



newsletter

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Triple Summer Whammy for the Company

July saw three different shows, performed on three consecutive Sundays, in three separate venues. What united them (happily) was the large turn-out

for each event.

Our Sixties Group production of *Bingo!* ended its run at Cullercoats Crescent Club in a packed concert room on July 5. The next Sunday, every ticket was sold for our rehearsed reading run-out of the Trevor Wood & Ed Waugh play, *God Only Knows*, at the Customs House Community Room, South Shields.

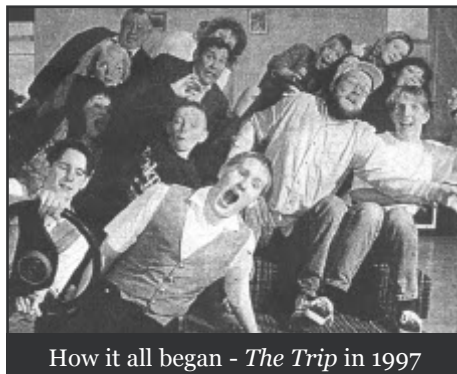
The trio was complete on Sunday July 19 at the Trojan Rooms, Whitley Bay, where in front of a large audience we staged our *Mirth Music and Magic* show. The first time the infamous South Parade, better known for strippers and stag nights, has staged live theatre.

See inside for more details on each event.

The Shape of Things to Come (Possibly.....)

The time approaches when *Cloud Nine* puts forward its main funding application of the year, that to Arts Council England, North-East.

Despite creating an unbroken twelve years of original theatre work (and remember, all our work is new and commissioned by ourselves), we have always failed in our bid to be treated as a core client of ACENE, which means every 12 months comes the



Some years we strike lucky, and are given the full amount, other years (such as the current one) our bid is slashed by half.

No-one has an automatic right to public funding, so you just get on with it. Plus which any company totally dependant on

ACE funding is likely to run into trouble, so we are always looking for other sources - our three year New Writing Partnership with The Customs House being a case in point. North Tyneside Council has also helped us a good deal, especially with our Sixties Group work. We hope to set up a new Script Reading as part of the partnership which is also looking at the possibilities of a large-scale outdoor production on both sides of the Tyne of

Grendel's Mother, Kitty Fitzgerald's planned radical new look at *Beowulf*. We are keen to stage our Wood & Waugh play *God Only Knows*, Neil Armstrong has a rock music theatre piece evolving, the indomitable Sixties Group continues to flourish, *PlayDays* throw up possible productions, and we're still chasing the BBC jointly to create some short radio dramas from the region.

As they say - watch this space!

Any news, info, ideas or letters for the newsletter, and any bookings, audition queries or to be put on our mailing list, please contact: Kitty Fitzgerald at CLOUD NINE, 5 Marden Terrace, Cullercoats, Tyne & Wear NE30 4PD.

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our web address is: www.cloudninetheatre.co.uk

Eyes Down for a Full House



Eyes up - a scene from *Bingo!*

Photo by courtesy NCJ Media Ltd

After five performances in the relatively peaceful atmosphere of Wallsend Library, our Sixties Group production of Kitty Fitzgerald's play, *Bingo!* took the stage for its finale in the hurly-burly of Cullercoats Crescent Club concert room.

The room is normally closed on a Sunday but *Bingo!* attracted a large turn-out.

The audience was warmed up with a real bingo session run by committee man, Steve Dunn, who incidentally was among the cast of the very first *Cloud Nine* show, *The Trip* in 1998, as was the secretary of the club, Phil Harrison. Plus which the writer, the director, Anne Orwin, and Peter Mortimer, who is the play's drag artist Laura Laporte, are paid-up members of the Crescent Club.

This was a genuine community event, and in some ways a throwback to the glory days of small scale touring theatre in the region, which in the 70s and 80s regularly included working men's clubs in their itinerary.

Club Secretary Phil Harrison said:

'This is the first time in my era that a play has been performed in the club and it was certainly something different.'

Review

As the *The Journal* reviewer, Tony Henderson put it :
'A little piece of stage history... Bingo! is enlivened by musical numbers, a dash of bawdiness and includes a finale by the Wallsend Wichita Line Dancers...Agadoo to that.'

The Sixties Group, who had worked long and hard on this production, allowed themselves a week's breather before starting their writing workshops with Neil Armstrong towards their next project (see page 3).

God Only Knows

EVERY TICKET WAS SOLD for our public rehearsed reading of *God Only Knows* at The Customs House Community Room, South Shields. The five actors, Christina Dawson, Louis Roberts, Vikki Elliott, Sean Kenney, and Mark Wingett, worked under the direction of Daniel Carver throughout the day workshopping the play with writers Ed Waugh and Trevor Wood.

A set was knocked up (thanks Jackie Fielding), a few props sorted, and the play given its first public outing, script-in-hand & on its feet. The plot concerns a male teacher's efforts to blag his way into a well-paid job in the new academy school run on creationist lines by a North-East millionaire, an attempt which leads to all manner of difficulties. Several script changes were made as the piece developed during the session.

God Only Knows contains a good deal of Wood & Waugh's well-known humour, but as one audience member commented in the post-show question and answer session, *'these writers have always made me laugh – but now they have made me think as well.'* These rehearsed readings have two main objectives – a first exposure of new writing to the public, but also a chance for the company and writers to see the work on its feet in front of an audience, a process that always allows a more proper assessment of new theatre work than on the printed page. The writers now write a new draft.

Cloud Nine will seek funding to stage the play in 2010. Thanks to The Customs House for support. A novel touch was the pre-show house music – *The Creation*.

Better Late...

This edition is published one month later than usual. This was due to the excessive demands placed on our Artistic Director and Newsletter Editor by the Shatila Project. Punctuality will now be resumed!

A CURVED ROAD WHICH leads down to Whitley Bay seafront is more used to strippers, drunken revellers, stag nights, and back lane vomiters, but on Sunday July 19, South Parade played host to theatre for the first time.

By 7.30pm in The Trojan Rooms the audience was three, outnumbered more than twice over by the performers, and the experiment looked to be a disaster. Fifteen minutes later the coast's newest performance venue was filling up. By the time the musical duo, *The Creels* performed their first set for our show, *Mirth Music and Magic*, all seats were taken. *Cloud Nine* works hard to create theatre in less conventional settings, and we hope this will be the first of several outings at the Trojan Rooms, whose previous programme had been live bands and stand-ups.

Mirth, Music, Magic at the Trojan Rooms

Our show featured seven of the company's sketches, selected from our four previous touring pub comedy shows, plus some original music and cover versions from *The Creels*, and a set from magician, *Dillinger*. And all this, as one audience member, Noreen Rees later commented, *for the price of less than a dozen toilet rolls!* Tickets were £6.00.

A few drunks staggered in during the performance, but the night was happily incident-free. The actors had only two hours on Friday night, plus Saturday, to knock the show into shape, and with no funding available, everyone worked feverishly hard

for unjustifiably low wages to make sure the event was a success.

Cloud Nine would like to thank the cast, Daniel Carver, Gary Cole, Christina Dawson, Dylan Mortimer, Aaron Mirfin, Ann



Ridley, Rosie Sales, and Ryan Syddall for the unstinting work. Ryan and Dylan are also *The Creels* who put in a terrific second set, while *Dillinger* both amused and astounded the appreciative audience.

Long-standing member of *Cloud Nine's Sixties Group*, MARGARET SCRAGG reveals details about their next project, *Strangers on a Bus*, which hits the boards in North Tyneside early in 2010

DON'T MISS THIS BUS

THEY'RE BACK AGAIN. There's just no stopping *Cloud Nine's Sixties Group* riding on the success of their latest play, *Bingo!*

This time the group have joined forces with playwright, Neil Armstrong and director, Harry Gallagher, (both fast workers.) As usual, ideas for this new play, *Strangers on a Bus*, evolved from a bunch of senior citizens sitting around a table sharing their ideas with the writer on what would be a good theme for the play.

Lots of chat, a show of hands, the decision made, and the journey began. We agreed the play should grip our audience in the first few minutes. Further workshops were spent creating interesting and complex characters that we wanted to travel on our bus. It was worth the effort. We had so much fun individually exploring each character. First and foremost we had to have a driver, (a surly man of a few words).

We have a troubled woman who appears to be heavily pregnant. A rather sleepy Vicar, and one very posh, excitable woman who, in a senior moment decided to take a bus ride. There's a man of mystery, a local tribute singer - and what do you know - an unemployed fortune teller. If you want to know why she is unemployed come along to one of the shows. There are many other characters joining the bus and lots of twists and turns. To hold your interest we need to keep you curious by not giving too much about the plot away. Come along and fasten your seatbelts, you're in for rocky ride. The making of the play has been a great journey and we invite you and your friends and neighbours to take this trip with us, and these 'strangers'.

**Opens Mon. Feb. 1st 12.30
North Shields Library
Free admission
further dates tbc**

News & Views

PlayDay @ Customs House

A GOOD TURN-OUT FOR our latest *PlayDay* at The Customs House on October 4 where, in the company of the two writers a cast of four spent a full day rehearsing two 30 mins pieces, *When The Waters*, by Louise Taylor and Dick Curran's play *Company*. The plays, directed by Anne Orwin, were then put on their feet in the live evening performance in The Community Room. The cast were Jill Dellow, Sean Kenney, Gary Cole and

Christina Dawson. *Waters* sets the problems of two personal relationships against the backdrop of ever-rising water levels, and *Company* is a three-handed black comedy, describing the nightmare scenario when the boss comes to dinner.

And Coming Up.....

Plans for our latest *PlayDay* event, due at Bishop Auckland Town Hall, in February 2010 are well advanced. All twelve places on the preliminary workshop at the same venue on Sat. Nov 7th. are fully booked. Other writers interested in submitting scripts (30 minutes) should contact our artistic director.

WordPlay Festival

Three of our actors took to the boards in the holy confines of St. Paul's Church, Whitley Bay.

This was the scene in October of the town's first festival of the spoken and written word, titled *WordPlay*, organised by Culture Quarter.

Cloud Nine's cast of Dylan Mortimer, Daniel Carver, Jackie Fielding & Biff the Baby performed a short set of comedy sketches in front of a small, and well wrapped-up audience.

The day also included workshops, a bookfair, readings, a children's tent, and wonderful home cooking.



The Palestinian children of Shatila perform their play in Bellingham Town Hall Photo: Gary Cole

Theatre from a Palestinian Refugee Camp

Cloud Nine members were well to the fore in the recent visit to the North-East of the children of Shatila.

The cast travelled 3,000 miles from their Beirut refugee camp to perform Peter Mortimer's play, created on camp during his two months stay in 2008. Mortimer wrote and directed, Kitty Fitzgerald was producer, Ryan Siddall was the musician, David

Courtnadge was the roadie, and Jackie Fielding helped with The Customs House fundraising gig by the band *The Enzymes*. *Croak, The King & a Change in the*

Weather was performed eight times in four venues, often to sell-out audiences, and there are now plans to build on the success to forge long-term cultural links with Shatila Camp which houses 17,000 people within one square km.

Out and About

Anne Orwin's Youth Theatre has moved from Whitley Bay to Linskill Centre, North Shields, where *Cloud Nine* hang out much of the time. Any interested youngsters should telephone: 0191-2518050.....

.....**Margaret Scragg's** son Robert has just scaled Kilimanjaro. His group raised more than £8,000 for UNICEF.....**Jackie**

Fielding directs *Wor Lads*, at the Library Theatre, South Shields, Nov. 5th/6th. 7pm, Nov. 7th. 2.30pm. Tickets: £5/£3 tel: (0191) 424 7863.....

.....**Peter Mortimer** has been given the 2009 CIC North-East Cultural Diversity Award (Arts Section) for the Shatila Project with the children from Beirut.....