

**SOLIHULL**

**PRESENTS**

# **T** **THE** **WHO'S** **Tommy**

**22ND TO 25TH MARCH 2017 BUSHELL HALL**

**MUSIC AND LYRICS BY PETE TOWNSHEND**

**BOOK BY PETE TOWNSHEND AND DES MCANUFF**

**ADDITIONAL MUSIC & LYRICS BY JOHN ENTWISTLE AND KEITH MOON**

This amateur production is presented by special arrangement with Music Theatre International (Europe).

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# SYNOPSIS

## ACT I

We begin in London in 1940, a country in the midst of war, with the initial meeting and then marriage of the Walkers. Captain Walker parachutes into Germany, where he is captured as a prisoner of war (**"Overture"**). Back in London at 22 Heathfield Gardens, the Captain's brother Ernie delivers a care package to the pregnant Mrs Walker just as two officers arrive to announce the disappearance and presumed death of her husband (**"Captain Walker"**).

The following year, two nurses hand Mrs Walker her newborn son, Tommy; later, in 1945, American troops liberate Captain Walker's POW camp, proclaiming the end of the war (**"It's a Boy" / "We've Won"**). Mrs Walker has since attained a new lover, and they celebrate her twenty-first birthday (**"Twenty-One"**); to their surprise, Captain Walker enters the house and a fight erupts between Captain Walker and the boyfriend. Mrs Walker turns four year-old Tommy away, but he watches his father shoot the boyfriend to death through a mirror. Captain and Mrs Walker embrace but soon realise what Tommy has witnessed, and violently shake him, telling him he didn't see or hear anything (**"What About the Boy"**). The police arrive; Tommy simply gazes at the mirror in silence. A narrator – Tommy's older self – appears to the audience, introducing and framing the story of his exceptional childhood (**"Amazing Journey"**).

Captain Walker is tried for murder but found not guilty for reasons of self-defense. However, Tommy's family quickly realize that he has apparently gone deaf, dumb, and blind. Tommy's parents have him undergo a battery of medical tests to no avail (**"Sparks"**) and at ten years of age, Tommy's unresponsive state remains unchanged (**"Amazing Journey - Reprise"**). The Walkers all go to church and host a Christmas family dinner, though the family is unnerved that Tommy does not know that it is Christmas or understand its significance (**"Christmas"**). Young Tommy only seems interested in staring into the mirror from which his older self seems to sing (**"See Me, Feel Me"**).

The Walkers leave Tommy with his cousin Kevin, a sadistic bully (**"Cousin Kevin"**). Cousin Kevin and his friends take Tommy to a youth club where, to everyone's astonishment, Tommy plays pinball brilliantly (**"Sensation"**). Another doctor, a psychiatrist, tests Tommy yet again with no success (**"Sparks - Reprise"**). The desperate Captain Walker is approached by The Hawkets (**"Eyesight to the Blind"**) who promise a miraculous cure for Tommy. They take young Tommy to the Isle of Dogs to find The Gypsy, who tries to convince Captain Walker to let her spend time alone with Tommy (**"The Acid Queen"**). Horrified by the suggestion, Captain Walker snatches Tommy away. By 1958, Tommy has become a pinball-playing expert as Cousin Kevin and a group of adolescents await 17-year-old Tommy's appearance at the amusement arcade, where his rise to local popularity has begun (**"Pinball Wizard"**).



## ACT II

By 1960, Tommy has become the local pinball champion and hero of the neighbourhood (**"Underture"**). Captain Walker persists unsuccessfully in seeking doctors and a cure for Tommy (**"There's a Doctor" and "Go to the Mirror!"**). On the street, a group of local louts surround Tommy (**"Tommy, Can You Hear Me?"**) and carry him home. The Walkers, at their wits' end, passionately confront each other (**"I Believe My Own Eyes"**). Tommy stares into the mirror blankly as his mother tries desperately to reach him one last time, before smashing the mirror in a rage (**"Smash the Mirror"**). With the mirror in pieces, Tommy suddenly becomes fully lucid and interactive for the first time since the age of four, and he leaves home (**"I'm Free"**). Through 1961 to 1963, news of Tommy's miraculous regaining of full consciousness receives huge media attention (**"Miracle Cure"**), Tommy is idolised by the public and the press (**"Sensation - Reprise"**), and he begins appearing in stadiums (**"Pinball Wizard - Reprise"**). Uncle Ernie tries to capitalise on Tommy's newfound stardom, by selling cheap souvenirs for a grand opening party of Tommy's new holiday camp, resulting from Tommy's cult-like following (**"Tommy's Holiday Camp"**). That night, an adolescent fan named Sally Simpson falls from the stage in her eagerness to touch Tommy and is injured (**"Sally Simpson"**). Tommy, in horror, stops the show and tends to Sally.

Realising how caught up in celebrity he has become, Tommy wishes to do something in return for his fans and invites them all back to his house (**"Welcome"**). Once there, the population of fans keeps growing, though Tommy generously, but naïvely, wishes to welcome everyone equally. Sally then asks Tommy how she can be more like him and less like herself (**"Sally Simpson's Question"**). He is confused, and insists that there is no reason for anyone to be like him, when everyone else already possesses the gifts that he was deprived of most of his life. He suddenly realises that he had thought his fame came from his miraculous recovery, when it in fact arose due to his fans desire for a spiritual leader, hoping he could communicate wisdom from his experience of not being able to hear, see, or talk for so long. Now, disenchanted with their hero for failing to provide the answers they wanted to be told, the crowd turns on him and leaves (**"We're Not Gonna Take It"**). Tommy hears the voice of his ten-year-old self (**"See Me, Feel Me"**) and for a moment, to the horror of his family, seems to be reverting to his old state. But instead he turns to his family, whom he has ignored during his stardom, and embraces them in acceptance, before he climactically reunites with his younger selves onstage (**"Listening to You"**).



## CAST

Cast (in order of appearance)

|                    |                       |
|--------------------|-----------------------|
| Mrs Walker         | Emma Hadley           |
| Captain Walker     | Oliver Daniels        |
| Uncle Ernie        | Federico Collini      |
| Minister           | Alexander Sasse       |
| First Officer      | Chris Baker           |
| Second Officer     | Charlie Hadley        |
| Nurse 1            | Anna Higgins          |
| Nurse 2            | Morven Cameron        |
| 1st Allied Soldier | Ned Tennet            |
| 2nd Allied Soldier | Richard Loughran      |
| Lover              | Alexander Sasse       |
| Youngest Tommy     | Tom Hattersley        |
| Tommy              | James Spence          |
| Judge              | Gwynneth Horbury      |
| First Barrister    | Jessie Lloyd          |
| Second Barrister   | Joe Chamberlain       |
| Younger Tommy      | Joshua Kermod         |
| Cousin Kevin       | Charlie Tucki         |
| Kevin's Mother     | Kirsty Scheiby        |
| Kevin's Father     | Chris Baker           |
| Minister's Wife    | Maxine Perroni-Scharf |
| First Hawker       | Benny Wu              |
| Second Hawker      | Ellie Barbieri        |
| The Gypsy          | Ellie Ajao            |
| First Local Lad    | Chris Baker           |
| Second Local Lad   | Joe Chamberlain       |
| Specialist         | Joe Chamberlain       |
| Assistant          | Helena Massoud        |
| News Vendor        | Benjamin Watson       |
| Sally Simpson      | Zara Donaldson        |
| Mrs Simpson        | Tabitha Botterill     |
| Mr Simpson         | Alexander Sasse       |
| DJ                 | Joe Chamberlain       |

### DANCING CHORUS:

Dance Captain: Gwynneth Horbury, Benedict Barker, Tarran Dhillon, Prudence Dixey, Zara Donaldson, Meredith Hanson, Aishwarya Jagadeeswaren, Harriet Jones, Madeleine Koral, Daniel Lee, Jessie Lloyd, Aoife Mackew, Jay Madhar, Katie Philips, Tom Serle, Sophie Shakeshaft, Alice Sharpe, Benjamin Watson, Benny Wu

### SINGING CHORUS:

Chris Baker, Ellie Barbieri, Christina Bate, Eleanor Berrow, Tabitha Botterill, Luke Bryant, Morven Cameron, Georgina Dalby, Alexandra Duckworth, Saskia Freshwater, Charlie Hadley, David Hass, Anna Higgins, Harrison Jones, Richard Loughran, Helena Massoud, Elle Miles, Maxine Perroni-Scharf, Alexander Sasse, Kirsty Scheiby, Aymbujan Srijothy, Ned Tennet

### CHORUS:

Lucy Fennell, Ellie Featherstone, Georgina Hart, Charis Holland, Niamh Smythe, Ella Stirling, Rebecca Toher



## BAND

|                  |                                     |
|------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Electric Guitars | Oliver Streeton<br>T Durham         |
| Bass Guitar      | Hayden Wood                         |
| Keyboards        | Jim Bate<br>S Phillips<br>A Woodrow |
| French Horn      | A Roper                             |



## PRODUCTION TEAM

|                               |                         |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Director                      | J C Hammond             |
| Musical Director              | A T Kermod              |
| Choreographer                 | S Mabon                 |
| Production Manager            | P Jukes                 |
| Consultant Production Manager | R Bower                 |
| Design Supervisor             | K Hunton                |
| Video Animation               | Keen City               |
| Prop Design                   | R Bishop                |
| Costume Supervisors           | S Surran<br>B Woolaston |
| 3D Set Modelling              | Chris Baker             |
| Makeup Supervisor             | S Thomas                |

### CREW

|                         |               |
|-------------------------|---------------|
| Stage Manager           | Alex Stedman  |
| Props Manager           | Kate Stumper  |
| Assistant Stage Manager | Matt Walker   |
| Lighting Operator       | Thomas Smith  |
| Sound Operator          | Cormac McLean |

### STAGE CREW:

Mary Davies, Elliott Harris, Oscar Huissoon, Aadarsh Krishianthan, Niall McManus, Liam Mingo, Ewan Waddell, Hannah Wolverson

### THEATRE DESIGN TEAM:

Johanna Balogh, Chris Baker, Olivia Barker, Jessica Boake, Eden Capewell, Eloise Davidson, Ziyu Ding, Rennae Du, Amy Edge, Beth Embley, Lily Evans, Evie Garner, Annabel Hill, Gwynneth Horbury, Maisy Horsburgh, Anushka Karandikar, Eden Lupoli, Anna Mitchell, Alexandra Marshall, Becky Monkhouse, Emily Moore, Alyssa Morrison, Elisa Mottram, Olivia Mueller, Anika Rao, Gemma Radburn-Todd, Bismah Saleem, Eleanor Shiels, Sarah Spence, Harriet Toogood, Heidi Youssef



### THANKS:

Mounting a theatrical production in such a busy school requires the help and goodwill of a great number of people, we would like to thank: the Headmaster and the Governors for their support; Pamela Davies for her work in coaching some of the soloists in their singing lessons; Dan Wilkins for his coaching and notation work on the electric guitar parts; Lee Harris on setting up the technological aspects of the keyboards; Sophie Lodge for marketing the show on social media and beyond; Don Ashford for constructing parts of the set; Jayne Round and the catering team for their food during show week and for organising interval refreshments; Tracey Duggan for managing the box office; Karen Perrins for painting the Front Door; the cleaning staff for cleaning up after long rehearsals and finally the parents of the cast and crew for providing costumes and supporting their sons and daughters through line learning and exhausting rehearsals.

Programme design & print: Alan Hill - Hill Shorter Photography: Dave Reardon and Andy Seal

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## PRINCIPALS

### ELLIE AJAO - GYPSY

Ellie is a keen performer and loves being on stage whether it's acting, singing or playing her favourite instrument, the violin. She usually contributes to the musical by playing in the orchestra but decided to move onto the stage this year instead. She recently played the role of the harpy "No-name" in *His Dark Materials Part II*.

### CHARLIE TUCKI - COUSIN KEVIN

Currently a GCSE drama student, this is Charlie's first production at Solihull in an acting part as last year he played in the orchestral 'pit' for *Carousel*. He has had acting roles in productions outside of school as a member of Playbox Theatre in Warwick, but this will be his first ever musical.

### OLIVER DANIELS - CAPTAIN WALKER

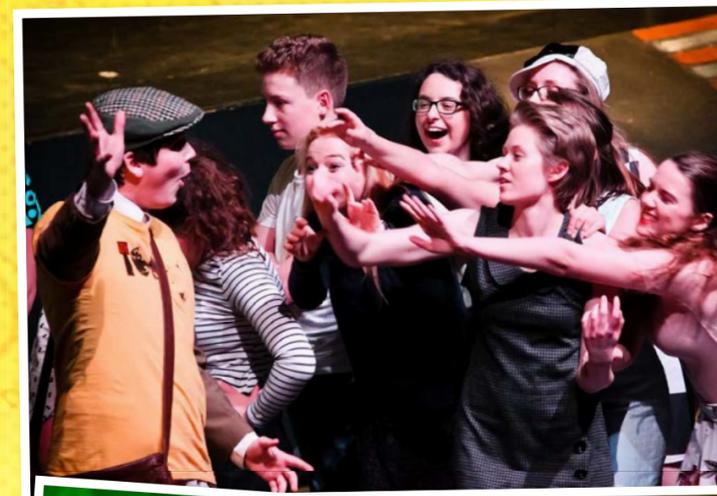
Oliver has been involved in drama productions throughout his considerable time at the school. Most recently he played Lord Asriel in *His Dark Materials Part II* (2016), but has also performed as Dr Seldon in *Carousel* (2016) and Enjolras in *Les Misérables* (2015).

### JAMES SPENCE - TOMMY

James has a passion for drama. His most recent role was of John Parry in the school's version of *His Dark Materials Part II* (2016). He is also looking forward to performing alongside some of his colleagues when they present *Beasts and Beauties* at the forthcoming Edinburgh Fringe Festival.

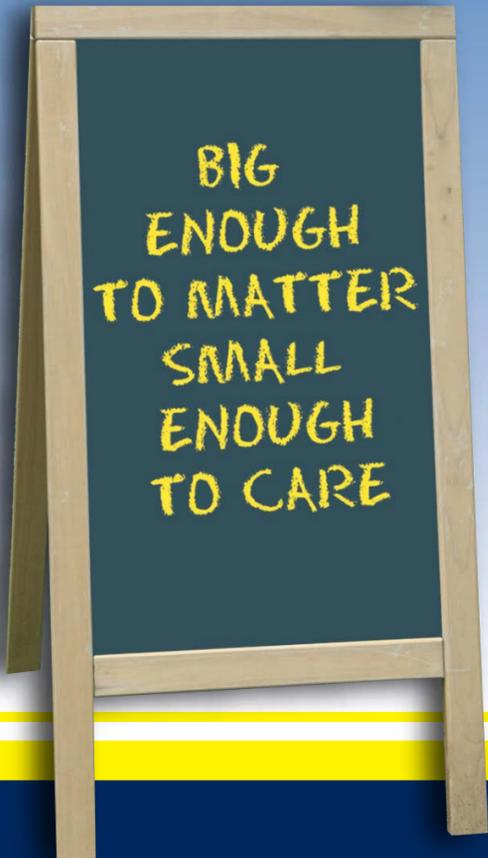
### EMMA HADLEY - MRS WALKER

Emma has partaken in all dramatic opportunities during her time at Solihull and has particularly loved studying GCSE and A Level Theatre Studies. She most recently portrayed the character of Nettie Fowler in *Carousel* (2016) and also directed a Lower School production this year, *The Wardrobe*. Emma hopes to further her study of Theatre and continue her dramatics by attending drama school in 2018.



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## DIRECTOR - JAMES HAMMOND

I am tremendously excited to be directing *Tommy* for this year's Solihull School musical, a project that I have longed to work on since I discovered my mother's dog-eared LP of the iconic original at the tender age of eight. *Tommy* had a significant influence on me; it wasn't only the first real rock music that I had heard, but it was also, much later, the first time that I came across a musical theatre piece featuring music that I loved. *Tommy* is not, in fact, a musical, but rather a rock opera; this grandiose term was embraced by Pete Townshend to describe his masterpiece, dubbed by some the first successful extended work in rock music. For a rock fan who is also a theatre director, there are few projects that are as thrilling, and I am enormously thankful that Tim Kermode was willing to step outside of his usual métier and come on this 'Amazing Journey'.

It is also a particularly interesting time to be attempting *Tommy*, something the Birmingham Repertory Theatre also seems to have noticed. The plot of *Tommy* is obliquely drawn, but one of the compelling themes is the willingness of people to follow charismatic leaders in search of simple solutions to complex problems. In the heart of a seemingly straightforward narrative about pinball, there is a deep concern about the cult of celebrity and its place at the heart of our culture, an astonishingly prescient insight for 1968. Reoccurring throughout the piece is also a belief in

## MUSICAL DIRECTOR - TIM KERMODE

Musicals come in all shapes, sizes and genres. *Tommy* takes us in a different direction to recent musicals staged here at Solihull in that it is a rock opera. Musically this presents some big challenges. The operatic nature means that nearly all the text is sung, or at least underscored; the band, therefore, plays almost throughout the show. In addition, the chorus singing parts are less melody-based than in many shows and more to do with adding harmonies and texture to the overall effect; this means they come in and out in short bursts, making the learning much more arduous. Finally, the vocal ranges are generally quite high and so we have had to work hard in finding ways to present what is required whilst also ensuring that we take care of what are essentially still youthful and developing voices.

My own previous experience of directing musicals has not included a rock show and so, for me, this has been an especially exciting journey. When Mr Hammond and I narrowed down our choices for this year's show he made it clear that *Tommy* was right at the top of his list and that if we did not do it this year it would come up in discussion every year until I said 'yes'! So, accepting that putting yourself out of your comfort zone is often a good approach I did say 'yes'. My initial trepidation has gradually faded as I have got to know the score and the show as a whole and I know that Mr Hammond's staging will be so energetic that it will look as well as sound fabulous.

As always, I have been struck by the energy and enthusiasm of all the pupils involved in the production: the singers for embracing all that is required of them, and the band for their attention to detail (as well, of course, for their volume!). I can only hope that they have all enjoyed the experience and end result as much as I have.

the importance of genuine human relationships; with the line 'listening to you, I get the music', *Tommy* is rejecting the acclaim of the mob for the more complex, difficult, but ultimately more rewarding relationships with his family and friends.

At its heart, *Tommy* is a rock show and so we have endeavoured to turn the dial up to eleven; our fantastic dancers have worked incredibly hard to master a greater number of routines than ever before and our singers have embraced the challenge of singing in a style with which few of them are familiar. I have been absolutely delighted in the way that our talented performers have embraced the challenge of bringing Solihull School its first ever rock opera, and I hope that you enjoy your evening with *Tommy*.



## DANCE CHOREOGRAPHER - SAMANTHA MABON

This is the ninth year I have been asked back to choreograph the school musical, and as always it is a privilege to be involved. This year has been different for me in many ways and it has changed the way I have been able to approach the show and work with the pupils. Whilst I normally juggle rehearsals around my full-time job in Birmingham, I have instead this year been on maternity leave. In addition, for the first time ever we held auditions to create a chorus of dancers (together with a separate singing chorus). Holding dance auditions 2 weeks after giving birth was, I am the first to admit, slightly crazy, and there is no way I would have been able to do them and the rehearsals that have followed over the last 6 months had it not been for the help and support of Mrs Johnson, one of the fabulous teachers here at Solihull. Having worked with Mrs Johnson on past musicals, I knew I could count on her help to make the dance chorus such a success and to demonstrate some of the more difficult moves (as well as leading my rather energetic warm-ups!) that I should not have been attempting so soon after giving birth. Thank you Mrs Johnson so much for all your help and support.

It has been amazing to have a dedicated group of dancers to work with for the first time as it has allowed us to push further than ever before and you will see a lot of partner work including lifts in our routines, which would have been impossible to achieve with a larger chorus. The pupils have worked tirelessly each week and have really bonded as a group, which was particularly important as they needed to trust their partners (particularly during the lifts) and I'm pleased to say that they are all still talking to each other, even after some of them have been dropped occasionally by their partners! *Tommy* is a musical I was not familiar with prior to this and so it was a challenge for me to imagine

## SET DESIGN - KEVIN HUNTON

*What sort of an atmosphere are you hoping to create?*

The atmosphere for *Tommy* needs to contrast from quite dark/surreal domestic scenes into the electric excitement of the musical numbers such as 'Pinball Wizard'.

*What were your influences for the set design?*

Many of the ideas for the set came from retro pinball machines themselves... the psychedelic graphics, flashing lights and sounds but above all, the ability pinball machines had in the 70s to transport the player to another world of heightened emotion! In addition, the host of current rock musicals such as 'We will Rock You' were of great influence.

*What is the set design going to look like?*

The band will be a focus of the on-stage set. They will be on a raised truss gantry platform across the centre stage and sides forming a box set. They will support lighting and LED panels that will surround the band and open stage area. Off the front of the stage on the auditorium level will see the domestic scene settings, carpeted with psychedelic pinball flooring.

the musical as a whole, however Mr Hammond had a clear vision as to how he wanted it to be staged and as a result his ideas formed the basis for my choreography, as well as taking inspiration from listening to the fantastic music used in this show. As always while I can choreograph a lot prior to rehearsals (although this has certainly been a challenge this year with a newborn!) it is not until you get into the room with the dancers that you can truly see how a routine will look and that is when things get tweaked depending on the pupils' abilities. My dance chorus have been a fantastic group to work with and I want to thank them all for their hard work over the last 6 months. I do hope you all enjoy the routines we have created and I want to wish the whole cast the very best for what I know will be a fantastic show.



*What are the challenges of creating a set design for a school play?*

Creating designs or steering the design in a direction that allows for an effective participatory and educational experience is difficult. It's always a big challenge with Solihull productions due to the technical scale we aspire to, however it has always been my plan to include students on many, if not all aspects of the design.

*What is your own background in theatre design?*

I studied Theatre Design BA(Hons) and Scenography MA(PGDip).

*How does Tommy compare to other shows you've worked on?*

Every show poses new challenges and *Tommy* is no exception, but we have continued to learn from how we face these challenges and grow as a production team.

Interviewed by PWG Ford

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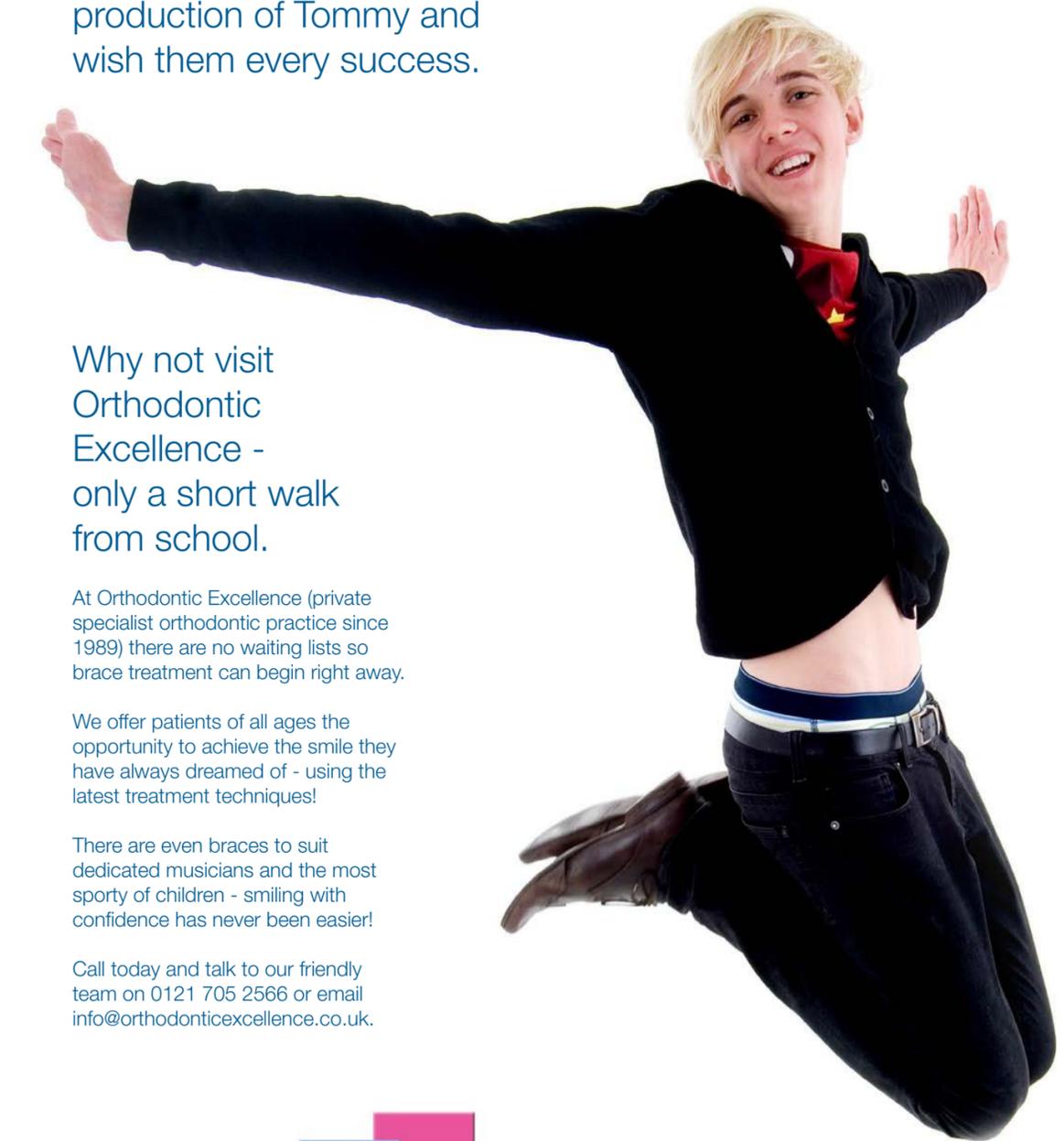
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# SOLIHULL SCHOOL PAST MUSICALS

- 1976 H.M.S.Pinafore
- 1978 The Beggars Opera
- 1979 Salad Days
- 1980 Orpheus in the Underworld
- 1981 La Belle Helene
- 1982 Free as Air
- 1983 The Magic Flute
- 1984 Pink Champagne
- 1985 Orpheus in the Underworld
- 1986 Kiss Me Kate
- 1987 The Mikado
- 1988 The Merry Widow
- 1989 La Belle Helene
- 1990 The Pirates of Penzance
- 1991 Pink Champagne
- 1992 Fiddler on the Roof
- 1993 My Fair Lady
- 1994 Annie get your Gun
- 1995 South Pacific
- 1996 Kiss Me Kate
- 1997 Oklahoma
- 1998 Guys and Dolls
- 1999 Crazy For You
- 2000 West Side Story
- 2001 Cabaret
- 2003 Oliver
- 2004 Joseph and the Amazing  
Technicolor Dreamcoat
- 2005 Les Misérables
- 2006 Barnum
- 2007 The Sound of Music
- 2008 The Scarlet Pimpernel
- 2009 My Fair Lady
- 2010 South Pacific
- 2011 Grease
- 2012 Fiddler on the Roof
- 2013 Phantom of the Opera
- 2014 Spamalot
- 2015 Les Misérables
- 2016 Carousel

