

Really Hot, Like 100C

Another opening, another show, another heatwave, another wilting cast with associated audiences fanning themselves with programmes! And, of course, Denise as the director of *Really Old, Like Forty Five* put some of her cast in dressing gowns and stuck them in hospital beds under all the spotlights. But that's what we wicked directors do. In picking a very modern play, first performed in 2010, set slightly in the future about the problems of an ageing population, Denise was certainly not going with a safe mainstream play that put bums on seats but we're all agreed that it was an excellent choice. We know, from feedback, that some of you were a little uncomfortable with the subject matter but we do like to bung in something a bit different from time to time to make you think and to challenge the actors at the same time. Some of us couldn't quite visualise



what Denise had in mind for the set but we all agree that the hospital screens worked brilliantly and has made us think that maybe we should make some sort of mobile scenery for future plays. And she wanted the bar of the National Theatre. And an aquarium complete with turtle. Which, of course, our set building team came up with as always although profuse apologies to the person in the front row one night who Ella managed to hit on the head as she dashed back up onto the stage with the large inflatable (thankfully) turtle. Following Denise with his two night show, *Sound and Vision*, Robin took us back in time to the 60's and 70's where his cast ran amok with TV and radio programmes from the period. Some sketches were lifted straight from



the original scripts but *Are You Being Served*, *Listen with Mother* and *Rainbow* were reimagined by company members Clarissa and Ian whilst Denise wrote a sketch comparing TV in the old days to the wall to wall reality shows we get nowadays. In the Dick Emery sketch both Malcolm and Liam frocked up and our photo shows the lengths they went to to find their inner females!



An EDC Profile - Stephen Sadler

Stephen says occupy his evenings. He came saw the show and thought it was that despite across us and he's never looked funny so they must have been doing being born in back. Taking a small part in the one Swindon he night stand *TV Times* he played a had a pretty number of characters with the most normal cringeworthy one being a childhood; children's TV presenter in a *Play School* sketch. Stephen says that going to his slimy interpretation together primary school in Swindon itself followed by secondary school with his hideous, but accurate sixth form in Fairford near the costume, made him think that Cotswolds. And all very idyllic it Officers from Operation Yew Tree would be descending on The Shed. was. Before joining us Stephen was His favourite part, to date, has to be a near theatrical virgin as all he'd done before was read directly from that of George Cleveland in *A Busy Day* mainly because it was his first primary school play to be followed 'major' part although coming a at Christmas with a nativity play. very close second was that of the Stephen says he made a very good Second Officer in *Twelfth Night*. 6 year old Wise Man although his He may only have had less than teacher's memory of the play may half a dozen lines but the onstage be slightly different! Training to be audience very amused. Especially a solicitor is what brought him to with the loving embrace at the end. Exeter where he joined Ashfords Stephen says both his girlfriend and LLP and in the tail end of 2015 he and the girlfriend of the other actor started looking for something to often as possible.



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Back on Track

I can't really remember when the back pain started - it was a gradual thing. I remember going to concerts and wanting to sit down because my back hurt. I remember doing Race for Life for Cancer Research and my hips felt like they were seizing up. At 16 I was diagnosed with an autoimmune disease called Lupus so I just put all aches and pains down to that even though by my 20s I was in remission.

On January 1st 2016 I woke up in the usual agony, curled up on my side to try and relieve the pain. I decided then and there that my New Year's resolution was to do something about my back. I rang the first chiropractor I could find and got an appointment that day, even though it was New Year's Day! Over the next few months Richard Gubbay at Cathedral Chiropractic clinic became more and more suspicious that I had a physical problem. In about April he did an X-Ray and discovered I have spondylolisthesis. He said it is a common condition which lots of athletes suffer and thought it had probably happened during my ten years of diving from aged 8 - 18. He explained it's when the vertebra slips so instead of the spine being in alignment, one vertebra is out of alignment. For me that was the lumbar vertebra at the bottom of the spine which sits above the sacrum.

Forward wind to my referral to the R D and E hospital. It was explained to me that I was born with a weakness at birth. It's likely that diving put pressure on that weakness causing a fracture and allowing my vertebrae to slip. I spent several months doing physio and had steroid injections but these didn't work. As my symptoms got worse (standing for the duration of *Twelfth Night* where I played Viola was agony and in one rehearsal I ended up in tears from the pain) my doctor recommended surgery. I was told the waiting list was 6 months so I pushed aside my anxiety thinking I'll worry about it when December comes. When I got a phone call out of the blue in June telling me that my operation had been fast tracked. I was to learn it would be the next month. I was terrified! It also meant that I could no longer direct the September One Night Stand as recovery is 3 months.

Following MRIs, X-Rays, and ridiculously frightening consent forms, on July 5th I arrived at the hospital for my Lumbar Fusion and decompression surgery. The procedure took 5 hours. They removed a disc, untrapped all the nerves that had been causing me numbness and pins and needles in my legs and feet and used rods and screws to pull and secure the slipped vertebrae back into alignment with the rest of my spine. I was thrilled. My surgeon, Mr Cristini told me afterwards that my nerves

were extremely squashed and it was definitely the right decision to have surgery. Recovery is a blur but I was told later that I was extremely poorly. All I remember was the doctor asking if I could feel him touching my feet. I could but they were numb. I saw my family as they wheeled me into Tavy ward. I was so relieved it was all over and feeling quite good with the heavy duty drugs they were giving me!



By Jenny Nash

The nurses over the next 6 days were all absolutely wonderful. At first I couldn't walk so relied on them heavily. I had a pain pump which was great at first but when they took it away I was extremely poorly. For the first two days you have to remain lying down so that everything can start to fuse. On Saturday with all the drains and drip and medicines no longer attached to me I managed to get out of bed and sit in a chair. It hurt so badly but I did it! On Sunday I started walking more and even made it to the end of the ward. By Monday I walked up and down some stairs so was able to go home. The drive was horrendous but I slept so much better in my own bed. One nurse, Mimi, was my favourite. When I was poorly after they took my pump away I got sick in my hair. I couldn't get my back wet so was not allowed a shower but Mimi wheeled me into the toilet, covered me in towels and managed to wash that one side of head, all without getting my dressing wet! Plus she made me laugh so much - an impossible feat you'd think in that situation.

Moving and sitting is very painful so I'm still not very mobile but each day I'm getting stronger. I can't twist or lift anything heavy - not even a kettle. I have lots of equipment to help me around the house. My favourite is my grabber as I can't bend! It takes 3 months and lots of physio but I'm excited that I am hopefully going to be able to stand and walk without pain. My feet are still numb but this should pass in a few months. I can't wait to be able to stand in rehearsals and be able to be in a play without being in pain during rehearsals or the show. Plus my posture will be amazing now!



Quizlings

Why do we do it? Why do we put ourselves through the agony and ecstasy of the annual Alphington Community Quiz? For the last couple of years we've entered two teams but this year we upped the ante and arrived with three teams. Steve, Letitia, Doug, Fran, Ian, Eliot, Alex, Justin, Robin, Elizabeth, Jamie, Joe, Clarissa and Denise and her friend Shelley and Ella who'd bullied her friends Charlotte and Owen into making up the numbers took to the battlefield calling themselves the Luvvies, the Dahlings and the Understudies and battle commenced. Heads were

scratched, lively debates took place amongst the teams, a tasty ploughman's was consumed, jokes were played and, when the final scores were tallied, although we'd dropped down the leader board a bit from previous years we were still very pleased to see the Dahlings in 10th place, the luvvies in 5th and the Understudies in 4th. I suppose if we enter enough teams eventually an EDC team will win. Won't it?

Sad Farewell - Richard Ware

It was with great sadness that we had to say our farewells to Richard Ware in June. He had borne his long illness with great fortitude and our hearts go out to his family. He died much too early at the age of only 56.

Richard joined Exeter Drama Company in 2001 and played Aramis in *The Three Musketeers* at our then Stepcotheatre. At that time he worked as a manager for BT where he was a friend of Denise Gough. He was then in *The Mayerling Affair* where he was immediately noticeable. Richard had a natural acting ability and showed great versatility from playing comedy in *Outside Edge* to being a nasty husband in *The Hollow*. He also showed off his famous long legs and his amazing singing voice as Miles Gloriousus in *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*, alongside his good friend David Gough who became Denise's husband.

Richard made a magnificent effort as the Chinese Emperor in *The Imperial Nightingale* in 2003 but only got by because he had the lines written on his fan! Although he played a variety of roles he didn't take acting too seriously and decided in the end that he would not take parts of more than 120 lines. During his time with us Richard also did a stint on the committee as Treasurer. He was very likeable and easy going and some would say a ladies man but in the nicest possible way. He was always charming and so the ladies liked him for it, especially when he did his jaw dropping salsa at one of our many drama

weddings. When Richard knew that time was running out he sent text messages to his friends saying 'Thanks for all the laughs'. He was always good fun back stage and good company if you happened to sit next to him at the Christmas do.

Richard's last performance was as the Aged Parent in *Great Expectations*. Before that he played a suave news reader in *Radio Times*.

He was a fine actor and a lovely man with a great sense of humour. We shall miss him.

Pat and Roger Mathewson



Smith Scripts

A new(ish) online website for scripts is beginning to make its presence felt and we recently had a visit from Paul Smith, the owner/founder of Smith Scripts who gave a short presentation. Paul is based in Wellington, Somerset and was drawn to us because of our comprehensive website which, he said, showed that we weren't 'like other drama companies' who seem to go for the same old same old.

So impressed with us was he, that he's offering us free access to any of the plays, sketches and monologues on his site. There will still be royalties to pay but we won't have to buy the scripts in the first place. And there are no strings attached, the offer will still be there if it takes us 5 years to find a play we like. Have a look at his site, www.smithscripts.co.uk, and if something catches your eye that you think you'd like to see, feel free to mention it to one of our resident directors.



Out and About

If you missed one of our many One Night Stands over the years fear not, they may be coming to a village hall near you very soon! We've been out and about touting for business and offering culture starved villages the pick of our shows and we've had some very positive responses. Watch out for more news of our 'tour' but we'll definitely be in Thorverton at the end of October, in Upton Pyne at the end of November and back at Butterleigh some time in late January or early February of next year. At the time of going to print we know what show they want us to do at Upton Pyne but not, as yet, in Thorverton! Hopefully they won't keep us waiting too long as we'll need to start rehearsals quite soon.

Minor Change at the Top

It's that time of year when our committee stands down and are either re-elected or retire to the back benches and this year we've only had one change. Margaret Heeley who had been an excellent Vice Chair stepped aside and is, in fact, taking a sabbatical from the company which left a vacancy to be filled by Kaitlin Nixson. Everyone else came back so we're stuck, for another year, with Malcolm Little as Chair, Robin Thwaytes as Treasurer, Pam Hoad and Frances Guy as Hon Secretaries in a job share, Ian Guy as Publicity Officer and Lynda Anning as our resident witch in the wardrobe.



New Members

We welcome to The Shed Cathy Todd and Rosie Dryden who are our most recent newcomers.

We hope they enjoy their time at Exeter Drama Company, and we hope to see them on stage soon.