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**NODA SCOTLAND**

*Magazine*

National Operatic and Dramatic Association  
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## COUNCILLOR'S WELCOME



Welcome to the first edition of the new electronic version of *NODA Scotland Magazine*. The members of the NODA Scotland Committee hope that you find the expanded content of interest and would ask that you please share the magazine with members of your company to help keep them up to date.

The development of youth sections and companies is vital for the continued success of amateur theatre over the coming years. To ensure this, the NODA Scotland Committee has agreed to run a series of workshops entitled *Dare to Dream*. These will be held all over Scotland and will be aimed at developing the performance skills of our younger members. Your Regional Representative (see page 3) will be in touch with full details.

The NODA Summer School will take place from Saturday 28 July to Saturday 4 August at Yarnfield Park Conference Centre, Stone, Staffordshire, and offers a range of course in both performance and technical disciplines. Full details are available on the NODA website – [www.noda.org.uk/events/noda-summer-school-2018/summerschool](http://www.noda.org.uk/events/noda-summer-school-2018/summerschool)

NODA Scotland will once again be holding its annual golf competition at Muckhart Golf Club on Sunday 5 August. Full details will be issued by separate email but I would encourage members to sign up and take part. The day is always good fun and a great opportunity to network with other NODA members from all over Scotland.

Preparations are well under way for this year's NODA Scotland Conference at Peebles Hydro from Friday 26 to Sunday 28 October. Details about the weekend will be published in late March and will also see the launch of a savings club to help spread the cost of the weekend. Please put the date in your diary and also circulate details to all your members when they are published.

Can I thank our NODA Scotland Editor for all his hard work in pulling together this new version of the Reviews Magazine? Alan and the NODA Scotland Committee would welcome any feedback you have to allow us to develop the publication over the coming year.

Finally thank you to all the companies that have invited Robbie and myself to their recent productions. It has been a great pleasure to see such a wide variety of high quality productions and to meet members from all over Scotland.

I wish you every success for your forthcoming productions. Remember NODA is here to provide you with help and support. Please contact your Regional Representative or myself or indeed Head Office if there is anything we can help you with.

*Stuart McCue-Dick, NODA Scotland Councillor*

## NODA SCOTLAND MAGAZINE

*NODA Scotland Magazine* is published in March, July and November. The March edition includes reviews on shows which had performances in November, December, January and February; the July edition covers shows performed in March, April, May and June; and reviews of shows performed in July, August, September and October appear in the July edition.

Generally, reviews are written by the Regional Representatives whose names appear below. Where the report has not been written by the appropriate Regional Representative, the author's name is given after the report.

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## NODA TODAY

*NODA Today* is a UK-wide magazine published in April, August and November.

The content of the magazine comprises features about societies, individuals, shows, NODA corporate activities and any outstanding achievements or activities in the region. NODA Head Office has asked that Regional Editors provide no more than 1,200 words collectively for all of the region's content. All jpeg pictures sent for inclusion should be at least 150dpi, with the ideal being 300dpi. Articles for the August 2018 edition are welcomed from societies and individual members and should be submitted by e-mail to the Regional Editor by **Monday 4 June 2018**.

Download  
the latest  
copy of  
**NODA Today**  
Magazine





# NODA MEMBER BENEFITS

## What do you receive for your NODA society membership?

- ★ Members' magazine NODA Today
- ★ Regional news and updates from HQ

### Access to members' area of website

- ★ Factsheets, including:
  - ☆ Child protection policy
  - ☆ Performance regulations and copyright
  - ☆ Model constitution
  - ☆ Production team duties
  - ☆ Fundraising
- ★ Show listings online at [noda.org.uk](http://noda.org.uk)

### Advice and services

- ★ Discounted rates on NODA insurance
- ★ Legal helpline
- ★ Health and safety helpline
- ★ DBS checks
- ★ Performance rights and scripts for pantomimes

### Regional support

- ★ Dedicated regional representative
- ★ Regional youth advisor
- ★ Show reports
- ★ Regional social media advertising
- ★ Contact lists for MDs, directors, choreographers etc
- ★ Regional conference, awards and workshops

### Training

- ★ NODA Theatre Summer School
- ★ Bursaries for Summer School training



### Awards

- ★ National awards ceremony
- ★ Poster and programme competition

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## SHOWCASE AT THE PALACE

In January Edinburgh's Showcase Musical Productions was honoured to be invited to a special evening at Buckingham Palace, hosted by the Prince of Wales, to acknowledge the work done by Macmillan supporters throughout the UK. In all, 150 selected people (from the 400 groups and individuals nominated by Macmillan) were personally introduced to His Royal Highness during a champagne and canape reception at the Palace.

Current President Alan Hunter (pictured right) and Vice President Ross MacTaggart nobly represented Showcase. Speaking after the presentation, Alan reported that it was a proud honour to represent the company at such a prestigious event and that it was a shame that everyone could not have been there, if only to add to the evening's entertainment! In a private discussion with Prince Charles, Ross is believed to have offered Showcase's services for a forthcoming family wedding and is standing by to get the call on the company's behalf!

In 27 years Showcase has now raised £270,000 for Macmillan Cancer Support and in 2018 is set for another Edinburgh season of concerts and the extravagant September shows, bringing together the best of musical theatre, contemporary classics and inspiring choreography under the direction of Andy Johnston, David McFarlane and Claire Smith.

*Charles Leeson-Payne, Treasurer, Showcase Musical Productions*



## OBITUARY

### Renee Brooks: The Lyric Club, Glasgow



It was with great sadness that Lyric Club members learned that Renee Brooks, Life Member and longest serving Club member, had passed away suddenly on Monday 4 December 2017 at the age of 87. Renee had been a loyal and active member of The Lyric Club for 68 years, an outstanding achievement by any standards.

This year The Lyric Club is 116 years old, but it had been in existence for only 47 of these years when Renee joined as a young dancer in 1949 at the age of 19. The show that year was *The Belle of New York*. Renee had a great love of singing, dancing and music in general, and got great enjoyment out of performing in the King's Theatre. When she decided it was time to hang up her dancing shoes she missed it terribly. However she continued to perform in a number of Club fund raising concerts and revues.

One of Renee's favourite shows was *The Desert Song*, and most memorable for her because she was over the moon to have been specially asked to be one of the main dancers at, as she said, the ripe old age of 42!

On 9 June 2008 The Lyric Club presented Renee with a NODA Diamond Bar in recognition of, and to celebrate, her 60 years of active membership of the Club. The Diamond Bar was added to her other long service awards and worn proudly when she and her late husband Tommy attended events such as the annual NODA Scotland Conferences at Peebles.

By 2008 Renee may not have performed on stage for a number of years, but no one could question her continued involvement. Regardless of the show, she was very proactive in selling tickets and loved to hear all the latest news. She regularly attended the Club's AGMs and, up until two years ago, helped in the Green Room, which gave her the opportunity to continue to be part of the buzz of our week in the theatre and to catch up with Lyric friends.

Until his death a few years ago, Renee's husband Tommy, was also a Life Member and served on the committee for many years. Over that time, Renee always provided a warm welcome and hospitality when committee meetings were held at their Busby home. In 2007 Renee and Tommy were exceptionally proud grandparents when they were able to watch their grandson George perform in our production of *Oliver!* in The Theatre Royal and their family links with the Club continued.

Just like our current members, she very much valued the fun, enjoyment, excitement and life-long friendships which membership of The Lyric club brought her. She was a kind and unassuming lady and she will be sorely missed by those who knew her.

*Lorna Ramsay, Past President, The Lyric Club*

## OBITUARY

### William A Tulloch: Dunfermline Gilbert & Sullivan Society

9 December 1929 – 3 January 2018



It is with great sadness that Dunfermline Gilbert & Sullivan Society learned of the death on the 3 January 2018 of a dear friend and founder member.

Bill was a long serving member of the male chorus, but was never slow in registering his dislike of wearing tights – and at the same time, was never over-keen on dancing! He was very involved with the Management Committee and was Chairman for several years. In this role, amongst many other responsibilities, he always warmly welcomed any newcomer to the Society's ranks.

Many years ago – the Society is now in its 48<sup>th</sup> year – Bill directed a charitable performance of *Trial By Jury* in the Sheriff Courthouse in Dunfermline, as part of the 25th anniversary celebrations of the Society. Also, during that memorable year, a dinner-dance was held at the Keavil Hotel, Crossford, during which Bill was presented with a Life Membership Award, in recognition of his many years of loyal and devoted service to Dunfermline Gilbert & Sullivan Society.

His occasional visits to rehearsals and unfailing attendance at the annual production will be sadly missed.

## LONG SERVICE AWARDS

November 2017 to February 2018

### 55 Year Pin

Jean Macmillan  
Norman Macmillan

Paisley Musical & Operatic Society  
Paisley Musical & Operatic Society

### 45 Year Silver Bar

Gladys Peden  
Mike Pendlowski

Johnstone Phoenix Theatre Group  
Dunfermline Gilbert & Sullivan Society

### 40 Year Silver Bar

Fiona Gibb  
Martin Tarr

Simpol Staging  
Dunfermline Gilbert & Sullivan Society

### 35 Year Silver Bar

Fiona Gibb  
Robbie Menzies

Simpol Staging  
Paisley Musical & Operatic Society

### 25 Year Long Service Medal

Jack Archibald  
Jacqui Baxter  
John Crawford  
Valerie Goff  
Marilyn Susan Gowland  
Sandra Shearer  
Diane White

Dunfermline Gilbert & Sullivan Society  
Paisley Musical & Operatic Society  
Kirriemuir Panto Group  
Paisley Musical & Operatic Society  
Kirkwall Amateur Operatic Society  
Kirkwall Amateur Operatic Society  
Glenrothes Amateur Musical Association

### 25 Year Badge

Annette Crawford Fraser

Arbroath Musical Society

### 20 Year Badge

Ian Anderson  
Alan Christison  
Blair Ledgerwood-Cruickshank  
Paula Milne  
Susan Barbara Robertson  
Katrina Tait  
Theresa Wilson

Dunfermline Gilbert & Sullivan Society  
Arbroath Musical Society  
Paisley Musical & Operatic Society  
Kirriemuir Panto Group  
Arbroath Musical Society  
Kirkwall Amateur Operatic Society  
Dunfermline Gilbert & Sullivan Society

### 15 Year Badge

John Allen  
Joy Campbell  
Willie Campbell  
Elaine O'Neil  
Jim Robinson

Dunfermline Gilbert & Sullivan Society  
Dunfermline Gilbert & Sullivan Society  
Dunfermline Gilbert & Sullivan Society  
Minerva Youth Theatre  
Dunfermline Gilbert & Sullivan Society

### 10 Year Badge

Rebecca Baillie  
Kevin Glasgow  
Norma Hamilton-Dyer  
Rebecca Hardie  
Vickie Moulds  
Janice Nolan  
Myra Ralston  
Laura Shields-Wulff

Harlequin – Eastwood Theatre for Youth  
Harlequin – Eastwood Theatre for Youth  
Kirriemuir Panto Group  
Kirriemuir Panto Group  
Paisley Musical & Operatic Society  
Minerva Youth Theatre  
Harlequin – Eastwood Theatre for Youth  
Paisley Musical & Operatic Society



## LONG SERVICE AWARDS

November 2017 to February 2018

### Youth Award Badge

Eilidh Gough  
Lisa Kemp

Minerva Youth Theatre  
Minerva Youth Theatre

### Youth Certificate

Euan Arthur  
Karis Black  
Lochlan Black  
Abbie Bonnyman  
Duncan Brown  
Chloe Gallacher  
Casey Jo Kennedy  
Jaime Lang  
Lois McKean  
Charley Manger  
Lucas McCrimmond  
Jemma McGillivray  
Jessie McLeod  
Eva Miller Watt  
Abby Renwick  
Jessica Riddoch  
Cayla Rushford  
Daniele Shanks  
Ross Sinclair  
Lucy Smith  
Abbie Stewart  
Keiran West

Big Bad Wolf Children's Theatre Company  
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Children's Theatre Bo'ness

## REVIEWS

### DISTRICT 1 (Glasgow Area)

#### **The Minerva Club: Dirty Rotten Scoundrels**

Director: Roy McGregor; Musical Director: Lynne Fyfe; Choreographer: Marie McElhinney

This comedy mystery show was a departure from the norm for this club, steeped in traditional musicals, but from the audience's perspective was an excellent choice. Lawrence (Iain Campbell), the suave, sophisticated conman with the bodyguard/butler André (Colin Thomas) tried to relieve rich ladies of their fortunes. André warns him that there are rumours of another con artist, "The Jackal", who may spoil his luck. Later, Lawrence meets Freddy (Ross Adam) a true fly-boy, intent on the same errand, but with a completely different *mode d'emploi*, and the two decide to combine resources, but each with the idea of defrauding the other. A new character, rich heiress Christine (Eleanor Mackay) comes on the scene allowing a new scam to develop for the pair. A wager, the race to get \$50,000, is proposed between them, and comedy around supposed paralysis of Freddy's legs is one aspect in this complicated farce-like storyline, involving kidnap, bedroom scenes, other love interest in the mature Muriel (Anne Allan at her outrageous best) and much else in the way of plot, finishing in an entirely unexpected way. A fun show, but not suited to the average club because of lack of ensemble. Well cast and performed, giving good entertainment, but hopefully Minerva will return to more traditional fare, for its members' sake.

#### **Pantheon Club: Elf**

Director: Tri Cumming; Musical Director: Kieran Young; Choreographer: Lynn Bustard

The hype and pre-publicity surrounding this show was amazing, and certainly worked for the Pantheon Club, one of Glasgow's more ambitious and successful amateur clubs, with drama a greater part of its repertoire than other clubs. It has for years often presented newer shows than most clubs, and generally that has paid off. This was certainly the case with *Elf*, an ambitious move. It was

the first Glasgow club to take the leap to two Friday performances some years ago; for this show, due to demand, they presented three Saturday performances, an enormous commitment for the cast. They obviously managed, with no suggestion of fatigue at the end of the last performance. Adrenalin is a wonderful thing — I only hope it didn't keep them awake till Monday! With fifteen named parts, an ensemble of 27, two teams of juniors (Santa's Little Helpers and the Epic Elves) double casting for the part of Michael (Buddy's Little brother) and a named understudy (Stephen Quinn) for the huge part of Buddy, the stage was well filled with people, all well rehearsed in the larger numbers in a vast array of costumes, many made specially by June at That Looks Good. Innovative effects to suggest the difference in Buddy's height included lots of cast literally on their knees, but not with exhaustion. Buddy (Graeme Wallace) pranced and danced his way brilliantly, being a most convincing Elf, human but in Santaland, unsuccessful as a Santa's factory worker. Back in New York, Buddy annoys his father Walter (Gordon Downie) but is persuaded to stay after helping stepmother Emily (Marianne Carr) and half-brother Michael (Tom Barclay or Jacob Duffy) with a problem. Romance is introduced in the form of Jovie (Vicki Robertson) and problems come when Buddy's actions cause his father to be nearly fired by the boss (Johnny Collins) but then quits. The arrival of Santa (Iain Bell) in his sleigh, which then runs out of power because of the world's lack of Christmas Spirit, causing Buddy to ask all New Yorkers by television to believe in Santa and the sleigh is fit to return to North Pole, but without Buddy, happy now at home with family. Further input from Patricia Welch as Mrs.Santa; Kris Morrison as Macy Manager; Eve Thomson, Mark Paterson, Stuart McMaster and Fiona MacCallum all enhanced this excellent presentation. Very much a children's story, it brought a tear to the eye; well sung, moved and acted, the whole cast and crew working in cohesion, this was the perfect Christmas vehicle. An expensive production if only from the costume bill, the fact of near total sellout of nine performances in six days should mean all is well at Pantheon HQ. They won't rest on their laurels, though. With a play in March, another in May, a musical in October and another in May 2019 it's full steam ahead for this club.

## REVIEWS DISTRICT 2 (Dundee & Perthshire)

**Broughty Ferry Amateur Operatic Society: Mack And Mabel**  
Director & Choreographer: Frances Irons; Musical Director: Richard Waghorn

If most people do not know much about this show, they will certainly know the music! Think Torvill and Dean dancing on ice and you have it in a nutshell! The show is set in the silent movies era and tells the tale of the love affair of movie director Mack Sennett and his female star, Mabel Normand. This Jerry Herman score contains many hit songs – *I Won't Send Roses*, *Movies Were Movies*, *Tap Your Troubles Away*, and *Hundreds Of Girls*. It requires two very good leads and both the company's leading players' stars shone bright throughout their performance with Paul Campbell extremely convincing as movie director Mack Sennett with a fondness for filming comedy. Seldom off the stage, this is a huge role to play and Paul carried it off with confidence and assuredness in his acting and singing. Leading lady, Ashley Gorman, had the wonderful personality to play Mabel Normand, and was totally immersed in her role as the delicatessen worker who finds fame and fortune in the silent film era, but sadly, comes to a tragic end. Her *Time Heals Everything* song number was full of poignancy and came over with great sincerity. We met other stars of the silent movie era, among them Fatty Arbuckle – played by a suitably "bulked-up" Sandy Kennedy making a good impression of the famous film star. Gemma Sullivan's Lottie Ames was perfect and her big number *Tap Your Troubles Away* was brilliantly staged as she was joined by the company's females to make it all a big production number. James Wiggins was suave writer Frank Capra; Bruce Martin was smooth-talking movie director William Desmond Taylor; and experienced David Newton (Adam Kessel Jr) and Jill Davidson (Charlotte O Baumann) completed the talented cast. This show was really "something different and new" for the company, but they successfully pulled it off – complete with a mad-cap Keystone Cops chase and, of course, the obligatory custard pie scene! It was obvious that the production team had worked very hard to bring this show to the stage and great credit goes to them for it was all most enjoyable.

### NODA SCOTLAND CONFERENCE 2018

Peebles Hydro

Friday 26 to Saturday 28 October

### **Downfield Mains Church Panto Group: The Snow Queen**

Director: Lyndsay Morrison; Musical Directors: Fiona Gill, Carol O'Rourke;  
Choreographers: Megan Robb, Amy McKay

Once again this small, keen, church panto group brought to the stage a brand new panto tale that, in all my vast panto experience, I have never seen. Now everybody knows this well-known tale, but as a panto ...? It was as an eloquent Hans Christian Andersen that Keith Spottiswoode introduced us to his famed characters and we met Gerda (Rachel Miller) and Kai (Kirsty Small). Both made a fine leading couple although, as the story progresses, they spend much of their time apart! Then came the Snow Queen herself, Claire Streets, bringing an icy coldness to all proceedings with her nasty, frosty manner and showing she loved every minute of it! And no one dare mention "global warming" (which we all did!) but we were met by her icy cold stare that made us freeze! But that did not stop the "good" element of panto to attempt to thwart her evil plans – the gentle Fairy Snowdrop, tenderly played by Alyson Duff. As for the panto part of this tale, step forward Gran – Fiona Gill at her boisterous best, blowing kisses to the audience at her every entrance and awaiting the audience's "charming" response – "Hello Granny Fanny Annie!" Gran also owned a sweet shop and there was a wonderful play on words concerning all makes of sweets! Her grandson, Helmut, a convincing Allyson Smith, aided the story along and we were soon travelling through the many, picturesque Ice scenes and also the warm brightly coloured Spring Flower Garden. Then there was a Summer Of Love, a Hippie Commune with a hyper active Ziggy (Steve Lowrie-McKay) and Sunbeam (Anne Lindsay) into Flower Power! Young Jamie Tosh proved to be a right scene stealer as Caw the Raven and he delivered what was the funniest joke in the panto! He next appeared as Rufus the Reindeer showing great poise and is definitely one to watch as a star of the future! This was a great night out with lots of laughs, lovely costumes, great scenery, and an enthusiastic dancing company. It definitely melted any heart of ice!

### **Dundee Dramatic Society: The Game's Afoot!**

Director: Graeme Murdoch

If there is one thing I really enjoy, it is a good murder mystery and this play was, indeed, a mystery! Set in 1936, Broadway star, William Gillette, admired for his leading role in the play *Sherlock Holmes*, invites his fellow cast members to his Connecticut castle for a weekend on Christmas Eve. The assembled guests all have something to hide, and this comes out as the play progresses. William Gillette is very seldom off the stage and Alex Lindsay was very strong in this role of the Broadway star who, eventually, assumes his favourite "role" as Sherlock Holmes to solve the murder mystery. This comedy thriller is full of "odd" suspects – starting with Gillette's loopy mother, Joyce Lindsay at her lunatic and vague best. Then there is husband and wife Felix and Madge Geisel - played by the robust duo of Rory Dunn and Shauna Gauntlett, both of whom hide shady secrets from each other! Next, was the secretly wed couple of Simon Bright – an excellent Jamie Flynn portraying a happy-go-lucky young man – and Coreen Pow as Aggie Wheeler nicely depicting his new bride, despite being widowed rather recently! They, too, have many secrets! Nicely stirring up the Christmas Eve party is the unexpected arrival of bitchy theatre critic Daria Chase ... who knows all about the secrets! (Now it was easy to conclude what would happen to her!) Linda Mooney was at her horrid best confronting the assembled household before she succumbed to a nasty end with a knife in her back. Then the police arrive – and this was where I really got confused! Pat Ward was Inspector Goring ... a man dressed in lady's clothes! The "mystery" was he/she a transvestite or what?! Whatever he was, he was fascinating to watch as he/she and "Sherlock" solved the mystery, unveiling (what we thought at the time) was the correct solution, only to find minutes later, that we were all wrong and the real murderer was finally unveiled! Or so we thought! The surprise last scene, a split second before final curtain, left me wondering who did what to who!

### **Tayport Amateur Dramatic and Musical Society: A Christmas Carol**

Directors: Lynne Binnie, Stuart Whyte; Musical Director: Emily Middleton

If it is Christmas time then there is no better occasion than to bring to the stage Charles Dickens' all-time favourite tale *A Christmas Carol*. This musical version is not to be confused with the other musical based on this story, namely *Scrooge*. This version, introduced by a dapper Derek Murray as Charles Dickens, found the company bringing this story beautifully to life with all the well-known Dickensian characters and ghosts associated with this festive tale. Alan Kerr made his mark as grumpy Scrooge showing his acting prowess and also coping admirably with the many songs he was

required to sing. Marcus Wylie made an awesome Jacob Marley whose appearance as a ghost forewarned the coming of the three Christmas spirits. Marley's *Link By Link* number with the tortured souls, played by the young cast members, was a highlight. Craig Nicoll as Young Ebenezer suited his role perfectly, as did Callum Taylor as Young Marley, when we met them at the Fezziwig Christmas Ball. The happy, jolly Fezziwigs – Wes Lorimer and Margaret Brown – brought a joyful party to the proceedings and it was there Scrooge fell in love with Belle – a tender and lovely moment this in the show when Eilidh Robertson plaintively sang *Heart Of Gold*. Then there was the cheery Cratchit Family bringing joy to all despite being poor. Alan Christison (Bob) and Vicki Bowman (Mrs Cratchit) brought all their theatrical experience to their roles and, who could not fail to feel sorry for Tiny Tim? Young blond Rio Rennie tugged the heart strings of all in the audience. Rhona McCallum (Mrs Dilber) and Gwen Teppett (Mrs Filch) both owed money to Scrooge and were a superb duo. One must not forget the three Christmas Spirits – Carey Norman was a grand Christmas Past; Madelene Harper a festive-looking Christmas Present; and Wayne Brown a frightening Christmas Yet To Come. Finally, there were the “magic” effects – Stuart Whyte created Dickens walking through the streets of a snowy London; Scrooge and ghosts flying over the rooftops; and the giant appearance of Marley's face on the door. Yes, it was all there and, as everybody exclaimed in the Finale – Merry Christmas To You All!

### **Thomson-Leng Musical Society: Cinderella**

Directors: Euan Campbell, Donna Bell; Musical Director: Billy Muir;  
Choreographers: Donna Reilly, Franky Anderson

It's the most wonderful time of the year! Yes, it's panto time! And this society brought their wonderful fairy tale production to the stage. There were some very clever touches to this traditional story line and this made the telling of this tale extremely refreshing. Cheers were reserved for the appealing and attractive Cinderella, played tenderly and lovingly by Ellen Ryder, who looked the part and, cheers also, for everybody's hero, the likeable Buttons, who won the audience's heart but, alas did not win the heart of Cinderella! Keiron Bole was at his boyish best in this role and carried it off with great self-confidence. More cheers were kept for Prince Charming and his side-kick, Dandini. Both Fiona McRobbie and Zoe Glenn were truly traditional panto principal boys, and both were strutting and striding around and slapping their thighs in time-honoured tradition. Of course, everyone should like the Fairy Godmother and Tamsin Holbrook was a vision of loveliness in traditional white dress and tiara complete with the ubiquitous magic wand. And Hamish the Dancing Horse (Sharon McLaren and Ewan Cassidy) received the plaudits too. Then there were the boos! They came loud and clear for the gruesome twosome, the Ugly Sisters, two pains who came in the formidable shape of Ewan Phillip (Haemorrhoid) and Thomas Richmond (Verucca). They cavorted about the stage in all sorts of manner with ghosts, custard pies, and, hilariously, at the Royal Ball when attempting to impress Dandini! These “girls” got up to all sorts of comic nastiness, aided and abetted by the equally bad stepmother, a slimy, sneaky, Jude Vandecasteele, who also took great delight picking on her husband, a hen-pecked Baron Hardup (Nick Browne). Panto is a great way to introduce youngsters to the stage and the Society had them in abundance. All showed their prowess at the Royal Hunt dressed as foxes and, later, the older ones showing their ballet talents. The traditional transformation scene was an absolute cracker – the audience had to wear special 3D glasses in order to watch the scene unfold brilliantly before them to a beautifully costumed white and red winter scene complete with Royal Coach. We all had sore throats as we left the theatre after a magical night out. And that's what panto is all about!

## **REVIEWS DISTRICT 3 (Central Scotland)**

### **Big Bad Wolf Children's Theatre Company: High School Musical**

Director: Lindsay Dowell; Musical Director: Jonathon Graham; Choreographer: Emma Watkins

The cast burst on to the stage with energy and confidence as Cheerleaders and Basketball teams and never looked back. Fun and enjoyment radiated from all as they took us on the journey of two youngsters who had met and bonded at a singing competition on holiday only to meet again at school and try to cut through the stereotypical thinking of their peers in order to come together and do what they really want. The two leads Gabriella (Amy Allan) and Tony (Daniel Scrymgeour) conveyed the frustrations of the young convincingly. Their duets were harmonised and beautifully sung. Meanwhile the school diva, Sharpay (Abby Renwick) acted the attractive teenager with attitude as if the role was

made for her. Along with brother Ryan (Paul MacDonald) their command of the stage impressed. Their song and dance routines were precise and Ryan's expressions were priceless. The adult roles of drama teacher Ms Darbus (Daisy Campbell) and PE Coach Bolton (Freddie Bang) were well characterised and very credible. Supportive roles of energetic Chad friend to Troy (John Sherlock), of Taylor science buff (Hannah Parsons), of composer Kelsi (Karis Black) and of class comedian Jason (Callum Allan) were well drawn and performed. A lively commentary and continuity role was ably kept up by DJ Jack (Euan Arthur). Dress, expression, stance and gestures delineated the sporty types from the science types from the arty types and it was fitting that the resolution of the show came from the youngsters themselves. The cast of over 60 all moved as one in the catchy music ratchetting up the tempo in numbers like *Stick to the Status Quo* and *Breaking Free*. The main backdrop of school lent itself to turning with ease into drama studio, sports hall, locker room, with the sides of the stage used as science lab and roof garden. Costumes of red sportswear, and school wear were apt and contributed to the atmosphere, as did the lighting and sound. There were a good number of new young faces on stage learning and enjoying themselves. The choice of show was great for these youngsters who demonstrated enthusiasm, belief and talent. Congratulations to all.

### **Children's Theatre Bo'ness: Pinocchio**

Director: Jamie O'Rourke; Musical Director: Calum Campbell; Choreographer: Louise Freck

Under new direction, the cast delivered an entertaining pantomime from the first puff of smoke revealing the rhyming duo fairies to the creation, kidnap and rescue of Pinocchio and defeat of the baddies. Confident singing of catchy, popular songs, strong principals and well rehearsed movement made the evening fly by. Kieran West took charge once more as a very capable dame, Barbie Botox. With his dominant presence, his control of dialogue and nuances fully conveyed, he never faltered. His lively character was nicely paired with Lola Black who portrayed the sincere, measured and serious toymaker Gepetto. They were assisted by the likeable Jimmy played by Isla Cadman and his equally likeable but more intelligent mate Polly ably played by Olivia Pattison, again a well matched pair. Cayla Rushford effortlessly enacted the scheming Wander whose powers overtook those of charming fairies Powder Puff and Sugar Sweet, namely Abbie Bonnyman and Amy McIntosh, while Jaime Laing provided a self seeking and cold Stromboli, kidnapper of Pinocchio. Jemma McGillivray as the toy Pinocchio gave a confident performance, at first seeming innocent and dependent but later revealing a determined streak. The three comedic sidekicks, Trick, Tease and Tickle – Hannah Kritzing, David Laing and Hollie Brown – employed by Stromboli to do his dirty work on Pleasure Island, provided further fun and laughter. Later on Cody Rushford as Molly the mermaid and Lucas McCrimmond as Ollie, the octopus under the sea, took the action forward and came into their own when persuading the audience to participate in the pantomime song. The villagers and dancers supported the storyline in their songs and routines with the music suiting the young voices. The principals sang confidently and in keeping with their roles. The costumes were striking with the dame in a number of startling creations, sparkly dresses for the fairies, floaty and sinister for Wander and circus master smart for Stromboli. Ollie coped well in his many armed but likeable outfit. The scenery too was thoughtfully created from the village square to the toy shop and the impressive whale's stomach. The audience appreciated the fluorescent fish under the sea. All involved created a wonder world far away from our own, displaying their talents and giving us a great evening. Well done to all.

### **Larbert Amateur Operatic Society: The Snow Queen**

Directors: Yolande Borthwick, Derek D Easton;  
Musical Director: Jan Cunningham

Adapted by themselves, this production touched all the bases: engagement of the young, slapstick, good and baddie characters and cheerful, seasonal songs. The storyline followed Gerda, whose parents were killed by the Snow Queen and whose brother's heart had been frozen by her, fighting the Snow Queen's pursuit of a magic mirror. Confidently, Michelle Weston gave us an innocent but strong Gerda who was championed by the mayor's son Eric. Claire Coyne took this role in her stride. The fun and slapstick stakes were ably managed by Gerda's grandparents: Stewart Bothwick as Pops, the amiable, put-upon-husband and Derek D Easton as the outrageous Grandma whose costumes and wigs astounded and delighted and whose ability to master those wonderful shoes remains unsurpassed. The wallpapering with the planks and the bedroom scenes were a scream. Jennifer Brisbane gave a chilling performance of the Snow Queen and was ably abetted by Lewis Baird as a cold unfeeling Kai. Both were so intent on their evil goal that they failed to notice the scheming Jack Frost, unlike the audience's little ones who booed him at every turn. As duplicitous

Jack, Daniel Baillie wound them up and goaded them with his evil laugh. On a lighter note, the antics of the dizzy duo of likeable idiots Hans and Olaf, namely Lucy Andrew and Lynsey Craig, were well received especially with the huge cracker. Dale Henry sparkled as the Christmas Fairy, and John Coe and Jeanna Connell sparred well as man and wife team Mayor and Mayoress. Christmassy songs contributed to the atmosphere and soloists and chorus sang strongly and engagingly with well executed choreography. The fluorescent interlude was cleverly done. Costumes were fresh and colourful, creating a spectacle in the ball scene and with striking effect for the characters of Jack Frost and The Fairy. The scenery, especially the toy shop, lent itself to the magic of the evening and was well constructed. Congratulations to all on a well rounded and thoroughly enjoyable panto.

### **The Livingston Players: Always A Bridesmaid**

Director: Gill Sullivan

Put four friends together who promised as students to be at each other's weddings still honouring that oath 30 years later with more weddings along with a manic hotel manageress and you have a recipe for fun and laughter. Comic moments abounded, from the opening speech of niece Kari to the off key singing of Libby Ruth ironing part of her dress, to the numerous marriages of Monette, to Charlie's panic attack of actually marrying, to Deedra's wedding punch up and to Sedalia calmly coming to break down the toilet door with an axe. The strong cast of six ladies had great rapport and were all comfortable using space and props for effect. The fun worked because of their grasp of character, their comic timing and well paced dialogue. Suzanne Smail as Libby Ruth caught the romantic believer and fixer of marriage, Lynne Hurst as Monette pinned down the part as the self centred, vivacious female who tests her friends to the limit with her various marriages, Louise Fairlie connected as a loyal and supportive Charlie unwilling to take the wedding plunge and carrying off the moments hiding from Sedalia, and Alison Carcas as Deedra cracked the hard-nosed legal beaver, revealing devastation at the break up of her long marriage then utter delight at her ex-husband and husband-to-be having a punch up over her. Judith Hutchinson makes her own the role of hotel manager who copes with all sorts of bridal hitches at the expense of her own sanity. Chiara Loia as Kari carried off the role of a bride becoming tipsy and dispensing advice. Costumes played their part with numerous bridesmaid dresses, revenge in making them wear outfits from past weddings and the wonderful 'sophisticated' ones turning out to be a variety of French dresses which led to the funniest situation in the play. The room set resonated opulent hotel and was beautifully dressed, its settee central to the action. The changes of flowers and other props to indicate different times were well executed and at the side, the wedding reception table with the cake was a constant motif for the drama. This production was a real hoot.

## **REVIEWS**

### **DISTRICT 4 (Renfrewshire, Ayrshire & Bute)**

#### **Ayrshire Philharmonic Opera Society: Top Hat - The Musical**

Directors: Andrew Nicol, Linda Ormiston; Choreographer: Gwyneth Grant

I was very excited that my first official show visit as Regional Rep for District 4 was to see the Scottish Amateur Première of Irving Berlin's *Top Hat - The Musical* in the beautiful Ayr Gaiety Theatre. The show really was a true celebration of the 1930s style, music and romance. With lots of well known songs featuring in the overture, I was swaying in my seat from the start which continued in the car journey home with the soundtrack on. The electric energy in the opening number *Puttin' on the Ritz*, including the full ensemble of dancers and chorus tapping, set the tone for the rest of the show and introduced us to the leading Man, Broadway sensation, Jerry Travers, played fabulously by Adam Dawson. Adam's charm, twinkle in his eye and effortless dancing engaged the audience instantly. This allowed us to easily follow his story as he danced his way across Europe to win the heart of society girl Dale Tremont, beautifully portrayed by Pauline Ferguson. Pauline balanced Dale's spirited character with graceful dancing perfectly. Pauline and Adam dancing together in the well known numbers including *Cheek to Cheek* and *Let's Face the Music and Dance* were key highlights of the show and their characters' relationship progressing from the comical misunderstandings in conversations to the more romantic scenes was a joy to watch. The flip side to this romantic relationship development, is the more turbulent one of Madge and Horace Hardwick. The bumbling and nervous character of Horace, whose nerves grew more when around his wife, the resilient, confident and glamorous Madge, were captured perfectly by Graeme Strawthorn and Olive Lindsay. During this journey, we also meet other key players: the eccentric fashion designer Alberto Beddini,

played by Colin McDonald, and Butler turned spy master Bates, played by Allan Ward. Both had the audience in the palm of their hands with impeccable comic performances. The image of Colin in his vest and red boxer shorts and Allan in his many costumes, especially the dress will be memorable for many I am sure. The story evolves by the introduction of an abundance of other characters played brilliantly by many of the ensemble, too many to mention individually, but all excellent. A special mention to Mhairi McCrindle for her hilarious spot on comical timing as Phyllis the Stage Manager. Each member of the principal cast, ensemble and crew worked well together to produce this uplifting and hilarious romantic comedy. Huge congratulations to the entire Society on a fantastic production.

**Johnstone Phoenix Theatre Group: Rapunzel and the Tale of Rumpelstiltskin**

Director: Carol McLaughlan; Musical Director: Cat Clark; Choreographer: Fiona McGregor

Johnstone Phoenix Theatre Group celebrated their 100th production with this cracking panto that had all the ingredients necessary to entertain adults and kids in equal measure. On the night I was present Sara Todd was perfect as the young Rapunzel with great stage presence. At other shows the role was played by Georgia McKay with equal talent. Both these girls have come up via the Group's youth theatre section and this bodes well for the future. Jennifer Scott as grown up Rapunzel sang beautifully and was a commanding leading lady who when all came good fell in love with Muddles played by Daniel McDonald. Daniel had a great rapport with the audience every time he appeared. As the baddie of the panto Wynter Elliott in his first lead role made sure he was booed every time he set foot on the stage. He was ably assisted by Ross White as Groton – his facial expressions were brilliant. Ensuring there were plenty of laughs, Craig Inglis as Queen Gertrude had the audience in the palm of his hand with his witty one liners, and never missed a chance to pick on a poor unsuspecting member of the audience. He was ably assisted by his down trodden husband King Claude played to great effect by Kevin Keay. Jillian McCall, as the Sorceress, lit up the stage each time she appeared and made sure there was a happy ending to the tale. Barry Orr made a strong Captain of the Guard and helped to make sure good triumphed over evil. As important to the success of the show was the chorus who all had named parts with costumes to ensure we know exactly who they were. A great selection of music accompanied by a small band was well sung by principals and cast in equal measure. The choreography complimented the singing, never detracting, and was performed with gusto. A great set built by members of the club set the scene and the real pony in the final scene was the icing on the cake. Well done to everyone on and off stage for a great night's entertainment that left me very much in the Christmas spirit. Well done on reaching 100 shows – I'm already looking forward to the next 100.

*Stuart McCue-Dick*

**Minerva Youth Theatre: Seussical**

Director: Susan B Russell; Musical Director: Chris Pugh; Choreographer : Donna Reilly

From the moment the curtains opened the stage was filled with vivid colours in the set, props and costumes – a complete visual spectacle which transported us from Eastwood Park Theatre straight into the world of Dr Seuss. This magical adventure was narrated by Cat in the Hat (Challum Brown). Challum's clear diction and animated expressions had the audience engaged from the start. He was ably assisted by Thing 1 and Thing 2 (Hannah Shields and Kirsten Shaw). The basis of the show is following the story of Horton the Elephant as he attempts to protect the world of the Whos and meets a variety of colourful characters on the way. Horton was superbly performed by Adam Stewart who used his smooth vocals and easy-going character to have the audience in the palm of his hand ... or elephant foot! During Horton's journey, we met the vibrant and sparkling Mayzie (Hayley Ferguson), and the endearing and sweet Gertrude McFuzz (Emily Gough). Both Hayley and Emily showcased fantastic singing voices and some great comedy moments. The sass was brought to the show by the 60s diva inspired Sour and Young Kangaroos (Monica Taggart and Collette McLaughlin) who inspired me to say "they owned that stage gurl!" When on the planet of the Whos, we met JoJo (Kai Kerr), Mr Mayor (Ethan Kerr), Mrs Mayor (Megan Watt) and General Genghis Khan Schmitz (Benny England). All four characters were very strong and their relationships together worked well. The rest of the characters were excellently portrayed by a talented ensemble, all as strong as each other. The energy on stage, fantastic characterisation, strong vocals, impressive choreography and dancing skills made the show enjoyable from start to finish. It was clear, as always with a MYT show, that each member of the cast loved being on that stage and were giving 100%. The audience reaction was lovely to see, especially with some of the younger members up dancing in front of the stage completely transfixed. It was also an honour to speak to the cast afterwards and to hand out NODA Youth Awards as well as

NODA Long Service Awards to the adult assistants. A huge well done to Susan and her dedicated team for another huge success. I'll look out my *Hairspray* for next year!

**Paisley Musical & Operatic Society: Top Hat - The Musical**

Director: Alasdair Hawthorn; Musical Director: Sean Stirling; Choreographer: Marion Baird

With PMOS' 1997 production of *Me and My Girl* being the first musical I saw as a child, and being a supporter of the club ever since, it was a pleasure to return to the 2018 production of *Top Hat* as their NODA Scotland Regional Rep, while they celebrated 50 years of performing in the King's Theatre. With the show's leading parts being double cast, I was lucky to see the show twice and see all four actors perform, and I would like to thank Valerie, Pauline and Liz for the warm reception that myself and Daniel received on both nights. With music and lyrics by Irving Berlin, the score is full of well-known and catchy musical numbers. The energy produced in all the big ensemble numbers, including *Puttin' on the Ritz*, *Top Hat*, *White Tie and Tails* and *The Piccolino*, from the full ensemble and orchestra was impressive and formed high points of the show. This was balanced with striking and seamless choreography. As soon as the curtain goes up we are introduced to leading man Jerry Travers. This part was played on alternate nights by Antony Carter and Greg Robertson, with both bringing their own style to the character. With Antony's; relaxed charm, charisma and cheeky-chappy smile, and Greg's strong presence, gleam in his eye and comic delivery both succeeded in bring the song and dance man to life. Their impressive solo dance numbers, featuring different choreography to suit their individual styles, were very well executed and a pleasure to watch. The other half of the leading couple is society girl Dale Tremont played by Aly Lamond and Claire Logue. Like the boys, both girls brought their own spin to the character. Aly combined a very feisty character showcasing her beautiful and effortless dancing, and Claire a strong-minded character which was supported in strong vocals throughout. Both excelled in their solo numbers with *Wild About You* giving them a chance to bring great comedy into their already resolute characterisation. Watching both Aly and Antony, and Greg and Claire's specific chemistry on stage was a delight. The other main couple in the story is Horace and Madge Hardwick, whose unique and love/hate relationship was conveyed excellently by Alastair McCall and Lindsey Ross. Alastair's comic timing and jumpy character balanced well with Lindsey's hilarious and poised portrayal of an elegant Madge. Lindsey's excellent vocals in her musical numbers were very impressive. More comedy was given by Iain Condie as Bates and Ross Nicol as fashion designer Alberto Beddini. The main principals were supported fantastically by an array of characters and dancers which formed an impressive ensemble, proving it really was a proper team effort.

**St Paul's Church Dramatic Society: White Christmas**

Director: Graeme Southwood; Musical Director: Linda Rae; Choreographer: Kirsty Galt

Based on the Paramount movie of the same title, this production provided great seasonal entertainment preparing the way for the start of the forthcoming Christmas season. Paul McWilliams and Craig Inglis provided an excellent double act as the song and dance team Wallace and Davis. Paul was outstanding in his portrayal of Wallace displaying the necessary impressive vocals and was equally matched by Craig as the tap-dancing, comedic Davis. Leah Farrell Smith played the charming Betty with Gillian Colquhoun as the tap-dancing Judy, both proving to be a perfect match as the singing sisters for Wallace and Davis. John Sands made a fine General Waverley with Samantha Todd (aged 13) ably playing Susan Waverley which was equalled by Lucy Blair who performed in alternate performances. Musical numbers were well staged and choreographed in particular, *Happy Holiday/Let Yourself Go* (Bob, Phil and chorus) and the tap routine in *I Love a Piano* (Phil, Judy and chorus). With a dazzling score and so many well known numbers including the perennial favourite *White Christmas*, who could fail to become captured in this timeless and heart warming musical? Well done!

David Black

**NODA THEATRE SUMMER SCHOOL 2018**

**Yarnfield Park Conference Centre, Stone, Staffordshire**

**Saturday 28 July to Saturday 4 August**



**REVIEWS**  
**DISTRICT 5 (Lanarkshire)**

**Airdrie Arts Guild Drama Group: Mother Goose**

Director: Craig Carter Smith; Musical Director: Ian G Montieth Mathie;  
Choreographer: Julieann Crannie

Celebrating 50 years of the Drama Group, this production had plenty of energy with good music and humour throughout. Principals were well supported by the adult and junior company in telling the tale of Mother Goose who with the local villagers was living in constant threat of the Squire but thankfully his nephew Colin was on their side. The title role of Mother Goose was ably played by Michael Boyle and was joined by Maureen O'Neill as daughter Jill and Peter Paterson her 'silly' son Billy, the village idiot. Jim Connell commanded the stage as the Squire and Laura Shepherd provided the perfect link as his nephew Colin to help ensure everything works out in the end. Grant Johnston and Ali Donald provided great amusement as the comedy duo Bogtrotter and Bumpkin the bailiffs, and Bill McCloy and Lorraine Keenan were a great match as the regal king and Queen of Gooseland. Winter Reid sparkled as Fairy Friendship and Liam McKinstry provided a great performance as the sinister Demon Discontent with Nicole Cowan cast as Priscilla the Goose. Eddie Goucher's subtle impromptu input added to the fun, laughter and the spirit of a traditional Scottish pantomime. The selection of songs set feet tapping, and the striking costumes added to the colour of what was a most enjoyable seasonal show and one which I am sure the company and the production team will be pleased with.

**Greenhills Panto Club: The Pied Piper**

Directors: Paul Eunson, Joy Eunson; Musical Director: Paul Eunson;  
Choreographers: Joy Munro, Katie Downie, Nicola Houston

This is a much less performed pantomime but still with the appeal of the Germanic tale. True to its roots in folklore, it was current with up-to-date comedy, corny gags, rhyme and song. As Sour-Krat (the witch) and Rat-Worst (the chief rat) battle it out against Fairy Strudel and a host of other characters, including Dame Helga, the local sausage maker, the story unfolds. Anne-Marie Simpson made an excellent Witch Sour-Krat with Brian Sheilds as Rat-Worst. Eleanor Hamilton was a fine Fairy Strudel with Veronica Wharton excelling as Dame Helga. However, when paired with Paul Eunson as Willie, both brought the magic of the traditional Scottish pantomime to the stage. Other principals included Angelique Watt as Heidi, Susan Livingstone as Hans, John Brewster as the Burgomeister and of course Lynn Meldrum as the Pied Piper. The remaining principals with the adult and junior chorus featured well in supporting the telling of the tale and in closing, the entire company, dressed in blue, white and silver provided a warm rendition of *O Holy Night* in candlelight. I am sure all involved in the production will be pleased with the response provided by the audiences at each performance.

**Hamilton Operatic & Dramatic Club: A Musical Showcase**

Director: Roland Russell; Musical Director: Elizabeth Pearson;  
Assistant Musical Director: Christine Robertson; Choreographer: Amanda Letarte;  
Assistant Choreographer: Katie MacFarlane

A musical revue involving some 50 songs stretching over eras from *Give My Regards To Broadway* to modern *Dream Girls* is a tall order for any company, but this club sailed through, maintaining their high standards throughout. Good strong singing and well rehearsed routines characterised the show. The Club showcased not only the musicals but also their talents. Unifying the whole was the storyline of young Tony scoffing at his Grandma's choice of music, being introduced to a wealth of music by a New York ticketeer and being brought to appreciate their wonder and joy. The first group of songs introduced the notion of showbiz with favourites like *Comedy Tonight* and *There's No Business Like Show Business* before moving into selections from *West Side Story*, where soloists Allan Cochrane and Gillian Black brought *Maria* and *Somewhere* to life; then to *Mary Poppins* with a well performed *Chim Chim Cher-ee* and well sung songs *Spoonful of Sugar* (Anne Morrison) and *Feed The Birds* (Elaine Paterson with Anne Morrison); and to Rodgers & Hammerstein with moving numbers *So In Love* (Roland Russell and Anne Morrison) and *If I Loved You*. Closing the first half with a change of pace and energy were *Motown – The Musical* and *Beautiful*. The second half opened with youngsters showcasing their talents in *It's A Hard Knock Life* and *Consider Yourself* while the young soloist Andrew Docherty sang *Electricity* with wonderful voice control. He was followed by Roslyn Bayley

who sang a haunting *Castle On A Cloud*. A medley from *Frozen* and *Wicked* came before the penultimate selection from *Les Misérables* which entertained with lovely harmonies and heartfelt solos – *I Dreamed A Dream* (Elaine Paterson) and *On My Own* (Lorna McGowan), interspersed with the comedic and well delivered *Master of the House*. The last selection from *Dream Girls* featured Emma Rodger, Carlie Slamin and Gillian Black which climaxed the show. Memorable were the choral arrangements for songs like *Tonight*, and *Supercalifagilisticexpialidocious*, the carefully choreographed tableaux, and colourful, quick changes of costume. Effective lighting and projections of appropriate background scenes added to the ambience and spectacle. The evening flashed by. Congratulations to all.

*Elizabeth Donald*

### **Monklands Light Opera: 9 to 5**

Director & Choreographer: Steph O'Raw; Musical Director: Patrick McClair

With music and lyrics by Dolly Parton this musical comedy, based on the 1980 movie, comes alive from the very opening with its quick witted phrases, punchy tunes and an abundance of comic repartee set within a story of courage, conviction and empowerment. John Bergin provided a great performance as Franklin Hart Jnr, the domineering and lecherous president of the company, with Nicole Henderson brilliantly imitating the inflections of Dolly Parton's tone as Doralee, his assistant. Nicola Frew made a suitably adorable and quirky Judy and Lucy Bonner provided the balance of pathos and comedy throughout her performance as Violet, the office mother hen, displaying some excellent dance and vocals. Gillian Hitchon made a fine frustrated assistant Roz whose character was transformed in a rather raunchy dance sequence. Clayton Wilson and Blair Wilkie were well cast as Joe and Dwayne and it was great to see Ross McArthur making the transition from the youth to the senior section of the club, playing the part of Josh with no difficulty. There is no doubt this production was well cast with all members of the company on stage providing full support to the principals and I am sure all involved in the production, including the production team, must be extremely pleased with the end result.

### **Our Lady's Musical Society: Fiddler on the Roof**

Director: Alan C Jones; Musical Director: Rebecca Keay; Choreographer: Sarah Booth

It is always a pleasure to visit the Village of Anatevka in what is one of my all time favourite shows. Taking on the demanding role as dairyman Tevye, John McKenzie provided an accomplished performance in all aspects of the role and was well partnered with Esther O'Hara who was flawless in her portrayal of Golde, his long suffering wife. Their older daughters, Tzeitel, Hodel and Chava were delightfully played by Jenny Morris, Laura Cowan and Julie Spence with great performances from the younger daughters, Shprintze and Bielke, by Hayley Stevenson and Abigail McNally. The male suitors were ably played by Christopher Morris who skilfully characterised the part of Motel the tailor with equally strong performances from Stuart Miller (Perchik) and Graeme Macaskill (Fyedka). As the gossipy village matchmaker, Marie Maxwell made a wonderful Yente. Excellent direction and choreography were provided to create a tormenting dream sequence which took centre stage around Tevye and Golde, featuring Violet Thompson as Grandma Tzeitel and Angela Lavery as a powerful Fruma Sarah rising from the dead in a red shroud! All supporting principals with the chorus and dancers added to what was a splendid production. With beautiful music and a strong story who could fail to enjoy this show?

### **Shotts St Patrick's Amateur Opera Group: Monty Python's Spamalot**

Director & Choreographer: Judy Brown; Musical Director: Fraser Wilson

Although I was not familiar with the story line, it didn't take me long to work out that it was a collection of Python's songs and other material captured in a condensed plot of their Holy Grail movie. Like the film, it is a highly irreverent parody of the Arthurian legend but differing from the film in its parodies of Broadway musical theatre. Matthew Coulter was brilliant as King Arthur travelling the land to recruit his Knights of the Round Table with his servant Patsy, ably played by Darren Strang, who followed him around banging two coconut shells together to make the sound of a horse's hooves, providing great amusement. When Arthur and his band of misfit knights finally gather in Camelot, they receive a charge from God to find the Holy Grail which takes them to obscure places and into the company of extremely strange and weird characters. Joe Totten and Brian Shallow provided excellent amusement as Sir Lancelot and Sir Robin. Rachael Totten was an absolutely fabulous Lady of the Lake,

displaying great versatility in her approach to differing song styles which included the *Divas Lament*, *Find Your Grail* and *A Song That Goes Like This*. A young Finlay Cook characterised the effeminate young Prince Herbert with great ease with Jim McGhee as his father. This production was performed slickly by a highly talented company who collectively and skilfully captured the true essence of Python under the guidance of a highly creative production team, leaving the audience rolling in the aisles with laughter.

## REVIEWS DISTRICT 6 (Edinburgh Area)

### **Edinburgh Gang Show Productions Limited: Edinburgh Gang Show 2017**

Directors: Andy Johnston, Jemma Crawford; Musical Directors: Andrew Thomson, Ian Sutherland;  
Choreographers: Louise Williamson, Jemma Crawford, Louise Hunter

Once again Gang Show triumphed with an evening of musical medleys, dance, comic sketches and solo performances delivered with skill and confidence by the cast of more than 200 youngsters brimming with enthusiasm, dedication and talent. The show really is quite a spectacle with fabulous costumes, dazzling sets and lighting pertinent to each section. The opening section *That Could Be Me* depicted a young man's aspirations to be a Broadway star as he imagines himself performing roles in *Les Mis*, *Oliver!*, *Billy Elliot* and *Lion King*. This very neatly led into the *Imagination* section where we see a fantasy life through the eyes of children. *A Christmas Tale* was a very very funny sketch on the nativity with well played, down to earth characters who really did *Sparkle and Shine* particularly the diva star and endearing donkey. This was followed by a more subdued moving section *Listen* where we were treated to three very fine solo performances of difficult numbers from *Les Mis*, *Hamilton* and *Dreamgirls*. The younger cast took us back to Oz with a charming, bouncy, colourful section entitled *One Short Day*. There is a wealth of talent in Gang Show and *Half A World Away* and *Don't Look Back In Anger* were sung with total conviction by the two very strong male soloists backed by the company who finished off this section with a resounding *Man Was Born to Be Free*. The slap stick sketch *The Orchestra* displaying the antics of a somewhat dysfunctional orchestra was well done. Fortunately this was unlike the very well controlled orchestra in the pit who were supportive of the singers and dancers. There were some superb orchestral arrangements throughout the show. *Applause* for me was one of the stand-out sections of the evening. Not only were the vocalists fabulous but the dance routines, set and costumes were quite stunning and brought the first half to a dazzling, glamorous conclusion. The synchronised clapping was very neatly done. The choreography which opened Act II in *One Step Beyond* was again quite thrilling. The long, non-stop dance routines to the music of Madness were fast and quite breath taking yet appeared so effortless to this lively, talented group of young people. A beautiful duet *Stay* backed by graceful dancing was a calming contrast. With panto season almost upon us, we were entertained by a most amusing adaptation of *Cinderella*. All of the actors here were so natural and confident. The Ugly Sisters, Theresa and Rurh, really convinced us that they were 'Bosom Buddies'. *Scottish Rock* provided the opportunity to showcase the instrumental skills of some of the youngsters. *Wild Mountain Thyme* was very sweetly sung by the young lady who accompanied herself on the guitar while the electric guitar and bagpipes accompanied some very neat dancing and strong singing particularly the foot tapping *500 Miles*. This year celebrates 50 years of girls in Gang Show and *There is Nothing Like a Guide* was very amusing indeed. Loved Moira and her zimmer!! The evening of fun, flare, frivolity and flamboyance was rounded off with the traditional finale where the cast proudly wearing their uniforms remember what being part of the Gang Show family means. This is always a very poignant part of the programme and the soloists in *These Are The Good Times* and *Thankful* sang with real sincerity. The discrete tribute to the late Gordon Blackburn with him singing a few bars of *These Are The Times* was most fitting. *Riding Along On the Crest of a Wave* lifted the spirits and had the animated audience singing along. What is most apparent about Gang Show is the real sense of camaraderie, enthusiasm and enjoyment on stage with every youngster doing his or her utmost and giving their all. The opportunity given to these young people to learn stage skills and perform on a professional stage whilst developing confidence and the importance of team work is not only due to their own commitment and willingness to learn but to the huge efforts of the production and wardrobe team and the back-up team who support them. The dedication of all involved in putting together such a diverse production is immense and deserves recognition. Without this all round team effort on and off stage we would not have the pleasure of seeing what can only be described as a magnificent Gang Show. Congratulations !

### **Forth Dimension Musical Productions: Knight Fever!**

Director: Melanie Smith; Musical Director: Craig Stewart; Choreographer: Zoe Hogg

This was a real family pantomime full of fun, slapstick, wit, colourful costumes and some very effective lighting and sound effects. In fact all the necessary ingredients for a panto. In the Kingdom of Camelot Justin, a young stable boy, wants to marry Princess Anna but reckons he can only do this by helping King Arthur overcome the dangers which threaten Camelot and becoming one of King Arthur's Knights. Helped by Lester the Jester he eventually overcomes the wicked Black Knight in a joust and of course all ends well. Yiorgos Perris was perfectly cast as the very funny, fine Jester who had the audience eating out of his hands from the word go delivering his witty jokes with perfect timing and totally at ease on stage. Young Calum Bowden too was a very natural performer and matched well with the lovely Caty Kerr, Princess Anna. Keith Bowden was a rather resplendent Dame Doris Dumpling who brought great humour to the part with his/her impromptu actions and reactions. The Black Knight (Cameron Aitchison) received all the expected boos and hisses from an audience who interacted and responded to the action on stage throughout the evening. King Arthur (Huw Thomas) and his entourage Queen Guinevere (Gill Sullivan) and Merlin (Joe Burnett) commanded the stage. I particularly enjoyed Lexi Lane's performance as Chardonnay La Fey, the Sorceress – a young lady with good clear diction and a stage presence. The company of young Knights looked great and gave it their all particularly in *Knight Fever* and *Go Quest* which were well choreographed. This may be a small company performing on a small stage but everybody is so natural and spontaneous which is what panto is all about. Any small hitches were sorted out with humour and the odd ad lib which added to the frivolity. Children brought on stage, a sing-a-long and sweets thrown into the audience all contributed to the fun being had by the performers and the audience. Forth Dimension panto is always a pleasure to attend and really gets me into the spirit of Christmas. I thoroughly enjoyed it. Oh Yes I Did!

### **Musical Youth: Grease**

Director & Musical Director: Peter Antonelli; Choreographer: Heather Antonelli

Celebrating their 25th Anniversary, this group of youngsters ranging in age from 8 to 16 put on a delightful production of *Grease*. The show is full of catchy, well known numbers and these High School students were animated and in great voice throughout. The choreography in the big company numbers was well thought out particularly in *We Go Together* which had small groups bobbing up and down and was delivered with enthusiasm and precision. Although very young, the boys especially embraced the style of the 60s with their leather jackets, slicked back hair and 'teddy boy' mannerisms and struts. There were some very good individual performances. Georgio Michalakis certainly looked the part as the suave, cool Danny playing hard to get and was well partnered with the somewhat naive, sweet Sandy (Becky Cargill). Both had very good singing voices. *Hopelessly Devoted To You* was sung with ease and feeling while *Sandy* conveyed Danny's heartache. The formidable Pink Ladies made a great team of well defined characters: a powerful Marty (Anna Scott), a confident, raunchy Rizzo (Hope Wilson), a vivacious Frenchy (Jessica Hogg) and a feisty Jan (Iris Scott) who had real attitude. Their pyjama party scene in Marty's room was well played and *Freddy My Love* was sung and moved convincingly. Kate Johnstone too was a strong, lively Patty. Greased Lightning is perhaps one of the most popular songs in the show and these lads did a great job with this number. Kenickie (Gregor Cargill) led the group with assurance whilst Sonny (James MacDonald), Doody (Will McNeill) and Roger (Luke Davidson) were in great form. I believe James and Luke are still at primary school but these lively, cheeky chaps certainly knew how to put across their numbers with style and maturity. I loved Roger and Jan's sentimental *Mooning*. Priya MacDonald was a suitably elegant, prudish Miss Lynch and Liam Munro a very loveable Eugene. Amy Thomson too made a great job of the striking, stylish Cha Cha. The second act got off to a cracking start with Johnny Casino (Ian McKenna) leading the group in a very good *Born To Hand Jive* with dancing and hand movements delivered with precision and obvious enjoyment by the chorus. The charming Teen Angel (Steve McDonald) was in excellent voice and backed by a group of dancers who looked fabulous. All the action in the School Gym was kept well under control by Vince Fontaine (Kevin MacConnachie). The final *You're The One That I Want* and *We Got Together* was spirited and finished the evening on a high. This was a most enjoyable production showcasing some very talented youngsters who had obviously worked very hard. Congratulations to this young cast, production team, band and all involved in any way in making this such a successful 25th Anniversary production.

**Musselburgh Amateur Musical Association: Revue 2018 Celebration**  
Director & Choreographer: Lisa McLeod; Musical Director: Laura Paterson

Celebration was a most fitting title for this fun packed evening of well chosen and well known musical numbers delivered with verve and enthusiasm by a cast of all ages from young children to the more mature stalwarts of the society, creating a relaxed, happy atmosphere on stage and in the auditorium. The opening section *Jukebox* got the evening off to a cracking start with *Oh What A Night* followed by the male chorus serenading the ladies in *Can't Help Falling In Love* and then a rollicking *Rockin Robin*. Carla's personality shone through in *Stupid Cupid* with the lively *Shoop Shoop Song* bringing this section to a close. The choreographed dropping money into a jukebox to change the tunes was a clever, neat touch. A selection of numbers from *The World* followed where we heard some fine solo work. *Don't Cry For Me, Argentina* was sung with passion by Fiona and Lynsey's *Walking in Memphis* was stunning. Dougal's *Galway Girl* and Bob's *On An Evening In Roma* were also most enjoyable. A small ensemble delivered a powerful *Budapest* while *Africa* with the full company created a great sound. More fun and humour in the *Scotland* section with an amusing *Letter From America* and *Let's Get Married*. Lulu's *Shout* was brilliantly delivered by one of the more mature ladies and was very well received by the audience. Act II began with a selection of favourites from *Musicals*. Anna, Cathy and Evelyn never let us down and they were in fine form in *Gotta Get A Gimmick* dressed as strippers and with no inhibitions. *Master Of The House / Stars* is always a winner and was followed by Claire's most enjoyable rendition of *There's A Fine, Fine Line*. Jenna and the company were in excellent voice in *Windy City* and Dougal's *Higher Than A Hawk* giving us a taste of the forthcoming production of *Calamity Jane*. A most energetic *You Can't Stop The Beat* concluded this part of the programme. The final section *Party* brought the evening which had a party atmosphere throughout to a lively conclusion. An accomplished ensemble blended really well singing *September* while *I've Had The Time Of My Life* really did sum up the evening's entertainment. I did enjoy the slower version of *I Wanna Dance With Somebody* contrasting well with the sparkly, dynamic *Love Shack* which closed the programme. This was a most enjoyable revue giving great opportunities to the many talented members of all ages to shine.

**Showcase Musical Productions: Showcase Christmas Concert**  
Director: Andy Johnston; Musical Director: David McFarlane

What better way to spend a cold December afternoon than relaxing and listening to a selection of Christmas songs! The programme was very varied including some more modern numbers as well as traditional favourites. The first half included the well know duet *Baby It's Cold Outside*, *When A Child Is Born* and a rousing *All I Want For Christmas Is You*. *Don't Fall In Love With An Elf* was a new one to me and fun. Showcase has traditionally included the John Lewis Christmas advert music in their programme and I did enjoy the arrangement of *Golden Slumbers*. In contrast to some of the bouncy numbers the duet *Pie Jesu* was sung brilliantly. The guest appearance by some of the children from the company *The Young Ones* was delightful. Dressed in their elf costumes they told us that *It Feels Like Christmas* and that they *Want A Hippopotamus for Christmas*. *Hush A By Mountain* from *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* where they were joined by one of the Showcase members was quite charming. After an interval with mulled wine and mince pies we enjoyed a variety of numbers including a medley of Christmas numbers recorded by Elvis Presley. The vocal arrangements for some of the numbers were original, fresh and interesting. A swing duet arrangement of *White Christmas* and the arrangement for five voices of *Silent Night* were most impressive. *Oh Holy Night* is one of my favourite songs and the soloist here sang with real sincerity and was indeed one of the highlights of the afternoon. *Jingle Bell Rock*, *A Fairy Tale of New York* and the final *Jingle Bells* were all sung with Christmas cheer and verve. This was a most enjoyable programme delivered by the talented Showcase who continue not only to entertain but also to raise money for Macmillan. To date they have raised more than £260,000. Apologies that in the last show report it stated £26,000.

**Threepenny Theatricals: Elephants**  
Director: Fiona Main

It was a real pleasure to be invited to the opening night of the debut production by this new company and what a wonderful production it was! I must confess to never having heard of the play *Elephants* so had little idea of what to expect other than it was a black comedy about a family reunion at Christmas when some dark secrets are revealed. This excellent, gripping play full of contrasting emotions was indeed wonderfully directed and perfectly cast. An impressive split set depicted a living

room lavishly decorated for Christmas, a dining area with a view into the kitchen and a garden shed filled to the brim with tools and 'stuff' and was well used and lit. Sally, a middle class housewife, has pulled out all the stops to try to make this a special Christmas for her family and close friends in memory of her dear son who was killed a year before. While Sally is apparently full of the joys of Christmas, her alcohol dependent husband Richard is not so keen and has little time for the friends Valerie and Dick. Sally and Richard's daughter Daisy who has mental health issues eventually turns up and is none too pleased to see her deceased brother's ex-girlfriend the fashionable, Lizzy, has been invited. There is unease in the group right from the start but as the play builds so does the tension between the characters. Things are not as they appear to be. The scene at the dining table where secrets and feelings are revealed was particularly well played and poignant. Daisy, displaying her almost manic behaviour, was brilliantly played by the young and very talented Rebekah Lansley who forces Lizzy (Mia Oudeh) to tell the truth about Christopher's death. The later scene with these two players after Daisy has seen her brother's ghost was a real tour de force by both girls. Lengthy dialogue was delivered with great sensitivity and real meaning, Daisy feeling that her loss and grieving may have been the cause of her breakdown. Sally's (Fiona Main) transformation from the jovial if somewhat needy hostess to the desperate mother who is pushed to reveal that she knew that the son she has always had on a pedestal was a drug dealer was a heart breaking moment as she loses the plot and becomes distraught. A very powerful moment. Richard (Simon Boothroyd) the sometimes boorish husband was extremely well played with sincerity and humour. However this façade was dropped when he poured out his heart to Dick (Chris Cotter) in the garden shed. In a very lengthy monologue he relives the horror of his son's crime scene and the torment he has lived through, eventually bursting into tears. Alcohol has been his saviour. Another wonderful piece of acting. Trying always to calm troubled waters is Valerie (Elspeth Whyte) who gave a 'lovely' controlled performance as she aims to find the best in everything. Her husband Dick who has difficulty keeping his hands off Lizzie brought humour to the piece as he keeps talking out of turn and putting his foot in it but was never overplayed. This was certainly a most moving production with very strong characterisations by all of the cast. The pacing and timing throughout was immaculate, the cast never afraid of the long silences and dramatic pauses which created tension. The intensity of the moment broken by humorous one liners delivered particularly well by Richard, Dick and Daisy. The bonding of the characters at the end of the play after such turmoil was quite emotional and I did like the final tableau with the star on the tree lit as the ghostly Christopher (Gordon Horne) stands in the doorway. This was a first class piece of theatre by an excellent cast who played well together resulting in a brilliant, memorable production. Threepenny Theatricals, you have set the bar high and I look forward to and wish you well with your future productions. Very many congratulations.

## REVIEWS DISTRICT 7 (Fife)

### **Artistic Concert Experiences: Ace Chorus Entertains** Director: Rona McKenzie; Musical Director: Richard Johnston

From the moment ACE Chorus "struck up the band" in the opening number to the rousing encore which ended with *9 to 5* they held the audience's attention. The usual varied programme chosen by Richard Johnston, Musical Director, and Rona McKenzie, Director, ensured there was something for everyone to enjoy. The first half included a variety of styles and genres of songs. My personal favourite was a powerful rendition by Alex Lawrie and Lorna Garvin of *If He Really Knew Me*. The company in their sea of blue shirts and ties obviously enjoyed the big numbers of *Reach Out I'll be There* and *By the Rivers of Babylon*. Stuart Abernethy and Vickie Ferrier are to be congratulated on coping with a technical hitch with their microphones and were still able to make the audience laugh with *Goodness Gracious Me*, a song I hadn't heard for many years. The first half finished with an Abba medley which again brought back memories. Who knew so many of us remembered the words and found it difficult not to join in on occasions? One of the strengths of ACE Chorus is the quality of the soloists and the fact that they are willing to tackle challenging music on short rehearsal time. This was demonstrated in the second half. It opened with two songs from *West Side Story* followed by two from *Les Misérables*. Nicole Cassidy's *I Dreamed a Dream* held the audience spellbound. Other songs from shows followed, showcasing solos from Lorna Brown, Robert Brogan and Alan McAtee. To borrow a phrase from the opening song – everyone loves a band and the ACE Orchestra live up to this saying. A change to the programme meant they played the theme from *The Magnificent Seven* – very atmospheric. The second half officially ended the way the half started with a song from *West Side Story*. As ever we were sent home with an encore of three songs, *Lucky in Love*, *I Will Survive*

and 9 to 5 all guaranteed to keep the audience singing all the way home. Thank you all for an excellent concert. I look forward to next year.

Alison Pendlowski

### **Cupar Amateur Musical Society: Anything Goes**

Director: Scott Melvin; Musical Director: Kate Doig; Choreographer: Lorna Lewis

It is a big ask of any company and director to cope with a show that contains so many one-liners, an equally large number of diverse characters and scene changes that just might slow down the pace of the entire show. Cupar AMS however acquitted themselves admirably in all the above. Louise Middleton characterised an excellent Reno, and, as she says in her programme biography, obviously “had great fun finding her ‘inner Reno’”. Complemented by Andrew Doig, Andrew’s “Billy Crocker” was a joy to watch. His impeccable sense of timing of deliveries, turned what could be a very wordy first act, into an enjoyable rendition of Cole Porter’s lyrics, which are never – even at the best of times – easy! Helen Knowles-Venters delighted as Hope Harcourt, none more so than in her duet with Billy *It’s De-Lovely*. Moonface Martin (Alan Blair) and side-kick Erma (Jackie Beatson) both added their own brand of comedy to the show – Jackie’s squeaky voiced portrayal, adding to the already comedic lyrics – and well-done for keeping up the squeak throughout! The matriarchal character of Evangeline Harcourt (Ruth Anderson) provided plenty of laughs whilst Neil Jarrett as Lord Evelyn Oakleigh brought every ounce of comedy to this part (one of my favourites in the show!), and made a showstopper out of *The Gypsy In Me*. Choral singing and choreography were up to the usual high standard of Cupar AMS, although the night I attended, *Blow Gabriel Blow* just didn’t quite make it for me. Sets were extremely serviceable, especially the frequent toing and froing between main deck and stateroom, which in other productions have slowed the entire pace of the show, this time no such problem. Sound quality was consistently good throughout, with a happy balance between singers and orchestra. One bit of advice on lighting – please ensure that, when required, cast can be seen in all areas of the stage and especially when you use an upper level on the set. Very often faces were underlit – or not lit at all! I would love to see this remedied in future productions! As always, an enjoyable evening was had at the Corn Exchange in Cupar, and many thanks for your hospitality at the interval!

### **Cupar Youth Musical Theatre: The Addams Family**

Director: Jude Vandecasteele; Musical Director: Emily Middleton; Choreographer: Rachel McNicol

Unceremoniously ripped from the TV series of the same name, *The Addams Family* must bring back fond memories for those who were lucky enough to view the black and white, small screen version in the late sixties, early seventies. Those same people, I am sure, had equal difficulty in restraining a double finger snap in the opening bars of the title tune! Tonight CYMT successfully brought the small screen version to the stage! Beginning with the chorus, enthusiasm was evident from start to finish – *Full Disclosure* giving one of the best opportunities for singing and movement from the twenty-four or so Addams Ancestors. Principals were all of an excellent standard – and kept in character for the vast majority of the show! Kitty Carr and Ross Dickson formed a suitably morbid, yet functional, Morticia and Gomez Addams. Lucy Campbell (Wednesday Addams) and Emma Duncan (Pugsley Addams) provided equally appropriate characterisations throughout. It is sad to see that this will be several of the principals’ last show with CYMT. However, the Youth Theatre’s loss will, hopefully, be some adult company’s gain! Not to take away from the obvious personal work input by members of the company, but mention must be made of the production team. Jude Vandecasteele as Director, has guided the young adults in Addams along just the right lines to make a great success of this musical. New choreographer Rachel McNicol has also worked wonders in bringing dance and movement to the company, while, last but not least, congratulations go to MD Emily Middleton for encouraging some first class singing from the young voices. Well done CYMT!

### **Dunfermline Gilbert & Sullivan Society: The Mikado**

Director: Rae Lamond; Musical Director: Eddie MacLennan

*The Mikado* is an operetta I know particularly well so I thought I pretty much knew what to expect from this production. How wrong I was! The curtain rose to reveal the Gentlemen of Titipu in casual trousers, shirts and waistcoats wearing brightly coloured bowler type hats alongside the Ladies of Titipu in fluorescent wigs, black trousers or long skirts underneath a white open kimono type dressing gown. Then the arrival of Nanki-Poo casually dressed with a black leather jacket and carrying a

trombone followed by three little maids in figure hugging short black dresses which at time got lost against the black ramps and scaffolding which made up the set. No traditional colourful Japanese set or orange blossom. And not a fan in sight. I must confess that it took me a little time to get used to what I was seeing, but when I did I found the concept of this production quirky and intriguing. Rectangular boxes moved cleverly around the stage helped to create different playing levels although at times this was a little distracting. Another twist was Ko-Ko being played by a female and Katisha played by a man. Although this was certainly a very different, innovative production, the score and script remained true to the work of Gilbert and Sullivan. The standard of singing by both the chorus and principal characters was extremely high and maintained throughout. Yum -Yum (Lindsey Cotter), Pitti -Sing (Katy Williamson) and Peep-Bo (Sinead Black) blended well vocally. Nanki-Poo (Alex Gunn) had a most pleasing light tenor voice which contrasted well with the resounding bass voice of Pooh-Bah (George Alexander) Lord High Everything Else and Pish-Tush (Martin Tarr). The Mikado (Matthew Sielewicz) complete with top hat and short jacket also gave a strong impressive performance. There were certainly some high standard characterisations in this production but, in my opinion, the oscar winning performance was Susanne Horsburgh's Ko-Ko. Scurrying about the stage, swinging from scaffolding and with brilliant comic timing this really was a brilliant performance which kept the show moving along at a great pace. Robin Ozog's Katisha, the only character in Japanese costume, was also a tour de force. *Alone and Yet Alive* was beautifully sung and for me was one of the show's highlights. These two characters interacted brilliantly. *Tit Willow* and *Beauty In the Bellow of the Blast* were both excellent. Act II has some gorgeous small ensemble numbers such as *The Flowers That Bloom In The Spring* and the Madrigal and the harmonies in these numbers came through very well indeed. This was undoubtedly a very different *Mikado* from any other I have ever seen or performed in and I have the greatest admiration for the director and the company for taking up the challenge of doing something totally different. I am sure there will be some who prefer to stick to tradition but if the audience response was anything to go by, this was a most successful venture. It was also a pleasure to present nine Long Service Awards at the end of the production.

Dorothy Johnstone

### **Fife Opera: The Magic Flute**

Director: Douglas Nairne; Musical Director: Alistair Digges; Choreographer: Allison Quigley

*The Magic Flute*, an opera in two acts by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, still holds as much appeal as it did following its première on 17 September 1791. Some see it as a fairy tale with pantomime humour and magic, whilst others perceive it as a human journey of enlightenment. In either case, it is as relevant today as it was when first performed. In true Fife Opera fashion the chorus was outstanding and added massively to a double-cast array of soloists, who, in themselves were a sheer pleasure to listen to. Papageno (Jonathan Sedgewick) gave a lively, humorous performance as this role demands. It takes virtually the whole opera, but, eventually, Papageno meets the lovely wife he has been longing for – Papagena (Zoe Perman), and they plan a happy future together – with the prospect of many Papageni! Tamino (Kenny Reid) portrayed a fine looking, handsome prince with a first class singing voice, while Freya Holliman as Pamina, the beautiful girl who falls in love with Tamino, brought this character to life with beautiful singing and acting throughout, making for a very enjoyable performance. A superb performance was realised by Ana Pousa as Queen of the Night, while her three Ladies (Frances Taylor, Eleanor Hubbard and Barbara Scott) continued the mysterious plotting to great effect. Possibly my favourite arias in the opera were performed with consummate ease by Russell Malcolm as the sorcerer, Sarastro. As in recent years, Musical Director Alistair Digges managed to extract every ounce of vocal talent from this large cast, while keeping his orchestra of twenty-eight under firm control. Artistic direction was in the capable hands of Douglas Nairne, who achieved many very pleasing pictures, using the facilities of the multi-level set. Another undoubted success for Fife Opera!

### **Kirkcaldy Amateur Operatic Society: Top Hat – The Musical**

Directors & Choreographers: Kenny Christie, Carol Sinclair; Musical Director: Tom Wright

Take a trip back to the golden age of Hollywood with *Top Hat*. This sumptuous song and dance show is crammed full of well known melodies for example: *Puttin' on the Ritz*, *I'm Puttin' All My Eggs in One Basket*, *Top Hat*, *White Tie and Tails*, *Let's Face the Music and Dance*. This production has been given true KAOS treatment in all aspects from sets to costumes and on to stunning performances from both principals and chorus! The principals could not be faulted. Let us start with Scott Binnie as Jerry Travers. Having seen Scott in a totally different role in the last year, it was a pleasure to watch



and listen to him in this major song and dance part. Partnering Scott was the lovely, elegant Wendy Tulloch as society girl, Dale Tremont. Wendy's wide range of characterisations from feisty to "agreeable", made this pairing a true Fred Astaire and Ginger Rodgers romantic comedy scenario. Clark Graham as Horace Hardwick entertained as only Clark can, while his manservant Bates (Kieran Allan) was hilarious as the Jeeves-like valet. Michael McFarlane also excelled as the over-the-top Alberto Beddini. Alberto, the exquisitely affected Italian dressmaker, could only be described as light years away from the last part that I had the pleasure of seeing Michael play – that of Jud Fry in Edinburgh G&S's *Oklahoma!*. A wide range of characterisations to say the least! Madge Hardwick (Deirdre McFarlane), the matchmaking friend of Dale Tremont, succeeds in carrying the story along from London to Italy, albeit with some not-so-minor personality confusions in the latter country! Congratulations to all of the production team! Well done KAOS – roll on your next show!

### **Kirkcaldy Youth Music Theatre: Cry Baby**

Director: Monica Holland; Musical Director: Alan Urquhart; Choreographer: Jillian Ogilvie

It is always satisfying to see a show that is infrequently performed, and *Cry Baby* is a case in point – in fact this production by Kirkcaldy Youth Music Theatre was a European Première. Teenage culture comprises class warfare between the upper class Squares and the opposing Drapes. The Squares are epitomised by "pillar of society" Mrs Vernon-Williams (Catriona Gauld) who handles this older character with apparent ease, and deals effortlessly with large amounts of monologue and a solo musical number that would frighten any actor of greater years! Her granddaughter Allison (Holly McIlhatton) provides the teenage angst, whereby she yearns to break away from her grandmother's apron strings – and be a bit less good. To this end she feels the need also to break away from boyfriend Baldwin (Andrew Stewart) and cross the tracks to the (slightly) bad Drapes. Holly performs extremely well in this double-character part and acts and sings her way through numerous musical numbers with consummate ease! On the other side of the coin we have the Drapes led by the vastly misunderstood Cry Baby of the title, played with feeling and excellent energy by Ross McKenzie. Cry Baby is aided and abetted by his friend Dupree (Blair Hollingworth) and three women who most certainly put the word CHARACTER into character! Pepper Walker (Bethany Morrison), Wanda Woodward (Dominika Valente) and Mona 'Hatchet-Face' Malnorowski (Cara Hayes) have developed three entirely individual personae each of which works exceedingly well. Again singing and acting appears to come as second nature to this trio! Last but certainly not least, the cameo role of Lenora, played with over the top perfection by Niamh Corkey, showcased her fine singing voice with a solo and a duet with Baldwin. As ever with Kirkcaldy YMT, youthful enthusiasm oozes from this company, and, together with a fine choice of show, provides an evening of lively entertainment for all their audiences. We look forward to next year, the 60th anniversary of this society.

## **REVIEWS DISTRICT 9 (Grampian & Highlands)**

### **Culter Theatre Club: Snow White**

Director: David Johnston-Oates; Musical Director: Jean McLeod; Choreographer: Susan Davis

*Snow White* was a good choice for Culter Theatre Club; not only was it slick but it even matched the weather outside! All the principals were excellent. Space does not allow me to mention them all, but some deserve a special mention. Bogwort (Linda Hector) and Stinkwort (Sandra Bain) had everyone in stitches and turned out to be not so bad baddies after all. Queen Caligula (Camilla Overland) and Black Wing (Matthew Bruce) were great baddies, getting booed loudly by the audience – Matthew showed his softer side by presenting his grandfather (in the audience) a late birthday present! Dame Dolly Dumpling (Colin Jones) was a nicely frenetic character with a touch of Mrs Brown about her. The happy couple, Snow White (Zoe Simpson) and her Prince Al'Bridge – of – Feugh (Robyn McRitchie), blended their voices perfectly in their duet. Zoe looked every inch a Disney Snow White, while Robyn slapped her thigh and swashed her buckle superbly. The choreography was slickly done and the band led ably by Jean McLeod was excellent. The Director added some nice theatrical touches (the Magic Mirror especially) to make it a night to remember. Well done Culter Theatre Club!

*Brian McDonald*

**NODA was formed in 1899 and has enjoyed 118 years of service to  
amateur theatre.**

### **Elgin Amateur Dramatic Society: Rapunzel**

Director: Amanda Craib; Musical Director: Brian Smith; Choreographer: Kirsty Anderson

This was the first time I had seen the telling of the fairy story *Rapunzel* as a pantomime and the script, written by director Amanda Craib, was full of the usual characters – damsel in distress, handsome prince, funny dame and fairies a-plenty. The large chorus got the evening off to a good start with an energetic rendition of *I Got That Feeling* set in the village square and then we were introduced to the main characters. Ben Mortimer's outrageously flirty Dame Dolly (Rapunzel's mother) made a grand entrance on her colourful mobile bakery cart and continued to have everyone laughing, ably assisted by her nephew (and Prince's Aide) Aiden played well by Darren McKinnon who had the audience responding loudly to his catchphrase from the start. In the title role of Rapunzel was Amy Hector, an actress with a head for heights as she spent most of the show high on the balcony of her prison tower. Her suitor Prince Michael was played by newcomer Harry Stagg who had fine stage presence and a good singing voice, as was shown in the delightful duet with Rapunzel *True Colours*. Adrienne Lean revelled in playing the evil Gothel (Rapunzel's captor) enjoying every hiss and boo from the audience. Much laughter was wrought from the antics of Gothel's hapless side-kicks Raven and Cobweb played by Phoebe Gibb-Kellas and Lee Whitely respectively and I particularly enjoyed their rendition of *Me and My Shadow*. Strong support was given by Colin Smith (King George) and Ally Deas, Bryony Munro, Lauren Holmes and Aimee Stephen (Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter Fairies respectively). Singing by everyone, accompanied by Brian Smith and his carefully controlled six piece band, was good as was the movement. Well done to all at EADS for an entertaining evening.

### **The Florians: Sleeping Beauty**

Director & Choreographer: Fiona McDonald; Musical Director: Alan Mackintosh

With a script written by company member Trevor Nicol this was a true community panto full of fun with plenty of local references. Special lyrics, written by company member Caroline Nicol to well-known tunes such as *Timeless to Me (Hairspray)*, *Master of the House (Les Misérables)*, *Together (Gypsy)* and *Be Our Guest (Beauty and the Beast)*, were performed beautifully by principals and chorus alike as was the choreography. Poppy Charteris, who took on the role of Beauty with a week's notice due to the ill health of the original actress, was delightful, interacting well with Aileen Hendry's thigh-slapping Prince Marius. Lots of laughter was engineered by Morag Barron and Hannah Nimmo as Lewis and Martin, the King's hapless gofers and by Trevor Nicol as Dicky, Beauty's nurse's nephew. As usual Nicholas Nicol made an outstanding dame, Beauty's nurse Bella Drumm, with each costume change more extravagant than the last. Lesley MacLean was believably evil as the wicked fairy Cadavera and deserved every last boo and hiss from the audience. Strong support was given by Brian Howlett (King Henry), Eileen Barr (Queen Patricia), Jason Hasson (Archbishop/Captain Quibble), Jimmy McNaughton (Lord Chamberlain), Steve Kelly (King Philip) and Anne Bamborough, Carla Kelly and Kayleigh MacAskill (the good fairies Ronda, Allegra and Sonata respectively). Mention too must be made of Emily Girst who played Prince Marius' faithful hound Bruno. Costumes and set were both colourful and appropriate. Well done to everyone at The Florians for another delightful pre-Christmas feast of fun.

### **Kirkwall Amateur Operatic Society: The Beggar's Opera**

Director: Penny Aberdein; Musical Director: Glenys Hughes

This piece, John Gay's great comic masterpiece, was written in 1728 and is generally agreed to be the first ever musical. There have been many versions since but KAOS picked on the Royal Shakespeare Company's 1990s adaptation to perform. With 50 musical numbers, encompassing lilting love songs to guitar-led rock-style numbers, there was huge scope for this vocally talented group to get their teeth into. Among the tunes still well known today are *Greensleeves*, *Over the Hills and Far Away* and *Golden Slumbers*. The story of Captain Macheath the highwayman, his lovers and band of brigands is colourful – full of both humour and pathos and, although it is set in the 18th century and uses the vocabulary of the time, the issues raised are recognisable today. Scott Gilmour was excellent as the strutting, swash-buckling Captain Macheath, with confident stage presence and a good singing voice. As his two main love interests Polly Peachum and Lucy Lockitt – played by Helen Newton and Kathleen Irving-Lewis respectively – both actresses gave very strong performances, their rendition of *No Power/I Like A Fox* at the end of Act II being particularly powerful. As the fathers of the two girls, Peachum (the informant) and Lockitt (the jailer), Dennis Gowland and

Chris Matthews respectively gave strong performances, never wavering from their villainous characterisations. A strong performance was also given by Kate Howe as Mrs Peachum with lovely renditions of her solo numbers in Act I. Paul Rendall, in the dual roles of Tom, the fictional author of the play, and Filch, Peachum's servant, played the narrator of the piece well, making sure we all kept up to speed with the story. The male chorus – playing thieves and members of Macheath's gang – looked and acted their various characters as to the manner born. The ladies chorus certainly threw themselves into their roles as the Women of the Town with special mention of Cathy Lyner (Mrs Vixen), Emma Laughton (Jenny Diver), Sandra Shearer (Mrs Slammekin), Edwina Lloyd (Suky Tawdry) and Ishbel Fraser (a delightfully comic Diana Trapes the ageing Madam). The crime-ridden slum of St Giles in London was well portrayed by the multi-level scaffolding set, with changes of the settings being achieved by the introduction of a few pieces of furniture and by the hanging of tapestry-like cloths from the scaffolding poles. Costumes were simple and appropriate to each character – the Women of the Town's daring attire even attracting wolf-whistles from the audience! The ten piece orchestra, under the baton of Glenys Hughes, played the intricate score with consummate ease. Well done everyone at KAOS for bringing this little performed gem back to the stage.

### **Ury Players: Puss in Boots**

Directors: Russell Adams, Gordon Smith; Choreographers: Chloe Christie, Tamara Scherwitzel

This was a colourful production with excellent costumes and lots of laughs. Dame Hettie Quette (Garry Brindley) growled his way cheekily through the panto. Douglas Clark's diction was crystal clear and his portrayal of King Herbert was beautifully brow beaten until the end when he asserted himself right regally! The Narrator (Heather Stewart) oozed charm as she guided us through the story. Jack (Kirsty Lockhart) and Puss (Heather Smith) had me believing cats could talk, with Puss's make-up and costume being especially superb. All the cast shone throughout but special mention goes to Andrew Dart as Lord Roger, whose confident stage presence and first class diction made him a baddie par excellence. The dancing was very good and the music, which was mostly pre-recorded, was well chosen. Directors Russell Adams and Gordon Smith did a slick job of getting a polished performance from the Ury Players. All in all a dazzling display. It certainly got the audience and me in panto mood – oh yes it did!

*Brian McDonald*

## **REVIEWS DISTRICT 10 (Angus & Kincardine)**

### **Arbroath Musical Society: Oliver!**

Director: Alan Christison; Musical Director: Richard Allan; Choreographer: Franky Anderson

From the moment the tabs opened it was obvious this production was going to be special. The tableau of chorus, combined with the whispers of "Oliver, Oliver" really captured the audience's attention. From then on it never faltered. The audience were treated to a workhouse of energetic and enthusiastic young performers, of which there were two choruses, many of whom had never been on a stage before. But equally enjoyable was seeing and hearing such a large focused adult chorus, always in character, in tune and attention never wavering and enhanced by understated and effective choreography. The principals were the real icing on the cake (or should I say gruel!!) the standard of characterisation and emotion being evident throughout. Brian Boardman was the quintessential Fagan complete with impressive make up. Sara Whitton gave a strong emotional performance as Nancy and Jimmy Gray certainly did justice to the part of baddie Bill Sykes. Nancy's friend Bet was played very convincingly by Chloe Gordon. And we all enjoyed the scenes between Mr Bumble (David Mathieson) and Widow Corney (Heidi Cathro). Undertakers, Mrs and Mrs Sowerby (Finlay McDonald and Marion Allan), were a joy of nastiness and in contrast David Mitchell as Mr Brownlow and Colette Dear as Mrs Bedwin, the epitome of kindness. Even the smaller parts of Charlotte Sowerby (Kirsty McDonald), Noah Claypole (Blair Ruxton), Dr Grimwig (Ryan Wink) and Old Sally (Alison McDonald) were all notable. Last but not least, we saw Brandon Boyd who was Friday's Oliver and gave an accomplished, emotional performance, while Catie Mathieson as Friday's Artful Dodger was full of energy and character. Massive congratulations to the entire cast, crew and production team – the audience were certainly left wanting "more".

### **Carnoustie Musical Society: Comrie Cabaret 8**

Directors: Jane Penton, Susan Kydd, Rodger Brunton; Musical Director: Colin Grant

Once again, I find myself attending Carnoustie's annual Comrie Concert, No. 8, this time, on behalf of my NODA colleague Gordon Smith. This show is staged in the Society's rehearsal hall, which is turned into a mini theatre for this fund-raising variety show. Having attended for the last three years, it still does amaze me how they manage to stage it at all! The stage is awkward shaped but, believe me, they cope no bother at all to present their show with consummate ease. How they manage to do all their stage moves on this enclosed space beats me! This year the show opened with the dancers giving a quiet opening dance, quickly followed by Irish jigs, which transformed into a full rousing Irish musical selection sung by the full company in fine chorale voice. We had *Lord Of The Dance* and that old favourite *Danny Boy*. Then came a little chaos as several members attempted to sing *Hallelujah* (the wrong version!) at different moments in the show, only to be given their marching orders by the MD. Finally, we did get the full company singing the correct "*Hallelujah*" number. There then followed *Bat Out Of Hell* with several songs apt to that as well. Two male members then gave a powerful rendering of *Starlight Express* and then came the surprise of the night. I cannot mention the name because the show programme did not announce who performed what but, suffice to say, the lady who performed *The Alto's Lament* literally brought the house down! She performed a song saying she was a soprano, but was having to sing the alto line and, as she sang the many well-known musical songs, she had to end the song singing the (un-tuneful) alto line, thus giving her no chance to sing the favourite melody line! This was a wonderful comedy break. As I also find with variety shows, there is always the obligatory *Les Mis* song, this time sung by two young girls. Because of safety in the "theatre" hall, the show does not have an interval and was staged as a complete performance but, in order to raise the necessary funding for the Society, there was the mandatory prize raffle. The lights came up and a well-known society stalwart stepped forward to present the prizes! Here was, indeed, an act of great spontaneous comedy for, completely "off the cuff", and much enjoyed by the audience, the prizes were eventually handed out to great mirth and delight! Finally, to celebrate the Society's 30 years in their rehearsal premises, they ended up with a great selection of songs from past musicals they had presented over these years. This was greatly appreciated by the audience because, from where I was sitting, I witnessed many of the audience's feet tapping along in enjoyment to the songs being performed. Yes, a successful night for the society.

Roger Buist

### **Carnoustie Theatre Club: The Grinch**

Director: Ali Laing; Assistant Director & Musical Director: Joanna Fitzgerald;

Choreographers: Kim Brymer, Phoebe Doherty, Linzy Evatt, Cerys Fitzgerald, Sarah Oliphant

Triumphing over the mean spirited and anti-Christmas Grinch was the theme of this unusual panto and a triumph it certainly was. Brian Hogson as the Grinch was wonderfully mean and always in character. His partner in crime Pinchit played by Audrey Doherty was a lively and enthusiastic foil to the dour green character. The dame Nora Good brought smiles at every appearance and David Cheape worked hard as the ineffective Mayor. All these "goodies" were well rehearsed with Jerry Swinley as a very convincing Santa and Cerys Fitzgerald a very clear spoken and delightful Annie Good. The magical side was also well catered for with a vivacious Spirit of Christmas (Emily Taylor) whose diction was "fairy" good. Muriel Gordon brought the right amount of regal cool to her role as Snow Queen – on the side of good for a change. Keeping the characters spirits up was the job of Colin the Cheermeister (George Doherty) and Widget (Santa's little helper) played by Linzy Evatt – didn't they do well? Last but not least was a charming performance by Amy Duarte as Polly Watt. There were highlights aplenty in all aspects of this production. A very clever gift wrapping machine brought a lot of fun to the plot and the graceful ballets by Darcie Bartle, Molly Boath, Heather Clark and Freya Ross were an unexpected pleasure. Both the senior and junior chorus were a strong backbone for the principals and their unusually bright and individual costumes brought a riot of colour to every scene. The finale with Christmas costumes and lights was stunning. Congratulations to all the performers and their hard working back stage unsung heroes.

### **Combined Productions: Jack And The Beanstalk**

Director: Graeme Baird; Conductor: Ron Stewart; Choreographer: Laura Ferguson

Lazy, hazy, crazy days of panto nicely sung by principal girl Jill (Sadie Seaman) and the chorus opened this traditional production and set the mood for a fun filled show. And that fun revved up a

notch when Brian Mathieson in the role of Dame Trot appeared. His two numbers with the dancers *All About The Bass* and *One of The Girls* were lively and the choreography catchy. Emma Ferguson gave a polished performance as Jack and was well supported in her scenes by an adorable Daisy the cow (Kerry Guthrie and Anna Bergen) as well as with Jill, their duet *With You On My Arm* being very romantic. Hard up King Maurice (Ali Niven) added to the fun and all the musical numbers with a delightful alto voice. If Silly Billy Trot, Alix Morland brought energy and mischief to the plot (and she did!) then Fairy Moonbeam (Teresa Warden) supplied the glamour and magic. Every good panto needs a good baddie and Millar Young as Fleshcreep was certainly that, giving the audience plenty opportunity to boo. Ross Robertson as Grabbit, the King's bailiff also shared that spotlight. The children's chorus provided lots of movement and melody. All in all this was a cast that understood that panto is all about the children and they knew exactly how to communicate the fun on stage to the fun in the auditorium. At times the audience participation was deafening – always a good sign – and certainly proof of a successful panto. Congratulations to all concerned.

#### **Forfar Musical Society: Aladdin**

Director: Ewan Campbell; Musical Director: Billy Muir; Choreographer: Chloe Leuchars

This production begins outside the Cave of Wonders and atmospherically sets the scene for the magic to come. This was a two genie *Aladdin* and our introduction to the first, Glaswegian Jeannie Needlehole (Louise Claire Cumming) was unexpected and entertaining. Her master, Abanazer played by Dave Mitchell, soon appeared, suitably gravel voiced and evil. Everyone loves Wishy Washy and Ryan Milne was enthusiastic and energetic in the part while his mum, a surprisingly elegant Widow Twankie, was played by Darren Gill with very clear diction. A riot of colourful costumes, catchy choreography and lively singing brought the chorus to the fore – the perfect background for an effortless portrayal of Princess So Shy by Terri Roberts while her handmaiden, the wise cracking Dim Sum (Iona Allan) protected her mistress and kept things “real” for the audience. But no one could stop the princess falling for the clean cut charms of Aladdin played naturally and with quiet assurance by Claire Rioch. There was comedy galore from the Genie of The Lamp. Craig Keable's over the top performance keeping the audience entertained throughout while more fun came in the shape of Pee Hi (Heather Paterson) and Pee Lo (Rebecca Mitchell), two unpolitically correct police constables. Add to that suitably regal performances from Marley Hunter and Neil Hartley as Empress Who Flung Dung and Emperor One Hung Lo and the occasional appearance of Wendy Rae as Ting A Ling the panda and the cast is complete. Altogether an entertaining production with some delightful performances and a truly magic flying carpet!

#### **Kirriemuir Panto Group: Beauty And The Beast**

Directors: Jim Walker, Christine Smillie; Musical Directors: Andrew Taylor, Gary Lawrence;  
Choreographers: Leah Robertson, Erin Cattanach, Chris Smillie, Rebecca Hardie

This is always an enchanting story line and this production's lovely costumes added to the magic. The chorus rendition of *Footloose* made for a very lively beginning. Indeed the use of contemporary musical numbers worked well throughout. Thereafter the narration by The Rose Fairy (Catrina Fraser) whose authentic sounding French accent, set the scene charmingly. In the village of Petit Pois, Dame Dolly played very competently by Neil Stewart started the comedy action, ably supported by “her” man mad, party girl daughters, aptly named Lambrini (Jennifer Bruce) and Chardonnay (Paula Milne) and a lively and enthusiastic chorus of villagers. Murran Mackay in the lovely little cameo role of Madame Tricot deserves a mention. Ellen Brooks as Belle was a delight in both her singing and acting – her version of the tricky Queen number *Somebody To Love* was impressive. Her father Papa was played nicely by Dave Buchan. Brodie Taylor was scarily convincing as The Beast while Graham Turner as the pompous Jean-Claude definitely had “the look” and was suitably over the top. Proving his versatility James Dobbie doubled as Monsieur Botox and Suit of Armour. The transformation was handled well as The Beast returned to being Prince Louis, easily handled by Iona Macleod. The dancers, as always provided some interesting and catchy dances. Last but not least, Jessica Farrell's excellent portrayal as Countess Cruella was truly memorable. Well done, Kirrie!!

#### **Letham Drama Group: Beauty And The Beast**

Directors: Margaret Scott, Maggie Fleming; Musical Director: Natalie Smith

This was the group's 40th anniversary with a cast of juniors under sixteen years old and only one adult of 20 years of age!!! The storyline here was not so familiar to the audience of this well known

tale but a rousing opening musical number introduced the cast of very inventive characters to the audience straightaway. Felix the family poodle played by Rohan Banks-Hawley had a very convincing French accent throughout and immediately endeared himself to the appreciative audience. The character of Jacques was also well portrayed by Angus Macfarlane with Charlie Allen an able Capucine and Roxy Hill as Aimee as the other children. Of course, every show needs a good baddie and Aisha Tomlinson as Malabelle was just that. The lead roles were nicely played by Joanne Lees as Beauty and Anna Bruce playing the double role as the Prince/Beast. But Ma (Megan Craig) was the glue which held the production together. The set, despite the confines of the small stage, was atmospheric and well built and painted by the in-house team, Beauty's bedroom being particularly impressive. The "furniture" therein provided a lot of fun throughout especially Rory Agnew as the Talking Clock along with Chest Of Drawers (Toni Martin), Lamp (Kate Millar), Table (Sophie Veitch), Rug (Stephen Langdon-Perry). Backing tracks for the singing did provide a challenge for the company with a couple of timing issues which did detract a little from the performance. The principals were well supported by the chorus and the enthusiastic audience enjoyed a good night of live entertainment. A real community affair!

### **Rising Youngstars: Bye Bye Birdie**

This was the first time I had seen this show so didn't know what to expect. The production had a double cast and I saw the Wednesday evening performance. The theme of a much adored rock and roll idol, Conrad Birdie, being drafted into the army may or may not have been inspired by the Elvis Presley's conscription but was undoubtedly an ideal choice for youngsters. In an effort to save his record company, Conrad's songwriter and agent, Albert Peterson (played confidently by Jason Pan), organises a farewell appearance on the Ed Sullivan show. Together with his secretary and long suffering girlfriend, Rose Alvarez (Penny Stephens), they hope this will promote Conrad's new record, *One Last Kiss*, especially as Birdie will give one last kiss to an avid member of Birdie's fan club, Kim Macafee. Penny Stephens gives a very mature performance both in singing and acting as Rose, the used and abused girlfriend to petulant Albert. However, the plan goes rather awry when an excited Kim, very naturally performed by Rose Stephens, finally meets Birdie and her family overreact. Her mother, Doris, nicely handled by Lucy Scarlett, tries to keep everything calm but her father, Harry is overwhelmed and reacts badly. Alix Burness gives an energetic portrayal as Harry while Kearan Jones as Kim's cute little brother Randolph is very watchable. Every time Birdie makes an appearance his adoring fans scream their heads off. Here the teen chorus were in their element and played up to the situation well. And as for Conrad himself – Fergus Durston was certainly on hip swinging form. There were also very able performances by Rebekah Mitchell as Mae Peterson and Zoey Morgan as Gloria Rasputin, and an enthusiastic and energetic cast made for a lively and enjoyable evening.

## **REVIEWS DISTRICT 11 (South West Scotland)**

### **Centre Stage Theatre: Dick McWhittington**

Director: Stuart Stokell; Choreographers: Donna Hislop, Matthew Grieve

This show is a new one on me, and to everyone else as it was both written and directed by Stuart Stokell. He was commissioned by the company to provide the panto for this year and what an excellent job he made of it – a Scottish slant on the traditional Dick Whittington story. Centre Stage have an enviable reputation for putting on a well-polished and professional production. This show was no exception to this rule. It had pace, comedy, a bit of pathos but mainly a feel-good factor that transferred from the cast on to the audience. The set mainly built by themselves and the colourful backdrops all added to the performances. I particularly liked the ship's mast. Scene changes were slick and the "canned" music suited the show very well. The whole of the cast thoroughly enjoyed the panto as was evident by their enthusiasm and slick timing. I thought that the singing in this show was as good as I have heard from this company. The casting well suited the characters who performed. They were all very relaxed and comfortable in their roles as evidenced by the occasional ad libs and throw away lines that are inevitable in a panto. Everyone dealt well with these and the interaction with the audience was excellent. Luke Bell played the part of Dick with aplomb and it is great to have seen him grow in confidence and theatrical stature over the years. His sidekick Nessie the Cat was excellent. Played by Finlay Eagleson (who was also Assistant Director), his part was super with very good timing and stage presence, and he played the support role to Dick really well. The story goes like this. Dick and Nessie have gone to Edinburgh to find fame and fortune but down on their luck head home to Langholm where they meet Alice, the Provost's daughter. Ashleigh Calvert, who played her part very demurely but with good strength. Love blossoms but Dick is just a poor boy and has no

prospects. She gets them a job in her father's shop and they are tasked with guarding his Provost's chain. Callum Jeffrey as the Provost was suitably bumbly. In the meantime, Sally, Dick's mum, appears on the scene. Les Murray is the epitome of the panto dame and I have to say he is one of the best I have seen. His comic timing is excellent and his general demeanour tells all. Dick and Nessie fall asleep after a hard day's work and the shop gets burgled by King Rat, Nicky Henderson, who was suitably evil as the baddy, made moreso by the exceptional makeup he had. It must have taken a long time to put on for each performance. He has a great stage presence. Provost McSporran, Alice's dad, is not happy and agrees that he will give his daughter's hand in marriage to whoever finds the chain. Dick promise to find the chain and return it. They set off on an adventure which takes them to a tropical island with cannibals and a man hungry Queen. By nefarious means the Queen ends up falling in love with King Rat and Dick recovers the chain and returns it to the Provost. His prize is to marry his daughter and live happily ever after. The whole of the cast from the little ratlings (King Rat's henchmen) to the main principals were all super. While I could go on at length about the various individual parts, suffice to say everyone was excellent and I could not find a weak link in the cast. This was a thoroughly enjoyable evening. Thanks to you all at Centre Stage.

### **The Fullarton (Castle Douglas) Ltd: Sleeping Beauty – The Panto**

Director: Janet Scott; Choreographer: Hollie Carey.

The story of *Sleeping Beauty* is well known so there is no need for me to go into depth with it. However with a few twists and turns along the way it made for an extremely enjoyable night at The Fullarton Theatre. The set was excellent as usual and the use of back projections enhanced the minimalistic set. It is great when you have restricted storage space for set that the use of projection can vastly enhance the picture. I am seeing this being used by a number of companies nowadays and with the continued usage of digital processes I can see it happening more often. Changes were slick and smooth, and I enjoyed the atmospheric lighting. Princess Beauty (Caitlin Black) was very good in her role. She sang her songs really well, and along with her other half, Prince Handsome played by (Gracie Roxburgh), made for a lovely couple who live happily ever after. They had good stage presence and their voices matched well. The King and Queen, played by Jim Gordon and Emma Middleton, were suitably bumbly as should be expected from the parents of the leading lady. Beauty's nurse Pinchme and Oddjob played by Colin Wilson and Idris Dean were the comics of the show. Particularly Idris whose portrayal of Oddjob had me in fits. The baddy Olga Pong was played by one of my favourite actors. Kay Potts has a demeanour about her that lights up the stage when she walks on, whatever the part she plays. As the baddy she excelled and was suitably horrid. Along with her henchman Gormless (Alison Murdoch), they made a good team. The remainder of the cast – Squint (Aidan Whan), Bounty (Liz Black), Smartie (Meghan Whalen), Wispa (Holly Chalmers), Cuddles (Tyler Gilmour) and Brasso (William Byers) – supported excellently. The singing throughout the performance was very good and I thought the choreography had a nice slick edge to it. The timing was superb. The supporting adult cast and junior chorus are always very good and it was obvious that they were all enjoying themselves to the full. Another great show by The Fullarton! Thank you.

### **Langholm Operatic and Dramatic Society: Spiderific**

Director: Bob McClure

Bob McClure, as well as performing with Langholm for their musical theatre productions, also directs their Drama Section. This play was the eighth in a series for this company. Bob is an accomplished actor and his own portrayal of the bumbly Sgt Dodde was superb. His mispronunciation and comic timing were a joy and any aspiring actor who would like to do comedy could not do better than watch him. The play is set in Greenbriar Retirement Home and everyone is excited as the Queen is due to come on a visit to the home. However, word of an assassination attempt on the Queen has emerged and the Sgt has been sent to try to wheedle out the evil culprit. The Queen's inept equerry played by Les Murray arrives to see that everything is in order for the visit and succeeds in making things worse. The residents of the home are all fighting with each other to see who will get the honour of presenting the bouquet to Her Majesty and the interaction between Belle played by Anne Halliday and Sophia (Nicole Weatherstone) was a joy to behold. Their playing one off against the other was very well done and I enjoyed the comic timing. The interruptions by Miss Enderby (Michaela Calvert) who has lost her school choir were nice and the portrayal of a resident, Dan (Eric Hislop), who just told the time was a nice interlude. The remainder of the cast all played their parts excellently with each one fitting into their characters with ease. Eventually the culprit is discovered, the home's secretary, played really well by Gilly Fraser. She appeared to be the only sane one in the place but suffice to say she gets her comeuppance. Why, I hear you say, is the play called *Spiderific*? Well, just ask Norman!!!



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Productions advertised on the NODA website for performance in April 2018 and beyond.

### **Annie Get Your Gun**

Duns & District Amateur Operatic Society  
Volunteer Hall, Duns  
Wednesday 4 to Saturday 7 April 2018

### **Made In Dagenham**

Falkirk Operatic Society  
Falkirk Town Hall  
Tuesday 17 to Saturday 21 April 2018 (Matinee on Saturday)

### **Dirty Dusting**

Eyemouth Variety Group  
Eyemouth Old High School Hall  
Thursday 19 to Friday 20 April 2018

### **A Night To Remember**

Dalziel High School FP Easter Egg Club  
Motherwell Concert Hall  
Thursday 19 to Friday 20 April 2018 (Matinee on Saturday 21 April)

### **9 to 5 - The Musical**

Kirkcaldy Amateur Operatic Society  
Adam Smith Theatre, Kirkcaldy  
Monday 23 to Saturday 28 April 2018 (Matinee on Saturday)

### **Calamity Jane**

Dumfries Musical Theatre Company  
Brigend Theatre, Dumfries  
Saturday 28 April to Saturday 5 May 2018 (Matinee on Saturday 29 April)

### **All Shook Up**

Thomson-Leng Musical Society  
Whitehall Theatre, Dundee  
Wednesday 2 to Saturday 5 May 2018

### **Little Shop of Horrors**

Cumbernauld Musical Theatre Society  
Cumbernauld Theatre  
Thursday 3 to Saturday 5 May 2018 (Matinee on Saturday)

### **Betty Blue Eyes**

Runway Theatre Company  
Eastwood Park Theatre, Glasgow  
Tuesday 8 to Saturday 12 May 2018 (Matinee on Saturday)

### **Sweet Charity**

Larbert Amateur Operatic Society  
Dobbie Hall, Larbert  
Tuesday 8 to Saturday 12 May 2018

### **Into The Woods**

Pantheon Club  
Websters Theatre, Glasgow  
Tuesday 15 to Saturday 19 May 2018 (Matinees on Wednesday and Saturday)

## FORTHCOMING PRODUCTIONS

Productions advertised on the NODA website for performance in April 2018 and beyond.

### **Oliver!**

AOC Productions  
Tivoli Theatre, Aberdeen  
Wednesday 23 to Saturday 26 May 2018 (Matinee on Saturday)

### **Blitz!**

The Livingston Players  
Howden Park Centre, Livingston  
Tuesday 29 May to Saturday 2 June 2018

### **High School Musical**

Leven Amateur Musical Association  
The Centre, Leven  
Thursday 13 to Saturday 15 September 2018

### **Les Misérables (School Edition)**

Thomson-Leng Musical Society  
Gardyne Theatre, Dundee  
Wednesday 19 to Saturday 22 September 2018 (Matinee on Saturday)

### **Oklahoma!**

Glenrothes Amateur Musical Association  
Rothes Halls, Glenrothes  
Tuesday 25 to Saturday 29 September 2018 (Matinee on Saturday)

### **Chitty Chitty Bang Bang**

Pantheon Club  
King's Theatre, Glasgow  
Tuesday 9 to Saturday 13 October 2018

### **Thoroughly Modern Millie**

Hamilton Operatic & Dramatic Club  
Motherwell Concert Hall  
Tuesday 9 to Saturday 13 October 2018

### **Chitty Chitty Bang Bang**

Thomson-Leng Musical Society  
Whitehall Theatre, Dundee  
Wednesday 17 to Saturday 20 October 2018 (Matinee on Saturday)

### **Disney Little Mermaid Jr**

Project Theatre  
Falkirk Town Hall  
Tuesday 23 to Wednesday 24 October 2018

### **Crazy For You**

Falkirk Bohemians Amateur Operatic & Dramatic Society  
Falkirk Town Hall  
Tuesday 30 October to Saturday 3 November 2018 (Matinee on Saturday)

### **Cats**

St Patrick's Amateur Opera Group  
Brian Duguid Theatre, Livingston  
Tuesday 6 to Saturday 10 November 2018

## FORTHCOMING PRODUCTIONS

Productions advertised on the NODA website for performance in April 2018 and beyond.

### Oliver!

Our Lady's Musical Society  
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