



Bailiwick

elf Special Edition

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Editorial by Phil Hallworth

This *Elf* Special edition is one in which we have tried to focus on *Elf*-related articles that we hope our readers will find interesting, with the production only a few weeks away now. My thanks to all who have contributed.

Phil



Chairman's Overture by Andrew Carpenter

As both Chair of BLOC Productions and Producer of *Elf — The Musical* it gives me immense pleasure to write the opening remarks for our *Elf* Bailiwick special. After three 'dark' years thanks to a professional booking in 2019 and two years of COVID, I know how delighted we all are to be back on the Hippodrome stage following our award-winning production of *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*, directed by Alex Turasiewicz, which won the prestigious Rose Bowl Award for Best Musical in 2018.

Our creative team, cast and crew have been working for the past six months in bringing this production to the stage and I would like to pay tribute to Director John Cousins, Choreographer Jacquie Bell, Musical Director Brendan Casey, Production Manager Peter Sutton and their teams for their hours of dedication and sheer hard work. Too many people to mention by name but I know we all recognise all those who are contributing so much to make this production the outstanding production it will undoubtedly be.

I believe the recent pandemic went to prove how important theatre is in our lives (didn't we all miss it whilst it was away?) as it provides many human needs surrounding health and wellbeing, face-to-face interaction and an ability to get away from day-to-day life for just two and a half hours. We have loved being back in the rehearsal room and I know that energy and enthusiasm will cross the footlights and inspire our audiences.

It's always a joy to work with Ben Phillips and his team at the Bristol Hippodrome and this production has been no exception. We are indeed fortunate to have one of the country's foremost theatres in our city and as always, we feel privileged to grace its stage once a year.

Ticket sales for *Elf* have broken all all records for BLOC Productions, and indeed we are now completely SOLD OUT for all performances – fantastic news! This not only shows the cult status of the film but also people's desire to get back to live entertainment. This really is a feel-good show that will set us all up for Christmas perfectly. I'm sure like me you're feeling '*Happy All The Time!*'

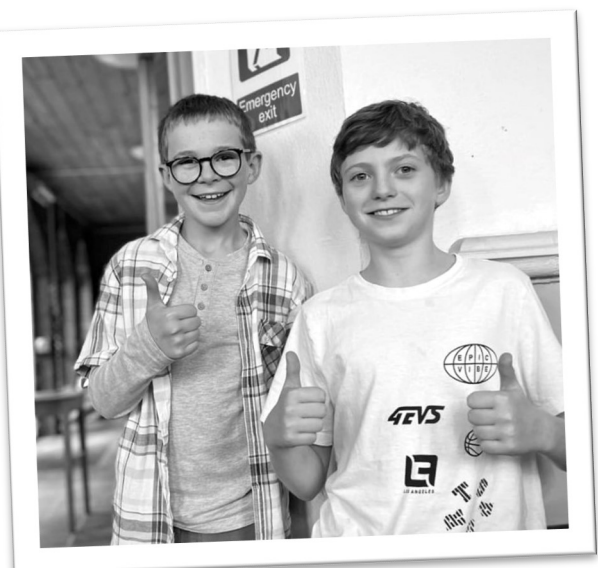
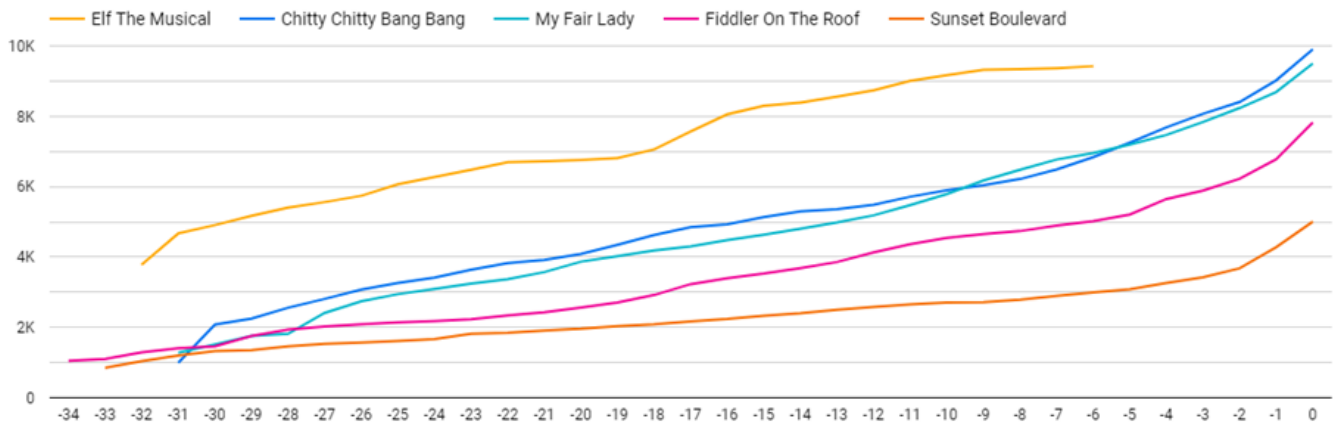


Trends in Ticket Sales by Jo Phillips

The table below shows our sales data for the last five Hippodrome productions, with the total number of tickets sold and revenue. **Elf – The Musical**, as you all know, has now sold out! Whilst we sadly won't hit the capacity level of **CCBB** in 2018 - due to running two fewer shows - we've seen the highest revenue takings from **Elf** than any other show due to the higher average ticket price.

This graph shows the cumulative ticket sales by week, dating backwards from show week (the Sunday of show week being the start of "Week 0"). Trend wise, the weekly progression is quite similar compared to other shows, but we just started so much higher. Our previous shows have always seen a surge in show week and the week leading up to it, but obviously that isn't going to happen with **Elf** because we don't have any seats left to sell!

Year	Show	Tickets Sold	Revenue	Avg. Ticket Price	%Capacity
2022	Elf The Musical	9,415	£272,626	£28.96	95.3%
2018	Chitty Chitty Bang Bang	9,903	£236,458	£23.88	72.3%
2017	My Fair Lady	9,496	£182,284	£19.20	70.0%
2016	Fiddler On The Roof	7,824	£134,980	£17.25	57.6%
2015	Sunset Boulevard	5,002	£82,198	£16.43	36.8%
	Grand total	41,640	£908,545	£21.82	64.7%



The Story of Buddy the Elf by Chris Parslow

Once upon a time...

In 1993, David Berenbaum wrote a screenplay for a film to be called *Elf*; it was his first ever script. Berenbaum had been raised Jewish, but his family always celebrated Christmas. His father had died when Berenbaum was eight and he has always said that the story of *Elf* is really about connecting with, and finding out about, a father.

= 2003: Elf the Motion Picture



= 2009: Workshop of Musical

The film was eventually released in 2003, was directed by Jon Favreau and starred Will Ferrell, James Caan, Zooey Deschanel and Mary Steenburgen. Initially Jim Carrey had been a strong contender to play Buddy. David Berenbaum appeared as one of the office workers.

The screenplay had gone through a number of rewrites by, among others, Will Ferrell. Jon Favreau said that the original script was “much darker” to begin with and did not interest him, although he was certainly interested in working on Ferrell’s first post-Saturday Night Live film. The ‘rewrite breakthrough’ came when Favreau realised that they could make Buddy’s world a homage to the Rankin/Bass Christmas specials of the 1960s and 1970s (a series of short, animated films based on Christmas songs) and so lighter in approach.

The film was well received generally: “A movie full of yuletide cheer, *Elf* is a spirited, good-natured family comedy, and it benefits greatly from Will Ferrell’s funny and charming performance...”. The film went on to win two awards in 2004 having been nominated for nine; Richard Curtis maintains that Ferrell should have been nominated for an Oscar, and, although the film received no Oscar nominations at all it is still ranked among the greatest Christmas films and airs annually during the Christmas season in the US – just like *Love Actually* here!

Which brings us to the *Elf — The Musical*. It was first staged on Broadway in 2010, since when there have been a good number of tours and revivals. It was staged in London in 2015 starring Ben Forster, Kimberley Walsh, Joe McGann and Jessica Martin.

The book was adapted from the screenplay by Thomas Meehan (who also co-wrote the books for *Annie*, *The Producers*, *Hairspray*, and *Young Frankenstein*) and Bob Martin (who co-wrote and starred in *The Drowsy Chaperone*). The original score and lyrics were written by Matthew Sklar and Chad Beguelin. Subsequently, in 2016, Sklar, Beguelin and Martin went on to write *The Prom* together.

= 2015: Opened on West End



= 2016: Closed on West End

There are quite a few differences between the film and the musical. The show is narrated by Santa Claus rather than Papa Elf (who doesn’t now feature at all). The story in the musical is said to have begun three years, rather than thirty years, ago. This means that there is no age limit on the actor playing Buddy. In the musical there is a new subplot about Michael and Emily Hobbs’ disbelief in Santa Claus. Some scenes from the

film have disappeared (the mail room of the Empire State Building, and the snowball fight in Central Park). The character of Miles Finch has disappeared completely and is replaced by Greenway and the Chris Smith Christmas Story saga. There are a number of further, minor, changes – locations mainly.

The character of Walter Hobbs is also quite different from the film. Originally, he was portrayed as obsessed with work, greedy and deliberately neglectful of his family – which was why, in the film, he is on the naughty list. In the show he is shown as more harassed and overworked and is on the naughty list because he doesn't believe in Santa.

= 2017: UK Tour



= 2018: UK Arena Tour

The show has garnered mixed reviews but has proved immensely popular with the public – as we are finding out! The 2015 London production at the Dominion Theatre was reportedly the fastest selling show since the theatre opened in 1929.

Finally, in 2013 it was reported that Jon Favreau was interested in making a sequel (*Elf 2: Buddy saves Christmas*). Later that year Ferrell said that he did not want to make a sequel, turning down \$29 million in the process! In January 2016, Favreau suggested that a sequel could still happen, but the following month Ferrell reiterated that a sequel was unlikely and that as a rule he was not interested in doing sequels unless there was a story to justify it. In 2020 James Caan confirmed that a sequel was highly unlikely and that Ferrell and Favreau did not get on. So, that was the end of that! For now, at least.

And they all lived happily ever after?!



***Elf - The Musical: a synopsis
by Sam Davies***

A few weeks ago our Stage Manager, Sam Davies, gave a highly entertaining presentation to the backstage crew about the show which included this wonderful pictorial synopsis of the show!



ORPHAN CRAWLS INTO SANTA'S SACK.



SANTA KIDNAPS HIM.



TAKES TO NORTH POLE TO JOIN A CHILD LABOUR WORKHOUSE.



**CHILD REALISES SOME TIME LATER.
WANTS TO ESCAPE.**



TRAVELS TO NYC ON AN ICEBERG.



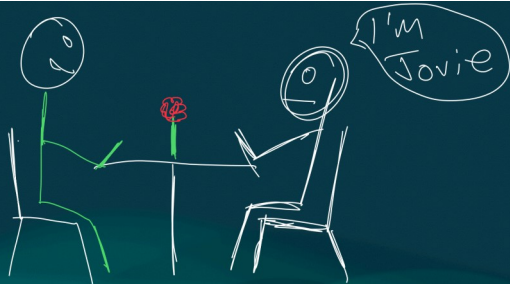
**FINDS HIS FATHER. TURNS OUT
HE'S A BIT OF A DICK.**



**HIS HALF-BROTHER DOESN'T
BELIEVE IN SANTA.**



SOME GUFF ABOUT GETTING A JOB AT MACY'S. AS AN ELF. HILARITY ENSUES.



BUDDY GOES ON A DATE WITH JOVIE. COS COURSE WE NEED A LOVE INTEREST.



BUDDY CALLS A SANTA "FAKE NEWS" AND HAS A FIGHT WITH HIM.



BUDDY GETS A JOB AT HIS DAD'S WORKPLACE. LONG LIVE NEPOTISM.



BUDDY SHREDS AN IMPORTANT MANUSCRIPT TO MAKE SNOW. GETS KICKED OUT.



GOES TO A CHINESE RESTAURANT TO COMMISERATE.



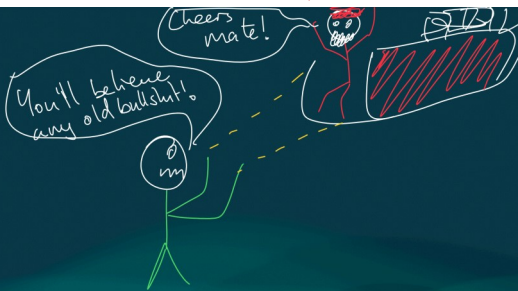
BUDDY'S DAD SOMEHOW PITCHES THE STORY OF BUDDY, IN SOME KIND OF SELF-REFERENTIAL PARADOX.



HE REFUSES TO WORK AT CHRISTMAS.



**MEANWHILE, SANTA'S SLEIGH
CRASHES.**



**BUDDY FIXES IT BY CONJURING UP
"MAGICAL CHRISTMAS SPIRIT". AS YOU DO.**



**THIS OBVIOUSLY WORKS.
CHRISTMAS IS SAVED.**



**EVERYBODY LIVES HAPPILY EVER
AFTER. COS IT'S A MUSICAL.**



The Set by Phil Hallworth

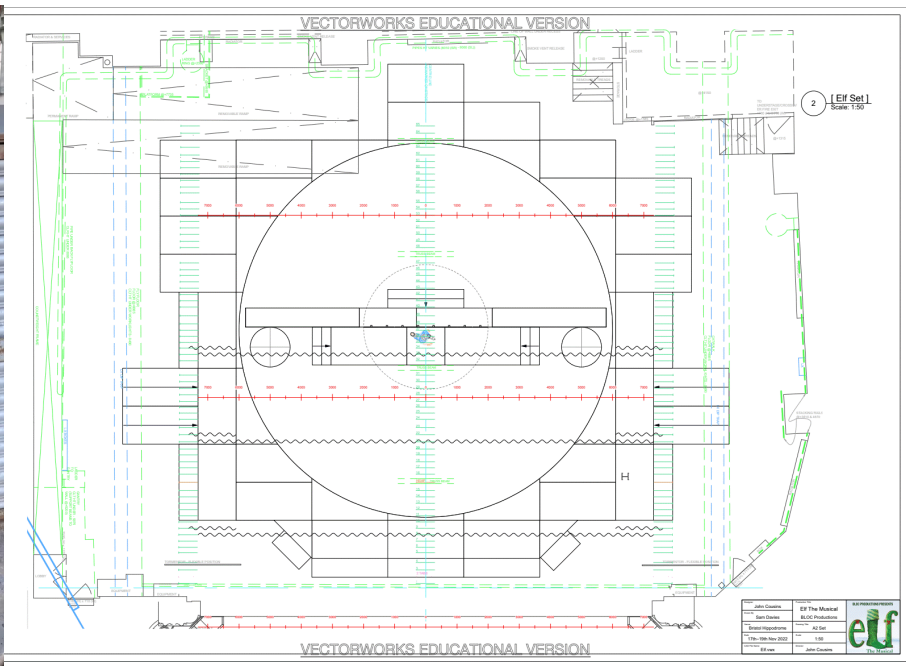
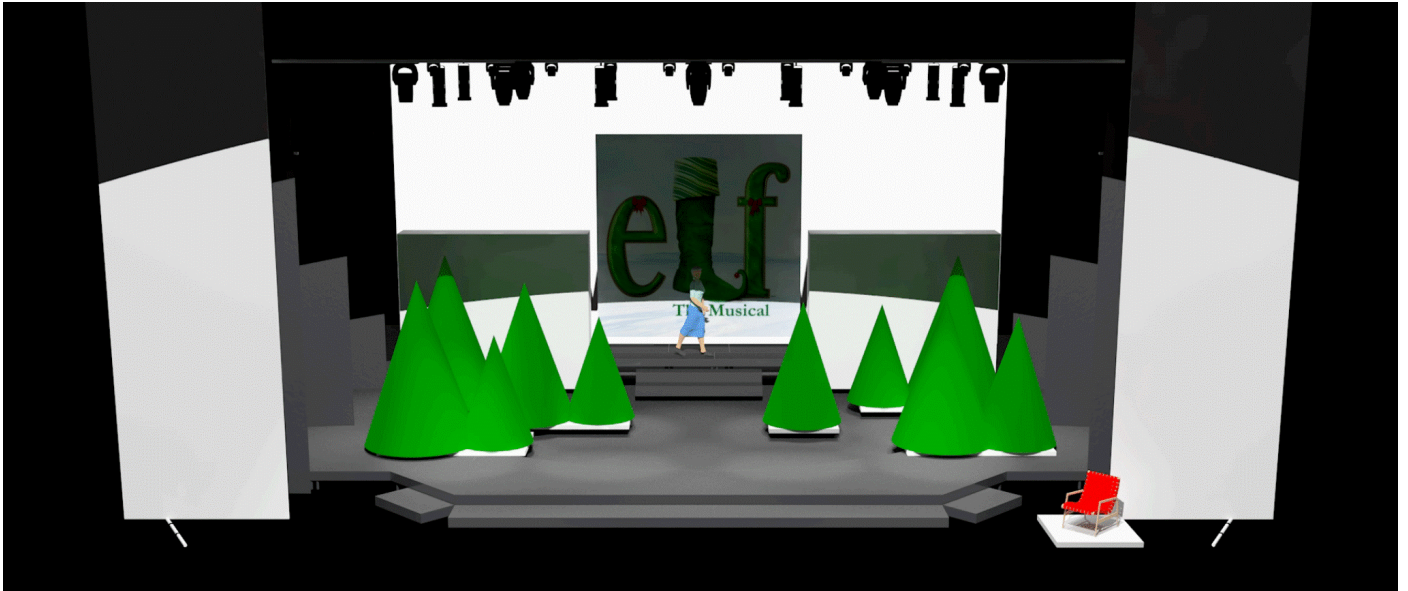


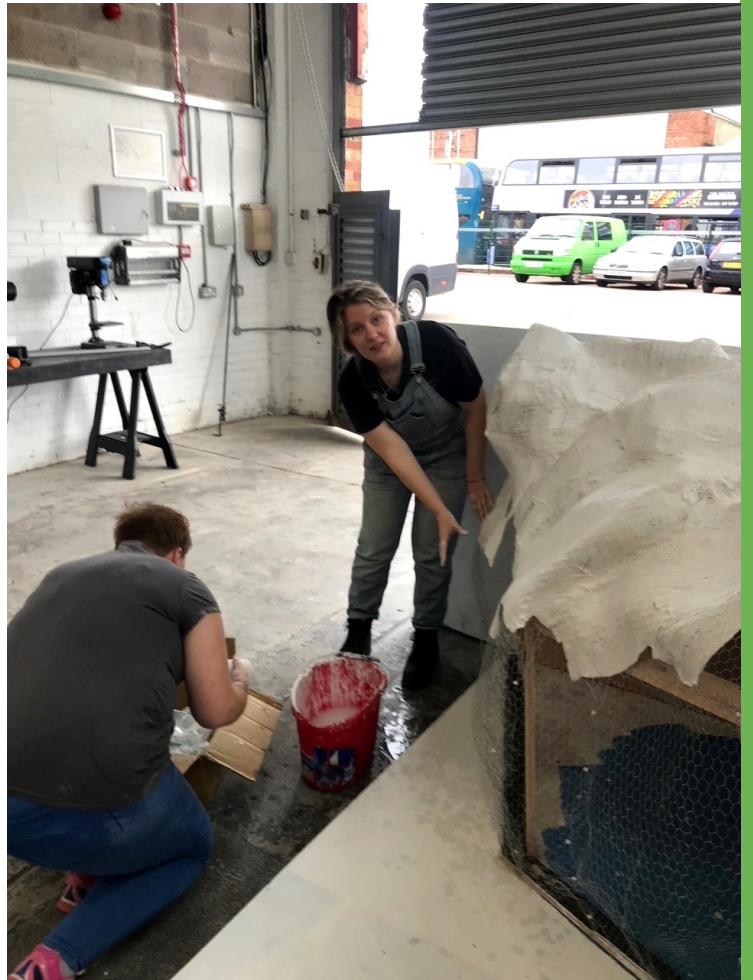
It's fair to say that when Director John Cousins discovered that there was no suitable pre-built set available for hire, he was secretly pleased; because it gave free rein to his creative proclivities!

Never one to think small, John came up with big and bold ideas for how he wanted the show to look, then set to work with Production Manager, Peter Sutton and Stage Manager, Sam Davies to work out the technical requirements to turn his vision into reality. This includes a 12m revolve, a 6m rostrum, a 4m LED projection screen, six trucks, two walls, massive hanging ice shards, star cloths, floating icebergs, countless Christmas trees, bookshelves, banners and bunting!

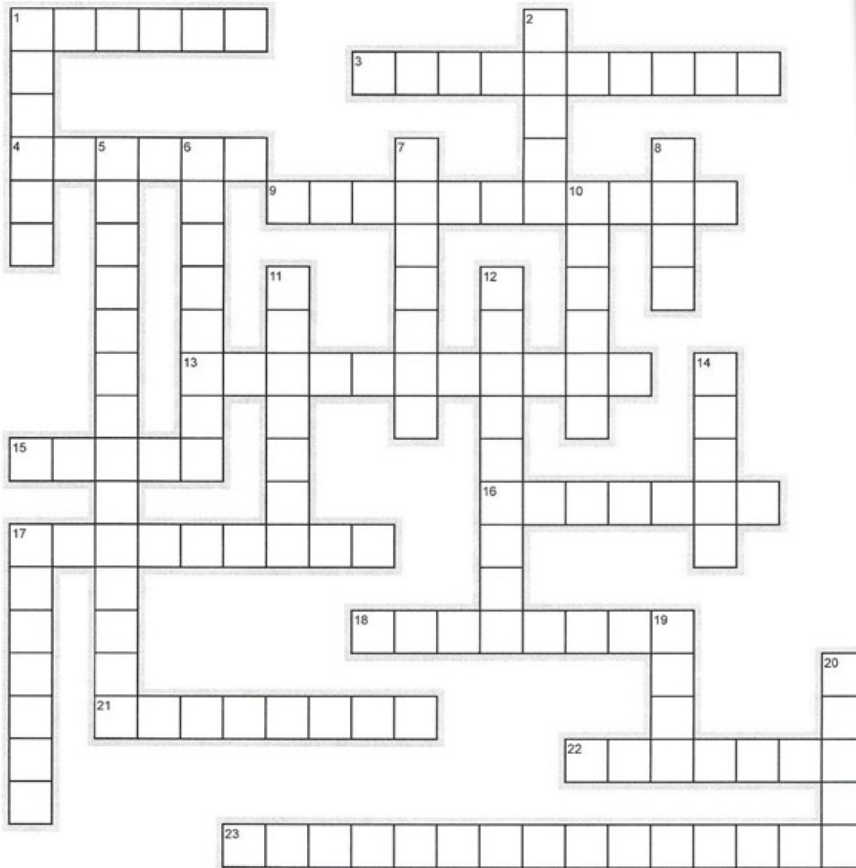
The next question was where to build it all? The Committee trawled Bristol for possible sites without much success until just in the nick of time (thanks to Carrie Northam and her contacts) we secured a suitable unit on the Lawrence Hill Trading Estate. We are immensely grateful to all those who have spent so much time both in the design and build stages to create something that will look truly spectacular on the Hippodrome stage.







***Elf! Cryptic and quick crossword clues about Elf
(and Christmas) compiled by Chris Parslow***



EclipseCrossword.com



Across

- 1. Christmas favourite, failure (6)
- 3. He might be found on USS Catalan (5,5)
- 4. This vehicle sounds like it could kill us! (6)
- 9. Parties teem out of this building (6,5)
- 13. The original testament sounds wild (4,7)
- 15. Can you spare a dime? (5)
- 16. Just like a little star (7)
- 17. Michael's breakfast treat (9)
- 18. Sounds like charisma at Christmas time (8)
- 21. Animal pelt expensive, we hear (8)
- 22. This swan had organised the elves (7)
- 23. Perpetual gaiety(5,3,3,4)

- 6. Ecological route for the big boss (8)
- 7. The sound of bells, perhaps (7)
- 8. Vermin turn back for heavenly body (4)
- 10. Managerial shivers down the spine (6)
- 11. Music to Graham's ears? (4,3)
- 12. Organises the march, sits for the holiday (9)
- 14. "'Tis the season to be..." (5)
- 17. A typical feature of a JC production (6)
- 19. Jovie's no way of holding this seasonal fall (4)
- 20. Fish glides like Buddy and Jovie (5)

Down

- 1. Peacefully shattered for Christmas decoration (6)
- 2. A store hiding backwards in a tree (5)
- 5. From the treadmill Wayne got to meet this pair (5,3,6)

Meet our new members by Phil Hallworth

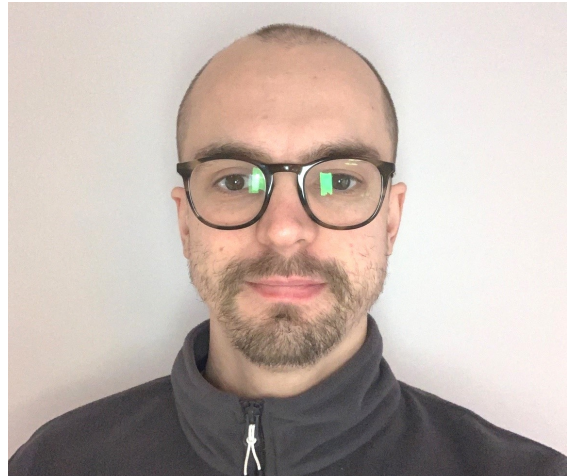
The new members who joined us after the 2022 auditions are already a very welcome part of the **Elf** family, but we thought you'd like to know a bit more about them!

Nic Gibney



Nic is an actor who can sometimes be found operating the switchboard at the BRI or helping Alpha with their social media. His love of musical theatre started with BMYP at Cotham on Friday evenings, he appeared in a few BLOC shows and BLOC provided him with a small grant towards his study at the Guildford School of Acting. Since graduating he has performed in many shows including **The Rocky Horror Show** (European Tour), **Evita** (UK and European Tour), **Annie** (UK Tour, West End & Toronto). He is a professional pantomime regular at the Bath Theatre Royal and you may also have seen him on television recently as one of the Dames in 'Dame Nation' who reached the semi-finals of BGT!

Daniel Bartlett



Daniel trained in Musical Theatre for three years at ArtsEd in London and since then has performed in **Babes in Arms**, **Dames at Sea**, **Patience** and **Once Upon A Mattress**. He sings with Bristol Gay Men's Chorus but is delighted to be part of BLOC because he has missed being on stage in shows. Daniel is a professional picture framer by trade.

Tom Creswick



Tom is an estate agent when he's not performing, being a partner with CJ Hole and working at their Burnham-on-Sea branch. Tom has re-joined BLOC this year having previously been in **My Fair Lady** and **Chitty**. He has been performing since he was five years old and trained at the Bristol School of Performing Arts. He is a committee member at Wells Theatre and an acting member at Worle Operatic.

Simon Harris



Simon works at The Boston Tea Party and teaches at Ivy Arts Youth Theatre. A former member of BMYP, he went on to study Professional Musical Theatre at The Urdang Academy, London. He is a member of BAOS and performed recently in **9 to 5** and **Singing in the Rain**. He has previously played Mac in **42nd Street** and Sir Jasper Tring in **Me & My Girl**. Working with BLOC as a chaperone during **Chitty** he says the commitment and high standard of performance of the cast inspired him to apply to join us as a performer.

Mary Hilditch



Mary was a youth member of FHODS in Kent then graduated from BodyWork Company Studios with an NVQ in professional musical theatre in 2012. She has performed in various shows including **Songs for a New World**, **Sweet Charity**, **Stepping Out**, **Annie** and **My Fair Lady**. Having taken a break from musical theatre she is delighted to be back on stage with BLOC. Mary work in HR for Sage.

Amber Mears-Brown



Amber is new to Bristol, working as a marketing manager, but has already performed with BAOS in **9 to 5** and **BAOS Unplugged**. Previously she was in London and has played various roles in shows with Impact Theatre Company, Centrestage, Geoids and Mayhaem – including Delta Nu in **Legally Blonde**, JoJo in **Seussical** and Rosie in **Sweet Charity**.

Will Pope



Will is a systems engineer by profession and has been a member of BAOS since 2015, for whom he was also Treasurer for three years. He has played Franz Liebkind in **The Producers**, Mr Tooley in **Made in Dagenham** and Hot Blades Harry in **Urinetown** as well as various ensemble appearances.

Sophie Sturge



Sophie joined BAOS when she was 17 and is also part of The Usherettes (a close harmony war song group). She has played Phyllis Dale in **42nd Street**, understudied Rita O'Grady in **Legally Blonde** and took the lead role as Hope Cladwell in **Urinetown**. She works as a primary school teacher at May Park Primary School.

Sam Ward



Sam re-joined BLOC this year having previously performed with us in **Fiddler on the Roof** in which he played Fyedka and understudied Perchick. He is a secondary school English teacher and annually devises and directs productions for Barnstorm Youth Theatre. Sam has performed in a variety of shows including **Funny Girl**, **Carousel**, **HMS Pinafore**, **Yeomen of the Guard**, **Iolanthe** and **25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee**.

Lee Westney



Lee works as a sales manager in the events industry and is another BAOS stalwart who has re-joined BLOC this year, having been a member a number of years ago, performing in **Oliver!**, **Beauty & the Beast**, **Oklahoma**, **Me & My Girl** and **The Wizard of Oz**. He has also been an active performer with BMCC and Theatreworx. His most recent role was as Collins in **Rent**. He says one of his potential theatrical skills is balancing stuff on his nose! Sadly Lee had to withdraw from the show for work reasons, but we thought you'd like to meet him anyway

James Flintoff and William Hall



Last, but not least, our two Michaels who agreed that the auditions for Michael were "nerve-racking, exciting and fun."

James (left) attends Widcombe Junior School where his favourite subject is PE. He has played Lost Boy in **Peter Pan** at the Theatre Royal, Bath and has recently been cast as Jay Osmond in **The Osmonds – A New Musical**. He is an associate member of the Royal Ballet and trains at the Dorothy Coleborn School of Dance, Bath.

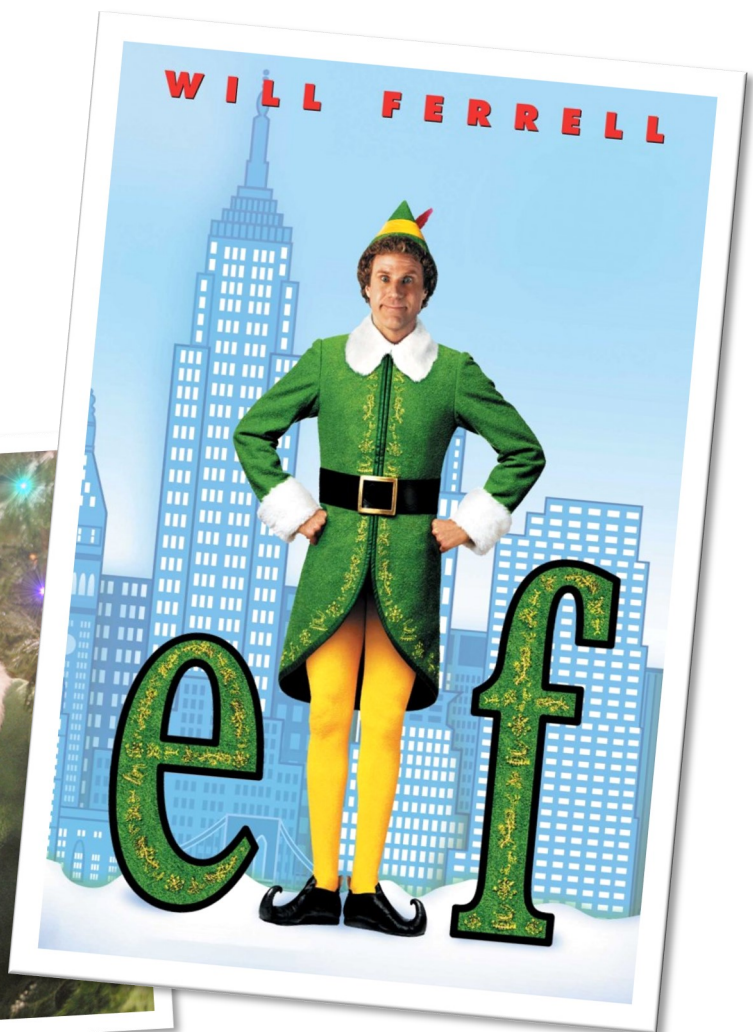
William (right) goes to Colston's School where he performs in the choir and takes part in school shows. His favourite subject is English, he is a competitive gymnast and also a keen drummer! He recently performed at the Birmingham Arena in a Young Voices event.

Why I absolutely ♥ Elf the Movie! by Sam Steadman

I've watched the film probably about 50 times, genuinely! My favourite line is "Hey Buddy... hope you find your Dad".

It's such a great family film with amazing humour for everyone. My children love it and it feels like it goes on virtually every day from October onwards! Even my husband is a fan and he's a harsh critic. I love Will Ferrell too –my absolute favourite actor.

I love it so much my friend had a bowl made for me which said "Sam's movie fest – Elf" and a plate with Buddy's face on it. Oh, and also a bauble with Will Ferrell in it and a hoodie which I'm going to wear to rehearsal – that's how much I love it!!



5, 6... a 5, 6, 7, 8! by Jacquie Bell, in conversation with Alex Turasiewicz



What got you into dance?

I started dancing at the age of two and a half and for many years entered the dancing Eisteddfod in Bristol. It was here I first started choreographing my own dances and found I had a flair for it!

What was your first show and what are your memories of it?

The first show I choreographed was **Godspell**, which was performed by my local drama group. It was a good start as I was faced with varying levels of ability.

Some shows come with a choreographer's 'bible' such as *West Side Story* and *Fiddler on the Roof*. Would you prefer to have these for every show, or do you prefer creating your own ideas?

I think it depends on the show. For example, for ***Fiddler on the Roof*** there are traditional dance steps which can be included. I have actually choreographed this show three times and didn't use the 'bible' - but it was useful as a guide for the traditional steps!

What are the challenges that you have as a choreographer?

Challenges are usually the differing abilities of the cast, using the space available to the best of my

ability, being imaginative, making the routines interesting with different patterns and thinking of new ideas!

The last show you choreographed was *Zorro* based on the music of The Gypsy Kings? How different is *Elf* to *Zorro* and how does the show dictate your approach to the choreography?

Zorro was definitely a challenge! Spanish dancing wasn't a dance form I had experience of so I needed to do a lot of research. I was then able to incorporate traditional steps with my own. **Elf** is very different to that and I am able to use my own steps and style. Every show has to be approached differently, but at the end of the day I always follow the same format by linking my choreography to how the show is being set and hopefully choosing steps that suit!

So how do you go about choreographing a big company number with over 50 people in it?

I actually follow the same plan regardless of the number of people in a number. Obviously, the larger the number of people the more challenging it is. I start by thinking of a plan for the number. I then listen to the music over and over and break it down into sections by counting the bars and distinct changes in the music. This helps me map the dance into sections, for example when to move people round etc. I then think of the patterns I can use to accommodate the number of people on the stage. After this I write it all down and use 'x's to show places of the cast. The most people I have choreographed was a number in **Scrooge** that had a cast of over 90 — adults and children together. This number was probably the biggest challenge I have ever had choreographically. Firstly, thinking of choreography that was accessible for all, which fitted into the space on stage, then getting all 90 people to learn the choreography in the rehearsal room and afterwards transferring this to the space on the stage with everyone moving as one.

Pick one of the routines in *Elf* and tell me how you went about creating it.

The number I have chosen is the Finale. I am hoping to create a number that involves everyone, uses the stage, looks interesting and matches the abilities of the cast. By listening to the music I was able to visualise patterns that would work throughout the number. I had been given a picture of the initial staging and the order of entrances and from this I was able to break the number down. I then listened to the track many times. Too many to count! I then mapped the number into sections applicable to the singing and dance breaks, counting the beats and listening for any distinct parts.

How do you decide on the steps?

Sometimes if you are lucky listening to the music brings steps into your head straight away and then I always write these down as a list. Then hopefully dancing around my kitchen or lounge the steps then come together. This isn't always the case and there have been many times I have been dancing in my sleep! This time I was very fortunate to have three talented dance captains who helped with the syncopated tap section.

How do you devise the shapes and patterns?

I am not a choreographer who likes to use straight lines all the time. I do like to vary the shape and move the cast around. I try and vary these patterns during the number and also during the show. For example, I would try not to use the same shape too many times.

How do you remember your ideas?

By writing them down and going over them at home. It gets harder to remember them as I get older! I think I can visualise the numbers and that makes it easier to remember. I am always very detailed in my notes. Sometimes it works writing the notes straight away and no changes have to be made, but the majority of the time there are too many scribbles and they have to be rewritten. Here are a few pages of my notes from the Finale so you can understand my planning and note taking. The first page shows my scribbles and ideas – the maths calculations showing my workings out as to how many people to put in each section and where they are at a certain time. You can see why it takes so long and why these have to be rewritten, to make it clearer and easier to understand! The next four pages show the actual finished notes, although there are still some crossings out and changes!

Handwritten notes with diagrams and calculations. Includes a circular diagram with arrows and a list of names.

4 paddles full
main R front
main L diagonal

2 x 8 (no circles) - 12
4 phrases 4 x 8 - 7
2 x 8 (no circles) - 12
principals 2 x 8 - 7
spread -
sing circles
end

Ball
Briac
Debbie
Carol
Helen
Will
Phil

Suaveos x x x x
Jason x x x x
Sam W x x x x
Sam S x x x
G girl dancers

Stacie
Verdy
Gina
Jessica
Rachel
Alex
Laura
Terry

40
7
33
20
13
7
30
3
18
3
6
3
40
25
7
15
40
15
7
3
3
3
10
30
10
33
30

Handwritten notes with diagrams and lists of names. Includes a diagram titled "Behind the tabs" showing a sequence of boxes and arrows.

30 clous
3 x 40
7 principals

Behind the tabs

off stage
Alex
Laura
Jenny
Phil
Faye
Clara
Lucy
Michael
Andrew
NIC
Jenny B
Darrell

ton
Jodie
3 x 40
Bruce
Nic
Chris
Amber
Rebecca
Stacia
Will
Gina

hobby
Lizzy
Sam
Eva
Mary
Sprue
Demi
Simon
Dance

Door - curtain up
4x8 - visual - with skaters

2x8 - x x x x x x x x
Simon Lucy Darrell

enter 1 x 8 tap springs into 1 straight line
2nd tap step ball changes x 4 straight fwd.
4 x 8 2x Shaky temple R L
4 x 8 3x tap spring toe hops turning R & L
(4x8 pivot turn, 12 bounces)

Chris # 3x8
enter 4x8 3 tap step ball changes fwd
upstage jump off step - through gaps

14 Step fwd x 4

Simon Faye Simon Lucy Darrell
x space x hobby x Sam x Lizzy x Jess x Nic

Handwritten notes with diagrams and lists of names. Includes a diagram titled "tap springs to" showing a sequence of boxes and arrows.

4x8 tap step pick up ball change x 2 R L
step pick up turning to L x 3 toe heel
tap step ball change behind, spring shuffle behind
spring shuffle in front - sep turn to R drop ahead
step pick up spring tap step pick heel ball change
pick up heel sep pick up ball change
circle spring into side Q.
arms up - front line
knee - back line
sep L switch to R - front line
up - back line
step to R switch to L - front line
step to L switch to R - back line
all turn drop back on R pick up L - front line
L pick up R - back line

(Chris Jenny Jenny)

NIC + Jenny + Michael over D stage. who centre
2nd round - tap springs
2nd round - x x x x x x x x
NIC + Jenny
wide round - tap step ball changes
Michael
pick ups - turning on spot - shuffles?

4x8
Dance
Shuffle tap step x 2 ball change
Paddles x 2 shoulders on 4 stamp 7/8
pick up travelling x 4 to out (diagonal)
be Stamp! 4 heel.

Handwritten notes with diagrams and lists of names. Includes a diagram showing a sequence of boxes and arrows.

4 sways R L
side ball change sep R L, R L R leg L
2 walks to R sep leg x 2
2 walks to L turn
4 points in front, sep R point L x 4 ans
all move to new position

we'll be -
front line - angle moves for your word
Chris - 123 deg to L - arms over head
turn to L - R hand up - R 22k L hand up - D 22k
shuttle down - turn to D 22k arm to point.

x x x x x x x x
x x x x x x x x
x x x x x x x x
x x x x x x x x
x x x x x x x x
x x x x x x x x
x x x x x x x x

Jenny Laura Beryl Faye Chris Lucy NIC Jenny Andrew Stacie Sam Phil
Tom Alex

all step -
sway fwd ball put turn feet leg.
Step dig R ans up R diag out. repeat L R
last one centre. - ans open out & down - end position

How do you create choreography for the number you are focusing on and make the best use of the range of dance talents of the group?

I always say simple is more effective especially if the number involves the whole cast doing the same steps. I believe it is always better to have everyone moving as one and setting something that everyone can achieve and looks good. I try and think of steps that I know a group can perform and work this into the choreography. This time I used some of the steps the cast had learnt at the initial dance assessment to make it easier for them.

How do you make sure you challenge your really good dancers?

By thinking of more complicated steps that suit the number and give the dancers something to work on. Every choreographer has a different style and that in itself can be a challenge sometimes!

How do you make your movers rather than dancers look good?

I always try and choreograph to their ability, making it accessible for all and then that makes them look good. That, and giving them plenty of time to go over it as much as possible and be confident with what they have been given to do.

How do you make sure someone isn't always in the back row of the chorus?

Everyone in the show is equally important. They all should be given their chance 'to shine'. This involves ensuring that I move the chorus around during the different numbers and giving them all their moment near the front of the stage. Everyone has sold tickets to their friends and families and they all deserve the chance to be seen.

How do you know when something isn't working?

You can tell just by watching the number! Sometimes ideas are great on paper but when you have bodies to work with it just doesn't work. I then rethink and redo the choreography. During the setting of the Finale it became apparent that people could get to their positions in 2 counts of 8 rather than the 4 I had allowed so I will go back to the next rehearsal with another 2 counts of 8 choreographed for them to learn.

How long on average does it take to set a big company number?

It is hard to say but a big company number can take hours to plan. It depends on how quick the choreography clicks into place! The Finale in *Elf* took me about nine hours to plan from start to finish. At the time of writing, we have spent one

and half hours teaching the choreography and have not quite finishing the setting. It will need at least a couple more hours to put it all together and polish.

How do you know when your ideas have become fully alive?

When everything works! The cast look good doing their moves and the number just flows.

What gives you the greatest satisfaction as a choreographer and what are the joys of being part of the creative team and of a production.

After all the hours of work that go into the number both by myself and the cast, the greatest satisfaction is seeing your choreography working and being brought to life on the stage. It is great to be part of a creative team and work with people who have the same goal as you, to put on the most professional show you can using the abilities of the cast.

What have been some of the highlight moments from the vast number of shows you have choreographed to date and why do they stand out?

Although *Zorro* was a challenge choreographically, I was thrilled with the end result. This was definitely a highlight for me. Another highlight was *Anything Goes* which I choreographed for BLOC back in 1996. This included the longest tap routine I had ever choreographed. This was recorded by (I think) Points West and shown on the news. Seeing your choreography on the television was definitely a highlight as well.

Is there one show that you would love to Choreograph in the future above all the others?

Probably *Mamma Mia!* You can certainly have fun with those numbers.

Finally, why do you always say: 5,6... a 5, 6, 7, 8?

I don't know! It is just something that I have always done. I must have heard others use it before me.

From the Props Table...

Spare a thought for Lorna and the Props team as they are tasked with sourcing, or indeed making, the following props for *Elf — The Musical*:

- The Story of Buddy The Elf
- Other books
- TV remote
- Tray
- Drink
- Air freshener
- Toys
- Etch A Sketch
- Trolley with cocoa
- Trick glass
- Snow globe
- Small suitcase
- Supermarket trolley
- Tin cans
- Office stationary
- Shredder
- Phones
- Diary
- Macy's carrier bags
- Spray perfume
- Store dressings
- Christmas tree decorations
- False packages
- Gift for child
- Spectacles
- Pen and paper
- Broken fan
- Mended fan
- Briefcase
- Two bowls of spaghetti
- Spoons
- Syrup
- FedEx envelope
- Plants
- Coffee trolley
- Coffee and sugar
- Hot chocolate
- Food cart
- Salvation Army bells
- Salvation Army collection tin
- Roller skates
- Manuscripts
- Chinese food
- Bowls
- Beer
- Large filled sacks
- Microphone
- TV recording equipment
- iPad
- White pram
- Baby!

