

Charlie Peace: His Amazing Life And Astounding Legend.

Rehearsals: 17th September 2013

Ma Adamson: And with what did you entice the adoring populace last night, my duck?

Susan: Aye. 'The Young May Moon.'

Ma Adamson: Delightful!

An excerpt from Charlie Peace by Michael Eaton

17th September – Rehearsals / Backstage Pass membership rehearsal supper:

During the first week of our rehearsals in Nottingham, Giles had mentioned that on the 17th September members of the Nottingham Playhouse Backstage Pass scheme would attend an evening rehearsal. The membership scheme offers a range of discounts, offers and access to the theatre and is a great way of supporting the work of the venue. These schemes are a vital way of underpinning work with new and emerging artists, youth and participatory events. Today was the day the members arrived. The supper means members can witness a rehearsal, see part of the process and meet the cast and key creative team. During the preceding days Giles had identified several scenes and songs that he wanted to showcase as part of the event.

When we arrived at rehearsals in the morning we started by running through the music hall scenes and the end of Act 1, after which Jonathan worked on the songs. We then put the two scenes and three songs together and ran them. All went well and Giles, Jonathan and the company seemed happy. We then had our mid-morning coffee break. I believe that our company's extraordinary capacity and need for a regular supply of very high spec quality coffee is keeping the industry buoyant. A tea drinker myself I did attempt to brew a cafetiere of coffee for the company the other day. As I poured the ground coffee in, filled it with hot water and pushed the plunger down it became clear to both Charles and Nic in the ensemble that I had, unbeknownst to myself, made it strong enough to blow their heads off. Lets just say that throughout the subsequent days rehearsal they were all very alert and alive!

We also had Robert Day in rehearsals. Robert is the Playhouse's photographer of choice and takes the production shots for the majority of the in house shows. This morning he would be taking photos of the company in action. It is a real skill to capture not only a good picture of a production, but also the atmosphere and feel of the show. Robert is amongst the best alongside with Nobby Clark, another established theatre production photographer. Roberts photo's will be on the Nottingham Playhouse website along with the shows trailer which was today in the final stages of completion.

All theatres and theatre companies have to engage with digital marketing opportunities and social media these days. At the Playhouse this responsibility falls to the marketing team. The department has been looking at ways of

marketing the production, seeking opportunities to raise its profile and working with the local and national press.

To create a trailer for the show, images from Eddie Campbell's paintings have been brought together with elements of Michael Eaton's text. The Playhouse works closely with a creative media company to make the trailer. The final stage of this process happened during this past week as Jonathan Girling sourced a variety of music samples to be considered for the accompanying soundtrack. David, Giles, Jonathan and myself all listened to each track and gave our feedback as to which we felt would be most suitable. Various emails were flying back and forth and we all agreed on a certain track. Then, at the 11th hour, David discovered that this piece of music was also being used for another high profile campaign elsewhere. We were up against a deadline to release the commercial on-line so Jonathan quickly proposed a new selection of instrumental tracks. Again cost plays a factor and luckily the track that everyone chose was available and could be purchased within budget. Have a look on line and see what you think.

Around these events rehearsals continued until the last half an hour when we recapped the Backstage Pass supper presentation. Giles explained that these suppers played a very important part in the theatres accessibility to the public. Although rather nerve racking for the actors as it is the first time they will be performing in front of the public, very much in the middle of a rehearsal process, it had often proved most beneficial in the past. You can get a sense of an audience's reaction and if the piece is working. The actors needed to have a break and be back for 6pm before the super began. Kat, the shows assistant stage manager Laura, Jane and I all needed to set the room up for the members arrival. After their break the actors took their positions and at 6.15pm the guests arrived. Once settled Giles made a brief introduction and the company began. A song flowed into a scene, and then into another song, which were both met with enthusiastic applause. Giles stepped forward and introduced Michael Eaton who spoke about the genesis of his play. After this we all introduced our roles, and ourselves. Giles then explained the various pictures pinned to the walls, the mark out on the floor and drew their attention to the model box. The company then proceeded with the next scene and song to finish. The members then had the opportunity to ask the company and creative team questions before we all retired to the Ustinov Room at the Playhouse for food and a drink.

This was the first time that I had been involved in such an event. It was such a positive experience for all concerned. At this point in the rehearsal process it was good for the actors to stand up and perform an excerpt from the play and good for them to connect with an audience. I could see how the work that Giles had been doing translated in front of an audience and from this useful exercise you could move forward in rehearsals. And I have to say, it was a real pleasure to meet with the Back Stage members and share in their enthusiasm for the show and the venue. They clearly cared greatly about the theatre and were incredibly supportive of the work that was being done here and it was wonderful to feel connected to them.

Neil.

Neil Bull
Assistant Director: Charlie Peace
Nottingham Playhouse
17th September 2013