



IVEAGH CINEMA

THURSDAY 1ST AUGUST 2013

Mark plays the part of Luke Sharkey, a teenager born with Down's syndrome.

Two identical settings and 50 years apart. Luke is born with Down's syndrome, the third child of Pete and Jayne Sharkey. Contrast the negative reaction of 1960 with the embrace of 2010. Follow Luke's formative years across both eras, through birth, education, social life and employment. And see how the person hasn't changed, but your attitude to him has.

Down's But Not Out tells with passion and humour the story of the life of a young person with Down's syndrome. With a beautifully poignant soundtrack linking each scene, this play will generate every emotion; laughter, tears, anger, sympathy and ultimately the joy of Luke's triumph.

Mark took time out of his very busy (and I mean very busy) schedule to talk to tullylish.com

Well Mark, did you audition for the part of Luke?

No, I was asked to do it by Raymond Murray who wrote the play.

How did Raymond know of you?

Through MADS drama group in St. Anthony's Parish Craigavon.

And how long have you been in MADS?

Over three years. I love it there and have performed in Calamity Jane, Back to the 80's and

Footloose.

That's great Mark. Who is in charge of MADS

Ciaran Corr –I like him a lot.

So, how often do you have to rehearse for 'Down's but not Out'?
Twice a week – I love it and meet lots of new people.

Are there many people in the play?

Yes, there are 11. There is only one song in the show, but I don't have to sing it. I play a teenager called Luke.

So, what's the play about, Mark?

It's about a boy with Down's Syndrome. He gets bullied and called names but his brother and sister stand up for him. The play is really about bullying and the person I play gets bullied because of Downs Syndrome.

And have you ever been bullied yourself Mark?

No, never. Everybody's different anyway and I've never been treated different to anybody else.

Do you want to be an actor Mark?

I do, yes.

What kind of shows would you like to be in?

Musicals or comedies.

Do you remember the first part you ever played?

Yes, I played Benjamin in 'Joseph' when the Tullylish Youth Group did it in the Den. I was 10. I've done lots of stuff with the Youth Group – I sang in the choir and I even sang with Dana. And I was an altar boy in Laurencetown.

I also joined Stage Struck in Banbridge with Mrs. Mulligan and was in lots of shows there. Then I auditioned for a part in Buggy Malone in the Opera House in Belfast and I got a part in that too.

His mum Ann added how proud she was of him in Buggy Malone saying over 300 had auditioned for a part. □ Mark has been attending Speech and Drama since he was 4 years old and attributes a lot of Mark's confidence and self-esteem to his early days in St. Colman's Bann Primary School, Laurencetown. Ann said Mark was never treated in a different way to his classmates by any of the staff or pupils and was encouraged to excel in his own way. Mark added

'I loved Laurencetown school'.

Mark then attended St. Patrick's College in Banbridge where he gained an A in his GCSE practical exams and an overall 'C' – a marvellous achievement.

What did you have to do for your practical GCSE Mark?

I played the part of the narrator and a gynaecologist in Blood Brothers!

Have you any other interests, Mark?

Yes, I love Gaelic football, soccer, boxing, golf and bocce.

Have you ever competed in any of these sports?

Yes, I represented Ireland in the Special Olympics 2006 in Rome in Bocce

And how did you do?

I won 2 Gold medals and 1 silver medal.

I'm also a member of Tullylish Gaelic Club. I like working on the computer and I write plays and make cards and posters. I also like playing on my play station.

What kind of music do you like Mark?

Frank Sinatra, Boys Own, Cher Lloyd, Joe McElderry and, of course, Jedward!

Do you like X Factor?

Yes and I want Janet Devlin to win this year.

Why is she your favourite?

Because she's from Tyrone

And who is your favourite judge?

Louis Walsh – he's from Ireland.

And what about Simon Cowell?

NO WAY

So, have you any other plans this year, Mark?

Yes, I'm usher at my sister's wedding in December.

To finish off, Mark, what would you like to say to everyone about the play 'Down's But Not Out'?

I'd like to encourage everyone to come to see the play and learn about Down's Syndrome.

What sort of things do you want people to learn?

People with Down's Syndrome are the same as everyone else and should be treated the same.

What a Star!