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Veteran actor wears late entertainer's costume to play part he made famous

## **Life's a drag being in the Danny La Rue role**

**Four steps.. And you can change a man of 72 into a woman**

WHEN Tunbridge Wells actor Michael Elliot plays his latest role at Trinity Theatre next week hundreds of feathers, a sprinkling of sequins and a generous slick of red lipstick will be crucial to ensure his performance is show-stopping.

For the 72-year-old is hoping to shock and delight audiences when he appears as a woman in *Oh! What A Lovely War*, which opens on Thursday. But first he has to master the art of applying eyeshadow.

"Now I know why my wife spends so long in the bathroom," jokes Mr Elliot. The Courier was privy to a costume and make-up rehearsal at a house in Upper Grosvenor Road – where the late entertainer Danny La Rue lived with his costumier Annie Galbraith.

### **Jewellery**

Mr Elliot's part is a woman who tries to seduce young men into signing up to fight in the First World War with the song *I'll Make A Man Out Of You*.

Drag artiste Danny took on the role in the mid-1960's and, thanks to Annie's help, Mr Elliot will be clad in a dress, make-up and jewellery worn by the entertainer.

And when he swishes on to the stage, nobody in the audience will be more surprised than Mr Elliot's wife Caroline, who has been kept in the dark about her husband's adventurous role.

"When she reads the paper, that will be the first she knows about it," said Mr Elliot.

"My wife keeps asking 'Where are you going? What are you doing?' I really don't know what her reaction will be when she finds out"

Annie carefully watches as Mr Elliot climbs into one of her creations, a pink-and-black velvet low-cut dress adorned with lace, sequins, beads and feathers, topped off with a curly wig and plenty of jewellery.

"All this and it's only a three or four minute number I'm performing!" he laughed.

He is playing three separate parts in the production and will have 15 minutes to recreate today's transformation back-stage.

### **Amazing**

"When I spoke to the director Ron Palmer we didn't quite know how you dress a man as a woman. I thought the one person who can help me is Annie."

Annie said: "I think it's amazing. It's really nice to see Dan's costume being worn and I haven't had to alter it at all.

"As long as he feels comfortable. The sign of a good costume is that you should not be aware you are wearing it."

*Oh! What A Lovely War* is on at Trinity Theatre in Church Road on September 10,11 and 12. There will be a matinee performance on September 12.

Tickets are £14.50 and £12.50 concessions.

To book tickets call the box office on 01892 678 678



By Helen Kitchener  
twreporters@courier.co.uk

