

Capital Theatres' apprentice is a flying success

The company which runs the city theatres including the Festival Theatre took on its first technical theatre apprentice, and says she is a flying success.

Liz Dokukina was recruited to learn about the art of flying – the way that scenery is lifted onto and off the stage. The deal was that Liz would receive hands on training in a live theatre setting along with the chance to study at Edinburgh College for an SCQF Level 7 Diploma in Technical Theatre and Production Operations qualification.

This is typically an area which is hard to get into, but it is very popular as a career.

The Festival Theatre has one of the largest counterweight fly systems in the country, consisting of 75 fly bars each holding up to 400 kilograms of weight. As part of her apprenticeship, Liz is learning how to safely operate this theatrical flying system that moves backdrops and scenery in and out of the audience's sight.

Despite joining the theatre just a few months ago, Liz has excelled in all aspects of her work and has already flown her own show for the first time – Carlos Acosta's On Before. Later this month, Liz is due to visit the Wales Millenium Centre in Cardiff to work on Matthew Bourne's Edward Scissorhands before it heads to the Festival Theatre in May.

Liz said: "It is a fantastic opportunity, and I am so glad that it exists, especially as someone who has a passion for theatre but didn't have any technical qualifications. Now I can learn hands-on while studying towards a qualification and also earning a living. It's been really fun – it's a dream coming into work knowing that you're going to have a good day. I love the learning process. With every show that comes in, there's a new technique for me to learn.

"Everyone at Capital Theatres has been so supportive and learning from my mentor Mark Pringle (our resident flyman) has been absolutely fantastic! He so clearly understands his craft, having started at the Festival Theatre when it opened 30 years ago, and it is a privilege to learn from him. The team has created a brilliant learning environment, and I am in very safe hands."

Fiona Gibson, Chief Executive of Capital Theatres said: "It has been so lovely to see Liz flourish in this key technical skill which is incredibly in demand and fundamental to the complex technical operation of a theatre of our scale and more widely across the sector.

"We are thrilled to be working in partnership with Edinburgh College in offering this Technical Theatre Modern Apprenticeship and are privileged to have a team of highly talented and experienced technicians operating one of the largest counterweight fly systems in the country. Modern apprenticeships are critical to our strategic planning through the building of future technical talent and the lifeblood of keeping all of our stages fresh for exciting new programming for the long term."

Audrey Cumberford, Edinburgh College Principal, said: "We are delighted to be able to deliver this apprenticeship with colleagues at Capital Theatres. Our joined-up approach ensures that Liz is benefitting from the unique blend of industry and education that apprenticeships

offer, ensuring Liz will have the necessary skills and knowledge needed for a successful career in Technical Theatre.”

Following the success of Liz and the first Technical Theatre Modern Apprenticeship, Capital Theatres is launching a second apprenticeship later in 2024, continuing this hands-on training experience in a live theatre setting alongside study towards an SCQF Level 7 Diploma in Technical Theatre and Production Operations.

