

# ELIZA'S HOUSE

## RESOURCE PACK & PROGRAMME

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PROBLEMS  
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**JUNE 2001**

# Fact files

Meet the actors and some of the people who've put *Eliza's House* on stage...

**Name:** Christine Mackie

**Role:** ELIZA

**Star Sign:** Capricorn

**Likes the Royal Exchange**

**because:** I've been there many times as an audience member and I love the building - it's really uplifting - as soon as you walk into the building you know it'll be a special night before the show's even begun. I particularly enjoyed STILL TIME in the Studio. It was a "promenade" piece where we moved around the studio. When you're watching in the main theatre it's amazing how intimate the space can be despite the big hall outside. You're also close to the action which I love.

**Recent Projects:** I was Titania in A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM. I was also in THE THREE MUSKETEERS and Victoria Wood's PAT AND MARGARET and Adriana in A COMEDY OF ERRORS.

**Favourite Project:** It was being Adriana in A COMEDY OF ERRORS which was set in the 1920s with fab costumes. It was a promenade piece (where the audience walk around the action) at The Dukes Theatre in Lancaster.

**Scared of:** My daughter's stick insect, Mr Stick - I'd like to touch him but I'm too scared. I'm not too good with spiders either.

**Likes:** I like walking the dog, eating, listening to music in the kitchen and dancing.

**Supports:** I don't support football, but I like watching athletics and tennis.

**Favourite Soap:** Coronation Street

**Favourite Food:** Roast Lamb or steamed ginger pudding.

**Name:** Kathryn Drysdale

**Role:** BETH

**Star Sign:** Sagittarius

**Likes the Royal Exchange because:** It has a good repertoire of plays.

**Recent Projects:** Louise in TWO PINTS OF LAGER AND A PACKET OF CRISPS and BILLY AND THE CRAB LADY at the Soho Theatre.

**Favourite Project:** I think it was Abigail in THE CRUCIBLE at Drama School.

**Scared of:** Violence.

**Likes:** I love ballet, pre-raphaelite art, clothes and the Classics.

**Supports:** Newcastle United.

**Favourite Soap:** Eastenders.

**Favourite Food:** Chinese food.

**Name:** Simeon Andrews

**Role:** MAURICE

**Star Sign:** Libra

**Likes the Royal Exchange**

**because:** It's a brilliant building with a great feeling about the place and in my opinion it's easily the best theatre outside London.

**Recent Projects:** I played Mr Cheeryble in NICHOLAS NICKLEBY on TV and I've worked with Shared Experience on ANNA KARENINA and MILL ON THE FLOSS. I played General Kutuzov in WAR AND PEACE at the National Theatre and was in the film RKO 281.

**Favourite Project:** The most interesting part I played was last year when I was the English Chaplain in ST JOAN at the Birmingham Rep, because the character begins as an unpleasant bigot and changes as he sees the result of his cruelty and becomes a kindly old man.

**Scared of:** I am scared of Alex Ferguson and rice pudding - especially both at the same time!

**Likes:** I like cats, listening to Marilyn Manson, reading science fantasy and playing tennis and solo whist.

**Supports:** Liverpool FC

**Favourite Soap:** I hate all soaps and don't enjoy watching them (even though I have been in Eastenders, Coronation Street and The Bill). My favourite programmes are Match of the Day, The Weakest Link and Who Wants to be a Millionaire?

**Favourite Food:** South Indian Vegetarian

**Name:** Wils Wilson

**Job:** Director

**Star Sign:** Aquarius

**Likes the Royal**

**Exchange because:**

It feels like a place

where people know

they can do good

work because

everything is done

to such high standards

and there is such a high

level of support in every area.

**Recent Projects:** Of MICE AND MEN - Midsommer

Actors Theatre Company and HOUSE, a site specific

production.

**Favourite Project:** HOUSE because it was so much

fun. We set it all up on our own and we did exactly

what we wanted to do with it.

**Scared of:** Losing people I love.

**Likes:** Walking right on top of the moors so you

can't see anything but moor land and sky.

**Supports:** I don't really watch football.

**Favourite Soap:** I don't watch soaps but I do watch

The Simpsons

**Favourite Food:** White toast with butter



**Name:** Brendan Murray

**Age:** 45

**Job:** Writer

**Star Sign:** Aquarius

**Likes the Royal Exchange**

**because:** I'm from

Manchester and I saw some of the early shows in the module when it was

just scaffolding before they built the permanent structure. I've seen some really good stuff at the Exchange over the years so it's really good fun to be working there now. Also - I went to college with Lynne Yates who is the Front of House Manager.

**Recent Projects:** Writing-wise - the last show I did was at ALICE IN WONDERLAND at the Blackpool Grand. It was a show performed by teenagers for a teenage audience. And before that I wrote BIG BABY, which was also at Royal Exchange. I spend the rest of my life teaching at the Drama Studio, London.

**Favourite Project:** BIG BABY - I am really proud of this work. I had a great team to work with and the piece was quite wacky - really good fun. I really cared about the subject (education) and because it was done in a theatrical way, it was a totally new style for me to work with. My other favourite is HOW HIGH IS UP? which was also at the Exchange; I had to stand in for an actor at last minute which was quite exciting.

**Scared of:** Spiders.

**Likes:** I love music and listen to Classical music all the time. I love theatre, especially when it is theatrical (not just like TV on the stage). I also love gardening, flowers and plants.

**Supports:** Manchester United

**Favourite Soap:** I don't really watch soaps but I like comedy programmes like THE FAST SHOW, SMACK THE PONY and SPACED.

**Favourite Food:** Really good fish and chips.

**Name:** Olly Fox

**Job:** Composer

**Star Sign:** Aquarius

**Likes the Royal Exchange because:** Because Manchester feels like my second home, I've spent so much time up here.

**Recent Projects:** Composing for a string quartet for COLD (Ashton Group Contemporary Theatre), THE GOOD WOMAN OF SETZUAN (RNT), THE THREEBIRDS (The Gate) and MILLPORT, series 2 (BBC Radio 4).

**Favourite Project:** Directing LAND in Eritrea - just after Eritrean independence because it was so exciting working with African people.

**Scared of:** Computer Games

**Likes:** Eating

**Supports:** I don't like football

**Favourite soap:** I don't like soaps but I love South Park.

**Favourite Food:** Crumpets with butter and salt & pepper.



**Name:** Natasha Chivers

**Job:** Lighting Designer

**Star Sign:** Cancer

**Likes the Royal Exchange because:** Because it's near where I grew up and it's always been my local theatre.

**Recent Projects:**

**Favourite Project:** GHOST WARD for the Almeida Theatre in London because it was done in a real hospital with lots of different rooms, all different shapes and sizes.

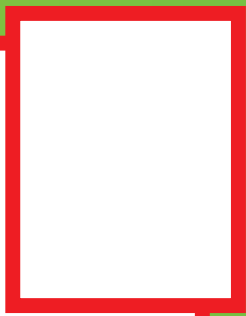
**Scared of:** Snakes

**Likes:** Travelling to different, faraway countries.

**Supports:** Huddersfield Town

**Favourite soap:** Coronation Street because my best mate is in it.

**Favourite Food:** Smoked Salmon



**Name:** Louise Ann Wilson

**Job:** Designer

**Star Sign:** Pisces

**Likes the Royal Exchange**

**because:** The studio is a challenging space to design for as it is very unusual and different to many other studios which are just black boxes.

**Recent Projects:** A version of Shakespeare's THE TEMPEST at the West Yorkshire Playhouse, a reworking of Monteverdi's DRFEO for Opera North and HOUSE.

**Favourite Project:** HOUSE because it was a very creative project as I was working very closely with a poet and composer. We worked together to transform an eighteenth century workers' cottage in Huddersfield into a magical theatre space. We had fish swimming around in the cellar and a rainstorm in the basement.

**Scared of:** Being alone

**Likes:** Walking on a beach in winter

**Supports:** Leeds United

**Favourite Soap:** Coronation Street

**Favourite Food:** Yorkshire Pudding



**Name:** Peter George Rice

**Job:** Sound Designer

**Star Sign:** Cancer

**Likes the Royal Exchange**

**because:** Because of the

constant opportunity and

challenges the spaces

present and the well

equipped theatres which

allow me to conquer

those challenges to the best of my ability.

**Recent Projects:** GLASS HEARTS at the Southwark

Playhouse.

**Favourite Project:** Designing A MOON FOR THE

MISBEGOTTEN for the Royal Exchange as it was my first

chance to design a big show.

**Scared of:** Going deaf!

**Likes:** Being in my new house with my missus.

**Supports:** Ashton United F.C.

**Favourite soap:** Eastenders of course!

**Favourite Food:** Mexican.



**Which of these jobs would you like to do? Turn to the back page to find out more about what goes on behind the scenes at the Royal Exchange Theatre.**

# Setting a Scene

Have you seen *'Eliza's House'* yet? If you have, do you remember the very beginning of the play?

In the script, the playwright Brendan Murray describes the mood that he wants us to feel before we even see anyone on stage. He says that there is "perhaps a mixture of low sounds: scales being played on a violin; the echoes of a prison corridor; the ringing of a phone and then a voice asking for Mr Metcalf".

It's all a bit creepy and peculiar. But it gets creepier and even more eerie because after a while he wants the sound to stop and then for us to see "a dim afternoon light. The sound of the front door being opened slowly. Pause. Then a man appears silhouetted in the doorway. ...He behaves like a burglar. He doesn't put on the light but comes in and looks round, picking up this and that; unsure, puzzled... Violin music and we see a woman 40 years ago, pause in her work".

All pretty scary atmospheric stuff and a great way of getting our attention quickly and to get us wondering about what is going on and what is going to happen next!

## WHY NOT?

- \* Think about what the playwright is trying to make us feel or think about the play we are about to see. How do sounds and characters make us interested at the very beginning of the play?
- \* Make up your own first scene that builds a scary atmosphere.
- \* Try out whispers, chants, singing and human sound to create creepiness.

# GHOSTS, PHANTOMS, GHOULS, SPECTRES, SPIRITS, POLTERGEISTS, APPARITIONS, MANIFESTATIONS...

This is a play about ghosts; the ghosts of the dead, the ghosts of the living, the ghosts of memories, the ghosts of happiness and unhappiness and the ghosts of lies and untruths.

Beth's father is dead but she keeps him alive in her conversation and in her games. The past haunts Maurice; he revisits his childhood and meets his mother, Eliza, as she was 40 years ago and she talks to him as if he was still a child.

Beth remembers happier times playing hide-and-seek or making her father's favourite pot noodle and feeling happy;

Maurice remembers wanting to be like the other kids but having a mother who wanted him to be special. Jimmy O'Rourke's clothes still hang in the wardrobe; the violin should still be in its case in the cupboard...

Perhaps we all have ghosts. Not the sort dressed in white sheets that say 'boo' in the night but memories, both good and bad, that come back to us when we least expect them. Or those ghosts or spectres that we come across because we have that secret fear of something that's really quite harmless but for some reason or another makes us shake, sweat or scream.

## WHY NOT?

- \* Think about the words - ghosts, phantoms, spirits, ghouls, spectres, spirits, poltergeists, apparitions, manifestations. How many words with the same or similar meaning can you add?
- \* Make up a play that deals with memories. Is there a way of using voices that the person or people from the past can be heard?
- \* Try out different ways of showing people as ghosts or apparitions in drama.
- \* Write about a particular memory in your life and tell the reader why it that this moment has stayed with you.

# LIES, STORIES, UNTRUTHS, PRETENCE, MAKE-BELIEVE, TALES, EXAGGERATION,

There are so many lies in *Eliza's House!* Some of them are just plain fibs like the girl, Beth, saying she has never seen the violin, and like Maurice's reasons for needing the violin.

Others are stories to invent new circumstances for people such as Eliza pretending that her son is a violinist called Yehudi Menuhin who lives in New Zealand...

Some are fantasies that make the facts a bit more comfortable, like Beth pretending her Dad, Jimmy O'Rourke, is alive, still there for her, making her feel happier and safer. Like the woman, Eliza, pretending that her son could one day be a musician, could be someone better than Jimmy O'Rourke or the kids that play down by the docks.

Some of the lies are plain criminal like Maurice going to prison for pretending to be someone else so that he could make money.

There comes a time, of course, when the truth comes to the surface. When all the lies get too hard to handle. It's as if the characters in the play have to face the truth and themselves. Do you remember the moment when Beth says, "Sometimes it's good to pretend. And sometimes it's good to stop."?

We all invent stories at some time. Sometimes it's because we're supposed to, like when we are writing in English or imagining situations for drama. At other times we do it to avoid trouble or to make the world more interesting. Or to make the facts just a bit more exciting, exaggerating the events or the way people talked or behaved.

So many secrets, stories, half-truths and fantasies...

# Back to the Future...

Maurice's Mum is obsessed with the violin. She wants him to have a future and she has a dream it'll be as a musician. He'd rather have a bike! And he's not very impressed with those crusty old records of violin concerts and Yehudi Menuhin.

But for Beth, that music and the violin aren't crusty. They are thrilling and full of hopes and dreams. So much so that she says that it's "Like going to another world...where nothing changes...and no one dies..."

Do you know anyone who still has a record player? Do you have vinyl records in your house or does your music come on tape or CDs or minidisks? Years ago, recorded music was played at home by winding up a crank handle. Now we usually point a remote control at the CD player. Technology changes, fashion moves on.

## OR DOES IT?

Vinyl records are now very fashionable again, and once you've stopped laughing at photos of your mum or dad when they were your age, you might notice that some of the fashions are quite similar to those of today. Aren't they?

Maurice's Mum doesn't want her son to be like the other kids. She wants him to be something special. But he wants to be in with the likes of Jimmy O'Rourke. That's what fashion is partly about - wanting to belong, wanting to identify with the trend and with the people you admire.

Beth is different again. She doesn't try to belong in the way that Maurice did. She really likes Bach and she's fiercely herself; feisty, independent and caught up in her own dreams.

And what sort of music would Maurice have been listening to if he wasn't listening to Bach? It wouldn't have been Westlife or Eminem or Robbie...

## WHY NOT?

Look at these photos and pictures from the 60s. What do you notice about the clothes, hair and make up?

Find out what music was in the charts in the 60s and what the top pop groups were called. And find out what was happening in the world in the 60s. What issues were important?

Maurice would rather have a trainset like this than a violin.

Think about what it feels like to dare to be different. Do you worry about whether your clothes and music are cool? Or do you dare to be outside the crowd?

# FIBS, FABRICATIONS, FALSEHOODS, FANTASIES...

## WHY NOT?

- \* Think of times when you haven't told the truth. What was the situation? How did you behave? Why did you do it? Did you get found out?
- \* Do you think it's ever OK to tell a lie?
- \* Write about one of the moments that you have just thought about. Try and make your reader understand why you behaved in this way.
- \* Think about the words - lies, stories, untruths, pretence, make-believe, tales, exaggeration, fibs, fabrications, falsehoods, fantasies. Make a list of as many words as you can think of with the same or similar meaning.

Ask your older relatives if they remember this! (It's a Space-Hopper!)



# FOOTBALL CRAZY, FOOTBALL MAD...



When he was a kid, Maurice was not very impressed with his mother's ambitions for him as a violinist. He thought he'd rather be with his mates on the football terraces. Remember the Man Utd rattle, the scarf and the bobble hat? Remember the portraits of the players that came with

the programmes?

Can you spot the 1960's Man Utd pictures on this page?

Can you name any of the players?

Unless you know one heck of a lot about

Manchester United you're more likely to be able to name the three players at the top left than any of the others!

In the play, Maurice didn't really enjoy being on the terraces. He says "But you know what's funny? I hated it...Standing on the terraces, freezing your - freezing to death. Blokes in front of you so you can't see what was going on."

Funny isn't it, doing things we don't really enjoy because we think it's cool and it's

what we ought to be seen doing? Maurice adds, "It's what you did I suppose. What everybody did: to be one of the crowd; so I wouldn't be just Maurice Metcalf; the skinny kid with the violin."

## WHY NOT?

\* Have a look at the football chants on this page. Who is singing them and for what teams? Then have a go at writing your own chants for either the team that you support or your school team.

\* Think about times it's exciting to be part of a crowd. Think about times when it's scary to be in a crowd. Try writing about the sights, sounds, tastes, touch and smells of being somewhere in the middle of a crowd.

\* Remember the bobble hat, the scarf, the football programmes from the play; what things will you keep forever because they are important to you?

\* Try designing a football strip for Manchester United in 40 years time.



MANCHESTER UNITED 1960



THE FOOTBALL  
LEAGUE IS UPSIDE  
DOWN,  
UPSIDE DOWN,  
UPSIDE DOWN,  
THE FOOTBALL LEAGUE IS  
UPSIDE DOWN,  
WE'RE GOING UP WITH  
GRIMSBY

GLORY, GLORY, LEEDS UNITED  
GLORY, GLORY, LEEDS UNITED,  
GLORY, GLORY, LEEDS UNITED,  
THEY'RE THE GREATEST FOOTBALL  
TEAM IN THE LAND.



CHIM  
CHIMENY, CHIM  
CHIMENY,  
CHEEERRRROOOO,  
WHO NEEDS ANELKA  
WHEN WE'VE GOT  
KANU!

YOU ARE MY SOLSKJAER,  
MY OLE SOLSKJAER,  
YOU MAKE ME HAPPY, WHEN  
SKIES ARE GREY.  
OH ALAN SHEARER  
HE MIGHT BE DEARER  
BUT PLEASE DON'T TAKE, MY  
SOLSKJAER AWAY



The players on the  
left are, David  
Beckham, Nicky  
Butt, Andrew Cole  
George Best and  
Nobby Stiles

# PROBLEMS, PROBLEMS, PROBLEMS

Eliza's House raises all sorts of issues and, because most of them are in the past, they have just become facts in the characters' lives. But imagine these characters had asked questions or wanted support; what advice would you give? Try writing replies to their letters.

Dear Brendan  
My neighbour is very good to me and my granddaughter who lives with me. There are just two of us in our house so my neighbour quite often looks out for my granddaughter in the afternoon after school until I am free to collect her. Unfortunately, my neighbour tells stories about her grown-up son that I know aren't true. I don't want my granddaughter's head filling with nonsense. How should I tackle this problem without causing offence or making people suspicious of one another?  
A Neighbour (name and address supplied)

Dear Brendan  
My Dad kept telling me that my Mum left home with the milkman I don't know whether this is the truth and now he has died I live alone with my Nan. She is very good to me but I sometimes wonder about my Mum and what kind of person she is and where she might be living. Should I ask my Nan or am I better leaving things alone. After all, she did walk out on us and I have never heard from her?  
Beth

DEAR DRENDAN  
I HAVE THIS MATE AT SCHOOL THAT HANGS AROUND QUITE A LOT. HE'S AN ALL RIGHT KIND OF KID (A BIT SKINNY BUT HE CAN'T HELP THAT). THE REAL PROBLEM THOUGH IS HIS MUM WHO IS REALLY SNODDY AND I DON'T LIKE GOING ROUND TO THEIR HOUSE. WHAT DO I DO ABOUT MAKING EXCUSES WITHOUT HIM FEELING LIKE I DON'T LIKE HIM?  
JIMMY

Dear Brendan  
I lost it with my Mum recently and said all sorts of things about how my mates see her. I also told her I hate her. I don't really but I want to be allowed to be a kid like my mates. I like playing down the docks and going to football to see Man U. My Mum wants me to go to fancy concerts and to learn to play the violin. How can I get her to see things my way?  
Maurice.

Dear Brendan  
I am very keen for my son to learn to play the violin. Unfortunately I have not got much money and our lives are a bit of a struggle. However I do have some pearls that are quite valuable. I like them a lot but I am wondering whether I should sell them to be able to buy my son a violin and pay for some lessons. It seems such a small sacrifice to make for my boy's future. What do you think?  
Mrs E. Metcalf

## PUZZLE CORNER!

? Test yourself on the story of Eliza's House. The answers to these clues are hidden in the wordsearch below. Can you find them?

- Where Beth thinks Maurice lives
- Beth's Dad
- Jimmy O'Rourke loved this sport
- Mr Metcalf's first name
- Yehudi, the famous violinist
- The force that Jimmy joined
- The name of this play
- Beth would love to play the...?
- Where has Maurice been?
- Beth hides this in her mouth
- She's 12 years old



try to match these theatre words with their definitions. It will be a useful list to look at when you're reading the back page!

We've done one for you, to get you started.

- A: props
- B: settings (or set)
- C: fit-up
- D: dress rehearsal
- E: prompt
- F: cue
- G: model box
- H: cans
- I: dressing room
- J: mark up
- K: stage management
- 1: a headset with a tiny microphone attached
- 2: the outline of the set and stage marked on the rehearsal room floor with different coloured tape
- 3: the room where the actors change into their costume
- 4: a model of the play's set and scenery, usually 25 times smaller than the actual theatre
- 5: the team of people who help the director during rehearsals and organize everything backstage during the run of the play
- 6: a signal for something to happen such as a lighting change or sound effect
- 7: any object that is used in the play by the actors
- 8: telling the actor the beginning of their line when they forget it
- 9: the first time the actors practise with their costumes, makeup and wigs
- 10: everything on stage that is used to create the world of the play
- 11: putting all the lights, sound equipment and scenery up in the theatre to get ready for the play

Wordsearch words: Jimmy O'Rourke, Maurice, Violin, Eliza's House, Football, Manuhin, Prison, Beth, Police, Key, New Zealand.  
Theatre words Matching: A-7, B-10, C-11, D-9, E-8, F-6, G-4, H-1, I-3, J-2, K-5.

# BEHIND THE SCENES...

Have you ever wondered how many people are involved in getting a play up and running? Follow the lines and find out what each department has to do to help create the finished show.

On the first day of rehearsals, everybody involved in the production comes together to meet the actors, see the model box and hear a few words from the Designer and Director. Then there are 3½ weeks to go...

## Props & Settings Dept

Buy or hire furniture, props, carpet and lino to match the model exactly. Eliza's house was last decorated in the 1950's so everything has to look as if it comes from that time. Carpets and curtains will have to be broken down to make them look old.

Build and paint floor, walls and stairs at the workshop. The plans must be followed carefully otherwise the set won't fit into the theatre.

## Costume Dept

Measure all the actors. Choose fabric with designer and start making the costumes. Would it be better to look for Beth's costume in the shops?

Fit costumes on actors. Maurice is seen as a young boy as well as an adult so it is important to see whether the costume helps this change.

Move costumes to dressing room. Watch the dress rehearsal and see what costumes look like on the set and under the lights and make any last minute changes.

## Lighting Dept

Lighting designer goes to rehearsals and builds up a picture of the play. Draws a lighting plan showing the position, focus and colour of the lights to create the right atmosphere. Most lighting plans are drawn using a computer.

Experiment with the gauze and light to work out the best way to make Eliza appear and disappear. Lighting Dept work out how much smoke will be needed and when. It's very expensive so it can't be used all the time.

Put up (rig) the lights and focus them. Make any necessary adjustments to create the perfect atmosphere. Operate the lighting desk.

## Sound Dept

During rehearsals sound designer works out what sound effects will be needed to help create the particular atmosphere or mood of the play. Does there need to be a repeated scary sound to mark Eliza's entrances? Will anybody have to actually play the violin?

The sound department has tens of thousands of sound effects recorded but if none of them are quite right, they will go and record some more.

Put up the loud speakers. Make any last minute changes, everything sounds different when the actors and set are in. Operate the sound desk.

## Stage Management

Mark out the rehearsal room floor so the actors know the size of the stage. Write down all the exits and entrances that the actors and director work out. Just in case anyone forgets! Give actors prompts.

Work out all the food and drink needed for the show. Maurice has to drink a cup of tea, what can stage management use to make it look real? Find and collect together all small props so that the actors can practise with them.

Cue the show from the desk - use cans to tell actors when it's time for them to come on stage. They will hear the call in their dressing rooms.

## Actors & Director

Rehearse, rehearse and rehearse the show. In spare moments, the actors will learn their lines and the director meets with all the other departments to share ideas and see what they have come up with to help tell the story.

Actors go to costume and wig fittings. It is very important that the costume fits in with the way an actor feels about their character.

The dress rehearsal is the first time the actors will have acted the play with the set, lights, sound and all their props and costumes. And the first time the director will have seen it. **THEY MAY ALL BE VERY NERVOUS!**

## Production Week - the last week of rehearsals

Bring the set from the workshop to the theatre. Fit up the floor and set and do all the last minute painting.

## FIRST NIGHT!!!