

My Life



TREADING THE BOARDS: Surgeon Richard Milton is also part of a theatre company.

Richard Milton

One Yorkshire surgeon spends his days in the operating theatre and his nights in another kind of theatre. Catherine Scott reports.

By day he performs life-changing surgery for lung cancer patients, but by night he performs on stage bringing roles to life that have included an aristocrat, one of the seven dwarfs, an 'i-genie', a matron, a highwayman and even a murderous transsexual cabaret singer.

And it's all for a good cause. Richard Milton, a consultant thoracic surgeon at Spire Leeds Hospital, is part of the Trust Us Theatre Company, an amateur dramatics group whose multi-talented members tread the boards to raise funds for medical charities.

The company, formed in 2011 by a group of healthcare workers from Harrogate District General Hospital, has produced six shows and raised more than £10,000 for charity.

"I enjoy it tremendously. It's a complete escape from my day job," said Richard, who is married with three children and lives in Leeds.

The group's first production, *Dumbstruck* about murder and mayhem was set in a theatrical boarding house in 1960.

"I was coerced into joining the group originally when a respiratory physician from Harrogate was directing a black comedy called *Dumbstruck* and there was one role that remained unfilled – a murdering

transsexual cabaret singer. Guess which role I got!" said Richard.

Rehearsals are held in the evenings and weekends to fit around the members' paying jobs.

They often play to sell-out audiences and receive rave reviews.

"It's a challenge fitting it around my work and I have to be extremely organised," he added.

Richard qualified at Sheffield University Medical School in 1993 before undertaking higher surgical training in cardiothoracic surgery

in Yorkshire and was appointed to a consultant position in 2007 at one of the largest regional centres for thoracic surgery in Europe.

He has always enjoyed science and wanted to do something really useful in his choice of career.

"I've been interested in science since I was young and I used to enjoy watching the American medical drama TV series *Quincy* as a teenager," he said.

Choosing to specialise in thoracic surgery while working in A&E in Liverpool many years ago, Richard performs a full range of thoracic surgery, covering both benign and malignant conditions.

He uses minimally invasive (keyhole) surgery wherever possible and, along with his colleagues, is keen to develop minimally invasive treatment for atrial fibrillation.

"Lung cancer is one of the commonest and deadliest cancers we deal with in the UK with about 46,400 cases diagnosed every year; the best chance of cure is surgery as long as it is caught early enough and patients are fit enough.

"I hope that the future will bring about the earlier detection of lung cancer through screening," added Richard.

THE WINGMAN

■ The theatre group's latest stage sensation, *The Wingman*, written by Richard Marsh and originally performed at the Edinburgh Festival in 2014, is currently on tour, playing in several North Yorkshire venues including St Robert's Centre, Harrogate on November 25.

■ Tickets cost £8 via www.justaddtickets.co.uk or on the door.

■ Proceeds will benefit Wellspring Therapy.