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Be inspired by amateur theatre

NODA In Europe
Beyond The Fringe
Presidential
Ponderings

A photograph of a man and a woman in period costume, likely from the early 20th century, embracing on a stage. The man is wearing a light-colored shirt, a brown vest, and a blue scarf. The woman is wearing a white blouse and a grey skirt. They are both looking upwards and to the right with expressions of awe or joy. The background is dark and out of focus, suggesting a stage setting.

Commemorating The Great War

All the news, views and events in your region

Please share this copy of NODA TODAY with fellow society members

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11/18



Another Year has passed, along with a changing of the guard at our recent AGM and Presidential Gala held in Wokingham, details can be found on page 22. We bid a warm welcome to our President for 2018-19, Jackie Stedman. I pick up the baton from John Barnes as Chairman of the Council. We owe John a great vote of thanks for the sterling work he has done since he took over the role in November 2016.

We said au-revoir to Bert Lumsden, his contribution to NODA spans many years, firstly in his support of the Scottish Regional Committee, he became known nationally in his roles as Chairman of the Reps followed by Councillor for Scotland, his two stints as President and more latterly as Life Member on Council, his sound words of wisdom will be missed, we can hope to see Bert and Anne from time to time.

At Head Office there have again been changes, last year we thought we had a settled team alas Craig and Becky left us to better their careers, many of the improvements in the financial reporting and marketing started with them, in July we welcomed Chris Cotton as Finance Manager and Rob Williams as Marketing and Publishing Executive, despite only being in post a few months the improvements continue to forge ahead, those who are sharp eyed will see changes in the presentation of this magazine.

Dale continues to visit Regional Annual Meetings and brings back to Head Office the wealth of information from our members which will support developments further improving service to members. Which brings me to the volunteer conferences for our Regional Committee Members, these will continue in 2019.



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Your letters and comments

Does your society have famous alumni?

Has your society pulled off a spectacular show?

Was your last show something out of the ordinary?

We also want to know what you think of NODA Today. Send us your letters in the post to NODA, 15 The Metro Centre, Peterborough PE2 7UH, or email our editor at editor@noda.org.uk.

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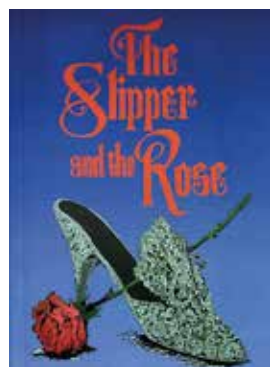
Many once popular musicals are losing their natural audiences, so here are some alternatives...



A young persons musical with dance and contemporary upbeat songs. In a British school of performing arts, two young student girls grapple with their fears, their abilities and their inner confidence, then face a battle between themselves. Which of them will go forward to represent the school at a crucial audition for a West End musical?



Written specifically to appeal to amateur groups, it has a well-balanced cast with simple staging and costuming. The plot is based around the pupils of Class 5D who are celebrating their last days at school. A story of unrequited love, recollection and reminiscence, betrayal and forgiveness, with the class being re-united years later, at a reunion of another sort entirely.



The libretto for this glorious musical tale of Cinderella and her Prince has recently been updated and revised to make it more easily staged. Taken from the smash hit film of 1976 with music and lyrics by the Sherman Brothers ('Mary Poppins' and 'Chitty Chitty Bang Bang') it is a truly family friendly piece of musical theatre.

And for the dramatically-minded our plays are top notch...



Hoovering on The Edge by Hilary Spiers

(1m, 7f) Full Length Drama. 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.



Curl Up And Die by Anna Longaretti

(3m, 7f) Full Length Comedy. Ruth's antiquated hairdressing salon's only chance of survival is a complete make-over, funded by winning the cash-prize hairdressing competition run by 'Fab Hair' magazine. Things are looking hopeful until Ruth's old faithful blue rinse ladies arrive during the judging and inveigle their shampoo and sets from her. The petulant model throws a strop, the Spanish photographer fuses the lights, and a pompous H&S Officer arrives for an 'in depth' inspection. During the mayhem one of the 'old biddy' customers seemingly dies under the drier. Could things get any worse?

Stage scripts

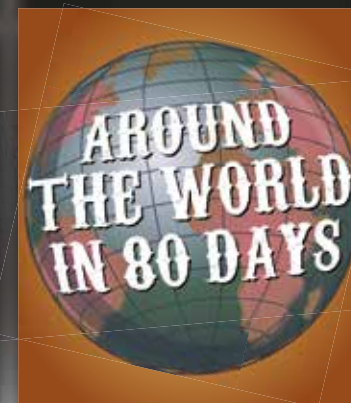
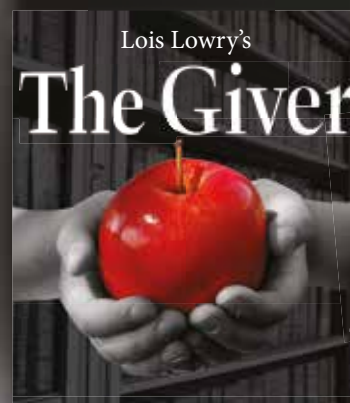
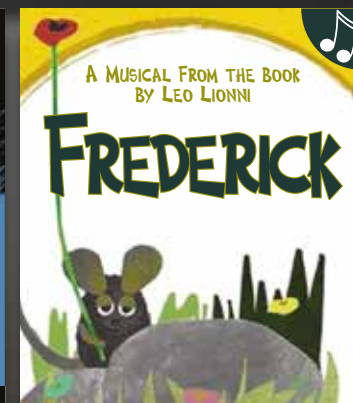
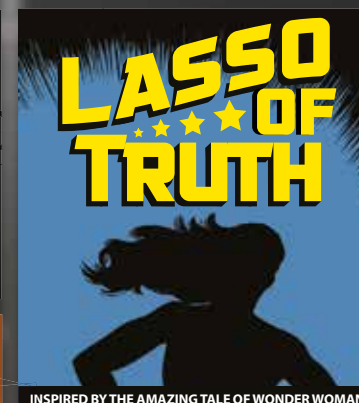
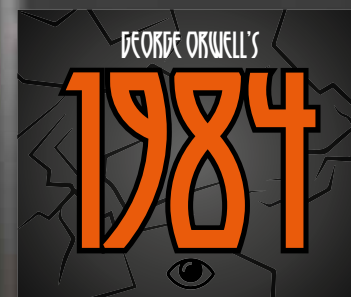
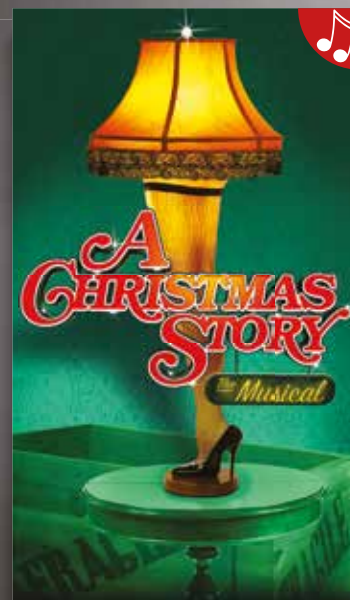
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Dear members,

Welcome to our NODA Youth roundup page.

Firstly I would like to congratulate President Jacquie Stedman and Vice President Christine Hunter Hughes on their new roles within NODA. These two ladies are huge supporters of our youth and it will be a privilege to work with them over the next two years within their roles.

May I once again draw your attention to Child Protection Policies. It is imperative that all societies that work with young people within their space are required to have a 'fit for purpose' Child Protection Policy in place. Often this is seen as an administrative task but please be assured that these policies safeguard both the young people and adults working with them. It is good practise to revisit your policy annually and have evidence and an account of this action being carried out. You can find our various model documents and more information regarding Child Protection on our website:

www.noda.org.uk/factsheets.

I hope to enjoy this edition of NODA Today. Please get in touch with your Youth Adviser if you would like to feature in our next edition of NODA Today. We are always keen to hear from societies celebrating success.

Keep believing in yourselves,

Jordan Spencer FRSA
Councillor to NODA Youth

'Acting out' by Curtis Teunon

The world is a confusing and scary place for children like me, and sometimes it is hard to understand how to fit in because my brain doesn't always work the same as normal children. I have autism and foetal alcohol spectrum disorder.

I found school too stressful and my difficulties meant that eventually I felt like everyone stopped believing in me. That was until I met Debi and Anne, and joined Cloettes. Cloettes are a group of boys and girls who are the youth part of CLOGS Musical Theatre.

Right from the first evening I joined the group, I felt like my world was turning around and I finally belonged somewhere. They didn't see a bad kid, they laughed with me about my unintentional jokes, and encouraged me without judgement when I got scared and wobbled.

When I joined Cloettes in 2015, I couldn't read or write and performing in front of people was unthinkable for me, but very quickly I learnt that lots of things that I used to get told off for doing, were the things that made me perform better with the group and with their help I also started to make friends.

In the last 3 and a half years being part of Cloettes has given me more I can imagine. I performed in concerts and show with the adults, I have auditioned for parts in from of adults as well as my friends, I have also as Charley Bates in 'Oliver' and sang the opening song as a duet for our Grade 3 musical theatre production exam – we got a distinction for that one. Debi has also helped me get a distinction in my Grade 4 solo exam, and I never thought I could do that.

But, my proudest moment ever has to be, being asked to sing 'Electricity' from Billy Elliot in front of everyone on my own.

Our next production will be with CLOGS in March. We are doing 'Blitz' and I am playing Tommy Blackwell.

Cloettes accepted me for who I am and taught me that my weaknesses can also be my strengths, if I use them right and have supportive people and friends to help me. I can be me, and I have Debi and Anne, and Cloettes to thank for that. ★



The Musical Youth Company of Oxford (MYCO for short) is celebrating its 30th anniversary this year.

To mark the occasion we're performing a Gala Concert at Oxford Town Hall on Saturday 20 October.

Our current company of 60 members will be joined on stage by another 60 more ex-MYCO members who are travelling from as far as the Juilliard School in New York to take part in the celebration. The programme will feature a host of showstoppers from MYCO's favourite musicals including *Sweet Charity*, *42nd Street*, *Guys and Dolls*, *West Side Story* and *Les Misérables*.

MYCO was originally called Oxford Operatic Youth Theatre and performed in its first show in 1988, a double bill of *The Arcadians* and *Trial by Jury* at Magdalen College School. The company has since grown from strength to strength and now stages a major musical annually. Its most recent show was a sell-out



run of *Godspell* at the Oxford Playhouse that received rave reviews: 'A divine display of young musical talent' – Oxford Times (*Godspell* 2018)

Many of our members have gone on to become professional performers including Eleanor Fanyinka, Emily Berrington, Richard Green (Taylor Woods), Sascha Pick and Ashley Harvey. 2016 leaver, Shak Gabbidon-Williams, was recently announced to play Marvin Gaye in the forthcoming UK and Ireland tour of *Motown the Musical*. ★

Starlight Express – Doing It On Wheels!

Acorn Youth Theatre NODA North East

Acorn Youth Theatre decided they wanted to try something to challenge their 8 to 18 year olds and decided to try 'doing it on wheels!'

Their young team approached Starlight Express with absolute commitment and although none of the team were experienced skaters they embraced this opportunity with great enthusiasm. Under the guidance of Director and Choreographer, Sarah Barker, MD John Turnbull and Assistant Director Cev Barker they worked hard for five months to develop the skills to be able to sing, dance and act whilst on skates.

Their hard work paid off as it really was a fabulous production - with every element being thought through to enable delivery by the young cast. The casting was excellent and all the young people worked so hard with the characterisation of some difficult roles. The musical numbers were very engaging and the choreographed the routines were incredible. Every young person gave their all and had a great time – with some even thinking about continuing to skate now the run has ended. ★

Jo Sykes
Youth Adviser NODA North East



Don't forget to send us your youth stories – email your news to editor@noda.org.uk!



EAST



NORTH WEST



SOUTH WEST



NODA Today – November 2018

SOUTH WEST



PRESIDENT'S PAGE



Read on for more youth news in the regions



Councillor's Chat

I am pleased to announce that due to the demand for a bigger venue for the NODA East AGM and Gala Awards Luncheon on Sunday 12th May 2019, that we have secured a contract with Wicksteed Park in Kettering to hold the event in the Georgian Pavilion. It can hold 500 people to a sit down luncheon in the main function room with additional rooms for the trade stands and AGM.

Wicksteed Park is a family theme park set in beautiful gardens and grounds, and if any of our members wish to take advantage of the rides and facilities we have been offered discount tickets. There are local hotels within walking distance of the park and we have also been offered discount rates for these as well.

I am also very pleased to announce that the price of a ticket will remain the same as it has been for the last two years at £40 per head. This is in response to the feedback that we have received from you, the NODA East members. Whilst every effort was made to find a venue that was central to the region, it was not possible without increasing the ticket price significantly. Wicksteed is just outside of the region on the North West border, but easily accessible via the A14, M1 / A1. I hope that the additional travel time for some people will be compensated by the beautiful setting and discounts available. ★

Don McKay
Regional Councillor
NODA East

East



Jaquie Stedman on stage with some of the principle cast and NODA representative Terry Rymer (District 6) following a performance of 'Made In Dagenham'.

Surprise Visit – Made in Dagenham!

At a 50th Anniversary year performance, the Lowestoft Players were privileged to receive a visit from Jacqui Stedman in her inaugural week as NODA President.

Making the 'far East' visit was an absolute coup for The Players performing 'Made In Dagenham', the second of four productions presented during their 50th Anniversary year. The newly appointed National President Jaquie Stedman and her husband made the decision to visit Lowestoft as her very first 'duty' ...and what a show she was treated too! The Players are known for the quality of their shows and this one was certainly no exception, as Jaquie commented "this will be a hard act to follow", now there is a challenge for any of the societies lucky enough to host our new President during her term of office! The society have purchased their own theatre (an old Seamans' Bethel) and converted it into a real gem of a performance venue and hub for

many community activities (re-named as 'The Players Theatre'). It is actually the most Easterly Theatre in the British Isles and also home to a strong youth theatre company B and B, who have already won the NODA East Best Youth Production twice! The Players, also frequent NODA Best Production winners, were honoured and grateful for the opportunity to welcome Jaquie and wish her well for the remainder of her year in office as The NODA National President! ★



Devilish Threesome

Three is a lucky number – David Blair, Sue Green and Richard Fisher, the founder members of the Ellesmere Devils Panto Society which is preparing for its 20th anniversary production.

1998 - just two years to the new millennium, and all across the globe, fantastic and memorable celebrations were being planned. In Suffolk, in a small rural village, three sets of parents were discussing a recent visit to a show which they considered to be poorly scripted, with dull scenery, and minimal props and costumes but delivered by enthusiastic actors who had so enthralled their own and other village children sufficiently that they embarked upon the venture of writing and performing their own as a fitting celebration to mark the dawning of the new century: at that moment the Ellesmere Devils Pantomime Society was born.

Now some years later, more successful than ever, 'those parents' David Blair, Richard (fish) Fisher and Sue Green are still hard at it "Ah, the innocence of youth," reminisced Fish as Sue recalled that she had foolishly volunteered to write the first script "Two years later, it was finished, with virtually no songs", a biting social satire on the issues of home ownership and the power of landlords cunningly disguised as a version of *Jack and the Beanstalk* or, in this instance *Jack and the Genetically Modified Beanstalk*, Sue found herself offering to direct this panto version of *War and Peace*.

David Blair whose day job as a farmer created staging made out of grain dryer ducts and other bits and bobs scrounged from the estate farm and having done an art A-level Sue was also put in charge of scenery and props. Rudimentary canvas backdrops were painted in the company of field mice and goodness knows what else in one of the farm's giant barns along with equally basic sound effects and props.

With no money to spare everything was created from what they and their friends found in lofts, garages and cupboards under the stairs.

Since that time their panto has been taken to Newmarket's twin town Maisons-Laffitte, just outside Paris. David recalls what a logistical challenge this presents with every single thing from backdrops, scenery, costumes and props, travelling with cast and crew but, he admitted to always getting a "pretty decent turn-out at the French theatre". The first production made us laugh as we watched the bemused French audience trying gamely to follow what on earth was going on. Now we get a majority of ex-pats and pretty much everyone cheers and boos when we expect them to."

The 20th anniversary production, written by one of the youngest members, Matt Atwood said "Pantomime has been part of my life for a long time. I have watched the Ellesmere Devils' since I was a small child. It's going to be a very special year for me." Summing up their recollections Sue said "We did it because we believed, perhaps naively, that 'we could' and what we came to appreciate much later, was the incredible depth of talent we had around Stetchworth. From year one we have produced something 'amateur' in name only, a tradition and a standard we maintain to this day and something which all three of us are tremendously proud". ★



ECHOES OF YOUTH FOR NEW GROUP

Echo Youth Theatre (EYT) is a new venture, based in Norwich, supported by industry professionals and established performers throughout Norfolk. EYT believe that providing a variety of opportunities enables young people to develop skills as all-round performers and works with some of Norfolk's most talented creative teams to provide high quality productions. Initially two major productions in 2018 – plus a series of workshops throughout the year within the theatre environment. Young performers, creatives and those interested in the technical aspects of theatre can experience a challenging variety of workshops and productions offered by a diverse range of directors, practitioners and artists who want to broaden their experiences outside school or regular classes. If you would like to learn more about EYT visit their website at echoyouththeatre.co.uk ★

NODA Members Remember the Great War

Local Opera Remembers WW1 Centenary

Bristol-based Opera in a Box revived local composer Eric Wetherell's *A Foreign Field* at The Redgrave Theatre, Clifton, during October 2018. Set during the Great War, the lyrical opera tells the story of three soldiers who find love and betrayal when caught behind enemy lines.

The singers of Opera in a Box were joined by John Telfer from BBC's *The Archers* as director, Bristol's Ben England as musical director and an eleven-piece orchestra. With support from the Arts Council England National Lottery Funding, this was the most ambitious project so far from the innovative company.

A Foreign Field, an easy-to-listen-to opera with music by Eric Wetherell and lyrics by Elizabeth Major, is based on Ben Macintyre's true story of hopeless love and betrayal during the Great War. It centres around Robert, a British soldier, and Claire, a French villager who quickly fall in love, much to the horror of her family and the whole village.

Eric Wetherell is a well-respected composer and conductor with a musical career spanning more than half a century. His credits include conducting at the Royal Opera House, Welsh National Opera and the BBC Northern Ireland Orchestra. His compositions include operas, jazz symphonies and everything in between.



"I'm really pleased to see *A Foreign Field* performed again, especially so close to my home in Portishead," Wetherell comments. "The musicians selected by John and Ben are excellent, and I look forward to hearing the piece performed to their famously high standards".

At its premiere in 2010, *The Times* review stated that "there is an integrity and nobility about its understated melancholy and bittersweet lyricism". John Telfer, who plays the vicar in the BBC radio serial *The Archers*, directed the previous production and is returning to direct the revival, as well as appear in the production.

Ben England is excited to be involved in its revival which coincides with the 100th anniversary of the end of World War One. "Wetherell's music combines beautifully with Major's lyrics, and the fact that it's all based on a true story makes the emotions involved even more heightened," Ben tells us. "October is the most perfect time to be producing this opera given the centenary celebrations, and the cast, crew and orchestra we have assembled will do full justice to the piece". ★



Family Ties

Norbury Players marked the 100th Anniversary of the ending of World War I with *Journeys End* by R. C. Sherriff. First performed in 1928, their 2018 performance ran till the 11th of November.

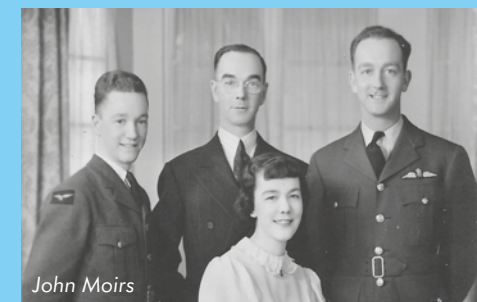
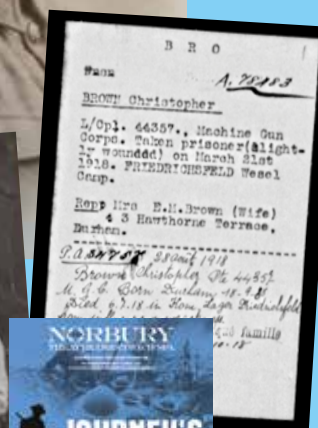
The play depicts the run up to Operation Michael which took place on 21st March 1918. While we transported ourselves from the comfort of our seats to the damp, candle lit dug out, the sounds of war reverberate along with emotions of trench life. There is no surprise to find while researching the characters and times the company unearthed their own connections to this story.

Captain Hardy and Second Lieutenant Raleigh played by Father and son Chris and John Broad revealed ties to battle grounds at Hebuterne and Vimy Ridge. Keith Thompson (Lieutenant Osbourne) discovered documents for his Great Great Uncle Corporal L H Tucker, who died from his injuries on the 5th December 1916.

Corporal L H Tucker



Albert Edward Hunt



John Moirs

The plays Director Melanie Brown came across several records, one of which of her husband's Great Grandfather Private Christopher Brown (left) who was stationed just 39 miles from where Operation Michael took place, he was injured on the 21st March 1918, captured and interned at Friedrichsfeld Camp where he died.

The play's dramatic ending coupled with the falling of poppies resonates, there are more family ties recounted in the programme, so while the cast quietly stand to attention in the foyer, we solemnly file past returning to 2018, there is nothing to say but We Will Remember Them. ★

Southampton Operatic Society gave over their entire Summer programme to commemorate The Great War by choosing to perform the Joan Littlewood 'non-fiction' epic *Oh What A Lovely War*, (OWALW) a show which they had only performed once before in their 94 year history, and linking in with other wartime commemorations around our catchment area.

Speaking to the Assistant Director Mike Pavitt; "Artistically it was a delight for us to perform, with traditional period costumes and all of our hundreds of props and hats positioned on stage in multi-functioning wheeled boxes which made up most of the overall set. The cast rose to the difficult challenge of telling a hard story in an engaging way with aplomb and I will always look on the show as one of our greatest achievements, at least over the 20 years I have personally been involved with SOS.

Financially the show performed disappointingly. We knew from experience that it was not everyone's cup of tea but we predicted - wrongly as it turns out - that enhanced interest in the Great War this year would translate into more promising ticket sales. The efforts we made to sell the show were nothing short of Herculean but despite aligning our efforts with the Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal and attracting local business sponsorship (easier if course when supporting worthy causes through fundraising) the audiences stayed away in their droves, with never more than half houses at NST Campus. We believe that an element of centenary fatigue had crept into audiences by June, particularly following the large number of professional shows with a WW1 theme which had featured in Southampton in the months leading up to our performances, including Warhorse at the Mayflower Theatre just before we opened.

However the true success of the show was in the way it opened the hearts and minds of cast, crew and audience alike to the horrors of War, to its consequences and to the sheer scale of the sacrifice made by the many. It was particularly pleasing to hear the stories of audience members who were recalling relatives lost to conflict talking with our Poppy Appeal volunteers after the performances. There was truly not a dry eye in the house and it would have been a challenge for any generation not to be profoundly touched by what they had seen.

Regardless of the financial losses, we would not have changed our Summer show selection this year for the world. The cast researched the War extensively and we were able to join in with local Armed Forces Day celebrations using our OWALW musical programme. We are looking for additional opportunities to work with the Poppy Appeal in the Autumn but have already enjoyed helping them to raise hundreds of pounds, which obviously makes us feel very good about ourselves whilst at the same time keeping the Great War ever towards the front of our minds." ★



Pack Up Your Troubles

The idea for *Pack Up Your Troubles* came from discussions about our own centenary year. Poole and Parkstone Productions was established in 1919, one year after the end of WW1, at a time when the country was rebuilding. We thought it fitting to unite our three sections (Musical Theatre, Singers and Players) together to commemorate the centenary that sparked our formation.

Rehearsals are well underway, with lots of excitement, especially in our 'Cockney Knees Up' section set in an East End Pub - we can't think why that has inspired our cast so much!

As well as the upbeat songs intended to represent the "blitz spirit" of WW2, there are some really poignant moments in this concert and rehearsals can get emotional, especially during numbers such as *Keep the Home Fires Burning* which has been arranged by our MD Adam Tuffrey and features a recording of one of the 'Last Tommies' describing his experiences. It's a true 'goosebumps' moment and we think it'll be something really special for the audience and performers alike. ★

Written by
Rosie Luxford



What the Women Did

My ideas for this production came originally from first hearing about the forgotten play *Handmaidens of Death* by Herbert Tremaine (the pseudonym of Maude Deuchar) on radio 4 Women's Hour, a number of years ago. What I then set out to do was see how I could incorporate this one act play into an evening about World War One where women were the main focus. I chose to divide the evening into two parts, to include a short play within each, together with additional material that I would then research and write. The other play I chose was *The Old Lady Shows Her Medals* by J M Barrie.

As well as the extensive library operated by Mr Google, the two main books that I based most of my research, writing and devising on were; *The Virago Book of Women and the Great War* edited by Joyce Marlow and the *Modern Troubadours* a record of concerts at the Front by Lena Ashwell.

The poetry I have chosen has all been written by women during the period of the war, where they have so movingly expressed the feelings and realities of the world they were living in. The actors will be performing the poems as characters in a scene where the words will become three dimensional.

The Suffragettes spent many years fighting for Women's rights to vote, with endless campaigns that were increasingly violent and dangerous. The men in power continually refused to listen, women were not important and worthy. Then on August 4th



1914 it all changed. The men now had to listen, they had to accept that the country could not survive without the help of 'the women'. The suffragettes suspended their political activity to join the war effort. As it is also the 100th anniversary of women getting the vote (which we know was helped by the war) I wanted to include the Pankhurst's within the production, Mrs Pankhurst in support of the war effort, and Sylvia adamantly horrified and against it. I begin the evening with a Suffragettes rally, then a journalist announces declaration of war, from which we move into a recruiting scene, where I have the men signing up at the same time as the women are called to take over their jobs.

As men left the country to fight in the trenches women stepped in and took over their jobs. On the Home Front women defended and kept the country going for 4 years, coming together in strength, community, patriotism and passion. Joining the war service millions of women worked in munitions, joined the Voluntary Aid Detachment and boosted morale by entertaining the troops overseas. Lena Ashwell worked tirelessly for many months to try and persuade the YMCA to allow her take a concert party to the front. To include the valuable work she did I have written a concert party into the production, where they perform a number of songs.

I wanted to provide a moving tribute to those that fought for our country and to show our enormous gratitude to all that lost their lives for us. What I hope we will achieve is an evening of entertainment that is full of laughter, tears and joy, at a time when our country is remembering the sacrifices made for us. ★

Written by Michele
Ackle, Lyndhurst Drama
and Musical Society

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|| SAMUEL FRENCH ||

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Councillor's Chat

Hello everyone - great to be able to talk to everyone in NODA East Midlands. By now you will be in the midst of rehearsing your Autumn productions and of course PANTO! It has been a great pleasure for me to enjoy so many fantastic productions and your warm welcome and hospitality. As always please let me know well in advance of your forthcoming productions as some weeks get very busy. Don't forget to invite your own NODA Representative well in advance if you would like a review – they just can't turn up on any evening... you do need to invite them!

Now a date for your diary - next year's AGM and Awards Day will be held on Sunday 23rd June 2019. Concordia Theatre will be hosting this event for us next year. We have been to Concordia several years ago as some of you may recall - a fantastic venue. Details of the 2019 Awards and AGM will be sent out at the beginning of April.

Congratulations to Mark Walker of Bonkers Playhouse for winning the President's Cup which was presented by Nick Lawrence at the NODA AGM on 22nd September 2018. Well done Mark - you really deserve this honour.

Finally I must thank the hard working committee of the East Midlands Region. Their support and loyalty is invaluable to me.

I look forward to seeing many of your productions between now and Christmas and into 2019. ★

My very best wishes
Nanette Lovell
Regional Councillor
NODA East Midlands

East Midlands

County Amateur Operatic and Dramatic Society – The King and I



The County Amateur Operatic & Dramatic Society (Lincoln) mounted their recent production of *The King And I* at The New Theatre Royal, Lincoln in September. Whilst maintaining the

glamour and tradition of this musical masterpiece, the production took a fresh approach, focussing on the inherent themes - power, the role of women, slavery, colonisation and cultural difference. Taking the colours of the peacock as inspiration, the world of the play inhabited an open stage setting, beautifully designed and lit by Neil Martin, with a strong focus on fabric and the use of silhouettes. Costumes were all newly designed by James Easter and crafted by local volunteers, adding to the sense of visual elegance on stage. Strong performances emerged from a large company of local actors, led by Lyndon Warnsby as The King and Imogen Phillis as Anna. The cast also performed a stunning version of the ballet, choreographed by Hannah Simmons. The musical score was superbly performed by a 17 piece orchestra, under the baton of David Warman. Two teams of children added their joyful

exuberance and Woody, the ship's dog, made his theatrical debut! Production Manager was Adam Slepownski. This musical was a huge success for CAODS, the standing ovations thoroughly deserved and great credit goes to Janie Smith, Artistic Director. ★

Written by Eira Hammond



★ NODA EAST MIDLANDS ★ ★ LONG SERVICE AWARDS ★ ★ PRESENTED MAY TO AUGUST 2018 ★

★ 40 YEARS: ★
★ **Irchester Players:** ★
★ Alison Everitt and ★
★ Sue Smith ★

★ 30 YEARS: ★
★ **Irchester Players:** ★
★ Rachel Bass, Anthony Curson ★
★ and Julie Haydon ★
★ **The Watson Players:** ★
★ Lee Hartshorn ★

★ 25 YEARS: ★
★ **Irchester Players:** ★
★ Sarah Liverton ★

All I Ask Of You: An Actor's Guide to Theatre Etiquette

By Michaela Clement-Hayes

The swish of the curtain, the smell of the greasepaint. There's just something about the theatre. The sudden hush as the orchestra begin and the anticipation as the curtain slowly rises on that other world.

But while it's easy to get excited about what's happening on stage, unexpected occurrences offstage can really affect the performance – not just for the audience, but also for the actors.

So what are the key things to remember when watching a show?

Timing

Things happen. We get this, but if you're enjoying the opening act of a show it's highly irritating to be asked to let a latecomer in. For some unknown reason these people always seem to be in the middle of the row, for maximum disruption. Try not to leave midway through an act (it's not long to the interval), but if you really need to leave, for heaven's sake do it quickly and quietly. And a whispered apology doesn't go amiss...

Mobile Phones

You all know that you need to turn off your phones. Yet at almost every performance, there's someone playing

a game, checking their social media or even calling someone. Turn it off people! If you're guilty of putting it on silent, the vibration is just as bad. If you really can't bear to switch it off then at least put it on flight mode. It's distracting for both audience and actors.

Snacks

It seems quite unbelievable that most people cannot get through 90 minutes without some form of snack. However, if you are going to take nibbles in with you, think ahead. Forego rustling crisp or sweet packets and take something in a tub. Better still, ask for a plastic glass at the bar and decant your sweets – you'll still be able to enjoy a sugar rush but without receiving glares from fellow audience members.

Participation

With immersive theatre growing in popularity, it's hard to not want to join in. If you're watching a show that encourages audience participation (most of the Juke Box Musicals allow you to sing at the finale) then by all means go ahead – sing, clap, get up and dance! Otherwise, do not join in. It's incredibly unfair to the actors and let's face it – the audience haven't paid to listen to you. If you want to be on stage, join your local Am-Dram group!

Respect

Actors like to be appreciated – who doesn't love leaving the stage door and being smothered in praise? But if you are one of those people who hangs around waiting for the actors after a show, remember that they're probably exhausted and hungry. Say your piece, ask for an autograph or a selfie, but don't overstay your welcome. And if you're sharing your thoughts on social media, don't make it personal. You don't have to like every show, but actors and crew have worked incredibly hard, so try to be fair.

Remember...

Most of us who frequent the stage do enjoy trips to the theatre and we're all guilty of getting caught up in the moment. But if you're excited about a show, just think about the actors. Would you be flattered that an audience member kept screaming and applauding every time you walked on stage or hit a particularly high note? OK, perhaps you would... ★



FOSART – Linking up Lincolnshire

A NODA member in Lincolnshire has created a Facebook Group which aims to be of interest and utility to anyone involved in the performing arts in her area.



Nicola Sandall, who is a member of a number of societies in and around her home town of Stamford, set up a Facebook page for people in the area in the summer of 2017.

Explaining her reasons for starting the group, Nicola said, "Friends of Stamford and Rutland Theatre (FOSART) group is an investment in the future of amateur theatre and performance in the area and a way of supporting the established groups across the county. Everyone who becomes part of the group has the opportunity to develop new skills, meet new friends from different theatre groups and gain the confidence they need to be successful in the world of amateur dramatics."

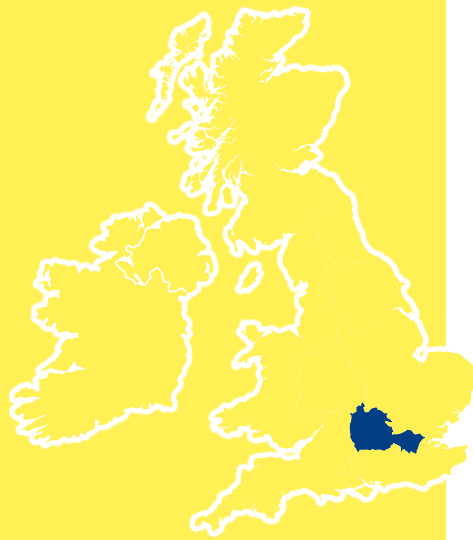
And the page is thriving, with over 500 members - many are from local societies (Stamford, Rutland, Grantham, Melton Mowbray and Peterborough are all represented) and some are simply interested individuals.

But the group does not just have an internet presence. Last autumn societies and groups in the area were invited to take part in a very successful theatre-themed quiz night at Tollethorpe Hall. And this summer FOSART took to the streets with a float in the Stamford Carnival, going on to celebrate their first anniversary with a birthday party at the bandstand in Stamford's park – where a raffle raised £600 to support local drama groups. More recently some members have sung at the Dyke Scarecrow Festival and will be supporting Stamford Christmas Market with an all-day Carol Singing Stage.

Other ventures include internet information sheets on local costume provision and rehearsal facilities and a 'Spotlight on a Member' feature.

This initiative – which, incidentally gives us a fine opportunity to promote NODA to non-members - is a stirring example of how to unify, inform and involve a wide cross-section of people who enjoy the performing arts. ★





Councillor's Chat

Much has happened since the last issue of NODA Today. We had our Regional Weekend in June, at which we ran the inaugural, and very successful, Showcase Competition, held workshops, celebrated our District Winners and presented 26 Regional Awards and District Flames to very worthy winners.

In September the Region hosted the National Presidential Gala and AGM at St Anne's Manor Hotel, Wokingham. A great time was had by all at the AGM and at the excellent Gala Dinner and Dance where we were well entertained by Stage One Youth and the Polka Dots. We celebrated into the late hours.

At the AGM, it was great to see one of our London Societies, SEDOS, winning the National Competition for Standard Programme Design. Details of this year's competition and entry forms are on the NODA website.

Talking of AGMs, I'm sure many Societies held theirs this summer and can I remind you all that if your Treasurer or NODA liaison person has changed, to let your Regional Rep have any updated contact details.

Four new Regional Reps have joined the team and we introduce them in this issue; please join me in welcoming them. ★

Andrew Rogers
Regional Councillor
NODA London

London



Kenny Frier Youth Theatre, Presentation at the NODA London Festival Weekend June 2018



It was a great privilege to be elected to take over from Jackie Stedman as Councillor for the London Region. Can I record my own personal thanks to Jackie for all that she has done to advise and guide me in preparation for taking on the role.

I have had a lifelong love of theatre and thrive on the excitement, the pressure and the companionship that producing a show brings. I have been a member of amateur theatre companies for well over 35 years. In that time I have acted in almost 60 plays, directed over a dozen, been a stage manager, set designer, set builder, been in charge of props, a sound designer, sound and light operator, Front of House, sold programmes and worked in the bar. I know the business of putting on a show from top to bottom. For my current society I was Chairman for seven years and have served on their play selection committee, casting committee and general committee for much of the last 30 years.

In 2014 I joined the London Regional Committee, serving as the Regional Representative for District 6. For London I have served on the Poster and Programme judging panel for the past three years, the Drama judging panel also for three years – as Chairman for the past two – and have been the Festival Weekend co-ordinator for the last two years, serving on the Events Steering Committee.

The business of running the London Region is, of course, continuous and planning is already underway for our Regional Weekend on 8/9th June 2019. You should all have received initial details of the Showcase Competition. I have already started to receive invitations to attend shows and this has given me the chance to see for myself the high standard that there is across the Region. I hope to have the opportunity of meeting all London societies in due course so please invite Karen and me to your shows. I would also be very pleased to receive invitations to present Long Service Awards and attend your AGMs or any other special events you are holding. I will try to get to as many as I can. Please also contact me to let me know what the NODA London committee is doing well and, importantly, what we could do better. I look forward to hearing from you. ★

NEW REPS

We are delighted to welcome four new Reps to the London Committee. District 1, in fact, now have two new Reps – Carly Hilts and Simon Jones, who will share the role.



DISTRICT 1 – CARLY HILTS

Am-dram became a key part of Carly's life whilst at university where she joined the Gilbert and Sullivan Society, performing at venues as far afield as the Minack Theatre in Cornwall and the G&S Festival in Buxton and Harrogate.

Since moving to London she has sung with Julian Light Opera Society,

Wimbledon Light Opera Society, Imperial Productions and the New London Opera Group and it is with the latter two groups that she performs most these days, both in London and on summer tours.

As a Rep, Carly says she has already learned so much by watching how other groups perform, and in particular is always very interested in chorus characterisation.

Outside performing, Carly is Editor of *Current Archaeology* magazine, enjoys running and playing the ukulele – and dreaming up new homebrew concoctions with her partner Simon (Jones).



DISTRICT 1 – SIMON JONES

Simon's music career started at an early age playing the trumpet, moving on to the trombone, piano and sousaphone with a variety of orchestras, pit bands and concert bands. At university he started directing their G&S shows which opened up a whole new world of performing, patter roles being a particular favourite.

Off stage and out of the orchestra pit, he is an Area Manager for London Transport.

Simon says he wanted to get involved in NODA as having been in many shows and donned the director's cape he realised that there is so much that you can miss when part of, and really immersed in, a production; that if you don't seek an independent input or a constructive critique, then you can never grow as a performer or director, and by extension - a society. It is the supportive and nurturing outlook that NODA has that really appealed to him and he felt that it was time to pay something back to the performing arts community so everyone can mutually benefit from their collective shared experiences and ideas.



DISTRICT 2 – MIKE SMITH

Mike has been involved in theatre one way and another for well over 50 years. He currently belongs to two groups – The Entertainers and BACCES (British Airways Cabin Crew Entertainment Society). The Entertainers are a small group who entertain 'in house' those folks who reside in care or residential homes, providing a mixed programme, mostly musical, of items from Old Time to modern.

A member of BACCES for 18 years, Mike has been involved in set building, in charge of props, working backstage, front of house, committee member, singing on backing tracks and in his spare time has been their Treasurer for the past eight years.

Mike has been a strong supporter of NODA over the past few years, attending the amazing event which is Summer School, and other workshops. He hopes he can now put some of his personal experience to good use by visiting groups in District 2 (and beyond) to encourage them to bring out the best in their society.



DISTRICT 6 – LINDSEY KENNEDY

Lindsey is delighted to have been appointed as Regional Representative for NODA London District 6. Amateur dramatics has been a lifelong hobby of hers and both Lindsey and her husband are active members, living in Buckhurst Hill. She follows in the footsteps of her parents as does her daughter, who is a member of CentreStage. She has performed in many musicals, and Old Time

Music Halls and now also takes part in the plays.

Lindsey worked professionally in theatre, her first job working for an impresario who produced, amongst many others, *No Sex Please We're British*, and then as an administrator for the English National Opera, until she had children.

The opportunity to become a Rep was one that came unexpectedly after a chance meeting with Andrew Rogers and she is really looking forward to this new challenge. ★



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So what actually is NODA Limited?

Many of you reading this article will have no idea that NODA Limited exists. To most members, NODA is simply NODA and the workings and structure of the organisation probably doesn't concern you. However, as Chairman of NODA Limited, I have been asked to write this short article to put you in the picture as to what it is that NODA Limited does. NODA Limited is a wholly owned subsidiary of NODA, the CIO.

We are a board of directors which consists of three independent directors and three NODA nominated directors. The COO also sits in on all NODA Limited board meetings and we also have an external insurance adviser and a marketing adviser who are called on from time to time to give opinions. The main objective of the Company is to provide NODA with funds to support its activities. In order to do this, we have three principal functions:

- ★ Sales of Long Service Medals & Badges
- ★ Royalties from Pantomimes, Plays and shows which are featured in our agency catalogue
- ★ Insurance commission raised from premiums paid by those who use the NODA Insurance Policy.

All of these are equally important to us and that is why we try to encourage members to use these particular services; this enables NODA Ltd to pass funds over to the charity for the benefit of all its members. Researching other marketing opportunities and revenue sources is also part of our remit.

If you don't currently use the services I've outlined, then I would ask you to seriously consider using some or all of them. As far as the Long Service Awards are concerned, we hear that not everyone wants to wear a medal these days which is why we've just introduced a new range of badges which appear to have greater appeal. They are not expensive and it is a way of members being recognised for the

length of time they have been involved with Amateur Theatre.

Looking at the royalties, we hear that some of our scripts are beginning to look tired. Fear not, for we will be introducing some new authors and titles to our catalogue before long and we trust these will appeal to you and your societies. And as far as the NODA Insurance Policy is concerned, this should be a no-brainer for all societies. Our policy has been drawn up and tailored to the needs of amateur societies. We have had a number of instances drawn to our attention where cheaper policies have been offered by others, only to find that the cover the societies expected to receive was incompatible with what NODA offered. So, take care, if you see an offer on insurance that looks too good to be true, it probably is.

If you would like to hear further about any of these services, then please get in touch with Head Office, where our staff there will be delighted to help you. ★

Eric Smart, NODA Limited Chairman



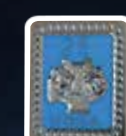
10 years



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



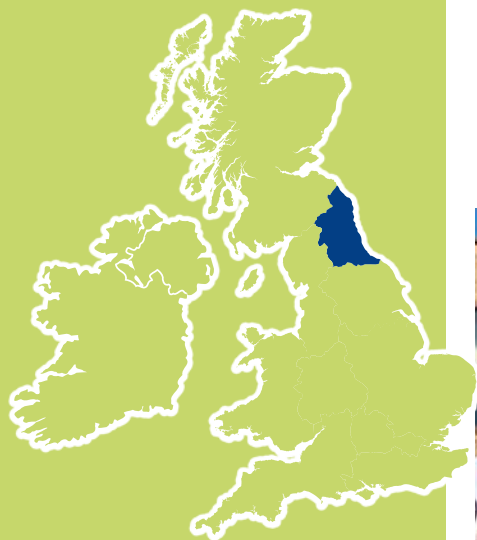
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Councillor's Chat

Whoosh! Where did that year go? As ever it has been packed with show visits to the far and wide of our region with many more visits still in the diary. We have welcomed the National president on no less than four occasions to our region (enjoy your 'retirement' Nick) and indeed have a three day visit by the brand new President Jacquie Stedman next month taking in visits to Darlington OS, Middlesbrough OS and Northallerton MTS.

As I write this column I have just returned from a 600+ mile drive round trip to West London to attend the National AGM and Presidential Gala which was spectacular and promoted all that is good in our hobby.

I also look forward to seeing one or two pantomimes over the coming months (well actually 21 last year) as I eat breathe and sleep to the chant of "He's behind you..."

Here's hoping the winter is good to you and all your 2019 productions are well prepared and all is in place to be successful. So, my final wish for the coming year, "May all your seats have bums in them..." See you soon at a production. ★

Gordon Richardson
Regional Councillor
NODA North

North



Murton Brass Band's final photo after Durham gala

Life imitating Art

Murton Theatre Group embarked on a joint venture with Murton Brass Band earlier this year to produce *Brassed Off*. The poignant, moving tale of a Band whose colliery is about to close and the inevitability of the band closure also. The theatre group struck up a mutual respect for the local band and much fun was had in rehearsals as the band respected the acting of the theatre group whilst conversely the actors marvelled at the skill of the band – especially as they tried to get a meaningful note out of the prop instruments they were using.

Several similarities to the play were noticed in respect the imaginary colliery of Grimley and Murton colliery; both were sunk within a couple of years of each other; both ultimately closed within a year of each other. Similarities also existed with the imaginary Grimley colliery Band and Murton Brass band both starting in the 1880's within a year of each other.

Sadly the similarities became all too real when after 137 years Murton Brass Band announced its disbanding only weeks after the final note in *Brassed Off* was played. Their final performance at Durham Miners Gala on July 14th, playing a rendition of *Gresford* (the miners hymn) at the Murton pit wheel memorial before setting off, at which several members of the theatre group cast stood in respect.

Although the band ceased through lack of members there remains a strong bond (as there always is in Mining communities) between the theatre group and the band members with some joining the theatre group to tread the boards in their production of *Half a Sixpence* later in the year. The band may have gone but the 'community' lives on. ★

Written by Gordon Richardson

Local Theatre Group Lends a Helping Hand!

Some of the cast and crew of 'My Fair Lady' along with the volunteers from the Re-F-use Café.



Chester-le-Street Theatre Group supported three local charities by raising awareness and vital supplies during their production of *My Fair Lady*. Their 3 chosen charities were North East Homeless (NEH), Re-F-use Café in Chester-le-Street and their local food bank.

Chester-le-Street Theatre Group Director, Julie Dryden told us: "One Sunday evening I was in Newcastle passing the Theatre Royal and noticed some tables set up and some wonderful volunteers dispensing hot drinks, food, warm clothing and words of kindness and support to the homeless community. This registered Charity 'North East Homeless' or NEH provide outreach three times weekly to their Street Friends and I have followed and supported them since that night. This experience gave me the inspiration to alter the date and location of this production to present day Newcastle and after carefully checking this out with the rights holders I have retained the original dialogue and libretto and tweaked in a Geordie accent. Within the directors interpretation I endeavoured to raise awareness of homelessness and support NEH, Re-f-use Café in Chester-le-Street and our local food bank as a result."

The Re-f-use Café opened in Chester-le-Street earlier this year and is part of 'The Real Junk Food Project' which is a rapidly growing network of organisations challenging criminal levels of food waste. They intercept food before it becomes waste and turn it into healthy accessible meals, served on a 'Pay As You Feel' basis which means guests can pay for their meals in cash, but non-monetary donations of time or skills are just as valuable. The café in Chester-le-

Street is run by volunteers, serving food that would otherwise be wasted.

Chester-le-Street Theatre Group collected for their 3 chosen charities during their show week. A collection point for foodbank donations was set up in Chester-le-Street Community Centre and recently some of the cast and crew of *My Fair Lady* went along to the Re-f-use Café to present them with a 'Bain Marie'. Nikki from the Re-F-use Café said "it will change our life and we are so very grateful to the Group!".

Chester-le-Street Theatre Group's production of *My Fair Lady* was performed at Chester-le-Street Community Centre where they raised a total of nearly £400 for their chosen charities which was used to buy the aforementioned Bain Marie for the Re-F-use Café, backpacks and toiletries for NEH plus a cash donation to both. The foodbank donations they also collected equated to a total of 96 meals! ★

Written by Lisa Graham

Some of the Junior members with the donated 'Bain Marie'.



Obituary Peter Parlour District No 6

When Peter was elected as Regional Representative for the then Region No 6, NODA North was known as the Northern area of NODA and Harry Low was the Area Councillor.

Peter was a very energetic and active rep for his region and was always ready to assist with anything concerning NODA.

Peter worked alongside 4 councillors: Harry Low, Ian Wells, myself and latterly Gordon Richardson and we could always rely on him whenever there was a job to be done. He would always approach everything with a big broad smile and very rarely missed a committee meeting or an Area/Regional Conference. Along with Anne his wife he attended many National conferences.

Peter's district covered mainly the Darlington Area but he also had societies in the Dales and would very rarely miss any productions even in the dead of winter. Nothing was ever a problem to him.

He retired as regional rep in March of this year having served for around 29 years. Peter was highly respected by all of his societies and members alike and is and will be sadly missed.

Our condolences are sent to Anne and Peter's family. ★

Written by Fred Piggford
– Past President

Work continues on Stockton Globe theatre which will hopefully open soon. More news as on this exciting development as it happens!

NODA North Awards Ceremony

NODA North hosted their annual awards event at Gosforth Park Hotel in Newcastle on September 15th. Andy Oliver was compère and an enjoyable evening was had by all. After sharing a meal together, the ceremony began with separate awards for youth and adult members. There were some great live action photographs taken by Signature Times Photography. Check out their website at signaturetimesphotography.pixieset.com/nodanorthperformanceawards2018/ and see if you can recognise anyone there! ★

Presidential Gala Review

Whenever we see the phrase 'National AGM' some tend to switch off their brains to the following phrase in that statement of 'and Presidential Gala'. Many (unless you are a constitution loving junkie) tend to realise that AGM's are necessary, but sometimes dry, legalities of any organisation.

Well under the chairmanship of outgoing National President Nick Lawrence, the AGM ran smoothly with added humour amongst the formality. As well as the financial and

constitutional declarations we were shown an audio / visual presentation detailing a year in the life of a President, many photos requiring no explanation, some requiring often mirth-inducing belly laughs in the bar afterwards as Nick Lawrence regaled us with their inclusion in the presentation.

As is tradition with the 'National', our sister organisation in Ireland (AIMS) provided their President Seamus Power to visit us. Maybe it's just fanciful to believe, but there is something about the

Irish in that they are natural comedians and, between Nick and Seamus, it felt like an episode of the two Ronnies...

Incoming President Jacquie Stedman gave an emotional address as she took office which also saw outgoing Chairman of Trustees John Barnes hand over to incoming Chairman Michael Hastilow, whilst Christine Hunter Hughes (Councillor for the North West) took the reins of Vice President. Speeches from Sarah Osborne as the new Director of NODA Theatre Summer School

extolled the virtues of the 'Bubble'. The 'Presidents Cup' was presented to Mark and Jane Walker of 'Bonkers Playhouse Theatre' of Kettering by Nick. Presentation of the Programme and Poster awards were awarded as a final act of AGM/open forum.

The rest of the day and weekend was dominated by a celebration of all that is good in the world of NODA, networking with fellow Regional Committee Members, staff from HO, traders (some of whom had flown in from New York earlier that day) and, of course sitting down to good food, good company and good entertainment in the presence of our brand-new President.

In one of her first speeches Jacquie Stedman acknowledged the dedication,

long service and professionalism of retiring Life Member of Council (and twice National President) Mr Bert Lumsden and the support of his good lady Anne.

Jacquie was supported, in what was obviously an emotional experience for her, by her husband, David, and most members of her family.

The splendid surroundings of the Hilton St. Annes Manor in Wokingham and good food were enhanced by background accompaniment on the keyboard by Clive Dunstall before the sumptuous entertainment cabaret provided by 'Stage One Youth' from nearby Maidenhead and dancing the remaining evening away to a 40's close harmony trio, "The Polka Dots".

Before departing after lunch on the Sunday a meeting of the Regional Committee Members was chaired by Judith Smith.

Congratulations need to be afforded to the 'Gala committee' and Regional Committee Members of NODA London for the immaculate organisation and preparations.

So the 'National AGM weekend' is so much more than a stuffy meeting. It is primarily a 'celebration' that NODA is still on the right tracks. It is alive and well supporting its members.

It has a vibrant member base and dedicated volunteers and staff so when it comes around in 2019 let's all celebrate our successes again as we remember our proud history. ★





North East

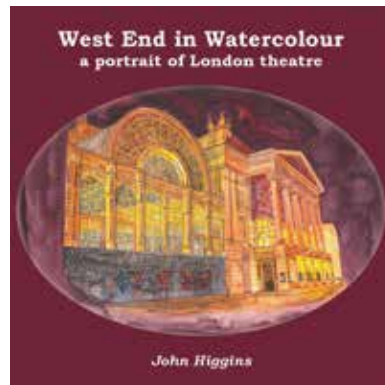
West End in Watercolour



John Higgins was, for more than 30 years, Musical Director and chorus master for several NODA affiliated theatre companies in South Yorkshire, notably Sheffield's Croft House, Barnsley's Hoyland ATS and Barnsley AOS. He was also chosen to MD the NODA North East's contribution to the National Centenary Celebrations at the Royal Albert Hall in 1999. Having retired from musical directing duties he is currently the President of the Croft House Theatre Company.

His visits to many of the famed theatres and opera houses of the world and his study of, and obsession with, theatre buildings and their evolution has provided the opportunity for his other great loves of writing and watercolour illustration and the publication of his third book *West End in Watercolour*.

The book considers the West End and its fashionable rise from earlier beginnings and John also looks closely at the concurrent vigorous entertainment scene around the East End and neighbouring working-class suburbs, and their subsequent metamorphosis into the prolific operation that has today become the trendy *Off-West-End*.



London Fringe. John says "As the legacy of the West End provides a host of sumptuous purpose-built theatres the modern-day Fringe is housed in a numerous variety of locations, from pubs and shopping centres to railway arches and redundant chapels or factories. Here a network of small

theatres scattered around Greater London supports and is invaluable to the West End itself. They have been described as powerhouses for their more modest locations and operations allow for the production of new, diverse and unknown work, the try-out of untapped talent and fresh ideas and risk-taking on an unprecedented scale. Thus, new actors, directors, technicians, musicians, playwrights, plays and shows are regularly given a platform, carefully nurtured, and will ultimately go on to benefit the West End, regional theatre and society in a myriad of ways, while individual localities may also reap the rewards of cultural projects, arts events and educational as well as tangible community-based facilities".

And so as the typical famous grand 'Up West' houses are paraded in their glittering surroundings of glamour and razzamatazz, their fascinating 'Off-West' counterparts have their own exciting tales to tell ... and John says one thing is for sure: they have all been delicious to paint! Both a theatre and an art book! ★

'The Handy Book of Unscripted Plays'

With an ageing population in mind, literally, one of our Individual Members, Dr. Ron Wiener, has written a book called 'The Handy Book of Unscripted Plays' with Diane Adderley as co-editor. Ron is the Artistic Director of Huddersfield based The Curtain Up Players. The group has been in existence for about 8 years and all members are over 50 who enjoy coming together to improvise scenes, sketches and plays that include serious topics such as dementia, family relationships and, for some light relief, pantomimes. Ron is himself a world-renowned socio-dramatist and a community theatre director. The book offers some of the scenarios and scripts created by the Players and would be useful starting points for amateur theatre groups. More details and copies can be obtained from ron@ronwiener.co.uk, through Amazon and Christine Castle, Regional Representative NE District 9, will be pleased to supply further information. ★

Councillor's Chat

As the days draw shorter we start a new season of productions from our great societies, we have all experienced a wonderful hot summer and now is the time to get back to rehearsals which we also enjoy.

Already my diary is getting filled with many productions which include Plays, Musicals and Revues which I know will be performed to an excellent standard, and even though it is getting filled, in fact I have already seen some brilliant productions from societies who have made an early start to the season and indeed one whose members work all through the summer season with their productions to entertain scores of people who visit their town, I am still very pleased to be invited to more productions.

If you haven't already invited me to your next production please do contact me with the details, dates etc and I am only too happy to support you and your society.

Of course we don't just support you by attending your productions, if you need support in other ways please do contact your Regional Rep or myself and we will support you in any way we can.

Please do make use of your NODA North East officials and also Head Office, we are only a phone call, email or text away. ★

Leslie Smith
Regional Councillor
NODA North East

"Clothes make a statement, Costumes tell a story" – Mason Cooley

A chat between North East Regional Councillor Les Smith and Scott McKenzie, the proprietor of Molly Limpet's Costume Emporium in Sheffield, resulted in a Costume Workshop for NODA NE members and others who had travelled from further afield to spend a day learning about the wonderful world of theatrical costumes.

Scott explained about how a professional costumier operates and shared secrets of some of the interesting 'experiences' he has had whilst working in the world of costumes. The workshop took place at Molly Limpet's costume warehouse and attendees were allowed to get up close to costumes and explore some of the 30,000 plus pieces which are available. Throughout the day Scott provided a range of top tips and advice to help amateur societies regardless of size and budget. A key thing which all attendees were encouraged to do was to talk to suppliers and to always communicate whether it was about budgets, the Director's vision or the impending 'due date' of the principal girl's baby. It was also emphasised that there is a need in societies to understand the commitment which costume teams invest to make the show look good and how it takes many hours of hard work to deliver a fully costumed show. So there is a need to involve your costume team at all stages in the planning.

Scott and his team generously funded the workshop and provided an excellent buffet lunch. But what everyone really valued was the guidance and support which was offered as well as the chance to see the amazing costume collection which one attendee described as "like being in a fairy tale". ★



Scott McKenzie with workshop attendees



Cats Erin, Harry and Leah

Winning Cats

A number of young dancers who took part in the LAOS The Musical Theatre Company's production of *Cats* went on to prove their talents at the I.T.D.A Dance UK Finals in Blackpool. Leah Darby (Rumpleteazer) won the Miss Dance UK final and Harry Wilson (Mr Mistoffelees) became Master Dance UK champion. Erin Chapman – 'Victoria' in the Leeds production – also won two Theatre Council International competitions in Senior Modern Dance and Senior Song and Dance. A 'purr-fect' way to acknowledge all their excellent dance skills. LAOS will return to the Grand Theatre next April with a classic production of *West Side Story*. ★

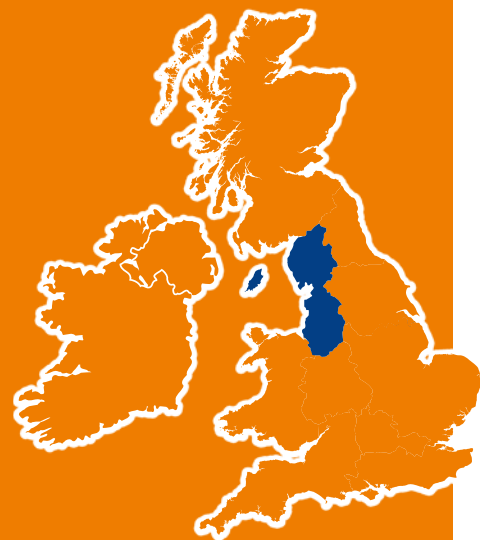
Singing and Signing in NODA North East

Following a successful 'Sign and Sing' workshop with Natalie Davis and Paul Whittaker at the NODA NE Bridlington Gala weekend in April the Director of Ossett Youth Theatre group was so impressed with what she, and other members of the group, had learnt that they invited Natalie and Paul to attend a dedicated workshop for their young members to develop skills, promote inclusivity and raise awareness of how much impact a signed performance can have.

The members of Ossett Youth Theatre (who are aged from 7 years) regularly perform full scale musicals as well as seasonal concerts. They recently performed *Hairspray* to captivated audiences who were singing and dancing in the aisles along with the very talented cast.

The Sign and Sing evening was great fun and allowed the group to explore emotion, character and musicality through signing and learning just a few words of British Sign Language. OYT plan to rehearse the three songs they worked on with Natalie and Paul and hope to include them in a future concert. ★

Jo Sykes
Youth Adviser NODA NE



North West

Councillor's Chat

Hope everyone had a great summer – I expect it seems a distant memory by now as everyone seems to be busy planning some fantastic productions – many of which I have already been invited to. We are busy too – planning the next NODA NW Weekend which will be held on 4th and 5th May 2019 at the Mercure Hotel in Manchester, so do save the dates.

I am also busy planning for the AGM and Presidential Gala which will be held either 21st or 28th September 2019 somewhere in the North West, and at which I will be installed as NODA's 70th President and in my own 70th year – so, as you can see, something to really celebrate and I really hope that as many of you as possible will come and celebrate with me and also celebrate the wonderful hobby that brings us all together as one big NODA Family. Please do try and come!

Shortly after receiving this you should also receive the nomination forms to elect a new NODA NW Councillor – if you can think of anyone you would like to nominate please do so – I am happy to chat with anyone who is interested but whether you nominate anyone or not – please do vote in the election. You are voting for YOUR representative on the NODA Council, NODA's ruling body. ★

Christine Hunter Hughes
Regional Councillor
NODA North West



Youth members from NODA North West's district six came together for a special workshop organised by their area rep Pat Connor, NODA NW councillor Christine Hunter Hughes and NW youth advisor Jenny King.

Based at Ormskirk Civic Hall, the young performers, aged from eight to 16 years, took part in a range of activities.

Jenny said "David Wall as musical director certainly encouraged the performers with their vocal abilities while Gemma Briscoe and Liz Wainwright from the Pleasurefolk worked on lively and exciting choreography for The Greatest Showman and drama with stagecraft based around the common mistakes people make when acting - it was great fun trying to spot all the things that were wrong.

"All the young performers attempted all the skills with enthusiasm, often attempting things they hadn't tried before.

"During a lunch break, it was brilliant to see all the new friendships made, everyone chattering to each other and swapping contact details.

"At the end of the day there were many requests of 'When is the next one?' and 'Can we do it again?', so we feel it was a great success and hopefully it will be repeated next year.

"A huge thank you to everyone involved." ★



Here's a How-De-Do!

A Festival of G&S...?

To celebrate the joys of the partnership of W.S. Gilbert and Sir Arthur Sullivan, a G&S Festival – to be run along similar lines as the successful NODA NW Drama Festival – has been suggested by NODA members in the North West; as an organisation which takes ideas from its membership seriously, the NODA NW Committee would love to hear your thoughts on the idea so we can start to put the wheels in motion for our very own celebration of the wonderful world of G&S.

The comic operas of Gilbert and Sullivan are among the greatest theatrical achievements ever brought to the stage and in the North West, the magic of G&S is as much alive and thriving today as it ever was. It's become something of a cliché to describe Gilbert and Sullivan as the founding fathers of the modern musical but their place at the heart of the stage musical as we know it today cannot be denied. It could also be argued that those of us who know and love our G&S can sometimes feel

pushed to the sidelines by a perceived focus on headline-grabbing new stage shows and 'the latest thing' in showbiz, whatever it might be.

Perhaps you feel that the sparkling Savoy Operas get overlooked in favour of the brash and flashy modern newcomers to the musical stage; maybe you think a focus on the operas of Gilbert and Sullivan might help to spread the word and bring a new audience to the wonderful world of the Savoy Operas; it

could be that you would just like share the joys of learning, rehearsing and performing G&S with the wider NODA community. Whatever your views and opinions, we'd love to hear from you.

Whether you're a Pirate or a Peer, a Sister, Cousin or an Aunt; fresh to the world of G&S or an established fan of the patter, remember: your views really do matter (matter, matter...)

Get in touch and have your say! ★

David Slater
NODA NW District 3
david.slater@noda.org.uk



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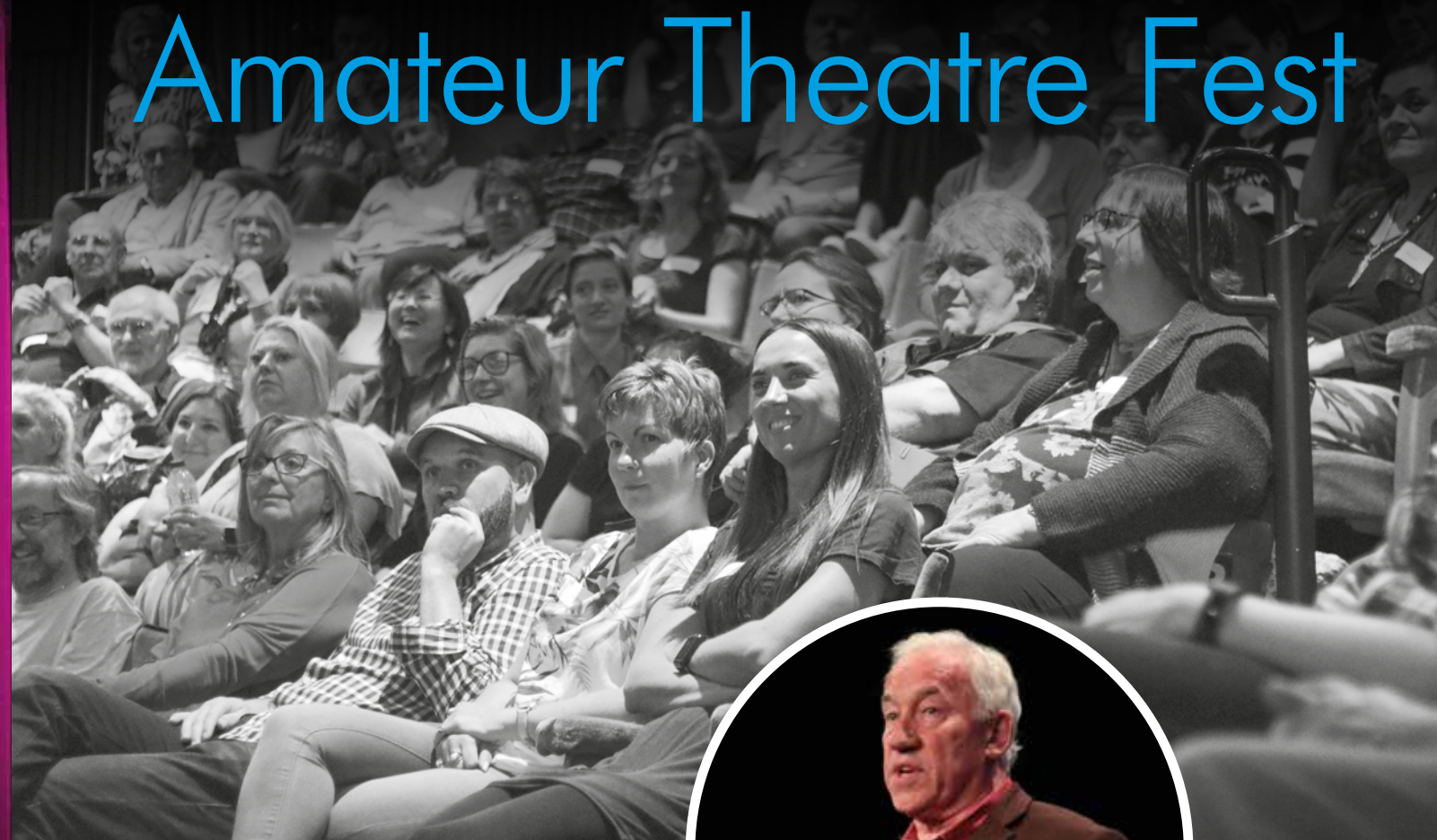
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Be inspired by amateur theatre

Amateur Theatre Fest



After having the surprise of being invited to the inaugural Amateur Theatre Fest, I eagerly anticipated this exciting event as I did not know what to expect. Waking up early on Saturday morning is not exactly what comes to mind as a source of 'fun' for a teenager after their first week back to Sixth form but as soon as I arrived at the Questors Theatre I was greeted with a warm welcome from the impeccably organised team of Nick Hern Books. The coffee was great. The trend of a warm reception continued throughout the day with the staff on hand at all times to

answer any queries that anyone had.

This event was the place to be for networking between amateur theatre groups, was evident by the excited murmur in the auditorium preceding the tumultuous applause awaiting the entrance of the man of the hour, Simon Callow.

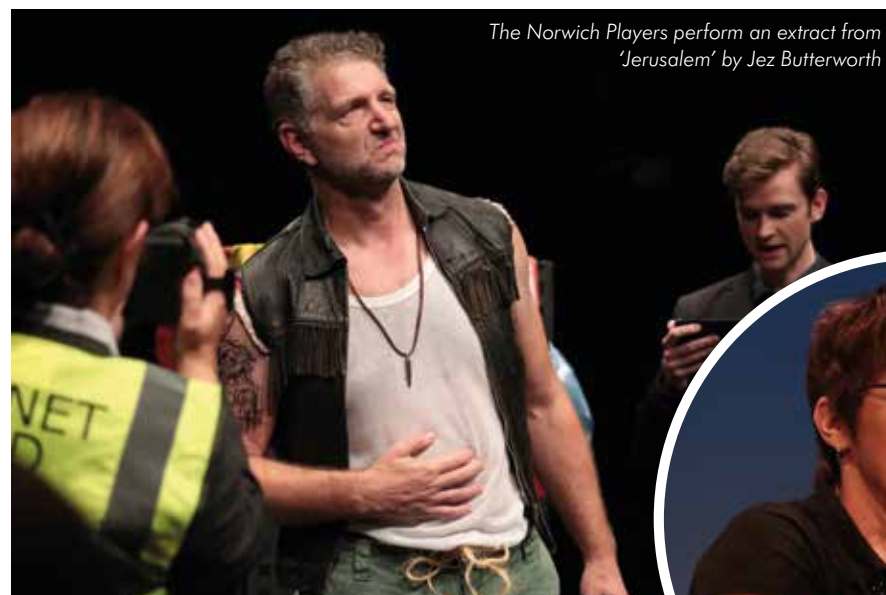


Callow's welcome speech was weighted with hilarious stories about his career; the anecdote about him and the actress playing

Mrs. Fezziwig falling down a trapdoor and ad libbing his way out of embarrassment during one of his first professional plays, A Christmas Carol, was particularly funny and led to his declaration that although his experience of amateur theatre is limited he has experienced the true meaning of 'amateur' in professional theatre. Simon's speech gave a bitter insight to the reality of the professional industry to all aspiring actors in the room: "it is not enough to want to act, you have to feel that you must act; it cannot be unless you want to live the life of an actor." This led him on to discuss the beauty of amateur theatre as he believes that amateur theatre possesses the true passion and craft of theatre due to the fact that, as he put it, "amateur theatre, as the name suggests, exists purely out of love." The audience certainly related to Simon's speech and this message of love and 'being in the room' was a theme that seemed to weave its way into the different aspects of the day.



Photos courtesy of Ben Copping



The Norwich Players perform an extract from 'Jerusalem' by Jez Butterworth



Jez Butterworth



Amanda Whittington

Stephen Unwin's masterclass gave practical advice to the audience members gathered to develop their skills in directing and the preparation required from a director before they can intervene:

1. Know your stuff – why does this play exist? Why do you care for the play?
2. Look at what is in front of you
3. Listen to the people in the room
4. Think of ways to fix an issue
5. Speak - only now do you have a license to speak.

Unwin's discussion again stressed the importance of being present and involved in the room.

The highlight of the day for me was Barbara Houseman's vocal workshop which focussed on freeing our voices from the censorship we have put on them. Barbara's practical approach to this workshop truly felt as if we had all 'found' our voices for the first time and I would highly recommend her book to unlock the secrets to unlocking the voice's potential.

This day provided the passionate amateur theatre people gathered with 3 chances to listen to 3 of Nick Hern Books' greatest playwrights. Mike Bartlett was an inspiration to all as he emphasised the importance of allowing the play to be born naturally as his play writing device is to find the characters first with the dialogue and then improvise the course of the play; to him this is the joy of play writing and shifts a focus onto the importance of being present in the drama. Amanda Whittington's interview was particularly exciting, not least because she approved an all male cast of 'Ladies Day' to free up theatre, but also she announced that Nick Hern Books have commissioned her to write a third play in the Ladies Day story. Nick Hern's introduction of Jez Butterworth as writing "the best play [Mojo] he had read since he [NH] was Harold Pinter's publisher". Jez's interview was heartfelt and honest, not least due to the fact that he was so open to discussing the emotional stimuli to writing his plays.

Pinter's influence in Butterworth's earlier plays was very interesting as he admitted that he felt he based his plays on the model of a Pinter play and said that when "writing Jerusalem, Pinter had died 2 months previously and that is probably why you can't hear him in it". Jez showed his passion for theatre as he jokingly revealed that he much prefers writing for the stage as "being a screenplay writer for Hollywood is like being a sperm donor". The presence of Jez, Mike and Amanda at the first Amateur Theatre Fest shows the legacy that this event will have; this event was extremely educational and enjoyable for all theatre makers and was loved by all that attended as was evident by the rapture of applause that released the audience to claim their drink vouchers from the bar. The day was very well planned and organised with very interesting workshops and talks that taught and inspired all that attended. ★

Written by Conor Quinn



Questor Theatre perform an extract from 'Mojo' by Jez Butterworth



Workshop Leader Thomasina Unsworth delivers 'Let's Play Some Drama Games'

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Beyond the Fringe

Back in the Summer edition, we caught up with The Stevenage Lytton Players as they were approaching their run at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival. Now we are into October and the run seems a distant memory, we had a chat with David Slade the Director 'Apocalypse Cow' and one of the cast members, Ari Nussey, to get their take on the whole Edinburgh Fringe experience.

Choosing the Show

Back in 2014, we took George Orwell's '1984', this time, we wanted to take a particular show but were unable to secure the rights. Instead we decided upon a devised piece based on cows destroying the world. We brainstormed the piece as a group, improvised some scenes and I then took all the ideas and created a script. This script bore no resemblance of the show we ended up performing. It was more adult, contained lots of swearing and as a piece of theatre, didn't really know what it was; was it satire, comedy, drama. So we workshopped the show again and tweaked the ideas to create a family based show.

Finding a venue

The first time we went to the Fringe in 2014, I identified 50 different venues and shared them out with the cast, they all went through the list and identified the best venue. In this case we decided on 'The Space: Surgeons Hall'. We had a good relationship with the crew and staff in 2014, so we decided to return to the same venue this year. The first time everyone was finding their feet in the venue and really just went along with what the crew and staff told us. This time as we had the relationship we found it a lot easier and laid back, I think that both parties knew what the others could do and that made a much more relaxed run.

People seem to think getting a venue is expensive and difficult. Some venues want to see your show first and have proof the show will happen. Some charge a flat percentage and some (like The Space) charge a fee to hire 'your slot' and then take a small percentage of ticket sales, leaving the rest to the group.

When you book a venue you book a time slot. This time we booked 1 hour. So we had 5 minutes to get in, 45 minutes to perform and 10 minutes to get out. As the show had minimal props and no set, this worked well. But when looking for a show to perform and a venue, always remember your get in and out time as this will really eat into your allotted time!

Funding the experience

Don't get me wrong, The Fringe is not cheap. I wouldn't recommend an amateur group to do more than a week run. We ran numerous fundraising events including sponsored weight loss, go bare faced with no make up for a month, comedy and music evening and grant funding. The cast still had to contribute to the cost but provided you are all willing to put the work in to fundraising it makes it a lot easier!

Accommodation

Accommodation was the most expensive part of the experience. There are so many options available. We went for student accommodation, where we all had individual rooms and a common living space. As student halls go, we were very happy with what we had. Other places you could have dormitories, youth hostels, hotels or AirBnB. The main thing we looked for when searching for accommodation was somewhere we could go to relax. It is a long week and having that place away from the hustle and bustle was vital!

Marketing the Show

When we took 1984, it was a known show. This year with Apocalypse Cow, obviously nobody had heard of it. Spending time leaflet dropping on the Royal Mile was vital, we even hired the small stage there to perform a short extract. Our ticket sales did suffer as our leaflets did not arrive to the venue until the third day of shows, but nevertheless we were out handing as many leaflets out as we could!

We had one critic come and watch the show this year. I think because we performed in the first week, most of the critics were still watching all of the big events and then filtering down onto the smaller ones. If we went up again, I would definitely go in the second or third week as by that time all of the big shows will be up and running and people looking for more variety.

The cast experience

All of the cast knew each other before going up, but even so it is a very different experience spending all day everyday together rather than just rehearsals. You work with, perform with, socialise with and work with everyone in the cast and crew and after a while things do tend to get a bit heated. Halfway through the week we had what I call the 'day everyone hated each other', everyone was tired and got to that halfway stage in the show where the novelty has worn off and before the last push of final shows. Everyone soon got over it and were back to their normal selves. Half of the cast had attended Fringe with 1984, so they were more at ease with the schedule and overall experience, for the other half, it was all new to them. Having a split cast this time really helped as you had the experience but also the eagerness and nervousness in the company.

Any last advice?

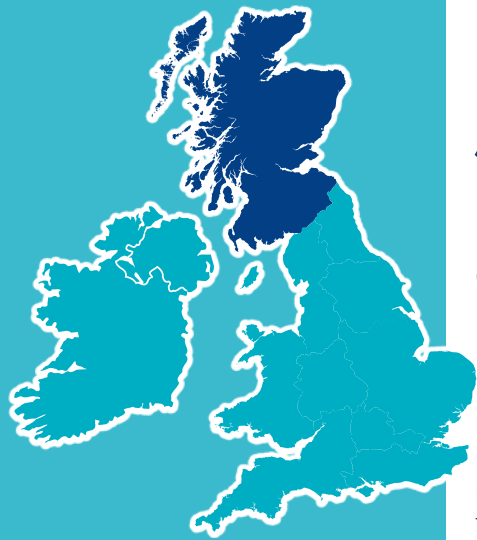
Book your venue early as they get booked very quickly. Book early October/November. It also helps you as it ties you into actually doing the show.

Fundraise, fundraise, fundraise - it makes the experience a lot easier and builds up teamwork from the start.

Make sure you experience Edinburgh and The Fringe when you are there. It is an amazing city with so much going on. This year I finally climbed Arthurs Seat with a few of the cast. It is something I have wanted to do for years and finally achieved it!

A comment from one of the audience was that they thought Fringe was considerably bigger than when they attended in 2014. I have to agree, over the last 20 years of sporadically attending it has grown enormously. Anyone interested in the arts will be amazed of the scope of events being performed in such a small area. ★





Councillor's Chat

It's hard to believe I have been NODA Scotland Councillor for a year now. It has been great getting to meet so many members at the various shows and District meetings I have been invited to.

Having launched our youth training workshop "Dare to Dream", the NODA Scotland Committee would like to roll this out to as many members as possible. If this is something you would like to take part in, please contact myself or your Regional Representative.

Over the coming year we are also looking to arrange a series of "Business of Amateur Theatre" workshops to help those with responsibility for running amateur theatre clubs. Topics will include marketing and budgeting for productions. Full details will be made available once plans have been finalised.

Don't forget to list your future productions on the NODA website to ensure additional free publicity including the weekly break a leg message on the NODA Scotland Facebook page.

I wish all those with productions over the coming months well. Don't forget that NODA is here to provide you with help, support and advice so please don't hesitate to get in touch if there is anything I or the NODA Scotland committee can help with. ★

Stuart McCue-Dick
Regional Councillor
NODA Scotland

Scotland

Ian M Gray – Regional Representative (District No 1 – Glasgow Area) (until 28 October 2018)

Ian Gray retired as Regional Representative for the Glasgow Area at the NODA Scotland Annual General Meeting on 28 October 2018. I am sure all Societies and Individual Members in District No 1 will wish to thank Ian for his 29 years of service in post and extend their best wishes for the future.
Stuart McCue-Dick (Councillor)

Apparently always singing, my first stage experiences were with the Life Boys — now renamed as Boys' Brigade Junior Section. In later years, BB meant pantomime or 'sketches', allowing what we called 'acting'! It also meant *BB Fanfare*, the equivalent of the Scouts' Gang Show, and my first big stage, in the Theatre Royal, Glasgow, just before Scottish Television took that theatre over. The second year was in the Glasgow Empire, dreaded by Mike and Bernie Winters and other professionals, and now destroyed, as was the third year's Alhambra Theatre. The bug had bitten hard, and when my dentist suggested joining Glasgow's Lyric Club (he was President), I jumped at the chance. *Oklahoma!* was my first show,

joining with performers I had watched from the audience for years. In tears after the final performance, I asked "What'll I do next week?" and someone said "Come to Glasgow Light", which I did, doing both Clubs' shows for many years.

Eventually, work pressure meant sacrificing one Club, and Glasgow Light Opera Club (GLOC) became my main society, and still is, 50 and more years later, mainly in the King's Theatre, Glasgow. Job-wise, one boss was heavily into the Pantheon Club, and suggested that I also join that for a year or two, with a slightly different stable of shows, all adding to experience. A vacancy as NODA's Regional Representative came up, and that altered direction again, to an extent, but I still try, health permitting, to perform with GLOC, whilst still thoroughly enjoying attending other shows as the 'NODA man'. The welcome from other companies to fellow aficionados never ceases to please me. So keep it up, folks — it helps us all. ★

Ian M Gray

CELEBRATION IN HAMILTON

Hamilton Operatic & Dramatic Club (HODC) are delighted to be celebrating the success of their Musical Director, Elizabeth Pearson who was recently awarded the British Empire Medal in the Queen's Birthday Honours List for services to music and education in Lanarkshire. Describing the reaction to receiving this prestigious award as "unbelievable", Elizabeth said, "I only wish my mum and dad had been here to see it. They would have been thrilled."

Away from teaching, she has been involved over many years in musically directing shows with HODC in particular, Our Lady's Musical Society and Carluke Operatic Society.

HODC secretary Ann Gardiner was full of praise for Elizabeth's work. "It couldn't happen to a nicer person," said Ann. "Anyone who knows her will tell you that. No-one was surprised when we found out the news." ★

Christopher Costello, Marketing & Advertising Manager, Hamilton Operatic & Dramatic Club



Liz Daniels – Regional Representative (District No 1 – Glasgow Area) (from 28 October 2018)

We welcome Liz Daniels as Regional Representative for the Glasgow Area. As you will see below, Liz brings a wealth of experience to the position and we wish her well for the future.
Stuart McCue-Dick (Councillor)

I am delighted to be given the opportunity to become the District 1 representative for the Scotland Region and thank everyone who supported me through the nomination and election process. I have been involved in amateur theatre for many years and have been lucky enough to have performed both as a principal and member of the ensemble, and have loved every minute of it. My main focus now is directing shows; other roles I have undertaken include production manager, stage management, crew, programme compilation and wardrobe. I have been a committee member and have life membership of The Minerva Club, Glasgow. Like many of you, I greatly enjoy visiting the theatre regularly and support both amateur and professional companies.

I have always been associated with societies who are affiliated to NODA, and for several years I have been an individual member of NODA to ensure I remain up to date with current news, events and information. My experience of NODA also extends to performing in the late-night cabaret at the NODA Scotland Conference.

For the past twenty years I have directed musical theatre shows and concerts, working with both adults and children. Directing shows and managing productions, I have gained a wide understanding of the work required

to stage a performance. This includes budgeting, all aspects of artistic and technical requirements, and the ability to deliver a show on time, within budget and with high performance values. Having this range of experience will enable me to write show reports with an understanding of the time, commitment, hard work and effort that is required to stage a production.

From 2010 to 2013 I was the artistic director for a number of concerts in The Glasgow Royal Concert Hall, and in 2012 was invited to direct *Young Variety*, also in The Glasgow Royal Concert Hall, which showcased the wonderful talent that is out there among our young people.

Issues such as rising production costs, availability of shows and legislation including GDPR and Child Protection and safeguarding are all important issues that affect every theatre company. Positive and encouraging developments are that over the last few years new clubs are emerging, and musical theatre is flourishing among our young people.

I look forward to working closely with companies, alongside the other Regional Representatives and the Youth Adviser in order to share information from NODA. This would facilitate a process by which amateur companies can be more involved in and influence decisions that affect them.

In summary, I believe I have the experience and understanding to work with societies and individuals in promoting the work of NODA as a valuable partner in the world of amateur theatre. I consider it a privilege to be a Regional Representative and can assure you of my commitment to NODA. ★

Liz Daniels



Obituary – Bill Nolan

The District 3 family lost a pillar of its community with the passing of Bill Nolan on 12 August 2018. "Uncle Bill" as he was known to many was a member of NODA for over 60 years and was an institution backstage in District 3 shows. He began his stage career way back in the 60s performing onstage with the Falkirk Bohemians before moving into a backstage role with his own company, Falkirk Players and LAOS some years later. In 1985 together with three of his stage crew friends he formed OPUS, a unique NODA society dedicated to providing backstage technical support to other societies in the area and he was their stage manager for over 30 years. Bill was a gentle, kind and caring man who was known for wanting things done just right. He would patiently educate new recruits on the proper way to do things and took great pride in getting the job done and done well. He was an excellent problem solver and companies always felt secure in the knowledge that if there was an issue Bill was the man to solve it, usually by producing some tool, device or gizmo from his trusty Aer Lingus bag. The world of amateur stage in Central Scotland will never be quite the same again and the stage manager's chair at The Dobbie Hall, Falkirk Town Hall and Linlithgow Academy Theatre will forever seem empty without him. ★

Letham – Population 1640 – Forty Years Strong



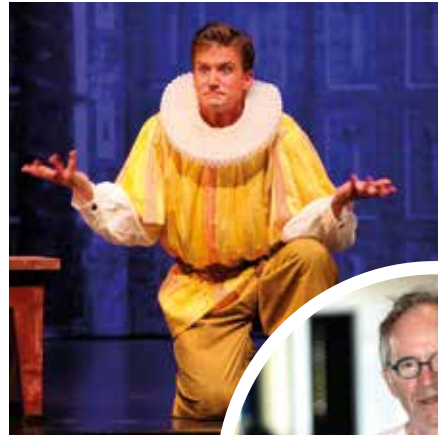
Letham Drama Group, Angus, have celebrated a milestone – 40 years of productions, started in 1978 by two 15 year olds, one of whom is still involved with the committee to this day. All past members, estimated at about 500, were invited to a birthday party in August at which we unveiled a bench which is now placed outside our premises as a fitting memorial. ★

Dawn Crighton, Chairperson, Letham Drama Group

Zurich Comedy Club:

English Theatre in Zurich for the Past 64 Years and Still Going Strong.

It was in 1954 that eight homesick British expats got together and with a few friends played "Quiet Weekend" for two nights to a bemused Swiss audience. Progress since then has led to the Club today having a membership of around 150, embracing several nationalities and native languages.



The Club holds regular weekly meetings at which plays are read (unrehearsed) or occasionally courses are given in various aspects of theatre. Twice a year a major production is staged for between eight and ten performances over two weeks. Audiences average about 300-350 per night, and we estimate that two-thirds of them are non-native English speakers. From time to time other projects are carried through in different venues, including musicals, music hall evenings, pantomimes, programmes of one-act plays and rehearsed public readings.

In our earlier years we sometimes went on tour: our very first performance was given in Davos. The cast, slightly the worse for a drink or two, had to hold up the cardboard scenery during their

performance. Since then our standards have risen somewhat!

We have played in Berne (including at the Ambassador's residence), Basle, and other places in Switzerland. More recently considerations of transport costs for scenery, etc. and the busier lives of some members, have made such excursions more difficult to arrange. In addition, we have several times taken part in the FEST (Festival of English-Speaking Theatre) in Berne and in other towns, as well as hosting it ourselves.

Our repertoire is in no way restricted by the "Comedy" in our name: we have performed *Macbeth*, *The Chalk Garden*, *The Miracle Worker*, *Hedda Gabler*, *Dancing at Lughnasa*, *Death of*

a Salesman and many other dramas. Among the musicals we have played are *Oh, What a Lovely War!* and *Fiddler on the Roof*; our dancers came to the fore in *Stepping Out*. We have attracted a younger audience by putting on *The Wind in the Willows*, *Aladdin* and *Cinderella*, among others.

Our activities were recognised by the Zurich city authorities in 2002 by the presentation of a prize for "promoting the English language in Switzerland". The presenter said that we "play an important role in (Zurich's) cultural landscape". It is also fair to add that over the years we have helped other groups to get off the ground in Basle and Berne.



Our financial position is satisfactory, and we regularly set aside a part of our profits to donate to charitable causes, both in this country and elsewhere.

Over the last twenty years several of our members have attended NODA summer school. We sponsor a first visit, but many

of those who have been once attend in subsequent years at their own expense. From time to time we invite NODA instructors to Zurich to coach our members in various aspects of theatre. With the combination of the knowledge gained from NODA expertise, and the practical experience accumulated over our 64 years

of activity, we like to think that we offer our audiences a semi-professional standard in all the relevant aspects of a production. We look forward to presenting high quality English language theatre in Zurich for another 64 years. ★

Written by Alan Bridgman

"There aren't many good parts for older actors."
(lament of any actor over the age of 50)

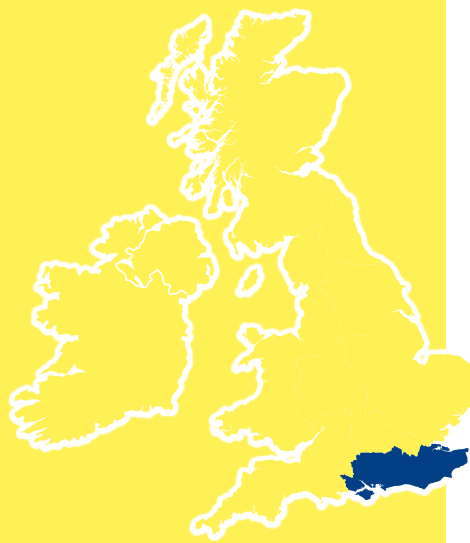


WE BEG TO DIFFER...

...but then we have cornered the market in outstanding new plays for the more, shall we say, seasoned actor, without resorting to parts that call for zimmer frames, deathbed scenes, terminal illness or care homes, (well apart from one play, described by a local newspaper as "A sort of Sex in the City for the over 60s").

Interested? Then read on...

www.playsforadults.com



Councillor's Chat

Following a tremendous summer of baking hot theatres, I notice we are moving towards those grey days when going to rehearsals has great appeal. Gradually all our diaries are beginning to fill with plays, operas, musicals and the winter staple - the pantomime.

Grump Corner - Many of you will be involved in more than one activity at a time, indeed maybe more than one society at a time. Rehearsal schedules are often extremely tight so missing a rehearsal can be very frustrating for the director and or the MD and the time cannot easily be made up. This is a plea to those who "miss" rehearsals - please don't!

Cheery Corner - It was a real thrill to see so many members of the South East at Yarnfield for the NODA Theatre Summer School. Under our new School Director, Sarah Osborne, with her infectious nature and cheerful disposition the School was very exciting and memorable.

Thanks, should go to all your Regional Committee for all the work they do on your behalf not just writing reports but organising our Celebration Days.

I thank you all, both societies and individuals, for making me welcome at your shows and look forward to meeting many more of you. ★

Kay Rowan
Regional Councillor
NODA South East

South East



Celebrations!

Eastbourne Gilbert and Sullivan Society is fifty years old this year. It was on the 13th February 1968 their inauguration took place and fifty persons attended. There are a few founder members still alive but are not active with the Society, all but one who will be gracing the Devonshire Park Theatre stage this coming May for the production of *The Yeomen of the Guard*.

Between the inauguration date and the Society's first major production, they were building up their assets by performing concerts at the Congress Theatre with their own version of "G&S for All" and had repeated the same concert at other venues. There were other social events and concerts which were successful enabling the Society to plan for their forthcoming production.

The Society's first production was *The Pirates of Penzance* at the Royal Hippodrome Theatre in 1970. This production was to be at Eastbourne's Pier Theatre, but unfortunately someone set light to it and it was completely destroyed and the Royal Hippodrome management stepped in and saved the day. A further eighteen productions were to follow up to 1988 when the Society received an invitation from the management of the Devonshire Park Theatre and their first production was *The Yeomen of the Guard*. So it seems a full cycle of events and thirty one operas later they are once again performing *The Yeomen of the Guard* -

a fitting tribute to the Society's history of keeping Gilbert and Sullivan Alive!

It was on the 20th June 1978 that yours truly became the fifth Secretary of the G&S Society and after much dabbling at various positions on the committee, I resigned after 38 years, but volunteered to be their Vice-Chairman once more. It was and still is a privilege and honour to serve the society in whatever they wish me to do.



The culmination of Sullivan's magical music and Gilbert's brilliant words were somehow made for each other - they were matched perfect as a performing duo and singularly they were equally excellent.

The Yeomen of the Guard may be seen as the second operetta that could be classed as a grand opera as it is a little more serious until we get to the duo Wilfred Shadbolt and Jack Point - a classic slap-stick farce of words and actions! Like all G&S although serious it has its funny moments. *The Yeomen of the Guard* is a story of romance and dastardly deeds set in the Tower of London in the sixteenth century with the usual twists and turns of a topsy-turvy world that both Gilbert and Sullivan were adept at producing. ★

Written by Gregory Gower



Wick Theatre Company 1948-2018

Back in 1948, stage struck members of a youth club in Southwick, West Sussex, persuaded their leader to invite two members from a local company to speak on the subject of drama. This generated such interest that a group was formed, soon to become the Young Wick Players. Ten years later, when original members weren't quite so youthful, the title was changed to Wick Theatre Company.

Of the original speakers, one, Molly Penney, was to be Wick's lady bountiful for many years. She became president, taught, encouraged and directed the young members, while her husband allowed the company to keep its scenery at his coal-merchants wharf in Shoreham Port.

One of the main founders, Betty Dawes, was President for a long period, and now, since her death in 2016, her husband, another founder member, has taken over the role.

Wick has had many seasons of award-winning drama, enjoying successes in various local competitions, both for one-act and full length plays. Each year, four plays providing a good mix from comedy and farce to more serious fare are now produced.

In 1951 a 200-year old Barn in Southwick was converted into a theatre, and became the Company's permanent home. It has been much improved over the years, and after a substantial

lottery grant in 1997, boasts a good-sized stage, state of the art lighting and retractable raked seating.

Since its inception, Monday has been Wick night, and members keep in touch with coffee evenings and play readings. To mark this anniversary, a very glamorous party was held at the Barn, with a sit-down meal and dancing.

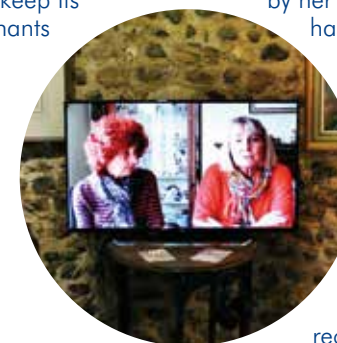
A Heritage Exhibition

The main event of the Company's 70th year was an exhibition, inspired by a large collection of archive material left by Betty, our late president. A team led by her daughter worked long and hard to bring it to fruition.

Expensive equipment was needed to make this modern and informative, so a Heritage Lottery grant was applied for, winning an astonishing £8,800.

Each display was accompanied by short recordings of long-standing members reminiscing about their experiences, which brought these to life in a way that no printed word or picture could do. Televised interviews explained the various aspects of mounting a production from designing a set to providing the costumes.

The exhibition ran for a month in Southwick's 15th Century Manor Cottage, and will be recorded on a dedicated website: www.wicktheatre70.co.uk ★



MILTON MUSICAL SOCIETY AT 50 YEARS

To mark our 50th year, Milton Musical presented *My Fair Lady* in April, 2018 with a cast of over 60! This production outsold every previous show staged in the modern era, being a virtual sell-out for all 5 performances. Reviews were all excellent and overall it has proved to be the most successful major show presented by the Society. To honour the occasion, a grand Dinner Dance was held the week after at the MIRAMAR HOTEL in Bournemouth, attended by over 80 members and friends where the cast truly celebrated their achievements and some suitable awards were made, as well as several long service awards for NODA Members. ★

Presidential Ponderings

Immediate Past President Nick Lawrence considers a year in office.

How amazingly quickly the sands of time do run. It barely seems yesterday that you honoured me by making me your President and now as I write we welcome Jacquie Stedman to the role. I was promised that as the Summer progressed things would calm down but it didn't turn out that way.

I enjoyed a very special visit to Belfast where I saw an amazing production of Joseph by the Fusion youngsters. Sheelagh Hobart and I received a very



generous welcome. I attended with the Councillor for the South West the opening of a new theatre at Sherborne. The Chapel, which can seat sixty in the audience, provided a venue for a wonderful production of "A Midsummer Night's Dream". "Soho Cinders" and "The Drowsy Chaperone" provided two completely contrasting leading ladies!

Of course, the highlight of my summer was my week at Yarnfield Park. Thanks to the wonderful organisation of

the Summer School Committee, the dedication of the fabulous tutors, the careful planning of the School Director, Sarah Osborne, and the irrepressible camaraderie of the students another brilliant week was enjoyed. You are never too old, too inexperienced, too unfit, too good to get something amazing from this week, so wake your society up and get some members along next July.

Among the recent visits I was privileged to visit the Bonkers Playhouse Theatre



at Kettering for a truly gut wrenching production of "Blackbird". This play was not for the faint hearted but the welcome received at this tiny theatre was warm and generous. The story of this little theatre compared well with the other small locally owned venues I have had the privilege to visit during my

term of office. I am pleased to present the President's Cup to Mark & Jane in recognition of their outstanding personal commitment to providing a venue in their town. Look them up or better still pay them a visit.

Well my day in the sunshine has come to an end, but I remind you that NODA is there for you all. Make use of it. It is not just show reports. There is so much more. Remember, as Dolly Levi might have said, "NODA is like manure. It should be spread about encouraging talent to grow". ★



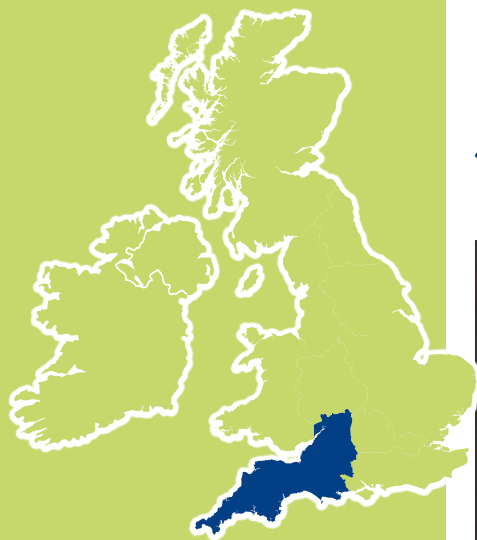
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Councillor's Chat

The year has gone by so quickly its worrying where the time goes! Since Last September I have attended with my Wife, Ann over Forty shows and enjoyed them all in their different ways!

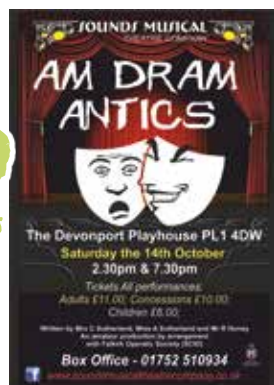
After being elected your Councillor, I hope that the Southwest committee have seen that things have changed in the way we do things. All Councillors work differently and I genuinely believe we have worked as a team.

The Awards evening in March was an example of working together, particularly with it being postponed at the last minute! My heartfelt thanks go to the committee for keeping calm and having nerves of steel in making all of the rearrangements. Next year's venue will be at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, Armada Way Plymouth on the 16th March 2019 and let's hope the snow does not strike twice!! For societies to be nominated means they have achieved a great deal as the nomination list is to be shortened some-what to make it REALLY mean something a real achievement.

We in the Southwest have a lot of great talent whether it be on stage, back stage or front of house and as I go around the Southwest it really never ceases to amaze me of the skills, talent and camaraderie that Societies have, and I am not only honoured but privileged to represent NODA and to see and meet good people with the same interests that we all share in the Arts. ★

Graham Liverton
Regional Councillor
NODA South West

South West



Di Bennellick

Interested in some 'Am Dram Antics'?

Plymouth Group highly recommends musical comedy written by another NODA Society

Like many societies, Sounds Musical Theatre Company (SMTC), Plymouth were looking for something a bit different to perform and saw a small write-up in the NODA magazine about Falkirk Operatic Society, who had written their own 'tongue-in-cheek' show called Am Dram Antics. This a musical about an amateur company putting on a show from behind-the-scenes perspective - including all the jealousies, diva's and a company Lothario! It begins with the committee trying to decide which show to perform and carries on with all of the backstage antics that many of us will all be familiar with!

"It is an absolutely brilliant comedy" said Di Bennellick, Chairman of SMTC, "the audience loved it and laughed so much that we were having to wait for them to get over each hilarious episode before we could carry on. We've had so much positive feedback from our audience and they all want to know when we are

going to do something similar!"

Amy Sutherland, one of the show's writing team at Falkirk said "We're so proud that Plymouth chose to perform our show - we never expected that it would travel so far! We came up with the idea for the show when in a committee meeting, an off-hand comment from one of the members saying, 'someone should write a show about all this, it would be hilarious!' and the rest is history. We put the idea to our company and asked for song suggestions, which we wrote the story around. It was a real team effort, with only a short period of rehearsal and we really didn't know what to expect. However, we were greeted with brilliant reviews. It was especially loved by other Am-Dram companies because they all saw how close to reality the show was!"

Di Bennellick concluded "SMTC highly recommend Am Dram Antics without reservation and hope it encourages others to write their own shows." You can contact SMTC or Falkirk Operatic Society via their web-site for more information. ★

Well-known South West Director celebrates 50 years of Service

Olveston Parish Players' much-esteemed Director, Linda Evans, recently received her 50 year award from area representative Frankie Telford. In her Amateur Theatre career, Linda has been one of the founders of the North Avon Youth Theatre and, since 2000, has given unstinting support to Parish Players as the Director of all our shows. She is also a judge of the local "Rose Bowl" competition. The Society members were thrilled to see Linda recognized in this way. ★

Richard Newley



Richard Newley

Castaways casting-off again!

Yeovil-based Youth Theatre performs outside the region and the Country!



Photos courtesy of Lynn Lee Brown

The Castaway Theatre Group in Yeovil takes children from 5 years to 16, though they do have a few older members that cannot keep away and a dedicated team of supporters! Though they generally produce one large production and a showcase per year, they do perform in many other local shows and concerts – and beyond!

Liking a challenge or two to give their 90 young members as many opportunities as possible, they've recently seen some travelling. Last October half-term, they took a group of children to perform at Disneyland Paris for 4 days, hiring two coaches to accommodate all the performers and families! With a 20-minute medley, they sang and danced to a variety of musical theatre songs. Their performances went down a treat and in Disney tradition it was all truly magical!

This Autumn we will once again see the group performing at the West End's Shaftesbury Theatre as part of a performance operated by West End Dreams. Though

this will be their 5th London visit, for many of the members it will be their first experience of a West End stage. They will be performing six numbers in the show, so there is a busy schedule of learning and choreographing new group pieces.

At home, forthcoming productions include *Peter Pan*, the new Styles and Drewe version of *The Wind In The Willows* and *Annie Jnr*.

Running a voluntary youth community theatre group is hard work but an absolute honour and leaders Lynn Lee Brown, Tammie Lloyd, Andrea MacLauchlan and Kirsty Beaumont love it! ★



From Workshop to Curtain-Up!

Axminster Drama Club see their summer youth workshop become something more

Back at the end of July, Axminster Drama Club held their second two-day theatre workshop weekend. This time the subject was **The Addams Family Musical**, and the attendees (all aged 9-16) learnt songs, dances, script, zombie make-up techniques and prop making skills. This was then all put-together to perform a 20 minute excerpt from the show. As usual, the children did a fantastic job and you would never have guessed that they had only been working on the production for a total of 13 hours. In fact, the workshop was so successful, that the Club have now decided to use it as a base for a full production of *The Addams Family Musical* (Youth Production) in January 2019.

For more information do contact Leigh Conley, Axminster Drama Club Chairman on 0749 6612258, FaceBook: **AxminsterDramaClub** or their Website: **axminsterdramaclub.co.uk** ★

Photo courtesy of Leigh Conley



Mark Lambert

'Dream' start to new Theatre!

Having your own theatre is a dream for many groups and Amateur Players of Sherborne have recently renovated a local chapel to become the Sherborne Studio Theatre.

Director John Crabtree thought it would be exciting to open the performance space as a theatre with a major, large-scale production. As a director who enjoys a challenge he saw that potentially, "The Dream" offered the group an ideal opportunity to display not only its new theatre but to tackle one of Shakespeare's most popular plays – and on Midsummer Night itself!

Casting a classical play is not an easy task, but the company already had several actors experienced in 16th century drama and the parts of The

Lovers was never going to be easy. However, four keen young people eager to tackle Shakespeare's text created believable three-dimensional characters with remarkable energy and enthusiasm. Lighting the play was a challenge but the lighting designer created a beautiful and luminous background to the action. The sound team's sensitive handling of the sound design enhanced many of the play's visual aspects and the specially composed music complemented the more ethereal moments.

One of the joys of having one's own theatre is that all rehearsals can take place on the stage on which the play is to be performed. Actors became familiar with the space and when it came to the performances, having a green room close to the stage was also of great benefit.

This was very much a team effort and there was a constant sense of sheer enjoyment, enthusiasm and all-round good fun running through the company. For the Director, cast, crew and capacity audiences, it was all a real "labour of love". ★



Behind The Scenes at NODA Theatre Summer School 2018

"If you love theatre and the myriad of disciplines it contains from Musical to Physical from Stage Management to Contemporary Drama or even if you have a Clown yearning to come out and play, or maybe you want to pursue Director tutelage or Film and Camera is your thing... whatever aspect, there will usually be something for you to grasp, to learn, to incorporate into your kit-bag of experience and to take away. I came out of it really having tapped into my creative side... I certainly came away on a high...and personally could've driven home hands-free all the way back to Essex – I was buzzing so much!! I'm grateful for the opportunity, I loved all of it... and as Big Man Arnie said: 'I'll be Back!'" – Kevin Stemp



Don't forget:

17th November
Course titles released
30th November
Course details released
1st December
12 Noon **Booking opens!**

noda.org.uk/summerschool



Wales & Ireland

Councillor's Chat

As I write this little piece it was four months ago since our Regional Gala and AGM took place. With over 300 members in attendance, 114 awards given out and the outstanding Tina Turner Tribute Act I feel that Wales and Ireland truly celebrated success during this year's Regional Gala. I would like to thank all that attended and supported the event.

Your regional committee are due to meet in October to start discussing your Regional Gala and AGM which will take place in May 2019. I am looking forward to inviting each and every member to our annual Gala and AGM after the success of our 2018 Regional Gala and AGM. I do hope that you will be able to attend to support the achievements of fellow societies and also to network with other members.

By the time you read this, Mrs Jackie Steadman would have been inaugurated as NODA President and Christine Hunter Hughes as Vice President. Congratulations to both and we wish them every success in their new ambassadorial roles.

I hope you enjoy this edition of NODA Today and do not forget to pop along to our NODA Youth page to catch up with what our younger members have been achieving in the last couple of months. ★

Your friend

Jordan Spencer FRSA
Regional Councillor
NODA Wales & Ireland



The first Bob Mills Memorial Award goes to...

The late Rotarian and Past President Bob Mills was revered both by his local Llandudno Club, and throughout the wider Rotary District 1180, for his selfless - and largely backstage - work for Rotary. After his death in 2017, his family kindly funded a Bob Mills Memorial Award in the form of an annual bursary to encourage local musical talent, reflecting Bob's own love of music and the "boy band" of his youth.

The first recipient of this award is Katie Hayward of Ysgol John Bright School. Kate's talent for song expresses itself in many ways, most recently in the role of Charity (Chairy) Barnum, wife and saviour of Phineas Taylor Barnum, in the Llandudno Youth Music Theatre production of "Barnum" that took Venue Cymru and all North Wales by storm.

The £250 award was presented to Katie by Past President Rotarian Steve Butler at the opening night performance of "Barnum". Katie will spend the award on further vocal and theory tuition. ★

Congratulations Katie!



Newtown Musical Theatre Company (NMTC) is gearing up for their autumn production of *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*, which promises to be a colourful, fun show for all ages. With Adam Jones as Joseph and Josephine Catherwood as the Narrator, the company, under the direction of Les Skilton, Sarah Astley-Davies and Dawn Jones (previous NODA winners for Best Production with 2017's *Sister Act*), have been rehearsing all summer and are excited to present their first Andrew Lloyd Webber show to the people of mid-Wales.

This show will also have another first for NMTC as one of their

performances will be signed by BSL signer, Cheryl Walker. "It's great to have Cheryl signing," says Les Skilton. "Joseph is a brilliant show and we're very happy to bring it to even more of our community."

NMTC have even gotten encouragement from two professional Joseph's! Jason Donovan, who famously played the part of Joseph in the early 1990's, said on Twitter: "Good Luck guys wishing you all the best Xxx." And Lee Mead, who won the BBC series *Any Dream Will Do* and went on to play Joseph in the 2007 West End revival of the show, said: "Have a wonderful show Guys Break a leg! Xx." ★



Monmouth Music Theatre performed the G & S perennial favourite, 'HMS Pinafore' at the Savoy Theatre, Monmouth in September. A stellar cast included the NODA Best Musical Performance winner Andrea Pole, as the Captain's love struck daughter, Josephine. Diane Sillman also a NODA Best Musical Performance

winner returned to the stage as Buttercup having played Josephine in the previous production. Joining them both was the magnificent MMT Chorus and professional orchestra under its Musical Director, Ian Russell, and Accompanist Helen Stidolph. Peerless G & S stalwart, Kate Russell directed the show. Following their spectacular production of *Sister*

Act this innovative and diverse theatre company delighted and entertained once again.

Monmouth Music Theatre's next production will be *Guys and Dolls* to be performed at the Savoy Theatre, Monmouth from the 3rd to 6th April 2019. ★



Date for your diaries: Regional Conference 2019

We have now confirmed the dates for next year's Gala Weekend and Annual General Meeting. This will take place at the Three Counties Hotel, Hereford on Saturday 10th & Sunday 11th May 2019.

We hope to get booking forms out in February 2019. Please be aware that spaces are on a first come first served basis and the first 300 individuals to book will be guaranteed a place. ★



Councillor's Chat

It has as always been a great pleasure to accept your kind invitations. We have again enjoyed the wealth of talent evident in your societies, seen complex productions and have been impressed yet again with our youth societies, the future of amateur theatre is in excellent hands.

I had the opportunity to experience the amazing NODA Summer School visitors' day, joining students and visitors from across NODA and witness all ages fully immersed in their courses. I was delighted to meet those from the region eager to learn and enhance their skills and enjoyment of theatre from a team of high quality, professional tutors.

Facebook update: For those of you who are members of the West Midlands Facebook **group**, in the coming weeks links will be posted directing you to the newly refreshed West Midlands Facebook **Page**. The 'group' will close at the end of December.

To continue receiving NODA West Midlands updates simply **like** the new page and continue to enjoy all the positives social media brings, this includes your views, promotions, cast calls and production stories.

All good wishes for the coming season ★

Ian G. Cox
Regional Councillor
NODA West Midlands

West Midlands



St John's Church

Upcycling to create a new home

We all know the value of recycling and it takes on all forms including churches no longer loved by their communities. Side By Side in Stourbridge have with the support of a parent recently purchased St John's Church on the ring road in Stourbridge, which will see the society back under one roof. Hopefully after a little updating and TLC by next year their new home will be ready to welcome their members and other groups back to the fold.

St John's Church was built in the 1860, a grade II listed building which sadly closed in January last year, to be purchased and saved by Side by Side. The group appeared in the local paper asking for volunteers and tradespersons to help them in a DIY SOS style make over to create their own 150 seater venue with kitchen, updated toilets and cleared grounds.

There is still lots to do, insurances and obstacles popping up here and there, but hopefully Side By Side will have their new home, and the tradespersons and people who have offered to help can make some magic happen. ★

National Award Winners

Congratulations to The Norbury Theatre and BMOS who were national competition winners of the programme and poster competition at this year's NODA AGM in Wokingham. Trophies were presented by new NODA President Jacquie Stedman. ★



Miles Nicholls and Mel Brown from the Norbury Theatre, first in the Standard Programme category for History Boys, winning the The Barnes Trophy.



John Spencer of BMOS second in the Dulux Programme category for My Fair Lady winning The Ralph Whittaker Trophy

Lets hear it for the Understudies...

Understudies, there are at least two kinds, those blessed with the grace of time and the full run of rehearsals to learn two or more parts, and those who take on roles with days or weeks before the curtain rises on first night.

Ian Meikle is one such fellow, earlier this year he agreed to take on the lead role of Kipps in *Half a Sixpence* and Vlogged his two week journey on Facebook. (A Vlog is essentially an online video journal) Ian documented his up's and downs and the hours of cramming lines, dance routines for a major role, alongside life and work all while the rest of the world cheerfully continues oblivious other than to those in the know or following his monumental efforts. His daily update is a reminder of just how hard our understudies work to get it right on the night.

Bravo Ian you did a stunning job and to all understudies working every minute they have to learn lines and dances. The team here at NODA West Midlands salute you. ★



Congratulations to Lesley Hart for her 50 years of service to WODS presented by NODA President Nick Lawrence at their last production, Lesley started in the chorus as a dancer, before undertaking many key behind the scenes roles before finding a home as Prompt. ★



70th Dinner.



Drinking in 70 years of Hereford and Worcester G&S with a programme of productions, concerts and a spot of Trial by Jury in the local court to support the Shirehall's 200th anniversary. ★

SAVE THE DATE

NODA West Midlands AGM and Awards Day
Sunday 14th April 2019
Stourbridge Town Hall
Contact paul.douglass@noda.org.uk

Come and spend the day with the NODA West Midlands Team, find out what we do for your societies, celebrate achievements at the awards ceremony. With the opportunity to meet our National President Jacquie Stedman and Chief Operating Officer Dale Freeman who like our regional team will be there to answer your questions on the day and at the AGM. ★



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