wales advert, a Cruse Bereavement advert, a music video, about 6 short films, *Casualty*, a Gruffalo voiceover, and a documentary with Chris Packham about plastic pollution in the oceans. My favourite one was the Visit Wales advert; I got to sword fight with real knights in a forest, had a hawk fly over my head, and had a dragon swoop over my head in a castle. Honestly, it's a real Welsh dragon!

When I auditioned for the part of Jeremy, I didn't think in a million years I would get the part. The audition was scary at first but, once I got to know people, it was fine and I really enjoyed it. When Mum told me I had been given the part I nearly fell off my chair in shock! It is a dream come true and I have never been happier. So far I am loving rehearsals, everyone is friendly and helpful and I have made some new friends. I can't wait to get on stage with my Jemima, Aggie, it's going to be amazing! I feel so proud of myself and am very thankful to have been given the opportunity to perform on a stage where professional actors have stood and to fly in the real *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang!*

JACK SPENCER (Jeremy)



At three years old whilst watching the film *Cars*, I asked Daddy 'How do I get into the film?' Daddy explained it was just a cartoon, but I said, 'I know, but how do I get to be in a film?'

From that moment on not a week has gone by that have not sung, danced or acted out a routine entertaining family and friends.

I jump at every opportunity to get on the stage. I joined a theatre group called Alicats when I was four and developed a thirst for the limelight performing in title role in my first show; *Go to Sleep, Jack Peep*.

I love to sing. When I was six,

GETTING TO KNOW YOU - MEET THE CHILDREN

I auditioned to sing solo at my school Proms and stole the show with 'Do-Re-Mi'. Applauded by my sister Alice it was then it was obvious that the stage was where I was happiest.

After Alicats I joined BSPA and successfully auditioned for a part in the choir for *Joseph* at Bath Theatre Royal. However, on the way to the audition I nearly decided not to audition due to nerves. I was reminded of a saying from my grandfather that has been repeated to me many times since. You always regret things you haven't done and not the things you have done. Hence I auditioned, and never looked back.

When I was eight I joined PQA. Thanks to an email from Jaleelah I was made aware of the upcoming auditions for *Fiddler on the Roof*. Even though I sobbed afterwards and thought I had failed the audition, BLOC had chosen me to be in the cast. There has never been such a happy young man! I remained in my element during the rehearsals and throughout the performances. When the time came to say cheerio to everyone at BLOC I felt I was leaving his family. I was so happy to find that there were people in this world that enjoyed Musical Theatre as much as me!

The love of performing exudes from me. Whether it's acting, singing, or dancing I am always keen to take up any challenge and recently with two days' notice was asked to host Stoke Bishop School Proms. This

would have sent most people into a spin but not me. I had such confidence and enthusiasm for the task although I was concerned that the audience was too small being only 200!

Through BLOC, I was introduced to BAOS Juniors and has just enjoyed a fantastic run at the Redgrave Theatre as a cast member of *Little Shop of Horrors*. I am already thinking about auditions for their next production of *High School Musical* When I discovered that BLOC was putting on *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*, I was determined to audition for the role of Jeremy. To my sheer delight, I was successful! Since then, I have been encouraged at home to adopt the Stanislavski approach to the role of Jeremy as I never answer back and goes to bed when I'm told!

LILY BEACON (Jemima)



My name is Lily Beacon and I'm in year Five at St Mary's Primary School in Portbury, which is near Portishead. I have danced since the age of three, firstly with the Bristol school of Dance, then with the Adele Stitch School of dance. I do tap, ballet, and modern and I compete most holidays in Eisteddfods, or festivals, doing solos, duets, or trios.

I first heard about *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* from my wonderful dance teachers, Miss Holly and Miss Adele. These two

are also taking part in this production, as dancers. They both suggested that I should audition, so I decided to try it out.

When I take part in festivals I normally sing 'Castle On A Cloud', however, we thought it was a bit miserable for the audition! I ended up proudly singing one of our uplifting hymns from my school explaining that 'Life is a wonderful thing!' It really made the panel laugh! I really enjoyed the audition and found everyone so kind and friendly.

Then came the big news, that I had made it to being one of the twenty-five sewer children. I was so excited but thought I should still try for Jemima. I spent a week learning the words, and again the audition went really well, and was good fun. That night Sue, the chairwoman, phoned me and told me I'd got the part of one of the Jemimas. She, then, asked my mum "Is Lily okay with heights, because the car will fly!" I was so excited!

I've never done a big production before, but I love performing on stage. I am most excited about working with Clive the dog, because I have two lovely dogs at home. Sadly, Frank, our sausage dog, wasn't brave enough to audition!

I am thankful for all the encouragement from my friends and family, especially to my lovely brother (Tom), who now knows *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* inside out!



IAN'S COLUMN



Hello again. It's been a couple of months since the last column, I haven't been to as much theatre as I would like but I did manage to see three superb productions recently.

The Rink – Southwark Playhouse

For some of you, the only exposure you will have had to this rarely performed musical was when Backstage Productions mounted a glorious production of it in Bristol several years ago.

Getting its first London revival in almost twenty years, Kander and Ebb's musical was a lovely surprise. It's the 1970s, and Anna is selling the shabby roller rink she inherited on the boardwalk of some seaside town; she's planning to retire to Florida. Demolition men become a chorus that drift into her old memories of the place (they also play several wonderfully funny and colourful cameos), and her romance with local hunk Dino. He turned out to be less than an ideal husband, abandoning her and their small daughter Angel.

But just as they prepare to tear it all down, Angel – who hasn't been home for several years – turns up (what timing!). Mother and daughter fight, bicker and finally make up, the glitter ball turns and the coloured lights come back but there is also the sense of how life doesn't always turn out as you'd hoped.

Caroline O'Connor was outstanding as the wise-cracking tough-cookie Anna. Wow, that woman can do it all – a true triple threat. Gemma Sutton didn't convince so much as a hippy, but her gorgeous, bell-clear voice, and

clever switch between playing Angel as a small child or teenager was delivered with aplomb.

By the interval, there's not been a single bit of roller rink dance action. But the second half made up for it when the superbly versatile male chorus basically did a tap routine – on skates. It was fabulously camp and they were so good that the roof was raised and the performance almost halted by the hysterics of a whooping and foot stamping audience who so clearly wanted to see more.

The score has an earworm in the title number that you could hear people sing and whistle as they left the theatre and wandered off into the night. I loved it and am hoping for a transfer to the West End.

The Inheritance – Young Vic

Oh my, this was quite something. A two-part, seven-hour play by Matthew Lopez dealing almost exclusively with New York gay men. It's like *Angels in America* crossed with *Howards End* in that it deals with the harsh inheritance of Aids and the spiritual qualities of a house. Wondrous, emotionally draining, hilariously funny and magical in equal measure - Stephen Daldry's production raises any number of political issues and enfolds you in its narrative. The production with an ensemble of thirteen on and around a simple raised platform, is minimal in its visual elements but has some 'big' moments – which hit hard when they appear. Part one ends with the heart-rending sight of young men in their prime – the ghosts of those who died after contracting Aids. Part two holds back Vanessa Redgrave's frail appearance until almost the end and shows an elderly mother, still mourning the gay son she spurned and saw dying. The

performances bar none are all superb – a special mention to John Benjamin-Hickey and Andrew Burnap who played Henry and Toby with such brilliant conviction. In a nutshell, it's the best new play I've seen in years. I laughed, wept and was utterly enthralled for the full seven hours. Unmissable. It's transferring into the West End and I urge you to see it.

Consent – National Theatre

If you want to see a challenging, thought provoking play then this is the one for you. After an acclaimed run at the National Theatre, *Consent* has recently (and deservedly) transferred to the West End. The quality of its writing, and its performances are worth seeing alone. Taking a critical look at the antagonistic, point-scoring nature of the legal system, it questions whether justice in rape cases is best served in an arena where finding the truth appears less important than telling the best story. This is a play you'll be talking about for a long time to come. It will challenge your perceptions and give you important food for thought.

That's about it for this month. Next time I'll choose between *Dusty – The Musical*, *An Ideal Husband*, *Absolute Hell*, *Fun Home*, *Everybody's Talking About Jamie*, and, possibly, *Sweet Charity*.

Until then, have fun.

ON MY OWN – SAM DAVIES

We all have differing opinions about musicals, here we give you the opportunity to share them and ask the question: Am I 'On My Own'?. This month, our Stage Manager, Sam Davies shares his thoughts about our current show *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*.

Chitty Chitty Bang Bang is an abomination on the landscape of musical theatre. It bears many of the hallmarks of pantomime: the audience clapping along during the overture; tedious back-and-forth dialogue; pun-based character names; slapstick comedy; wide-spread booing. Those features alone should be enough to disqualify CCB from ever being classed as "good", but if you're not yet convinced, I'd be happy to draw your attention to several more reasons why CCB is a terrible, terrible piece of theatre.

Firstly: the music. A good proportion of the songs are flat-out dreadful, exemplified by 'Chu-Chi Face'. Not only is this piece a sickly nightmare, but it does nothing to progress the story. The main CCB theme, the one that everybody knows, becomes an overused crutch throughout the entire show, from the opening bars of the overture right through to the final curtain. If the audience clapping along with the music as the houselights fade isn't evidence enough of the ghastly nature of this ditty, the sheer number of repetitions alone in one show will ensure that they'll be idly humming the tune for weeks. The orchestration is reminiscent of a

kids TV show, with overuse of wacky percussion and copious glissandi. There are, admittedly, a few too-short moments of subtlety, where you're transported away from this mediocre bedlam for brief, brief intervals, but those moments are far too rare to make the rest of the show bearable.

The story itself is frankly preposterous. The first half of the show is a strange yet passable piece of theatre, whereas the second act goes off the rails nearly before it's begun. One wonders if one has been dropped squarely into some kind of drug-fuelled nightmare, with a sequence of absurd events and scenes hinging loosely on cases of mistaken identity. In what one can only assume is an attempt to bolster the flimsy story, the script continually finds ways to justify the shoehorning-in of entire scenes that add nothing of any discernible substance. Take the sweet factory scene as a prime example among many. Does Potts ever manage to sell his sweet-making invention to Scrumptious? Whether you care or not, it matters little in the end; if he does sell it, then the fairground is superfluous; if he doesn't, then the sweet factory itself is pointless.

Speaking of pointless things, as the second half lurches from one absurd premise to another, you pray that this staggering, bleeding beast of an act will eventually arrive at a conclusion, however contrived. In a style that smacks of the writer becoming bored with what's in

front of them (a sentiment that the more sensible members of the audience can definitely relate to), the final scene becomes a desperate attempt to wrap everything up as quickly as possible, logic be damned. Chitty saves the day, Grandpa escapes, dog arrives, evil leaders are banished, childcatchers are captured, evil legislation is revoked, irritating children cheer, references to a happy ending abound, the family comes together, and marriage rears its head all in the space of four pages. Which, to think of it, might be by design, so that there would be lots of time left over for even more reprises of the main Chitty theme. But why stop there, considering good sense is hardly the order of the day? We could have easily constructed another flying car, solved world peace, or maybe written a third-rate musical/pantomime in those four pages as well.

The saving grace of this dress is that audiences seem to love it. Clearly they're wrong, but I have neither the energy nor the eloquence to point out to them the error of their ways, so I suppose I should just lean into it. I eagerly await the enlightenment I'll feel when I've achieved the state of not caring any longer, once the stage management choreography has been finalised, along with what I hope will be the sweet, mind-numbing effect of sitting through a few dozen more renditions of the CCB theme song. Maybe I'll even clap along.

MY FAVOURITE THINGS

The results are in; our Favourite Musical Composer is -

1st – Stephen Sondheim

2nd – John Kander

3rd – Alan Menken

4th – Claude-Michel Schönberg

5th – Lin-Manuel Miranda

This month we taking a slight detour from our favourite things to ask you for your top 5 Worst Stage Musicals. Simply click the link and let us know what you think.

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/9NZPXKH>

J A L E E L A H ' S B L O G

We are now really under way with rehearsals and getting stuck in with the scenes and large scale numbers.

The 'Bombi Samba', which is a fun, silly, and VERY energetic routine is complete and already looks impressive. I think we are all excited to see how thing will look onstage in costume with the set; it's sure to be memorable.

The four child actors are working very hard on their roles of Jeremy and Jemima and getting to grips with rehearsing for such a large stage. Gerri is being fantastic at supporting them in their rehearsals and making sure they are enjoying the work.

It has been great to see the understudies attending the rehearsals, their counterparts are called for, to make sure they get as much time with Lauren and the rest of the production team as possible. As we know it can be a tough job as an understudy but we have a great team of them all

enthusiastic and committed.

We 'hopefully' have the dog playing Edison in place; this dog has to be 'stage trained' as he won't always be on a leash! Let's hope it doesn't get stage fright.

This is a show which has a lot for the ensemble do to and it's great to feel such a fun and jovial atmosphere in the full company rehearsals. It makes for a very creative environment.

People have said 'never work with children or animals'; those clearly haven't rehearsed *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* with BLOC'!



GETTING TO KNOW YOU - MEET SOME OF THE NEW MEMBERS



Mike Griffiths



Lily Dyble



Andrew Carpenter



Kevin Wheeler



Emma Griffiths



Mike Johnson

FROM *BARNUM* TO *CHITTY CHITTY BANG BANG* BY RUSSEL ERWOOD



I'm writing this sat at my dining table in the bay window of my North Wales flat that overlooks Conwy's thirteen Century castle built in the mid-1280s by Edward I. I like to sit here on an evening, the castle illuminated, and just think about stuff. Work and family usually dominate my thoughts, but tonight those thoughts have been temporarily replaced with fond memories of my first theatre show.

1995. On the surface, I was a normal fourteen year old boy. I went to school, lived with my parents and brother in Brislington, played rugby, walked my dog, and had a paper round. But hidden beneath that schoolboy veneer was a dream of becoming a professional entertainer, I wanted to run away to the circus and become a juggler. And so, I'd spend my weekends at the local juggling shop. It was called Freaks Unlimited and was found halfway up Park Street. Freaks was an amazing place full of colour, welcoming smiles and people who could do things with sticks, balls and bits of string that, to my fourteen year old self, appeared impossible. I wanted to be one of them more than anything else.

I'd spend all my hard-earned paper round money in Freaks on props and circus books. I'd then try to teach myself how to use those props. A frustrating and difficult task for anyone but one that was all-the-more difficult for a dyslexic Briz kid. On one of my regular visits to Freaks, I spotted a small flyer advertising a youth circus school that was about to open in Kingswood. I pestered my parents until they eventually agreed to me joining the club and, so in October 1995, I became one of the first members of Circus Maniacs (CM).

Back then CM was run by ex-Cirque du Soleil performer and winner of the prestigious Silver Clown from the Monte Carlo

Circus Festival Jackie Williams and her then business partner Marc Parrott, who had at that time just graduated from Circomedia, and was yet to become the internationally renowned puppeteer and puppet maker that he would eventually be.

CM was amazing. I learnt more in that first session than I did the entire twelve months previous trying to teach myself from a book in my garden.

Fast forward to 1997. I'd turned sixteen in the March and had been training at CM for about eighteen months. Marc had sadly left to work on becoming a puppeteer and I'd taken over his role as juggling instructor. I can't remember exactly when or where I saw the advert, possibly the local newspaper, but I'd spotted an advert for a group that were looking for circus performers and that if anyone were interested they should pop along and audition. And so on audition night, I put my juggling kit bag on my back, jumped on my bike and cycled to Cotham Church Hall and did just that.

I was terrified.

The audition was for the 1997 BLOC production of *Barnum*. I couldn't sing, or dance (still can't), and I'd never acted in anything before. But I could juggle, walk on stilts, and spin a diabolo. And, it was because of those skills the powers that be said



I could join the cast.

Being in *Barnum* was amazing. I'd done shows with CM at small fetes and fairs, but I'd never been in a proper show in a proper theatre before. I'd never

had a dressing room, never had a costume beyond the black shirt and trousers I'd wear when juggling and never had someone do my make-



up... I'd never even worn make-up.

I loved every moment. Everyone made me feel so welcome and encouraged me to try things that I'd ordinarily been too afraid to try. The biggest thing for me was juggling five balls on stage. I'd been working on this particular trick for the best part of a year but had always bottled it when it came for me to perform it in front of people. One evening rehearsal someone from the group (I forget who) spotted me practicing during the break (I always carried juggling balls with me) and asked if I'd be willing to juggle five balls as the finale to the juggling routine in the show. I was unsure, but, with a little light prodding I eventually agreed. And that was that. It was in. I know I'd have never performed it had I not been asked to do so.

So, not only was BLOC's 1997 production of *Barnum* my theatre debut it was also my five ball juggling debut - a trick that has been in every show I've done ever since.

The confidence I gained from working on *Barnum* allowed me to apply to be part of a youth circus exchange programme. I got accepted and so, the following year, in 1998, and aged just seventeen, I boarded my first aeroplane and flew to Amsterdam. I was there for about a month and got to work with young circus performers and circus professionals from all over the world and together we created and performed a show called *Big Time*. We had a lot of fun

and it opened my eyes to the fact that there was a world outside of Bristol.

Since then my career has taken many twists and turns. I became a flair bartender (bottle juggler) in Germany; I worked as a full-time street performer in Belgium, The Netherlands, France, and the UK; wrote and toured a show around UK schools that taught forces and motion to five to eleven year-olds using juggling and magic; became a magic consultant for TV including ITV2's *TRICKED!* and Discovery Channel's *Breaking Magic* that allowed me to spend some time working in Poland and resulted in me gate-crashing the wrap party for a German language movie; I worked as an escapologist performing stunts such as the Milk Can and suspended straitjacket that actually got me a part in a music video and ultimately landed me a job working with TV

stuntman Jonathan Goodwin as his consultant.

I met mind reader Derren Brown in a stationary cupboard, made a car vanish in the style of *Back to the Future* for Joey Essex, I've been pulled apart by a timber truck on numerous occasions at a steam rallies around the country, and I even graduated with a BA(hons) in journalism from Lancaster University as a bit of middle finger to my school teachers who didn't think I'd be able to grasp the basics of English due to me suffering from acute stupidity (my dyslexia wasn't diagnosed until much later).

In 2015, I became the official jester of the North Wales town of Conwy and as a result appeared in magazines, in newspapers, on radio and on TV all over the world, and I even got to briefly work alongside Sir Terry Wogan (which is truly a highlight

of my career so far).

In 2017, I agreed to create some magical effects for UWE's production of *Zorro*, which in turn allowed me to meet Alex and has led me full circle back to BLOC as the magic and circus consultant for this year's production of *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*. The past 21-years has really been quite the ride.

I'm about to dash off to do a show at an eco-friendly theme park in Caernarfon before appearing in tonight's seaside show in Llandudno and wanted to end this little piece by saying a genuine and heartfelt thank you to everyone who was involved with *Barnum* all those years ago. You gave a shy teenage boy from Brislington a chance. If it wasn't for the positive experience the sixteen year old me had in 1997 he wouldn't have developed the confidence to attempt to fulfil his dream of running away with the

DESERT ISLAND SHOWS BY TERESA DAVEY

I think I must be the oldest member of BLOC and have had many happy years both on and off the stage. I joined in 1954 and have spent 65 years with the company in many different capacities.

My first show was *The Dubarry* which was performed at the Victoria Rooms, and I played Suzanne. Our daughter was named Suzanne when she arrived due to my playing the part and also because my future husband joined and an Associate that year and consequently this was when and where we met. BLOC even sung a lovely song at our wedding.

I have performed in many different sections of the club

which has proved very rewarding and interesting namely – principle role, chorus, call boy, assistant stage manager, costume team, and am still surviving with the costumes.

I missed one show *Die Fledermaus* in 1968 with a back operation and ending up seeing the dress rehearsal on a bed in the central aisle which would not be allowed now.

My choice of eight shows are as follows and as you will note these are memories of productions which are light opera and not Musical Theatre as nowadays.

1. *The Dubarry* when I met my future husband through

connived match making by some members of the company!

2. *Song of Norway* when Chris Northam played a section of the Grieg Piano Concerto magnificently.

3. *Bless the Bride* with the late Judith Bright in the lead and the only time we have had to call an understudy for the main role when Rod Young lost his voice and at a few hours' notice a man from Rugby was called down to take over, having played the role before. We had about one hour before the show to rehearse and did not know what moves he was going to make, or how he was going to sing it but, amazingly we all

followed and it worked a dream.

4. *The Sound of Music* which BLOC performed three times. I played three different roles in 1970, 1979, and 2004 (The Countess, Mother Abbess, and, then Sister Margharetta). Quite contrasting characters.
5. *Kismet* when Linda Evans played Lalume and Kate Adie was in the chorus.
6. *La Belle Helene*: imagine doing a rock and roll number with Diana Cole and would you believe it Alex Turasiewicz.
7. *Fiddler on the Roof* when we did the show for two weeks,

which was experimental but the idea did not last for long although the shows were double cast in those days.

8. My last highlight was *The Great Waltz* which was attended by Princess Anne.

Best Bit of BLOC: the talent and professionalism of the Company, which has kept us in the Hippodrome for so long.

Show I'd Love BLOC to do: *Phantom of the Opera* which has some lovely music and a good story.

Book apart from Shakespeare and the Bible? *Seven Years in Tibet*

Luxury -can't help you to get off the Island? My luxury item would be a trowel to dig up and explore the archaeology of the island and maybe find some grubs to eat!

Did You Know?

Musician Phil Collins claims he was one of the children storming the castle at the end of the film but was edited out because of a rather large and unsightly bandage on his head that was covering a cyst.

S O C I A L U P D A T E

The BLOC Club night is a chance for members and patrons to socialise on a regular occasion. Meeting at the Highbury Vaults after the rehearsal on the second Monday of every month, it's a great way to have fun and wind down! The next two meetings are as follows:

- 10th September
- 8th October

Have you seen the wonderful Wallace and Gromit statues that have popped up around Bristol? There's over sixty, but only one we'd like you to seek out. 'Caractacus Paws' is a statue of Gromit designed by the people behind *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* to celebrate the films 50th anniversary, and you can find it at The Galleries Shopping Centre. Take a picture with the statue and post it on social media so we can advertise the show!

Dinner Dance

Don't forget to book your tickets for the BLOC Dinner Dance! To celebrate BLOC's 85th birthday, we've booked the beautiful Bristol Grand Hotel for a lovely three course meal on November 3rd, so put the date in your diary! Tickets are £32.50 for members, patrons and friends (non-members actively involved in the current production) and £35 for partners and guests. Deposits of £20 to be paid by the end of August with the balance due by the end of September. Cheques payable to BLOC. Email Anna Sutton Craftysutton80@gmail.com

QUICK-FIRE QUESTIONS

Craig Rees-Cavendish -

What has been your favourite role to play?

Jackie - *Wild Party*, this was a great part to play, a debonair chap who was addicted to parties and cocaine!

What has been your favourite production to be in?

Just So! This was one of my first professional gigs in London, worked with the guys who wrote the musical - was fun to play an animal and bounce around... (Kangaroo!).

What is your favourite piece of theatre to watch?

Farce comedy - I love watching *The Play The Goes Wrong*, it's a must see.

What is a show you can never see again (for good or bad reasons)?

Miss Saigon - I cried at the end and I can't go through that again!

Which character would you love to play?

Marius - *Les Miserables*, always a part I'd love to sing, especially 'Empty Chairs At Empty Tables'.

What is a part you would never be able to play that you would love to?

Tracey Turnblad - *Hairspray*. I love the wigs and music.

Grace Macdonald -

What has been your favourite role to play?

I absolutely loved playing Judy Haynes in *White Christmas* with BLOC. I adore the golden era of Hollywood movie musicals, with their classic sound and spectacular dance numbers, so it was a dream show week. Plus, I conquered the art of tap dancing as part of the role! Nothing like a six minute mega tap number to up your skill set!

What has been your favourite

production to be in?

Now that is a tough one! I can't say a specific one... each time a production ends, it leaves you with such a feeling of togetherness and magic. For that reason, I can say two shows stand out. BAOS' production of *Hair* was incredibly special because it was an ensemble piece; we often spent most of our time on stage improvising and working together in character. There was so much love within the cast by the end of that process! The other production would be *Fiddler On The Roof* with BLOC. This had such a feeling of togetherness in show week. Each night we would watch the bottle dance with baited breath and when it came off there was such a swell of energy on stage. It felt amazing! I also loved portraying such an important historical story that has so much relevance now too.

What is your favourite piece of theatre to watch?

Matthew Bourne's Nutcracker. I could watch the Pas De Deux of Clara and the Nutcracker in 'Act One No. 8' over and over again. Tchaikovsky's 'Une forêt de sapins en hiver' is the song I walked down the aisle to on my wedding day. Very romantic and magical! And Bourne's choreography just optimises young romance. Sigh!

What is a show you can never see again (for good or bad reasons)?

Err... *Wicked*?! I have seen it FIVE TIMES. Through numerous school trips, family outings, gifted tickets... and I just don't get out to the theatre enough to justify another viewing. Although, that said, I cry every time, without fail, at 'Defying Gravity'. Not because of its emotional content or portrayal, but simply because the power of the vocals always takes

my breath away!

Which character would you love to play?

Clara in *Matthew Bourne's Nutcracker*. If only for the Pas De Deux!

What is a part you would never be able to play that you would love to?

Billy Elliot. I would love to have been THAT talented at that age. And his stamina and technique is incredible. I actually auditioned for the show back in the day, only to be told if I had had a pot belly and a beard, I'd be a shoe in!

Chris Parslow—

What has been your favourite role to play?

Sweeney Todd. A really challenging role in the greatest musical and by the greatest Broadway composer (and there was no dancing!).

What has been your favourite production to be in?

The Drowsy Chaperone. A great company that really worked well together in a really charming show.

What is your favourite piece of theatre to watch?

Follies. My second favourite Sondheim.

What is a show you can never see again (for good or bad reasons)?

Rent. Appalling, irredeemable drivel - even worse than *Les Miserables*. In my humble opinion.

Which character would you love to play?

Max Bialystock. Have loved the original film with Zero Mostel and Gene Wilder for as long as I can remember; a peach of a part.

What is a part you would never be able to play that you would love to?

Coalhouse Walker Jnr. I'm the wrong age and the wrong ethnicity, otherwise I'd be perfect!

QUICK-FIRE QUESTIONS

Lizzy Westney -

What has been your favourite role to play?

I recently understudied and played Elle Woods in *Legally Blonde*. It was the biggest and best role a girl could hope for, and I had so much fun. Especially, as I was understudying my fabulous friend, Emma Griffiths.

What has been your favourite production to be in?

Witches of Eastwick with BLOC in 2005. The chorus numbers

in that show are fantastic; I had the best time throughout the whole rehearsal process and show week playing the role of Jennifer and prancing around in the chorus.

What is your favourite piece of theatre to watch?

The Lion King- I never expected it to impress me, but I've cried every time I've watched it. It's such a magical show!

What is a show you can

never see again (for good or bad reasons)?

We'll never say never, but I saw *Spider-Man: Turn Off the Dark* in New York. It was brilliant, but I doubt it'll make it across the pond.

Which character would you love to play?

Audrey- *Little Shop of Horrors*.

What is a part you would never be able to play that you would love to?

Galinda "Glinda" in *Wicked*.

BLOC THROUGH THE DECADES - 1956 - 1975

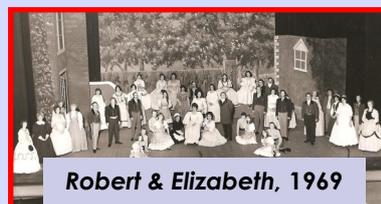
1956 proved to be a momentous year for BLOC. Early in the year it learnt that the Victoria Rooms was no longer going to be available due to university dances. So the committee decided to write to Moss Empires managing director to ask if they could go into the Hippodrome. Whilst they waited for a response, rehearsals for *The Gypsy Baron* were underway. Unfortunately, after several weeks, no reply had been received so alternatives were investigated. And so it seemed that the club was going to find a new home at the Scala Cinema on Zetland Road. Despite the need for alterations, the club met with the City's Chief Fire Officer, owners, and builders and final arrangements were discussed. As everyone went away to await a contract to be drawn up, Betty Pitt, BLOC's secretary of the time, received a letter that would change everything: BLOC would be performing at the Hippodrome after all. The company was excited to be going to the Hippodrome, until it was discovered that no scenery suitable for the vast Hippodrome stage was available. Undeterred, Producer John Heming and Stage Director Bobbie Burn set about designing sets and making models. The set was then made to order in Weston Super Mare. It was definitely the most ambitious undertaking in the club's history.

BLOC adapted well to the larger stage of the Hippodrome and continued to attract audiences in the larger numbers it now needed to meet the greater expenses performing in a larger theatre attracted. In both 1957 & 1958, "House Full" notices were seen for some of the performances.



The Most Happy Fella, 1964

As time went on, it became increasingly difficult to find new shows to present, as few genuine light operas had been written since the war, so in 1963 for the first time an American musical comedy was presented: *The Music Man*. The following year *The Most Happy Fella* proved a happy choice as it brought the club its first Evening Post Rose Bowl award for the Best Musical. Productions of *Brigadoon*, *Bless the Bride*, *Orpheus in the Underworld*, *Die Fledermaus* and *Robert & Elizabeth* followed



Robert & Elizabeth, 1969

before yet another significant year for BLOC.

In 1970, BLOC made a change to its original choice for that year, following the news of the amateur release of *The Sound of Music* was made known. It was the first year BLOC put its faith in its production and performed for two weeks. It also brought another Rose Bowl award for Best Musical and the formation of Junior BLOC. After seeing 235 children audition, Sally Noble, the show's Director, saw the great interest children in had in musical shows and suggested a junior section be formed to keep this talent associated with the club.



The Sound of Music 1970

The King and I in 1974 saw the first Rose Bowl award for Best Actor, unfortunately it also marked a new low in male chorus members, a lack of work had seen numbers reduce so it was great to see their numbers swell again the following year for BLOC's 1975 production of *Show Boat*.

Once again not all of the set available was suitable and so Stage Director Mike Hemming (joined by a familiar name, Peter Sutton along with members) set about building a boat in a basement in Old Market.

BLOC THROUGH THE DECADES - 1956 - 1975

There efforts were rewarded with a Best Stage Management prize in the Butlin Awards.



Bless the Bride, 1966

There have been a lot of changes since BLOC moved to the Hippodrome in 1956 so having officially joined BLOC in 1962 we had to ask our Technical Director

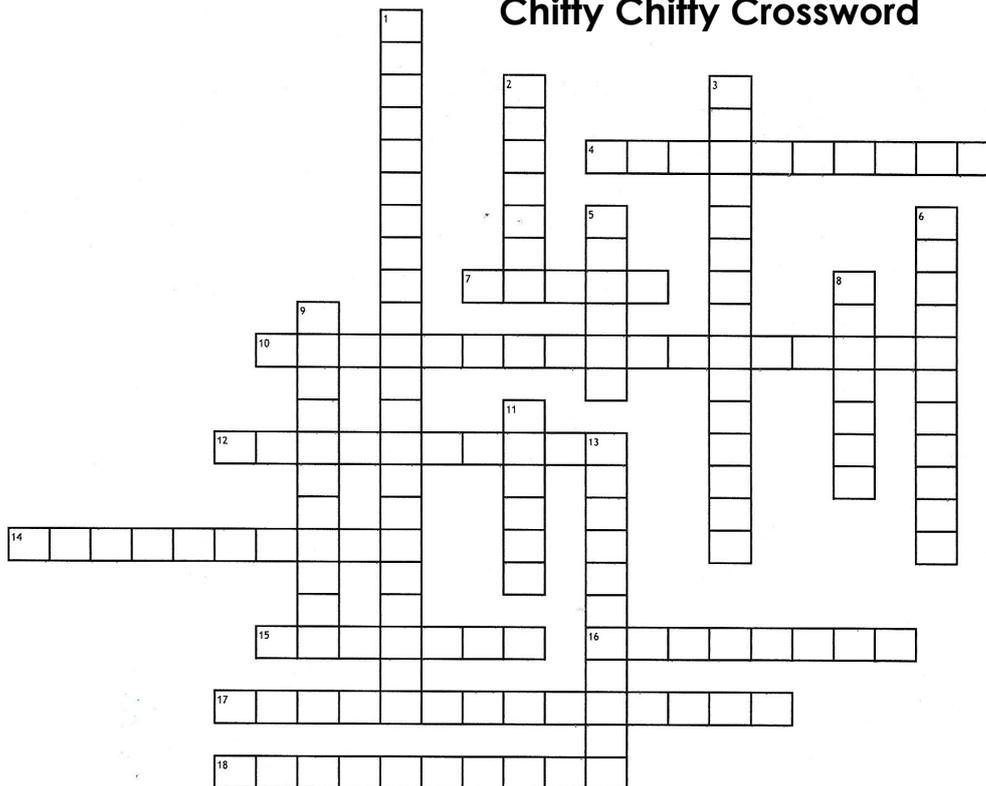
Peter Sutton what he remembers about his early days with BLOC.

"My first job, in my early teens, before I officially joined, on the Sunday morning of show week was to deliver costumes to the allocated cast dressing rooms, having been delivered in large wicker skips. Always a nerve wracking time as this was the first time anyone saw the costumes. In those days there was a dresser for every dressing room something that continued into the 1970's. I used to watch the Saturday night performance and then helped roll up the backcloths. In those days they were battened top and bottom, rather than in the current practice of folding and being put in a sack.

I officially joined as a Props Assistant in 1962 for *The Dubarry*. In those days there was no stage crew to move the scenery as this was done by the Hippodrome staff, (there was also very little set as BLOC was at that time staging 'Light Opera'), the show went in on the Sunday morning with a dress rehearsal Sunday evening and opening night Monday. I moved through the ranks first taking over as Properties Master, then Stage Manager in 1974, and finally Stage Director in 1980 a position I have held ever since with only a change in name to Technical Director."

Next month we look forward to hearing more memories from members who joined between 1976-1995.

Chitty Chitty Crossword



Across

4. Bool Blame Mo for organising this routine (anagram) (2,2,6)
 7. Popular Asian destination (5)
 10. Award winning plants? (3,5,2,7)
 12. Tweet 'SOS' to arrange for help when your sugars are low (4,5)
 14. Buffoons and louts? (10)

15. You can give the secretary £1000 but this character still can't dance! (7)
 16. United modus operandi (8)
 17. They made the Don groan. Sordid aliases (anagram) (5,3,6)
 18. The court of this British king just passing by (10)

Down

1. Nan hoists transvestites in the lab (anagram) (3,9,10)
 2. Band of Brothers, or a musical tank perhaps (7)
 3. Buxon Linda's cool toy delights (anagram) (4,2,1,5,4)
 5. Canine record producer (6)
 6. Suzi? Traci? We need you tell us what to do (anagram) (11)

8. This author's word is his bond, it is said (7)
 9. Rabbits might be his most popular achievement! (3,8)
 11. Beatrix's duck (6)
 13. Really? (11)

SIXTY SECOND SHOW – LEGALLY CONNED BY EMMA GRIFFITHS

The show opens. Women lean out of a gigantic house and scream for a long time about their cult leader getting engaged, despite the fact that as yet there has been no proposal. A tiny dog appears on stage and performs a small acrobatic feat by jumping into one of the cast's arms. The audience cheers on cue. Blonde Cult Leader (BCL) appears and frets about a dress. There is an entire musical number about this issue. A dress is eventually selected. The Handsome Man (THM) enters and DOES NOT PROPOSE. Instead he ends the relationship with BCL and walks off, although he does at least pay the bill. BCL eats some chocolate, which is apparently a grave sin in the Cult.

During an impossibly long song, BCL decides to apply for Harvard Law School to stalk THM, despite the fact he has ended their relationship. She feels well equipped to take on the challenges of the legal profession after a finishing a tough degree about shop window displays. Due to the inherent patriarchy of the academic world she gets in because she's conventionally attractive.

BCL arrives at Harvard and shockingly does not fit in. The Crumpled Man (TCM) adopts her as a pet. A Brunette Woman (ABW) appears and is snotty. BCL takes her first class in Law which is apparently not at all about Law but about being a dick. Class is taught by Clearly Sinister Lawyer (CSL). BCL is thrown out of class for having not read anything, ever. BCL's friends arrive to offer support, except they're now dressed in white and are not really there, indicating that BCL is potentially schizophrenic - a serious condition which no one seems bothered about for the rest of the show.

BCL meets The Hairdresser (TH) who sings showstopping number about fancying Irish Men. BCL borrows an unhygienic sex outfit and wears it to a party. She

is humiliated as she is once again inappropriately dressed, although at least this time it was because ABW was naughty and told her to. BCL runs out of party and is met by TCM. We know he is 'nice' because she is half naked and he gives her a coat. TCM is bitter about being poor. He tells her to actually try at being a Lawyer, not because it's a good thing to do, but because it will ram it in the face of everyone else.

BCL says one sensible thing in class and everyone orgasms on stage. CSL notices that BCL is attractive. BCL rescues another, bigger dog for TH from her clearly abusive ex. Back at school, THM proposes to ABW in front of BCL. She is sad. She then wins a spot on a new internship run by CSL (who appears to be the only professor at Harvard) and is happy. Sings long note. End of Act One.

Act Two. We meet Ridiculous Abs Woman (RAW) who is a fitness instructor accused of murdering her elderly husband. RAW almost kills herself singing and skipping at the same time while looking pretty. We discover that CSL and the interns are to defend her at trial. BCL is now serious lawyer type person evidenced by her now wearing blue. RAW is also a member of BCL's cult and so, following a short ritual dance, tells BCL her alibi and then immediately forbids her to use it an ultimately masochistic move.

BCL takes TCM shopping and turns him into THM Mk2. BCL is now interested in TCM because, well, shallow.

Back with TH's salon now, where we meet Package Man (PM). TH is sexually attracted to PM but does not know how to seduce him. TH and BCL then inhabit a shared delusion where BCL's friends arrive in ghost form and teach her how to retrieve dropped stationery. The number ends with TH physically assaulting PM.

Back to the trial (finally) and BCL is convinced that the lead witness is gay as he is not attracted to the way she retrieves fallen stationery. There is an entire musical number to discuss this man's sexuality, culminating in the conclusion that yes, he is gay.

BCL and lawyer friends meet back in CSL's office to celebrate her 'instincts', which have nothing to do with knowing the Law and everything to do with her being aware that she's attractive. Everyone leaves and

BCL is then sexually assaulted by CSL. This is witnessed by both THM and ABW. BCL then tries to leave and is stopped by TCM who chooses this particular moment to also declare his sexual interest. Somehow shocked at the realisation that she actually is useless at Law and is just attractive to men, BCL leaves in tears.

ABW attends TH's salon in order to prevent BCL from leaving Harvard, not by offering to help her prosecute her lecturer for assault, but by giving her a blue dress. BCL decides to stay. There is an inexplicable parade featuring BCL's parents, her actual friends (now back in colourful clothing) and an unforgivable excerpt of Irish dancing.

Back to the trial, and BCL manages to win the case thanks to her knowledge of perm maintenance and little else. THM comes back to propose to BCL, who now refuses because she has upgraded to TCM. The show ends with a roll call of all the characters and what has happened to them. In a symbolic feminist gesture, BCL proposes to TCM. Bows. Megamix. Bows. Dog bows.

TL:DR. Blonde women changes costume 75 times. Dogs. Pink.