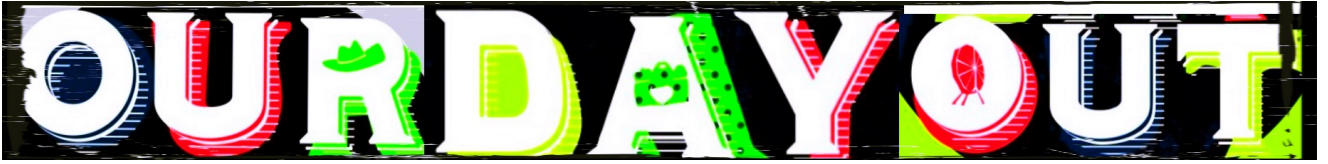


**OLDHAM**  
**Coliseum**  
**THEATRE**



# Education Pack



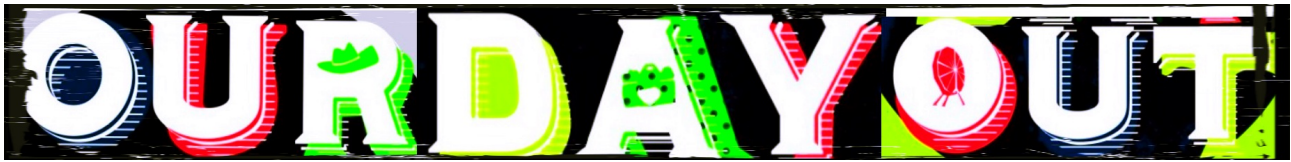
## **Included in this pack**

**Who is Willy Russell?**

**An interview with Kevin Shaw- Artistic Director and  
Chef Executive of Oldham Coliseum.**

**Marketing *Our Day Out: The Musical***

**Stage & costume design**



## Who is Willy Russell?

Willy Russell is considered to be one of the greatest playwrights of his generation. Born in 1947 he grew up in a working class family just outside of Liverpool and left school at just 15 with no academic qualifications and went to work as a hairdresser. Aged 20 Willy Russell returned to education and trained as a teacher at St Katherine's College. Whilst studying he began to write with a collection of his work being performed in 1972 at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival.

After graduating Willy Russell began teaching at a local comprehensive school in his home city. Whilst working as a teacher he continued to write for the theatre and for television producing several television dramas for the BBC.

*Our Day Out* only took five days to write with Russell taking inspiration from his teaching career in particular school trips he had been on as both a teacher and a child. The television drama was originally broadcast in 1976 and of the drama Russell said:

*'I still watch it today. The performances are exquisite. Shot on 16mm in just three weeks by a first time director working with a largely untrained cast it just seemed to be one of those charmed ventures in which everything just fell into place. A great bonus, for me, is the understated but stunning Nic Jones version of Teddy Bears Picnic over the final credits.'*

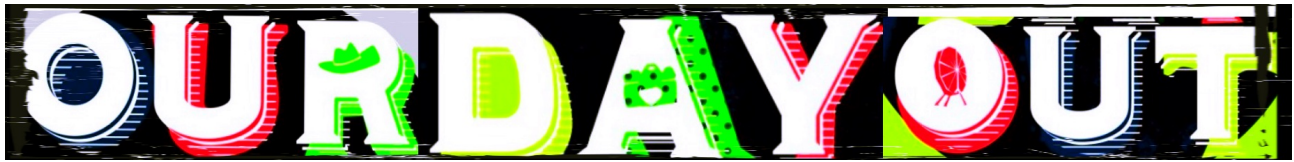
WillyRussell.com

The original television version was developed into a play for the stage with songs by Willy Russell, Chris Mellor, and Bob Eaton. This production, directed by Bob Eaton, was first performed at the Everyman Theatre, Liverpool in 1983. During the 1980's Russell also wrote *Educating Rita* for the Royal Shakespeare Company which has been performed all over the world and was made into a film starring Michael Caine and Julie Walters with Russell writing the screenplay. With a strong passion for music Russell wrote and composed *Blood Brothers* which has a West End run of 24 years and has transferred to Broadway. *Shirley Valentine* premiered at the Everyman Theatre before transferring to the West End and then was adapted for film with, once again, the screenplay and music being written by Russell. During this time Russell continued to write for television and composing scores for television series.

During the 1990s and 2000s, Russell produced his first album, *Hoovering the Moon*, wrote the screenplay for the film *Dancin' Thru The Dark*, an adaptation of his play *Stags and Hens*, and a novel entitled *The Wrong Boy*, to wide critical acclaim. In 2009, Russell wrote *Our Day Out: The Musical* which he updated to give it a more modern feeling. The musical premiered in the Royal Court, Liverpool.

Willy Russell has won the Laurence Olivier Award for Best New Comedy for *Educating Rita* (1980) and for *Shirley Valentine* (1988), the Laurence Olivier Award for Best New Musical for *Blood Brothers* (1983), and the Evening Standard British Film Award for Best Screenplay for *Shirley Valentine* (1988).

He has been nominated for an Academy Award and a BAFTA for Best Adapted Screenplay, and a Golden Globe for Best Motion Picture Screenplay for *Educating Rita* (1984), for a BAFTA for Best Adapted Screenplay for *Shirley Valentine* (1990), and for Tony Awards for Best Play for *Shirley Valentine* (1990) and for Best Book of a Musical for *Blood Brothers* (1993). Willy Russell has received an honorary fellowship from Liverpool John Moores University, an honorary doctorate of Literature from the University of Liverpool and is a companion of the Liverpool Institute of Performing Arts.



## **Interview with Kevin Shaw**

### **Director of *Our Day Out: The Musical***

Kevin Shaw has been Chief Executive and Artistic Director of Oldham Coliseum Theatre since 2002. Having trained and worked as an actor, Kevin started directing at the Salisbury Playhouse. Before joining the Coliseum Theatre, Kevin was Artistic Director of Forest Forge Theatre Company. Shows he has directed include *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Brassed Off*, *The Wind in the Willows*, *Star Cross'd*, and *Chicago*.

#### **1. What was the appeal of *Our Day Out: The Musical*?**

It is a great story that everyone can relate to as everyone will have memories of school trips. It has dancing, songs, music, comedy, a bit of pathos, and it has something to say about how we treat young people. I think it fits well in Oldham having a really big show on the Coliseum stage is tremendously appealing.

Another thing we have a tradition of doing at the Coliseum is mixing a professional company with community participants and I thought it was about time we did another show with this mix.

#### **2. How did you prepare before starting the production?**

As a director there isn't a set way in preparing as it always depends on the production.

For *Our Day Out: The Musical* I realised that I have turned into a statistician because of all the logistics involved. The production has two teams of young people who perform on alternate shows which are not exactly equal in that there is twelve in one team and thirteen in the other. So the preparation is as much about sorting out the logistics of where they need to be, how to build my stage pictures, and how to move quickly from location to location.

The preparation is really about logistics to an extent. This is coupled with the fact that it is a actor musician show so you need to insure that the actors can get to their instrument at the right time.

If you were to work logistics out during rehearsals then the show would never be rehearsed in time. You have to start with a very clear plan and be very organised. Now that doesn't mean you can't change the plan during rehearsals but at least you have your starting point. On other shows with a smaller cast you can do more working out during rehearsals but I always have a plan and for this production a plan is essential.

#### **3. There are two teams are two young casts playing the same characters. When directing do you want the actors to play these characters the same?**

There is a base character and she has to be the type of person who says the things she says and does the things she does. However, the characters are open to interpretation.

I encourage each actor to play the character to their own strengths or else they would both be doing a pale imitation of something that was in my head rather than bringing too it there own interpretations. I hope we will have slightly different performances depending on what team you are seeing.

#### **4. What are the main challenges in directing a musical?**

It's about making sure that the world of the play has its own reality and that is the same if your directing a musical, play, or pantomime. The audience need to believe that the most natural thing for the characters to do is to burst out into song at that particular moment otherwise it will feel odd to the audience

It's always really important to make sure that everybody is in the same play. This is about energy levels and about how larger that life the characters are. So if you've got one person being really over the top and someone being really truthful doing television acting their clearly not In the same play. It's really important to make that happen.

It has to be seamless so we are not waiting for someone to pick up a guitar before a song can start so it all just happens and it looks really natural. So that each moment is the only thing that can happen next for an audience. Unless you want to make them jump or shock them.

As a director you are always looking at the stage pictures making sure it all looks interesting, making sure that it's seamless, making sure the characters are believable and each actor has what they need to make the characters believable.

As a director you really need to try and divorce yourself from the production so you can see it as the audience and make it a great experience.

#### **5. What do you think the audience will most enjoy about this production?**

I think they will enjoy the energy and exuberance of the young company and appreciate the skills of what I'm calling the older company. It's great to see talented people doing what their good at and it's great to see the wealth of young talent we have in Oldham.

The older company are playing the teachers and the bus drivers etc and to an extent they are archetypes. We have the disciplinarian teacher, the older kind teacher, and a couple of younger teachers who aren't as confident as the older teachers. Everyone will remember teachers like that from school and have memories of school trips.

I think the audience will be whisked away by the relatable story. You will laugh and cry, you will be given something to think about, but mainly you will have a good night out.

#### **6. Who are you most like? Mrs Kay or Mr Briggs?**

That's interesting...! I think I see myself as a Mrs Kay but I imagine some people will see me more as a Mr Briggs.... No I'm definitely a Mrs Kay!

#### **Task**

In *Our Day Out: The Musical* the students and teachers uses a camera to take pictures of their trip. In small groups create five photo images (tableaux) to show a journey of a school trip. Think about the story of the images and the characters within them. Consider the stage pictures you are creating, make sure they look interesting to the audience



# OUR DAY OUT

## Marketing *Our Day Out: The Musical*

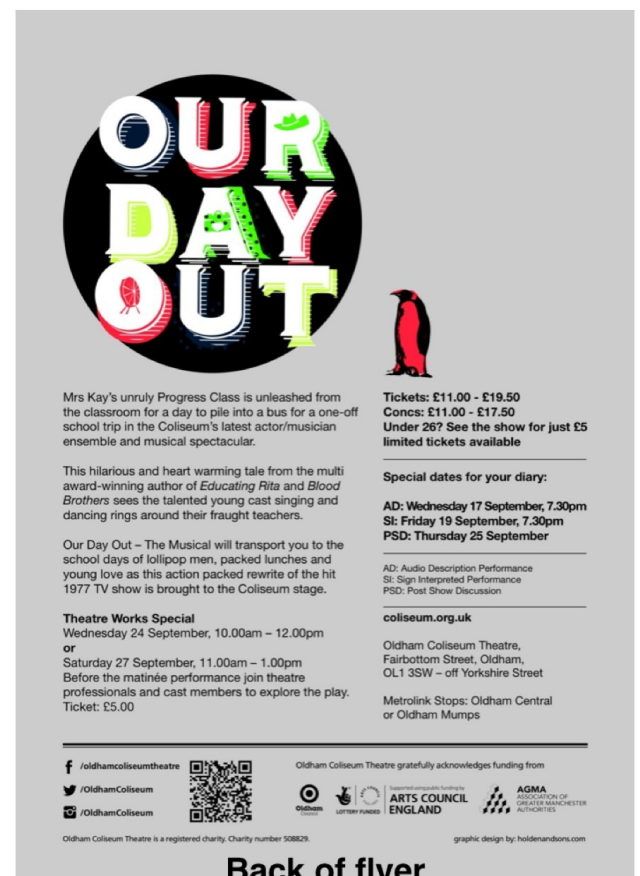
The marketing department's main role at the Coliseum is to promote shows and sell tickets. They create and oversee the content, design, and production of marketing materials which includes fliers, posters, brochures, press adverts, social media, and websites.

For *Our Day Out: The Musical* the marketing team have distributed flyers via direct mail to 1400 homes, distributed posters to local businesses, have placed billboards at train stations in the Greater Manchester area (including Deansgate, Bolton, and Stockport stations), weekly adverts can be found in the Oldham Chronicle, and have utilised social media such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

### Flyer for *Our Day Out: The Musical*



Front of flyer



Back of flyer

When marketing a show at the Coliseum there are lots of different variables that the marketing department need to consider in order to maximise the impact of the advertising materials created.

## Identify your target audience

For every show at the Coliseum the marketing department have to identify who the target audience are. To discover the potential target audiences some useful things to think about are:

- What genre is the show?
- Who is the show aimed at?
- What are the themes of the show?
- What are the characters like in the show?
- Is there music in the show?

When thinking about the questions above it is useful to think about who the answers might relate to and who will be interested by them.

## Marketing strategy

Once you have identified your target audience you need to develop your marketing strategy. This involves thinking about the best way to tell the target audience about the production and what will make them buy a ticket.

So what different ways can a target audience be reached? Think about the pros and cons for each method and remember that the marketing strategy has to stick to a budget.

- Social media
- E-Flyer
- Flyer
- Newspaper advertisement
- Poster
- Billboard
- Radio advert

Next think about how each method will best reach the target audience. For example if we look at a flyer where do we put this flyer? Do we post it out to our mailing list? If we are looking at a radio advert what station is it best to go on and at what time. Remember you want to maximise the number of audience you reach.

You then need to consider what will make the audience purchase? For *Our Day Out: The Musical* there are discount tickets for under 26's, a Theatre Works special attached to the show, and special dates for the diary.

## Design and proof

Once it has been established who the target audience are and the best ways to reach them it is time to design your marketing material.

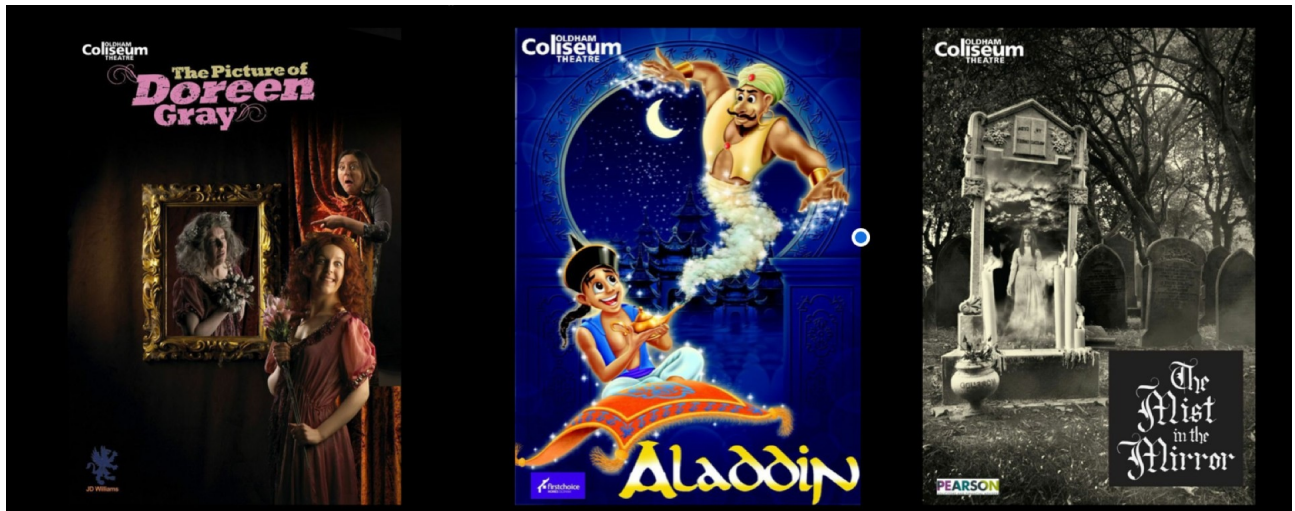
When designing a flyer it is important to consider what type of image and colour scheme will appear to the target audience. The flyer must also have a similar design to the flyers for the other Coliseum shows this season so the audience can identify the Coliseum brand.

Copy must also be written for the production that tells the audience some information and understanding of the production, similar to a blurb on a book. The flyer must also contain the essential information for the production such as show dates, ticket prices, booking information, location, and transport information

Once the flyer has been designed it is important to check it for any typographical or factual errors and to ensure that everything can be seen clearly. Once this has been done the print is checked and checked again by several members of staff before it is sent off to print.

## Task

1. Working as a team you are going to be your own marketing department. Using the information and things to think about above identify who your target audience will be and discuss your marketing strategy for *Our Day Out: The Musical*. Choose one piece of marketing to design and create. This could be a flyer or a radio advert which you could script and perform.
2. Have a look at the images for three of the Coliseum shows coming up this season. Think about what the images say about each show? Just by looking at the image what might the show be about? What is the genre of the show? What style of performance could it be? Who do you think the shows target audience can be. Once you have answered the questions have a look on the Coliseum website ([www.coliseum.org.uk](http://www.coliseum.org.uk)) to compare your ideas and to discover more about the show.



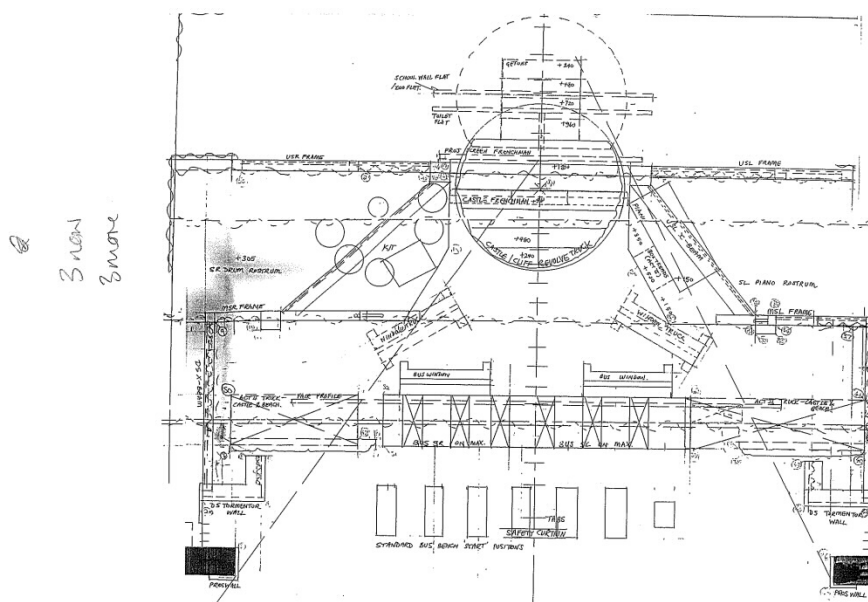


# OUR DAY OUT

## Stage & costume design

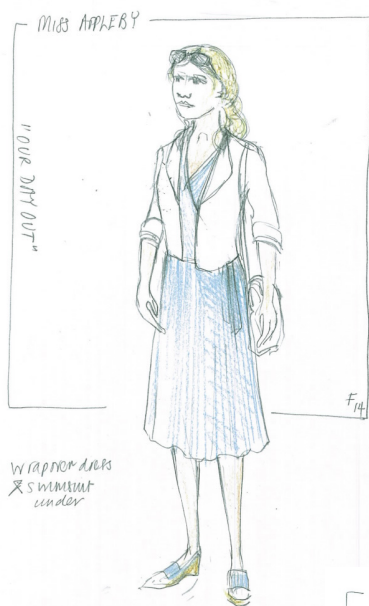
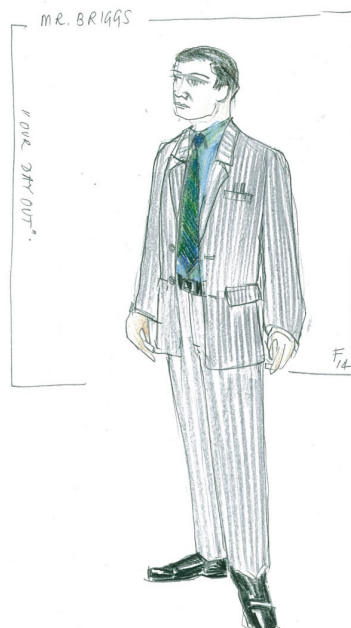
This is an image of the set model box for *Our Day Out: The Musical* designed by Foxton. The set model box is 1 to 25 scale, so everything that can be seen on the model will be 25 times bigger when it is on stage.

When designing the stage there has to be collaboration with the director, to ensure the vision is being achieved and so the director can plan how to block the show, and also the production manager, to ensure the design is feasible for the Coliseum stage and consider the health and safety for the actors and production team.

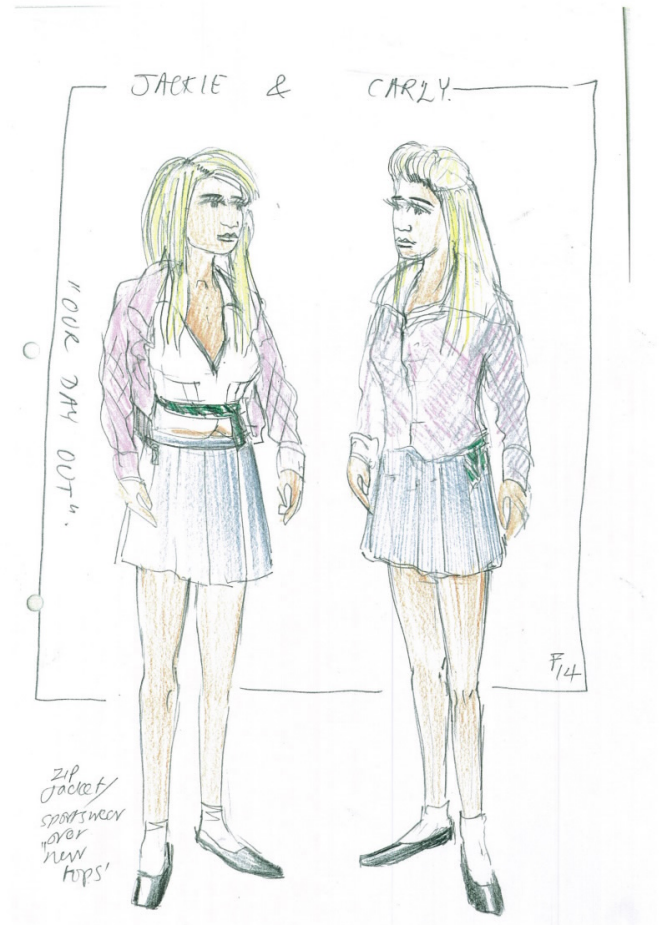


A technical drawing of the stage for *Our Day Out: The Musical*.

Costumes: Teacher & other adult characters



## Students



## Task

1. Have a look at the costume designs for the different character for *Our Day Out: The Musical*. What do the costumes tell us about the characters?