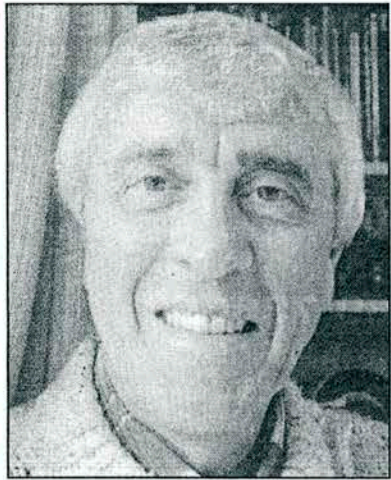


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WHAT'S ON

Bringing you all the news, views and gossip from the world of amateur theatre
IN THE SPOTLIGHT:
Highlighting the stars of amateur theatre, on stage and off

Ian Morley, from Bassett Green, is a leading light with Maskers Theatre Company, who have their own studio theatre in Shirley

How long have you been with Maskers?
I joined Maskers in 1987. I wanted to work with an established company and being a member of Maskers offers opportunities for performing at different venues such as the Nuffield Theatre and Mottisfont Abbey, as well as our own studio theatre.

Favourite role to date?

I enjoy playing comedy roles and villains. I particularly enjoyed the part of Freddie in *Noises Off*. This brilliant and unusual farce by Michael Frayn is a most challenging play with its different layers of action.

Role you would still like to play?

I would love to have the chance of playing Shylock. *The Merchant of Venice* is one of my favourite Shakespeare plays. I have seen a number of productions but two Shylocks who stand out are Dustin Hoffman in London and more recently Desmond Barrit at Chichester.

Funniest moment with Maskers?

I played Richelieu in *The Three Musketeers* at Mottisfont. During the intervals a 'nun' and I carried a portable confessional around the audience inviting donations to charities such as Paris Orphans and Richelieu's Retirement Fund. Whichever box people put donations into, all ended in Richelieu's box! We only expected small change to be donated but we collected more than £100. It all went to a deserving real-life charity.

Name an actor you most admire in the professional theatre.

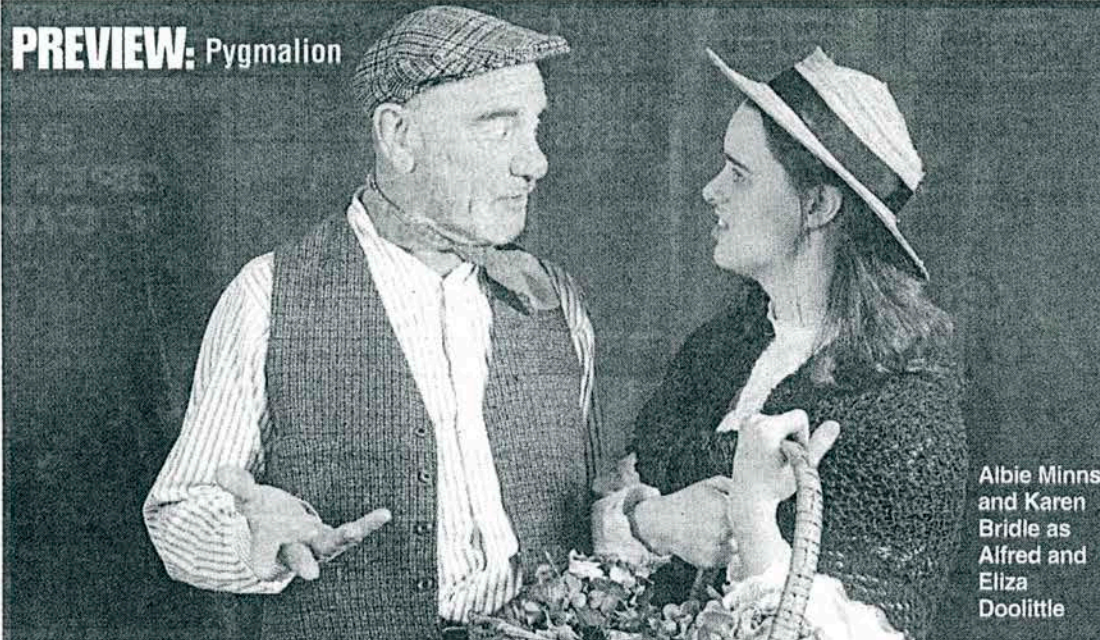
I would have to pick Des Barrit who works mostly in the West End or with the National Theatre and the RSC. I have seen him in a number of parts including Antipholus in *Comedy of Errors*, Bottom in *Midsummer Night's Dream* and Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice* as well as several TV and film roles. His versatility and humanity is evident in everything he does.

How do you prepare for a role?

I start by examining the text to see what others say about my character, what my character says and how he behaves. If an accent is required, where possible I learn directly from a native speaker. The most challenging accent I have had to learn was Polish. Luckily I had Polish friends who gave me expert coaching. To help with learning a part, I put the lines of all my scenes on to an audio tape

What's your next project?

I am looking forward to playing Professor Higgins in *Pygmalion* at the Nuffield Theatre next week. This is the second time I have played a role involving the education of an uneducated woman, having previously played Frank in *Educating Rita*.

PREVIEW: Pygmalion


Albie Minns and Karen Bridle as Alfred and Eliza Doolittle

Understudy steps in

IT'S the dream of chorus girls and understudies the world over – the chance to step into the limelight and take on a leading role.

For Karen Bridle of Fair Oak, that dream has become a reality.

Karen, 31, who works as a communications officer with Hampshire County Council, was promoted from understudy to the lead role of Eliza in Bernard Shaw's classic comedy drama *Pygmalion* with just ten days to go before curtain-up.

This evergreen story of how cockney flower girl, Eliza Doolittle, learns to 'speak like a lady' under the arduous tuition of Henry Higgins, a Professor of Phonetics is being produced by Maskers Theatre at the Nuffield in Southampton.

When the original Eliza, Grace McGowan, sadly fell ill, Karen who had been studiously understudying at all the rehearsals, stepped into the role.

It is Karen's first show with Maskers since becoming a member three years ago. Until then she had helped off-stage as secretary for the group.

She said: "It's very scary suddenly finding myself going from having 15 lines to say as a parlour maid to taking on the lead role. I am determined to do the part justice as everyone has worked so hard to make *Pygmalion* a success."

Pygmalion is a play about class-consciousness, and how the way language is spoken is used as a social barrier.

Shaw was himself a student of

phonetics and had very strong opinions on how the English language should be written, spelt and punctuated and he wrote the part of Eliza for the famous actress, Mrs Patrick Campbell, with whom he was having a notorious affair.

Professor Higgins is played by veteran Masker Ian Morley.

Guy Boney plays the gentle-natured Pickering and Albie Minns, the jovial cockney dustman Alfred Doolittle.

Maskers Angela Stansbridge said: "Karen has worked extremely hard and I am sure she will do the company proud."

■ **The Nuffield Theatre, Southampton from Tuesday to Saturday 22 January Box Office: 023 80 671 771 or www.nuffieldtheatre.co.uk**

PROFILE: Maskers

■ Mollie Manns, the director, has been a member of Maskers for more than 30 years. By coincidence her full name is Mollie 'Eliza' Manns. Perhaps that is why she has always wanted to direct this play. She has never worked in a flower shop though!

■ Albie Minns (who plays Alfred Doolittle) arrived safely home from a holiday in Thailand – he's never had such a fuss made of him!

■ Ian Morley (Higgins) dyed his hair from white to blondish, in order to get into the role!

■ The cast have spent time looking at the original film to practice the accents, especially Cockney!

■ The hurdy gurdy man, Dave Foot, comes from the other side of Portsmouth. He sets the atmosphere beautifully at the start of the play. The hurdy gurdy was made by his father.


NOISES OFF

Got some news to share? Desperate for that hard-to-find prop? Then let us know!

A READING of Bernard Shaw's delightful comedy *Arms and the Man*, a classic satire highlighting the illusions of war, romance and class, will be held at the Chesil Theatre, Chesil Street, Winchester tonight at 7.45pm. Open auditions will follow on Sunday and Wednesday at 7.45pm.

The show will be performed from April 4 to 9 and directed by Caroline Helcke from Chesil Theatre.

■ **For further information on auditions ring 01962 864539.**

HAVING been unsuccessful in obtaining a licence to perform the well-loved musical *Oliver* has proved a blessing for Eastleigh Borough Youth Theatre.

The group went in search 'for more' and in doing so discovered another great musical the award-winning youth group has discovered *Black Out*.

This high-energy show is written by professional playwright Mark Wheeler from Southampton and evocatively explores the life of one evacuee.

It boasts a large cast with excellent roles for both actors, singers and dancers.

Auditions take place on Saturday at The Chandler's Ford Youth Centre, Station Lane, Chandler's Ford.

Black Out will be performed at The Point, Eastleigh from Thursday, July 14 to Saturday, July 16.

■ **For more information on auditions call 023 8062 7806 or 07879477924.**

ABOUT CURTAIN CALL

Amateur theatre is an important part of local entertainment. The *Daily Echo* acknowledges that with its annual Curtain Call Awards a glittering prize-giving ceremony honouring the best talents of the am dram world.

All amateur shows reviewed in the *Daily Echo* are considered for the awards.

To let us know about your show, e-mail some information (including contact details for the director, wherever possible) to Curtain Call co-ordinator Tracie Billington-Beardsley at echocurtaincall@aol.com at least a month before the first night.

You can also write to Tracie at *What's On, Southern Daily Echo*, Newspaper House, Test Lane, Redbridge, Southampton SO16 9JX.


DON'T MISS... Dick Whittington


WHEN it comes to the perfect ingredients for a successful pantomime, Porchester Players has clocked up more than 35 years of experience in entertaining the community.

This panto season the group turns its attention to streets paved with gold with the classic rags-to-riches tale of *Dick Whittington*.

Packed with song and dance, The Players have gone all-out to serve up a truly traditional panto treat.

Players member Alan Head says: "We get people who come to our pantos year after year. Unlike profes-

sional pantos that are often performed in huge theatres, ours is in the more modest setting of Porchester Community Centre and makes for a much more intimate affair."

He added: "The closeness of this setting allows us to make the most of audience participation and interaction which is a vital part of panto fun."

Audiences will be encouraged to take part in a panto-song and some will be invited on stage to join in. There will be a ten per cent discount for parties of ten or more.

■ **Porchester Community Centre, Friday 21 and Saturday, 22 January and also Friday 28 and Saturday, 29 January, 7.30pm, plus 2.30pm matinee on both Saturdays. Box office: 023 9279 2238.**