

Tommy Jessop: A Life Worth Living

Accessible Edition

Hello there everyone,

I hope you will enjoy reading my memoir.

I want to tell stories about living life to the full.
I hope you will be able do the same.

I say follow your dreams whatever they might be
and live your life to the full like I am.

“It’s time
for us to
live our
lives to
the full.”

A Life
Worth
Living

TOMMY
JESSOP



Tommy Jessop: On Acting

1



Acting and dancing make me feel alive and free. I really do love being on stage.

2



Mum & Dad didn't believe me when I said I wanted to be an actor, but I got an audition.

3



Then we founded Blue Apple Theatre which is still going on. I've acted in over 30 plays with them.

Tommy Jessop:

On Acting

4



Here I am playing Prospero in Shakespeare's famous play The Tempest which is all about a storm, a shipwreck, magic and romance.

5



Now I am a film and TV actor and make documentaries as well. This is me in costume for my role in BBC One's Casualty.

6



Life as an actor is about lots of things. Here I am learning my lines.

Tommy Jessop: On Acting

7



You have to think how your character is feeling. Here my character is looking for his brother.

8



You might also have to learn new skills: I had to learn to box for my film *Fighter* trained with World Champion boxer Ryan Pickard.

9



I was quite proud when I got past his gloves and punched him on the nose.

Tommy Jessop:

On Acting

10



I had to learn how to fight safely with swords when I was playing Hamlet on stage. That was wicked too.

11



I had to learn to fish and be able to climb a mountain for different films.

12



There might be stunts. Here they are getting ready to push me off the top of the mountain in my first film *Coming Down the Mountain*.

Tommy Jessop: On Acting

13



In Line of Duty my character was almost drowned in a lake.

14



After filming that scene, we had hot water bottles and hot chocolate to warm us up.

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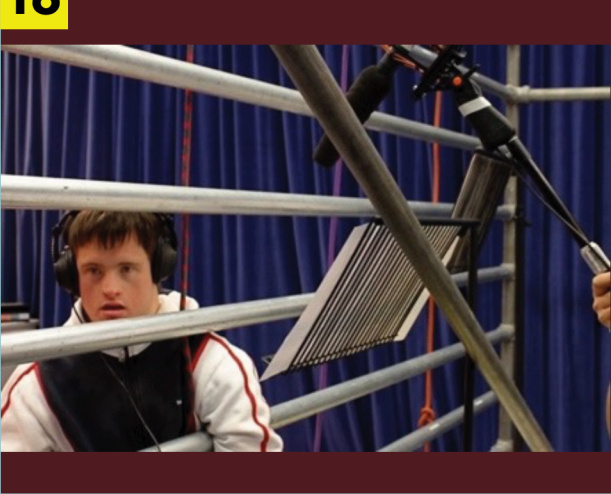


In Casualty I was blown up in an electricity cupboard. Here is a photo of the make up on my arm.

Tommy Jessop:

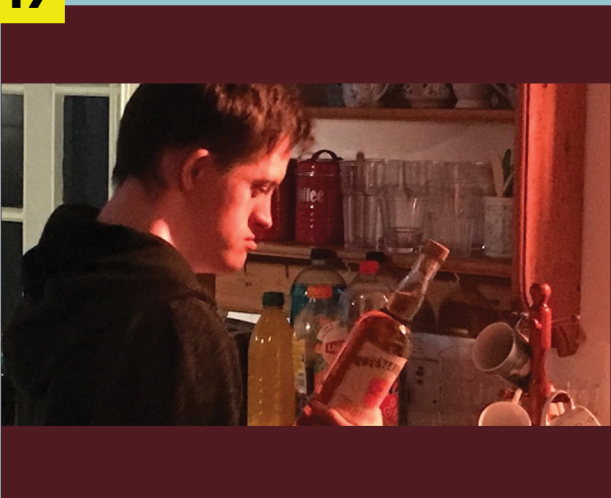
On Acting

16



Once, I had to record a BBC play on a climbing frame so that I felt like I really was climbing up Blackpool tower.

17



I have had fun playing all kinds of roles. Here I am in a scene from my short film Innocence which was written and directed by Ben Reid.

18



I am really into Shakespeare's plays. This is me playing Don Pedro in Shakespeare's play Much Ado About Nothing.

Tommy Jessop:

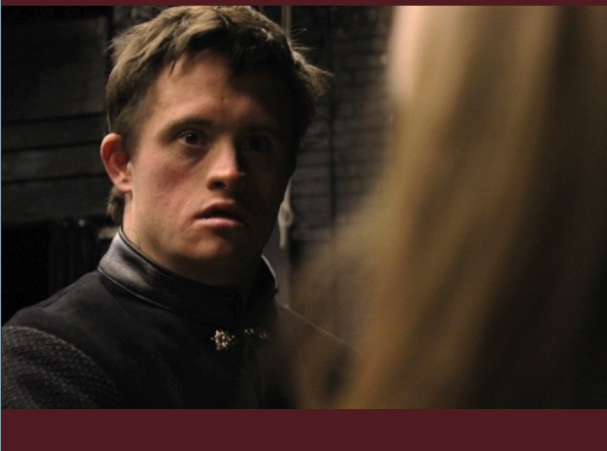
On Acting

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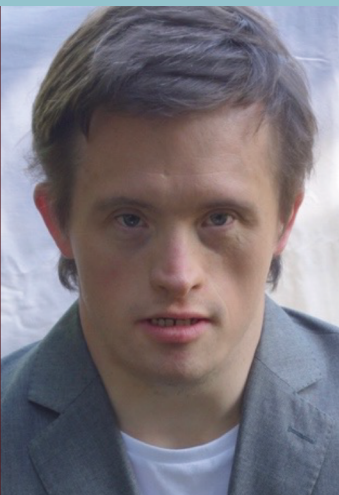
I played Bottom in Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream. Bottom gets transformed by magic into a donkey.

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I was really proud and honoured to play Hamlet in Shakespeare's play which has the infamous 'To be or not to be?' speech

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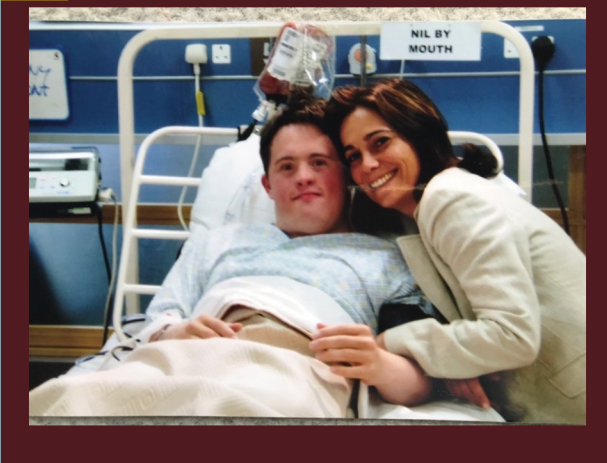


You can make a difference through film and TV work.

We all need people to listen to us and let us make our own decisions in life.

Tommy Jessop: On Acting

22



In Holby City I played a patient with a learning disability who wanted to make his own decision about an operation.

23



In my short film Fighter I played a boxer who wanted to make his own decision about whether to fight the big guy or not.

24



Other things that are important are getting good healthcare. Freddie's Story is a film about things that can go wrong and how to do things better in hospital.

Tommy Jessop: On Acting

25



We made a play and a film called Living Without Fear with my brother and Blue Apple to help people who are frightened because of hate crime and mate crime.

26



In Line of Duty my character, Terry Boyle was stuck in a scary situation. Here I am in handcuffs for when he was arrested. Tell someone you trust if you are afraid of anyone.

27



As an actor you have to have early nights and keep fit.

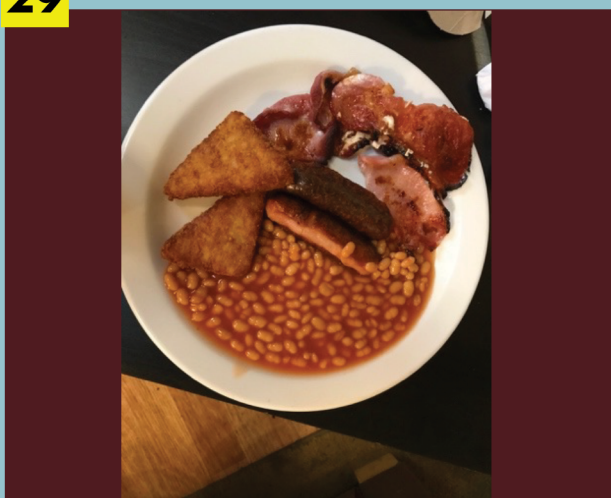
Tommy Jessop: On Acting

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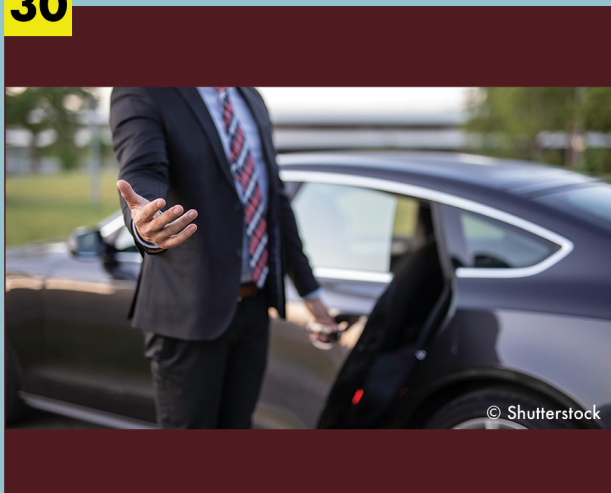
You have good food and eat in your own trailer.

29



This is what breakfast looks like. Yum!

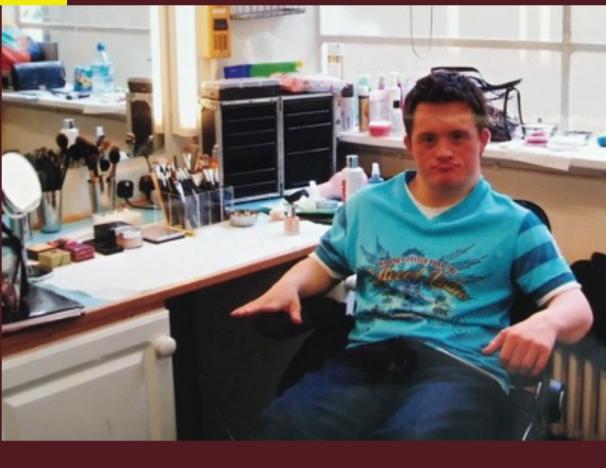
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You might have a chauffeur and black Mercedes to drive you round when you are filming.

Tommy Jessop: On Acting

31



You have to go to the make-up trailer where they do your hair and make you look just right for your role.

32



Once I went to Stockholm to talk about a film. I went to the Abba Museum when I had time off!

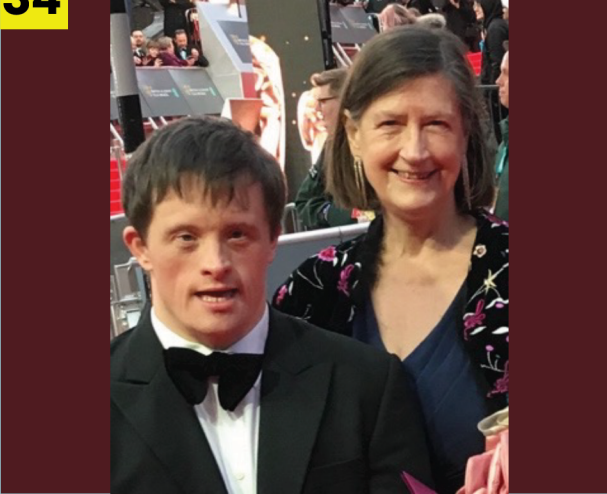
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We made a film called Growing Up Downs for the BBC about going behind the scenes making Hamlet. Here we are in New York for the International Emmy Awards.

Tommy Jessop: On Acting

34



Sometimes you get invited to award ceremonies. Here we are at the BAFTAs.

35



Sometimes as an actor you get invited to do crazy things – like this photo of me in a digger when I opened a local doctors' surgery.

36



You might get to go to film previews.

Tommy Jessop:

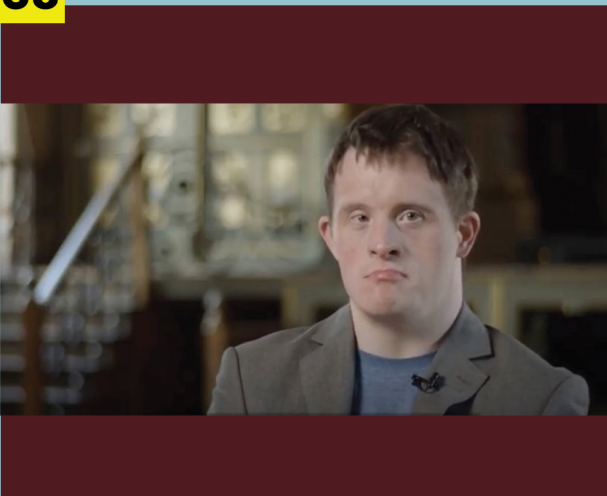
On Acting

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You might get invited to present an award like this one at the British TV Soap Awards.

38



My next ambition is to play a character who saves the day by making their presence felt.

39



It is important to see people like us on screen so that everyone understands us better and sees that we truly are capable.

Tommy Jessop:

On Activism

Activism means campaigning or speaking up about things that could be better.

I think it is important for all of us to speak out and change how other people think about us so that we all get better chances in life.

1



My acting has given me a platform to speak about issues I care about.

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Speaking out can be history-making, and a big part of changing the world for the better.

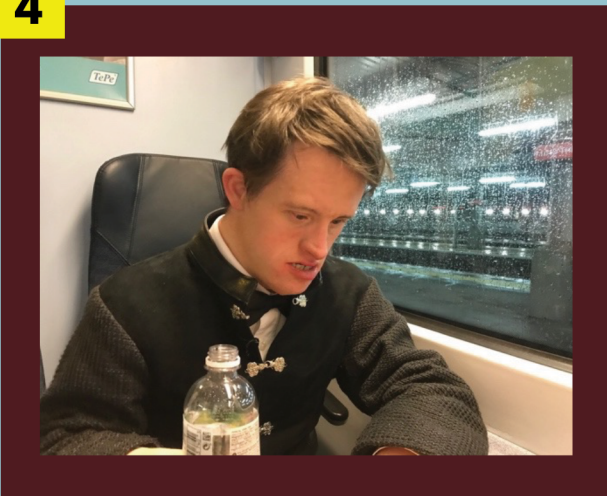
Tommy Jessop: On Activism

3



I spoke on BBC Radio 4's PM programme about improving healthcare.

4



Here I am off to London preparing another speech.

5



I was invited to film a video message to MPs about the importance of the Down Syndrome Bill to myself and everyone else like me. It was during lockdown in 2021 so I had to film it on my mum's mobile phone.

Tommy Jessop: On Activism

6



I believe everyone has the right to good healthcare and a good education.

So, some of us went to Parliament to talk about the new Down Syndrome Bill.

7



One day I had a busy day starting with a photoshoot for the Guardian.

8



Then we headed to the Houses of Parliament to meet lots of people with Down syndrome.

Tommy Jessop: On Activism

9



I was interviewed on TV and made a speech.

10



I went to Number 10 Downing Street and stood on the doorstep with Dr Liam Fox MP and other campaigners with Down syndrome.

11



I was honoured to speak at Parliament in March 2022. I said 'Believe in yourselves... be kind And most of all, be who you want TO BE.'

Tommy Jessop: On Activism

12



We worked hard making speeches and giving TV interviews about how important the Bill was to us.

13



I was invited to make a short speech at a party at the American Embassy. This party was to celebrate the Down Syndrome Act.

14



The Down Syndrome Act became law in April 2022 and it is the first act of its kind in the world.

Tommy Jessop: On Activism

15



The Down Syndrome Act is to make sure everyone with Down syndrome gets:

- a proper education
- good healthcare
- proper jobs and the same chances in life as other people.

16



We are all different and can do different jobs. Not just sorting hangers!

17



Everyone has a gift and talent but they might need some help to dig it out.

Tommy Jessop: On Activism

18



I want to help make sure people with a learning disability can live their lives to the full and be happy and healthy.

19



On Zoom I asked some civil servants to make sure there were more real jobs on offer for people with Down syndrome.

20



I felt really proud when Mencap asked me to become one of their Ambassadors.

Tommy Jessop: On Activism

21



Here I am at the Mencap photoshoot on becoming one of their MythBusters and Ambassador.

22



As a Mencap Ambassador, I read a poem for their Carols by Candlelight service in the oldest church in London.

23



In 2022, I made a documentary for BBC's Panorama with director Imogen Wynnell-Mayow campaigning for better healthcare for people with a learning disability.

Tommy Jessop: On Activism

24



Next I was asked to become one of the Ambassadors for the Southampton City of Culture Bid.

Here I am being interviewed on stage about this by Meridian TV.

25



I was also asked to become Patron of the Portsmouth Down Syndrome Association. As part of that I went to a black-tie dinner on HMS Warrior.

26



I want to inspire others to find opportunities to speak out like I do!

Tommy Jessop: On Everything Else

1



There are lots more things you should know about me.
The first of which is that I love football. I have enjoyed it since I was very young.

2



My favourite thing about watching or playing football is when we score a goal and the crowd erupts in cheering.

3



Kicking a football and the feel of the ball on my foot is wicked.

Tommy Jessop: On Everything Else

4



I support Newcastle United. My ambition for Newcastle is to win the Premier League, and to get into the Champions League as well.

5



I am actually glued to the transfer news. I do find it intriguing and exciting to try to find out who we get to play for us.

6



I reckon that football is all about teamwork and helping other people out when they need it most, and it is also a way of making new friends around the world.

Tommy Jessop: On Everything Else

7



Another big passion in my life is dancing.

I have danced in the UK, the US and all over London.

8



Before Covid we used to dance for 21 hours to celebrate our lives on World Down Syndrome Day 21st March.

9



Lots of students danced with us. They wanted to celebrate our lives too.

Tommy Jessop: On Everything Else

10



Some of us danced the Rite of Spring at Covent Garden with Daniel Vais, Culture Device and dancers from the Royal Ballet.

11



Daniel also invited me and Sarah Gordy to dance at a festival at Somerset House in London.

12



When I dance, it makes me feel even more alive!

Tommy Jessop: On Everything Else

13



One of my other hobbies is singing. I love singing my heart out.

I feel proud and emotional when I start singing because I can encourage other people to start singing too.

14



I sing every week. My singing group has been going for four whole years.

15



Singing with other people really does make you happy.

Sometimes we sing in pretty crazy outfits.

Tommy Jessop: On Everything Else

16



We have made up our own songs but also sang 'When the Saints Go Marching In', 'Swing Low Sweet Chariot' and 'Teenage Dirtbag'.

17



Last December, we put on our Christmas hats and sang about four of our favourite songs and three Christmas songs.

18



My fourth most important hobby is cooking.

Monday afternoons are called Boys' Cooking Night in my house because Dad and I make our dinner.

Tommy Jessop: On Everything Else

19



Jamie's book was a birthday present from my very own dad. We take turns to decide what to make from the book.

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Chopping and stirring are the hardest parts of cooking, but I do love a challenge! My weekly cooking night is a time for me to practice my skills and let my fingers get stronger.

21



Sometimes we make treats - YUM!

I think asking about someone's hobbies are great way of finding out what they are like!