



CURTAIN UP

the newsletter for

noda London

Be inspired by amateur theatre

What's in this issue

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From the editor

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In Memoriam



Spring 2021 issue - end of lockdown in sight?



From the Councillor

Never has technology become more important than it has during this pandemic. It has been wonderful to see the creativity of the London region groups and how they have embraced the web based platforms to keep their groups active and to share with so many of us the vibrant performances and activities that have been crafted – congratulations to you all for some stunning performances.

Owing to the restrictions on activities, our Regional AGM this year will be a strictly business meeting – a Webinar to be held on the 20th June 2021. Full details will be posted on the NODA London webpage and also on the NODA London Facebook page.

Little by little the restrictions are being lifted and by the summer we should be able to enjoy live theatre once again. Certainly this is what our Patron Andrew Lloyd Webber intends with the opening of his theatres in July – music to our ears !



From the Editor

I can't tell you how good it is to be back helping within the Region, taking on the role of Editor, for both NODA Today (the national magazine) and Curtain Up! (our regional newsletter). A learning curve on both counts believe me!!!

I have followed the fortunes of the NODA London groups with interest and know from what you have said how hard it has been during this pandemic lockdown to stay connected to each other. As you will see from the articles and District Reports every group has been doing something to keep the interest going – some more than others

depending on what works for them.

Magazines, in whatever shape or size, can only exist with input from yourselves, the readers, and this time around in addition to the usual newsy articles we are making a few tweaks to our regional format. We are hoping to include in each issue a report from each of the fifteen Districts which make NODA London an exciting region. It has not been possible to include every District this time around due to various circumstances of the Regional Representatives involved, but we have made a start!

We will also be continuing with our What's On section and we have two inclusions this time – possibly due to the uncertainty about when productions can begin but.....you will see the template below for your use. You can submit as many productions as you choose as far ahead as you wish to go and when they have been performed they will be taken out of the calendar...what could be easier than that???

We would also like to feature a 'letters page' where you can ask questions or express views. If answers to questions need immediate attention we can answer those before the next issue, but also publish the answers if it is felt they are of interest to other groups. I know you will all be busy in the near future planning your programmes but do please take time to share with us all your news and views. jacquie.stedman@noda.org.uk will find me or if you have a query about an article and need an immediate response try 07941 854164.....I look forward to hearing from you.....this is, after all, your production!!!

Why not share your next production(s)

TEMPLATE FOR WHAT'S ON SECTION

NODA London District (your District number)

NAME OF PRODUCTION (Arial, 11 font, Bold, Caps)

Date (Arial, 10 font)

Name of Society (Arial, 10 font)

Venue (Arial, 10 font)

Box Office number (Arial, 10 font)

Website (Arial, 10 font)

EXAMPLE

SOUND OF MUSIC

25-29 September 2012

Kettering & District Theatrical Society

The Lighthouse Theatre, Kettering

01536 414141

www.kitts.co.uk

Please put these in date order. You can submit as many as you like and they will be removed when the production has taken place. Thank you – Ed.

Reports from your Regional Representative

District 1 Sylvia Finnimore

Unsurprisingly, Covid has frustrated the societies in this District. All groups, however, remain hopeful for a brighter future.

Quay Players and **Centre Stage** have little to report, although **Centre Stage** still has *Godspell* on postponement.



Opera Integra are hoping to present *Cavalleria Rusticana* in Spring 2021. 2021 is their 50th anniversary. They are managing to rehearse on zoom.



Southside Players have cast *The God Of Carnage* and hopefully this will go ahead on the 9th & 10th July as part of the Wandsworth Arts Fringe Festival.



Through Facebook, **New Stagers** invited members to submit their favourite NS show for National Theatre Day. They also published a poem written by one of their members.



Geoids are still hoping to go ahead with *Sunday In The Park* postponed from September 2020, but in the meantime have offered alternative outlets for Geoids talents. They kicked off in January with New Year drinks on line and by February had organised an ambitious tap dancing venture: a virtual rendition of the 42nd Street opening number, last performed by themselves in 2015. Steps to be taught online and performers to record themselves, recordings to be merged together to form a "magical 42nd Street montage".



For **Sedos** members, mainly interested in straight plays, online readings have been on offer, providing a welcome opportunity for actors to flex their acting muscle. These have included a variety of genres, including Melodrama and Restoration Comedy, and are set to continue with *Great Catherine* which was seen via Zoom on April 15th.

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Musical Sedos members have been brilliantly catered for by a very elegant masked singer competition and details can be found on Facebook as well as their website. The first competition was a really excellent show and genuinely entertaining for the viewer as well as being a novel and stimulating experience for the participants.

The whole show was extremely slick and sophisticated with four superb judges guiding us through. A second competition is currently in progress after an enthusiastic response to the first competition.

Plans are afoot to go ahead with a November musical.

District 3 – Des Wilby

District 3 is fortunate to have a strong membership and I have greatly enjoyed reviewing the wide variety of productions since my involvement with NODA. With the prospect of another busy year it was hugely disappointing to see all productions cancelled from March 2020 onwards.

With Covid restrictions now easing, many societies are considering plans regarding future performances. Several have announced productions towards the end of 2021 and it is terrific to see audition details already being advertised. Of particular note is one society that has already cast a number of one-act productions in July. Following this, they aim to return with a full-scale production in November. Other societies have sadly made the decision to wait until 2022 to restart their activities in any format.

Regardless of their individual schedules, societies have generally remained active over the past year with regular Zoom quizzes, readings, plays and sing-a-longs being of particular note. The overwhelming feeling for all those who love to 'tread the boards' has been one of sadness but today there is a noticeable sense of anticipation at the prospect of returning to the stage once more.

I trust enthusiastic audiences will support all societies on their return and make these productions both special occasions and box-office successes. I look forward to once again seeing all District 3 societies onstage in the not-so-distant future.

District 4 – Robin Kelly

Groups have made sterling efforts to maintain communication with members and social media has seen significantly increased usage. When possible, groups organised socially distanced picnics and gatherings. Zoom has continued to facilitate a huge number of activities and Musical Theatre quizzes and virtual concerts and open mics have been favourites, but other imaginative activities have been produced. Activities at Bromley Players included a Drag Bingo Night, a Kids Musical Theatre Live Class and a lip sync /dance along/Virtual Zoom Party.

The absence of income continues to be a concern, although NODA insurance came through for many groups for cancelled productions. Bob Hope Theatre secured funding from the Culture Recovery Fund and Dartford Operatic obtained a grant from Dartford Council as a result of charitable status.

It does of course remain a difficult time and our heartfelt sympathy goes to all those affected by the pandemic and in particular to those societies who have lost members as a result of Covid 19

District 6

Although most groups have been active via Zoom there has been the general disappointment of lack of connecting with members combined with a lack of rehearsals. That, thankfully, now looks as though it is coming to an end so that productions can be planned and members can, once again, meet up.

LADS (Loughton ADS) has been holding fortnightly Zoom sessions – ‘LADS Talking’ when they have done radio play readings, rehearsed play reading broadcast on YouTube as well as quizzes, with ‘Blankety Blank’ (for those of you who can remember!) being a particular favourite. They were also lucky enough to have a surprise tutor in the person of Michael Corbidge of the RSC for their Shakespeare Workshop evening...a real treat!!!

CADOS held Zoom auditions for their production of *Made in Dagenham* which, having been postponed twice is now expected to take place in July.

There is general concern that social distancing in theatres may make ‘breaking even’ for a production more difficult than normal so careful thought is going into which productions, whether drama or musical theatre, to consider.

District 8 – Tony Austin

Like groups all across London District 8 societies have used Zoom to their best advantage. Rehearsals have been interrupted because of the changes in legislation and even distanced rehearsals ceased.

Whilst they are all itching to get back to rehearsals the possible restrictions on theatre numbers have caused some groups to think of different and exciting venues to accommodate their audiences.

Harefield ADS have been able to purchase new curtains and hang new cables and pulleys in their Church Hall venue, as well as negotiating a new, more easily accessible store for their costumes, scenery and props. All groups have a tentative programme for the autumn and are all looking forward to treading the boards once again.

District 9 – Carole Baines

However ingenious an Amateur Theatre group, presenting a live performance to a live audience has of course not been possible for many months. Thankfully we have the internet which has been a lifeline, enabling communication between performers and also audiences.

All District 9 societies have remained in contact this way for AGMs, Quiz nights, chats and sing-songs.

Having the IT ‘know-how’ however has meant some have been able to be more adventurous. The Chameleons ADS, for example, has performed two “Radio Plays” for its followers – “This Wonderful Life” in December and “Pygmalion” in February thereby receiving donations to help cover the costs. Relayed via Zoom, with suitable still images on screen and the scripts having been adapted for radio, these plays were most enjoyable.

Pump House Theatre Company has also been very active with regular on-line streaming on Facebook. Highly entertaining original vignettes, plus extracts from classic plays and monologues have been transmitted prompting generous donations. A particularly outstanding feature was “Sir and Norman” (characters from “The Dresser”) coping with lockdown - these two talented actors presenting their highly amusing original sketch.

As choral singing is a little more difficult to rehearse on line than dialogue the drama groups have generally remained more active. However Harrow Opera Workshop did manage to live-stream six members performing a singing master class in the autumn, when restrictions were lifted – in preparation for their next planned production “A Masked Ball” in October 2021. As this year marks their 50th anniversary they are also hoping to celebrate with a special Gala Concert scheduled for June.

Now that Boris’s roadmap is under way we can see the light at the end of the tunnel so, hopefully, it won’t belong until we are all back working on our next production!!!

District 10 – Mike Monk

Radlett Musical Theatre Company (RMTTC) has been organising several events over the past few months - Jason, their Chairman, created an amazing masked member competition which has been most enlightening lasting several months on Facebook

Their most recent event was a zoom cabaret on Friday 9th April with some very impressive performances from members all produced from their own homes – genius!!

The company are soon to commence rehearsals for *Legally Blonde* which hopefully will be live at Radlett Theatre this October.

St Albans Musical Theatre Company (SAMTC) are currently preparing for a live three-day festival to be held at the end of June and Abbots Langley Players who are, sadly, having to give up their storage area in Abbots Langley will be holding a grand sale of props and furniture over the summer months.

District 11 and 11a – Judith Watsham

Many groups in Districts 11 and 11A have been holding regular online quizzes - as well as, naturally, struggling with Committee Meetings and AGMs via Zoom.

One has run a couple of successful Treasure Trails locally to raise funds. As someone who took part, these were most enjoyable (suitably masked and socially distanced of course!). A small entry fee and a £20 prize for the winning team (drawn from the correct online entries) hopefully raised some much-appreciated funds.

Others have been busy with online plays and play readings as well as training events.

In many cases society subscriptions have been extended which has been welcomed by members.

Of course the main sufferers of the lockdown have been the musical societies - singing does not lend itself to Zoom calls in quite the same way as a play reading or a brilliantly engineered play. One of the latter that particularly struck me was the ingenuity in passing props from one Zoom box to another!

WHAT'S ON 2021

District 9

A MASKED BALL – GIUSEPPE VERDI

October 14-16 2021. Performances 7.30, Saturday matinee 2.30

Harrow Opera

The Compass Theatre, Glebe Ave, Ickenham, UB10 8PD

Box Office; 01895 250615

Online bookings; www.hillingdontheatres.uk

District 5

SONGS UNDER THE SUMMER SUN

June 19 and 20 2021 Performances 2.00pm and 5.00pm

Mayhem Theatre Company

Cannizaro Park, Wimbledon

Box Office; 01895 250615

Further information – www.mayhemtheatre.co.uk

A Reminder from the Editor

Enter your next company performance for next issue.



NODA Theatre Summer School 2021

The committee for NODA Theatre Summer School has, after much discussion, decided that 2021 will not see a physical Summer School. Whilst the government has formulated the roadmap out of lockdown, we can now see the light at the end of the tunnel, although, by the beginning of August, things may not be fully back to normal. Whilst the vaccine roll-out is continuing successfully not everyone will have been offered or had the vaccine, and those who have been shielding for the past year may possibly not feel fully confident about mixing with large numbers of people in a social environment.

Taking everything into consideration we feel that for 2021 it would not be prudent to hold a physical School. We had hoped that we would all be together this year but the health and welfare of students, tutors and staff has to be the prime consideration.

So.....having learned valuable lessons from last year we will be offering a new and improved NODA Theatre Summer e-School running from Monday 2nd – Friday 6th August. The launch of the e-school will be on 6th April with full details in this magazine and on both the NODA website and the Summer School Facebook page. Bookings will open on 4th May but please ensure that you read the terms and conditions thoroughly before you book.

We are sorry that we are not able to go ahead with our original plans for this year, but students, tutors and NODA staff will, I am sure, appreciate what a difficult decision this has been.

News from the Districts

C.A.D.O.S. Chingford Amateur
Dramatic & Operatic Society



**We shall never
surrender.....**

Chingford Amateur Dramatic & Operatic Society (or CADOS) was founded in 1945 and over the years enjoyed performing in The Scala Theatre, London with some performances overseas. Now our 'home' is a small, 80 seater ex village school hall in East London. We are a registered charity with a membership of 20 but passionate about live theatre.

Early 2020 in addition to organising online stagecraft tutorials, we started planning for a fund raising variety show to be performed last June which, unfortunately, came to a halt and is now on hold. The rent of our fully maintaining lease with the local authority is £24,500 + business rates p.a. So like many groups without our fundraising and our daily hirers, our future was very unsure.

The rights to perform *Made in Dagenham* in October 2020 were already in place, so we went ahead with video auditions and castings in June and YES!!! we got a cast!! We had some face-to-face small group rehearsals over the summer, giving us the backbone for the production, but with October unviable due to restrictions, we rescheduled for April this year.

Director Judith Jackson has been holding Zoom rehearsals twice a week since the autumn and will continue until restrictions lift. We rehearse dialogue, musical numbers with Patrick, our Musical Director, and our choreographer, Jacky, demonstrates simple moves that could be done in living rooms, lofts and kitchens with 'armography' - upper body moves only seen on Zoom.

Jacky (also our Chair) says:

"This has been a huge challenge altering all the ensemble choreography so it can be taught and practised in front rooms via Zoom. I have been sending out WhatsApp video tutorials to assist the cast to practice at home. This has proved very helpful, enabling people to ask questions prior to the next rehearsal. People are showing a real enthusiasm to learn despite the restrictions of COVID-19 and Zoom, we all know there's an element of 'delay' but people are working hard to get it right"

Every couple of weeks Judith ensures we have a whole cast Zoom to go over ensemble numbers and, most importantly, to keep everyone connected. A developing tradition has been to end the Zoom with "Show Your Pet" where those without animals vie with each other to present the most unusual cuddly toy – great fun.....

The commitment of the cast is what has kept this show going. Everyone has taken on amazing levels of individual responsibility to learn their roles remotely through accessing a Google Drive folder containing their vocal practice tracks and choreography demo videos uploaded by Patrick and Jacky.

The jigsaw pieces of the show have all gradually fallen into place and we are now doing full run-throughs on Zoom. There is real characterisation and energy being projected through those tiny squares on the screen. We check on each other's wellbeing, rejoice when a member reports that they've 'had the vaccine' and share a remarkable camaraderie amongst the group.

With very little in revenue coming in, we still had to maintain our lovely little home and things were looking pretty grim. However, giving up wasn't an option and slowly things started to look more promising. We received a three month Rent Holiday from the Local Authority, a COVID Government 'Restrictions' Grant of £10,000 and another of £7,500, a Lottery Grant of £8,500 for planned external maintenance of the hall and a few anonymous donations. Winter sent us yet another big blow! The 100 year old heating system had finally given up... the old cast iron pipes had been leaking causing rotting of the wooden floor. An online Just Giving Page was set up for 'Heat our Hall' and we did a socially distanced Live Streamed Christmas show to raise awareness of our situation. To date we have raised £13,000 towards a cost approximating £20,000.

Incredibly, our membership has increased during lockdown by eight although, sadly we have not yet met in person. However, we have that to look forward to and, hopefully, our 'after rehearsal' pub will be open by then.

As we keep our fingers crossed for a brighter future, never has the *Made in Dagenham* Act 1 closing song 'Everybody Out' felt more meaningful! From all of us in CADOS, keep safe and well!

Frances Chalkwright

Belmont Theatre Company

Belmont's 'orses for courses

Bill Baynes, one of our most long-serving members was, sadly, lost to us during 2020. In celebration of Bill and his sense of fun and also to keep members engaged and up to date with technology, we created the *Lion and Albert* monologues on Zoom.

Members and patrons were invited to take part and the lines were shared out between the volunteers, who filmed their own 'bits' which were then put together by the genius that is 'Eddie'.

A few months later we did the sequel, this time 'passing' props to one another – I organised everyone having the same props, and then sent them to the respective players. We had a socially distanced filming session for the four of us that were reciting the '*Orses head 'andle*' piece using the appropriate '*Orses head 'andle*!! Then as we filmed each piece we took the prop in our left hand (as if from the previous person) and passed it out of shot to the right and so on.

It was rather challenging but all great fun, as can be seen on YouTube-Belmont Theatre – *The Lion and Albert*....and then *Albert's Return*. Bill would have loved it!

Judi Campion – Belmont Theatre

Belmont's Zoom Challenge No. 2

We've all missed our theatre during the past year, but on a very cold evening in February, 15 members got together via Zoom to read *Hobson's Choice*. Carole Baynes, our Artistic Director, marked up the scripts enabling us all to read, irrespective of gender and accents. Fond memories were relived as many of us remembered being in the Belmont production in 1983.

Everyone managed to connect up and we had a good catch-up and then read the play. It proved very successful, enormous fun, and it was super to see everyone. Thanks to Carole for organising a most entertaining evening!



Wyllotts Theatre, Potters Bar, Herts is the home of 4 theatre companies
Green Room - Southgate Opera - ELODS - Potters Bar Theatre Company

They combined together to create
Four Companies - One Aim
an event supporting Wyllotts Theatre and the NHS

Potters Bar
Theatre
Company



Southgate
Opera



ELODS

Green Room



Read the article the on
following page

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Four companies, one aim

The spirit of theatre is alive online ! Lin Manuel Miranda, composer of the hit musical *Hamilton* said “fill the world with love, music and pride” and four companies joined forces to do just that, with more than 120 people collaborating to present a series of YouTube videos, celebrating their love of musical theatre, and their support for Wylllyotts Theatre and the wonderful NHS.

Wylllyotts Theatre, in Potters Bar, Hertfordshire is the home of these companies, , **ELODS (Enfield Light Operatic and Dramatic Society)**, **Green Room Productions**, **Potters Bar Theatre Company** and **Southgate Opera**, all of whom embrace that sentiment.

Whilst the companies can't perform live at present, they were determined to keep the spirit of theatre alive online.

Southgate Opera's Lee Davis said: “We love entertaining our audience, filling the auditorium with music and words and we take enormous pride in what we do. “We all look forward to entertaining audiences at the theatre as soon as possible. In the meantime, as we can't perform live on stage, we thought it would be a great outlet for our creative energies to record songs from musicals and operas and deliver them online.”

The videos include well known numbers from *Guys and Dolls*, *Six the Musical*, *Miss Saigon*, *The Wizard of Oz*, *The Pirates of Penzance*, *Rent*, and many more.

Gary Colledge, of Potters Bar Theatre Company, said: “The energy of live theatre is indescribable, and the role it plays culturally, socially and artistically, within our local communities, cannot be underestimated. It brings people together, binds and connects people from all walks of life, forges friendships and brings enjoyment, laughter and tears. These videos give a welcome reminder of the joy that musical theatre and opera can bring.”

Mark Shaw, Chairman of award-winning amateur theatre company ELODS, said: “Huge thanks to our members, musicians, visual and sound editors and the technicians who have helped us put these videos together. And thank you to the Wylllyotts' staff for their support, not only in the making of these videos but for all they do when we are performing there live. We're determined to be back as soon as it is safe and economically viable to do so, delivering great theatrical productions to our audiences.”

All of the videos were recorded outside of lockdown, adhering to social distancing restrictions. Some were recorded around the theatre but most from members' own homes, with the sound and video editors painstakingly bringing together all the recordings thereafter.

The videos posted daily were free to view.

Green Room Productions' Alastair Woodgate said: “The arts have never been more necessary than now, and have got many of us through lockdown with drama, entertainment and music.

Everyone has been affected by the pandemic and the arts are facing one of their greatest challenges ever. We're keen to highlight how invaluable Wylllyotts is as a cultural hub in Hertfordshire. And this is also our way of showing our thanks to our wonderful NHS.”

The first YouTube video in the series was launched on 5th December . **Look for 'A Celebration of Theatre at Wylllyotts' on YouTube.**

“No one would deny there's theatre in life at present,” added Alastair. “Here's our reminder that there's life in theatre.”

For Green Room Productions, visit greenroomproductions.co.uk

More about Southgate Opera at southgateopera.com

Visit elods.org.uk for more on ELDOS.

For Potters Bar Theatre Company, visit pottersbartheatrecompany.co.uk/

Sedos go Bananas during lockdown

From plays written across four centuries, to heavily-disguised singers, with some Bananas thrown in, Sedos has certainly spent a very active 12 months or so, as they explain here.

Isolation

Quite quickly after the first lockdown we decided that the show must go on, albeit online, with a brand new project, *Isolation: A Lockdown Experiment*.

We invited Sedos members to create new digital theatrical content exploring the theme of isolation that would culminate in a virtual showcase on our website and YouTube channel. Our thinking was that just because we were physically distancing, didn't mean we couldn't be social.

We wanted members and their households to turn their homes into live performance spaces with opportunities for writers, composers, actors, dancers, tech creatives and directors to get involved.

We had a fantastic response. Actors were paired with writers or allocated suitable scripts, while directors and film editors also helped shape the pieces with some impressive visual results.

By the end of the project 25 people (17 performers and 8 writers) had created 11 Isolation videos, ranging from monologues to a six-person drama, which lasted from three to seven minutes.

Find out more and watch the Isolation videos here: <https://sedos.co.uk/shows/2020-isolation>

It was an inspiring project and a quick reaction to the first lockdown, paving the way for our other online activities.

These included Sedos Reads, which has now performed nine plays written across the past 400 years, was set up from October 2020 by Matt Bentley as director with Peter Foster as committee liaison, initially as a weekly series of Zoom performances.

However after two shows we moved to bi-weekly, allowing for planning, recruiting actors and one rehearsal evening before the Thursday evening performance. Matt directed a cut version of *Much Ado About Nothing* as the first play, followed by *Radium Girls* (D W Gregory).

Peter then directed Isaac Pocock's melodrama, *The Miller and His Men* before Matt returned with A Halloween Double Bill of radio plays followed by *Handbagged* (Moiria Buffini). Peter completed the autumn season with his own adaptation of *A Christmas Carol*.

Peter then took over the directing mantle in the New Year for a series of plays to be performed once a month from February to April with more rehearsals than before.

As the season progressed there was more interest from actors, always at least twice the number needed; a much bigger, and also international, audience; and a higher performance quality.

These three shows were *The Critic* (Sheridan), *The Lights o' London* (George R Sims) and *Great Catherine* (Shaw). We have found that the best length for online performances is between 50 and 75 minutes.

With summer (slowly) approaching and real life plans on the way, we've decided to pause the programme for now. It has been a most enjoyable experience performing such a range of pieces and both directors and casts – about 50 altogether – can't wait for the time when they can actually meet in person.

Recordings of some of the shows can be seen here: <https://www.youtube.com/sedosvideo>

Meanwhile a number of regular Sedos activities have continued over the past year.

Up to the 12th April up to Forty-one Sedance classes had been held remotely and the participants have learned 21 different routines. The online warm up video has been streamed 150 times, and the recorded classes have been streamed 456 times.

Forty-two SeYoga sessions have taken place since the first lockdown.

Simprov held five sessions for around eight people while our in-house improv group, the Banana Hut Gang, devised *Zoom... Your Own Improv*, which played to 20-50 attendees – with multiple people often behind each "screen". The shows included Christmas and Valentine's Day specials.

Some of the *Zoom... Your Own Improv* shows can be seen here: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC2gp5U6JvDumjMpCSqntSdA>



In total contrast Sedos has produced two seasons of Masked Sedos Singer during the early part of this year, each consisting of two heats and a final. The first season was won by Cloud (revealed as long-time Sedos performer Andrew Overin), while the final of the second is yet to come on 4th May.



continued on next page

and the winner is cloud.

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The Contestants all pre-recorded their songs and “reveal” videos, and these were then combined with live segments from the host and judges to create a performance.

The audience were able to get involved by guessing who was inside the costumes via Facebook comments. Finalists were chosen by a combination of audience vote and judges’ wildcards, with the viewers at home picking the eventual winner in the final.

The shows became a spectacular showcase of Sedos members’ skills, from the singing talent, video editing and creativity of the performers to the wit and quick-thinking of the judges and the technical skill of the production and graphics team.

It was particularly pleasing that Masked Sedos Singer offered an opportunity for performers to get involved no matter where they lived, including some who are no longer regularly involved in the society having moved away, and the singers ranged from those who have not performed in a Sedos show for some years to those who have taken part in one show in 2019 – and one brave stage manager even got involved! One of the singers commented that the experience had given her more confidence and she would be channelling her character at auditions in the future.

The performances have each had 700-1100 views, including both live watches and replays.

See the performances in full: https://www.facebook.com/sedostheatre/live_videos

Watch highlights of each show: <https://www.youtube.com/sedosvideo>

Summing up: a varied, somewhat unusual and unpredictable year of activities, with truly something for every member to enjoy.

LOCKDOWN UNLOCKS AN INTEREST IN COMMUNITY THEATRE

Kings Langley is a village located just two miles from Junction 20 of the M25. It is steeped in history with ruins of a 14th century Royal Palace and Priory still standing in a resident’s garden.

The village was also the birth place of Edmund of Langley the 1st Duke of York whose tomb is in All Saints Church alongside tombs of his wife Princess Isabel of Castile and Eleanor de la Pole, Lady-In-Waiting to Catherine of Aragon, Henry VIII's first wife.

In addition Kings Langley was home to the Ovaltine farm and factory until 2002 when production was moved to Switzerland and the listed building was turned into flats.

Five years ago All Saints Church celebrated its 800th birthday and I was delighted to devise a Pageant celebrating notable events from each century since the Church had been built. With short pieces of drama, sketches, dances and songs the cast included not only 12 children from the local junior school but also performers from all three of the local theatre groups: Kings Langley Musical Theatre Company (KLMTTC), Kings Langley Players (KLP) and Revue Theatre Company (RVC).

In March last year the COVID 19 lockdown stopped all three theatre companies in their tracks along with hundreds of other groups up and down the country. After holding their AGMs via Zoom two of the groups have new Chairmen and committee members.

There is now a real determination to come back bigger and better just as soon as we can and plans are in hand for ‘popup’ cabaret style concerts involving members of all three groups and a joint production of Stepping Out is scheduled for August. By then it is hoped that ‘normal service will be resumed’ and the audiences will be able to come back to enjoy a full programme of musicals, plays, pantos and revues put on by all three groups.

In the meantime, as a result of an idea raised by the Leisure Group of the Kings Langley Parish Council, a new joint venture is planned as a community project. Performers from all three groups will take part in a series of short film clips depicting, in full costume, characters from local history.

These clips will be put together as a virtual historical tour round Kings Langley which can then be accessed by visitors as part of an actual walking tour around the village. In addition performers will take part in village events such as the annual carnival and Christmas festival by acting as groups of strolling players.

In conclusion it is hoped that, out of what has been a disastrous year for performing arts all round, the three performing groups in Kings Langley performers will get back on stage with enthusiasm, optimism and renewed energy to work closer together.

Annie Hertler-Smith



No Zoom at the Inn for Lane End

Cari Nicholson of Lane End Players reports that as far as the company's activities during the past few months are concerned, the focus moved from "what we can't do" to what we CAN do.

Pre-Christmas, she says, we had a number of projects on the go. Firstly we chose and cast a radio play, "It's A Wonderful Life" by Joe Landry, based on the Frank Capra film. We hope to record it for release. I saw recently that NODA has teamed up with @Box Office Radio to produce a new radio show - so we may be looking to use that as a platform when the time is right!

We also produced a video Winter Show called "Countdown to Christmas" featuring songs and sketches and a recording of "Do They Know It's Christmas?" which we used as a springboard for a charity food bank appeal for donations from viewers.

We were then planning to put on our Nativity Play which was supposed to have taken place on the 20th of December as an open air community production. This came about because our local church, Holy Trinity, was unable to host their annual Christingle service due to Covid-19 restrictions.

It was to be quite a show, with a bedouin encampment, shepherds gathered round an open fire, a stable with sheep, a star mounted on the top of a crane and a real live donkey!

The idea was hugely popular and earned us support and funding from the Lane End Parish Council and the South West Chilterns Community Board. Regrettably, it was cancelled at the very last minute due to the tightening of government restrictions, but nevertheless, we released an audio recording of the production on our FaceBook page, which then received over 2000 "listens" over the Christmas period.

We have committed to all concerned that we will do the live performance next Christmas instead, if circumstances permit.

Our regular Thursday night Zooms have now grown into online workshops to develop our theatre skills. We have already had two workshops with Lottie Williams Burrell, Head of Voice at Mountview Academy, in which we have focussed on American accents and exercises for voice projection.

Another exciting project was with Ruth Gibson, an actress particularly well-known for her radio and voice-over work, guiding us through tips and techniques for Voice for Radio.

As we move forward into the Spring, we are currently working on two wonderful short two-hander plays called "Love Letters" by AR Gurney, and "Two" by Jim Cartwright.

The idea is to be able to have intimate theatre when the restrictions are eased - small cast and crew with a small audience. And if an indoor audience fails to be possible in the foreseeable future, then we will film them with a view to showing on open-air screens if possible or even release for viewing on social media.

We think flexibility and readiness are the keys to being able to continue to bring theatre to our community.

Finally, the most exciting project of all is that we are currently working with our local Parish Council on a proposal to have a permanent Open Air Performance Space in Lane End.

As a first step, we have agreed that we will stage an open air production at the Lane End Playing Fields this summer - at the moment, the most likely choice of play is "The Darling Buds of May" by H.E. Bates.

We hope to develop this concept even further by securing a piece of Parish-owned land in order to build a permanent amphitheatre for the use of the whole community.

For this challenging project we have a busy team working on plans and investigating possible sources of funding. We will keep you posted on developments!



Proud Priory Make Progress

The Priory Players was founded in 1965 and originally located in a church hall in Eltham High Street before transferring to our current “home” 10 years ago. Our company performs a wide variety of plays including our traditional pantomime every January.

We have become heavily involved with the local community and I have subsequently become a member, on behalf of our group, on the board of Trustees of St Mary’s. They administer the community hall in which we are based and perform as well as three other community halls and the St Mary’s building itself in the Eltham area.

We also regularly raise money, during our pantomime season, for a local hospice as well as having supported charities such as Breast Cancer and Alzheimer’s Society.

We have a great working relationship with our local council (Royal Borough of Greenwich) and every incumbent mayor for the past six years has attended our productions.

In 2018 we received an Arts and Entertainment Civic Award from the Royal London Borough of Greenwich in recognition of our contribution to the local community.

As with every other company, our productions have been curtailed due to the Covid-19 pandemic. That said, we have, as a company remained in touch with a quiz night and play reading every week.

Additionally, we were invited to take part in the opening of The Progress Hall by the Mayor of Greenwich.

Since recently being allowed access to the Progress Community Hall, we have been undertaking several housekeeping jobs, including re-varnishing the front of the stage, painting the backdrops, and steam cleaning the curtains as well as various deep cleaning and decorating projects. (Picture attached - inside the hall.)

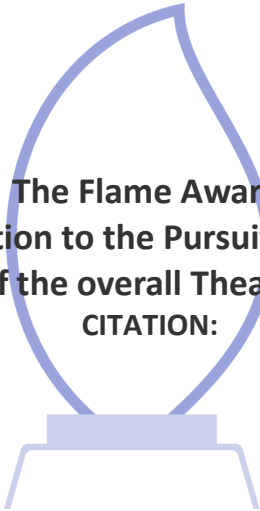
Despite being 55 years old we are relative newcomers to NODA, having joined about four years ago. Since then we have met several times with Robin Kelly or Jackie Mitchell who come to see and review our productions.

Finally, it is with a certain degree of pride that I say that The Priory Players were District winners in the London Region 2019 – 20 for Best Drama and Best Male in a play. And with even more pride when I say we then won the Regional award for Best Male in a play that same year.

Marian McGuigan, Priory Players

In Memoriam

We have just heard the sad news of the death of Keith French of Argosy Players. Keith won the coveted Flame Award in 2017 and the citation is reproduced below. His funeral took place on April 27th. Our thoughts are with his family, friends and colleagues. RIP Keith.



The Flame Award
“For Inspirational Contribution to the Pursuit of Excellence in Theatre and Enhancement of the overall Theatrical experience”
CITATION:

Keith has been described as “the backbone of Argosy Players” for whom his commitment, which started in 1969, continues unabated. As a former Chairman and current committee member his experience and knowledge is vital to the society.

He originally joined to help backstage and with set construction but his acting talents were soon spotted and he has taken and still takes roles from cameos to leading parts, and directs both classics and modern plays, with a recent emphasis on Shakespeare.

His speciality, however, is design, perhaps best known in the scenery which he designs not only for Argosy but often for other NODA societies in London District 8 (and helps to build), but also encompassing costumes (where he is also part of the sewing team) and lighting, although his input there is often not shown in the programme, leaving operators to be credited for the whole effect. At the District’s shared Scenery Workshop he holds classes to instruct novices into the art of scenic construction.

And finally

Heartfelt thanks to everyone who contributed to this edition of 'Curtain Up'.

If you wish to see your society in print the final copy date for the next issue is
27th August., with distribution in early September.

Articles should, ideally, be no longer than 500 words and a photograph would be most appreciated – it always adds extra interest to a piece. We like to credit the photographer so please supply the name. And don't forget the 'letters' page!!!

We sometimes have to change the layout of articles or precis them a bit, but will always retain the essence of what you have written.

Please remember that if you need any assistance at all you can reach me on
jacquie.stedman@noda.org.uk or 07941 854164.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Jacquie Stedman