

The background of the cover features a blue curtain with a central opening, through which a solid blue rectangular area is visible. Two white diagonal lines cross each other in the lower half of the image, forming an 'X' shape that frames the bottom text.

noda

Be inspired by amateur theatre

NODA SCOTLAND

Magazine

National Operatic and Dramatic Association
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With the memories of this year's NODA Scotland Conference not yet a distant memory I wanted to thank everyone who played a part in ensuring its success once again or came along to support the weekend. It was great to see increased numbers again this year – hopefully we can continue this trend again next year. I would especially like to thank the theatrical suppliers who had a stand this year for their support and full details about them can be found on the NODA website - www.noda.org.uk/regions/scotland/noda-scotland-sponsors

Planning is already underway for next year and advance details including dates, costs and what is included in the weekend package can be found later in the Magazine. Bookings will open on 1 May 2020. The savings club to help members spread the cost of the weekend is now open and can be joined at any time. If you would like to take advantage of this simply drop me an email for full details.

One of the highlights of the weekend is always the midnight cabaret on the Saturday evening. The Committee are looking for a club or group of clubs who would be interested in performing. Please email either myself or your Regional Rep to express an interest.

Congratulations to all the winners of this year's Programme and Poster Competition. It was great to see a healthy number of entries in each category although there is always room for more. Details about the criteria and how to enter can be found on the NODA website - www.noda.org.uk/regions/scotland/noda-programme-poster-competition

Another highlight of the NODA year is Summer School. Next year it will run from 1-8 August and course details have now been released on the NODA website. Bookings will open on 1 December and once again NODA Scotland will have a number of bursaries available to help cover part of the cost. Next year sees Summer School move to a new venue – The Performance Hub @ The Walsall Campus of the University of Wolverhampton.

The last year saw NODA Scotland run a number of workshops, Dare to Dream for our youth members and The Business of Amateur Theatre for those tasked with running societies. Further training is planned for the coming year and details will be published on the website in due course - www.noda.org.uk/regions/scotland/events

District meetings are a great way to keep in touch with other members from within your District, share ideas and network. I would encourage all members to attend these where possible. Details are posted on the Facebook page and also the website – www.noda.org.uk/regions/scotland/events

It's a busy time for shows over the coming months and I send best wishes to all clubs with upcoming productions. Thank you for the numerous invites Robbie and I have received – it is very much appreciated. Don't forget to list your show on the NODA website to gain additional free publicity and to be included in the weekly Facebook "break a leg" message.

Stuart McCue-Dick, Councillor

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 November edition.

Generally, reviews are written by the Regional Representatives whose names appear later on this page. Where the review has not been written by the appropriate Regional Representative, the author's name is given.

Advertisements are invited from societies and theatrical rights holders, traders and suppliers.

Advertising rates

- The rate for a show advertisement is £25 per edition.
- The rate for advertisements by theatrical rights holders, traders and suppliers is £50 for three successive editions.

Please send advertising material to the Editor.

All copy for the March edition of the *NODA Scotland Magazine* should be with the Editor not later than **Saturday 29 February 2020**. Earlier receipt of material will be welcome.

NODA SCOTLAND COMMITTEE

Generic e-mail address: firstname.secondname@noda.org.uk

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District No 4 (Renfrewshire, Ayrshire & Bute)
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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 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 April edition are welcomed from societies and individual members and should be submitted by e-mail to the Editor by **Friday 7 February 2020**. Earlier receipt of material will be welcome.

Note to Secretaries:

Please send a copy of the *NODA Scotland Magazine* to all members of your society to ensure that everyone is up to date.

NODA SCOTLAND CONFERENCE

23 - 25 October 2020
Peebles Hydro

AGM

Workshops - movement, drama, good to talk and singing

Gala Dinner with guest speaker

Programme and Poster Competition

Theatrical Suppliers and Rights Holder Stands

Late night sing-a-long



The NODA Scotland committee invite all members to join them at Peebles Hydro from 23-25 October 2020 for the annual conference weekend. There will be the usual mix of workshops, theatrical supplier and rights holder stands, the chance to network with members from all over Scotland as well as plenty of time to socialise.

Weekend Package

Single Room	£290.50
Double/Twin Room	£279.50 (2 sharing)
Triple Room	£263.00 (3 sharing)
Multiple Room	£239.50 (4+ sharing)

The weekend package includes the following:

- Friday - drinks reception with canapés, dinner, dance and disco, late night sing-a-long.
 - Saturday - breakfast, workshops, lunch, workshops, gala dinner, dance, midnight cabaret, late night sing-a-long.
 - Sunday - breakfast, AGM, programme and poster competition awards, lunch.
- Delegates will also have full use of the Hydro leisure facilities.

Additional Nights £64.00 (dinner, bed and breakfast)

Gala Dinner, Ball & Cabaret Ticket £55.50 (non residential)

Savings Account

For those wishing to help spread the cost of the NODA Scotland Conference a separate bank account has been set up by the committee to allow members to put aside money as and when they wish. The committee hope this will help attract increased numbers to the conference - please spread the word.

The account for the 2020 conference will open on 1 November and £20-£25 per month will cover the cost of the weekend package. Please contact the NODA Scotland Councillor for full details - stuart.dick@noda.org.uk

LONG SERVICE AWARDS: CELEBRATE YOUR TIME IN AMATEUR THEATRE!

How long have you been in amateur theatre?

Did you know you can purchase long service awards from NODA to celebrate your dedication?

From 10 years all the way up to 70 years, we have pins, badges and medals that you can wear with pride.

Check out our long service awards on the NODA website.

**Further details from the NODA Scotland Awards Secretary:
Gordon Smith (Regional Representative, District No 10).**



10 years



15 years



20 years



25 years



25 years



30 years



35 years



40 years



45 years



50 years



50 years



55 years



60 years



65 years



70 years



Society Life
Member

Peter Kennedy
Morag Dingwall

Eileen Monie
Archie Alexander

Maureen Driscoll
Elaine Forrester

D. John Barker
Corrie Hall

Paul Connor

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Gemma Carnegie

India Ford
Regan Koczubik
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Aleesha Graham
Lara Stevenson
Phoebe Taylor
Megan Campbell
Daniel Campbell
Oliver Anderson
Zoe Crabb
Luci Laing
Ellie Fraser
Cali Barclay
Kaya Eggleton-Hunter

SUMMER SCHOOL

**NODA Summer School 2020 will run from
1 to 8 August at The Performance Hub @ The Walsall
Campus of the University of Wolverhampton.
Bookings open on 1 December.**

NODA SUMMER SCHOOL – YOU WILL NEVER REGRET IT!

In the summer I took part for the first time in NODA Summer School to learn how to direct musical theatre. It was with trepidation that I drove down the M6 in torrential rain. I was on my own and knew no one who would be there. On top of this, I was aware I was only a back stager and dressed always in black. Would I be able to fit in with experienced theatrical performers, choreographers and those who had already tried directing?

Our first class was on the Saturday evening after arrival and my heart sank. My class were all experienced theatrical performers, choreographers and those who had already tried directing and I just crumpled into my seat. Even as a gregarious extrovert, I believed there was no way I would fit in with this group, or more exactly, into their world. I felt I knew nothing; had never really acted and was beginning to doubt I could direct when on that first evening we looked at what a massive responsibility directing was and what a mammoth job, when broken down into all its parts.

My week at NODA Summer School changed all that.

We bonded as a class really quickly. Breakfast on the Sunday morning was the only meal I had alone (not easy for an extrovert!). After that, a group of us from the class would sit together at every meal and laugh ourselves through the day. This really helped us to feel comfortable with each other.



In addition, the work in class really helped us to connect. Every class started with warm up exercises, which really do serve to break down barriers! As well as this we worked with two scripts: Marvin Hamlisch's *Sweet Smell of Success* and *A Little Night Music* by Sondheim. We started by dealing with the script; researching the context; developing themes to be used in staging; activities to help actors deliver lines and to help the ensemble to create characters. All this work led to us directing an excerpt from one of the two studied musicals, chosen by the class tutor, and then being critiqued by the class and the tutor.

This meant, of course, that I had no choice but to act and perform, for the others to be critiqued in my directing. It has always been a huge dream of mine to act and the older I have got, the more I have been afraid to try, because I did not want to find out I could not do it. My best friend kept telling me to just let go – you've got to let go. My first part was from Sondheim and I had no choice whatsoever but to let go and it was glorious. My classmates were so encouraging when I did eventually perform and I loved it. In terms of the directing, I learned many lessons, from being directed myself and through actually directing.

The week completely transformed me. I feel confident now to audition and I am very excited to be trusted enough one day to direct a show. I cannot wait to get an opportunity to do both.

The week ended up with a themed night. There are many social evening events throughout the week. We were all sitting outside partaking in a beverage. My new friends were very reluctant when I suggested we should act out the whole of *Les Mis*. So I totally disregarded them and cast the parts. That ended up with them singing a few of the well-known numbers, and lots of others joining in, and we ended with a performance of "One Day More." It was such a success, they renamed it *Les Liz* and we will be adding to the performance at next year's summer school. If you want to be part of it, sign up to next year's Summer School. You will never regret it!

Liz McGuinness

A MESSAGE FROM NODA EAST

"NO IS NOT AN OPTION" – WHY SOCIETIES SHOULD CONSIDER A RELAXED PERFORMANCE

Relaxed performances are nothing new in the theatre world but for many amateur societies the thought of not conforming to the technical requirements of a particular script or the idea of people calling out, commenting loudly or even getting up and leaving the auditorium is taboo and should never be considered. But who are we to dictate who should be suitable enough to enjoy a performance and why can't the constraints of a certain lighting plot or sound effects not be altered to accommodate theatre goers who might otherwise miss out.

A relaxed performance is designed purposely for audiences who might enjoy the experience of the theatre in a more stress-free and calmer environment, including (but not limited to) those with autistic spectrum conditions, anyone with sensory and communication disorders or theatre goers with a learning disability.

Here are a few pointers that may help or persuade your society to dedicate a performance as a "relaxed performance" for anyone who wishes to attend. It's not as complicated as you might think.

- When someone requests a booking for a relaxed performance date, give a clear explanation about what a relaxed performance is.
- Provide pre-show information describing what to expect. It is essential that everyone knows what's happening from the outset.
- Some societies might even promote a familiarisation visit if a guest has not been to the theatre before.
- An introduction at the start of the show to remind the audience that it's a relaxed performance thus giving anyone who needs to move or be noisy the freedom to do so. Audience members should also be able to leave and come back in at any point.
- Staff and cast need to take an inclusive approach from start to finish.
- Consideration must be given to sound and lighting levels, taking into account sensory sensitivities.
- Prepare and inform staff of a clear plan for how any complaints from audience members will be managed.
- If possible, provide a quiet space outside the auditorium where people can go during the show if they need to.

Any type of theatre is suitable for a relaxed performance because people enjoy different kinds of theatre.

I truly believe that making theatre accessible makes it better and leads to more exhilarating experiences for everyone. A show where performers, audience and location allow for unexpected outcomes, leads to each individual performance becoming unique and compelling: isn't this what live theatre is all about?

So don't be put off, embrace the positive and remember, "No is not an option."

Vicki Avery, Regional Rep, District 9, NODA East

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Michelle Coulson, Dryburn Theatrical Workshop

We will certainly be dealing with you the next time we need a backcloth rather than anyone else - they were excellent quality but more significantly, I think your customer service is absolutely amazing.

Ben Jeffreys, Westcliff High School for Boys

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IN FOND REMEMBRANCE

Betty Beckles – Glasgow Light Opera Club

November 1933 to March 2019



In 1957 Betty Maclean joined The Glasgow Light Opera Club, thus starting a lifetime's love of amateur theatre. The show that year was *Carousel*, the Scottish Amateur Première, and Betty was overjoyed to win the rôle of Carrie. She joined brother Ian, who helped backstage for a few shows, but her connection was constant for 62 years, as performer and Committee member, organiser for many years of the Concert Party which boosted ticket sales by entertaining in church halls and other similar places throughout Central Scotland.

She was a teacher, specialising in European languages, and worked in schools and colleges, ending her career in The Glasgow College of Food Technology, where her love of cooking and baking was increased. Her post was not in teaching these skills, but one of her tasks was organising trips abroad, and trips from similar establishments abroad so that students could experience first hand the cuisine of foreign places. On one occasion I was invited, with others in GLOC, to entertain a group from France by singing at a Burns' Supper she organised for them, showing a little Scottish culture.

She married Bill Beckles in the early seventies. He was also in education, and both used the extended holiday time available to teachers to travel abroad in their campervan, sampling first-hand the delights of European and Scandinavian cuisine, storing up a repertoire of culinary delights. Her expertise in baking was shown often when committee meetings took place in their house, and at the end of the meeting a welcome cup of tea was accompanied by scrumptious cakes many and varied — an excellent reason to become a Committee member!

In fact, her abilities on Committee led to her becoming Vice-President and then President. Her tenure in the latter position extended to forty successive years as President — surely a record in NODA circles, and many other fields. This was not solely from her cake baking; she was a well-organised, capable and knowledgeable lady, who kept the Club prosperous through its Centenary year, despite all the pitfalls which running a theatre company attracts, dealing with scenery and costume problems, City Council and BECTU rules and regulations, the fickle nature of audiences and club members alike.

All throughout she used her lovely soprano voice in many of the shows, and in Concert Party, although Presidential pressures meant she had to forgo 'treading the boards' in her later years. She continued to encourage others to give their best, and was regularly an attender at Peebles Conference, finding answers to improve the running of the Club, particularly after Bill died. She started to 'take a step backwards', and downsized her house, then when health started taking its toll, moved into sheltered accommodation, but still stayed in touch with members by joining them for lunches, but not participating in productions or rehearsals.

A truly outstanding example of someone who believed in the pleasure of participating wholly in our hobby, and giving pleasure to others by performance.

Ian M Gray, President, Glasgow Light Opera Club

IN FOND REMEMBRANCE

Billy Love – Theatre Guild Glasgow

13 June 1928 – 19 July 2019



It is with great sadness that we announce the death of Billy Love, a founder member of Theatre Guild and its director and choreographer for over thirty-five years. The Club was formed with the intention of presenting new and/or rarely performed works, a departure from what the founders saw as the treadmill of tried and tested war horses bedevilling the local amateur circuit. If shows like *South Pacific* (the Guild's first), *West Side Story* and *Fiddler on the Roof* are now staple ingredients of the amateur repertoire, it is because the Guild, with Billy as the driving force, got there first. Under his direction, the Guild presented 9 Glasgow Amateur Premieres, 5 Glasgow Premieres, 12 Scottish Premieres, 5 Scottish Amateur Premieres, 4 British Amateur Premieres, 2 British Premieres, and 1 World Amateur Premiere.

These productions were infused with Billy's knowledge and love of musicals, and his collaborators, both on stage and behind the scenes, responded accordingly. Over and above the musical qualities, there was a visual flair to the shows, born of his long-time expertise as a window dresser for Clydebank Co-op. This flair was not without its obsessive quality, and it was not uncommon during show week for the girl dancers to have their costumes accessorised on a nightly basis (and sometimes swapped around), as Billy strove for exactly the right "look". The obsessiveness always paid dividends.

After 1992, due to rising costs it became no longer financially feasible for the Guild to pursue its original ethos. Billy directed a revival of *Guys and Dolls* in 1996, after which he stepped aside. The following year he was appointed Honorary Life President, and in 2001 he donated to the Club a silver salver, to be presented annually as the Billy Love Award to a Guild member or members, deemed to have made an exceptional contribution to the Club. Failing health led to him spending his final years in Erskine Park Care Home, but, faithful to the end, he was always to be seen at every Guild show. Within the sphere of activity to which he devoted himself so passionately, he was a towering figure, nor was his reputation confined to the West of Scotland. For many years he was a tutor at the NODA Summer School held at Ripon.

Billy's legacy speaks for itself. He served devotedly the musical theatre that he loved. He was truly a one-off, and the Guild holds his memory in the highest regard.

The vision of NODA is that amateur theatre is successful and sustainable, providing a range of opportunities for people to develop their skills and enjoy taking part, at all levels.



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The Pantheon Club: Small-town

Director: David Wood

Before seeing this play, I had the pleasure of visiting the Pantheon one Sunday afternoon. I saw a glimpse of the play in rehearsal and was immediately sucked into the storyline of this extremely funny and witty play, originally written as three plays. As Pantheon says, it is an outrageous wee Scottish comedy telling the story of what happens when contaminated water (Rabbie Juice) causes extraordinary events to happen to ordinary people. Set in Ayrshire, the stories told through the talented cast brought laughter, tears and pathos as they played out their stories through the three quite separate tales linked with the common thread of Rabbie Juice. A simple yet effective set and use of props, not to mention tails, ears and zombies locked in freezers brought the stories to life, tales which tested relationships as well as an understanding of friendship and life. The ending of the play is left up to the audience to decide, and whatever storyline is chosen the cast have to be ready. The vote at the performance I attended was almost unanimous, but I think the audience would have liked to see all three endings. As this was an afternoon performance, there were a number of schools there and along with them I was invited to stay at the end of the play for the Q and A session with the cast. This gave an opportunity for students to dig a bit deeper into the characters in the play, and it gave them the opportunity to understand the challenges in rehearsing and working on a piece such as this. Director David Wood also gave of his time and was able to add his own particular thoughts, given that he is from Ayrshire. Well done to all involved in this quirky production!

Theatre Guild Glasgow: Return To The Forbidden Planet

Director: Jon Cuthbertson; Musical Director: Alistair Peter; Choreographer: Greg Robertson

Return To The Forbidden Planet was a new show for me, and while I knew some of the music before I saw the show, I didn't realise just how much of it I knew. From the opening scene we were transported from the reality of our daily lives to SS Albatross as we were taken on a journey with the crew, in the words of The Theatre Guild into hyperspace ... and beyond! Based on Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, this jukebox musical brought a lively and well thought out production to the stage. From principals to ensemble each one of them portrayed and maintained their own individual characterisation throughout the show. From Jonathan Proctor's solid rock pop vocals to Claire Robertson's amazing choreographed roller skating, we also saw a great range of talent in between with individuals each displaying strong acting and vocal ability across the principal line up. The ensemble worked equally hard and it was evident that everyone made a huge contribution to the overall piece. It is always a challenge and a risk taking on a show that isn't done so often, but Theatre Guild worked as a very tight team to ensure the audience was not in any way disappointed with the end result. The work of the production (Navigation) team was very evident in the music, direction and choreography. Making his debut as Musical Director, Alistair Peter brought his talents to bear, ensuring vocals from both the principals and ensemble were of a high standard. The vocal blend of the ensemble along with the band was well controlled. Jon Cuthbertson's direction truly had us believing we were on that journey with The Crew of the spaceship, and Greg's choreography was as always detailed and slick. The set design enhanced the audience experience on the starship journey somewhere in space, with the cast's detailed use of all the technical desks and displays, all of which were used and none forgotten. Stuart Poole ran his own tight ship with his team backstage, and the front of house crew made us feel welcome on board on the journey of SS Albatross into hyperspace ... and beyond!

DISTRICT No 2: Dundee & Perthshire

Comedy Girls: Ladies' Day

Directors: Lorraine Kidd, Nicky Stewart

This new group to this NODA district aimed high this time and presented their latest stage production in the local Gardyne Theatre. This comedy play told the story of a group of four women resolved to having a great day out at the races! What followed was anything but! The script was given a local "flavour" – the women worked in a fish factory in Arbroath and, this year, Royal Ascot was relocated to Perth Racecourse! That said, we learned a great deal about the four ladies – their love lives and their personal problems – and it all came over in an extremely funny and amusing manner, though one had to be prepared for some rather risqué language! There was a very strong female quartet who bonded and worked extremely well throughout the entire performance. A lot of hard work came from Helen Shearer as Jan, who was unknowingly in love with her fellow worker, Joe (a fine performance from Derek Murray), and her scene at the races when she becomes absolutely drunk was pure unadulterated comedy. Kirsty Scott played Linda, with a dominant mother problem and at the races meets up with jockey, Patrick (Craig Low). Their paddock scene where Linda is taught the art of riding a race horse by Patrick raised the laugh thermometer a few degrees higher! The guffaws came thick and fast! Then there was Pearl, hiding an illicit love affair, brought tenderly to the stage by Ann Sutherland, who was looking for her illicit bookie lover somewhere out there on the course. And no one could fail to miss brash, loudmouthed Shelley, desperate to find fame, fortune, and a rich man – with Laura Barnes being the perfect person to bring this outrageous character well and truly alive! When she set her eyes on racing TV pundit, Jim McCormack, a nice cameo role from Alan

Kerr, he was a goner! Needless to say, normal outings to a race course usually end up badly and, sad to say, our ladies lost their winning accumulator bets on the very last race and ended up flat broke! But this very funny comedy play ensured that there was a happy ending for all!

Downfield Musical Society Youth: Honk! & My Son, Pinocchio

Directors: Rebecca Waghorn, Graeme Neil Smith; Musical Director: Marlowe Simpson;
Choreographer: Rebecca Waghorn

After months and weeks of rehearsals, plus hard work, the Society's youth (and there were loads, and loads, and loads of them!) finally took to the stage to show their audience the fruits of their endeavour! In doing so, we got two totally different musical shows from two totally different age groups, and the talent on show was immense. From the very small ones, to the older cast, each and every person played their own personal part on the stage and enjoyed themselves in the process. *Honk!* told the story of the Ugly Duckling, and there was a tender moment to see when the young ducklings hatched and emerged from their eggs looking smart in their bright yellow costumes. Ugly found himself in despair, shunned by his family, but eyed up by the nasty Cat as appetising food! Ugly and the Cat were both outstanding performers, as were Ugly's mother, Ida, and father, Drake. Escaping from the clutches of the Cat, Ugly goes through a series of adventures meeting many characters – the Flying Geese Patrol, captained by a super Greylag; then there was a terrific Bullfrog; a serene swan; a terrible snow blizzard; until ... the big happy ending ... Ugly turned into a beautiful swan - and we all went "Aaah!" In the *Pinocchio* show sequence, we met all the famed characters – a first class Pinocchio and Geppetto, who was helped by the Blue Fairy and her Fairy entourage to grant Geppetto's wish – to have a real, live son! And we all know the adventures that followed Pinocchio – meeting the ambitious puppeteer, Stromboli; the adventures with the child-making machine; Pleasureland; well-known animals making the wrong sounding noise; until finally, inside the big whale. It all came good at the end and there was fine rendition of "When You Wish Upon a Star". There was energy, passion, gusto, and enthusiasm emitting from every single youngster. And, at the final curtain call, both casts joined together and totally filled the stage making a superb sight. Yes, the future of amateur stage is safe here in the city.

Friends of Stepping Stone Theatre Company: Island Fling

Directors, Musical Directors & Choreographers: The Very Special Staff of Kinnoull, Gleneagles, and Blairgowrie

This theatre group aims to showcase the skills and abilities of individuals with learning challenges and their show, *Island Fling*, showed just how much they all enjoyed being on the stage. The look of joy on their faces as they performed this show just displayed how much they were all thoroughly enjoying the experience as we, the audience, enjoyed watching them. This company have presented these shows regularly over the years and this production was a real cracker. It also gave us, the audience, the chance to sing along, tap our feet, and clap our hands to the famous Abba songs. But before the show started, the audience was entertained by the company's musical members who formed the rock group the Scotch Bonnets. A well done to you, lads! So, to the show, with their commitment and enthusiasm, the cast took us to a Scottish Island where our hero, Jack, discovers that he has a father in America. Cue for the Americans to arrive in Scotland. This welcome to the Scottish island sequence was very funny – the people on the quayside were plagued by seagulls trying to steal their fish and chips, and a lone fisherman was having the same problem with the gulls! Then a "magic" moment as the ship, named 2ndWind, "sailed" on to the stage. What followed after was musical mayhem – the ceilidh birthday party went with a great swing as the company danced, sang, jigged the highland fling, and generally had a good old party on stage with lots of tartan on show, and well done the main dancers, plus the guitar "playing" musicians. All the principal players came over loud and clear, guided (in the chorus background) by their helpers. And, at this point, a special word of thanks must go to these helpers who do so much work behind the scenes, and who also spend a lot of spare time to allow these special people to appear and perform on stage. To the stage company, long may you all be able to perform your shows – and please keep the smiles on your faces for you lighten up the evening and bring so much joy and happiness to your audience.

Tayport Amateur Dramatic & Musical Society: The Steamie

Director: Rhona McCallum

Everybody, but everybody, knows this very famous play set in the local steamie, or wash-house, on Hogmanay and, no matter how many times you view it (and I have seen this many times), it continues to entertain. So, to the show itself – we meet all the loveable well-known characters – the four hard-working 1950s Glasgow women, plus one local male layabout, all getting on with their work and wanting to celebrate Hogmanay. And this all took place in a simple, but effective, stage set. My favourite character is Mrs Culfeathers and Jean Bain brought her to life superbly well in a performance which showed her long life's burden, full of trials, her tiredness and, above all, her kindly spirit. In fact, everybody in the audience, felt sorry for her! Bossy and outspoken, Magrit, was the loud "mouthpiece" for the ladies and was strongly played by Ruth McKay and, oh boy, no one would want to be on the end of her barbed tongue! Her clever soliloquy where she described her married life in a 24-hour day came over extremely well. Then there was Vicki Bowman

as Dolly, a kindly and helpful soul, who provided many laughs after feeling “clairty” whilst discussing the contents of dirty water – she then proceeded to have a wash in the steamie’s sink! Comical! And, last but not least, there was Carly Mackie as the youngest lady of the quartet, Doreen, daydreaming of owning a brand-new house in a posh area of Glasgow. The “telephone” sequence about this was hilarious. Carly was just perfect for this role. I must say all the women worked well together, had great local accents, and came over extremely well as a team. The show’s only male character is Andy – he’s the wash-house shirker! Enthusiastically played by Craig Nicoll, he had boundless energy throughout this role although, once his pre-Hogmanay drinks took its toll, he literally “fell away” inebriated! You could say this was a “spirited” performance! The comedy came fast and furious, culminating in the best, and funniest, story of all – Galloway’s mince! (Everybody knows this story, but we all still laugh at it!) This is the real “meaty” part of the show! To lighten all the goings-on, there was a musical element with all the “extras” steamie women joining in, and this did boost the proceedings. There were cross-over “peenies”; hair piled up under headscarves, trampling blankets in your bare feet – and I well remember all this, because I am of the age to do so (even though I am just over 21!) Ah, TADAMS, great memories, great night!

Thomson-Leng Musical Society: Oliver!

Director: Donna Bell; Musical Director: Billy Muir; Choreographer: Donna Reilly

Charles Dickens’ London came to life when this society took to the stage in this much-loved musical in a lively, vibrant manner. Packed full of Lionel Bart hit musical songs, Dickens’ famous characters came alive in a visually imposing way. Both the young male leads Oliver, (Maxi McRobbie) and The Artful Dodger, (Archie Turnbull), were strong, assured, and confident within their roles – young Oliver, with his necessary plaintive look, gave an extremely appealing “Where is Love?” and Dodger, strutted around, chest thrown out, full of his own importance. So, a big “Well done”, lads! Arch villain No.1 of the piece, Fagin, was brought nicely to the stage by Raymond Uphill-Wood, who showed a great feel for the character, both in style and in manner, plus magnificent stage make-up bringing this character visually alive. His “Reviewing the Situation” was excellent and riveting to watch. As arch villain No.2, Bill Sykes made his presence known with his threatening solo “My Name” and Craig Rose carried the role through in a masterful, aggressive manner looking every inch the bruiser bully man that he is, and a person you don’t want to meet on a very dark night! As the live-in wife of the terrifying Sykes, whose abuse she endures because she loves him, Rachel Hogg was at her theatrical and musical best, extremely evident in her superb “As Long As He Needs Me” (enthusiastically applauded) where she professes her undying love for Sykes. This great musical has an assortment of wonderful character parts: Neil Hartley and Jude Vandecasteele as the heartless workhouse caretakers, Mr Bumble and Widow Corney; the awfully insensitive Sowerberry group – Michael Sanderson and Allison Wylie as the Mr and Mrs, obnoxious Noah Claypole (Zac Brownlow), and his girlfriend, Charlotte (Cara Gordon); the good kind Mr Brownlow (Tom Richmond) and faithful and homely Mrs Bedwin (Denise Main); Lucy Reilly was a surprise female Dr Grimwig; and Nancy’s close friend, Bet was a fine Terri Milne. And who could not forget the well-behaved Hugo as Bullseye, Sykes’ dog, who didn’t put a paw wrong and received great applause as he padded off stage, on cue, with no human aid! All the famous showstopper songs were extremely well staged with great liveliness and panache in music and in action – “Consider Yourself” was a real cracker! And there was a great, talented bunch of smashing youngsters playing orphans and pickpockets. What more could anyone ask for?

Roger Buist

The role of Fagin was shared throughout the show’s performances and my report concerns the player seen on the night I viewed the show. Fortunately, NODA Councillor Stuart McCue-Dick saw the Saturday matinee performance, and here is his review of the alternate Fagin character. R.B.

I was delighted to see this wonderful production of *Oliver!*, dark and menacing but full of life in equal measure. At the matinee I saw Tom Richmond in the demanding role of Fagin – what a performance capturing the many sides to the loveable rogue to perfection. His rendition of “Reviewing the Situation” was a delight. Raymond Uphill-Wood who alternated the role of Fagin played a caring Mr Brownlow at this performance whilst Nathan Forsyth was a suitably bullying Noah Claypole.

Stuart McCue-Dick

NODA SCOTLAND MAGAZINE

Please e-mail material for inclusion in the March 2020 edition by Saturday 29 February to the Regional Editor at alan.jones@noda.org.uk



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RELAXED PANTOMIME!

One of the main aims of Larbert Amateur Operatic Society (LAOS) is to entertain the local community and our annual pantomime is a great way to do that! We want everyone to have the opportunity to come along, so we introduced a relaxed performance for children and young people with additional support needs along with their families and friends.

It all started five years ago when a local group Tayavalla (part of Action for Children) approached LAOS about doing a relaxed performance for their group. We were thrilled to do this and worked with Tayavalla, ensuring we met all their needs. We set about making some adjustments, such as not using pyrotechnics, keeping some lights on in the hall, allowing people to move around freely and having quiet areas people could go to during the performance. The company also all signed (and sang!) our finale song of "Santa Claus is Coming to Town". Tayavalla were an amazing audience and our company absolutely loved performing for them. The principal cast were honoured and delighted to meet all the young people after the show.

As everyone had such a fabulous time, the following year we did another relaxed performance for Tayavalla and when word got round we were approached by other groups to see if they could join in the fun too. Of course, we were more than happy to extend our relaxed performance and we now have around 200 people attending from groups including Tayavalla, Enable, Falkirk Carers and Play and Learning Support (PALS).

We would encourage other societies to put on relaxed performances as it's been such a positive experience for everyone involved. Ask anyone in LAOS and they'll tell you that the relaxed panto performance is their favourite as the audience are just one of the best!



Visit the NODA website for up to date factsheets on Child Protection Guidelines (Scotland), Model Child Protection Policies, GDPR Privacy Policy for Children.



HELPING YOUNG PEOPLE

At Larbert Amateur Operatic Society (LAOS) we know the value and benefits of encouraging young people in the study, performance and appreciation of music and drama. Due to the generosity of one of our members, we have been able to set up a fund that young people in LAOS can use to attend courses and training in drama. This fund is called The Jim Nicol Fund for Young People.

Jim Nicol was a loyal and trusted member of LAOS for over 50 years. We are still very sad at his passing in February 2019. Jim was an active member of our company and a rock solid supporter as he always wanted the best for LAOS. Jim was someone who would take time to welcome new members of the society and made sure that they felt at ease. People bring many qualities to a company and amongst Jim's there was honesty, integrity, loyalty and generosity. His generosity was demonstrated when he donated the fund to LAOS as part of his 70th birthday celebrations. We feel honoured that Jim chose to donate to LAOS and help our young people.



The first recipient from the fund was Jennifer Brisbane to help her attend NODA Summer School. Jennifer also received a National Bursary from NODA.

"I am so grateful to have been given the opportunity to attend NODA Summer School, thanks to the Jim Nicol Fund. Jim was an amazing member of Larbert Opera and I'm so happy that he provided the company with a young members' fund, which allows young adults, like myself, to learn from new experiences. NODA Summer School was one of the best experiences I've had, learning new acting and singing techniques, meeting wonderful and insightful tutors whilst feeling like a part of a family, the amazing NODA family! I can honestly say, that trying out Summer School was one of the best choices I could have made. I hope to make this part of my summer each year!"

We're so delighted that Jennifer had such a great time at NODA Summer School and that she can bring all her experience back to LAOS. We hope that many more of our young people take up this opportunity in the years to come.

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

As part of their future development Livingston Players have been bolstering their numbers by taking a foray into youth productions. This is the third year of the project and so far they have produced *Les Misérables* in 2017, followed by *Grease* in September 2018 and *West Side Story* this year. They have a core number of youth members who have appeared in all three productions with a steady stream of new members adding to the group dynamic. The youth members have also appeared along with the adult members in the main musical productions and plays as well as the Players' Showstoppers Concert Party and a fundraising event for Guide Dogs Scotland.

Year on year production costs are increasing and the youth members have thrown themselves into fundraising. They have bag packed and walked and performed in a gala day parade to name but a few. They are already planning more events to raise funds for the next production – even though it's not been decided yet – a flash mob in the local Morrisons being one of their ideas. It is important that the Players continue to support and nurture the youth members to sustain the viability of the company and three of the youth members have volunteered to be the "voice of the youth" at their committee meetings. They have learned a great deal so far and now have a realisation of the actual cost of a production. Maybe there's a future President or Treasurer there in the making! They are keen to fill the theatre for their next show and have been canvassing their audience during the run of *West Side Story* to gain a feel for what their audiences want. Hopefully they will choose a great show and continue to wow the audiences of West Lothian.



NODA support the education and information needs of individuals and organisations with high quality services and products that contribute to the success of amateur theatre, as well as encouraging appreciation of the sector by participants and audiences alike.

Falkirk Bohemians Amateur Operatic & Dramatic Society: Summer Holiday

Director: Malcolm Burnett; Musical Director: Harry Thomson; Choreographer: Hannah Foley

Well known songs from the film of the same name, confident principals and a fast moving chorus were all ingredients for a successful show. The bus mechanics from London Transport got hold of an old bus to take them on a holiday on the continent. They met up with girls whose car had broken down and who were focussed on reaching Greece to star in a singing contest, and took them along. Then they also picked up an American pop star escaping stardom and her dominant mother. The mechanics were well fronted by lead Michael Coyne as Don, who sang and gelled well with fellow mechanics, Colin Fawkes as redoubtable Steve, David Young giving a solid performance as Edwin and Iain Davidson as irrepressible Cyril. The lively girls, Olivia Donnett as Mimsie, Lisa Goldie as Angie and Lois McNinch as Alma, looked every inch of their era and presented some lovely harmonies – although almost upstaged by the broken down Morris Minor. Laura Stewart gave a convincing performance as the troubled run away and sang a well matched duet “The Next Time” with Don. The unaccompanied “Living Doll” with them all was excellent. Meanwhile Kirsty Meikle as her mother Stella and her long suffering side kick Kenny Walker as Jerry took their parts by the scruff of the neck giving lots of comedic moments. Minor principals Lindsay Karwowski as the Wedding Singer, Rebecca Anderson and Dominic Carr as Border Officials gave good accounts of themselves. Songs like “Foot Tapper”, “Do You Wanna Dance” and “Dancing Shoes” were great company numbers. Indeed, the choreography overall was impressive with moves suiting tempo and action and maintaining the energy of the show. Mention must be made of the wonderful miniature bus which developed a character all of its own as well as performing the useful linkage between the destinations on their route. The orchestra on stage behind the action worked well and along with the scenery and costumes contributed to the enjoyment of this colourful and light-hearted show.

Falkirk Operatic Society: Musical Nights – A Royal Connection

Musical Director: Jo-Luke Kirton; Choreographer: Amy Sutherland

This show provided a feast of musical numbers with some direct and indirect royal connections throughout. The company opened with a selection from *The Lion King* with great harmonies which also included the number “Your Song” superbly sung in the style of Sir Elton John by Dylan Allison. The voices of Catriona Turk and Darren Tasker blended well in their rendition of “Written in the Stars” from *Aida* as did Eilish Toal and Jordyn Patrick in “I Know Him So Well” from *Chess*. Further great selections were presented from musicals *Mama Mia* and Queen’s *We Will Rock You* which had great energetic choreography. Victoria Daly’s presentation of “Give My Life For You” from *Miss Saigon* was sung with great passion and feeling leading into Graeme Scott and the gentlemen of the chorus joining with “Bui Doi”. Two particular highlights for me included “Shine” entertainingly performed by Chris Hogg, Darren Tasker, Grant-Scott Johnston and Graeme Scott as the Manzone group and the well-choreographed “Cell Block Tango” from *Chicago* presented with attitude and characterisation by Susan MacFarlane, Carole Sutherland, Marion Dixon, Hannah Gillies, Jordyn Patrick and Lindsay Brown. The show also included numbers from *Les Misérables*, *Hamilton* and a selection of title “007” songs within which Amy Sutherland gave a great delivery of the number “Diamonds Are Forever”. The selection of Kings of Swing numbers also added to the entertainment and in particular Darren Tasker’s presentation of “In the Ghetto” with solo guitar. There were some fabulous musical moments throughout the show and I regret I cannot name each and every one but all in the company should be pleased with what they accomplished in providing a highly entertaining show.

David Black

Linlithgow Amateur Musical Productions: Betty Blue Eyes

Director: Sandy Queenan; Musical Director: Eddie MacLennan; Choreographer: Claire Withnell

This is a really funny show. Set in 1947 in England with meat still rationed, a small community wanted to celebrate the royal wedding with a special meal but they needed meat so the local bigwigs secretly have an illicit pig, one with beautiful blue eyes. The scenario was ripe for farce – and so it proved. Craig Lowe presented Gilbert the local chiropodist who was denied a shop rental because he didn’t fit in, at first as hesitant and self-effacing but then he grew in stature and gained respect for his principled stances. This was reflected in his songs and by the time he sang “The Kind of Man I Am” he had reeled us in. As his assertive wife Joyce, Hannah Easton commanded the stage showing her determination not to be ignored and to be included at the meal. Her voice was well suited to the numbers and she delivered a heartfelt “Nobody”. Eric Brown revelled in the role of zealous Inspector Wormold as Gestapo-like he sniffed out meat under the counter, closed butcher shops and painted good meat green with his horrid little brush. As events climaxed into the farce of Gilbert kidnapping the pig, Carol Fraser excelled herself in the role of Mother Dear. Her mannerisms of an elderly lady were spot on and comedic, while her reactions to thinking she was to be done away with and her confusion in the wonderful “Pig, No Pig” number were a delight. The well drawn bigwigs made their mark with Keith Hewitt as snob Dr Swaby, Guy Sutherland as his soulmate Mr Lockwood and Jesper Petersen as the soft hearted Mr Allardyce who fell in love with Betty’s blue eyes. Gregor Peston as Sgt Noble did well to tread the fine line of upholding the law while contributing to the secret. Chris Hogg had a lovely cameo role as the pig farmer while the pig was well worked by her

handler Claire Withnell. Wives and members of the community all played their parts well including the regal Prince and Princess. This is a good company show with lots of named parts and cast involved in lots of songs and scenes: queuing for meat, reacting to Wormold and enjoying the banquet. Songs were well delivered and choreographed. Costumes resonated the period, as did the set. This was a most enjoyable and hilarious show, well executed by all.

The Livingston Players: West Side Story

Director: Lynne Hurst; **Musical Director:** Jon-Luke Kirton; **Choreographer:** Karen Forrester

This is a difficult show to sing with its Bernstein score presenting many challenges. Their youth section came up to the mark and blew the audience away. From the foreboding opening sequence with the rival Jets and Sharks, to the conflicts of territory, to the young love of Tony and Maria and the inevitable tragic conclusions, these youngsters delivered the dissonant score with confidence. All the principals – and there were many – connected with the music and hit all the right notes with passion. Scott Glidden gave us a Tony who in growing awareness of the dangers of conflict was natural and naive. He sang and moved with confidence and ease. He was well matched with Megan Telford as Maria who with her amazingly pitched voice interpreted her role of hopeful young love to tragic grief-stricken lover so believably. Michael Harris as a bellicose Riff and Josh Ure as an edgy Bernardo comfortably presented their characters as did Erin Traynor as the fiery, yet practical Anita. They were supported by the rest of the principals who caught the tension and rivalry of gang culture and female angst while Robyn Burns as a kind of onlooker as Anybody moved us with her “Somewhere” solo. With 46 youngsters on stage, space was at a premium yet with well thought out choreography it was used judiciously as they danced energetically. Their energy, enthusiasm and commitment to their roles were palpable; colour, hope, pathos, tragedy and humour were all there. They sang “Maria”, “America”, “Only You”, “Tonight”, “I Feel Pretty” and “Gee, Officer Krupke”, expressing the variety of emotions and tempos. The set built by Livingston’s own team looked simple, but was cleverly designed with the gate, skyscraper towering above, the store door and the sewer hole encompassing the different environments and contributing to the changing moods. The staging for the shop and bedroom were well dressed and lighting did the rest. The role of production officials in directing this talented cast cannot be discounted. Everyone should be proud of their achievements in staging such an entertaining show. Principals – all worthy of note – were David Mack, Cameron Robertson, Scott Legerwood, Joseph Gall, Nicholas Brown, Robbie Fullerton, James Bradley, Josh Enever, Sam Jones, Blake Owen, Andrew Killane, Katy Smith, Katie McCrum, Abbie Mason, Abbey Gordon, Erin Boyd, Aaron Gall and Ewan Ferguson.

Project Theatre: Oliver!

Director: Jamie O'Rourke; **Musical Directors:** Tracy Gilland, Tommie Travers; **Choreographer:** Louise Brown

This group of lively youngsters gave a performance that thrilled their parents and their audience. The opening strains of “Food Glorious Food” set the tone for the whole with good singing and clear diction. The chorus was well drilled and confident while this year’s principals all portrayed their roles with commitment. Young Oliver sang truly, engendered sympathy throughout, especially in “Where Is Love?” and was both suitably bewildered and excited by Fagin and his gang. The Artful Dodger oozed the cocky cockney wise-cracker and sang strongly. Mr Bumble rumbled his role as the Beadle and sang the difficult “One Boy for Sale” with aplomb. His counterpart, Widow Corney, was also suitably drawn, in good clear voice and also a good match for him! Both brought out the comedic elements of “I Shall Scream”. The undertaker scene came through strongly. Fagin presented himself as caring and amiable in “Pick A Pocket or Two” then revealed his total self interest in “Reviewing the Situation” before we saw his inability to combat the stronger personalities of Sykes and Nancy. Bill Sykes caught the menace and cruelty of the role while Nancy, at 13, excelled herself in developing a feisty character ready to go against the mighty Bill, yet also revealing her need for love in a well delivered and emotional “As Long as He Needs Me”. Supporting the main principals, Mr Brownlow, Mrs Bedwin and Dr Grimwig brought a calm contrast to the sound and fury of Sykes and Nancy. Particularly well arranged and delivered was the “Who Will Buy?” number with the sellers all keeping to their harmonies. Everyone was well served by the orchestra (especially the violinist) and by a background of cloths which created the London scenes. All in all, everyone has worked hard to provide this entertaining show. Congratulations to all – Oliver Twist: Erin Mackintosh; Mr Bumble: Eilidh Gallacher; Widow Corney: Hailey Honey; Mr Sowerberry: Rebecca Adam; Mrs Sowerberry: Becca Tait; Charlotte: Rachael McLardy; Noah Claypole: Cohen Gurung; The Artful Dodger: Jessica Bradley; Fagin: Eilidh Smith, Nancy: Robyn Gilbertson; Mr Brownlow: Sorcha Hay; Bet: Lily Harvey; Bill Sykes: Lewis Egging; Mrs Bedwin: Mhairi Gallacher; Dr Grimwig: Hayleigh Gilland; Old Sally: Eildigh Morton.

Scene 2: All At Sea

Director & Choreographer: Karen Forrester; **Musical Director:** Alex Knox

Scene 2 presented an all-round comprehensive evening’s entertainment. The programme cleverly took us on a cruise with songs in sections spanning the start of the voyage, on the deck, locations, party times, away days, return to ship and the last night. There was something for everyone here. The company segued from one section to the next with ease. The evening opened brightly with company numbers “Summer Holiday”, “Wish Me Luck” and “Getting to Know

You". This well constructed programme presented a variety of songs the soloists delivered with the MD playing to their strengths in the likes of "Beyond the Sea" and "As Times Goes By", "Miss Otis Regrets" and "Santa Lucia". Singing was strong and clear with some well-judged harmonies in "Mr Blue Sky", "Spanish Eyes" and "Sailing". Comedy numbers leavened the whole with "Keep Young and Beautiful" in old fashioned swimsuits, "Show Me the Way to Go Home" and "Drunken Sailor", while the mood switched again with an emotive "Don't Laugh at Me 'Cause I'm a Fool" and later a moving "Shiver Me Timbers". The "Last Night" section caught the excitement of the end of an experience with a striking red and black costumed "All That Jazz", "Dance the Night Away" and finishing with a nostalgic "We'll Meet Again". As well as good singing, the company moved as one, in clearly defined actions which enhanced the songs, often with lovely picture setting like "La Isla Bonita". In addition, costumes were varied and colourful, apt and eye-catching and particularly pretty were the Dutch bonnets in "A Windmill in Old Amsterdam". With lots of soloists, it is not right to single folk out but I have printed all the names below. This was a team effort with great singing, supported by experienced and sympathetic musicians, all creating an evening of first class entertainment. Well done! Ladies: Alison Wright, Ann Pearston, Caroline Thomson, Christine Shiels, Claire Smith, Corrie Hall, Gillian Gilchrist, Helen Latham, Jean Bennett, Jenny McPherson, Karen Forrester, Lesley Allan, Maggie Roderick, Mary Fullerton, Mary Greasley, Sheila Morris, Terri Lyon; Gentlemen: Jason Thomson, Kevin Doherty, Ricky Cassidy, Simon Lippmann.



Does your society have something exciting to tell?

We are looking for interesting articles for our November edition of NODA Today.

Does your society have an exciting story to tell?

Have you pulled a show off completely out of your comfort zone?

Do you perform in a quirky venue?

Does your society have famous alumni?

Then let us know!

We are always looking for stories for every edition of NODA Today and our online blog. If you think you have one of those stories then please get in touch.

Please submit by e-mail to the Editor by Friday 7 February 2020.

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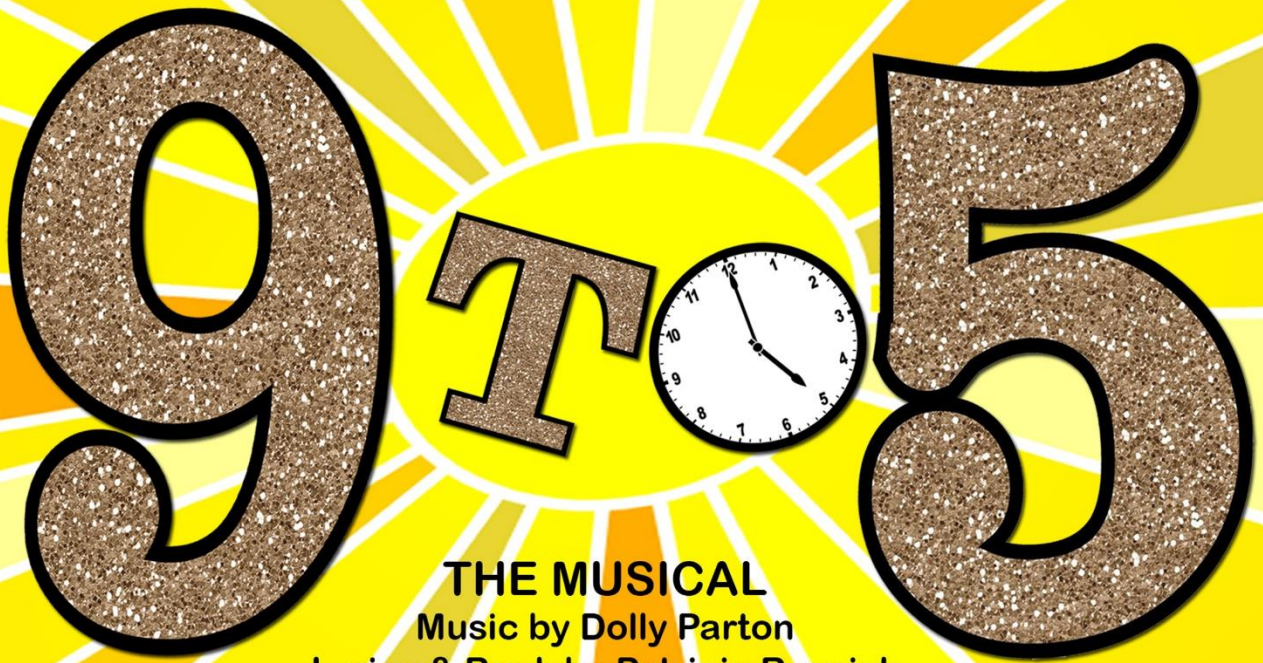
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EROS Musical Society: Sister Act

Director: Jon Cuthbertson; Musical Director: Aileen Shaw; Choreographer: Vikki Rodgers

The production team of Jon, Aileen and Vikki along with a talented cast brought a lot of energy and laughter to their production of *Sister Act*. The music throughout the show was confidently performed by all principals, each member of the ensemble and orchestra. The choreography featured great routines for the bigger production numbers, allowing each member of the cast to perform to their maximum ability. The characterisation and comic timing were great throughout and it was enjoyable to watch the characters develop as the story progressed. Deloris was confidently played by Pamela Cunningham who balanced sass and vulnerability to give a well-rounded performance. Her fantastic stage presence and powerful voice effortlessly mastered the songs and scenes. Pamela gave a consistently strong performance and her version of "Sister Act" was just terrific. The relationship between Deloris and the other leading female of the show, Mother Superior, was excellent and kept the momentum of the story progressing. Playing opposite Pamela, in the role of Mother Superior was Lesley Wilson who brought a lot of humour to the role with her wit, meaningful facial expressions and clear dialogue letting us enjoy every emotion this involved character feels during the story. Jane Sinclair was contagious in her comedy portrayal and energy as Sister Mary Lazarus. She had the audience in stitches with her comic timing and used her physicality to nail the comedy in this role, especially the solo parts of "Take Me To Heaven" and "Sunday Morning Fever". Danielle Carroll as Sister Mary Robert gave a great performance as the shy young postulant developing inner strength through meeting Deloris. Her solo "The Life I Never Led" was particularly excellent. She complemented Laura Wilson as Sister Mary Patrick who gave a brilliant comedy performance of the warm and bubbly character. The pair together gave a convincing friendship and worked very well together throughout. Lorna Cunningham (Sister Mary Martin of Tours), Audrey Wilson (Sister Mary Teresa) and Mike Driscoll (Monsignor O'Hara) completed the talented line up in the convent. Attempting to protect Deloris by placing her in the convent for witness protection is the hero of the show Eddie (Neil Pearson). Neil's portrayal of the gentle police officer was lovely and worked well with the other more confident characters he interacted with. Mike Denholm as the nasty gangster Curtis created a menacing character well. David Clark, Andrew Tasker, and Christopher Young (Joey, Pablo and TJ respectively) were entertaining and very funny in their numbers as the haphazard gangsters. Their dancing definitely left the audience wanting more. Michelle and Tina were played by Kelly Ann Gurney and Linsey Todd and ensured that the opening scenes let the audience know they were in for a treat. The supporting ensemble of confident performers who portrayed various characters throughout brought a lot of energy to the musical numbers and were all individually dedicated to their performances. I would like to thank the entire club for a great night's entertainment and congratulate them on a fantastic production.

Apologies: Due to an oversight the following review was inadvertently omitted from the July 2019 edition.

Harlequin Eastwood Theatre For Youth: Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat

Director: Alasdair Hawthorn; Musical Director: David Zochowski; Choreographer: Linda Smith

The youth group version of this ever-popular show takes all the best bits from the full show and condenses it down into a fast-moving version that leaves the audience wanting more. It was clear from the start that every member of the cast had worked extremely hard to put on a show of the highest standard. Congratulations to director Alasdair Hawthorn for his well thought out direction which made great use of the colourful set and the individual talents of every performer. The team of six narrators moved the story along and each had a lovely singing voice with crystal clear diction which allowed the audience to follow the story easily. Hats off to Ellie, Emily, Eve, Gabby, Lara and Sophia for a job well done. In the lead role of Joseph, Matthew Ralph, gave a faultless performance going from happy go lucky brother to down trodden slave and then Egypt's no 2 with ease. Great stage presence, acting skills and singing voice all added to his performance. A highlight of the show is always the appearance of Pharaoh and Rory Duncan captured perfectly the Elvis like nature of the role with great moves and a singing voice to match. Joseph's brothers played by Aaron, Louis, James, Dev, Rory, Gregor, Ross, Nathan, Sam, Hamish and Andrew had all clearly spent time developing their own individual characters which make each of them stand out in their own way without overshadowing each other. The rest of the principal parts were well cast and all added to the overall enjoyment of the show. The chorus were in excellent voice and produced a lovely sound with some fine harmonies. They were accompanied by a tight, well controlled band under the capable direction of MD David Zochowski. Choreography by Linda Smith was appropriate to the show and the cast coped with it with ease. Well done to everyone on and off stage for another superb Harlequin show.

Stuart McCue-Dick

Minerva Youth Theatre: Rent (School Edition)

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

Rent, the well-known musical set in New York's Bohemian East Village, which tackles the issues surrounding HIV/AIDS and follows the consequent physical and emotional complications that it has for seven impoverished friends. The subject

material in this show is very complex for performers to appreciate, understand and then translate to the audience. As I had only seen this show done by adult players I was simply blown away by the maturity, emotion and commitment of the younger cast at MYT. There is not much change to the book of the school edition from the full version, making the challenge the club took to perform it even more admirable. Each principal performer and ensemble member gave complete and impressive performances from start to finish and allowed the audience to care for each character's development. I have to admit I had teary moments throughout the afternoon. Adam Stewart played Mark, an aspiring filmmaker, his fantastic voice and excellent acting were wonderful – he truly embodied the role. Lewis Kerr's impressive voice made him an ideal choice for the role of Roger, his solos and duets, particularly with Mimi, beautifully played by Emily Gough, were outstanding. Collins was well portrayed by Conor Manley, and even more impressively when I heard he had stepped into the role at a later date. It was a very confident portrayal. Another impressive character development was that of Collin's lover Angel, which was very, very effectively played by Liam McGrath. Liam balanced the charismatic and softer side to Angel superbly. Special mention has to be made to the emotion Conor and Liam shared as Angel slipped away in Collin's arms during the number "Without You". It was mesmerising, touching and so poignant. Monica Taggart as Joanne and Isla Howie as Maureen both excelled in their respective roles. Isla gave an absolutely stand-out comedy performance when she sang "Over the Moon" and together in their duet "Take Me or Leave Me" was brilliant. Benny, a former friend but now a local landlord, was competently played by Benjy England. A great set and effective lighting added to make this a truly thought provoking and captivating show. Congratulations to the production team, Susan, Chris, Donna, and to everyone involved behind the scenes who made this show the success it was.



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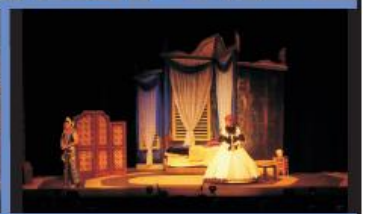
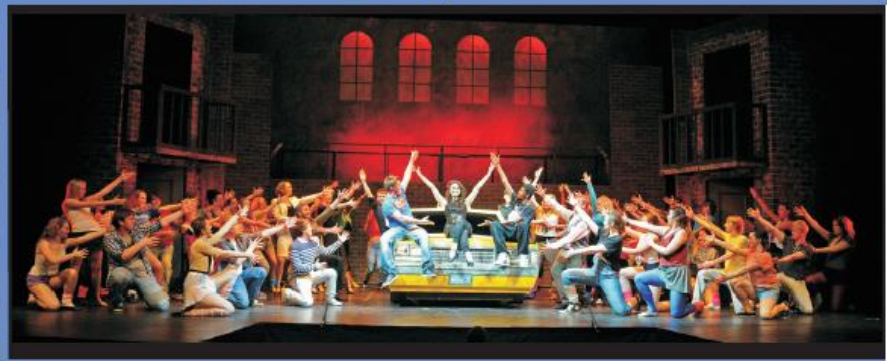
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CAOS Musical Society: Legally Blonde

Director: Eleanor Mackay; Musical Director: Jack Thomson; Choreographer: Eireann Screen

This production had great energy and drive throughout, telling the story of sorority girl and Malibu Barbie - Elle Woods, who swaps fashion merchandising to become a student of Law by enrolling at Harvard Law School after being dumped by her boyfriend Warner Huntington 3rd, in an attempt to win him back. In the performance I attended Katy Angus provided all the necessary qualities to deliver an outstanding performance as the extrovert Elle which I understand was equally matched by Jenny Carmichael who portrayed the role in alternate performances. Trent Allen superbly captured the part as the charming but very self-absorbed ex-boyfriend Warner and Jenny Bartley brilliantly characterised and generated much laughter as the unlucky-in-love Paulette Buonofuonte, longing to marry a man from Ireland. Other great performances were provided by Dale Crombie as fellow law student Emmett Forrest; Laura Kilpatrick, Nic Duthie and Caroline Constable as sorority sisters Pilar, Serena and Margot; Andrew Davidson as the pompous and manipulative Professor Callahan; Nicola Carmichael as Vivienne Kensington the stuck-up, wealthy, smart driven law student; Megan Daly as Brook Wyndham the exercise video star accused of murder whom Elle presented the defence case for; Jasmine Gordon-Brown as Harper and Chris Cheyne as Kyle the smooth-talking UPS deliveryman. Heather Coulthard and Gerry Jamieson played Elle's Mum and Dad and it would also be remiss of me not to mention Steve, the 3 year old Chihuahua, as Elle's dog Brutus and Blue, an 8-year-old Golden Retriever, cast as Rufus. With great singing, drama and slick choreography the entire company and the production team must be proud of their achievements in bringing such a polished production to the stage.

Cumbernauld Musical Theatre: Lullaby of Broadway

Director & Musical Director: Fraser Morrison

This was a fabulous evening of song from musical theatre provided by Amy Glover, Alan Digweed, Christine Duncan, Fraser Morrison and Roslyn Dale, all brilliantly accompanied on piano by Gregor Duthie. The programme was extensively varied presenting numbers from a range of musicals including *Annie Get Your Gun*, *Guys and Dolls*, *Anything Goes*, *Witches of Eastwick*, *West Side Story*, *Wicked*, *My Fair Lady*, *Into the Woods*, *Rent*, *Songs for a New World*, *Spamalot*, *The Secret Garden* and *42nd Street*. I could not single out any soloist and as an ensemble or in trios or duets, all voices blended beautifully to the highest standard. The content of programme had a freshness presenting a modern delivery to some of the more traditional numbers which contrasted well with the newer ones. The venue was a perfect choice for the evening which was further enhanced with effective lighting to create the perfect mood for a most enjoyable evening!

Hamilton Operatic & Dramatic Club: Jesus Christ Superstar

Director: Alan Bayley; Musical Director: Elizabeth Pearson; Choreographer: Amanda Letarte

The cast gave us a compelling drama with energy radiating from the stage. From the forbidding opening to the inevitable but moving conclusion, the cast propelled us through the last seven days of Jesus' life. The show was characterised by strong principals, dynamic singing and fluid movement. Steven Struthers as Jesus had a voice with an amazing range flexing it to the full to convey Jesus' anguish. He showed experience in the role, clear in his compassion and steadfast in fulfilling God's will. The scenes in Gethsemane and on the cross were especially moving and overall his interpretation of the role was totally believable. He was well matched with Richard Leach as Judas, a troubled bystander from the first, principled but tortured by his betrayal of Jesus. The measure of success of his performance came in the suicide scene where for once the audience could have compassion for a man who has been ever vilified. In wonderful roles the scheming Pharisees were wonderfully nasty and their power and opulence clear in attitude and costume. The deep bass Douglas Muir as Caiaphas, the determined Frank Bent as Annas contrasted sharply with the poverty of the people. Eddie Goucher gave a colourful and quirky Herod, delivering the patter song with comic ease while Roland Russell as Pilate in the red suit showed all the ambivalence of the role. Allan Cochrane as Simon and Patrick Rafferty as Peter contrasted against these powerful figures and revealed the care, loyalty and very human behaviours of ordinary folk in a situation out of their depth. Striking in the only powerful female role was Carly Slamin as Mary Magdalene. Her rendition of "I Don't Know How To Love Him" was beautifully sung and heartfelt. In the crowd scenes Jesus' followers sang and moved rhythmically and with love before switching to mob thirsty intent as they demanded the crucifixion. Memorable moments were the seductive dancers in their red, the scourging scene behind the gauze, the eerie disembodied singing in the background and Jesus carrying the cross through the audience, only bested by him being carried out by his weeping followers. This production was in the best traditions of amateur theatre, punching a phenomenal impact.

Elizabeth Donald

Shotts St Patrick's Amateur Opera Group: Godspell

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

I have seen *Godspell* performed many times and in different settings. This production was set within a circus environment and provided scope to showcase some great characters associated with the circus with plenty of colour and energy. The company do not normally repeat musicals; however, having performed the original version in 2000, this revised and updated 2012 version presented the opportunity for the group to re-enact a true favourite which featured half of their original cast. Finlay Cook led the company in "Prepare Ye the Way of the Lord" which set the scene providing

drive and enthusiasm and paving the way for Matthew Coulter to take centre stage in the lead role as Jesus Christ. Matthew excelled in his portrayal of Jesus as he engaged with the company telling the parables based on St Matthew's gospel interspersed with musical numbers and taking us to a moving last supper and a dramatic crucifixion. Collectively the company was completely engaged through singing, drama and movement and therefore I feel it would be unfair of me to single out any one of the supporting principal characters as everyone blended into this excellent production. Although the arrangements and harmonies are different from the original version, the musical has not lost its magic and the company led by Matthew certainly did not disappoint. All involved in this production including set designers must be extremely pleased with their achievement. Well done.

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Allegro: Made in Dagenham

Director & Choreographer: Felicity Thomas; Musical Director James McCutcheon

What a fabulous show! Based on real life events in 1968, this dynamic musical tells the story of the fight for women's right to equal pay. Women working in the Ford Factory in Dagenham sewing seats for cars were downgraded to unskilled workers and were incensed that they were being paid much less than the male factory workers. Determined to do something about it, they took their case to the union, but eventually were driven to taking strike action in order to achieve a positive outcome. This compelling storyline was brought to life by an exuberant cast who, under the direction of an excellent production team, created a stirring piece of musical theatre. Choreography throughout was slick and true to the 60s style and beautifully executed by every cast member who appeared confident and at ease with the extremely well thought out routines. Big production numbers were moved and sung with real energy. The strike scenes "Storm Clouds" and "Everybody Out" with the women brandishing their banners, were especially hard hitting, conveying the ruthlessness and determination these women had. Musical numbers throughout were vivacious with some excellent solo singing. The angst between the men and women came across particularly well. The main characters were very well cast, each one portraying a convincing character. Zoe Brookes gave a wonderful performance as Rita who has been nominated as the somewhat reluctant spokeswoman for the female factory workers. She showed real power and strength both vocally and in her characterisation. Her dilemma in juggling her family relationships and domestic commitment with her passion for her job in getting things sorted for the workers showed a real feeling of split loyalty no more so than in "Nearly Had it All". There was real chemistry between Rita and her husband Eddie (Alex Matthews), a real family man who, when feeling he has lost his wife, gives up and leaves with the children. "The Letter" was sung with genuine, raw emotion. Eddie's eventual recognition of his wife's achievement and realisation of their true love showed immense tenderness. The two O'Grady children, Sharon (Freya Reid) and Graham (Luke Murray) were quite charming. Rita has the support of all of the factory girls but especially Sandra, Cass, Clare and Beryl. This was a strong line up with each creating an individual character. The sexy Sandra (Ali Wood), the feisty Cass (Ruth Harris), the somewhat ditzy Clare (Caitlin Davis) who led the girls in the most entertaining "Wassname" and the mouthy Beryl (Chrissie Thornton) who just said it as it was! These girls provided many comic moments with their well timed one liners. The Ford UK boss Jeremy Hopkins (Paul Inglis) and his stylish wife Lisa (Rachel Allison) established the contrast in class distinction, Jeremy trying to stand his ground in the dispute, while his wife showed a genuine compassion in supporting the women's rights and befriending and encouraging Rita in a most moving scene. Judith Walker gave a strong portrayal of Barbara Castle with a sharp yet sympathetic manner and gave a great interpretation of her number "Ideal World". Dominic Lewis had the audience eating out of his hand as the most amusing Harold Wilson with perfect timing in his mannerisms and distinctive walk. "Always a Problem" with Harold and his aides was a very good song and dance routine. Phil Dobson was a sympathetic union rep Monty, Audrey Jones a strong Connie and Jonny Farley a somewhat showy all-American boss man Tooley. An interesting set which was transformed to depict a dated modest kitchen, factory floor, offices, House of Commons, and TUC conference was well lit to highlight the appropriate playing area. The many, many scene changes were smooth and non-intrusive. Excellent costumes reflected the style and fashion of the period with some glamorous, glitzy disco costumes. The final "Viva Eastbourne" and "Stand Up" showed the strength of the company singing and had the capacity audience on its feet ending the show on a real high. From the opening number to the final number it was obvious that this production was being enjoyed by all on and off stage. This was a bold, brash, pacey and energetic production well deserving of the standing ovation it received. A tremendous evening and a memorable production which could match many professional productions. Fab-u-lous!

Bohemians Lyric Opera Company: A Bohemian Fairy Tale

Director: Niall King; Musical Director: Kirstey Johnstone; Choreographers: Jenni Whigham, Samantha Doig

The Bohemians Fringe concert was billed as *A Magical Journey Through The Light And Dark Of Our Favourite Musicals* and there certainly was plenty of light and shade in this extremely well balanced compilation of carefully chosen musical numbers. Beginning with the introduction "Once Upon A Time", these magical numbers were linked with the occasional narratives which unfolded the fairy tale story line. This was very much a team effort with wonderful strong soloists and an ensemble which demonstrated excellent choral singing and real vitality. The playing area was used to great effect with imaginative choreography which was slick and vibrant throughout. "Touch the Sky" got the production off to a cracking start and was followed by an animated "Macavity" / "He's a Tramp" medley. The two soloists complemented each other in a beautiful "Beauty and the Beast" with the mood then changing to a powerful, animated "Monster - Beth Crowley". "When She Loved Me" and "Once Upon a Dream" were both delivered with real feeling and emotion while the ladies ensemble's "Hocus Pocus" oozed personality and certainly did put a spell on us. The three witches of Eastwick had a wonderful blend of voices singing "Make Him Mine". The small group of lads with fine voices gave a most relaxed performance of a selection of sea shanties and a rousing "Irish Rover" which preceded the company's "Little Mermaid Medley". This section was extremely impressive both vocally and in its choreography. "Poor Unfortunate Souls" was a real fun number which was well put across. "You Must Love Me" was sung with real sincerity and I did enjoy the subtle interaction between the two performers. Things were really rocking in "Keep On Standing" and the selection from *Kinky Boots* with its soloists and full company in full swing was just WOW! A fantastic "Holding Out for a Hero" was sung

with such panache and great 'oomph' and was obviously enjoyed by the entire company (and audience). The final two numbers "Freak Flag Fly" and "I'm A Believer" gave a taste of what is to come in the Bohemians' spring production *Shrek The Musical* and was fabulous – a real positive advertisement for the show! This was a first class concert with an extremely talented cast. The entire programme of contrasting numbers and moods was delivered with energy and style by all performers. All credit to the production team too who certainly brought out the very best in the company with fine singing and creative direction. The small supportive band was also in fine form. This was a wonderful hour of great variety and passion which I enjoyed immensely. Thank you.

Edinburgh Gilbert & Sullivan Society: Carousel

Director: Alan Borthwick; Musical Director: David Lyle; Choreographer: Elspeth Whyte

Rodgers and Hammerstein's *Carousel* with its wonderful, lavish score is, in my opinion, one of R&H's best collaborations. The storyline is quite dark and controversial and perhaps doesn't appeal to all but this emotionally charged production was very well staged indeed. Almost operatic in places, this musical requires strong singing which was very evident in this company. The opening "Carousel Waltz" played by a fine orchestra brought the fairground to life with jugglers, a dancing bear, acrobats and clowns entertaining the bustling crowd. It's here that we are introduced to the Carousel barker Billy Bigelow and Daniel Barrett gave an outstanding performance in this role. He totally understood the complexity of the character, contrasting the bullying, rough and violent Billy with the tender, heartbroken Billy when he realises what he has done and what might have been. His long "Soliloquy" can only be described as marvellous and quite exceptional for a young man. The rapport between Billy and Julie Jordan (Claire Lumsden) was perfectly balanced with Julie suitably naive and innocent and conveying a wonderful depth of emotion in the most heart wrenching death scene. Both of these characters had effortless vocals, "What's The Use of Wondering" and "If I Loved You" beautifully sung and brimming with emotion. This tragic love story is interspersed with moments of light relief. Leah Kincer-Christie brought life and personality to the part of Carrie Pipperidge while Malachi Reid, another young man with a powerful singing voice, brought a real warmth to the amiable Mr Snow. I did enjoy "Geraniums in the Winder". The Snow family of youngsters were quite delightful and very well disciplined indeed. Samantha Currie was a genuinely kind and caring Nettie Fowler as she gently sang "You'll Never Walk Alone". I did enjoy Claire Wolseley's characterisation of Mrs Mullins, more genteel than sometimes played and yet feisty and determined. The real villain of the piece is Jigger. Laurence Aitken was a truly threatening baddie ultimately responsible for Billy's tragic downfall. There's lots for the company to do in *Carousel* and this ensemble was in excellent voice in the big production numbers particularly "June Is Bustin' Out All Over", the "Clambake" and "Blow High, Blow Low" where the male chorus also showed off their dancing skills. The ballet when Billy makes his return to earth to see his daughter Louise was danced with real charm by Catherine Bain and Stewart Williamson. The final "If I Loved You" and "You'll Never Walk Alone" were sung with immense feeling and brought real tears to the eyes. The many supporting cameo roles were all played with confidence. *Carousel* is a difficult, challenging show both from a performance and stage setting point of view. This was an excellent production with an extremely talented cast supported by an excellent orchestra, colourful costumes and effective lighting. Despite being wiped out emotionally, I thoroughly enjoyed every minute of the production and congratulate everyone involved in making *Carousel* such a success.

Lothian Youth Arts & Musicals Company: The Vackees

Director: Fraser Jamieson; Musical Director: James McCutcheon; Choreographer: Fiona Jackson

Set at the outbreak of World War 2 when a group of children were evacuated from London to a Somerset village, *The Vackees* is a funny, moving story set to some wonderful musical numbers. It is a very difficult show both musically and also in conveying the drama of the period. This was an ambitious choice for this young cast but they certainly rose to the challenge. There are so many characters of all ages and there were great opportunities for many of the younger members to be given their first principal role working alongside some of the slightly older more experienced youngsters. The opening numbers and tableau were very well directed and the sadness and heartache of mothers being separated from their children followed by the children pleading "Please Choose Me" when they are being selected by their new guardians was very emotive. Central to the story is young London boy Kip and Dean Gray gave a superb, confident, engaging performance. With a strong singing voice too, he was most believable and really pulled at the heart strings in the final scene when he returns to London. He and the other vackees worked so well together and stood up to the unwelcoming country children led by Buzz, the somewhat bossy, bully boy well portrayed by Matthew Knowles. The differences between the two groups of children were well conveyed, creating the tension when the newcomers arrived invading the space of the country children. Kip forms a friendship with young Ellen, Aunt Luce's niece, and Megan MacLean in her first leading role was totally suited to the part. Despite suffering from laryngitis, she acted and sang very well indeed. A real trouper! Thea Mason was an excellent Grace, the maid, and the duet "Just for A Moment" sung by Ellen and Grace was very strong. Head of the household Aunt Luce was in the most capable hands of Fiona Wilson who gave an assertive performance. The opening of Act II "Letter from the Front Line" was delivered with a real sense of drama by Kip's mum (Emma Clark) and the London mothers. "Warning: Man in Uniform" eased the tension slightly with Miss Maybee (Katie Coyle) and the Land Girls dancing and singing well. Nicholas Hann-Renigo, the somewhat

determined Mr. Constance, gave a convincing performance and I'm so glad he and Miss Maybee had a happy ending. Andrew Brown who stepped into the role only a few weeks earlier was a suitably surly Mr. Jack and made a good job of "Battle of Darchett Hill" where the children also impressed with their well staged fight scene. Matthew Steel who played the German pilot has a great stage presence and gave a mature performance with a real understanding of the character. His solo number "Somewhere Behind" was first class. All of the many supporting roles were very well cast and well developed characters. The enthusiastic ensemble made a great sound together. "Pictures" was very well done with great humour. "Glamour" led by Ginger (Ailsa MacLean) was indeed glitzy and glamorous with strong choreography delivered confidently. Authentic costumes created the mood of the period or scene. The backdrop of St. Paul's set the scene in London while the country scene with its central bridge added height and variety in the staging. A dedicated group of talented youngsters under the direction of an excellent production team gave it their all, resulting in a most enjoyable well staged production. Very well done, LYAMC!

Showcase Musical Productions: Showcase 2019

Director: Andy Johnston; Musical Director: David McFarlane; Choreographer: Claire Smith

As newcomers to a Showcase Production, we were blown away by the sheer energy and obvious enjoyment that emanated from the stage tonight. With chorus and soloists numbering over sixty, this music extravaganza was well supported by a 14 piece orchestra. Each half of the programme comprised three sections – Act I offering a Neil Diamond Medley, Guilty Pleasures (an excuse to feature favourite songs by several soloists – and why not!), and closing with a selection of show tunes from recent Broadway musicals. The Neil Diamond section provided a balanced grouping including hits like "I'm A Believer" and "Sweet Caroline", plus a couple with soloists, giving us a taste of the quality that was to come. The concert featured a vast number of soloists who I will not attempt to name nor will I suggest that I had any favourites (although, in fact I had several!!). The Guilty Pleasures section gave voice to a host of songs chosen because "they wanted to perform them" and they wouldn't fit into any other section. I wish more companies would do just that, and let us hear songs that they love, because that is when we really get the true emotions from the singers. Here, a Carpenters Medley brought back some fond memories! The last section in the first act gathered together a collection of show tunes from current and recent Broadway musicals, each one of which I could class as a favourite of mine, and performed tonight by soloists who could do nothing to dissuade me of that feeling. Before we close Act I, praise in this review is long overdue for the choreographer Claire Smith. Almost without exception the numbers in this show were moved from simple flowing choreography to full blown high energy showstoppers. Rarely have I seen a show with such a variety of dance moves, all performed with energy, which I am certain was not missed by the capacity audience. Act II continued with similar pizzazz as the first, welcoming the audience back to their seats with "At The Movies", beginning with a not to be forgotten Bee Gees Medley. A word at this point should be made, congratulating Louise Williamson, Wardrobe Co-ordinator, for the ever-changing costuming in the show. Each section had its own style, be it simple or extravagant – but always in keeping with the musical genre being portrayed. We moved on to a Queen section with a selection of songs which recalled my days as sound engineer for a cover band – days probably now best forgotten! I loved each and every number from "Bohemian Rhapsody" to "We Are The Champions". In fact, I'm realising, that I would be quicker mentioning the items I didn't like in the Concert, but, apart from being unfair to the performers, it would make for a very short report! Unfortunately, we had to come to the finale of this evening of song and dance, performed with tireless exuberance by this talented Edinburgh company. The finale included "Stars" from *Les Misérables* – who could fail to find this so moving? – followed by company calls carried out to a background of "Shang-A-Lang" – what could be better? Final words must go to Director Andy Johnston and Musical Director David McFarlane, who, together with Claire Smith, have compiled and rehearsed a concert of epic proportions, giving this wonderful group of singers and dancers so much to work with, and, in particular each and every soloist the opportunity to display their skills and talents to the audience tonight. My thanks to your Regional Rep, Dorothy Johnstone, for giving me the opportunity to report on this show, while she sunned herself in warmer lands, and, also, sincere congratulations to Showcase on a wonderful performance and the sterling support you are giving Macmillan Cancer Support.

Mike Pendlowski

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CONGRATULATIONS

Robin Ozog – 50th Year Award



Robin Ozog is pictured receiving his 50th Year Award from NODA Scotland Councillor, Stuart McCue-Dick.

Robin started singing at age 8 as a chorister with Holy Trinity Church in Dunfermline. His love of music and theatre flourished after seeing *The Pirates of Penzance* at the Carnegie Hall in Dunfermline and his career in theatre followed. From the early 1970s to date, Robin has performed with many societies in Fife and beyond, and has played every leading tenor roll in the G&S canon and several others in both grand opera and musical theatre. He is currently Production Director with Kirkcaldy Gilbert & Sullivan Society and has served as both Chair and Social Convener in earlier years. He is also a member of Dunfermline Gilbert & Sullivan Society. In March 2020 he will be playing the part of Don Alhambra with Kirkcaldy Gilbert & Sullivan Society in *The Gondoliers*, and this will be his 122nd show! Well done, Robin, on a richly deserved 50th Award.

Anstruther & District Amateur Musical Society: All Shook Up
Director & Choreographer: Fiona Stewart; Musical Director: Robert Nee

A fairly dismal Scottish Summer, weather-wise, has obviously pent up the energy and enthusiasm of this ADAMS cast, allowing both to be released tonight, during this rocking and heart-warming performance, featuring most of Elvis

Presley's hit songs. The leading man, Chad, was brought to the stage by Fife productions stalwart Andrew Doig. Andrew's obvious understanding of the role together with his comic timing and knowledge of how and when to engender himself to the audience, gave us a feeling of confidence in the show very early on. Natalie, the motor mechanic who has fallen in love with Chad was delightfully portrayed by Steph Baillie, in her gender-changing role. Steph's crystal-clear dialogue combined with beautiful vocals, ensured that her on-stage chemistry with Chad was obvious, albeit unrequited! Move in second lady to make her stage presence known (especially to Chad!) – Miss Sandra (Rachel Nee). Rachel's year in Oz (that's in the southern hemisphere, not in *The Wizard of ...*) has obviously done no harm to her acting or singing techniques! Again, it was lovely to see a performer who can command a stage, even against the talents of Andrew and Steph – not to mention all the other fine principals in this show. Sylvia (Fiona McCruden), the bar owner, is happy to be single, but in the course of the musical falls for Jim Haller (Craig Spence), the father of Natalie, subconsciously looking for love after the passing of his wife three years earlier. The pair worked extremely well together and the rendition of "There's Always Me" was heartfelt. Dennis (Callum Stott), the geeky poetry-loving boy-in-town, brought much hilarity to the show, albeit failing to attract Natalie, but finding love in Miss Sandra by the end. Young lovers Lorraine (Brianna Harley) and Dean (Ben Smart) both showed very good stage presence. The last of the principals, but certainly not the least, were the domineering Mayor of the town (Shona Gardner) and her Sheriff Earl (Mitch Scott-Bell). Shona, as the pantomime villain of the show, played this part so well, that it nearly drew "Boos!" from the full audience! Mitch – a man of few words – until he proposes to the Mayor at the end of the show, completed an excellent corps of principals. ADAMS chorus were never underplayed in this happy, jukebox of a show! Their direction together with their choreography did credit to Fiona Stewart in charge of the movement, while singing was no less praiseworthy in the capable hands of Robert Nee. Technically, sets, although fairly minimal were appropriate, and allowed for easy movement by Gregor Nee and his team. Sound, after a slightly tentative start, soon got into the swing of things. Lighting – maybe some more thought could have gone in to this, especially knowing the upper level and downstage corners were frequently populated. However, overall a grand show, well done, and thank you ADAMS for the hospitality shown to us at the interval!

Carpe Diem Productions: Missa Brevis Caledoniae

Musical Director: Peter D Robinson

Giving their annual presentation in the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, Carpe Diem Productions return to the Art Space at St Marks, taking full advantage of the wonderful acoustic in this intimate Church setting. Although pride of place is given to Peter D Robinson's new work *Missa Brevis Caledoniae*, the programme is extended with other works by the composer, sung prior to the Mass. The entire programme, sung in Scots and Latin, was inevitably a challenge to the chorus of twenty-seven voices, but, as in previous years, they rose to this challenge. Soloists were all in fine voice, but I will mention two, baritone Colin Povey and soprano Katie Fleming, whose voices sat most comfortably with me this evening. The second part of the recital was given over to Robinson's latest composition *Missa Brevis Caledoniae*. This *Missa Brevis*, or 'short Mass', again sung in Scots and Latin, prior to Scots being displaced as the national language, following the political union with England in 1707. The piece opened with a fine Kyrie Eleison sung by choir and soloists. A Gloria and Sanctus followed, prior to a Benedictus. The only aspect of the concert that slightly niggled with me was the change of accent on some of the words, in particular the placing of the accent on the first syllable of "Hosanna". However, the evening's programme was brought to a close with a beautiful rendition of the Agnus Dei followed by Dona Nobis Pacem. It is always a pleasure to hear Peter Robinson's works, as we know that they will always bring something new to the world of Church music – and tonight was no exception. The final word goes to excellent accompanying by Dorothy Moncrieff on piano. Many thanks for your kind invitation to tonight's concert.

Glenrothes Amateur Musical Association: 42nd Street

Director: Carol Sinclair; Musical Director: Peter Robinson; Choreographers: Carol Sinclair, Iain Hughes

This musical requires an all-dancing, all-singing company to perform this show successfully and requires a society with all these attributes, plus good singers and actors. Fortunately, GAMA did fill these musical requirements in all departments and this they proved to their audiences. Earlier this year, I saw the show on the London stage and GAMA, you were equally as good. This show is chockfull with well-known songs and melodies, many of which had the audience tapping their feet when Peter Robinson's fine orchestra performed the show's overture – making it a great start to the evening. Charlie Sinclair totally stamped his authority in a commanding style and made an imposing Julian Marsh, the *Pretty Lady* show's director, attempting to make the show's hopeful newcomer, named Peggy Sawyer, into a star! Margaret MacKenzie excelled in the role of the fading and one-time star, spiteful, haughty, Dorothy Brock, throwing her star status around in many vindictive jibes, much to the consternation of all. But when her come-uppance time arrived, she showed her star quality in her charming and famous "About a Quarter to Nine" song. Dorothy Brock has two men in her life – real boyfriend, Pat Jennings (nicely played by Andrew Butchart), and her sugar daddy, the show's financial backer Abner Dillon – and Glen McGill stood out in his role. In the role of Peggy Sawyer, Brogan Orkney made a tremendous showing: she had the qualities to carry off this role with ease in her acting, singing, and tap dancing, all of which were essential to bring this stage character to life. Brogan brought all these talents to the fore and, in doing so,

proved to be a great leading lady. As the writers of the *Pretty Lady* show, Maggie Jones (Diane White) and Bert Barry (Derek Walker) showed their great theatrical comedy talent in their comic parts and their big musical number, "Shuffle Off to Buffalo", where they were joined by Anytime Annie (Ann-Marie Miller) as the bride. All brought their special oomph to the number. Perfectly cast as *Pretty Lady*'s leading man was Colin Sutherland, who made a darn good job of the role of juvenile lead, Billy Lawler. And what a fantastic and powerful singing voice this young man possessed! It was a joy to listen to. Filling in the necessary, and varied, cameo roles, all expertly played, were Michael McLean (Andy Lee); Kathryn Kitchen (Phyllis Dale); and Brodi Orkney (Lorraine Fleming). The "glitz, glam, and glitter" songs, all beautifully costumed, were there to see in such musical numbers as "We're in The Money" and "Dames" and the "42nd Street" dance montage was well staged. The entire company get full marks for their energetic, and frenetic tap-dancing routines, a much-required ingredient for this show's success; and much energy was put into the ever-popular "Lullaby of Broadway" song. The onstage *Pretty Lady* show turned out to be a success, and the same can be said of GAMA's production of *42nd Street*!

Roger Buist

Leven Amateur Musical Association: Hairspray

Director: Iain Hughes; Musical Director: Peter Robinson; Choreographer: Arlene Anderson

Set in the 1960s, Tracy Turnblad dreams of dancing in the Corny Collins TV Show. African American students at her school teach Tracy some dance moves and, despite opposition from programme producer Velma von Tussle and her vicious daughter Amber, Tracy wins a place on the show. Tracy (Maisie Kitchen) and best friend Penny Pringleton (Regan Koczubic) both hold their characters well throughout the show. Tracey's quest for racial integration in the show leads to her falling for Link Larkin (Marc Ritchie). Marc, try not to let your voice drop away at the end of lines – otherwise a great character, well played! Doing their best to thwart Tracy, Velma Von Tussle (Millie Anderson) and daughter Amber (Eilidh Geddes) as the villains of the piece, both played excellent parts – did I hear a "Boo!" from someone nearby? Motormouth Maybelle (Orla Jones) offered a powerful personality combined with a fabulous singing voice. Prudy Pringleton (Morgan McAlpine-Wemyss), Mr Pinky (Finlay Jones), Seaweed (Conor Westwater), Little Inez (Martha Ferguson) and Herman F Sprintzer (Caleb Cunningham) all added to the principal line-up in their own individual characters – none of which I found to be lacking in any way. However, the character who stole the show for me was Edna Turnblad (Benjamin Anderson). Benjamin, it was a pleasure to see this character captured to the extent you did, exhibiting the full range of emotions, whilst showing extreme capabilities in singing and dancing too. Your duet "You're Timeless to Me" with Wilbur Turnblad (Jack Given) was very nearly a showstopper – congratulations to both! A simple set, largely comprising small trucked pieces was well utilised by Director Iain Hughes. Congratulations also to Musical Director Peter Robinson and Choreographer Arlene Anderson for getting the most out of LAMA's young people, both in singing and dancing. Careful use of lighting aided the show rather than becoming an evening of light, with a show in the background – something seen far too often these days. Sound, too, was well mixed. Just a couple of times, the band almost drowned out the singers – but caught in time! Many thanks LAMA (Youth) for a fine evening of entertainment!

Lochgelly & District Amateur Musical Association: The Little Mermaid (Jr)

Director: Andrew Gardiner; Musical Director: Ronan Corkey; Choreographer: Yvonne Tait

An excellent evening of entertainment provided by this group of talented young people! In the role of Ariel – the Little Mermaid in the title – Erin Cameron offered an engaging performance, helping to carry the story to people like myself, being one of the few people in the world who has never seen Disney's epic, smash hit, later to become this musical! Sam Morrison, as Prince Eric, made a gallant leading man, and at this point I would like to add that Sam's diction, and that of all the principals, was extremely good, albeit small voices aided by radio mics. A favourite of the audience was, of course, Flounder, played here by Abbie Reid-Rielly, presenting us with an energetic and entertaining performance. Oliver Morrison as Sebastian was in fine voice and also provided an entertaining performance with well-timed comedic moments. His leading of "Under the Sea" was most enjoyable. The sea witch Ursula (Ruby Barker) aided and abetted by her evil minions, Flotsam (Molly Penman) and Jetsam (Lucy Burns), all maintained characters throughout and gave good interpretations of their "baddies" roles. Scuttle (Jack Hadden), King Triton (Reece Smith), Grimsby (Daniel Shaw) and Carlotta (Katie Walkingshaw) all performed their cameo roles to the maximum, and last of the principals, but not least, Chef Louis (Jamie Sutherland) brought appreciative responses from the audience in his rendition of "Les Poissons" – very well done! The chorus of sea gulls and undersea creatures performed, sang and danced extremely well. Credit to Director Andrew Gardiner, Musical Director Ronan Corkey and Choreographer Yvonne Tait. This was a first show for this new youth group, and I feel they did themselves proud. Their enthusiasm was palpable, and promises bigger and even better things for the future! Well done to all, and thank you for inviting us along to your debut show!

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MR FRANCIS AND THE VILLAGE OF SECRETS

Rhona Mitchell, Director, MSD Productions, tells the story of a newly commissioned work performed by her company at The Lemon Tree Theatre in Aberdeen and Peterhead Community Theatre.



Mr Francis and the Village of Secrets is the first piece to be performed in this, the sixteenth, Garioch Theatre Festival. This brand-new play with music from award-winning playwright Alan Bissett with music and lyrics by Ashley Forbes was a brand new commission for North East Scotland in conjunction with Garidge Theatre and Aberdeenshire Council. The play tells the true story of Francis Lathom, a Gothic novelist mysteriously banished from England in 1810, who reappeared in Aberdeenshire fifteen years later under the guise of 'James Francis'. This hilarious, sometimes tragic play speculates about Lathom's past, while turning a satirical eye to the religious hypocrisies of nineteenth century Scotland.

Alan Bissett is a playwright, novelist and performer from Falkirk who lives in Renfrewshire. In 2012 he was named Glenfiddich Spirit of Scotland Writer of the Year and in 2013 was shortlisted for the Creative Scotland / Daily Record Literature Award. The plays which he has written and produced with director Sacha Kyle are *The Moira Monologues* (2009) and *More Moira Monologues* (2017), which was shortlisted for Best New Play at the Critics Awards for Theatre in Scotland (as was their play, *Turbo Folk*, in 2010), *Ban This Filth!* (2013), shortlisted for an Amnesty International Freedom of Expression Award, and their play about ex-Pink Floyd frontman Syd Barrett, *One Thinks of it all as a Dream* (2016). The short film which he wrote and narrated, *The Shutdown* (2009), won numerous awards at international and domestic film festivals. Alan's prose work includes four novels, including *Death of a Ladies' Man* (2009) and *Pack Men* (2011), both shortlisted for the Scottish Mortgage Investment Trust Fiction of the Year Prizes. He was short- or long-listed for the Macallan / Scotland on Sunday Short-Story Competition four years running between 1999 and 2002 and has also edited five anthologies of fiction. In November 2016 he was awarded an Honorary Doctorate by the University of Stirling for his contribution to Scottish culture.

Alan Bissett writes, "When Rhona first approached me about writing a play set in Inverurie I was initially stumped. I'd been there a number of times doing shows or school talks, but never long enough to find myself steeped in the place. What to write about?

"My mind went back to my days as a student at Stirling University, way back in 1999. Professor David Punter of the Department of English Studies had hired me as his research assistant to find out what I could about one Francis Lathom,

a Gothic novelist from the late 18th century, who is only now remembered because one of the characters in the Jane Austen novel *Northanger Abbey* refers to him. Professor Punter, a Gothic scholar, had to know more about who this writer was. So off I went on his trail ...



"It turns out that Lathom was born in 1774 into an upper-class Norwich family, and found early fame as a novelist and playwright, before in 1810 being mysteriously banished from his home town and written out of his family's will. His children later reverted to their mother's maiden name.

"He seems to have travelled extensively around Europe and the United States thereafter, before finally settling in Inverurie, of all places, late in his life, where it is known that he dressed as a dandy, enjoyed a drink, told incredible stories, frequently burst into song, started a theatre company, and was abducted by a local magistrate in some dispute over rent which resulted in Lathom fleeing by horse to the Rennie family farm in Fyvie, where he resided for the rest of his life. After his death in 1832 he was buried in the Rennies' plot in Fyvie churchyard, under the name 'James Francis'.

"What a story! What a mystery! And barely anyone in Inverurie knows the first thing about this fascinating man who once lived in their own place. We had our play. We had our lead character. All we needed to do after that was speculate wildly. This play is the result of that speculation!"

I first saw Alan perform last summer in one of his own plays, and went on to read some of his novels. Having greatly enjoyed his writing, I thought he would make a very good fit as a writer for Inverurie and our cast. So, I was thrilled when he agreed to the commission and we were fortunate to be granted funding from Aberdeenshire Council towards the creation of a new piece for the North East of Scotland.

With lyrics and music by Ashley Forbes, established as a superb contributor in the past, this project was going to be special.

To work directly with a writer of Alan Bissett's calibre and be part of the process as well as the final outcome is a very special experience. Through work-shopping and improvisation sessions the cast have had input, gaining a real insight into how a professional writer works, as he pulls many strands together successfully, from their own ideas, to the story of Francis Lathom and making this a piece in which they are all fully engaged. I'm very proud that we've been able to provide this opportunity and it should be seen as a real coup for the area, especially as it is so specific to our own place. It is strange that a piece set in 1820 has turned out to be one of the most contemporary pieces we've delivered.

We are all hopeful too that this will raise interest in a part of our local history which has been almost forgotten. To quote the *Press and Journal* from 1888: "Francis is buried in the Churchyard of Fyvie, in the grave next to his friends, the Rennies. That no monument is erected over the grave of such a personage is rather curious."

Rhona Mitchell, Director, MSD Productions

JUNE PROVES ABERDEENSHIRE REALLY DOES HAVE TALENT

"Local hero" June Cranna has been named the winner of Aberdeenshire's Got Talent.

June has been treading the boards as part of Huntly-based Aurora Productions since its formation in 2011, but in October she put herself in the spotlight of the Aberdeen stage when she entered Aberdeenshire's Got Talent.

The competition was arranged in aid of the STV Children's Appeal, and invited staff from the local authority to showcase their hidden talents. It took place at Aberdeen Arts Centre, where acts ranging from dancers to musicians, and comedians to singers braved the stage to be judged by a panel that included local radio DJ Martin Smith and children's entertainer Lisa Lollipop.

June, who is used to sharing the stage with a cast – most recently playing Motormouth Maybelle in *Hairspray* – or surrounded by the Aurora Choir, stepped into the spotlight alone to perform "And I Am Telling You I'm Not Going" from the musical *Dreamgirls*.

June said: "*Aurora is such a big part of all our lives in Huntly. It's like being part of one huge family. They are supportive, inclusive, and great fun to be part of. It offers such an outlet for creativity, allows members to explore their talents, and enables them to meet new friends.*"

"Taking part in Aberdeenshire's Got talent was one of the most nerve wracking and exciting experiences that I have ever had. Having taken part in many of Aurora's productions over the past 9 years, it was very daunting appearing without all the Aurora team on stage with me. However, that said, the Aurora family were there in abundance to support me on the night."

June was supported on the night by members of Aurora's production company and choir, its directors Hugh Johnstone and Hannah McGinlay, and – of course – family and friends. But her supporters weren't the only ones who gave a standing ovation after she had finished singing, with even the judging panel getting to their feet.

It was Hannah who convinced June to sing a so-called "big song" as part of the competition. This was something June was thankful for when – despite stiff competition – she was announced as the winner.

June can be seen next in the Aurora pantomime, *Cinderella*, from 3-7 December at the Stewarts Hall, Huntly.



AOC Productions: Shrek The Musical

Director: Judith Stephen; Musical Director: Craig McDermott; Choreographer: Jenny Anderson

It was a privilege and a delight to attend the opening night of the Scottish Premiere of this show, such was the professionalism shown in all aspects of the production. From the simple set to beautifully bright costumes to the marvellous cast of principals and chorus everything was perfect. Scott Jamieson was outstanding as the loveable green Ogre of the title with excellent stage presence, comic timing and strong singing voice. Donkey – played by the hilarious Deborah Archibald-Tough – was a joy to watch, stealing every scene she was in. Morag Nicol as Princess Fiona brought out the feistiness and the sadness in the character with equal ease. Her beautiful soprano voice was shown at its best in the trio “I Know It’s Today” with her younger selves (played by Mischa Forbes and Grace Gauld) and in her solo “This Is How A Dream Comes True”. Callum Bell as the diminutive but egotistical Lord Farquaad gave a bravura performance – from Tiller Girl-esque dance with the chorus (I hope he had good thick kneepads) to his entrance and exit on a large white horse! The huge puppet Dragon was impressively voiced by Amanda Massie in the “Forever” number with the chorus of Knights. The large ensemble sang and danced well whether as villagers, knights or fairy tale characters. After a rousing finale of “I’m A Believer” the cast received a richly deserved standing ovation! Congratulations on another superb production.

Broch Drama Group: The Wizard of Oz

Director: Claire Ross; Musical Director: Patricia Marr; Choreographers: Louise Hay, Sophie Kuberek

In the 80 years since the film of *The Wizard of Oz* was made, it and the stage musical version have delighted audiences of all ages and this production was no exception. With a simple, colourful and well lit set and bright costuming the production was a delight to the eye. The mainly youthful chorus of Munchkins (the youngest being only 5 years old!) and Emerald City residents sang and moved well. The four main characters of Dorothy, Scarecrow, Tinman and Lion were perfectly cast and worked well together. Young Erin Buchan was a delightful Dorothy with a beautiful singing voice shown to its best in her rendition of “Over The Rainbow” in the opening scene – and excellent stage presence. Sabastian Rennie as the tumbling, stumbling Scarecrow had everyone on his side from his first appearance in search for a brain – again with a good stage presence and excellent comic/tragic delivery. David Rennie as Tinman had a good strong voice and delivered his “If I Only Had A Heart” with lots of pathos. Gordon Pittendrigh’s Lion had the audience in stitches with his cowardly antics and facial expressions from the moment he walked on stage. His rendition of “King of the Forest” was a hoot! Roxi Wilton as the good witch Glinda was a picture in pink chiffon and sparkles – with a beautiful voice to match – every time she came to the aid of our four travellers. Jennifer Innes as the Wicked Witch was the personification of evil with a vicious cackle and was fully deserving of the booing that greeted her at the walk down! Strong support was given by Georgia Buchan (Aunt Em), Jaimee Bain (Uncle Henry), Rebecca McKinnon (Miss Gultch), Nicola Henderson (The Wizard), Holly Reid (Professor Marvel), Jack Ritchie (Hickory), Shaun Sim (Hunk) and Scott Murray (Zeke/ Emerald City Guard). Congratulations to everyone involved for a most entertaining evening.

The Florians: Blithe Spirit

Director: Claire Cameron

Continuing with the theme of presenting plays from the 1940s in this their 75th Anniversary year, Claire Cameron’s production of Noel Coward’s comedy *Blithe Spirit* was a delight to both the eyes and the ears. On a beautiful 1930s country house drawing room set, designed and built by company stalwart Allen Perrin and dressed by Maralyn Allan, the cast of seven experienced actors delivered Coward’s witty dialogue with panache. Trevor Nicol as Charles Condomine was the epitome of a successful writer of the period whether in dinner suit mixing Dry Martinis or in country tweeds eating a hearty breakfast. He managed to make the difficult task of speaking to two wives – one earthly and one ethereal – look perfectly normal! Caroline MacPherson as his earthly wife Ruth gave an excellent portrayal of a woman getting more and more frustrated and angry with her husband’s interaction with his – to her unseen – deceased first wife. It is an extremely good actress who can manage to speak to an empty space whilst reacting to a character who is actually on stage with her without once looking at the other actor – this Caroline managed without once defaulting. Aileen Hendry’s portrayal of the ghost of Charles’s first wife Elvira – both mischievous and catty – was also outstanding and had the audience in stitches. Christine Fletcher as the mystic Madame Arcati played the part with, for me, just the right amount of flamboyance. Strong support was given by Ian Shearer and Fiona Chapman as the Condomines’ friends Dr and Mrs Bradman. Ann Bamborough in the small but integral role of Edith the maid made the most of the humour in the part. Congratulations to all involved for another wonderful production.

Giz Giz: The Sound of Music

Director: Abigail Westwood Patterson; Musical Director: Alisdair Sneden; Choreographer: Hayley Brown

It was a delight to see this group of 33 young people, aged from 8-18, perform this perennial favourite to such an enthusiastic and appreciative audience. Emily Bannerman was delightful as Maria with a beautiful singing voice and

good stage presence. Dylan Shearer as Georg Von Trapp gave a very strong performance as the outwardly stern but deeply unhappy Captain. I particularly liked the touching duet "An Ordinary Couple" between him and Maria when they finally admit their love for each other. Rebecca West as the Mother Abbess was another strong character with a soaring soprano voice shown to its best in "Climb Every Mountain". Molly Robertson as Baroness Elsa Schrader looked every inch the strong, sophisticated aristocrat using her feminine ways to get what she desired. I loved her interactions with Max Detweiler, played by Logan McKerron, which added some comedy, especially in the songs "How Will Love Survive" and "No Way To Stop It". The Von Trapp children – Liesl (Emmah Chibesakunda), Friedrich (Callum Birrell), Louisa (Erin Mehigan), Kurt (Corey Adam), Brigitta (Lilly Bannerman), Marta (Skye Miller) and last but not least Gretl (Libby Adam) – made a truly convincing family group with excellent singing and movement in the "Do-Re-Mi" and "So Long, Farewell" numbers. I also liked them in "The Lonely Goatherd", when they acted as puppeteers to the song's puppet characters played by members of the chorus, which brought much laughter from the audience. Emmah Chibesakunda (Liesl) had a beautiful voice shown to its best in the "Sixteen Going on Seventeen" duet with Rolf (Aiden Combe). Strong support was given by Erin Tierney (housekeeper Frau Schmidt), Aria Kirkton (butler Franz), and Millie McMillan (Herr Zeller). There is not much for the chorus to do in this show but when they did appear the chorus of Nuns/Townpeople sang and moved well. The ten-piece orchestra, under the baton of Alisdair Sneden, played well and were sympathetic to the company, never overpowering them. The set, with its impressive central staircase, worked well with the changes of scene being swift. The costuming was always appropriate to characters and the era. Well done, Giz Giz, for a most enjoyable evening.

MSD Productions: Mr Francis & the Village of Secrets

Director & Choreographer: Rhona Mithchell; Musical Director: Ashley Forbes

It was with eager anticipation that I looked forward to seeing this play after learning earlier in the year the group were commissioning a piece with a local flavour. Playwright Alan Bissett was approached and came up with the idea of basing the play on the later life of the Gothic novelist and playwright Francis Lathom who, after being banished by his family from his hometown of Norwich for homosexual indiscretions in 1810, finally found himself in 1825 in the small village of Inverurie in rural Aberdeenshire, adopting the name James Francis. Through the script, and original music and lyrics by resident Musical Director Ashley Forbes, the hilarious and sometimes tragic play speculates about Lathom's past while turning a satirical eye to the religious hypocrisies of 19th century Scotland. Jordan Abberley-Nicoll as the eponymous Francis Lathom gave a tour de force performance to bring out equally the character's joie de vivre when interacting with the villagers in the tavern (and when directing them in a performance of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*!) and his inherent sadness at the forced separation from his children and wife. Imogen Watt and Euan Banks as Mary and Alexander Rennie, the farming couple who along with their three children take Lathom into their home, were excellent – Mary strong and outspoken and Alexander timid until he eventually plucks up courage to point out to the local minister and the rest of the villagers that they all hold secrets – avarice, drunkenness, loose morals etc – and shouldn't pass judgement on Lathom. Mikey Nicoll and Eleanor Harper, the black-clad Reverend and Mrs Beagle, also gave strong performances as the bigoted cleric and his wife with Mikey being particularly strong in the scene where he uses carefully selected passages from Scripture to prove Lathom guilty of an abominable sin. Josh Simpson also gave a strong performance as manipulative local magistrate Stuart McLeod, who when his efforts to bed Lathom were unsuccessful, turned against Lathom and exposed him with the aid of Lathom's son Henry (Scott Sambrook). Much of the laughter in the piece was engendered by the town gossips – Minnie the Milkmaid (Alex Kelman), Sally the Servant Girl (Imogen Vickers), Fiona the Fishwife (Arwen Scott) – and the Editor (Ruby Harrison) and Assistant Editor (Molly Robertson) of the local paper. The simple monochrome set was very effective allowing the action to flow smoothly from village square to tavern to farm to church. The costumes were perfect for the period and appropriate to each character. The singing and movement of the company were excellent especially in the opening and closing numbers "Simple Fowl" and "Roar of the Greasepaint". Congratulations to everyone for a superb – and thought provoking – performance.

GETTING IN TOUCH

The National Operatic and Dramatic Association, 15 The Metro Centre, Peterborough PE2 7UH.

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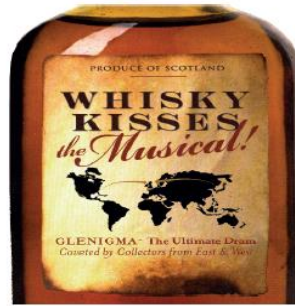
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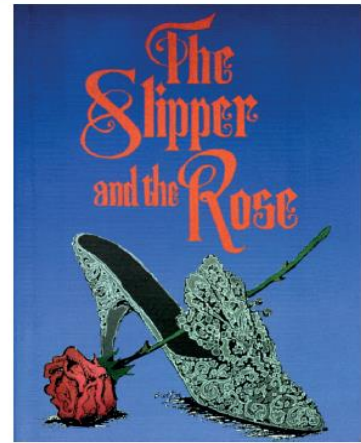
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Hoovering on The Edge a full length drama by Hilary Spiers

(1m, 7f) Discover the unlikely friendships that develop between seven very different women, tutored by one hapless male, on a summer writing holiday. Sun, sangria and story-telling, what could possibly go wrong! Meet Moira the tactless hypochondriac, Clare the dippy yoga teacher, and feisty Rita, to name but a few, as the women embark on a voyage of discovery about themselves, their hopes and their dreams... and uncover some surprising home truths.



Past Forward a full length drama by Carolyn Pertwee

(2m, 2f) Can the past ever let us go? Liz and Tom Fielding are poised to change their present life by selling up and moving to the coast for a brave new future, little knowing that a chance meeting with Sam Rutland, a long lost friend from their youthful past, will challenge the very foundations of their lives. What happened all those years ago when Sam shared their flat in those heady carefree days? Why is Liz so desperate to keep Sam and their daughter apart, and then so anxious when they not only meet at the family home, but become lovers?

Stage scripts

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0345 686 0611

Arbroath Musical Society: Chitty Chitty Bang Bang

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

This well-known musical about the famous flying car is pure magic and the songs and story all make for a great evening's entertainment. But the show's success depends on two great juvenile leads for the roles of Jeremy and Jemima Potts, and this production had a fantastic young duo! Charlie Baird and Nieve Knox, as the children, were totally confident of their script, songs, and dance moves and acted throughout with ease and total expertise, showing no stage nerves at all. So, take a bow, young ones! As the children's father, Scott McRuvie was perfectly splendid as Caractacus Potts, the eccentric inventor, and his cheery, smiling personality shone throughout in his heart-warming performance. It was a delight to listen to his tender, and splendid, "Hushabye Mountain" song, which came over extremely well. Bringing joy, charm, charisma, kindness, and sophistication to her character, Kirsty McDonald was a truly Truly Scrumptious and her clear singing voice was a joy and a delight to listen to. When she became the toyshop "doll", her robotic dance actions were absolutely spot on! Experienced Brian Boardman made a great impression as the Potts' family's equally peculiar, "potty" grandfather and dithering about in a grand manner. As Baron and Baroness Bomburst of Vulgaria, Blair Ruxton and Marion Allan brought their evil, and funny, personalities to the stage in an outrageous style, and over-acted with great aplomb, thoroughly enjoying themselves as they did so! After their singing of "The Bombie Samba", I hope the Baroness's voice will last out the week! They were aided and abetted in their funny nastiness by two brilliant pantomimic character Vulgarian spies, Boris and Goran (Ruaridh Matheson and Ryan Wink), who turned up throughout the show in various outrageous costumes and acted themselves silly to great effect. The wicked, slimy, sneaking, Child Catcher, with his chilling cry of "Children!" came in a scary performance from Andrew Lodge, whilst his alter ego, the kindly Toymaker (David Mitchell) brought calmness to the story. And we can't forget the talented, imprisoned youngsters in the sewers, who brought their youthfulness to the stage. The show's musical numbers were nicely staged – there was a frenetic "Me Ol' Bamboo" number and "The Bombie Samba" was a riot of colour! But, the real star of the show is Chitty, the car – and the moment it "flies" in the Act I Finale is a defining moment in the show, bringing much visual joy to all in the audience. So, to my NODA colleague, Gordon Smith, sunning himself in foreign climes, you missed a tremendous treat!

Roger D. Buist

Carnoustie Musical Society: Comrie Cabaret 10Directors: Rodger Brunton, Jane Fenton; Musical Director: Colin Grant;
Choreographers: Gemma Cox, Jane Fenton, Kerry Mitchell, Teagan Mitchell, Claire Smith

Once again, I found myself sitting in the audience for this always-entertaining 10th fund-raising show (hence the title). (NODA Rep Gordon Smith sunning himself on holiday). As before, I am totally amazed at how this production becomes a real live show and staged in what is, basically, an oddly-shaped rehearsal hall, with an equally odd-shaped stage! But Carnoustie do make a success of it all and this present show was no exception. From the off, just as the show started, a group of "elderly" women "invaded" the audience, insisting on joining soloist Grant Roach on stage to perform ... and they did, in a wild and frenzied song and dance routine! Calmness then took over as Jo Fitzgerald sang and invited all to *Cabaret*. What followed was a varied musical selection of well-known songs in music and dance from *Beautiful – Carole King*; *Queen Medley*; a sensual *All That Jazz* routine; then we were all nicely stunned by *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* selection, where Society President Kevin Smith revealed himself as a *Sweet Transvestite* wearing the appropriate sexy gear (brave man!). There were musical selections acknowledging the last ten years of this fund-raising concert, when the assembled company lustily sang their hearts out in a fine melodic style. Comedy was also in the mix and Elaine Scougal gave us a comical rendition of how she felt being "The Girl In 14G" – a very demanding vocal song this! Then the society's youth (four young people) enthusiastically performed their part in the evening's entertainment recalling their school days. But, always the highlight of this visit, for me, is the totally unscripted "Raffle Waffle", courtesy of society member, Rodger Brunton, who announces a description of each raffle prize by introducing, in hilarious "off the cuff" comedy remarks, information about the winning prize, which he then hands over to an unsuspecting member of the audience. Pure, funny comedy! Finally, *Comrie Concert 10*, for entertainment, you get 10/10!

Roger D. Buist

Rising Youngstars: Back to the 80s

Director: Fiona Retalic; Assistant Director: Janet Irving; Musical Director: Stewart Rooney

Back to the 80s tells the story of the senior class of William Ocean High School, as remembered through the eyes of now thirty-something Corey Palmer (confidently played and sung by Scott McIntosh who returned to the company for this production). Seventeen-year-old Corey (another well acted character by Frank Durston) is madly in love with his next-door neighbour Tiffany Houston, one of the coolest girls in the school. Tiffany is brilliantly portrayed by Catie Mathieson with a delightful voice and stage presence. Her duet with Eileen (another top performer, Alix Burness), "Lost in Your Eyes," was one of the highlights of the show. However, Tiffany is too busy mooning over Michael Feldman

DISTRICT No 10: Angus & Kincardine

(Angus Crompton), the hottest guy around. Michael and his friends are athletic and good looking – the kind of guy Corey and his best friends dream of being. Although not the coolest guys in school, they are one up on Feargal McFerrin III, (excellently and comically played by Kearan Jones) whose best friend is his computer. ‘Adults’ in the piece were Andrew Ford as Mr Stevie Cocker and Stefi Curson as Ms Brannigan, another well-portrayed duo. Add to all those a very well schooled and tuneful team of supporting characters and ensemble and a large selection of catchy numbers accompanied by a well-controlled quartet of musicians and you had a great evening of musical and dramatic entertainment. It was difficult to remind yourself that you were watching a talented group of youngsters ranging from age four to eighteen years. Well done Rising Young Stars!

Ron Stewart

DISTRICT No 11: South West Scotland

Guild of Players Dumfries: Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat

Director: Amy McCreadie; Musical Director: Christopher Watt; Choreographers: Amy McCreadie, Nadine MacDonald

This production performed by The Junior Guild of Players was in one word: “Excellent”. There were a number of firsts: Amy McCreadie's first production as Director and Christopher Watt, first acting as MD to a cast involving only young people. Both of them also work with a local adult company as Choreographer and MD and I think they brought that experience to this production. It was simply super. From the first note to the final curtain there was a sheer delight of talent on stage. The whole cast were enthusiastic and it showed that they were all enjoying themselves. The set was simple yet effective with no big scene changes but simple add ons etc made such a difference. I especially liked the quirky bits of acting from using a selfie stick to take a group photo to Potiphar standing on his guards’ knees to look into Joseph’s face. I really shouldn’t single out any one individual from the cast as they were all very good in what they did as individuals and chorus. However, with regard to the principals, I was very impressed by the duet of Narrators sung by Anna Wilson and Niamh Jackson. Their interaction with each other and their musicality were excellent from the opening right through the show to the big finale. They hold the show together and keep the audience aware of what is happening throughout. They did this with ease and elegance. Next on stage was Jacob and his family and the chorus work here was harmonic and we could hear every word. It was nice to see this group not only acting as a chorus but also doing their own thing in these scenes so there was stuff going on all the time. Their songs (“Jacob and Sons”, “Joseph’s Dream”, “Poor Poor Joseph”), were super and I especially liked their rendition of “One More Angel in Heaven” when they tell their father about Josephs ‘death’. After Joseph gets sold into slavery, he comes to the attention of Potiphar who was superbly played by Joe Clark. He has a confidence about him that belies his years and he has talent as well. Nadine McDonald played Potiphar's wife and was suitable seductive for this part, so that Joseph ends up behind bars. Nadine was a co-choreographer for this show and along with Amy their moves for individuals and for the ensemble were simple but effective. Carry on the good work. In jail with Joseph was Morgyn Keeton as the Butler and Adam Black as the Baker. These roles are pivotal for the remainder of the show and I liked the way they interacted with Joseph to have their dreams interpreted. Joseph eventually comes to the attention of the Pharaoh who is having nightmares and doesn’t know what they mean. Ruairi McCormack who played this part was very believable as “The King” and his interpretation was as good as I have seen before. He sang his very difficult music with ease and got a well deserved appreciation from the audience. Joseph tells him what his dreams mean and it all comes true so Joseph is raised to the nobility. Famine sets in and the brothers come to Egypt to beg for food and Joseph gets his own back on his brothers and relents to reveal who he really is and they all live happily ever after. You might think I have mentioned Joseph a few times but not about his performance. That is because I am speechless. Callen Love was nothing short of spectacular in his portrayal of Joseph. His acting and singing were faultless. Not only does he have stage presence but a great voice too. The experience he is going to gain in Edinburgh where he has moved to university to study musical theatre will only enhance his already raft of talent. This was a performance that will long stay in my memory for the enthusiasm and all I can say is “Well done”.

The Fullarton (Castle Douglas) Ltd: Nuncrackers - The Nonsense Christmas Musical

Director: Jacqueline Feenan; Musical Director: Isobel Riddick; Choreographer: Elizabeth Smith

The Fullarton Theatre Company has over the last few years performed the series of the *Nonsense* musicals. This year's offering is the *Nuncrackers Christmas Musical*. I have seen most of the series and feel that the original was and still is the best of them. This production had a quasi pantomime feel to it rather than a straight musical comedy. The story line is the nuns are recording and broadcasting a Christmas special to help raise funds for the Mount St Helens convent and school. In saying that, this excellent production was very well performed by everyone on stage. All members of the cast had their own personae which all complemented each other so that we had a feast of humour and a bit of pathos thrown in. Reverend Mother, Sister Mary Regina, was superbly played by Kay Potts. She is a consummate actress who owns the stage when she is on, even to the extent when she dragged on the prompt at one time when words went a bit array. Her comic timing is superb. Her second in command Sister Hubert (Liz Black) was also excellent, with a more dry sense of humour for this part she complemented Reverend Mother wonderfully. Following on from her we had Sister Robert

Anne who was played by Ann Brown. She had a super part to play and as with all the other characters her performance was very good. She has a lovely voice and her singing along with everyone else was excellent. However, her portrayal of the streetwise New Yorker didn't quite resonate with me; she was too nice! I liked Sister Amnesia, the one-time country star, who was excellently played by Sarah McKnight. She has a bubbly personality which came over the first time she steps on stage and her role in keeping the "chorus" in order was well done too. She has the ability to have a conversation with the audience that was seamless and appeared to be very ad lib. Colin Wilson, who is also a good actor and singer, played the part of Father Virgil. Drafted in to this Christmas extravaganza because of his experience in radio recording he was there to keep the nuns right. The quirky clever chorus was very good. Whilst small in numbers (Gavin Millar, Eden Brown, Rebecca Potts), and Aidan Whan as Stage Manager all complemented the main characters, and they sang their songs very well. The harmonies were very good and I liked the choreography: it was simple yet effective. The pace of this musical was good with slick scene changes and the lighting and sound was very well done. I would like to thank everyone at The Fullarton from the front of house team for their welcome through the theatre to the back stage staff with the performers in the middle for making my night so very good. Well done and I look forward to seeing your next production.

FORTHCOMING PRODUCTIONS: December 2019 and beyond

Cinderella

Monifieth Amateur Dramatics
Monifeith Theatre

Thursday 28 November to Sunday 1 December 2019

Alice in Pantoland

Johnstone Phoenix Theatre Group
Johnstone Town Hall

Saturday 30 November to Saturday 7 December 2019 (Matinee on Saturdays)

Dick Whittington

Guild of Players Dumfries
Theatre Royal, Dumfries

Saturday 30 November to Saturday 14 December 2019

(Matinees on Saturday 30 November, Sunday 1 December & Saturday 7 December)

Sleeping Beauty

Runway Theatre Company
Eastwood Park Theatre, Giffnock, Glasgow

Monday 2 to Saturday 7 December 2019 (Matinees on Thursday & Saturday)

Cinderella

Aurora Productions
Stewarts Hall, Huntly

Tuesday 3 to Saturday 7 December 2019 (Matinees on Friday & Saturday)

Pantostein

Forth Dimension Musical Productions
South Queensferry Scout Hall

Tuesday 3 to Saturday 7 December 2019 (Matinee on Saturday)

Jack and his Amazing Beanstalk

Culter Theatre Club
Culter Village Hall, Peterculter

Wednesday 4 to Saturday 7 December 2019 (Matinee on Saturday)

Cinderella

Monifieth Amateur Dramatics
Monifeith Theatre

Thursday 5 to Sunday 8 December 2019

Jack and the Beanstalk

Downfield Musical Society
Whitehall Theatre, Dundee

Friday 13 to Friday 20 December 2019 (Matinees on Saturday & Sunday)

It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year

Runway Theatre Company
Clincarthill Parish Church, Glasgow
Friday 20 December 2019

Kipps, The New Half a Sixpence

Cupar Amateur Musical Society
Corn Exchange, Cupar
Tuesday 4 to Saturday 8 February 2020

The Wiz

Big Bad Wolf Children's Theatre Company
Falkirk Town Hall
Tuesday 4 to Saturday 8 February 2020 (Matinee on Saturday)

The Hollow

Threepenny Theatricals
Church Hill Theatre, Edinburgh
Thursday 6 to Saturday 8 February 2020 (Matinee on Saturday)

Sister Act

Minerva Youth Theatre
Eastwood Park Theatre, Giffnock, Glasgow
Tuesday 11 to Saturday 15 February 2020 (Matinee on Saturday)

Last of the Red Hot Lovers

Guild of Players Dumfries
Theatre Royal, Dumfries
Wednesday 12 to Saturday 15 February 2020

Shrek – The Musical

Kirkcaldy Youth Music Theatre
Adam Smith Theatre, Kirkcaldy
Thursday 20 to Saturday 22 February 2020 (Matinee on Saturday)

Shrek – The Musical

Ayr Amateur Opera Company
Gaiety Theatre, Ayr
Monday 24 to Saturday 29 February 2020 (Matinee on Saturday)

Lucky Stiff

Brechin Amateur Operatic Society
Brechin City Hall
Wednesday 4 to Saturday 7 March 2020

The Gondoliers

Kirkcaldy Gilbert & Sullivan Society
Adam Smith Theatre, Kirkcaldy
Thursday 5 to Saturday 7 March 2020 (Matinee on Saturday)

Shrek – The Musical

Paisley Musical & Operatic Society
Theatre Royal, Glasgow
Tuesday 10 to Saturday 14 March 2020 (Matinee on Saturday)

9 to 5 – The Musical

Kilmarnock Amateur Operatic Society
Palace Theatre, Kilmarnock
Tuesday 10 to Saturday 14 March 2020 (Matinee on Saturday)

The Sound of Music

Callander Amateur Operatic Society
McLaren High School, Callander
Wednesday 18 to Saturday 21 March 2020

The Producers

Markinch Amateur Operatic Society
Markinch Town Hall
Tuesday 24 to Saturday 28 March 2020

Our House

Harlequin Eastwood Theatre For Youth
Eastwood Park Theatre, Giffnock, Glasgow
Wednesday 25 to Saturday 28 March 2020 (Matinee on Saturday)

Shrek – The Musical

Bohemians Lyric Opera Company
King's Theatre, Edinburgh
Wednesday 25 to Saturday 28 March 2020 (Matinee on Saturday)

Blithe Spirit

Guild of Players Dumfries
Theatre Royal, Dumfries
Wednesday 1 Saturday 4 April 2020

Bugsy Malone

Linlithgow Amateur Musical Productions
Linlithgow Academy
Monday 6 to Saturday 11 April 2020

Ghost

Johnstone Phoenix Theatre Group
Johnstone Town Hall
Wednesday 29 April to Saturday 2 May 2020 (Matinee on Saturday)

The Drowsy Chaperone

Larbert Amateur Operatic Society
Dobbie Hall, Larbert
Tuesday 5 to Saturday 9 May 2020

Shrek – The Musical

Downfield Musical Society
Whitehall Theatre, Dundee
Tuesday 5 to Saturday 9 May 2020

Saturday Night Fever

Kelty Musical Association
Carnegie Hall, Dunfermline
Wednesday 6 to Saturday 9 May 2020 (Matinee on Saturday)

Chess – The Musical

Dumfries Musical Theatre Company
Theatre Royal, Dumfries
Saturday 9 to Saturday 16 May 2020 ((Matinee on Sunday)

Big Fish

Runway Theatre Company
Eastwood Park Theatre, Giffnock, Glasgow
Wednesday 13 to Saturday 16 May 2020 (Matinee on Saturday)

Legally Blonde

The Lyric Club
King's Theatre, Glasgow
Tuesday 19 to Saturday 23 May 2020 (Matinees on Friday & Saturday)

West Side Story

The Pantheon Club
Theatre Royal, Glasgow
Tuesday 26 to Saturday 30 May 2020

50th Anniversary Concert

Minerva Youth Theatre
Eastwood Park Theatre, Giffnock, Glasgow
Thursday 17 to Saturday 19 September 2020 (Matinee on Saturday)

Joseph and the Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat

Theatre Guild Glasgow
Eastwood Park Theatre, Giffnock, Glasgow
Monday 5 to Saturday 10 October 2020 (Matinee on Saturday)

9 to 5

Hamilton Operatic & Dramatic Club
Motherwell Concert Hall
Tuesday 6 to Saturday 10 October 2020

Not known

The Minerva Club
Eastwood Park Theatre, Giffnock, Glasgow
Tuesday 3 to Saturday 7 November 2020 (Matinee on Saturday)

The Baker's Wife

Dumfries Musical Theatre Company
Brigend Theatre, Dumfries
Saturday 21 to Saturday 28 November 2020 (Matinee on Sunday)

Legal Advice

NODA provides extensive advice on a wide range of contractual issues and guidance on subjects that would benefit from the advice of a qualified solicitor who understands the specific requirements of amateur theatre.

Email info@noda.org.uk with a clear description of the advice required.

NODASafe

NODASafe is run by people who understand theatre and have personal activity in the community theatre environment, so we know what pressures and challenges face NODA societies on a show-to-show basis. Support includes - telephone and email support with production safety queries, general advice on all health and safety queries, dealing with serious accidents, generic risk assessments and coming soon will be online training.