



# Playbox Theatre

## Members' Newsletter

October 2023



Cinderella costume fittings are underway!

## CHIMES AT MIDNIGHT - Corin Alford's Falstaff

*Director Stewart McGill chats to CORIN ALFORD, who faces the challenge of bringing Sir John Falstaff to the Playbox stage this autumn, in Chimes At Midnight.*

### How did you feel when you were cast as Falstaff?

I felt absolutely ecstatic to be given the opportunity to tackle such an iconic role, it truly is a dream come true. I must admit that I did feel a twinge of apprehension about the enormity of the task ahead but I just wanted to get into the studio and start rehearsing immediately.

### How much had seeing Antony Sher when you were very young influence you?

Seeing Antony Sher's Falstaff at the RSC when I was 9 years old really shaped my life. It started my obsession with theatre and Shakespeare. I was absolutely mesmerised by Sir Antony's performance and the fun he seemed to be having. After seeing his Falstaff (several times!), I joined Pucks and never looked back. Aside from just the actor, Antony Sher the man was also incredibly generous and I still read over the letters he wrote to me in reply to mine. He was my acting idol, every performance he gave was pure gold. This project means so much to me because it is the part that really started me on my Shakespeare journey and I want to make it as brilliant as possible. *Continued on Page 2*



Corin Alford (18)



In the rehearsal room this month

## WELCOME

Welcome to the October edition of the Playbox Newsletter,

The season is rattling past, and is surely one of our busiest ever! We've been delighted with the work of Young Production Company who brought Phillip Pullman's epic, *The Scarecrow & His Servant* to life with great joy and skill earlier this month.

Next up is *Chimes At Midnight*, Orson Welles' adaptation of Henry IV Part 1 and Part 2, and we are hearing great things from the rehearsal room.

The roof is coming on well, and we are so grateful to you all for your patience and support, while this epic project takes place.

As we head towards the midseason break, we are so proud of the Playbox members in Warwick, Kenilworth and Stratford upon Avon, who continue to create superb work every day, with their workshop directors.

I hope you'll find lots to interest you in this month's newsletter...and that you'll book to come and enjoy some of the performances that are opening in the coming weeks.

See you all very soon!

Emily Quash  
Artistic Director

## CHIMES AT MIDNIGHT: Corin Alford's Falstaff Continued

### **You are playing size rather than age, is that difficult?**

Yes, it is hard to find the balance and to create a genuine character. Making him as heavy as possible whilst still being able to pull off physical gags is a real challenge. It is the balance between the comedy and the tragedy, he has to be a large and humorous man but also feel the effects that time has had on him.

### **How have you found working in this particular ensemble?**

Every member of this cast is incredibly talented so developing a great show becomes much easier. From the jump, they were all excited to get working and have some fun creating an awesome show. It just gets better and better every week as their performances flourish and new details are added. I am always looking forward to the next rehearsal. It feels like we have created a tight knit group and a real team mentality. We are all willing each other to succeed.

### **Could you talk about the setting of *Chimes at Midnight*?**

We have set this play in the 1950s, in the post war era where ideas of Englishness and England's place in the world were changing. This was an England which had "lost an Empire and had yet to find a role". Falstaff is the paradigm of a particular kind of Englishness; as he died he "babbled of green fields". It was this vision of England that was vanishing in these years, and - to me - this setting gives the role an extra poignancy.

### **Have you seen the Orson Welles' film?**

I have seen the 1965 film *Chimes At Midnight* and I absolutely love it. Orson Welles' Falstaff has obviously been a reference point for me (along with Sir Antony's) and it is a film that has truly stood the test of time. The story looks at these histories through the eyes of Falstaff rather than the broader approach in the original plays, and the central performance (more an over the top Olivier than an understated Rylance) is wonderful to watch. I love the fact that every actor who tackles Falstaff is different – Sher, Welles, and also the great Simon Russell Beale all show this iconic character in an individual and different light.

### **Falstaff is described often as a lovable rogue. Is this how you see him?**

You cannot escape the fact that Falstaff is a deeply flawed character; he has no moral compass. The way he talks about those that love him – Mistress Quickly, Doll, even Hal - is profoundly unattractive. He has a complete disregard for humanity – his own soldiers he describes as "food for powder". However, I do feel love for him. Why? His is just so brazen and audacious. He tells outrageous lies, but when they are uncovered his total lack of shame is somehow endearing. *Continued on Page 3*

## CHIMES AT MIDNIGHT: Corin Alford's Falstaff Continued

He and Hal can match wits and insult each other but there is real love between them. Seeing the demise of this character when Hal ultimately rejects him is deeply painful because the façade vanishes. At the end you are left with a wreck of a man. Falstaff is certainly a rogue but the fun you have in his company means that while you deeply disapprove of him you also love him. Despite his flaws, his downfall is therefore truly tragic.

### **What was it like having expert Paul Edmondson come to talk to the cast?**

Having someone like Paul Edmondson come in gives a new perspective and is really helpful for accelerating that experimental process. With his great knowledge of the play as a whole, as well as the Shakespeare canon, questions can be answered which help us form a less tentative approach to creating the character. The academic angle that Paul gave made me really think about the context of the play and how the events preceding created the environment for the events depicted.

### **How do you prepare for this giant (in more senses than one) role?**

There are over 70 references to Falstaff's fatness in the plays (*Henry 4th Part 1* and *2*) and his size is vital to the character. His personality is also gigantic. Making him both energetic enough to be larger than life but heavy enough that you can see the weight of the years is a challenging tightrope to walk, and is a balance I am still trying to find. This script puts more emphasis on the mental aspects of the character than the original plays so building an internal map of the man is paramount; the emotional baggage that he carries is as important as the physical. Fear of age follows Falstaff like "his ill angel"; he masks it with humour but eventually it catches up to him, as it will with us all. In practical terms, there has been a lot of time spent waddling around the house in a fat suit and drinking copious amounts of ginger tea for my sore throat. But remembering not to put too much pressure on myself and to enjoy inhabiting the role has been the main thing.

### **Are you excited as the project gets near to opening?**

Absolutely. I cannot wait to show people what we have been working on and just go on stage and have fun. This project has such an important place in my heart and I think we have really made something special.

***Chimes at Midnight* opens this November and tickets are on sale now!**

**[www.ticketsource.co.uk/playboxtheatre/chimes-at-midnight/e-bdkymj](http://www.ticketsource.co.uk/playboxtheatre/chimes-at-midnight/e-bdkymj)**

Thursday 9th November (7pm)

Friday 10th November (7pm)

Saturday 11th November (3pm and 7pm)

## NEWS FROM THE WIZARDS ON THEIR FIRST SHOW

*With their first production due to open at the end of the month, we are delighted to hear how rehearsals are progressing, as resident gap year company, Millennial Wizard, approach their opening night.*



Corin Alford as The Cardinal, Ed Buckley as Ferdinand and Amelie Friess as Bosola



Miriam Clements as The Duchess and Elliot Barlow as Antonio



Ed Buckley as Ferdinand, Ed Twyman as Castruccio and Quillan Mitchell as Silvio/ Malatesta

We wizards are are putting in the final push as we prepare to open *The Duchess of Malfi* on Saturday 28th October. The show has found its own wonderful shape, and now we're scrambling to tick the last bits and bobs off our list so we can share all our hard work with you.

It's been such an exciting journey, wrestling with all the surprises, challenges, and fun of producing our own show, but the best is yet to come - performing for an audience!

Tickets have sold incredibly quickly and the show is now completely sold out! If you would like to be added to the waiting list so you can see the famous play re-imagined, witness fresh talent and maybe spot some future stars in the making, follow the link below.

[www.ticketsource.co.uk/playboxtheatre/e-jgzkry](http://www.ticketsource.co.uk/playboxtheatre/e-jgzkry)

Suitable for ages 14+

MILLENNIAL  WIZARD  
RESIDENT ENSEMBLE - PLAYBOX THEATRE

**JOHN WEBSTER'S NOTORIOUS  
TALE OF LOVE, WIT, ABUSE AND  
BETRAYAL REIMAGINED**

# PLAYBOX MERCHANDISE : order now, just in time for Christmas

We are really pleased to be offering an expanded range of Playbox merch this autumn, including *incredibly* comfy joggers – perfect for workshops and rehearsals!

The next order will be placed on 8th November, and we won't then order again until the spring. Follow this link [www.playboxtheatre.com/playbox-merchandise/](http://www.playboxtheatre.com/playbox-merchandise/) to see what we have on sale, and to place your order.



Beanie - £15



Tote - £10



Joggers - £34



Green Hoodie - £30



Beige Hoodie - £30



Pink T-Shirt - £15



Red T-Shirt - £15



Light Blue T-Shirt - £15



Musical Theatre Blue T-Shirt - £15



Musical Theatre Blue T-Shirt (back) - £15



Musical Theatre Blue Jumper - £28



Whether it's to hang-out or help-out, members, assistants and workshop directors alike love wearing our merchandise!



## OCTOBER HOLIDAY WORKSHOPS AT THE DREAM FACTORY

There are a few places left on the Playbox Holiday Workshops, that are taking place during half term week – these are open to both members, and non-members, of Playbox. We would love to see you there!

Use this link to book on now: [www.playboxtheatre.com/holiday-projects/](http://www.playboxtheatre.com/holiday-projects/)



**The Addams Family Musical**  
MONDAY 30TH OCTOBER 10am - 4pm

6 - 10 years old

£65 to include lunch



**W.O.L.F - A Day of Development**  
THURSDAY 2ND NOVEMBER 10am - 4pm

8+ years old

£65 to include lunch



**Winnie The Witch's Halloween Spooktacular**  
TUESDAY 31ST OCTOBER 10am - 1pm

3 - 5 years old

£40 to include lunch



**Werewolf - The Ultimate Halloween Party Game**  
THURSDAY 2ND NOVEMBER 5 - 8pm

11+ years old

£40 to include refreshments

## CONGRATULATIONS SCARECROW TEAM!

We are so proud of the cast, crew and creative team of *The Scarecrow & His Servant*, whose beautiful production came to a close earlier this month. You delighted audiences and impressed us all with your energy, talent and wit.



*Here we chat to ISAAC HOPE, who brought the character of The Scarecrow to life for us, in his biggest Playbox challenge to date.*

### **Tell us a bit about yourself! Who are you and how long have you been a part of Playbox?**

Hi, I am Isaac Hope! I'm in year 9 at North Leamington School and I have been a member of Playbox for 5 years, starting with Toby in Leamington on Wednesday evenings. I have a dog called Winnie and a cat called Begby. I also have a twin sister and a younger sister who is a member of Playbox too. My favourite book is 'The Hobbit' and my favourite film is the 'Muppets Christmas Carol'.

### **When did you first appear on stage with Playbox?**

My first official stage appearance was in Mariner in 2022 but I have been part of Stary Nights every year apart from 2021.

### **How did you feel when you discovered you'd been cast as The Scarecrow in the production?**

I found out on the last day of school term. My mum picked me up from school and showed me the cast list and I squealed. I was already excited because we were heading off on holiday that evening and school had just finished. I did a little dance when I got home and talked about it a lot on holiday 😊.

### **What was the most enjoyable thing about rehearsals?**

When it all started to come together and we were no longer looking at our scripts. I also loved hanging out with the rest of the cast and the AD's (Assistant Directors).

### **What was the biggest challenge you had to face when playing this part?**

Holding my arms in the air and smiling for such a long time - jaw and shoulder ache!

### **What was it like performing before the audience?**

I loved it. Performing in front of the audience helped me because they laughed at the right points and that helped me continue to build the character.

### **If you could play any part, in any play, what would it be? What's your dream role?**

Troy Bolton from 'High School Musical' or Jim Hawkins from 'Treasure Island'.

### **You're also a member of Blank-Shift Creative Writers, what do you love about this?**

I don't stop laughing and enjoying myself from the moment I get there. I love the possibility of being able to fully express my creativity and I also love the Mr. Men (if you know, you know)...

### **What advice would you give to a younger actor, who would love to perform on a Playbox stage one day?**

Just do it! What is stopping you? Keep auditioning.

## JACOB BUCKLEY : AGENCY MASTERCLASS

We are so grateful to Playbox alumnus, JACOB BUCKLEY, now a Casting Assistant at Rob Kelly Casting, who visited us recently for a masterclass.

Last weekend, Jacob joined Playbox members and their families for a casting agency masterclass, and Q&A about the industry, casting processes, and to share advice.

It is wonderful that so many past members are now fulfilling exciting roles within the arts, and it is even better when they come home to share their knowledge and experience with us.

*The agency books will be reopening in January, with a small number of places for Playbox actors who are keen to become a part of this wing of the company. Juliet will share details of how to apply for the agency later this autumn, but you can take a look by visiting the website right now! [www.playboxtheatre.com/agency/](http://www.playboxtheatre.com/agency/)*



## CINDERELLA : COSTUME FITTINGS WELL-UNDERWAY

Christmas is fast-approaching and we hope that you'll be joining us for a spectacular feast of theatre magic this December, when *Cinderella ~ The Ash Girl* has its world premiere at The Dream Factory. Written by Playbox alumna and playwright, HOLLY ROBINSON, and directed by Emily, we're all excited to see this new interpretation of a timeless classic.

Costume fittings have been taking place over the past few weeks, and with Jo Fleeman at the helm, alongside a fantastic team of fitters, makers and buyers, it's already looking very special.

***Cinderella ~ The Ash Girl opens this December and tickets are on sale now!***  
[www.ticketsource.co.uk/playboxtheatre/cinderella-the-ash-girl/e-lgdjlj](http://www.ticketsource.co.uk/playboxtheatre/cinderella-the-ash-girl/e-lgdjlj)





## ALUMNI NEWS - Ed Miller

*We are always proud of our alumni, and we follow their future paths with pride. This month, we're delighted to focus on a special past member who has used the skills and attitudes he acquired at Playbox in his professional career.*

This month, we're delighted to celebrate past Playbox actor, ED MILLER, who was a wonderful member of Kenilworth Playbox for many years. Ed played a hugely important role in the life of Playbox, and came on tour to Tokyo with us in 2006, working with 100s Japanese children, who learn English through theatre practice (with our partner company, Model Language Studio).



Ed Miller in *The Wall* at Playbox in 2007

Ed appeared on stage at The Dream Factory many times and was a brilliantly energetic and talented actor. He played Lord Asriel in *His Dark Materials* (2003); The Father in Pink Floyd's *The Wall* (2007) and Theseus in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (2008), along with a whole host of other roles.

Since leaving Playbox, Ed has channelled his ambitious and creative personality into the digital and virtual world, achieving some rather extraordinary things! In 2021, Playbox director Toby Quash was celebrant for Ed and Steph's wedding – Ed talked to Toby about how Playbox's unique approach had become an important part of his personal, and his professional, life. In 2022, Ed was guest speaker for Voice & The Young Actor members who were receiving their LAMDA awards – at this, Ed spoke to Playbox members about the importance of voice, the ability to communicate effectively, and how important creative thinking is, no matter what path you take in life.

We really value Ed's words, as Playbox is for everyone – not simply those who want to become a part of the arts world. Voice, ambition, collaboration, creativity, tolerance – all vital to a successful, positive, and fulfilling future, and all central to Playbox Theatre's approach.

"Wow, what a few years it has been! Since leaving Playbox, I went to university and started a company called Scape Technologies which, in January 2020, was lucky enough to have been acquired by Facebook (though we didn't realise just how lucky we were at the time!). I now lead one of the research teams in London, developing cutting-edge technology that eventually makes it into new products, like the company's latest VR headset, the 'Quest 3'. My daughter Sophie, now 15 months old, is running around the place and keeping my wife and I on our feet. We hope to pass on to Sophie our core values of 'Energy, Enthusiasm, and Passion', which has proven to us to be a great motto to live by!"



Ed on tour in Japan with Playbox in 2006



Toby Quash as celebrant at Ed's wedding in 2021

**Thank you so much for being a part of Playbox!  
We really look forward to bringing you more updates next month.**