

EXETER PHOENIX AND QUIRK THEATRE PRESENT

Mary



THE PIGEON WHO NEVER GAVE UP

30 NOV - 28 DEC 2022

THE
CHRISTMAS
SHOW
FOR ALL
THE FAMILY



Quirk exeter phoenix

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School's Pack

This pack focuses in on different elements of the show, creating a springboard for inclassroom discussions & activities. From the making of the show to the research behind it, we have tried to bring together all the main themes in one place. You will also find some drama warm ups and exercises geared towards primary age children. Please get in touch with us if you have any questions or would like to collaborate in the future. theatrequirk@gmail.com



About Quirk Theatre

At Quirk we make great theatre for all generations. A real treat that will gladden the hearts of all family members. This is our 20th year creating & performing original theatre in Exeter at Christmastime (& more recently, Torrington).



Quirk shows are often a child's first experience of live theatre and this is a responsibility we take very seriously. Although our shows are silly, anarchic & often ridiculous, we pride ourselves on creating theatre with a social conscience, theatre that deals with big subjects & theatre that has kindness at its core. We are also deeply committed to creating meaningful employment and development opportunities for South West creatives.

BACKGROUND TO THE STORY OF...

MARY OF EXETER

Mary of Exeter was a carrier pigeon who flew many military missions with the National Pigeon Service during the Second World War, transporting important messages across the English Channel back to her loft on West Street in Exeter.

Her owner, Cecil (known as Charlie) Brewer, was a bootmaker and pigeon racer. Charlie was born in Church Lane, in St Thomas, Exeter in 1895.

During the First World War, Charlie had been mobilised as part of the Exeter Territorial Army. His leather working skills resulted in him being made a saddler and posted to India. In 1918 he returned to Devon and resumed his career as a bootmaker.

Charlie married his wife Ena in 1922 and purchased No. 6 West Street, which remained his workshop and home for the rest of his life.

The house, which still stands today, is in the West Quarter of Exeter and was built upon the old Roman wall of the city. The West Quarter was traditionally inhabited by merchants and industries such as woollen cloth finishing, metal foundries and smithy working, and the manufacture of clay pipes. Traders, artisans and labourers, including the fullers, dyers and weavers that serviced the woollen industry, lived in the lower parts of the West Quarter. The area suffered from terrible poverty, and had been ravaged by cholera outbreaks in 1832 and 1866. When Charlie bought the house, the area was beginning to be improved by the council.





Charlie was the President of the South Western Centre of the National Homing Pigeon Union. He was the official starter (also known as the Liberator) for pigeon races, releasing hundreds of birds simultaneously from large wicker baskets stacked up on old mail trolleys on the platform at St. Thomas Railway Station.

Charlie was appointed a special constable in 1941. At that time, the work of special constables was not confined purely to police duties. It was considered desirable to give to certain men engaged on special war duties the responsibility of a full constable - for duties such as siren operation, supervision of shelters and, of course, one of the most important positions, of being in general control of war pigeons in the area. That particular special constable was, of course, Charlie Brewer. Not an unlikely choice given his longstanding involvement with pigeons and his membership of the National Pigeon Service.



Born around 1940, Mary flew many military missions from Charlie's pigeon loft and worked until the end of the war. She was awarded the Dickin Medal (often called the Victoria Cross for animals) in November 1945 for showing endurance on war service despite being injured on three occasions. Mary is buried in the PDSA pet cemetery at Ilford in Essex. She is commemorated locally in Exeter within the mosaic under the St. Thomas railway bridge, and a plaque for her can be found adjacent to the war memorial in Northernhay Gardens. Along with other Dickin medal recipients, Mary is honoured by a memorial dedicated to all animals used in war in Park Lane, London. Of the 200,000 pigeons that flew missions during the Second World War, only 2,500 survived.

Our heartfelt thanks to Double Elephant print workshop for sharing this potted history, created as part of their Heritage Lottery funded animation project about Mary. Find the fabulous community created animation [here](#)





Scene By Scene



Scene 1

First of all we meet Gregory Peck. He's a modern day street pigeon. He sings a song about people. Then he takes us back in time to tell us Mary's story

Scene 2

Next we meet Charlie Brewer and he takes us up to his pigeon loft to meet his pigeons. And there, he finds an egg!

Scene 3

The egg hatches and Mary pops out. Two other baby pigeons start telling Mary stories, and Mary finds out about the pigeon's number one enemy- **the PEREGRINE FALCON!**

Scene 4

Mary and Charlie LOVE to race, and we get to see some pigeon racers and their pigeons have a race! Mary wins (as always) and we meet her in her **puppet form** for the 1st time

Scene 5

But then WW2 breaks out. Mary and Charlie listen to a radio broadcast from the National Pigeon Service, who need brave pigeons to deliver messages. Charlie and Mary sign up!

Scene 6 + 7

Mary arrives at the NPS headquarters and meets Flavio (a flamingo). Major Squits puts Mary and Flavio through their paces as they start their training. We also meet GI Joe

Scene 8

Mary is off on her first mission, to Plymouth. We see the secret message put inside the canister on Mary's back and she starts to fly home. She is on her way when suddenly- **BANG!** Mary is hit by a bullet!

Scene 9

Back home at the loft, Charlie is waiting, no way of knowing if Mary is OK. But then all of a sudden, she is back and Charlie tends to her damaged wing and nurses her back to health

Scene 10

Mary returns to the NPS and meets GI Joe properly. They are competitive, because they both want to be the fastest. Flavio sings a song about London & how he wants to go on the next mission, but Major Squits says no.

Scene 11

Mary & GI Joe head to London on the train. Mary is determined to help Private Gubbins and be the fastest. But she takes a dangerous route and **BANG!** She is injured by a bomb

Scene 12

Back home at the loft, Charlie is waiting, no way of knowing if Mary is OK. But then all of a sudden, she is back and Charlie tends to her injuries & nurses her back to health again

Scene 13

Mary goes on her third mission, this time by plane all the way to France. Mary meets Annette, a member of the French resistance, who sends a very important message with Mary.

Scene 14

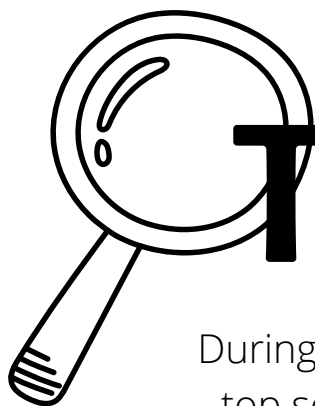
But as Mary sets off for home, she realises she is being chased by a Peregrine Falcon. Mary tries to race it, then remembers her training. But is it too late? Mary is injured & she falls to the ground

Scene 15

Mary is found by Jan, a member of the Eagle Owls Squadron. Jan makes Mary a member of the squadron and hurries her off to try and get her home.

Scene 16 + 17

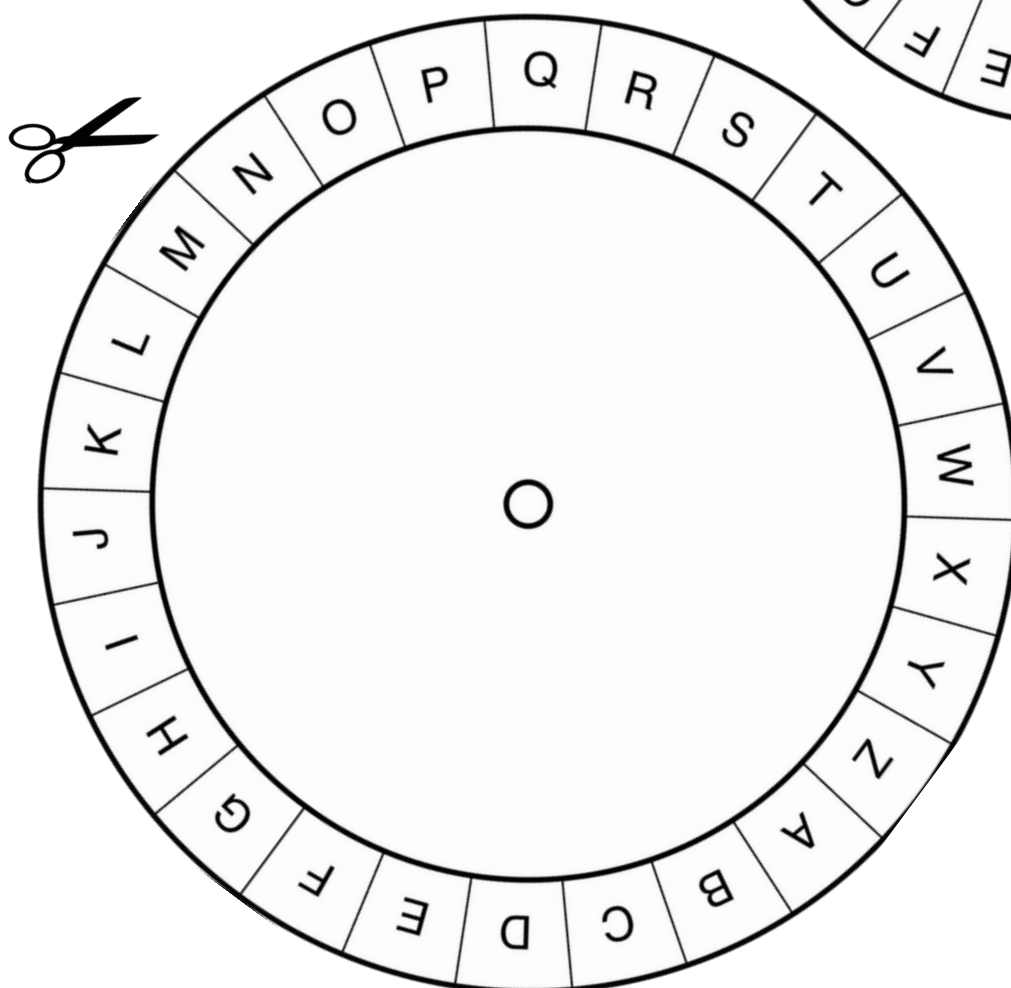
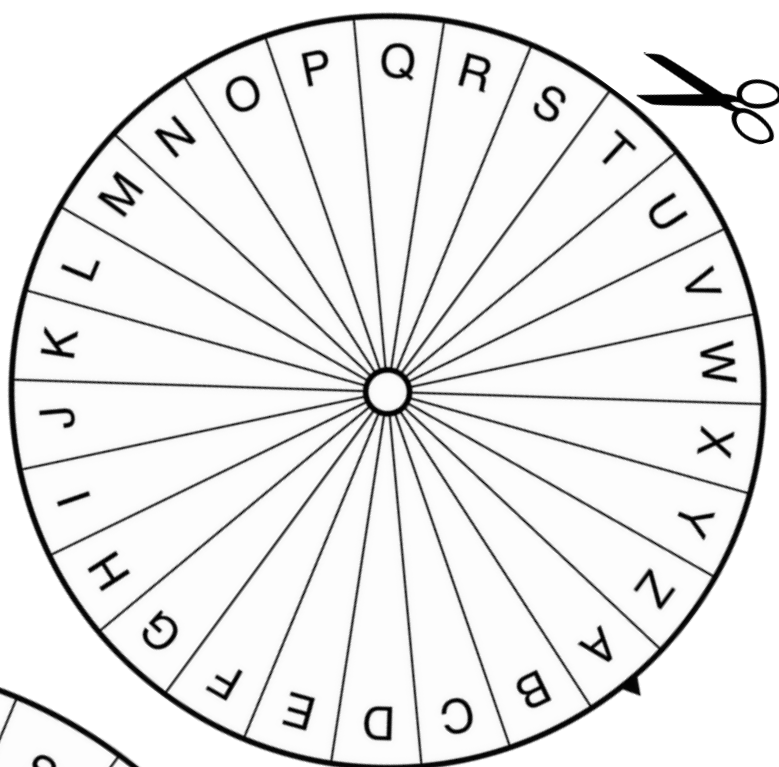
Back home, Charlie is waiting. He dreams of dancing with Mary. He wakes to a knock at the door. It's Mary! Charlie looks after her & then Mary receives her medal & meets all her friends again.



TOP SECRET!

During World War 2, Mary and her pigeon friends had to deliver top secret messages across the channel. The messages were written in secret code so that they couldn't be intercepted.

- **Cut out** both wheels
- Place the little wheel on top of the big wheel so the letters line up.
- You can use a **split pin** to hold them together if you like
- Now turn the little wheel so that two different letters line up (**A = D** or **A = Z** etc).
- Tell your friend which letters you lined up- this is your **key!**



- Now you can write secret messages by using the letters on the little wheel in place of the letters on the big wheel.
- As long as your friend knows your key, they will be able to decipher your code!

Pigeons are... SUPER HEROES!

We needed to learn A LOT about pigeons, and we found some amazing facts about our feathered friends! We've captured some of our best bits here!



Pigeons have eyes that can see Ultra Violet light (so they can literally see colours that are invisible to humans!). They can also **hear** low frequency sounds that humans **can't** hear.

Scientists believe they use these skills to find their way home.

Super heroes!



Pigeons can fly at speeds of up to **77 mph** but have been recorded flying at **92 mph**. Pigeons can fly between 600 and 700 miles in a single day, with the longest recorded flight between Africa and England and covering **7000 miles**.



Pigeons are one a very small number of birds that can take off **vertically**. Next time you see one, watch the way it does it!



Behind The Scenes!



It can take a LOT of different people to make a theatre show! Here's a sneak peek behind the scenes at the people who helped us make Mary



I'm Fi and I'm the **set and costume designer**. It is my job to think about how the world the story happens in is going to look on stage. I love my job as I get to play make believe all the time, just as you might turn your den into a spaceship or castle I get to do that as an adult. The magic comes from doing it in such a way that the audience can believe it as well.



When making the set for Mary, Fi needed to think about a lot of different things. We needed:

- high places where characters could **fly**
- a pigeon loft
- a set that could show characters **inside and outside**
- Charlie's shoemaker's workshop
- The National Pigeon Service headquarters

Fi decided to design a very **flexible** set, that could look like lots of different things at once. She used **ladders** to create height and places to fly from, **lots of levels** so that one character could feel like they were **up in the sky** while another was on the ground. And she made sure each section of the set could be used in lots of different ways. So it doesn't look **exactly** like a house or a workshop or a pigeon loft **but** with a bit of imagination, it can be anything we need it to be!

Activity!

Think of a setting (like the beach, a shop, the Rainforest) & then draw a set. Think about how you might change your set to show a different setting. How do I make my rainforest look like a park, for example?



I'm Jonny and I am the music composer for the show. I create the sounds and music of the characters' world. I get to play many musical instruments, using my computer to arrange all the sounds together. I love trying to imagine the music that helps us understand what the characters are feeling and doing. It's really fun to find new sounds that suit each show I work on. Sometimes I go on sound expeditions to record real life sounds like the sea, a busy street, or trains. Other times, if there's a crashing sound in the script, I create it by banging things or throwing them around in my studio. When we hear these sounds we can feel like we are in the world of the play

Activity!

Choose one of the settings Jonny mentions above (the sea, a busy street etc) and make a soundscape as a whole class. Talk about the different elements you might hear and try out different ways of making them- with your voices? With your hands/bodies? With musical instruments/objects? **Could you create the sound of a pigeon race? What might you hear?**

I'm Katie and I'm the **Director** of the show. Lots of people aren't quite sure what a Director does, and the short answer is... a little bit of everything! Everything you see on the stage, whether it's the design, the things the actors are doing, how they say things, and what it looks like are all decided by a Director.

Directors are **all different** and everybody goes about it in their own way. I like to make sure everyone is having fun, because I think the **best** shows are made by happy people, who have their ideas listened to. One of my jobs is to run the rehearsal room and we play a lot of games to get our bodies moving and our brains in gear. I **love** being a Director- I think it's a lot of fun.



Mary The Book!



This is Quirk's 20th year, and to celebrate we decided to make a book! Quirk have been telling stories for two decades and so we decided to try our making a book to accompany this year's show, Mary The Pigeon Who Never Gave Up. We did **a lot** of learning as we went along, talking to **experts** who do different things in the world of books. Here's how we did it!



The Mary story is a **true** story, so Simon and Katie (the writers) needed to do lots of research to make sure that they had the facts in order!

We talked to **Charlie Brewer's family**, we visited a real **pigeon loft** and we looked up a lot of things online. We then edited and edited the story together to make sure it was perfect!

Simon meeting a real racing pigeon!



We then joined our illustrator, Rosie Race, to start sketching the illustrations. We drew each page on an A4 sheet and laid them all out around the room. We needed to choose what a reader would **see, read and feel** on each page. This bit was **very fun** but quite tricky!



Then we started the **very VERY fun bit**. We ran workshops for school children and community groups in painting and collage, creating lots of the lovely illustrations in the book! Our participants made **pigeons, flowers, butterflies, houses, fancy pigeons and shoes!**



Then **Rosie** made all the other illustrations out of collage. This took a very long time (pretty much all summer). The community made illustrations were all scanned in and then we combined Rosie's pictures with our workshop pictures digitally, using a computer.



We worked with our **Book Production Manager**, Julian, to lay out the book using a computer. We had to decide lots of things about where things should go on each page. How big should the writing be? Where should the pictures go? Once it was all ready, Julian sent it off to the printers. This was a **very** exciting moment!

Every school who comes to see the show will get a **FREE BOOK** for their school library, **Happy reading!**

Activity! Make your own collage artworks using painted papers!

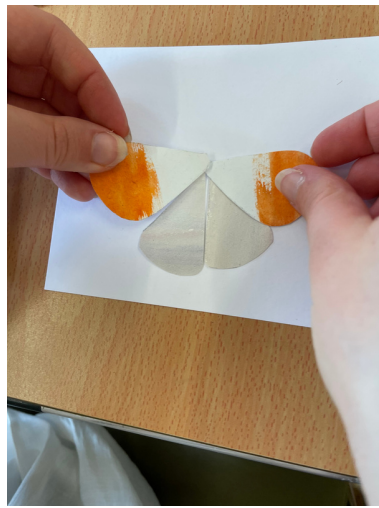
- Paint your papers in a way that creates INTERESTING TEXTURES. Solid blocks of colour aren't that interesting! So you could paint with quite a dry brush to create brush marks, or put two colours on your brush at once to create streaks. You don't have to paint perfectly- in fact the more imperfect the better the result!



- Paint sheets of different colours and then leave them to dry

Now you're ready to collage!

- It helps to have pictures or examples of what you're making so that you can look for the details and textures
- You can either rip the paper into shapes or use scissors!
- Lay the pieces out on a blank piece of A4 and move them around until you're happy with the result
- Then glue into position- you just made your first collage!
- You may want to add a few more details once it's stuck down.



Build up layers slowly, adding detail as you go!

Collage Tip!
Leaving white bits on your paper can be really useful!

Collage is really accessible and creates fantastic results!





Squadron 307

The Polish Eagle Owls



307 Squadron were **night-fighters** for the RAF who fought the Luftwaffe over the skies of Britain and prevented Exeter from being totally destroyed during the blitz on the city in 1942.

80 years ago, on the night of 3rd-4th May forty Junkers-88 bombers attacked Exeter. The British city's only defence were four Beaufighters of the Polish 307 Squadron. During the bombing raid the squadron shot down four of the enemy bombers, crucially before those bombers could release their bombs on Exeter.

Tragically 156 people were killed that night and over a thousand buildings destroyed. However, had it not been for 307 Squadron the loss of life would have been considerably higher and the damage to property even greater. The Polish 307 Squadron probably saved the city from complete destruction that night.



Information kindly shared by **307 Squadron Project**

The Eagle Owls as they were known, had a Squadron song and the chorus sounds like a hooting owl. In fact, to join the Squadron, **you had to hoot three times!** The song was written by Juliusz Baykowski (author of the text) and Jan Maliński (composer of the music). When we heard about the Eagle Owls we knew we had to include a character from the Squadron in our show. It felt like a very important part of Exeter's WW2 story, and one we don't often hear.

The true Mary story ends with Mary being brought home by a farmer, but we decided to weave the 307 Squadron story into Mary's. So we decided that **Jan Maliński** would find Mary and look after her. The song that you hear Jan singing is the official **Eagle Owl's Squadron Song**.



http://www.polishsquadronsremembered.com/307/307_faces_1.html

Below you can see a ceremony outside Exeter Cathedral, where the 307 Squadron gifted the Polish flag to the city of Exeter. The Polish flag is now raised above the Guildhall every year to mark the occasion



You might have noticed that in the show, Jan wraps Mary up in a Polish flag to keep her warm when she is injured. For a while, the Polish flag that had been gifted to the city after WW2 was lost and had to be replaced.

We imagined what could have happened to it, and thought it was nice to imagine that it was used to look after Mary and then became a part of Mary's pigeon loft!

Drama Games

Quick warm Up Games

Pumpkin Face/ Raisin Face

- Open your whole face as wide as possible and say 'PUMPKIN FACE' in your biggest voice
- Screw your face up as tightly as possible and squeak 'raisin face' in your smallest voice
- Repeat, getting your body involved too!



Pass The Face

- Make an amazing funny face, then turn to the person next to you in the circle
- The next person has to mirror the face as exactly as they can. They then make a new face and send it to the next person.
- Repeat, all the way around, adding sounds for more fun!



Pass The Sound

- The first person in the circle makes a brilliant sound (with an action attached for more fun)
- The next person has to mirror the sound as exactly as they can. They then make a new sound and send it to the next person- try & find variety of pitch, timbre, volume etc
- Repeat, all the way around, ending with a round of applause!



Aims

- Warming up the face, voice and body
- Having fun together
- Unlocking playfulness

Rehearsal Room Exercises

Flocking

We use the flocking exercise nearly every rehearsal day, as it's such a great way to tune in to each other & to open up play.

- Gather in small groups (4 or less) Form a diamond shape like this photo
- Move around the space, allowing the person at the front of the diamond to lead the movement
- Everyone else in the group tries to move in exactly the same way
- Whenever the group turns & a new person is at the front, they become the new leader
- Try and move together, mirroring what the leader is doing .

It's best to keep movements slow and small to begin with, allowing things to speed up as everyone tunes in



Aims

Group focus / Play / Cooperation / Physical Warm Up

Development

- Starting with breath, encourage participants to add sound as a group, letting sounds come out of the physicality.
- Invite flocking groups to 'meet' each other in the space & see what games develop

Colour in Mary!

Quirk



Colour in Mary!

Quirk

