



# Playbox Theatre

## Members' Newsletter

Winter 2024



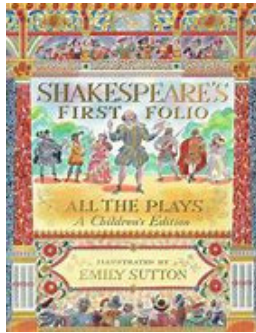
## END OF SEASON PRESENTATIONS

### PUCKS FIRST FOLIO PRESENTATION

We were delighted to welcome curator of Shakespeare's First Folio for children, Dr Anjna Chouhan, as well as Shakespeare scholar and friend to Playbox, Paul Edmonson on the evening of 22nd of November. Audiences were treated to an inspiring discussion surrounding the love of Shakespeare for young people.

Later on, Playbox's 'Pucks' gave a fantastic performance of extracts from the abridged version of Shakespeare plays that Dr Anjna Chouhan has formulated. This included pivotal moments from The Merchant of Venice, King Lear and Romeo and Juliet just to name a few.

Thank you so much to everyone involved and congratulations Pucks!



## MUSICAL THEATRE PRESENTATIONS

Audiences were treated to various fabulous presentations by our Musical Theatre members in December.

The Monday troupe performed a variety of spectacular duets, from Wicked to Annie! The members worked so hard this season, learning to sing in harmony. Meanwhile, our Saturday and Wednesday groups showcased numbers from Wonka/Charlie and the Chocolate Factory, whilst our Senior groups sprung into action with the wonderful West Side Story.

Congratulations to all Musical Theatre members who have displayed incredible teamwork and talent this past year, we cannot wait to see what you produce in the Mary Poppins and Good vs Evil season this Spring!

## WELCOME

Hello!

Welcome to the Newsletter Winter season 2024 edition!

It's been such a busy season full of wonderful performances and festivities!

Read more for a summary of our end of season presentations and our various fantastic Winter productions as well as our numerous events over December!

Also get a sneak peak on the upcoming Spring season's programme...

On top of all that, we hear from the brilliant Playbox member (and Director of the upcoming Blue Rider production of 'The Visit') Jess Kaijaks on her Gap Year experience so far. As well as hugely talented Alumnus George Fletcher on his time in the RSC's Twelfth Night!



*Guest Editor*

*Next edition due March 2025*

*If you have news to share, please email - [info@playboxtheatre.com](mailto:info@playboxtheatre.com)*

# THE SEASON'S PRODUCTIONS

## THE PROPOSAL VARIATIONS- THE BLUE RIDERS



Our gap year ensemble, The Blue Riders, performed Chekhov's comedy 'The Proposal' in early December.

The Riders had audiences in stitches as they portrayed the larger than life characters arguing over futile matters.

The company rotated their roles after each section of the piece, which were separated by animalistic movement sequences devised by the company alongside Director Stewart McGill, highlighting themes of greed and covetousness.

Overall The Riders have had an extremely successful few seasons. We cannot wait for the upcoming Rider projects, including 'The Visit', 'Holes' and 'The Comedy of Errors' (all directed by members of the Gap Year company).

## THE HOUSE OF BERNARDA ALBA

The Theatre was transformed into Lorca's 1930s Spain in November, with The House of Bernarda Alba leaving an extremely tense atmosphere among audiences.

The household became a symbol of oppression, ruled over by the titular tyrannical matriarch, portrayed by member Elysia Sully.

Audiences were immersed by the sensory elements of the production, including the performances onstage but also the smell of lillies and lighting states that replicated perfectly the trapped feeling of Lorca's play.

This production ran from the 14th-16th November, Directed by Mary King.



## ALICE THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS



Alice Through the Looking Glass was our magical Christmas production this year. Written by Toby Quash and the Blank-Shift brigade and Directed by Emily Quash, families were transported into a world of imagination and wonder throughout the December run.

The importance of ensemble was emphasised particularly in this production, as throughout the process, the tight-knit cast worked together to devise sequences whilst uplifting and encouraging each other.

This was entirely reflected in the run of this show, making it a perfect final Christmas huzzah for many of the Gap Year company.

This very special production reminds us all to 'never stop believing in possibles' in 2025!



# CHRISTMAS EVENTS

## FATHER CHRISTMAS VISIT

The Dream Factory had a very special visit from Father Christmas this December!

It was so lovely to see many families come to greet him and collect some treats for his reindeer!

Huge gratitude to any volunteers helping facilitate our jolly guest and run some festive games!

## ANNUAL LIGHT SWITCH ON

December 1st officially marked the beginning of our Winter festivities!

The Friends of Playbox did a fantastic job providing delicious food and wintry goods.

On top of that, the company of 'Alice Through the Looking Glass' presented a magical extract from the show, full of dancing and excitement.

This all led up to the big moment - The Dream Factory illuminated with beautiful lights as 'Alice' entered 'Looking Glass' world!

## CHRISTMAS EVE

Our favourite day of the year came around once again at The Dream Factory!

It is always so lovely to see familiar faces in front of the Christmas tree, and this year was no different.

Hearing our youngest pre-school members to our eldest Alumni come together in festive spirits to sing carols is such a special experience.

As 'Alice Through the Looking Glass' so brilliantly put it "it is a very lucky thing to be here with you"!

Here's to another year of kindness, bravery and brilliance for all Playbox folk!



# COMING UP...

<https://www.playboxtheatre.com/whats-on/>

## THE VISIT

**10th/11th March**

The world's richest woman returns to her poverty-stricken hometown with an unthinkable proposition. Both chilling and darkly funny, The Visit asks: 'how far would you go for money?'



## HOLES

**3rd-4th March**

4 survivors find themselves adrift and forgotten in an unfamiliar world, living off mini-sprites and aeroplane food. They grow increasingly out of their minds.



## PLAYHOUSE CREATURES

**20th-29th March**

Set in the vibrant Restoration period, this magnificent play delves into the struggles and triumphs of these trailblazing actresses. A powerful and poignant tribute to the women who changed theatre forever!



## THE COUNTRY WIFE

**20th-29th March**

Outrageously funny and once banned for its audacity, this classic play is reimagined in a fresh, fizzing staging. Expect lavish costumes, towering wigs, and razor-sharp wit in a riotous tale of love, lust, and intrigue!





## MEMBER NEWS - *Jess Kaijaks, Gap year*



Below, we hear from the multifaceted Jess Kaijaks on her Gap year adventures so far!

“Hi! I’m Jess Kaijaks and I’m one of the members of the Gap Year company this year. My Gap year has already been jam packed. I absolutely loved assisting *The Addams Family*, where I ran the music and tracks backstage as well as being assistant choreographer for the production. It was so interesting to go behind the scenes and learn how difficult it is to run tech, something you sometimes forget onstage. I also performed in *The Proposal Variations*, and had a role in creating the absurdist movement sequences inspired by the themes within the play. I have most recently performed in *Alice Through The Looking Glass*. I loved that production so much and revelled in the Christmas magic. Looking forward to next season, I am super excited to be directing my very own production of *The Visit* by Freidrich Dürrenmatt. Although quite a daunting project, I am so grateful for Playbox’s support and the chance to work with some incredibly talented actors, who can bring this underrated play to life. The Brechtian style tragi-comedy will be showing on March 10th and 11th so please come and see it! There are so many more projects coming up next year that I can’t wait for, like Tom Basden’s ‘*Holes*’ and ‘*The Comedy of Errors*’, so Playbox is certainly keeping us busy, however when I am not here I also work at Kenilworth Castle (which is super fun as I love history!). After the Playbox Japan tour in the Summer, I plan to go up to Edinburgh for University to study German and History. However I will certainly be returning, like so many Alumni, on Christmas Eve to watch the show and sing some Christmas Carols!”



Jess in *The Proposal Variations*



Jess in *Alice Through the Looking Glass*

Thank you Jess, we cannot wait to see what you do later this season!

## ALUMNI NEWS

### -George Fletcher in RSC's Twelfth Night



Over the winter period, hugely talented Alumnus George Fletcher performed in the RSC's Twelfth Night, below we find out the backstage experience of being a part of the production.

*What was your favourite scene of Twelfth Night?*

"I loved being in scene 18, the final scene. It's one of those big, messy Shakespeare denouement scenes where 15 people stand onstage and the plot cracks into place and everything is cleaned away. In so many productions it can feel so programmatic and inevitable, the many resolutions and weddings and revelations. But in our production I got to stand onstage every night and watch the tender reuniting of the two siblings played with such reality and gentleness. I got to watch Sam as Malvolio curse the upper circle as he gripped the torn remnants of his letter. I got to watch Daniel Millar as Fabian play every night with his speech to Malvolio and make Fabian my favourite character in the play. I enjoyed the waves of laughter as Freema as Olivia realised she was married to the twin of someone she fancied. I got to stand back and watch Feste descend from the heavens wearing yellow garters. I got to stand in this big, mad scene with my colleagues and friends and it was never anything but an absolute riot."

*When did rehearsals start for the production and what was the rehearsal process like?*

"The rehearsal process started in London at the end of October and we rehearsed for five weeks there, we then moved to Stratford for a final week of rehearsals and then flew into our technical rehearsals. The rehearsals were such a joy, because I was understudying I wasn't called everyday but invariably I sat on the side watching the play being built. The director Prasanna Puwanarajah set such a lovely tone in rehearsal, with lots of laughs and collaboration."

*How was your experience understudying for Sir Toby?*

"It was my first experience of understudying and I loved it. The actor I understudied, Joplin Sibtain, was so generous with his time and process, sharing music playlists he'd made, back stories he had worked out and conversations he had with the director. The problem with understudying is there is simply not enough time so it was my responsibility to do a lot of the work away from rehearsals and make sure I knew my lines inside out! A discovery I made early on was that it wasn't my job to do an impression of the other actor but find my own shape and history that could cleanly be placed into the world of the show. We did an understudy run just before Christmas and so many of my Playbox friends came to see it, was simply one of the best days of my career."

*What was it like being back in the local area performing at the RSC?*

"It was such a joy being in Stratford, I spent so much of my early life looking up at the theatre and seeing lots of shows there. For a short time I worked as a chaperone there, before I went off to drama school, and now my mum works on the stage door! It felt like coming home."

It was also so lovely to pop into Emily's Playbox session just before Christmas and remind myself that what I do for a living and all the many happiness's in my life started in a small room in Stratford with her, discovering stories and art and play. The best days of work are when I feel like I am back in that room. I was so sad not to make the Christmas Eve show of Alice Through the Looking Glass but I heard it was absolutely beautiful!"

Thank you so much for taking the time to speak to us George!

**Thank you for reading. See you next time!**



George Fletcher in Twelfth Night

