

# BLOC Bailiwick

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Business Report	2
Review Round-up	2
A View from the Pit	3
The Sound of Musicals	4
Come Fly with Me	5
Make-Up	6
Being the Understudy	7
Props	8
First Timers	9
Week in Pictures	10
Winging It	12
History of the Rose Bowl	14

## EDITORIAL BY JACK BLACKMORE

Welcome, welcome, to our fifth issue of the BLOC Bailiwick! The 2017 production of *My Fair Lady* may be over (and the blues may only just be starting to wear off!), but we will keep on going to bring you all the news from our lovely BLOC community. Our plan is to publish editions every two months until we start the process again for the 2018 production. With the future in mind, let's focus this issue on the present – we've tried to bring you a lovely roundup of all things *My Fair Lady*. Reviews, thoughts, and wonderful look backs on the week at the Hippodrome.

In other news, congratulations to Simon Vardakis on his Rosebowl Award win for Best Actor in a Musical. Thoroughly deserved, but then, maybe, we are just a bit biased!

As always, I would like to thank all of our contributors this month: Cheryl Batt, Sarah Broome-Smith, Andrew Carpenter, Will Carr, Steve Clarke, Stephanie Coates, Sarah Cochran-Meredith, Tom Creswick, Dave Dodd, Richard Gourlay, Phillip Hallworth, James Hartland, Lu Jeffrey, Grace Kingsley, Graham Lewis, Robb Norton, Gerry Parker, Ewan Poole-Gleed, Liam Richards, Lorna Robinson, Joel Rothwell, Craig Sillick, Chris Sterry, Adele

Stitch, Anna Sutton, Alex Turasiewicz, Robin Tyacke, and the Front of House staff at The Hippodrome.

If you want anything to be featured or wish to join the team then just get in touch at [alexander.turasiewicz@gmail.com](mailto:alexander.turasiewicz@gmail.com).

## BLOC MEMBERS – HAVE YOUR SAY

The choice of show is the most difficult and important decision the Committee has to make each year and as always we value the membership's opinion.

The roller-coaster experience of the last four years illustrates the complexity of the task:

- ***Sister Act*** looked set to make a loss until the final two weeks of incredible sales
- ***Sunset Boulevard*** was an artistic triumph but a box office flop
- ***Fiddler on the Roof*** was more to the Bristol public's taste and just about broke even
- ***My Fair Lady*** has sold consistently well and already guarantees that BLOC will be back at the Hippodrome in 2018

So, let us know what show you think would be good for BLOC next year. It's not quite a case of *Anything Goes* because the show has to be both available for licence and financially viable in terms of box office popularity at The Hippodrome. For example, we still can't do *Les Miserables*, *Phantom of the Opera* or *Oliver!*, but *Cats* has recently become available.

Shows obviously vary in terms of balance between singing, dancing, and acting - as do the talents within the club - so what show will suit us best? Please also remember it must be fun and rewarding for the company to rehearse and perform!

Please have a think and let the Committee have your suggestions.

To see who holds the licence check out <http://www.guidetomusicaltheatre.com/listofshowsindex/a.htm>

## SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- What do you do when you're not busy on stage?
- How does the scenery fly?
- Twenty-Two pairs of what were used
- Find out when the crew 'leap' into action.
- What annual event started in 1966?



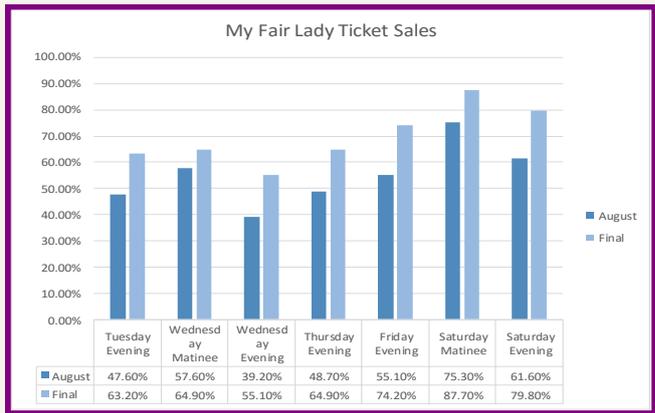
## BUSINESS REPORT BY GRAHAM LEWIS

In the last edition I reported that our horse, 'My Fair Lady', was hurtling up the track and was looking to be a strong finisher at Ascot. Well, I am delighted to report that not only were we a strong finisher we absolutely romped home first passed the finishing line.

We ended the show with ticket sales of 9496, 70% of all seats available. This is the fourth biggest number of seats sold for a BLOC

production since 2001. On Saturday we were over 80% for both performances, an amazing job and, once again, a huge thank you to everyone who made that possible and sold tickets.

Total revenue from the ticket sales was £182,000. Our budget to break even was around £145,000. Now don't all get excited and think that everything above the £145,000 is profit - with increased revenue comes



increased costs. However, I can assure you that when the last invoice has been paid and the final numbers balanced, there will be a healthy increase in BLOC funds that will guarantee our continuing presence on the Hippodrome stage.

## REVIEW ROUND-UP

### Life Of Sparkle Blog

"BLOC may be an amateur theatre group, but from what I saw tonight... they have a cast that can give professional theatre stars a run for their money."

<https://lifeofsparkle.wordpress.com/2017/09/27/my-fair-lady-was-just-loverley/>

### Chopsy Baby

"A clear passion and love for theatre from the cast gives this show a special spark, something desperately lacking in many professional productions these days."

<http://chopsybaby.com/magazine/my-fair-lady-by-bloc-productions-at-the-bristol-hippodrome-review/>

### Bradley Stoke FM

"Bristol Light Opera Company perform annually at The Hippodrome and have yet failed to disappoint, this production is one of the best."

<https://www.facebook.com/bradleystokefm/photos/a.232932296722330.79558.185704884778405/1871029769579233/?type=3&theater>

### Wilts & Gloucestershire Standard

"If I didn't have to drive home, I could have danced all night. And if given half the chance, I would have watched Bloc all night too."

[http://www.wiltsglosstandard.co.uk/leisure/whatson/15561080.REVIEW\\_BLOC\\_s\\_dynamic\\_new\\_production\\_will\\_make\\_you\\_fall\\_in\\_love\\_with\\_My\\_Fair\\_Lady\\_all\\_over\\_again/](http://www.wiltsglosstandard.co.uk/leisure/whatson/15561080.REVIEW_BLOC_s_dynamic_new_production_will_make_you_fall_in_love_with_My_Fair_Lady_all_over_again/)

### The Weston Mercury

"The costumes were immaculate, the sets were stunning, and it was lively, engaging, funny and beautifully-performed."

<http://www.thewestonmercury.co.uk/what-s-on/theatre/bloc-productions-my-fair-lady-review-at-the-bristol-hippodrome-1-5212173>

### UK Theatre World

"Great choreography, good voices and lovely costume"

<http://uktw.co.uk/news/My-Fair-Lady/1941.html>

### Weston Super Mum

"Overall it's a great big 10/10 for costumes, acting, stage, singing, dancing – almost all of the elements that make up a great show."

<http://www.westonsupermum.com/bristol-hippodrome-theatre-review-my-fair-lady/>

### Nailsea People

"BLOC Production's My Fair Lady was filled with sincere moments of joy and a vast amount of intelligent comedy, making it a 'bloomin' lovely' night out for anyone."

<https://www.nailseapeople.com/bloc-my-fair-lady>

### Visit Somerset

"A fantastic performance by all and the standing ovation at the end was well deserved."

<http://www.visitsomerset.co.uk/blog/2017/9/27/my-fair-lady-at-the-bristol-hippodrome-a1176>

## A VIEW FROM THE PIT BY LU JEFFERY

I am an incredibly lucky person. During an average year I get to work with outstanding musicians and theatre practitioners throughout the country. However, every January as I sit in a mulled wine haze of Christmas pantos, Messiahs, and carol services, I am already, secretly, hoping I will get the call from BLOC MD Headquarters. What show will it be? What will the band consist of? Will we be replaced by 3 keyboards, a click track, and a tambourine? Why such anticipation you ask... I shall try to explain using this week of *My Fair Lady* as a template.



Band Call. The usual ceremonial moans about parking, another year of not being able to find the light switches, did anyone find a decent coffee? BUT WAIT! Lauren is super organised! There is cake, water, crisps, and light! Suddenly, joy and rapture fill the room. Once settled, it's the moment when we finally hear our combined sound for the first time... and? Everyone is too loud... are we all in tune? Have we all got the relevant cuts? We await the dreaded "then we cut from number 2 bar 47a to number 56 reprise for 8 bars and then straight to last 4 bars of the finale... quietly... and that's repeated until the scene change

is done but we won't know how many times round until at least Thursday." BUT WAIT! Lauren's written it all in! Like Harry before her, she is ahead of the game! We gallop through the beautifully written score in record breaking, relatively stress-free time, and head home musically exhausted but optimistic for the week ahead.

Dress run. I leap in to the theatre full of positivity for the fabulous week of musical merriment ahead but am met by "We can't fit everyone in the space". Oh... BUT WAIT! Here comes Lauren with a saw, a ladder, and a screw driver! Seriously does this woman's patience know no bounds? And so the week goes on. Performances pass in a haze of sweeping string melodies, soaring brass lines, delicate woodwind flurries, bizarre piano jazz renditions of Ascot gavotte, freshly made rolls, cake, and endless cups of tea. It's so rare these days to be musically engulfed within such a large live theatre orchestra. They are so often replaced by keyboards and click tracks. It's always a privilege to play with some of Bristol's finest musicians and to accompany such an amazing cast.



This year the band move brought us all closer together, which turned out to be a real eye opener for both cast and band!



On a personal note: when I was ten I interviewed for BLOC's future president, Bob Latham, for a music scholarship. "If you pursue a career in music," he told me, "you will never be lonely and you will always have friends". Every year with BLOC his words ring especially true. I spend a week surrounded by friends, some of which I've known almost my entire life. I am an incredibly lucky person. Then, suddenly, I'm home again and the week is done. Just me, the ear worms, and the thought that there is always next year... Just you wait!



## THE SOUND OF MUSICALS BY JAMES HARTLAND



Where to start? Sound is extremely complex and difficult to control. Firstly, it can't be seen and, therefore, it is very difficult to know where it's going (and not)! The number of variables is huge: the temperature in the room - this will change from the start of the show all the way through to the end; the number of people in the auditorium; and, the fact that everyone will hear different things in different parts of the theatre and at different levels. Everyone has an opinion on what sounds good and not - I've had people say that the sound was great and others not whilst both only sitting a couple of seats apart!

So, before we've even put any speakers in the theatre, or a microphone on any instruments or performers, we are faced with a lot of issues.

In the weeks and months before a show I listen to the soundtrack. This helps not only with learning how the songs should sound but also the sequence of the show. I also film rehearsals - this way I can watch it over and over again and ensure that, when programming starts, I'll have the right microphones fitted on the right performer and switched on at the right time. Programming and planning a radio plot can take up to eight hours all in. As get-in time in the theatre is so limited, this is all done in advance.

The Bristol Hippodrome doesn't own any suitable sound equipment, so everything must be

installed during the get-in. We put a main system on the proscenium line and additional speakers, called delays, to add more vocal level to the back rows in the stalls and circle. In total, we install forty-eight speakers around the auditorium and stage, and around 600m of cable. Considerable planning has to go into how and where speakers should be installed and ensuring that the right cable, rigging, and connectors are onsite for the Sunday morning get-in.

The time allocated to sound checking and orchestra balancing is, and always will be, restricted. The financial implications of calling the orchestra for longer, and allowing for a proper sound check, will always be unattainable for amateur companies. Therefore, the orchestra balancing must be done 'on the fly'; making alterations during the dress rehearsal, whilst at the same time, knowing it will sound completely different when the audience are in situ.

Operating sound is a complicated task - not only do you need to watch the show, follow the script, and trigger sound effects (which in some shows can add up to two-hundred or more), you're also trying to guess and adapt to the differing volume which may come from the performers and orchestra. In addition, you're constantly monitoring levels between characters, as their physical proximity to each other has an effect on the sound, as well as the emotion of the scene, be it loud or soft and light. The orchestra also requires this same level of

attention throughout the show. Finally, you also have to address and fix problems that may arise with the radio microphones during the course of any performance.

In summary, it's the ultimate juggling act.



## COME FLY WITH ME BY DAVE DODD



Unlike the months of rehearsing the show, the flymen's first time of seeing the show is at the get in. Firstly, we're greeted by the night shift LX team, and later on by the rest of the LX team and the Set team. As everyone has said before about a "hanging plot", this is key for the fly team to know where the lighting and set is going to on the fly bars. At the Hippodrome there are sixty-four manually hauled fly bars. These are known at counterweight sets, and can have a maximum of 7.5 tonnes of weight added to them. During the get in, when either team is working on a fly, bar weight is added to a cradle as it is being rigged onto. This is to ensure that the fly bar is balanced and enables the flyman to safely and smoothly operate it. Everything will have been rigged and flown out by the end of the Sunday before the cast arrive.



This is normally the point when we add in breast-lines to the set and lighting from the fly floor as it can be very tight. Breast-lines are used when there is a need to allow more room for the larger pieces of set that are flown in and out live during the show.



During Monday as LX plot the show, each piece of flown set is flown in to set the scene being working on. At this time, we then mark an "in" and "out" dead. These are set for the flyman to know how far each piece is to be flown during scene changes. Cue sheets are written out on two chalk boards. Each cue line has: which bar is moving "in" or "out"; the speed it is flown at; the order they are flown; and if two flymen are required to fly two pieces at the same time. Additional notes are added during the tech and dress runs.



With the tech and dress runs, we become aware of where the cast will be when a fly cue is going to

happen. As with all shows there is a person, who acts as a spotter. Their job is to make sure the stage is clear when a



verbal go is given to the flyman as the DSM calls the cue. They will also stop or delay the flyman for safety reasons. As we approach the start of the show, the flymen will be on the fly floor ready for the show to begin. Before the band begin, the DSM will call a standby for the first set of cues. We release the brake for the bar, take hold of the rope, and wait to pull it on cue. Most of the standbys for the flymen can range from twenty seconds upwards to two minutes. As the standbys are called, we "leap in action" aka stop reading our book or watching what we can see of the show.



## THERE'S NEVER A DULL MOMENT IN THE MAKE-UP ROOM BY SARAH BROOME-SMITH & GRACE KINGSLEY



Once the show has been decided, we can begin the mammoth task of preparing the make-up! A lot of planning goes into the make-up for the show; from the first rehearsals, chats with the director, and lots of research. We need to make sure that the make-up is fitting for both the time period and the Hippodrome stage, and that we know every single character's changes. Once this has been done, we can get to the fun part: shopping! Although, this year we managed to do the whole thing without spending a penny - which makes up for the beard budget last year!

When we've been through the show, and know how much we will actually need to do, we can start getting the team together. We have to factor in how many people are in the show, and how many changes there are, so that we can decide how many people we need. This needs to be done early so that we can pin people down! There are people in the team that have been there far longer than we have, but we also like to get some new faces involved if we can. A huge selling point is the fact that, for the both of us, it's one of the most fun (if exhausting!) weeks of the year.

Our part isn't over once the show has started - we are constantly preparing for the next change, whether it be someone rushing up to the room, or us rushing backstage, we need to be constantly listening for our cues. Usually by Saturday evening we have gotten it down to a fine art!

We also find that for many, we are not only there to help with make-up. We have assisted with costumes, wigs, plasters, safety pins, hair grips, treasure hunts... you name it, we've been asked to help! Often, we'll get visitors throughout the show - not just for make-up changes. People are always popping in for a chat and a quick backstage selfie, although most of the visits could be due to the fact we're next to the canteen...

Overall, although it's a lot of hard work and dedication, every year we manage to have an absolute blast and, thankfully, the room is always full of laughter!

We're looking forward to next year already!

## WILL I GET TO BE ELIZA? BY STEPHANIE COATES

The alarm goes off: I would wake all of a fluster; reaching for my phone; checking it was indeed my alarm and not "the call" saying I was to go on...

It was an absolute dream to be asked to come and join a society, of such distinction, I had heard so much about. I was certainly nervous but had a wonderfully warm welcome from committee and members; I really felt appreciated.

What a joy it was, too, to understudy the lovely, gracious Charlotte Hunter. Being an understudy can hold a certain air of trepidation and awkwardness from the very nature, but I am glad to say this was not felt at all in this relationship. Everything was moving along swimmingly and then I found out I was pregnant! Absolutely wonderful and joyous but, doubts began to creep in about how, exactly, this might work. A bout of terrible sickness ensued during the first two months but luckily this didn't interfere too much and, as the show loomed ever closer, I began to improve enough to take part in

rehearsals once again. The next worry was fitting in the costumes!

The greatest challenge of understudying had to be the blocking. I tend to remember movements by doing them, going over and over it until it becomes muscle memory... this was not really plausible, so I had to compensate and adapt to other methods of learning.

It was nerve-wracking that the understudies didn't get chance to run the show but it was more important the actual cast felt secure with it and I had watched, taken copious notes, practiced my blocking in the living room with my wonderfully supportive husband playing all characters extremely well and testing me on my lines, so I felt, if called upon in the end, it would be "ok".

Once in the theatre, a whole other dynamic came in to play. What a theatre! Having the opportunity to step foot inside the Hippodrome, calling it home for the week was special, but to be treading the boards and, perhaps, the small chance of playing one of the World's most well-known female characters on that vast stage was just

incredible!

I sat in the dressing room every performance with my lovely dressing room buddies awaiting my moment at Ascot, but ready to drop everything and transform into Eliza if the need arose. You could often see Alex and myself muttering lines in tandem with the real Eliza and Pickering so we would be, completely, ready should the understudying become a reality. I never felt overwhelmed, even thinking of the audience numbers; it was exciting! If I'm honest, I am a little disappointed, I would have loved the chance to step up and appear as Eliza but, of course, I would never have wished any harm to Charlotte and she did such a fantastic job!

A heartfelt thank you, BLOC, for this wonderful opportunity. I thoroughly enjoyed my time with you all and hope to join you again soon.





## BEING THE UNDERSTUDY BY ANDREW CARPENTER

When I was asked by Robbie to understudy the role of Henry Higgins in BLOC's production of *My Fair Lady*, I was filled with both excitement and intrigue. Excitement about working with one of the South West's leading amateur groups on one of the greatest stages in the UK, and intrigue because I'd never understudied any part ever before. I'm always one to try new things so it didn't take me long to say, "yes please". I have to say I'm delighted that I did because the experience has been very rewarding. The hospitality shown to me, particularly by Chair Susanne and Vice-Chair Alex, has been exceptional and watching the group perform most enjoyable and educational.

What has struck me more than anything is the strength in depth that BLOC enjoys. Most amateur groups have half a dozen, or so, 'good leads' but their tail is long! Here each individual is top quality and that shows throughout the production from the principals to the youngest member of the ensemble. The

journeys to and from Frome have been long, particularly after difficult days at work where I'm a CEO in the construction industry, but when I get to rehearsal it is always worthwhile. It has been a sheer joy to witness all the talent on show.

I suppose I'd liken myself to an unused substitute in the Cup Final where you do all the training but don't get on! So how did I feel about show week I hear you ask? Well, it was a mixture of emotions – excitement about the production itself and the possibility of performing on the Bristol Hippodrome stage, concern that if required I'd do justice to both Peter and BLOC, and nervousness that I'd retain all the words, songs, and moves with so little rehearsal time! I think at the end of the day I'm relieved I wasn't required although now, having tasted life backstage at the Hippodrome, it's certainly on my bucket list. At the end of the day, the people that matter most are the audiences and having Peter perform all week was undoubtedly best for them. I am auditioning for the role in December for a production in Bridgewater next spring but, of course, there is no guarantee I'll get it! However,

watching Peter was most helpful and I loved his rendition of the role. If I do get the role in December, I hope I'm half as good as he is.

How strange it was to team up once again with Craig Rees, your Freddie Eynsford-Hill, for I'd given him his first opportunity on stage at the age of thirteen when I cast him as Buttons in my production of *Cinderella*. *My Fair Lady* is one of the all time great musicals and, indeed, one of my personal favourites in which I've already appeared three times, including playing Freddie myself at the age of eighteen and Alfred P. Doolittle fifteen years ago.

I would like to thank Robbie, John, Lauren, and the creative team for taking the time to work with us understudies, Peter for his patience whilst I stumbled around trying to match his brilliance, Steph & Alex for their support during rehearsals, and the cast and crew for their friendship and hospitality. If you are ever short of a man of my age to play a part 'for real' - please give me a call, as I'd love to appear on the Hippodrome stage just once. Thank you, it's been a ball and I'm overwhelmed by your quality – it's been bloomin' luvverly!

## BLACKMORE'S BLOG

For my last Blackmore Blog of 2017, I thought I would focus on the most important week: show week. What a time it was; the audience reactions, the critic reactions, and our own enjoyment made the culmination of five months very special.

Personally, I found the week difficult. I wasn't on stage for long and, when I was, I was never perfect (moving too early on a movement; forgetting a line in a song; having my shirt come undone mid dance!); and I was gutted that I was missing the first week of my final year at university.

But that didn't matter because all the most wonderful people surrounded me. Whether we were speaking along with the lines at the side of the stage, having a rowdy game of *Uno* on the top floor, or pranking our Professor Higgins by filling his dressing room with nearly three hundred inflated balloons (sorry Pete!), there was always fun to be had.

I think what has resonated most for me during this year's production is why I enjoy being a part of BLOC. Yes, I enjoy being a

part of great musicals; yes, I adore performing on the Hippodrome stage; and yes, it's local to me so easy to access. But, what I love most are the bonds I have created with everyone from *Fiddler* and *My Fair Lady*. I'm sure most will agree that the friendships you make in theatre are truly very special and I have felt that since joining BLOC. So, I must apologise if I ever looked gloomy during the week; I just knew I was in good company (in more ways than one) that would cheer me up. Here's to the next one!

## PROPS BY LORNA ROBINSON

Props (properties) usually refer to any item held by an actor. However, props can also include set dressing like tables, chairs, flower arrangements, plus other items that could be classed as costumes: for example, bags, spectacles, and parasols. There has always been much debate about what exactly defines a 'prop' and so it is very important to be clear on what is required. I work on the premise that a prop can be picked up in one hand; a table is not a prop but a flower arrangement may be... depending on the size... you see what I mean? At the earliest production meeting, this must be clarified.



For *My Fair Lady*, I met with Robbie in May and discussed all the props in detail. Once the list was finalised, it was shared with the rest of the team. We have an excellent team of prop makers and buyers; however, we work within a tight budget – so beg, borrow (don't steal!), making them ourselves, and charity shops are our mantras! We hired most of the props for *My Fair Lady* from other amateur clubs in the area.

So, what are the challenges? Ideally, props should be available to the actors as early as possible, or, at least, a suitable substitute for practice. This is incredibly difficult because rehearsals take place in different venues and there isn't storage space available in any of them. My house became the storage for most of the props... my husband was thrilled! As a

result, getting props to and from the rehearsal is very difficult. In an ideal world, I would have been able to attend all rehearsals with all the props. Sadly, work and family stuff gets in the way. Props needed for dance rehearsals are quite large and the crates for the staircase in "Wouldn't it be Lovely" will haunt me forever! They were very difficult to find so were not available until late in the rehearsal process.

Props aid the imagination and help the actor create their character. Props can convey meaning and profound sentiment (e.g. Professor Higgins's slippers), and they define the time period (e.g. the candlestick telephone). We had a lot of food related props – aiding the realism of the piece. The challenge here was getting authentic food for the era from what is available in our shops now. Included in the food props was plain 'pline' cake, scones and jam, strawberry tarts, and chocolate; not to mention rather a lot of fruit juice masquerading as alcohol!

As the rehearsals progress, things change; so, it is important to liaise with the production team to ensure all changes are communicated. This in itself is a huge challenge, and frustratingly, there are always props purchased/hired that we don't use – the stomp props for instance. Sometimes a prop is something of a mystery - we had a door key and a beggar's bowl on the props table all week that were never collected!

Props is a department, which can feel like the poor relation, usually swept in with set design. We are very different though; our business is about bringing scenes to life with

authenticity, colour, and detail. *My Fair Lady* used over 200 props, which all needed careful handling, repairing, and storing - some of which were precious family heirlooms dating from the early twentieth century.

It was a pleasure and privilege to work with such an awesome team, and with everyone else in the cast and production team. I sincerely hope to be finding props again next year.

*My Fair Lady* featured tons of props, from the very first page of the script to the very last. We've gone through them all, and selected a few interesting items:

- 22 pairs of binoculars
- 10 white fivers
- 6 black umbrellas
- 6 Suffragette signs
- 4 trick pint glasses
- 2 round baskets, balanced on heads
- 1 decanter of Port and 2 glasses
- 1 birdcage
- 1 three tier plate of cakes and tarts
- 1 pair of stilts
- 1 Champagne bottle
- 1 cabbage and 1 cucumber



## FIRST TIMERS

Following on from last month's article, in which 'old' members looked back the first time they took to the Hippodrome stage, this month we caught up with some of our new members and find out how they found their first experience.

"The top of the pyramid in my 13 years of musical theatre. Looking out at the auditorium, I felt like I'd finally made it" – **Tom Creswick**

"There are few places in the Bristol Hippodrome I'm unfamiliar with, having worked there for over 3 years. But being able to witness a standing ovation from the stage was incredible, there's no feeling like it. Hopefully it's just a taste of what's to come!" – **Chris Sterry**

"Performing on the Bristol Hippodrome stage for the first time was breath taking! I simply can't put it into words! But having the opportunity to perform alongside such amazing talents and such an incredible cast made *My Fair Lady* a show I'll never forget!" – **Joel Rothwell**

"After the *My Fair Lady* production, I am now in a very unfortunate situation of having my only real on-stage experience being at the Bristol Hippodrome - I don't know how I can follow it! The moment the curtain went up didn't really feel real, (especially given I was wearing blind man glasses and couldn't see much) but it is one I won't forget." – **Will Carr**

"What an amazing theatre! I just love the Hippodrome, always have, but little did I know I would get the opportunity to appear on that stage one day! The size of the stage is quite daunting when you first see it; there's a lot of ground to cover on those first drag steps to the centre for Ascot! It's amazing being able to play to such large audiences too; although, looking out at the auditorium you wouldn't think there were that many people... Good job really, as that could be pretty scary! I would love to tread those boards again." - **Stephanie Coates**

## CLUB NIGHT

Do your Monday evenings feel empty now that the show is over? Well, there is something you can do to fill them. We have decided to continue with BLOC Club Night. On the first Monday of the month we will meet at The Highbury Vaults. This is a great opportunity to catch up with old friends and, maybe, get to know some new ones better. There are always those people who we see at rehearsals but don't get the

chance to talk to, now's the chance.

So whether you enjoy being on stage, haven't stepped foot on stage for a while or enjoy hiding behind the set come and join us on Monday 6th November & Monday 4th

December at 8pm. Looking forward to seeing you there.

Don't Forget -

**11th December—BLOC Carol Service , Cotham Parish Church**, This is a lovely service with many members taking part, all the best carols to sing followed by mulled wine, mince pies and savoury nibbles Do come along & bring your family and friends too.



A WEEK IN PICTURES & SHOW HIGHLIGHTS

The humungous standing ovation on the opening night was a tear jerker for me. **Cheryl**



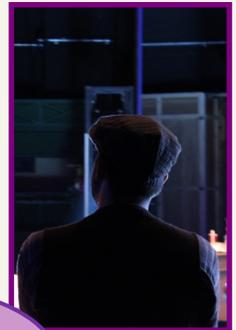
"I can't believe they're amateurs."



Mid song selfie. **Anna**



Chocolate Orange Brownies. **Dickie**



"Everything about it was just amazing."



Standing on the upper riser for the bows and seeing Charlotte & Peter coming out and the standing ovation that occurred, every night, that's a sight I will never forget!

**Robb**



The bows on opening night, standing up the top, in the centre, seeing the wave of people stand up screaming is a feeling I'll never forget. Possibly the best moment I've ever had on stage. **Tom**



"As good as a professional production."



"Absolutely excellent! Wonderful show."

Lots of waiting, washing up, books, books, books! **Sarah C-M**

Being so close to the orchestra and watching them tune up every night...it was lovely to see them in action and OMG what an incredible orchestra they were. **Craig S**



Operation room inflation, headed by Chris & Jack with military precision. **Liam**

## WINGING IT BY ROBIN TYACKE



I've been asked to give you all an idea of what show week is like from the crew's point of view. First of all, let me introduce myself: by day, I am a neuropsychopharmacologist and do human brain imaging studies at Imperial College, London, and, by night, I am a member of the BLOC stage crew. At least for one week of the year... *My Fair Lady* will have been my seventeenth BLOC show I have crewed for (starting with *Evita* in 2001). Though that wasn't my first show for BLOC - that was *Oliver!* in 1982, but I was on stage for that.



So back to the question in hand. I've given it some thought and have found it quite difficult to answer. One option was to give a more practical point of view, but there have been three other articles from the technical side. They have covered a lot of what goes on and happens for the crew during show week, as well as before it. I don't want to repeat all of that. So, what do I write about? Then I remembered a question I was once asked. "Why do you do this (crew shows)?" A

good question, especially when you consider the very early start on the Sunday of the show for the get-in - or earlier if you're involved in the LX fit up; followed by a late finish and full days on Monday and Tuesday; culminating in working till the early hours after the last show doing the get-out - usually serenaded by the after-show party. So yes, why indeed do I (we) do it...?



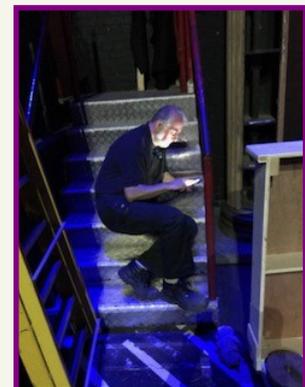
There are lots of different reasons. A key reason is the fun and friendships. It is an odd situation: being in the crew, I have made some very good friends, some I only see once a year for show week. We meet up, and work hard (and well) together, have fun, and, then, say goodbye for another year. Then, there are the challenges. Show week is different from my normal job and it is great to do something so different. You have the challenge of being part of a team that comes together to change a big empty space into Covent Garden, a Russian village, or a Hollywood movie lot. The challenge of fitting it all up and learning all the scene changes in a couple of days before going out and doing it for 'real' on opening night. The challenge of flying a ghost over the audience in black pyjamas and a balaclava. The challenge of arranging all of

the bits of scenery in the wings so it can be easily got to when it is needed. To name a few.

One of the reasons I personally do it, which probably differs from some other members of the crew, is my job and life make it hard for me to commit the time needed to be 'on stage' as much as I'd like. So, this is a way of still being involved.



However, I think the main reason I, and many of the other crew, do it, even though this will sound clichéd, is we take pleasure and pride in being part of something bigger, putting on spectacular shows in an amazing theatre and entertaining people. Of being part of a bigger whole and because we love theatre too.



## WHAT'S ON

If you have an event you would like us to share please let us know.

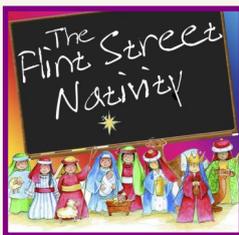
6th– 10th November - Ship and Castle Theatre Company presents *Pride & Prejudice*, Newman Hall, Box Office: 07745208639 or [shipandcastleboxoffice@gmail.com](mailto:shipandcastleboxoffice@gmail.com) Adapted by Tom Phillips, The Ship & Castle production of *Pride and Prejudice* has been brought forward to the 1910's to reflect the period of sufferagette and just before the repeal of the Act that made the novel so relevant.



21st –25th November - The Worx Productions Limited presents *The Big Meal*, Alma Tavern & Theatre, Box Office: [www.almatavernandtheatre.co.uk](http://www.almatavernandtheatre.co.uk) Somewhere in America, in a typical suburban restaurant on a typical night, Sam and Nicole first meet. Sparks fly. And so begins an expansive tale that traverses five generations of a modern family, from first kiss to final goodbye. A stunning, big-hearted play that spans nearly eighty years in roughly ninety minutes, *The Big Meal* tells the extraordinary story of one ordinary family.

24th November & 22nd December - The Secret Cabaret The Bristol Hippodrome Piano Bar, St Augustine's Parade, Bristol Box Office: [www.ticketsource.co.uk/date/409612](http://www.ticketsource.co.uk/date/409612) Well it isn't exactly a secret anymore!

Every month we bring an incredible cast of Bristol's best performers to the Bristol Hippodrome Piano Bar to perform an intimate evening of show tunes from Broadway, the West End and beyond. Normally on the last Friday of each month, every show so far has sold out and had a waiting list, so book well in advance. Singers are accompanied on the grand piano and with a live cellist, giving a new edge to your favourite songs. All profits go to charity with the Secret Cabaret so far raising over £1200 for local charities.



22nd—25th November - Tickenham Drama Group presents *The Flint Street Nativity*, Tickenham Village Hall, Box Office: [www.ticketsource.co.uk/tickenhamdramagroup](http://www.ticketsource.co.uk/tickenhamdramagroup) Mizzis Horrocks' class of seven year olds is about to perform their nativity play at Flint Street Junior School for the proud mums and dads - and the occasional social worker. Squabbles arise when Gabriel wants to play Mary, the Star grumbles he's not a proper star like they have at NASA, Herod won't stop waving to his mum and dad and the subversive Innkeeper is determined to liven up the traditional script. And then the stick insect escapes...The children are played by adults, who later play their parents. This warm, witty, funny play is an ideal alternative to the usual Christmas fare with original lyrics set to the tunes of the usual Christmas carols.

23rd—25th November—BAOS Youth presents *When Children Rule!* The Newman Hall, Box Office [www.ticketsource.co.uk/event/FDIFIF](http://www.ticketsource.co.uk/event/FDIFIF) BAOS Youth have taken control. Designing their own show... their way! "When Children Rule!" is a collection of songs and dances, performed in a cabaret style setting, featuring songs from *Whistle Down the Wind*, *School of Rock*, *Little Shop of Horrors*, *Hamilton*, *Waitress*, *Ghost the Musical*, *Shrek*, *Annie* and *Hairspray*. Set around tables, with a Ploughmans Supper in the interval, this show is one not to be missed! Tickets are £15 including supper and we have a family discount.



25th November – The Secret Cabaret presents *A Night on Broadway* Hype Agency and Secret Cabaret Brunel's Old station, Passenger Shed, Bristol Box Office: [www.hypeagency.co.uk](http://www.hypeagency.co.uk) A Night on Broadway will feature a full professional orchestra, our most incredible performers from throughout the year, and some exciting guest performers. The venue is themed, so expect a snowy central park, Hard Rock Cafe, cocktail bar, and of course the most splendid evening of Musical Theatre. Tickets can include a dinner or be entertainment only.



29th November—2nd December - Failand Drama Circle presents *Little Shop of Horrors*, Failand Village Hall, Box Office: 01275 393302.



1st—15th December—Courtney Jackson will be Sally Sausage in *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, NE6 Suite, Newcastle, Box Office 07766 335055.

15th December—7th January - Harry Haden-Brown will be Musical Director for *Cinderella*, Imagine Theatre, Porthcawl, Box Office: 01656 815995.



## THE ROSE BOWL – A HISTORY BY GERRY PARKER

In the 1960's, in spite of the growing influence of Television, newspapers were still the major source of news and advertising; with local newspapers collectively wielding as big an influence as the London based national press. At the start of the 1960's, outside of cities with far bigger populations like Birmingham, Manchester, and Glasgow, Bristol boasted two of the most successful newspapers: the *Bristol Evening Post* and *Bristol Evening World* with a combined daily circulation of around 250,000 copies. By 1962, the once all powerful *World* found itself struggling to hold its own, and finally was forced to join forces with its one time arch enemy the 'Post'.

At the head of the *Post*, in those days, was Walter Hawkins, whose father had been one of the papers' founders in 1932; every inch a newspaper man, Walter was always looking to the future, trying out new ideas in order to keep the *Post* at the forefront of local media. His interest in local theatre was heightened when he married Joan, who had been involved principally via costume and production design, in many top class local presentations. Realising the strength and quality of local theatre in the area, and wanting to support and encourage it, in 1966 he hit on the idea of sponsoring awards for these company to compete for. The obvious man to go to in order to formulate these ideas was the papers' long standing much respected theatre critic, John Coe - another strong supporter of local drama and music.

When the announcement of the Awards was first printed, the two men anticipated an entry of somewhere between a dozen and twenty productions, all of which John Coe would see and judge. Almost immediately that number was exceeded and clubs from outside the immediate Bristol area applied to be allowed to enter. It was, therefore,

agreed that the circulation area of the *Post*, and its sister publication *The Western Daily Press* would form the boundary for entries, and roughly that still applies to today's competition. From almost day one, John Coe realised that, with his own heavy work schedule, he could not cope with so many entries; so, the, then, main representative for NODA in the South West, John Cockram, was persuaded to join him. By the end of the first season, with entries growing fast, it became obvious that even two men could not cope with such a work load; so, two of the best known and respected Drama teachers in Bristol, Eileen Hartly Hodder and Barbara Macrae, joined the team. Both these ladies, alas no longer with us, are remembered with Awards named after them. Since then, there have been many changes in adjudicators - today we have an eight strong team coping with the regularly over a hundred entries competing for the nineteen Awards on offer.

The biggest crisis in the history of the Awards came towards the end of the 1980's when, with a change of ownership, the, then, *Evening Post* decided to withdraw its full time sponsorship. The insurance arm of Westminster Bank were persuaded to take on the financial burden but, after two years, they announced that the next season would be their last, leaving the Awards with a very bleak looking future. At this stage came Walter Hawkins' widow, Joan, galloping to the rescue like St. George on a white stallion. Determined not to see her husband's legacy disappear, which had been the envy of many other provincial newspapers throughout the country, she shored up the finances, whilst establishing a trust fund, with members of the late John Coe's family lending support. In 1991, they founded the present set

up who have, despite the occasional hiccups, steered the Awards into safer waters.

There is still one place where the Rose Bowl Awards runs into very choppy waters: the night when the adjudicators meet to argue the case for the production or player they have nominated for an award. No quarter is given and, although no result can be guaranteed to please every entrant, like democracy it is the best way we, or anyone else, have come up with so far. With so many talented players, and top quality productions on view, it takes something special nowadays to get even a nomination.

The presentation evening, when each Award winner receives a beautiful Bristol Blue Rose Bowl, has now become a prestigious event on the local theatre scene. Thanks Richard Jones, and his terrific sub-committee - like the quality of the productions offered for adjudication each season; the evening has risen steadily throughout the years. Like all voluntary non-subsidised events, the Rose Bowl Awards struggles to keep its head above water financially, but this year, thanks to the enormous work of Steve Blackmore, for the first time, all nineteen Awards have an individual sponsor.

Over the years BLOC and some of its members have been lucky enough to pick up a few awards including: - Best Musical for *Evita* in 2002, Technical Achievement for *Beauty & The Beast* in 2011 and most recently, Sid Vardakis Best Actor in a Musical for *Fiddler On The Roof* in 2017.

PHOTOS FROM REHEARSALS  
- CAPTION COMPETITION

For those readers who weren't in My Fair Lady and therefore didn't see these, here are the captions!



"Must I swallow!"  
"Always shower between shows!"  
"Ooh he's such a bloomin' lovely mouthful."



"He's watching me again, isn't he?"  
"Do I move the desk now?"  
"When do I tell them I've superglued my hand?"  
"Oh my God! Did I forget to flush?"



"Next one to miss a cue gets shot!"  
"It used to be this big!"  
"I love Adele's warm-ups!"



"1You really should pluck those nose hairs!"



"We'll see who'll be chairperson soon!"  
"You shall not pass!!"  
"Aaahhhh! Me want foood!"  
"And the ego is THIS big!"

Editorial Team—Jack Blackmore, Ewan Poole-Gleed, Anna Sutton, Alex Turasiewicz.