

issue six august - september 2007

WAITING IN THE WINGS



If we were working to plan (which clearly we aren't!) Issue Six would have been out in June. But it got here eventually, and that's all that matters right?

This issue contains interviews with two wonderful actresses; Lara Pulver and Cassidy Janson as well as the usual reviews and profiles – enjoy!

-Liz & Katie xx

INTERVIEW – Lara Pulver



Date of Birth?
1/9/1980

How did you first get into acting?

I had bags of energy as a kid, and my mum always used to encourage me to take part in after school activities such as netball and hockey club. When I was 12 my mum saw an advert in our local library for an amateur production of 'Annie' that was happening over the summer holiday. I went to the audition and unexpectedly landed the title role. I then worked extensively with the National Youth Music Theatre until I went to drama school.

What is your favourite part you have played?

Cathy in 'The Last Five Years' was a real highlight in my career.

What is the one part that you would love to play?

Gosh, there are too many!

What influences you as an actor?

I think everyday life heavily influences me.

What is your most memorable audition?

I was up for a sportswear advert and had to wear a bikini to the casting. I walked in the room in my bikini and had to dance around the room to Michael Jackson's 'Billie Jean'! The things we do for our art! I love how random commercial castings can be!

And your worst audition?

I auditioned 'Mamma Mia' when I first left college. I went to the library to get a copy of the song 'Downtown' and rehearsed at home with a CD. I went to the audition and the pianist played the introduction and I started singing only to realise the sheet music was in a different key to what I'd been rehearsing to. When I got to the chorus I burst into laughter. I was so embarrassed coz I was soooooo off key. Lesson learnt - always check the key signature of your music before you go to an audition. Never assume it's in the same key as the recording!!

What is the coolest thing you ever got to do because you are an actor?

I was asked to do a one night concert in Dubai. I only had to do one number and the company paid for me to have an entire week's holiday in a five star hotel!

Favourite actor you have ever worked with?

I am currently working with Anna Francolini who is an inspirational actress. Oh, and also my partner Joshua Dallas!

Do you have an all time favourite actor?

There's so many! I really can't pick just one!

Is there anywhere you would draw the line for a role, or would you pretty much do anything?

As long as it was true to the piece, I can't imagine having a problem with anything.

What is your favourite play?

I recently saw 'Frost/Nixon' at the Donmar, which I thought was a great piece of new writing.

And favourite TV show?

I'd love to say something more intellectual, but I do love 'Friends'!

And film?

I saw 'Zodiac' last night and that was pretty good!

You're soon to be in 'Into the Woods', are you a big Sondheim fan?

I'll let you know once I make it through rehearsals!!! Seriously, he is a genius!

There's quite a few big names in the show, such as Clive Rowe, do you find that intimidating or exhilarating?

It's a pleasure to work with actors with a great level of experience. You can learn so much from them.

You've performed on some huge stages such as the Royal Albert Hall and also some very intimate spaces such as the Menier Chocolate Factory, which do you prefer?

Both! As they require such different approaches and skills. Actually it's just because I'm greedy!

'The Last Five Years' was a cast of just two; did you feel any excess pressure because of that?

I didn't feel pressure because of the size of the cast, it's kind of a gift to be that intimate and exposed!

Were you familiar with 'The Last Five Years' before you got the part?

I'm embarrassed to say, I did not have a clue. But everyone around me seemed to know it inside out!

What's your favourite song in the show? Either to perform or listen to?

They were all amazing to sing for different reasons. 'Goodbye Until Tomorrow' was one of my favorites because it came right at the end and I was normally slightly high from the rest of the show. It was an amazing feeling to belt out that song. It used to give me such a buzz! I used to love listening to 'Shiksa Goddess' in the wings every night because Damian [Humbley – her co-star in the show] sang it so well and Tom Murray our MD, had this awesome piano section which I loved!

The show has a huge following in America, what do you think it is that makes it such a well-loved show?

Everyone can relate to one character in the show, because everyone's been there at some point. Jason [Robert Brown, composer] is very gifted at writing really accessible music.

Is straight acting something you'd like to do or do you prefer musical theatre?

Right now I don't have a huge desire to do Shakespeare or Ibsen, however I never say never! I love musicals and as an actress, I am more than happy to burst into song every now and then!

What's your favourite musical?

I am so rubbish at these questions because I can never pick just one, sorry! I think 'Miss Saigon' has to be one of my favorites, though.

You've been in quite a few popular touring musicals, which was the most memorable?

'The Boyfriend' because that's where I first met my partner!

Who's your favourite composer?

I feel a real connection to Jason Robert Brown's music on many levels, but I also love Bernstein, Sondheim, Styles and Drewe, Gershwin, I could go on and on!

What was your favourite production when with the NYMT?

'Pendragon'. I was an amazing experience with a very special bunch of people.

Finally, anything else the WitW readers ought to know?

They are all welcome to contact me at www.larapulver.com

-Lara will be starring the Parade at the Donmar Warehouse from 14 September

REVIEW - Pretend You Have Big Buildings

Royal Exchange, Manchester

July 2007



Big Buildings, written by Ben Musgrave, won first prize in the Bruntwood Playwriting Competition, a national search for new young writing talent that the theatre launched almost two years ago. And you can see why it won. Set in 1995 it tells the story of Ruhksana (Shobna Gulati) and her teenage son Danny (Sacha Dhawan), moving back to London, sorry, Romford, from India after the death of her husband. Already in Romford is Rob (Steve North), facing redundancy and marital problems wife Karen (Tanya Franks), and then there's Leon (Jonathan Bailey), the son who dresses up in his mum's dresses.

The performances from the whole cast are magnificent, particularly from the younger cast members Bailey and Dhawan. The latter deserves a medal for bravery after suffering not one, but two shoulder injuries during the first few days of the run. One of which happened on

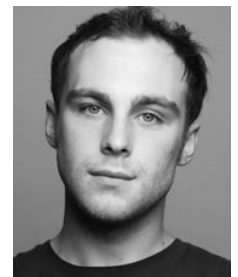
our first viewing and subsequently lead to the cancellation of the second half and us returning a week later to see the play's conclusion.

The staging is superb. The only vaguely negative point to make is that the second half seems a bit too busy; it tries to pull in several different directions and I can't help feeling that if it was a bit more sharply focused it would feel more polished. But there's no doubt that Musgrave is a very talented writer.

-Liz

SPOTLIGHT - Adam Paul Harvey

Adam was born in July 1984. He joined Jackie Palmer Agency when he was fourteen. In 2001 he got the role of Tom in ITV's soap 'Night and Day'. In 2002 he starred in Andy Hamilton's drama 'Bedtime' as the slightly disturbed teenaged Ralph with Alun Armstrong as his Dad and Sienna Miller as his girlfriend, Stacey. He then appeared in 'Casualty' and 'Strange' before landing the role of Russell in the ITV adaptation of Jaqueline Wilson's 'Girls in Love' series. He then became a regular on 'Where the Heart Is' playing Nathan Boothe for four series before the show ended. Most recently Adam starred in a BBC documentary drama called 'Dealing with Disasters' documenting the real life London nail bomber David Copeland.



- You can contact Adam c/o his agent at: AIM agents, 45-53 Sinclair Road, London, W14 0NS

REVIEWS – Philistines & Landscape With Weapon

National Theatre, London

May 2007

If you ask someone if they liked a play and the first thing they mention is the set you know you're not on a winner.

Set in Russia, Maxim Gorky's play is about a family falling apart due to repression and boredom. The family unit acting as a microcosm of Russia at the time. Or it would if the characters had more definition.

Sufficed to say I understood what the play wanted to do and wanted to say I just don't think it did it.

Tanya (played by a somewhat flat and sometimes inaudible Ruth Wilson) declared love didn't exist. So her lusting for her foster brother (who I took to be her brother for a while) was contradictory but not obvious enough to be a character flaw.

It may be due to my lack of historical knowledge that I didn't enjoy the play and that is entirely due to my own ignorance. However, I believe you should be able to enjoy a play without being an expert of the subject (see 'Landscape with Weapon')

At times the play boarded on farce, others it was an intense family drama but always diluted by the vastness of the set which although wonderfully created put enough space between characters to undermine the suffocation they felt.

Phil Davis who I admire highly pitched the father character too high too soon. If you start an angry rant by shouting how can you take it?

The only joy of the play was Rory Kinnear, a favourite of mine and being hailed by all as a rising star. Even in scenes where he merely sat observing you find yourself drawn to him. His performance seemed perfectly pitched. The rest of the cast were struggling for any sort of backbone for their characters who in the whole were mainly superfluous anyway.

Critics seem to disagree with me, which makes me wonder whether I saw the same play as them. I did see it in previews but even by press night it can't have had a complete change. But even as I sat there in the Lyttleton I realised that I was alone, the rest of the audience loved it. So maybe I should be questioning my opinions of good theatre but I know this wasn't it.

And on to a play which, to my shame, I called 'Landscape with a Weapon' for a long time before I read the NT website properly.

I knew nothing about this play except that I was familiar with all four members of the cast. Tom Hollander has appeared in some of my favourite dramas. Julian Rhind-Tutt perches on desks in every job he does and is surely in the running as the next 'Doctor Who'. Pippa Haywood seems to have been in most 90's sitcoms and Jason Watkins was the best thing about brit film 'Confetti'

The play is about two brothers (unlikely but not impossible) Ned (Hollander) and Dan (Rhind-Tutt). Dan finds out that Ned's job isn't all it's cracked up to be. Ned designs weapons. But they're better weapons than the ones used now. They will kill less people, but people will still die. Dilemma. Especially as Dan's discovery of it gives Ned a crisis of conscious which starts the whole plot in motion.

Set on a traverse stage - something I'm not personally keen on - the play threw up some questions that have never occurred to me before on a personal level. If someone manufactures or designs weapons does that make them partly responsible for the deaths that occur?

The boyfight between the brothers was hilariously well choreographed, using the table to allow everyone to see it. Jason Watkin's performance was unnervingly good and he seemed rather too capable of the tortures he tells Dan about. Hollander had this wonderful optimistic lilt to his voice (which was a little hoarse poor dear) but the lilt is slowly lost along with his life's work.

The intricacy of weapons and business talk was a little lost on me but Joe Penhall's script was witty, observant and sharp.

I liked it!

-Katie

INTERVIEW – Cassidy Janson

Date and place of birth?
30/7/80 in High Barnett

Any nicknames?
CJ

How did you first get into performing?
It's been part of my life since I can remember. One of my earliest memories is doing ballet classes when I was two and a half!



What was your first acting/singing experience?

Probably in school nativities!

What is your favourite part you have played?

A close tie between Suzan in 'Tick, Tick...Boom!' and Elphaba in 'Wicked'

What is the one part that you would love to play?

For years I wanted to play Elphaba, and now I have! So now it's Maureen in 'Rent'.

Who influences you as an actress?

All the greats, I adore Cate Blanchett, everything she does is so detailed and real. Emma Thompson, James MacAvoy...people that make acting not acting, but being.

What is your most memorable audition?

Gosh, most of them are a blur of concentration and nerves! I know one of my most enjoyable was for 'Rent' in Germany in 2005. I was up for Maureen and Mimi – I just had so much fun playing and singing both parts.

And your worst audition?

Probably one year when I went up for 'Mamma Mia'. I just finished a tour the night before and sang like a drain! Oops! They still saw me the following year so no harm done!

What is the coolest thing you ever got to do because you are an actor?

So many things...snogging leading men, doing charity concerts with celebs, but possibly staying with actor friends in LA who got me into 20th Century Fox to watch their show being rehearsed.

Favourite actor you have ever worked with?

Neil Patrick Harris [her co-star in 'Tick, Tick...Boom!'] – a star on stage and off.

Do you have an all time favourite performer?

Performing for performance sake you can't beat Liza Minnelli.

What is your favourite play?

'One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest'

Musical?

So naff to say this, but 'Wicked'

And favourite TV show?

'Grey's Anatomy'

And film?

I have many; 'The Shawshank Redemption', 'Layer Cake', 'The Slipper and the Rose', 'Dirty Dancing', and anything with Johnny Depp in.

Most of your work to date has been in musical theatre, do you have any plans to do any straight acting?

Absolutely, we'll see what comes my way.

You said you'd wanted to be in 'Wicked' for years, so what's your favourite song from the show?

'No Good Deed'

And favourite character?

Elphaba

What's your favourite part in the show to perform?

I like 'Fallen House' – when Elphaba and Galinda have a cat fight.

You're the standby Elphaba, how many times have you performed the role on stage?

At the moment, 13!

How nerve-racking is it knowing you could be asked to perform the lead with minimal notice?

OK now that I've done it. The first time I went on I had two hours notice, I've never had adrenaline hit so fast!

What was the audition process like for the show?

Long! It started in January and finished in May! I had eight auditions in all.

Last year you were in 'Tick, Tick...Boom!' at the Menier Chocolate Factory. Was it a show you were familiar with before you auditioned?

Nope, I'd never heard of it. Absolutely huge fan of it now, though!

What was your favourite song to perform in the show?

'Sugar'! It was so high energy and great fun!

There were only three cast members, what was it like working in such an intimate group?

Wonderful. We all got on so well and are still great friends now.

Do you prefer to perform in an intimate venue like the Menier or a huge theatre like the Apollo Victoria?

It depends on the show and the part. Some work better in small, some in large. I have no preference, I just hope that I'm in a show that suits its space.

Were you a fan of 'Footloose' before you played Rusty?

I'd never seen it until I knew I had an audition!

- Cassidy is still performing in 'Wicked' at the Apollo Victoria theatre

REVIEW - Doctor Who series 3

Episodes 1 – 9

A series without Rose? How can we comprehend such a thing? After having our hearts broken last summer where will the Doctor go from here? Christmas showed he was far from over Rose and even when Catherine Tate turned him down as a companion nothing has hurt the Doctor more in a long time.

Along comes Martha Jones, organized, clever and rudely interrupted by having her place of work removed from earth and taken to the moon! And the Doctor realizes he might need someone, a companion to help him in his adventures. However, he only offers Martha one more trip. It's there they meet William Shakespeare and once again Martha proves a worthy companion. But it takes a trip to the future, a double episode in 1930's Manhattan to defeat the Daleks and a adventure at home a day after Martha left to defeat Mark Gatiss' mad DNA mutated alien for Martha to be a fully fledged companion. A rigmarole that Rose never had to go through!

This series (so far – episode 9 broadcast at the time of writing) has had a few duff episodes but the introduction of Freema Agyeman who is just perfect as Martha Jones has surpassed all expectation. Human Nature (8) has had the doctor become human, and the repercussions of those actions are much more interesting and unnerving than 42 (7) a rather lack luster attempt to imitate 24.

The guest stars have been excellent as usual, Harry Lloyd and Thomas Sangster (8 & 9) Lenora Crichlow (3) Andrew Garfield (4, 5) and William Ash (7) Dean Lennox Kelly as Shakespeare (2) and new sometime regular Gugu Mbatha Raw as Tish Jones, Martha's sister.

Episodes 10 – 12

Episode ten, the double banked episode (meaning it has to be filmed at the same time as another episode due to Who's huge shooting schedule.) It means the action must take place largely without the Doctor. In this episode (like Marc Warren in 'Love and Monsters') one character comes to the fore. In 'Blink' it was Sally Sparrow played by the lovely Carey Mulligan, who as well as being beautiful managed to carry the entire idea of the episode. The Big Bad this time was very clever. It was stone statues that came to life, who hasn't been freaked out by a statue either before or after watching this show. Some brilliant one liners from the sharp pen of Steven Moffat (Jekyll not included) making his episode yet again one of the best in the series. Eleven twelve and thirteen were all interlinked. 'Utopia' set up the back story for 'the sound of Drums' and 'Last of the Time Lords' the fantastic Sir Derek Jacobi regenerating into Jon Simm was enjoyable but difficult not to say "I'm the master and I woke up in 1973" Great to see John Barrowman back as Captain Jack with such a good twist in the final episode that it made me forgive the whole series all it's faults. As for the last two epic episodes I felt it lacked a little in it's resolution, possibly anyone who has read Peter Pan will be similarly disappointed (Last year it was 'His Dark Materials'!). Very sad to see Martha go and frankly livid to see Kylie getting in on the Christmas action. But I trust the team of Russell T Davies, Phil Collinson and Julie Gardner. And roll on 'Torchwood'!

-Katie

REVIEW – Angels In America Parts I & II

The Lowry, Salford
June 2007

This production is, in short, pure faultless theatrical genius. The set is basic yet effective, with splashes of day-glo colour reminding us that we're back in the 1980s. Set in the mid-1980s, it centres on the start of the AIDS crisis in America, it tells the story of two couples. The first Louis and Prior - Louis is a neurotic Jew, and his partner Prior has recently been diagnosed as HIV-positive. And the second couple, Harper and Joe, are Mormons who have fled Salt Lake; Harper is a valium addict, and Joe, who is in the closet. Then there's Roy Cohen, a corrupt and successful lawyer who also has AIDS.

The seven actors (playing several character each) are all stunning; not a weak link among them. Mark Emerson deserves a special mention for his portrayal of Prior, it's such a crime this guy isn't British! His performance was so captivating and natural, a complete pleasure to watch. Kirsty Bushell was also stunning in her portrayal of Harper.

At over seven hours in total, it's not easy on the bum! But the time just flew by, and both parts in one day is the only way to watch it!

-Liz

And that's it for another issue! Next time it's the birthday issue – we've been going almost a year!