

Catherine Shipton plays Charge Nurse Lisa “Duffy” Duffin



Cathy’s first foray into the world of performance was at the age of seven when her mum sent her for elocution lessons. “I was affecting a slight lisp so my mum thought the lessons would help. It’s all her fault that I’m in the business!” During her school years, though she was quite academic, she also found time to enjoy the extra curricular activities involving drama and theatre work. “I was quite a shy child but I loved that world. I sparked off in it, but never envisaged it being a career for me.” Just as she was starting her language degree Cathy also got the part of Helena in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. At the end of the play’s run she decided to give the acting world a chance, though her parents had their reservations. “They were flabbergasted at my decision, it seemed to them that I was wasting my education but the course I subsequently did at drama school had a degree element. I also

trained as an aerobics teacher and as this was around the time of the Jane Fonda craze I did well financially.” Cathy then worked a lot in fringe theatre which led to her joining a co-op actors agency which taught her the business very well. “I was quite good as an agent and negotiated parts from things like *EastEnders* to commercials.” The *Casualty* audition came at what she considered to be crunch time, five years after finishing drama school. “My dad died that year and it made me have a good old think about things. I thought about going back to university and then *Casualty* auditioned me for a receptionist part. I asked if they were casting for any nurses as I kept getting asked if I was a nurse by people at that time. I had to borrow some clothes for the audition as I’d come straight from an aerobics class. I got a call the next day and was offered the part. I was delighted and terrified!”

Age: 45

Similarities with Duffy: “I like this new-found confidence and lease of life that she’s been given in the new series, also her sense of humour. As we’re seeing a new side to her I find I can bring more of myself to her.”

Duffy’s best and worst traits: “Her best is seen in the new series – her ability to pick herself up and her quality of survival. She seems to live on the motto of ‘Hope springs eternal’. Equally Duffy can be defensive in order to conceal her vulnerability. She also can make snap decisions.”

Cathy’s real-life *Casualty*: “I was queuing with my daughter Tallulah in my local post office when a man had an epileptic fit. I was strangely calm and put my fleece under his head, put him into the recovery position and called an ambulance. I waited outside for the paramedics who were thinking: ‘Why did it have to be her?’”

On-screen romance: “Duffy is in for a real treat this series when she surprises herself by starting a relationship with the department’s security guard. As a result she becomes quite glamorous and up-beat and it really is a new stage in her life.”

Cathy’s favourite food and music: “Since being pregnant I can’t get enough fish. I have it at least twice a day – at work and when I get home. My music tastes are dictated a lot by Tallulah who recognises Stevie Wonder from when I was pregnant. We like to listen to a range of music from The Beatles to South American, Spanish guitar or classical music.”

How do you keep in shape? ”I do about two-three workouts a week and a hundred sit ups every day. Getting back into shape after having Tallulah was also very motivating, but I do really enjoy exercise.”

How do you relax? “Watching black and white movies on TCM. I also love *Dad’s Army*, *Porridge*, and *The Fast Show*. I’m into reading too and enjoy working my way through author’s works. I’ve just finished Thomas Hardy, who I love because of his amazing human observation which still applies today. Working out is another good way to relax.”

Did you know?

- Cathy’s daughter Tallulah is now 13 months old and splits her time between London and Bristol with her mum and dad.