

SCENE

The Little Theatre

The Newsletter of the Leicester Drama Society

Under New Management!

Graham Muir joined The Little as our new Theatre Manager in July. We asked him to introduce himself to us...

Hello and a massive thank you for the wonderful welcome. Some of you may know me, some may not. So, a quick introduction.

I came to Leicester from Rochdale 15 years ago to study Drama at De Montfort University. After graduating I joined the Phoenix Cinema just as the new venue in the Cultural Quarter was opening in 2009. I joined as a Front of House Assistant and left 11 years later as Customer Services Manager having well and truly earned my venue management wings.

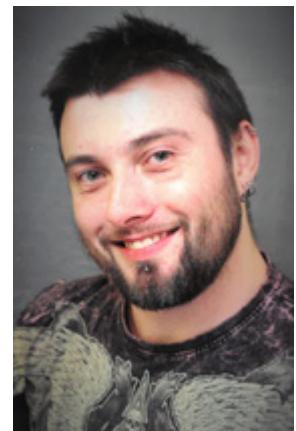
I joined The Little Theatre as a member in 2014. I was lucky enough to be cast in the short, explosive *Out of The Flying Pan* directed by the multitalented Rick Lamoure and didn't look back. Every show I have been involved with at The Little has been an amazing experience. That is down to the wonderful team of members who all strive to deliver or

support a show to such a high standard every single time. And they call us amateurs! I now relish the opportunity to support the theatre professionally. I look forward to continue to facilitate such hard working and passionate members.

Back when I joined Phoenix, it was during a strange period of metamorphosis. As some of you may know, it had gone from its old Upper Brown Street venue, that it had inhabited for decades, to a shiny new state of the art building. It emerged on a new frontier where change was necessary. There were undoubtedly wobbles along the way. Over time though, new ways of doing things were embraced both by staff and customers but it's core identity remained the same. In the end, Phoenix arose as a stronger beast and it feels good to have had a hand in that.

We ourselves now emerge, as do countless venues on something of a new frontier. And the world feels little bit different. Due to the hard

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New Theatre Manager Graham Muir (he doesn't look like this now, he has much longer hair...!)

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(elected unless otherwise stated)**

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Contributions to Scene are invited. Our deadline is a week before the end of each month – but if you have a story let us know before then to guarantee that we reserve space for you.

Contact us via email using the email above.

All photos in each edition of Scene are by the fabulous Sally Evans, unless otherwise stated. If members use any images of Little Theatre productions in any social media post please give a photo credit to the person who took the photo. In most cases, for production photos, this will be Sally Evans.

Emma Bamford

Editorial

Welcome to August!

2021 has had quite the summer of sport, what with Euro 2020, Wimbledon, the Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games and, of course, our very own *Chariots of Fire!*

But looking ahead to the second half of this year and although the drama of COVID might (hopefully) be starting to wind down, the drama on offer at the Little just keeps getting better!

Chariots ... crossed its finish line in July, but our next offerings are just as brilliant but (probably) feature fewer men in shorts. *Blue Stockings* returns in September for a full week, after its sadly aborted run back in 2020; the IDOLS are back with a multitude of songs (and some solid social distancing advice) with *Six Feet Away* in October, and *My Mother Said I Never Should*



and *Private Lives* both hit the boards in the second half of that month. A full round up of our Main House Shows can be found on the back cover and on our website, and details of some exciting specials are also available in our new Season Brochure, which you can also view online (printed copies are available in the theatre from 1st September).

This is my first letter as official editor of Scene, and I am incredibly proud to share this issue with you all. I do have to give a massive round of applause to Jeremy Thompson who stepped in as designer of the magazine, as my own design skills are sadly lacking.

See you next month!

Correction In July's edition, there was an omission in the article, 'Delving into the Archives'; the archiving team comprises of John Brooks, Alan Freckingham, Mavis Rope and Jim O'Donoghue. John's name was missed off the original article.

Chariots of Fire – A Review

The stage version of *Chariots of Fire* by Mike Bartlett is the latest production at Leicester's Little Theatre, an apt choice for the society to herald this Olympic summer – the name itself brings to mind images of running along with the iconic stirring Vangelis Papathanassiou's theme tune of the 80's.

The plot weaves around the lives and chequered progress of two former British track aces, Harold Abrahams and Eric Liddell, who both won major events at the 1924 Paris Olympics detailing their will and motives to win. The story is told in a succession of staccato scenes through several locations from Cambridge, Scotland and eventually to Paris for the Olympic finale. With the setting at The Little provided by Kevin Jenkins' effective minimalistic block set, which includes running track lines and the inclusion of background projections such as the passenger liner from Dover, opera singers, distance and length times, all helping to enforce the expectation from the audience. The athletes warming up on stage and throughout the auditorium as the audience enters entices a palpable anticipation of what is to come... a clever ploy from director Mary Jones!

The ruthlessly determined Harold Abrahams, son of a Lithuanian Jew, hungry in his ambition to win, was played with superb conviction by Tim Stokes, equally matched by Sam White as Eric Liddell, son of a China-based missionary, in a beautifully understated performance powered by his faith. Both are totally believable in their selfless support of each other. Able support was given by a strong support cast, many of whom took on multiple roles. However, occasionally the accents vanished into cyberspace, and there were times when the audibility dropped – especially for those at the back – but it picked up apace in the second act.

Apart from the two main trophies I will award my own gold, silver and bronze medals (in no particular order!) to: Pip Nixon, as the dignified Prince of Wales; Jonathan Barnes, as the affable and true friend of Eric; and Joe Middleton, for sustaining his upper crust character throughout. Going further than the finishing tape, *Chariots of Fire* should make us think of issues that are relevant today, including friendship, religion and, most of all, moral courage.



An Interview With... Tim Stokes

Scene sat down with Tim after his recent “run” (get it?!) in *Chariots of Fire*. Here’s what he had to say to us ...

S: Starting off with a big question ... The characters in the play are real people. Did that change how you approached the role? Did you do any research on who they were and what they did?

TS: Playing a real person from history meant I had a lot of information about them. I personally looked up Abrahams and saw through my research how accurately the playwright portrayed Harold's determination and utter devotion to perfecting his already natural athletic ability. I leaned heavily into that side of his character.

S: What was it like rehearsing for this play, both on Zoom and then in person?

TS: Gosh, where do I begin?! This process has been long and arduous at times. Zoom presents many challenges, namely a slight delay in responses, so one had to anticipate their lines even more so to create any kind of



flow in the dialogue. On top of that, you're only able to see peoples' heads and shoulders, so there's no body language to read, and we were all purely acting from the chest up, which is rather exhausting. Then coming together in person almost flipped the situation; we could meet in groups of no more than 6 to start with (proving difficult with a cast of 30), so we could only rehearse very isolated

scenes. Then we had the problem of wearing masks, so we sacrificed facial expressions for body language and blocking. We had to provide an extensive list of precautions we were taking – e.g. putting the cast into bubbles and sit in allocated chairs etc. – to the Council for it to be deemed safe to put the show on so it has been a long slog to say the least! Mary [Jones, the director] has put in an insurmountable amount of hard work to make this show go ahead!

S: If you could have played a different character, who would you have chosen (male or female)?

TS: I think I'd probably have played Eric Liddel, mainly because I am of faith myself, and so to have played such an iconic Christian role would have been very special for me.

S: Do you have a favourite line from the play (one of your lines, or someone else's)?

TS: I could pick about 50! There are so many fab lines in this show, both funny and poignant. If I had to pick one, though, I would probably say Aubrey Montague's line of, "I think that's why I do it, the purest thing in the world for me; achievement, for its own sake." Delivered impeccably by the fantastic Simon Butler!

S: How was the training? Was it hard work?

TS: Oh. My. Word. The training was brilliant and horrific at the same time! We had the lovely Marisa and Tracey come in to teach us a warm-up routine, and then ran optional pre-rehearsal workout sessions which were gruelling hard work, but we felt the benefit of them during show week. Myself and Sam White (who played Eric Liddel) had been meeting up for a few weeks before we started rehearsals in person, to get in shape as soon as possible ... I'm not sure if we managed it, but at least we showed commitment!

S: Were there any notable moments from rehearsal - funny times, sad bits, random bits ... anything!

TS: I genuinely couldn't pick a specific moment, due to there being constant laughs all the time; mainly, I think, because we're all just so happy to have each other back on stage and back in our lives again. I think the main thing I'll take away from this is the times we've had in the bar after rehearsals; the camaraderie and fun, once lost, no regained in being back at the Little with my family.

S: Finally, what's next for you at the Little?

TS: Next up is *Six Feet Away* with the IDOLS, then onto panto where I'll be having a bash at playing Buttons in *Cinderella*!

Welcome to The Little...! Tom Young

Newcomers regularly pop up at The Little, in all manner of categories – actors, techies, crew, bar staff, Front of House ... the list goes on. Our ‘Newcomer of the Month’ this time round is actor Tom Young, who joined us for *Chariots of Fire*.

S: Hi, Tom! So, how did you find out about the Little and what made you want to join?

TY: Having been a comedian and improviser for well over a decade, I'm not new to Leicester's theatres. However, prior to this production of *Chariots of Fire* there were only two that I'd neither performed, spoken, nor directed at – the Sue Townsend and the Little. I'd seen shows here over the years, usually because friends were in them, but had never really expected to perform on this stage myself, because straight acting wasn't an ambition of mine. However, the pandemic caused many shifts of focus, and with a girlfriend who's an active member of the Little's performing community, the desire to be in a show with her rose to the forefront. Plus, I've known the story of Eric Liddell for years, despite never having seen the film, so I was particularly interested in this show.

S: What's different about the Little in comparison to its 'competitors'?

TY: Opportunity and community. The city's biggest, professional theatres have always felt like very exclusive clubs – they've always given me the impression that the mere notion of working with an "outsider", or putting on a project for which they haven't acquired funding, is a frustration they could do without.



By contrast, the Little Theatre has welcomed me with open arms, very quickly inducting me into the community and making me feel as though I'd found another chapter of my 'tribe'. I'm certainly hoping that I've met lifelong friends in this production – mind you, as I write this, we're still mid-run – they might've forgotten my name by Sunday night!!

S: What was *Chariots* like as a newcomer?

TY: Atypical, to say the least. The pandemic meant that our first four months of rehearsals took place on Zoom. As an improviser, used to creating shows on the spot with no pre-planning, the concept of 4–6 months rehearsing any one thing was new to me, regardless of the medium. What was nice though was that Zoom is a great leveller. Everyone gets an equally-sized box on screen, no-one can pull too much focus nor feel excluded for too long. By the time we made it to the rehearsal room, I'd already spent months with the rest of the cast, which was much easier than entering the first rehearsal cold. Sure, I still had to find my role within the dynamic of the cast's stalwarts, but it certainly helped to at least know everyone's name.

S: Would you have done anything differently if you were a director with a newcomer in the cast?

TY: Honestly, under the circumstances, I don't think Mary could've done any more. To have even put this production on is extraordinary; it would've been complicated enough in normal circumstances, but to do so with COVID tying one, and occasionally both, hands behind her back, has made this a magnificent achievement. Having often trained new performers, I've seen the look of fear that can come from entering a new community where everyone else knows each other, so I know how important it is to make that person feel comfortable and valued within the group, and that's exactly what I received.

S: Finally, did anything stand out for you, or has anything surprised you?

TY: Yeah, my brain isn't a fan of learning French dialogue! (Editor – Tom had to speak a few lines of French during 'Chariots ...', which he did magnificently!) Also, having largely avoided scripted shows for most of my performing life – mainly because I just didn't think I'd be very good at it - I have been pleasantly surprised to find I'm actually not intimidated by it, and have really enjoyed the process. Don't get me wrong, I think the speed & variation of improv is still more of a natural fit, but I'm certainly not uncomfortable here, and hope to do more at the Little Theatre in the future, whether that be acting, directing or whatever else I'm permitted to do next!

Let's Get Quiz-ical!

Our own intrepid editor, Emma, is off to Peru in November this year (COVID-permitting!) and is doing a number of fundraising activities to help raise money for LOROS, the Leicester hospice.

You may have seen on Facebook that I recently held a quiz in aid of LOROS. My dad passed away on Wednesday 21st October 2020, after a long, terminal illness of Pulmonary Fibrosis. One of the things that was a huge help to dad was LOROS. He attended there mostly as an outpatient, with a few inpatient spells, and it made a real difference to him. Dad got the best care and attention from every single staff member there.

In November 2021, I'm scheduled to go to Peru, to walk the Inca Trail to raise money for LOROS. They've helped us so much as a family that it doesn't seem enough. The quiz at the end of May was to help raise some money to get to the magical total of £3474. Some of the quiz questions are below, so you can test out your brain power even if you couldn't make it to the event! And donations are still very much encouraged – you can go to [justgiving.com/bamf84](https://www.justgiving.com/bamf84) if you'd like to donate to this worthy cause.

Here are two selected questions from each round, plus two of the Bonus Questions that were asked ... Good luck!
PS. The round about 1956 was particularly special; my dad was born in 1956, and he would have turned 65 the week after the quiz.

General Knowledge

- True or False: according to Scottish law, it is illegal to be drunk while in charge of a cow.



- How many books are in the Bible?

1956

- What bill was passed by Parliament in 1956, in response to the Great Smog of 1952?

- Which TV studio launched in Manchester in 1956?

Arts & Entertainment

- Name two of the four games that Bill and Ted play against Death in *Bill and Ted's Bogus Journey*? Two points available!

- Who presented TV quiz *Blockbusters* between 1983 and 1995?

Sports & Leisure

- Name the three female characters in the game 'Cluedo'. Three points available!

- How many players are in a netball team?

Bonus Questions

- In metres, what was the length of the Titanic?

- In tons, how much water flows over Niagara Falls every second?

Total points available: 13

How did it go? Do you think you got the Bonus Questions right?! Answers are given below!

ANSWERS

- | | | | | | | | | | |
|---------|-------|------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------|----------------|---|--------------|------------|----------------|
| 1. True | 2. 66 | 3. Clean Air Act | 4. Granada Television | 5. Battleship, Clue, Electric | 6. Bob Holness | 7. Mrs White, Miss Scarlet, Mrs Peacock | 8. 7 players | 9. 269.06m | 10. 3,160 tons |
| | | | | | | | | | |

LDS 200 CLUB

1st prize - £250 Share Number - 106

2nd prize - £100 Share Number - 09

3rd prize - £50 Share Number - 126

Auditions

Private Lives

Show dates: November 8–13 2021

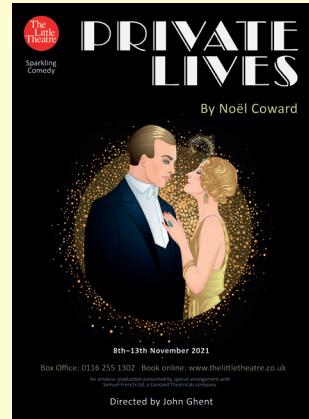
Directed by John Ghent

Auditions will be held in the Theatre Library for this sparkling comedy on:
Tuesday 3rd August.

- Elyot Chase: witty, irreverent, sophisticated.
- Sybil Chase: Elyot's second, rather innocent, younger wife.
- Amanda Prynne: spirited, independent, unconventional.
- Victor Prynne: Amanda's rather more conventional second husband.
- Louise: French-speaking maid.

Age range: 30/40

T: 07703 764800 E: j.ghent38@btinternet.com



My Mother Said I Never Should

Show dates: October 18–21 2021

Directed by Nadine Beasley

Auditions will be held for this wonderful play about four generations of women on:
Tuesday 10th and Thursday 12th of August at 7.30pm, 52 Down.

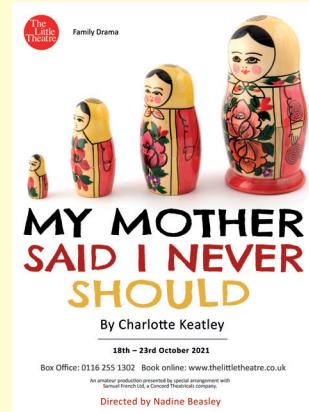
Characters as follows:

Doris Partington, b. Oldham 1900; engaged 1923, m. Jack Bradley in Oldham 1924.
[Age 5 in child scenes in 1905.]

Margaret Bradley, b. Cheadle Hulme 1931; m. Ken Metcalfe in London, 1952.
[Age 9 in child scenes in 1940]

Jackie Metcalfe, b. London 1952. [Age 9 in child scenes in 1961]

Rosie Metcalfe, b. Hulme, Manchester 1971. [Aged 8 in child scenes in 1979]



Ages are not important as the characters play themselves from childhood to, in Doris' case, old age. If you have any questions or want to talk about the roles, please text or ring Nadine on 07711 285155.

Under New Management!

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work of the trustees and members we have had a successful reopening and some cracking performances. We have made a great start at rebuilding post-lockdown though have some way to go. We will retain our identity and many things, no doubt will remain the same. But new ways of doing things will occur and we too must embrace them.

We are a smaller staff team. Far more reliant than before

on you, our members to help us with the running of our theatre and delivery of our shows. So, a massive and heartfelt thank you to all who have given their time and talents so far. There is still room for more – if you haven't gotten involved yet but would like to, just get in contact with me.

I'm looking forward to working with and learning more about the theatre from you all. If you ever have any questions, concerns or would just like to chat please just say hello!



AUTUMN 21- WINTER 22 SEASON

Blue Stockings



27 Sept-2 October

SIX FEET AWAY



4-9 October

MY MOTHER SAID I NEVER SHOULD



18-23 October

PRIVATE LIVES



8-13 November

made in Dagenham

THE MUSICAL



16-20 November

Cinderella



10 December-
2 January 2022

CONSTELLATIONS



17-22 January
2022

HANDBAGGED



31 January-
5 February 2022