

Express Buzz

Actor turns to the Arts

Mike Schillinger at Chilwell School *Interviewed by Rachel Armitage*

BEING ushered through the door to Mike Schillinger's new project, 'Theatre Olympia', was like walking into a different world from the drab décor of the average school canteen I'd been sitting in just moments before.

Having lived in this area all my life, I couldn't understand how I'd managed to remain unaware of this jewel in Beeston's crown. Mike told me how his new job as 'Arts Development Officer' at Chilwell School required him to 'sell' the theatre – a task with which he was only too happy to oblige. He gestured to various different aspects of the theatre: its digital sound desk, the seating for 170, a cinema screen and digital projector. All, I was told, were rarely used. All, he assured me, was about to change.

Having been blissfully unaware of Mike's colourful past as an actor, I soon realised there was more to him than met the eye. I

listened as he spoke of his acting career based in London and how, as a willing employee of show business, he had landed roles in theatre, film, television and radio, but decided that after twelve years of living the high life, it was time to come down.

"The thing about acting is that it's too unpredictable," he told me. "One year you could be landing loads of great jobs, and the next, you end up in an economic slump and have to start begging for jobs as a builder or call centre staff. That's why I decided to give it up. With a growing family, I needed a steady income and thought, 'where better to start than in education?'"

Still, I wonder, he must miss the fame and fortune so often related to acting, and the glitz and glamour of London?

"Yes," he admits, "but really, I've managed to find myself a home from home here at Chilwell School. If

London actors were given the opportunity to run their own theatre, they'd be drooling. When I arrived, I couldn't believe that such a wonderful facility has been kept under wraps for so long. Now I'm here, I'm determined to make 'Theatre Olympia' a household name."

And what will be his first bid to get the renamed theatre on the map? He pushes posters across the table publicising 'Standing In Line' by Lester Simpson (see page 11). His plans are only too clear – what better way to raise awareness than by putting on world-class performances, just around the corner from half of Chilwell?

"I'm planning a Grand Opening and trying to find contacts wherever I can, with the aim of filling the calendar with performance dates," he grins enthusiastically.

Having uncovered his scheme for the theatre, I

wonder how he managed to get a job so far from what he knows in the first place. He tells me that, after training as a teaching assistant, he came to work at Chilwell and, as his potential as a teacher and his love for the arts started to shine through, he was offered the job of Arts Development Officer.

However, I soon found out that this was not the only trick Mike had up his sleeve. "When I finished acting, I became involved in a lot of voice-over work, and then started to create a series of short films. The hobby turned into a passion, so I decided to set up my own business venture for kids who want to learn how to make their own films. I run summer schools and weekly sessions and have generously been given free rein of the 'Royal Centre' in Nottingham this summer. The kids enjoy it and so do I, and in the end, that's all that matters!"

The Free Ranger...

Our monthly columnist shares his thoughts with us...

THE Free Ranger lives in Attenborough, but asks to remain anonymous so that he can share his opinions freely about local matters that affect all of us.

Please remember, however, that the opinions he expresses are his own, and do not necessarily reflect those of The Beeston Express. If you wish to comment, please write to the address on page 2.

Please confuse me with detail

IN the last few weeks I have been fortunate enough to receive through my door a number of targeted mail shots asking me for my opinion on various subjects, ranging from what I think of the stripes in my tooth paste to if I think hanging is a good idea.

Now it seems to me (perhaps owing to my

fondness for conspiracy theories) that these mail shots are not just about asking you for your views, they are carefully designed and immaculately produced to get you thinking about various issues in order to sow a seed in your mind. For example, if you read a question that asks: "Do you think Wollaton is overrun by illegal immigrants?" it may also make you think that perhaps there is a problem with illegal immigrants in Wollaton that you didn't know about, and then you might ask why is no one doing anything about it, when in fact it's just nonsense I have made up.

You may also get asked to tick a box that is the equivalent of the old "are you still beating your wife?" question, e.g. "Do you support the construction of thousands of homes in precious greenbelt?" (Yes or No), without exploring the subtlety of the problem or explaining the statutory planning process that requires consideration of all options. Then you get

the creative bar graph that shows two columns (one normally much bigger than the other) used to illustrate a single point. But how many of us check the scale up the side? Frequently the huge difference in the bars may illustrate a difference of point one of a percent; however, the height difference in the lines is the message that sticks.

Now, as you have no doubt guessed, some of these leading questions are part of the dance of the various political parties. For example, if you list or tick boxes on some of the issues that concern you, you may later find yourself part of a statistic that says X number of people in Broxtowe are worried about issue Y, followed by a statement that someone needs to do something and damning with faint praise, all dressed up under the banner of listening to your views and keeping you informed. Yet the reality is that (regardless of what the issue) there are normally two sides, and they are probably reasonably

evenly split.

Personally, I think your best bet with these over-simplified surveys and leaflets is to recycle them in your green bin. If you have worries or concerns, write about your own views in detail to make them clear to the people asking. Don't engage in the over-simplified one-sided marketing ploys dreamed up by overpaid spin-doctors in sharp suits from a posh office. These simplistic political questions do not help anyone engage in local issues, and lack substance. All serious politicians will surely listen to your whole opinion, and be happy to look at both sides of the case (rather than just to the bit that helps them).

Finally, can I point out to "Disgusted in Sevenoaks Crescent" in the last *Beeston Express* that I would not dream of using the word 'delinquent' in these Politically Correct times.

I was merely reporting the facts as reported in the news item I referred to.

Snippets

Funds for South Africa

A TABLE Top Sale is to be held at Queens Road Methodist Church on Saturday, April 19 between 10am and 1pm. There will be refreshments, tombola, cake and table top stalls.

Proceeds from the tombola and sale of refreshments will be put towards fund raising for a sixth form student at Bluecoat school, who is going to South Africa to work with disadvantaged children and orphans.

Talking of Honour

BROXTOWE MP Nick Palmer will visit the British Legion on Friday, April 4 to talk to members about the 'Honour the Covenant' campaign, a Legion campaign started last year to try and get better treatment for our troops.

Mr Palmer has agreed to take members' views back to the MOD and Government. The meeting starts at 8pm at the British Legion Beeston branch HQ, Hall Croft, Beeston.

Change of name for Beeston Volunteer Centre

MORE than 50 volunteers, users and representatives of other organisations attended an event at Chilwell Road Methodist Church, Beeston on March 14 to complete the legalities for Beeston Volunteer Centre to become Volunteer Centre Broxtowe, and to become a company limited by guarantee.

The centre is planning to expand its volunteer and support services to cover areas in the north of the borough in line with Nottinghamshire County Council's Infrastructure Review.

Treasurer Mike Shorten explained the reasons for the name change and change of charity status before asking those present to cast their votes. The vote was virtually unanimous with only one person voting against.

Don't be conned

HERE at *The Beeston Express*, we have noticed a marked increase in the number of incoming emails asking us to confirm our bank details after "unusual activity on an account", or notifying us of a bequest of tens of thousands of pounds from a distant relative half way across the globe – all we need to do is provide bank details and the money will be paid over.

These scams – schemes to con us out of our cash – are becoming much more commonplace and people need to be on their guard. Some people are repeatedly taken in, often after replying to just one 'scam' mailing that puts them onto a 'suckers list'. The average loss by the three million people taken in each year is £850.

Leaflets published by the Office of Fair Trading offer advice on how to avoid being the victim of a scam are available from Consumer Direct (0800 398 3158). Anyone who thinks they have been the victim of a scam can contact Consumer Direct for advice on 084545 04 05 06.

Caption Competition

This sign, warning of delays on the cul-de-sac, has appeared on a post on Vicarage Street, Beeston.

Let's have your captions and we'll publish the funniest. Please remember to keep them clean!

