

NEW/ADVENTURES RE;BOURNE



Ashley as Vicky Page dancing at Lady Neston's after-show soiree (Photo: Johan Persson)

SPOTLIGHT – Ashley Shaw in The Red Shoes Wed 17 May 2017

(Warning: potential spoiler alerts)

Tell us a bit about your role in Matthew Bourne's production of The Red Shoes:

I play the young, aspiring ballerina Vicky Page. Vicky is a passionate, ambitious girl who joins the ballet Lermontov with dreams of becoming their star. The company's director, Boris Lermontov sees that she is special and creates his new ballet *The Red Shoes* on her. Whilst creating the ballet, she falls in love with the show's composer, Julian Craster. Vicky is then torn between love and art... How can she give herself entirely to either? Her struggle between the two is what eventually drives her insane (represented by the uncontrollable madness of the red shoes) and eventually to her tragic end. Vicky's story really takes you on a journey and getting to play such a vivid character with so many emotions is just wonderful.

What is your favourite moment in The Red Shoes for your character?

My favourite moment for Vicky is a duet in Act Two called 'Cheap Digs'. Vicky has just left the Ballet Lermontov and is working in a low brow variety act performing as part of an Adagio trio (who treat her very poorly). She is miserable and unfulfilled and starts to feel angry and resentful towards Julian. He is feeling the same and the cracks in their relationship really start to show. The duet is an angry, passionate struggle between the two, both fighting between the love for their art vs each other. When we originally workshopped this duet we played with the idea of constantly being connected. Her holding his wrists and him holding her ankles, representing them holding each other back from their artistic careers in music and dance. So, there is meaning behind every step within it. It's a very heart-breaking duet and every night I perform it I truly feel Vicky's pain. It's also set to the most stunning piece of music that just fills your soul with emotion. It's a really special moment.



Ashley during her favourite moment on stage 'Cheap Digs' (Photo: Johan Persson)

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Ashley's biggest inspiration for the role, Moira Shearer who played the original Vicky Page in The Red Shoes film. Here she is on set.

What has inspired how you created and play your character?

There has been so much that has inspired my character in this show. As always, Matthew and the team encourage you to do as much research as you possibly can! I looked at pictures, read books, watched films and endless archive ballet videos I could find online. Really emerging yourself into the era was hugely helpful and inspirational. The way they looked, moved, danced, spoke to each other, held themselves... etc. was actually rather different to how we do today. So achieving that physicality was really important to capture the feel of a ballet company in 1948.

Obviously, for me, the *The Red Shoes* film was the biggest inspiration and of course, famous ballerina Moira Shearer who played Vicky to perfection. It's such a huge, iconic role that so many people know and love, that I felt a lot of pressure to do her justice. Trying to capture the essence of Moira was something I really aspired to do, and still do!

If you've been in a New Adventures show other than The Red Shoes, how does this new work differ in terms of what may have been asked from you thematically?

I think all of New Adventures' productions are very different and having been in quite a few varying shows I must say the work is so satisfying. From one show to the next we really get to push ourselves in new directions and explore new areas in both our dancing and acting. This show has definitely been the most challenging for me physically. Playing a ballerina means I'm dancing a lot and it requires a lot of stamina! (First time I ever performed it I honestly didn't think I could ever do it again!) But it's hugely rewarding and I love it. It's also great to be back en pointe. Something I've trained in my whole life but isn't actually in many other New Adventures productions, so it's really lovely to revisit that side of my dancing.

If your role is played by someone else also how has this informed how you develop/play the character yourself?

In New Adventures each role in the show is played by at least two or three people. This keeps us well covered in case of any injuries and allows us to have shows off each week. But what's really great about this system is that we get to share our experience with another person. Particularly when you are creating a new show or role it can be quite daunting and having someone to bounce ideas off is really helpful. Everyone has different strengths and things to offer, so it's great to combine them all. Also getting to watch the show and see what the audience sees gives you a better understanding of the character to help further develop your own performances. So it's a very positive thing.

How do you reflect on your performance after the show other than receiving notes from other company members/resident director etc.

After a performance it's hard not to run through the whole thing in your mind. What moments you nailed, what wasn't so great, did the audience get it? It's always good to self-note and recognise what went wrong so you can do what you can to fix it for next time. But mostly I just take in the feeling after a show. Being on stage makes me so incredibly happy and there is no greater feeling in the world than that total exhaustion of having given the audience absolutely everything you've got. A dancer's career can be quite short so I try to enjoy every moment and celebrate that with the company as much as I can. As Vicky Page answered when asked the question, "Why do you want to dance?", "Why do you want to live?" - it's my everything.



THE red shoes

You can follow Ashley on Twitter (@AshleyShaw_1) and Instagram (@Asharella14) for a further insight into her world.