

noda

LONDON LATEST

News and Updates from the London Region

February 2014

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COUNCILLOR'S COMMENTS

Welcome to this edition of London Latest.

I hope you all had a very festive Christmas and an enjoyable New Year, and are looking forward to the challenges of the coming twelve months!

I expect lots of rehearsals are now under way for production early this year. Can I remind you that you can send all your coming productions to Rosemary, our Editor, for inclusion in the 'What's on' in this newsletter for as far ahead as you wish. This list will be updated with each edition of the newsletter. Please do not assume that because you have put your next production on the website that it automatically is included in the newsletter – or vice versa – they are two separate operations.

We will be holding a Youth Workshop, as mentioned in the last newsletter, on the 11th May at Shinfield Players Theatre, Whitley Wood Lane, Shinfield, Reading RG2 9DF, so I hope we will see lots of our young people there. Again, further details will follow soon.

Each year the regional committee meets for a strategy meeting when we discuss the services NODA London offers to its members and whether those that we do offer are being delivered in the best way. It's almost like a 'Best Practice' review. The next one will be held on the 23rd February so in the next newsletter I will be able to report on what we discussed and how we will be delivering it over the next 12 months.

The current criteria for the Programme and Poster Competition were reviewed this year and will come into effect for all programmes and posters produced for productions in 2014. This is now on the website (Members Area) together with a copy of the crest for programmes and a suggested piece about NODA (for which extra marks are awarded) for insertion into your programmes.

KEEP THE DATE FREE for 2014:

6 July will be the NODA London Conference at Wylyotts Theatre, Potters Bar. Be sure not to miss it!

Jacquie Stedman
jacquie.stedman@btinternet.com



APOLOGIES TO ALL SET BUILDERS

In the last edition of London Latest we set out proposed changes to the way the scenic award was judged. During our recent Council Meeting, and following an approach made to us by the instigators of The Shinfield Players Scenic Award in Memory of Pat Barr, the committee agreed to revert to the original criteria specified in 2000 when the award was first presented to NODA London. This was *"that the whole scenery was constructed by the society and no hired scenery was used in any way, shape or form. That the scenery was complementary to the production, the decor and perspective were correct and a photograph was taken of the completed set as seen by the audience."*

This should make the judging much easier, but I would like to assure those of you who have followed the previous criteria that you will not be penalised if you have produced the detailed documentation in support of a nomination.

Jacquie Stedman

MORE, OR LESS, MAYHEM?

Mayhem Musical Theatre Move With The Times



As any amateur dramatics company will tell you, times are tough. In the current financial climate, external investment and sponsorship is dwindling, there are fewer bums on seats and yet the costs of mounting a production are still rising. So how does a local society survive? Is downscaling always the answer and what does this mean for the society members? How do you maintain and build a large sustainable group with a healthy balance of new and old blood during such tough times?

The issue can become even trickier if there are a large number of other great societies in the local area that collectively provide a huge choice of shows and opportunities for your members. So how do you survive and still keep everyone happy?

For Mayhem Musical Theatre Company based in South London, these are very familiar and very real issues. In what some may deem a saturated area for musical theatre, the issue of surviving and standing out from the crowd is a permanent challenge. Despite a number of hugely successful productions, including a number of local premieres (We Will Rock You / Spring Awakening) and artistically challenging niche market shows (Nine / Into The Woods), the company began to feel the pinch in 2010 and noticed a drop in regular members by 2011. So what was the solution? Current chairman Jon Wade explains.

"It all boiled down to the membership. With a traditional three shows per year approach (one of which falling more into the compilation/cabaret fundraiser category), members who may not have been able to commit to long rehearsal periods, or sign up for a new show immediately after the curtain fell on a previous one, would traditionally take a break with anything up to five or six months off. Of course a busy social calendar and opportunities for non-acting members helps, but with a lot of other shows in the area, members were understandably more likely to audition for a show with another society. In August 2011 the company took a bold decision to move from 3 shows per year to a season busting 7 productions to provide greater diversity and variety and more opportunities for members to duck in and out of productions throughout the year. The new format also gave the company the opportunity to feature, in the same year, both large scale musicals (The Producers / Pirates of Penzance) as well as

smaller artistically specific shows (Company / Wild Party). We made a number of other changes at the same time, such as giving our Mayhem kids, who had previously only performed alongside the adults in full scale musicals, their own show. Cleverly using a shared set and lighting rig in an extended theatre run we found we could perform both a kids (Honk Jr) and adult (Little Shop of Horrors) show over a 10 day period, and save on some of the costs that would have been incurred if we had run both shows as autonomous productions. We also added an incredibly exciting outdoor summer Shakespeare production into the season to dust off the old acting chops.

It's certainly wasn't easy, but there is no doubt that with so much Mayhem now going on, there is always something for everyone. We even now hold our very own Moscars (Mayhem Oscars) every two years with 14 productions to vote for."

So what's on the cards for Mayhem this season? Another 7 shows? George Still (Vice Chairman) says:

"This is the biggest and most demanding season yet, starting with the UK premiere of The Addams Family at the Secombe Theatre (Sutton) in March and ending the year with a huge production of Peter Pan at the Bloomsbury Theatre in Central London. We're incredibly proud to have been given these phenomenal opportunities, especially the UK premiere. What an honour. How often do you get to create a show that virtually no one has seen before? And one based on such an iconic theme and characters ... and everyone knows that amazing "duh duh duh duh ... click click"? It's certainly a challenge with everything from the huge and demanding set to some amazingly weird and wonderful costumes and props ... all having to be made from scratch. But what a show!! Everyone we speak to is very intrigued, and who can blame them. If you're in the area, you really must come and check out what all the fuss is about".

The Addams Family runs from Wednesday 12th to Saturday the 15th March 2014 at the Secombe Theatre, Sutton. Performances start at 7.45pm with a Saturday matinee at 2.30pm. Tickets are available from www.suttontheatres.co.uk or call the theatre box office on 020 8770 6990.

*Jon Wade
Chairman, Mayhem*

THE BEST PUBLICITY STUNT EVER..... and we didn't even organise it!

I am sure you all know that Prince Charles celebrated his 65th birthday in Cochin. Well, it just happened that our Chairman, Trish Lewis, arrived there on holiday the day before and took the opportunity to join the crowds to see him pass through. Apparently she was outside one of the shops when Trish had the idea of singing Happy Birthday to him as he passed. The shop owner invited her to go up on to their balcony and from there, good as her word, Trish duly serenaded her Prince. She has played many leading roles in her amateur stage career but never one quite like this. She has a lovely, very strong, voice and was clearly heard by HRH above the crowd noise. He and Camilla stopped and looked up to see where the singing was coming from, and the Prince selected a red rose from some he had just been given and threw it up to her – amazingly she did manage to catch it (and still has it!)



Photograph reproduced by courtesy of Getty Images

So where does the publicity come in? Afterwards she was interviewed by a reporter who took down all the details – except for her age. When asked she said “Not as old as him!!” – the sort of response I would think of afterwards! The story was then picked up by the papers and published the following day, together with a photo, in every national newspaper, except for the Financial Times, and even appeared in Hello magazine. They all said “Mrs. Lewis sings with Panda Players near her home in Wendover, Buckinghamshire”. Brilliant. Our ever vigilant Publicity Manager then contacted the local paper who actually telephoned Trish in India to check the facts before publishing and they also included details of our forthcoming show, *Return to the Forbidden Planet*, so Trish became a ‘page 3 girl’ for the first, and probably last, time in her life! We were amazed that they phoned her as, in our experience local papers don’t do a lot for their money these days. In the ‘old’ days, they used to send reporters to rehearsals but now, if we want any pre-show publicity we have to supply the details and photographs. Sometimes, one even has to write one’s own review! However, we can’t complain about the coverage in this instance.

On her return home, Trish wrote to Prince Charles, thanking him for the rose and for the pleasure the whole event had given her friends back home, also suggesting, tongue in cheek, that perhaps Camilla would like to come and sing to her husband whose 65th birthday was coming up in January! To her amazement, yesterday she received a lovely letter back, saying that her gesture had “made his day”, and that he was pleased his throwing had been so accurate. He wished her husband every good wish for his birthday. This was partly typed but handwritten at the end. Thrills all round and thank you Trish for instigating our ‘best publicity ever’.

Panda celebrate their 25th Anniversary this year, performing *Return to the Forbidden Planet* in March, *‘Godspell’* in June, and with a ball in July. We were originally formed to put on just one show, *The King & I*, to raise funds for the World Wildlife Fund, hence our name, the panda being their logo. We presented a cheque for well over £1,000 which was excellent all those years ago. Nowadays, like many other companies, no matter how good a show we put on, we rarely cover costs, let alone raise money to give away – much as we would like to. Everyone enjoyed that first show so much, it was decided to put

on another one ... and another and another. I was delighted to be involved in that first show and am now honoured to be Panda’s President. Reading of the problems some companies are facing, many much larger than ours, we are delighted to have reached this milestone and for that I must thank our hard-working committees over the years which has helped with fund raising to keep the show on the road. We make many of our own costumes, which we hire out to other local companies, run a Concert Group which occupies those who want to sing during the summer and perform in many venues and for all sorts of events – Masonic dinners, retirement homes, etc. We’ve even performed at a wedding. So I would like to say Happy Birthday Panda – long may you continue.



*Still mixing with royalty, and with a rose:
Trisha Lewis as Lady Tiang in The King and I*

Return To The Forbidden Planet is on 12 – 15 March at the Elgiva Theatre, Chesham. Further details on www.pandaplayers.co.uk.

*Helen Turner
Panda Players*

EDITOR'S COMMENTS

It's always interesting, and useful, to get feedback from societies on the newsletter. It is, after all, **your** publication. So it was quite disappointing to hear from people belonging to several different groups that they had not seen it. This was not because it hadn't been sent to societies, but because the societies hadn't forwarded it to their members.



One of the aims in changing from the old hard copy magazine to an electronic version was to reach as many members as possible. We try to keep publications a manageable size so we don't clog up your mail boxes, and include local news as well as an up-to-date list of what's on in the London region.

So a plea to Chairmen/Secretaries/NODA contacts within each society: assuming you all have a database for your members, please, please can you forward the quarterly newsletters to them.

If there's something you think can be improved on, or something new you'd like included, please let me know. It's an excellent way of publicising your group and your productions, and with over 200 groups in the London region, and many members within each group, reaches out to a wide area.

Deadline for the May issue is 30 April. I look forward to hearing from you!

Rosemary Roberts
Editor

REG VINNICOMBE

NODA mourns the loss of Reg Vinnicombe, a Past President of the Association, who passed away late on the 1st February. Reg was a real Yorkshire gentleman with a wicked sense of humour who worked tirelessly for amateur theatre for over 50 years. He was also the 'money man' for the NODA Theatre Summer School for over 10. He will be sadly missed by us all and our thoughts are with his family.

PETER COCKMAN wins Pride of Reading Award



Peter Cockman collects his Cultural Contribution award from Chris Tarrant and Chris Sykes of sponsor Volume

Despite turning 90 in September, Peter Cockman shows no signs of slowing down and still plays a huge role in the day to day business of Progress Theatre. Having been a member since 1974, Peter has directed, acted and produced for the group, and is now their Treasurer. He states "I think in many ways my biggest contribution to the theatre is on the management committee, very few people want to do that so trying to find people to fill the roles is really difficult,"

He has also been instrumental in staging the annual Reading Open Air Shakespeare production in the Abbey Ruins and Caversham Court Gardens and was a founding member of the amateur drama group Caversham Park Theatre in 1965.

Peter's nomination read: "The sheer effort Peter has put in over the years, and still being involved at the age of 90, is what makes him deserving of a nomination."

WORKSHOPS

We reported in the last edition of London Latest that we would be holding three Regional Workshops between March and the end of the year. However, at our recent Regional meeting the committee decided that we could benefit our members more if we structured our training in a more specific way and we have, consequently, put aside the idea of these three workshops.

However we will be still be holding the Les Miserables Workshop specifically for our younger members aged 11 - 20 on Sunday 11th May at Shinfield Players Theatre, Whitley Wood Lane, Shinfield, Reading RG2 9DF – more details will be announced shortly, so watch your emails for news.

Many of our London groups run workshops for their own members, whether they be general or show specific, and we would like to be able to offer some financial help with these. Therefore we are going to make available a training fund from our regional budget.

To take advantage of this training fund, groups would need to ensure that the workshop was available to other NODA groups and then complete a form (rather as we did last time we had a training fund) with all the details of the workshop and a proposed budget. This would then be sent to the Regional Councillor and a decision would be taken as to how much would be awarded. It could be towards the cost of the tutor, the venue or any other specific item. We would also ask that the words 'supported by NODA London' be added to any advertising of the workshop.

The application form is in the process of being formulated and will be available on the website, and other social media by the middle of March. If, in the meantime, you have any questions about this new initiative please contact Jacquie Stedman the Regional Councillor.

You will be pleased to know, however, that we will still be running our three workshops at this year's Regional Conference on the 6th July at Wylyotts Theatre, Potters Bar.

AN AMAZING SUMMER SCHOOL EXPERIENCE

Stephen Crompton relives last year's experience



Stephen Crompton, back row right, in blue shirt

For most of us involved in this peculiar hobby where we pretend to be other people, our only experience of NODA is either Good NODA - the NODA which gives us awards and rightly praises our last production; or Bad NODA - the NODA which fails to highlight how wonderful our, frankly brilliant, performance was, or, just occasionally, that we were actually in a show at all.

But I began to hear rumblings of another NODA – Fun NODA - a NODA which runs a 'school' where like minded individuals congregate for a week in the summer, sharing their love of all things theatrical. I decided to investigate, and before you could say "jazz hands" I found myself in a Warwick University Sports Hall, sweating for England, staring in trepidation at a (Legally Blonde - Whipped into Shape) skipping rope and feeling...happy.

Alice had gone down the rabbit hole.

Step back a few hours and I was arriving at University for the first time, minus the security of parents to embarrass me with a hankie and some spit. So, here was the famous NODA Summer School or, as it is more affectionately known - The Bubble, the venue which was to be my home for the next week, as I embarked upon my own particular choice of masochism - Musical Theatre in Performance; one of 15 courses NODA offer, covering the entire gamut of theatrical disciplines. I stared across at a sea of smiling, blue t-shirted individuals, who periodically yelped and ran over to hug someone, and smiled to myself - Welcome to The Bubble.

Formal registration and obligatory lanyard secured, what followed was one of the most exhausting, challenging and enjoyable weeks I can remember - a week of intensive singing, acting, dancing and, yes, skipping (well, tripping). Oh, and drink. And cake. Lots of cake - the cake is the stuff of legends.

Prior to my NODA baptism of fire Legally Blonde was merely a musical I'd seen once - which to this day still generates flashbacks whenever I see the words 'OMG' - and a better than average 'romedy' with a predilection for preppies, puppies and the colour pink. But after a week which began with vocal auditions in front of industry professionals and ended with both a patchwork of bruises and the performance of five numbers from the show, with musical parts, libretto and choreography all absorbed in five short days, to those of us involved it had become something akin to religion.

The Bubble is the theatrical equivalent of a skiing holiday, minus the possibility of broken bones - well, as I was dancing, let's just say the chances are reduced. A perfect storm of late nights, early mornings, hearty (and delicious) meals and intense, exhausting and exhilarating classes, culminating in a final performance.

In front of newly-made friends!

Okay, Warwick University may be more Milton Keynes Snozone than Chamonix, and, unlike a recent EBOS production, I had no obligation to wear ski boots on the Arts Centre stage. But, as I awoke from 3 hours sleep on the final Saturday morning, I felt that same conflict - a broken body waving a white flag which at the same time yearned to go back and do it all over again. The disbelief that it was over, when it seemed only yesterday that I stepped off the coach and stared out at the carpet of snow, which was to be my home for the next...um. (Okay, so my analogy may be breaking down here.)

But, most of all, I knew I would miss the group of former strangers who, over the course of only a week, I now had the pleasure of calling 'people who've added me as a Friend on Facebook'. LOL.

And, whether your thing is singing, dancing, acting, sound, lighting, drinking, composing, puppetry or a combination of these, that, ultimately, is what The Bubble is about - a unique opportunity to come together with similarly twisted individuals and spend a week in total escape from the stresses of the real world; creating bonds with people who share the same joy of performance and who also think it quite normal to parade around a business centre in full Rocky Horror garb or spontaneously break into song during meals - and/or tolerate those who choose to.

Young or old; experts in James Bond or not (we so should have played our joker on that NODA Quiz round - not that I'm bitter); drinkers or teetotalers; cake lovers or...what am I on about? who doesn't like cake?!..... NODA Summer School has something to offer everyone, be it vocal coaching by the resident MD of Blood Brothers, being taught advanced dance by the choreographer of Billy Elliot or taking acting classes with some of the most respected tutors in the country, you are guaranteed a holiday like no other and one which will stay with you forever.

And, as for whether I'm going along next year? Reader - I've already booked!

Stephen Crompton
East Berkshire Operatic Society



CREATING A COMPLETELY NEW MUSICAL AND BRINGING IT TO THE STAGE

Outline

'Feelgood Academy' is an exciting and magical new British stage musical. The original idea was hatched in 2011 and by early 2012, the musical team was together working on songs and compositions. By mid 2012, the book writer had been found and work started on the story and characters. Towards the end of 2012, a Director and a fundraiser were brought into the team.

2013 was a busy year of script and song development, read-throughs, auditions and rehearsals. By the end of Summer we even had a plan in place for a showcase run to bring in Producers and further investment.

It's now early 2014 and Feelgood Academy is having a three performance showcase at a theatre in London. The time between the key creative team being assembled and a showcase being put on will be roughly 20 months. It might only be taking place in a 200 seat theatre in Stratford but it's happening and we're making it happen.

Do you want to do the same? Do you want to write a stage musical and get it on in a theatre? Well read on, because this is our story.

The Team

As the creator of the original concept, Penny Lane has sung professionally all her adult life. She was the house singer on Terry Wogan's lunchtime TV show. She composed songs for Billy Ocean and Gloria, Gaynor and she has sung with legends including Cliff Richards, Johnny Mathis and Tony Bennett. Penny was not, however, an expert in writing songs for a stage musical.



Glenn Keiles is a composer who since the early 1990s has written over 400 compositions for film and TV. He has worked on movies directed by Ridley Scott and Alex Proyas and numerous TV documentaries and dramas. Glenn was not, however, an expert in composing for a stage musical.

Steve Jones doesn't even work in the entertainments industry but has a day job in marketing. He did write the book for a stage musical based on the invention of fast food in the USA, but this is only his second stage show book. Steve was not an expert in writing the script for a stage musical.



Towards the end of 2012, Karren Brooks met the creative team through a mutual contact and came on board to bring in the finance needed to put on a showcase of the musical to see how it played and to give invited Producers and investors an opportunity to see it. Although Karren had been involved in raising money for film companies and an on-line music business, she was not an expert in the stage musical business.

Basically, when bringing a stage musical to life the only people guaranteed to make it fail are the people behind it. So when creating a stage musical rule number one is: Never give up.

The Process

We started with a simple outline and a handful of songs. One in particular had significance to Penny and was destined to create a few structural problems later. However, the creative team developed a process that worked along these lines:

- The initial outline was taken away and developed
- A new story outline was created
- The outline was agreed
- Existing songs were positioned within the outline and places for new songs were identified
- New songs were written as the book was developed
- A number of drafts of the book were put together and the songs refined
- Songs were recorded by various potential performers
- Drafts of the show were recorded in reads-through
- Video of each reading was watched back and analysed
- Characters were analysed and developed
- Spacing between songs was looked at
- Introductions into songs through dialogue and action were considered
- Character motivations, story arcs, realisations and lessons learnt were understood and developed
- Dialogue was developed for each character's individual voice
- All songs, dialogue and action were developed to avoid cliché and obvious elements

So when creating a stage musical rule number two is: Never stop re-writing.



Owen Smith, Director



The Problems

As I write this article, Feelgood Academy is about to start rehearsals. We have paid a deposit on our theatre but our fundraising is behind schedule. In fact, we might have to delay booking rehearsal rooms.

If you're going to write a stage musical, there's probably only one certainty and that is that things will go wrong. We have developed a 30+ page fundraising proposal and brought in someone to specifically go after investors but we're still behind.

We have taken holiday from day jobs, given up paying gigs, worked evenings, weekends and the early hours of the morning and we're still playing catch-up. We've looked for Production Assistants to help and we found the perfect person. But they introduced us to a team who could help even better than a team we'd already spoken to but not signed up. Suddenly, we're making tough business decisions that affect not just business people but friends who were giving their expertise for free.

What about selling enough tickets? What about getting all our cast to rehearsals? What if someone is sick? What if the sky falls on our heads?

Suddenly, writing something fun that was designed to entertain a few people has become a business with tough decisions. But we're still only looking at three performances in a 200 seat theatre to encourage further investment and development. Imagine what it would have been like if our goal had been a thousand seat theatre or a tour or The West End.

Writing a stage musical will always be a difficult business because it's the business of creativity for presentation to a paying audience. The different sides of the brain involved in being creative and being organised and business-like don't always mix well.

You can get help with Production in the same way that you can hire a Director or a Lighting or Sound Engineer. But where does the money come from, or is it all done on favours, or a share of the company you created to produce the show?

These are all questions to consider at the beginning of the project and we will be developing a check-list of things to consider at various stages of the process. However, it's rule time again, so when creating a stage musical rule number three is: Problems will happen and they're just hurdles to get over, not obstacles blocking your path completely.



Recorded Readthrough

The Show

At our showcase, we will invite Producers and Investors and we'll kidnap them to get them there if we have to (not really!). But if they don't come, we'll also video each show with three cameras so that we can edit a full show together from the best performances.

We will then have something to send out to amdram groups, use on the internet and generally promote Feelgood Academy with.

The final rule before a list of less forceful suggestions in our advice list below is simple to say but difficult to adopt because it could mean you have to step outside your comfort zone. But think about this. Is writing a stage musical outside your comfort zone? Is getting investors involved or putting together presentations outside your comfort zone? Could you audition cast members and tell the ones who didn't make it the bad news without stepping outside your comfort zone?

If you've decided to create a stage musical, forget about comfort zones and just go for it. That will mean you can deal with rule number four for creating a stage musical which is: Never miss an opportunity.



Auditions



The following list is comprised of ten recommendations and pieces of advice based on our experience of creating Feelgood Academy the Musical. We hope it's useful when you put your stage musical together but why not keep a list of your experiences and pass that onto someone else who plans to be as incredible as you.

- Don't let too many friends and family know too much about what you're doing in the early stages. Unless they're in the business, they probably won't understand why you're doing it and will probably not be encouraging.
- Make sure that everyone in your creative group knows that any recommendation, comment or advice is designed only for one purpose and that is to improve the show. It's not personal.
- Take a break. Regularly. Tired minds do not create as well as inspired minds.
- Love what you're doing. If you find history boring, would you want to devote so much of yourself to creating a historical story?
- Always think of the audience. Would they understand? Are you giving them enough information? Are you giving them too much information? Are you boring them? Are you telling them lots of jokes in a tragedy or no jokes in a comedy?
- Understand marketing and get good at it or hire someone who can do it for you.
- Don't become trapped by something you like that no-one else does. If you can't cut something from a song or the script (and use it in the next thing you write instead!) when everyone else thinks it's bad for the show, then you're being precious and petty and narrow-minded and completely human but you have to give it up. The only alternative is to think of something better.
- Try and get people involved who love the idea, enjoy working with you, can commit to it, have a genuine skill or experience that will benefit the project and then... DELEGATE! Make sure that whatever it is that you do well is done as well as it can be and let others do their things.
- You will never have enough time so don't put anything off until tomorrow. One day you will have run out of tomorrows but still have loads to do.
- Enjoy it!!

Final details for box office contact and ticket pricing will be available on the website which is as www.feelgoodacademythemusical.co.uk where you can sign up to receive the latest news about the show and details of how to book tickets when the box office opens.

*This is an abridged version. The full article can be found on the NODA London website: <http://www.noda.org.uk/>
new british musical feelgood academy by steve jones*

NODA SUMMER SCHOOL



The school is the only one of its kind, offering an activity holiday with a difference:

- quality professional training with real, lasting benefits to performers and technicians alike
- a fully residential experience in a hotel quality conference centre
- an opportunity to meet and socialise with like minded people who are 'PASSIONATE ABOUT THEATRE!'

With competitive course fees and top class residential facilities at the University of Warwick you are guaranteed a fun packed week of top quality training, morning warm-ups, optional evening activities, great food and plenty of time for socialising.

Browse the courses on offer for 2014 and read about the vast range of experience amongst our professional tutors on <http://www.noda.org.uk/summerschool>

NODA Theatre Summer School 2014 will run from Saturday 2nd - Saturday 9th August 2014.

There are still places available on some courses - and it may be possible to apply to NODA London for a bursary to help with fees.

SOCIAL MEDIA AND AMATEUR THEATRE

Having recently been asked to assist the regional website manager in developing our online activities (www.noda.org.uk/regions/london), I have over recent months been looking at the region's use of social media, in particular Facebook (www.facebook.com/NODA.London) as it's a personal favourite of mine.

Social media is a means by which people can: create, share, exchange ideas and information, and can be both a mixture of historical or up-to-the-minute information. Many amateur theatre companies have grasped this fairly recent marketing tool by the horns and now use social media relatively well throughout the London region.

For this article I have focused solely on Facebook but there are many other types of social media which amateur theatre companies can and do use, including; Google+, LinkedIn, Flickr, YouTube, Printest, Twitter (<http://twitter.com/NODALondon>) to name just a few.

When I was first appointed as an 'Administrator' of the NODA London Facebook Page, I made the following simple improvements:

- created a unique domain name
- added an 'Introductory' sentence
- uploaded a suitable 'Profile' & 'Cover' picture repositioning them so the best part of that image is on full view
- 'Liked' all currently paid up societies in the London Region.

By doing these four simple steps the Region's Facebook Page has grown its audience substantially, though we could always do better! By doing just these four simple things to your Facebook Page, it will make it more attractive, engaging and something for the casual user to connect with.

Whilst I was 'Liking' the societies in the London Region, I was quite surprised that only 45% actually had a Facebook Page. That doesn't mean that 55% of all London societies do not use Facebook at all, because 19% of those do have a presence on Facebook but either as a Facebook 'Group' or as an 'Individual'.

The problem for an organisation like NODA London (and its fellow London Societies) is that these 'Groups' and 'People' on Facebook are not easily 'Liked' and difficult to 'Follow'; sharing information about each other's societies and their productions. Facebook 'Groups' are great ways of sharing personal details, private society parties, rehearsal information, etc but they are **not** excellent ways of advertising your society.

Facebook Pages do this much better and in the age of the Smartphones with lots of people using Social Media on the move, Facebook Pages and short, quick, concise messages on both Facebook and Twitter are definitely the way to go (NB: An interesting fact is that the fastest growing age range for people using Social Media is 45-65!).

10 Benefits of Facebook Page

1. Facebook Pages are easily picked up by the Search Engines based on the keywords used in the search – so ensure you've mentioned:
 - The name of the society
 - Words like: Amateur Theatre, Amateur Dramatics/Operatics Society, etc
 - The region or district you're based in: London, City or Chelmsford, Essex etc

2. Facebook Page allows you to alert your fans of: events/performances, audition notices, large public social events, etc.
3. Easily create Society Events for you to invite your fans/followers to and for them to forward on to their friends & family etc using Facebook.
4. With over 500 million users worldwide on Facebook, you can drive a lot of traffic to **your society website** through your Facebook Page – so make sure the contents and information flow is steady to keep your followers interested and engaged with what's going on in your society. Also ensure that your website is bang up to date.
5. Patrons can leave feedback about your productions, which may increase the number of people coming to watch your performances.
6. You can have unlimited Facebook users who like you – they are all potential new members for your Society, who can be both young and old!
7. Anyone can access your Facebook Page, even a search on Google will still display your Page.
8. You can have various custom tabs for things like; Society History, Joining Information, etc.
9. You can easily update everyone, all at once with a Facebook update.
10. Facebook Pages are great for long lasting relationships with your members and/or Patrons and creating an interactive community for them to feel part of our wonderfully enjoyable hobby.

For detailed information and support on how to utilise all Social Media to your societies benefit, then please check out the NODA Media Helpdesk (www.noda.org.uk/socialmedia).

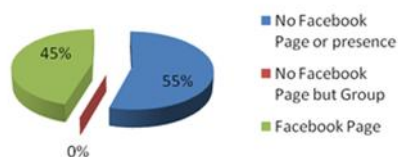
However let's try to get the message out there more that amateur theatre is of an extremely high standard across London. If it is of a professional standard it should display itself as this on the internet. We can only do this if we rise to the challenge of utilising all the free tools on the internet to the maximum.

Below is information about each NODA London District (data correct mid-December 2013) and how they use Facebook – if you not already doing it, have a go and if you are doing - try making it work more for you moving forward – plus don't forget, this is **FREE** advertising!

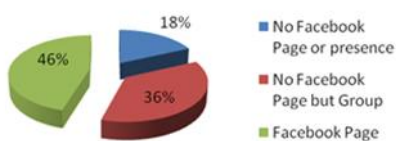
Darren JA Knight
NODA London Regional Representative, District 4
and Website Assistant

SOCIAL MEDIA BREAKDOWN FOR LONDON REGION

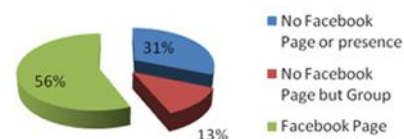
District 1 - Central London



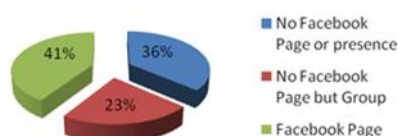
District 2 - West London



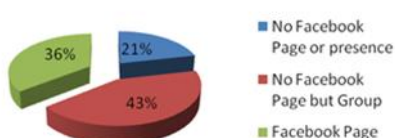
District 3 - Southwest London



District 4 - South East London



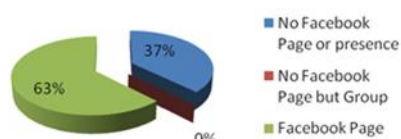
District 5 - South London/Surrey



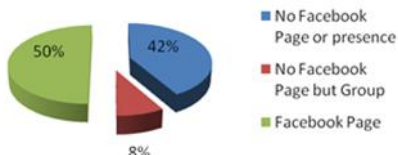
District 6 - NE London/Essex



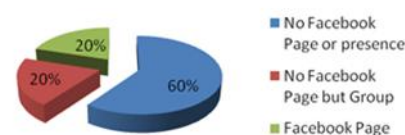
District 7 - North London / Herts



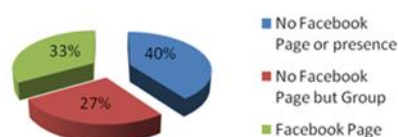
District 8 - West London



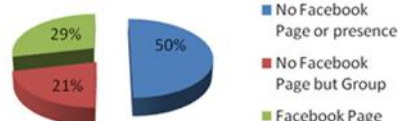
District 9 - North West London



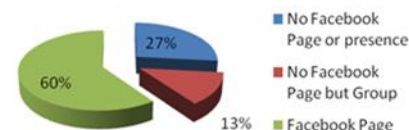
District 10 - North London/Herts



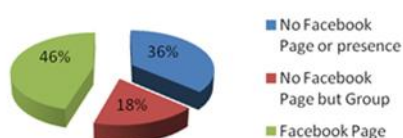
District 11 - North Bucks



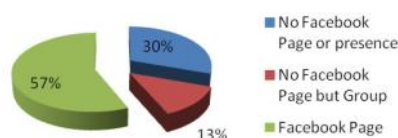
District 11a - South Bucks



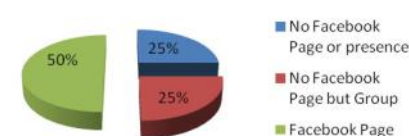
District 12 - Oxfordshire



District 13 - West Berks



District 14 - East Berks



CONTACT DETAILS

Glancing quickly through a document produced recently for the NODA London committee, it was obvious that several groups had out of date website details. We know websites are something that societies update periodically, and quite often with the update the name changes.

Could we ask you all to make sure we have your correct details – that is website address and the person who is your NODA contact and their email address. It's amazing how many of the newsletters bounce back, or do not get forwarded because the person we send them to is no longer associated with that society.

Please send any updates to the NODA London Secretary, Cortina Henderson: cortina.henderson@btinternet.com

WHAT'S ON

NODA London Region Fixture List

MARCH 2014

WITCHES OF EASTWICK

11 - 15 March
Crowthorne Musical Players
Wilde Theatre, Bracknell
www.cmp-berks.org.uk

PYGMALION

12 - 15 March
Bob Hope Theatre
www.bobhopetheatre.co.uk

ADDAMS FAMILY

12 - 15 March
Mayhem Musical Theatre Company
Secombe Theatre, Sutton
www.mayhemmusicaltheatrecompany.co.uk

BACK TO THE 80'S

12 - 15 March
MAOS (Marlow Amateur Operatic Society)
The Shelley Theatre, Marlow
www.maosmarlow.com

RETURN TO THE FORBIDDEN PLANET

12 - 15 March
Panda Players
Elviga Theatre, Chesham
www.pandaplayers.co.uk

VITA & VIRGINIA

19 - 22 March
Proscenium
Compass Theatre, Ickenham
www.proscenium.org.uk

HOW THE WEST WAS SUNG

Hounslow Light Opera company
19 - 22 March
St Faith's Church Hall, Brentford
www.hloc.org.uk

MURDER WEAPON – Thriller by Brian Clemens

20 - 22 March
Theydon Bois Drama Society
Theydon Bois Village Hall, Coppice Row,
Theydon Bois
www.theydondrama.org

BOUNCERS

21 - 23 March
Purple Theatre Company
The Compass Theatre, Ickenham
www.purpletheatre.org.uk

HALF A SIXPENCE

25 - 29 March
Kings Langley Light Opera Company
Community Centre, The Nap, Kings Langley
WD4 8ET
www.klloc.co.uk

THOROUGHLY MODERN MILLIE

26 - 29 March
Eldorado Musical Productions
Bob Hope Theatre, Eltham, SE9
www.eldoradomusicalproductions.co.uk
www.bobhopetheatre.co.uk

CARMEN

28 - 29 March
Opera Integra
www.operaintegra.org.uk

MY MOTHER SAID I NEVER SHOULD

28 - 30 March
Purple Theatre Company
The Compass Theatre, Ickenham
www.purpletheatre.org.uk

APRIL 2014

JESUS CHRIST SUPERSTAR

8 - 12 April
SWMTC
Theatre Royal Windsor
www.theatreroyalwindsor.co.uk
www.swmtc.co.uk

WHISTLE DOWN THE WIND

8 - 12 April
Twickenham Operatic Society (TOPS)
Hampton School, Hampton
www.twickenhamoperatic.com

THEY CALL IT MURDER

9 - 12 April
Shepperton Players
Riverside Arts Centre, Sunbury
www.sheppertonplayers.org.uk

LEND ME A TENOR – THE MUSICAL

9 - 12 April
Players 2
Compass Theatre, Ickenham
www.players2.co.uk

THE WIZ

9 - 12 April 2014
Ruislip Operatic Society
Winston Churchill Theatre, Pinn Way, Ruislip
www.ruislipos.org

THE PRODUCERS

9 - 12 April
Chesham Musical Theatre Company
Elgiva Theatre, Chesham
www.cheshammusicaltheatre.co.uk

THE MUSIC MAN

24 - 26 April
NEOS Productions
www.neosproductions.co.uk

MURDER IN PLAY

24 - 26 April
Worcester Park Dramatic Society
Adrian Mann Theatre, NEScot, Ewell
www.wpds.co.uk

THE MIKADO

28 April - 3 May
Erith Operatic Society
www.erithoperaticsociety.co.uk

THE MUSICAL OF MUSICALS

29 April - 3 May
BROS Theatre Company
Hampton Hill Playhouse
www.brostheatrecompany.org

STEPPING OUT

30 April, 1 - 3 May
New Stagers
St Ann's Church Hall, Wandsworth, London,
SW18 2RS
www.newstagers.co.uk

THE KING AND I

30 April - 4 May
Maidenhead Musical Comedy Society
The Desborough Suite, Maidenhead
www.mmcs.biz

MAY 2014

MEMORIES

1 - 3 May
Zodiac Musical society
Riverside Arts Centre, Sunbury
www.zodiacmusicalsociety.net

LOSERVILLE

7 - 10 May
PLOS Theatre Company
Putney Arts Theatre
www.plos.co.uk

CORPSE AND CULPABILITY

8 - 10 May
Arrow Players
St Edmund's Church Hall, Northwood Hills
www.arrowplayers.org.uk

THE VICAR OF DIBLEY

8 - 17 May
Quince Players
Cordes Hall, Sunninghill
www.quinceplayers.com

RUDDYGORE or THE WITCHES CURSE

13 - 17 May
East Berkshire Operatic Society
The Wilde Theatre, South Hill Park, Bracknell
www.ebos.org.uk

WHAT'S ON

THE PIRATES OF PENZANCE

13 – 17 May
WWOS
Churchill Theatre
www.wwos.org.uk

GUARDS! GUARDS!

14 – 17 May
The Bob Hope Theatre
www.bobhopetheatre.co.uk

RUMOURS by Neil Simon

14-17 May
Ruislip Dramatic Society
Compass Theatre, Ickenham
www.ruislipdramatic.org
www.compasstheatre.co.uk

FIDDLER ON THE ROOF

14 - 17 May
Wimbledon Light Opera Society
Secombe Centre, Sutton
www.wlos.org.uk

GREASE

14 - 17 May
Kingston Vale Theatre Group
Adrian Mann Theatre, Nescot, Ewell
www.kvtg.co.uk

CITY OF ANGELS

22 – 24 May
Mayhem Musical Theatre Company
LOST Theatre, Wandsworth
www.mayhemmusicaltheatrecompany.co.uk

JUNE 2014

THE MERRY WIDOW

4 – 7 June
Maidenhead Operatic Society
Desborough Suite, Town Hall,
Maidenhead
www.mos-uk.org

HAY FEVER

18 - 21 June
Purple Theatre Company
The Compass Theatre, Ickenham
www.purpletheatre.org.uk

AVENUE Q

25 - 28 June
Cygnet Players
Arthur Cotterell Theatre, Kingston
www.cygnetplayers.com

JULY 2014

SEUSSICAL Jr

24 - 26 July
Kingston Vale Theatre Group (Youth Section)
Adrian Mann Theatre, Nescot, Ewell
www.kvtg.co.uk

SHAKESPEARE'S TWELFTH NIGHT

Dates tbc
Mayhem Musical Theatre Company
Outdoor Performances in
Cannizaro Park, Wimbledone and
Nonsuch Park, Cheap
www.mayhemmusicaltheatrecompany.co.uk

AUGUST 2014

THE PIRATES OF PENZANCE

Dates tbc
WWOS
Harrogate Grand Hall
www.wwos.org.uk

SEPTEMBER 2014

SALUTE TO STAGE AND SCREEN 4

26 – 27 September
Mayhem Musical Theatre Company
Arthur Cotterell Theatre, Kingston Upon
Thames
www.mayhemmusicaltheatrecompany.co.uk

OCTOBER 2014

ANYTHING GOES

7 - 11 October
Maidenhead Musical Comedy Society
The Desborough Suite, Maidenhead
www.mmcs.biz

SISTER ACT

Slough, Windsor & Maidenhead Theatre
Company
28 October – 1 November
Theatre Royal Windsor
www.swmtc.co.uk
www.theatreroyalwindsor.co.uk



To have your show published in
the What's On pages, please
send your details as shown on
this page to:

roberts.noda@btconnect.com

by 15 May latest