



Patron - PETER BROOK

CYGNET TRAINING THEATRE

Professional training
for Actors



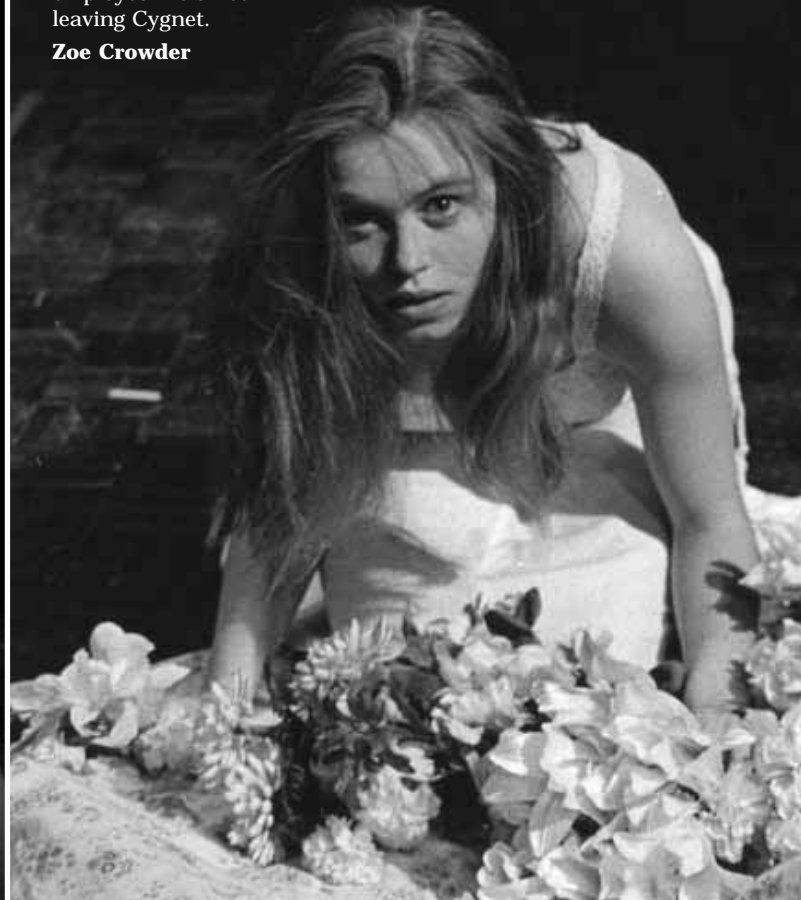
A Midsummer Night's Dream 2006



Cygnit is both challenging and nurturing. From day one you are an important member of the company and this gives you the confidence to learn. I have felt very well equipped to work with the companies that have employed me since leaving Cygnit.

Zoe Crowder

Hamlet 1995





Patron - PETER BROOK

Founder
MONICA SHALLIS L.R.A.M., L.G.S.M.

Principal
ROSALIND WILLIAMS B.A.(Hons.) Exeter

Artistic Director
ALISTAIR GANLEY B.A.(Hons.) P.G. Dip. Drama Therapy

Administrator/Company Secretary
MARY G. EVANS B.A.(Hons.) Bristol

CYGNET TRAINING THEATRE
is a member of
THE CONFERENCE of DRAMA SCHOOLS

Cygnnet Training Theatre is a Registered Charity No. 1081824

*What is so refreshing in CYGNET's programme is that from the start
the actors are challenged. The teacher brings passion and experience -
this needs to be grasped with both hands.
The days of spoonfeeding are over.
This is where CYGNET begins.*



Monica Shallis
1939 - 2006



Peter Brook

No one can become a successful performer until they know themselves. The CYGNET training with its combination of attention to the individual within the discipline of an ensemble company, makes possible a very special degree of self-realisation. For some the intensity of the programme is too demanding and there are those who fall by the wayside but those who complete the three year training come to a much fuller understanding of themselves, as well as releasing and honing their talents. Learning in this way produces a special kind of integration in the company and in the individual. Over the past twenty years we have come to see this more and more as a 'training for life' not just a way to an Equity card and a job.

CYGNET is a COMPANY OF YOUNG ACTORS from the ages of 18 - 35, chosen for their special promise and individual qualities, who work as a PROFESSIONAL ENSEMBLE in their own theatre where they develop their skills to the full.

Guided by PROFESSIONAL ACTORS, DIRECTORS and TEACHERS, the CYGNET COMPANY works continually on a varied programme of plays - Classical, Modern and Musical, including new theatre works. These are given PUBLIC PERFORMANCE in the weeks prior to Christmas and Easter and during the summer, in the New Theatre, Exeter and on tour.



*The Beaux'
Stratagem
1985*

CYGNET TRAINING THEATRE is an educational charity, specialising in the training of actors. It functions as an ensemble company with a good reputation and a strong commitment to regular public performances in the community. As well as performing in its own studio theatre (the New Theatre, Exeter), the **CYGNET COMPANY** tours to a range of venues in the South West. Productions are sometimes taken to London or to the Edinburgh Fringe Festival.

The **ACTING COURSE** normally involves classwork each morning and rehearsal for the current production each afternoon and covers:

Acting and Performance
Movement and Dance

Voice and Singing
Verse

Improvisation
Classical & Modern Text Work

TV & Radio
Stage Combat

ADDITIONAL OPTIONS: Acting with Music covers acting skills as above with the added opportunity to further previously established music studies. This usually relates to piano or singing but can incorporate harmony, composition and the technical skills of arranging and recording music for use in theatre work.

Acting with Directing follows the acting programme for the first year and then branches out into additional directing studies and assistant directing until the 3rd year when directing students are given full responsibility (with supervision) for at least one production.

The course enables actors to extend their skills and put into practice the techniques they are learning on a day to day basis in rehearsal and ultimately in performance.

A high level of individual attention is possible in the environment of a small company, ensuring that the unique qualities of each student are enabled to develop. Assessment allows the student to measure progress in relation to individual potential rather than to compete against others. There is no expectation of uniformity of style or individual progress and competitive attitudes are discouraged.

Lecture Evenings are also a regular feature of the course, so that visiting professionals (directors, actors, casting directors and others) can pass on their experience from working in the industry. Regular theatre visits to touring productions are also organised.

Some important criteria for entry to the courses are: openness and flexibility of attitude, awareness, self discipline and good ensemble potential.

This is more than an ordinary drama training. Actors come to **Cygnnet** for three years to study their craft in performance. This does not exclude talented beginners, provided that they have the maturity and dedication to work to professional standards.

An actor's work is interpretative and creative. An actor's tools are his voice and body, the hands, feet, face, energy, emotional range and not least, his capacity for human understanding. Training these aspects of the performer is a very individual matter and teachers, directors and actors together need to recognise the realities of the raw material available and understand its workings very thoroughly.

It is easy for an actor to be tied to preconceived notions about him/herself and to carry those into the work. Acting skills depend on loosening those ties and finding the courage to become both vulnerable and disciplined. An actor must be able to do, in an understanding, controlled and totally exceptional way, those things which other people do every day without the actor's awareness of quality: to stand, to walk, to sit, to talk etc. and in the process of this, to love, to hate, to laugh, to cry, and sometimes to kill or to die.

The skills required to do these things truthfully are immense and yet, in a well trained actor, the techniques involved become totally invisible. For this reason acting needs as much training as any of the arts and the training must be both practical and precise.

Three years is only a beginning: the learning process continues throughout life.

Watching and listening are among the most valuable things an actor can learn to do, both on stage and off. It is the first step and one that many actors find very difficult.

Student actors in the Cygnet Company are given the opportunity to do highly disciplined work. They are expected to be ready for this.

ACTING AND PERFORMANCE

This is the main purpose of the training. The influence of Peter Brook introduces acting students to an aim of spareness and simplicity that is often not discovered by actors until they have had considerable professional experience. Truthfulness and a feeling of ease are the result of many of the exercises that stem from Brook's work and from the work of Michael Chekhov. The study of character and situation in the context of a play are accessed through the use of growing technical knowledge and assurance and the use of the creative imagination. Improvisation is coupled with acting exercises for this purpose and these also form part of the in-depth rehearsal process which creates a seamless continuity between the three elements of the acting course: learning, rehearsal and performance.

THE ACTING PROGRAMME is an on-going developmental process. In production work student actors are given progressively more demanding roles and increasing organizational and technical responsibility over the period of their training.

ASSESSMENT - each term duologues and/or monologues are prepared for performance under near audition conditions. Students gain practical experience of various theatrical styles from Ancient Greek theatre to classical and modern works. The preparation encourages the practical application of all areas of the classwork and a focus upon the individual's growing technique. Assessors are drawn from the teaching staff and visiting professional specialists.

VOICE AND SINGING

Oklahoma 1997

The human voice is the most flexible and expressive instrument known to mankind and, as such, is one of the most precious tools of an actor's trade. The basic techniques of breathing, resonance, projection, articulation, RP, text work, verse speaking and scansion are only the bare bones of the voice work that an actor needs to encompass. All these are taught within the context of this training where the voice is recognised as essentially expressing the inner condition of the whole human being.

In the early stages voice exercises, in tune with the rest of the training, lead to personal discovery in the development of freedom and self-knowledge. Once personal freedom is achieved and the voice is centred and well rooted in good technique, knowledge is able to be applied to character work, where psychological and emotional truthfulness enable the subtle use of tone colour to affect vocal work on a character without effort or strain. The aim at all times is to give the actor the use of the voice in its full potential in both speech and singing. It is often very gratifying to discover with an actor that he or she was born with a singing voice of considerable quality that has never before come into its own.

Voice training is divided between CLASS WORK and INDIVIDUAL sessions, which are given according to the developing skills and needs of each student.

MOVEMENT

Action is a significant part of all drama, expressed by the body moving in space. The body expresses thought, feeling and imagination and by his movement the actor can engage and communicate with both the audience and fellow performers.

The actor is trained to understand the body's physical structure and to develop its flexibility. Through working the joints, bones and muscles and through specifically channelling the senses and the imagination into creative movement, the actor develops and extends the vocabulary of his unique personal movement language. He comes to an understanding of the creative possibilities available in the transitions from one spontaneous moment to another, both in the self and in a wide range of characters.

THE MOVEMENT PROGRAMME focuses on the individual's growth within the group, an understanding of group dynamics as well as individual tutorial sessions.

Neutrality and *Centre* - working from the belly and heart centres the student discovers his/her physical neutrality in posture and movement. The inner processes of physical experience - impulse, breath, movement - are explored through a range of exercises including forms such as Chi Kung.

Space - students explore internal and external space, composition, stage picture, through structured exercise and free improvisation, both group and individual.

Specific Movement Styles - occasional workshops by visiting specialists are included in the ongoing programme to introduce and develop specific skills (these may include Renaissance and Baroque movement and dance, Commedia dell'Arte and mime).

Stage Combat leading to certificate examinations is covered in an annual 2 week intensive course.

See How They Run!
2004

Playing with Fire
2001



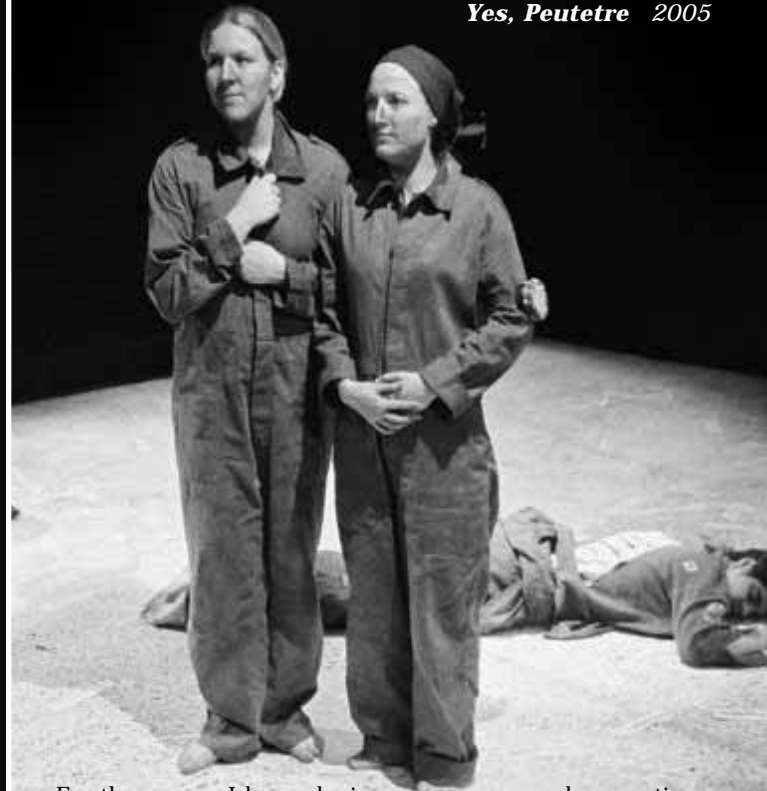
Beauty & The Beast
2000



The Dumb Waiter 2003



Yes, Peutetre 2005



For three years I learned - in a very secure and supportive environment - how to use each acting 'tool' to the very best of my ability. Acting should be about working in a committed, positive and above all honest way and Cygnet enables you to do this. It teaches you to work as a respectful member of a highly dedicated ensemble, to commit entirely and perform truthfully. This stays very strongly rooted in all that you do after the training.

Katherine Senior

DANCE

The dance training working alongside other key elements taught at Cygnet has its ideology rooted in the belief that knowledge can only resonate meaning if it is sensed as well as thought. The body is perceived as the vehicle for our life and energy and we assert a practice that creates a fundamental unity where body, mind, spirit and matter, male and female, interact in dance.

The actor is trained to feel his body, rather than seeing it from the outside. In this way the performer embodies his experiences using them to create an inner reality. This process enables each individual to engage actively in acquiring the skills necessary to deepen and enrich all experience. It is from this internal knowledge that we can make sense of the outside world; students are encouraged to listen, respond, feel, think, sense, and act, to acknowledge consciously and to know deeply the essence of their own being.

THE DANCE PROGRAMME - a progressive structure with three components:

1 - Body & Spatial Awareness: Exploring breathing, deep stretch, relaxation, posture observation and embodied presence, both internally and externally to increase awareness of the body and the space which it inhabits.

2 - Technique, Focus and Centering: To learn and practice a variety of dance techniques and disciplines, providing the student with invaluable skills to warm-up the body safely and focus the mind in preparation for devising, rehearsing and performance. These training techniques enable the student to become comfortable and confident with movement, provide a strong centre from which to move and also increase the student's movement vocabulary.

3 - Choreography and Instinctive Movement: Students will study and practise a variety of dance composition techniques to enable them to create dance performance material. They will explore rhythm, a range of dynamics, contact work, counterbalance/partner work, movement with text, emotion and movement, performance skills and a variety of dance styles. Students also learn and practise instinctive movement and improvisation techniques, providing them with the confidence and skill to devise their own movement / dance material. They will practise using the body's natural movement memory to enable them to learn and perform complex movement / dance choreographed sequences.



Classwork

develops technical skills and supports the ongoing rehearsal and performance commitments of the students.

Improvisation

expands and challenges the imagination within a discipline of creativity, which involves timing, co-operation and sensitivity to others and to the demands of the work in progress.

Imagination

is developed and exercised with the same precision as the physical skills, using techniques and exercises from many parts of the world. These may include influences from India, Japan, Russia, among others, and the imaginative work of Peter Brook, Michael Chekhov and Yoshi Oida.

Concentration

is one of the most essential attributes of an actor's approach to his work. This is a discipline that is developed throughout the training.

BACKGROUND STUDIES

these include play text analysis, research and study of the set texts of Cygnet's prescribed book list, including the methods of appropriate theatre practitioners.

The training made me a strong contender in a tough business. It also opened up a magic door for me: the door to a free imagination on stage.
Seb Steiger

IN THE MODERN WORLD OF THEATRE THERE ARE VERY BROAD EXPECTATIONS

Actors can find employment in the fields of education, business and commerce, by using their transferable skills in presentations, workshops, role play, and corporate videos. Acting skills are used increasingly to enhance the visitors' experience of living history in museums and other cultural attractions. This area of work could pay your rent while waiting for the big break!

WORKSHOPS are sometimes organized as part of the presentation of Cygnet productions in schools, especially when a play is a set work on the school's curriculum. The Cygnet Company goes into schools for this purpose or welcomes school groups to the NEW THEATRE. Experience in the presentation of and participation in such workshops has stood many actors in good stead in their future careers.

IMPROVISATION is a valuable aspect of modern theatre work. It is often used as part of the selection or rehearsal process in large and small theatre companies. Directors such as Mike Leigh base their work entirely on the ability of actors to improvise. Actors who are self-conscious when asked to improvise are often more limited in their range of expression in scripted performance. Improvising as a company and in class work with children is an important part of the Cygnet training.

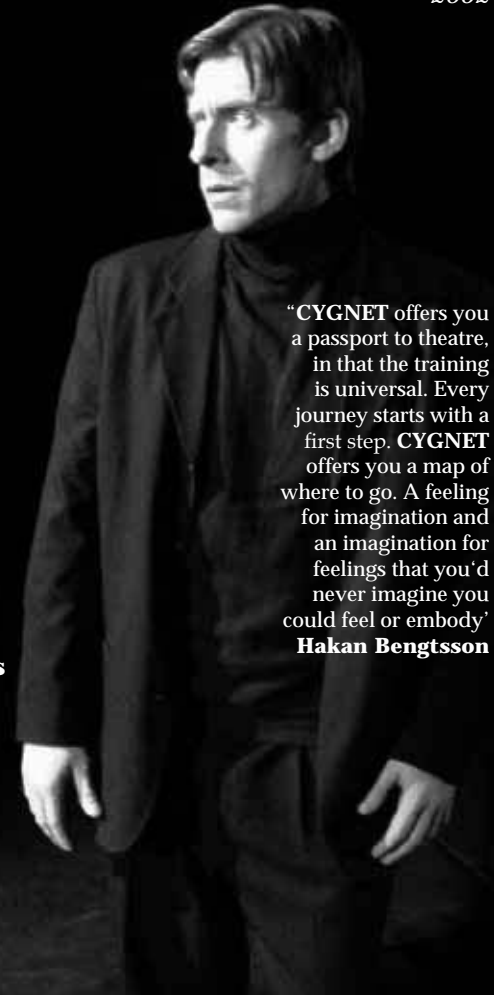
TECHNICAL BACK-UP is an essential area of experience for Cygnet actors. All have the chance to learn the basic-skills of Stage Management and will have the opportunity to run at least one show during their training. All actors are assigned to join one technical team for each production, working either on set design and construction, making and looking after costumes, properties, or designing and rigging the lighting. Everyone is involved with setting up and touring each show. These skills can often prove useful later and could tip the balance in an actor's favour.

PROFESSIONAL CONTACT

David Angus - *Microphone/Radio Techniques*
Caroline Bartlett - *Television Casting Director*
Steve Bennett - *Actor*
John Colclough - *Casting Consultant*
Richard Digby Day - *Director -
London Dramatic Academy*
Peter Ellis - *Actor*
Bunny Fildes CDG - *Casting Director*
Toby Gaffney - *Stage Combat Tutor*
Patrick Godfrey - *Actor*
Chris Harris - *Actor/Director/Writer*
Ian Hogg - *Actor*
Howard Cooke Associates - *Agents*
Jeffrey, White & Silvey - *Agents*
Amanda Knott - *Director/Choreographer*
John Lee - *Mime and Commedia Specialist*
Penelope McGhie - *Actor*
Bruce Myers - *Actor/Improvisation Specialist*
Yoshi Oida - *Actor/Director*
Gwyneth Powell - *Actor/Director/Writer*
Roger Redfarn - *Director*
Sandra Reeve - *Movement Specialist*
Amanda Walker - *Actor*
Margaret Wolfit - *Actor*
Henry Woolf - *Actor / Director*

This is a feature of the backup activities to the training. Cygnet students see a range of professional work in the South West and elsewhere and Cygnet arranges for actors, directors and other professional specialists to visit from time to time to lecture, direct or act as members of the professional assessment panel that comments on the work. Some of these outside consultants are members of Cygnet's Advisory Board, others may be invited because of their special interest in or connexion with the work, or for their specialist skills. The following list shows some of the professionals whose input has been valuable in the past. These, or other experts in their field, will sometimes work with Cygnet students, in accordance with their professional availability.

The Winter's Tale
2002



"CYGNET offers you a passport to theatre, in that the training is universal. Every journey starts with a first step. CYGNET offers you a map of where to go. A feeling for imagination and an imagination for feelings that you'd never imagine you could feel or embody'
Hakan Bengtsson

CYGNET'S HOME

The NEW THEATRE EXETER is a sympathetic performance space with a maximum of 150 seats. It can be set up as proscenium theatre or in traverse or in-the-round formations. Above the studio theatre is a large, sunny dance studio.

The theatre has a loyal public and a dedicated support group, the Associates of Cygnet Theatre (known as ACT). This group raises funds to support the work of training and is warmly encouraging to the young professionals of the Cygnet Company at the start of their careers.

In my three years at Cygnet I was encouraged, inspired and challenged in equal measure. From day one you are taught to work sympathetically and sincerely as a member of the ensemble whilst also being given the opportunity to take risks and experiment individually within the supportive working environment.

The nature of the work is ultimately a search for truth in all areas of artistic expression and Cygnet provides its students with a thorough training in the skills and techniques necessary for a lifetime of personal development as a professional actor.

Rachel Longstaff

Photo: Bill Sykes

Charley's Aunt 2002



Pygmalion 1993

CYGNET TRAINING THEATRE



Rosalind
Williams



Alistair Ganley



Mary G. Evans

STAFF

Principal

Rosalind Williams

Artistic Director

Alistair Ganley

Movement

Sandra Reeve

Voice / Text / Singing

Rosalind Williams

Voice / Text / TV Acting

Stephen Copp

Dance Consultant

Ruth Way

Dance / Choreography

Jules Laville

Stage Combat

R.C. Annie Ltd.

General Information

Entry to the company is by audition and workshop / interview.

Audition fee: £35 - no further charge is made for recalls. A contract is issued to all company members detailing the conditions / requirements of the training. The contract is renewed on an annual basis according to individual aptitude and progress. The handbook 'Welcome to CYGNET' sets out the conditions and ethics of the training.

A student who does not show the required aptitude and progress may be required to repeat a year or even to discontinue the training at the discretion of the Artistic Director.

Fees are £2,500 per term and are not refundable. Deposit (returnable only in accordance with the terms of the contract) £2000.

Students will sometimes be given the opportunity to take **music** and **fight** examinations, and go on **theatre visits**, for which there will be an additional charge.

CYGNET reserves the right to alter the content of the training as it may see fit.

CYGNET TRAINING THEATRE is a company limited by guarantee and a Registered Charity No 1081824. Supported by Exeter City Council.
Company no. 3905769. Registered in England and Wales. Registered Office: New Theatre, Friars Gate, Exeter, Devon EX2 4AZ

2008

ADVISORY BOARD

Mark Carey

Patrick Godfrey

Ian Hogg

Kathryn Hunter

Geraldine McEwan

Penelope McGhie

Bruce Myers

Yoshi Oida

Sandra Reeve

Jennie Stoller

Administrator

Mary G. Evans

Assistant Administrator

Malcolm Mardon



Patron

PETER BROOK

Consultant

David Brierley

Trustees

Diana Cavalier

Beryl Dean

Maurice Dean

Mary G. Evans

Sonia Newton

Rupert Pratt

Rosalind Williams

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The **Cygnets** ethos is essentially learning through doing. There are no secrets to being a successful actor. By constantly questioning and challenging its students (in lessons, rehearsals and performance) the **Cygnets** training creates actors who are willing and able to do almost anything. This learning process, whilst often difficult and demanding, is ultimately immensely rewarding.

David Lockwood

The Comedy of Errors
2005



The Winter's Tale
2002



Cygnets is a unique Professional Actor Training and works beautifully for actors who want a very practical course. With its own Studio Theatre it has a certain kind of freedom that allows an actor to develop, explore and take risks. It teaches you to be a team player and learn about all aspects of theatre. My three years at **Cygnets** stood me in good stead in the acting profession and gave me opportunities to perform in some of Theatre's best loved plays, tour the South West, stage manage and even have a crack at directing. If this sounds like your cup of tea, then you're in for a treat.

Lizzy Dive

Great Expectations
2005

Cygnets Training Theatre
New Theatre, Friars Gate,
Exeter EX2 4AZ