

VENTURE THEATRE

ASHBY DRAMATIC SOCIETY

Here we talk to Nicola Harvey about her experiences of being an actor at The Venture Theatre. Nicola has been with us since 2009 but her acting career started long before when she joined a drama club at Swadlincote Town Hall. "But I'd always been the sort of child that would put on a hat and do a silly voice to entertain my family," she told us. She went on to join the Brewhouse Youth Theatre at the age of 16 and then studied drama at university. After graduation she discovered the Venture Theatre through Google!

Her first role was a minor character in *Trivial Pursuit*. She remembers "the play was set in summer time so I had to wear a short dress with no sleeves but we were rehearsing during October and November and I was freezing! During one scene, we were having a barbeque. I was holding a drink and I was nervous as well so I couldn't stop shaking!"

Nicola has a photographic memory so finds learning lines easy but actors are often required to put on different accents so how does she learn them? "I don't know. I just can do it but some are easier than others." She told us the cockney accent she needed to do for Eliza in *Pygmalion* was the most difficult she has tackled to date. "It wasn't really difficult but it was the one that required the most work."

Many actors have a set routine they go through before appearing on stage. Nicola told us she doesn't like to rush beforehand. "I don't drink fizzy pop or eat a lot before I go on stage and of course you always have your lucky underwear! If you're in a play where you have to wear clothes you're not comfortable with you've got to have your lucky underwear. Obviously it gets washed. You don't wear the same underwear for two weeks!"

Another important requirement is the ability to cope with disasters on stage! Mrs deWinter in *Rebecca* was Nicola's first leading role and on one night she was supposed to be putting roses in a vase when there was a power cut and all the lights went out. "They went off on my line as well so I was thinking, do I carry on or what?". She did carry on, in the dark for about two minutes "But it seems like a lifetime when you're on stage!" By a funny coincidence, the next line for the other character on stage at the time was "I've got to go and sort the lighting out."

In *One Night in November*, a play about the bombing of Coventry during the Second World War, Nicola played a character who wore pigtails. During the bombing scene, she had to crawl under a really narrow part of the set to get off stage and her pigtails got caught in another character's gasmask. The two of them came off stage joined together in a way they never expected!

The Farndale Avenue Housing Estate Townswomen's Guild Dramatic Society Murder Mystery was a silly play about an amateur dramatic company where everything keeps going wrong. One night during its run at The Venture Theatre, something really did go wrong. Nicola was supposed to be dancing and singing along to a 1950s number with one of the other characters. Something went wrong in the technical department and there was no music. "The sound crew just grabbed a CD and shoved it in but it was this 1990s dance rave music!" The actors had to improvise and Nicola's partner started to dance in a really comical way. "I was playing a stern character so I tried not to laugh but it was hard not to. Luckily the audience thought it was part of the play because everything going wrong was the whole point of the play!"

Asked which part would be her ultimate dream to play she told us that she had already played it as Eliza in *Pygmalion* but she would also like to have the chance to play a really strong female in a Shakespeare play such as Lady Macbeth or Beatrice in *Much Ado About Nothing*. "I'd like to play someone really nasty, something I could really get my teeth into! I think men are so lucky in acting. They get some really good roles which women just don't get but there are some writers writing for females now."