

# TODA★

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Be inspired by amateur theatre

## Oliver! – Made in Colchester

Pantomime feature • A trip to the archives • All the news from your region

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# CONTENTS



## On the cover

Colchester Operatic Society and Colchester Operatic Society Second Edition

NODA East

Photo by Pamela Raith

## Features

### 22

#### **Oliver! - Made in Colchester**

Colchester Operatic Society and Colchester Operatic Society Second Edition in a co-production with the Mercury Theatre.

### 34

#### **A trip to the archives**

Creation of a Lady - part two, written by Alan Jay Lerner - lyricist of My Fair Lady in 1968.

### 37

#### **NODA Presidential Gala & AGM**

All the information for booking your space at this years Inauguration Gala.

### 50

#### **Travels with the chain**

Catch up with our National President Christine Hunter Hughes as she travels the UK.

### 66

#### **The definitive guide to NODA Safe**

Where to go for all things Health and Safety plus find out about our new online training courses.

### 68

#### **In Memoriam**

## 12 It's panto time! Oh, yes it is!

### All the news from your region



NODA East



NODA East Midlands



NODA London



NODA North East



NODA North West



NODA Scotland



NODA South West



NODA Wales & Ireland



NODA West Midlands

# WELCOME



The pantomime season is over for all but a few, and I am sure many of you are mid long discussion and evaluation of how the season's production has gone, the all-important analysis of performance, box office and the suitability of the text for the audience. In this edition of NODA Today we have stories from the pantomime stage, now is the time when many of us set next seasons agenda and as you will read we have pantomime societies saying goodbye to their Dame and thinking about what they are doing next year.

The team at HO have been working hard to make our pantomimes relevant for today's audience, we have removed some from our lists, and new titles have been added, the pantomime pages on our website should make it a simpler task to make the right choice for your society, coupled with a more relaxed charging basis for licences, so take a look, select and have a ball.

Winter is always a difficult time for our older members, and sadly this year has proved no different. It is with sadness that we said farewell to John Warburton and Brian Sullivan, both former member's of Council. On a more cheerful note, we are proud to congratulate Regional Councillor Nanette Lovell of NODA East Midlands on being awarded an MBE in this year's New Year's honours for services to youth in Northampton.

Summer School has a limited number of places available on three courses, at the time of writing they are for Choreography, Greek Theatre and one to stimulate your creative side, Making a Musical.

This year's National Conference and AGM is to be held in Durham in September; full details can be found pages 37-40, the weekend presents a superb opportunity for meeting with your fellow members, and for Regional Representatives to get together at their annual meeting. This is also when you get to meet the incoming National President and an opportunity to visit this beautiful city with its superb cathedral overlooking the River Wear. You can see why the Bishop of Durham was in years gone by referred to as the Prince Bishop.

Michael Hastilow - Chairman of Trustees



NODA North



NODA South East



NODA Youth

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Go to [www.noda.org.uk/regions](http://www.noda.org.uk/regions)  
Click on your region and then the tab  
saying **Committee**

or

NODA email addresses follow the format  
of  
[firstname.lastname@noda.org.uk](mailto:firstname.lastname@noda.org.uk)

To find out more about  
NODA Pantomimes?

Go to [www.noda.org.uk/pantomimes](http://www.noda.org.uk/pantomimes)  
Here you can read extracts of all  
of the pantomimes available from  
NODA

or

You can apply for your performance  
licence online

We need legal advice.  
What do we do?

Email [info@noda.org.uk](mailto:info@noda.org.uk) clearly detailing  
your issue or request.

We will then contact our Legal Team who  
will get in touch with you directly.

This is a society benefit only.

## NODA ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting of The National Operatic and Dramatic Association, Charity No 1171216 will take place on Saturday 19th September 2020 at 2.30pm at The Radisson Blu Hotel Durham DH1 5TA.

The Meeting is called in accordance with Rule 11 of the Associations Constitution to receive the audited annual statement of accounts, the trustees report, receive reports on the number of members, the proposed rates of subscription, elect nominated Trustees, Honorary and Life Members. Appoint the appeals committee and elect the auditors for the ensuing year and receive any other business of which due notice has been given.

To ensure the smooth running of the meeting, any resolutions to be considered at the meeting should be sent to the Chairman of Trustees Michael Hastilow at 15 The Metro Centre, Peterborough, PE2 7UH or by email to [michael.hastilow@noda.org.uk](mailto:michael.hastilow@noda.org.uk) to arrive no later than 15th August 2020.



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# Councillor's Chat

A quick note from your Regional Councillor



## **Tessa Davies** - East Regional Councillor

It's been an interesting year since I was appointed Councillor for the East Region at last years AGM. I have received numerous invitations from across the region and I have done my best to attend every one of them. I have seen everything from a lovely review in a small village hall to spectacular productions of *Evita* and *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*. I love attending these performances so, if you would like to invite me please send me an email as soon as possible. I already have a lot of bookings for 2020 and I want to make sure that I see as many different societies in the East as I can.



## **Nanette Lovell MBE** - East Midlands Regional Councillor

The East Midlands had a very successful 2019 and I hope to see it continue this year. An important date for your diary is our AGM and Awards Day on Sunday 28th June 2020 at The Concordia Theatre in Hinckley. Further details will be sent out in April. We currently have a vacancy in District 4 and looking for someone to become a NODA Rep to cover North Lincolnshire? Please contact me direct for further details- it's the best hobby in the world!

In the meantime my very best wishes and lots of luck for your forthcoming productions.



## **Andrew Rogers** - London Regional Councillor

Hello from the London Region. Our big news is the launch of a Youth Day as part of our Festival this year. On 13th June we will run a 'Page to Stage in a day' event as youngsters work on, rehearse and present excerpts from *Seussical*. More details in this issue.

Good luck with all your spring productions and don't forget to invite Karen and me. We will attend as many as we can and look forward to meeting you all.



## **Gordon Richardson** - North Regional Councillor

By the time this is read my successor as Regional Councillor elect will have been announced. They will take over in September when I take on the role of National President. I am sure that the region will give them the support they have given myself over the years.

In the meanwhile I continue to support the region and hope to see you in your productions at Scotch Corner and the 'Presidential' Gala at Durham.



## **Leslie Smith** - North East Regional Councillor

The trees are down, decorations are back in the loft and all the Christmas cake and puddings have been eaten so it now time to look forward to the highlight of our year, the NODA North East Gala Weekend which this year will take place from 3rd to 5th April.

You should all have now received your application packs and I look forward to seeing you all in Bridlington for another enjoyable weekend.

## Andy McNicholas - North West Regional Councillor

NODA North West have had a very busy couple of months with the District Awards Dinners, which saw over 2,500 members attending this year.

It was a great opportunity for me to meet so many of you and I look forward to seeing everyone at the Regional Awards Gala and AGM held 1st and 2nd May 2020 – full details and links to booking forms be on the website soon.



## Stuart McCue-Dick - Scotland Regional Councillor

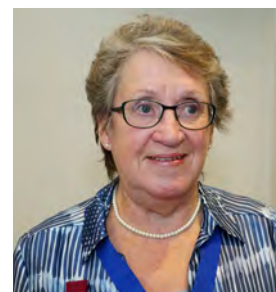
District meetings are a great way to network with other NODA members. They provide an opportunity to keep up to date with all that NODA is doing both locally and nationally to support amateur theatre. Details of forthcoming meetings are posted on the NODA website.

The website also contains advance details about this year's NODA Scotland conference – 23rd to 25th October at Peebles Hydro. There is still time to join the savings club to help spread the cost over the coming months.



## Kay Rowan - South East Regional Councillor

Panto season is almost over and your audiences have greatly appreciated all the efforts you have put in to present such dynamic performances – whether in large theatre or small village hall. Six societies will be strutting their stuff at the Regional Celebration Day on Sunday 19th April to entertain and inspire so please come and support them. Thank you for all your invitations last year and for those already received for 2020. I wish all of you every success in 2020 and look forward to meeting many of you at your productions this year.



## Graham Liverton - South West Regional Councillor

Here we are in 2020 – where did 2019 go? Christmas and the New Year celebrations are but a distant memory, but we have a new year to look forward to and all that brings! I wish you well with your productions and look forward to being invited to see them.

I am looking forward to meeting you on 9th May at our Awards evening at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Plymouth. It's a Bank holiday weekend and Plymouth have the 400th Anniversary of the Pilgrim Fathers – so there will be a lot going on in Plymouth. Why not make a weekend of it?



## Jordan Spencer - Wales & Ireland Regional Councillor

As you will now be aware Mr Brian Sullivan BEM, former Regional Councillor and District 5 Representative has passed away. Myself, Michael Hastilow (Chairman of Trustees) and Nick Lawrence (Former National President) attended his funeral back in January.

Ian Hogg our Regional Treasurer and Conference Administrator will be in touch soon with booking information for this year's conference which will be held on Saturday 27th June 2020 at the Three Counties Hotel.



## Ian G. Cox - West Midlands Regional Councillor

Thank you for your invitations to productions, events and celebratory occasions. Karen and I look forward to meeting many more of you in the coming months.

Planning and preparation for our regional AGM & Awards day on Sunday 10th May are being finalised. Early booking is advisable for this event, featuring a workshop back by popular demand, a chance to chat with corporate and trading partners, celebrate awards presentations and take the opportunity to meet our NODA President Christine Hunter Hughes.





It's panto time!  
Oh, yes it is!





To mark the relaunch of NODA Pantomimes, we dive into some of our new scripts, pantomimes from your region and an insight into a new Dame's first performance.



[pantoscripts.org.uk](http://pantoscripts.org.uk)



# Frequently asked questions about NODA Pantomimes

## *Are all your scripts old and the jokes out of date?*

We are adding new titles and authors regularly, new authors include Katie Skeffington, Colin Barrow, Amanda Craib and new titles from Appleton & Fearn and Stephen Duckham have been added in the last six months.

## *We only have a small group - do you have small cast pantos?*

We certainly do! Pantomime casts range from a cast of 6 to 65. There is something for every group in our collection.

## *Can we print our own scripts?*

With every title you have the option of hard copy scripts or a digital script meaning you can print off the required number of scripts from the comfort of your own home!

## *Can we film the show?*

You can film all our titles with a licence. When applying for performance rights online, simply tick the video licence box and the licence fee will be added to your basket.

## *Can we make cuts to the show?*

No, however we do allow you to change jokes or local references to suit your venue.

## *I have written a pantomime - can I get it published?*

Yes you can! You can submit your script for appraisal by one of our panto readers. If accepted, your script will be added to our collection and sold and marketed through NODA Pantomimes

You can submit your script at [noda.org.uk/submit](http://noda.org.uk/submit)

## *Can I read the scripts online?*

You can read samples of all of our scripts online. To read the full copy, you would need to purchase a perusal script either on the website or call 01733 374790.

## *What resources do you have online?*

We are currently in the process of building a brand new pantomime website where you will be able to get all of the scripts, licences and resources you need to put on one of our pantomimes...watch this space



[pantoscripts.org.uk](http://pantoscripts.org.uk)

# NODA Pantomimes

Over 100 quality scripts

New scripts added regularly

Flexible licensing to suit all groups

Dedicated pantomime website launching Summer 2020

Whether you are looking for something traditional like Cinderella or Sleeping Beauty, or something a bit different like A Sword in the Scone or The Princes Quest there is something for every group



[pantoscripts.org.uk](http://pantoscripts.org.uk)



I am the  
pretty one  
obviously!

It's the most wonderful  
time of the year (...oh no it isn't!)

Panto through the eyes of  
a first time Dame

*Written by The Beautiful Ugly Sister (Rob Williams)*



Photograph by Adam Fairbrother

Dear Diary,  
What have I signed up for? 18 performances of pantomime, with an additional 'adult' pantomime on New Year's Eve... I must be mad!

Pantomime is a massive part of my group's calendar as I am sure it is for many others. It is the time of year when audience members who claim they 'don't do theatre' attend in their masses as pantomime is just 'something they have done for years' or 'always attended with their grandparents'. It is a time of year that is packed with so many different things going on, but people always find the time for this major commitment as it is 'just not Christmas without it'. I am no different, I have been working on (or in) pantomimes for 15 years, and the one year I had off was just strange! In the last few years I've returned to performing in panto playing Beast in *Beauty and the Beast* (I was wearing a mask... honestly), then Silly Billy and this year I played Dame for the very first time! Who on earth thought this was a good idea?

## Rehearsals

For our group, rehearsals start in the middle of October once our main adult musical has finished. Unfortunately for a new dame, this doesn't give a huge amount of time to 'master the art' let alone learn all the lines before tech rehearsals begin. I felt like I had travelled back in time to the first time I ever performed: where do I put my hands, how do I have to talk, how do I stand and walk? I remember the first principal setting call, in every scene, I was using a different voice to try and find my 'dame voice', some worked... some really didn't! Before I even knew it, it was time for the song. This year the Dame's main number was 'And You Don't Even Know It' from *Everybody's Talking About Jamie*. I usually sing big musical theatre ballads, but this was a modern pop musical number - completely out of my comfort zone! So a new part, a new type of song, and nerves abundant: rehearsals weren't as fun as I usually found them.

## Team Building

18 shows is a long time to spend with a group of people. Our main dressing room is not very big, and without green room facilities, pre-show and the interval is spend all together in the dressing room. With so many theatrical people, tensions always

waiver so to help us all come together we organise an annual team-building event after tech run. Laser tag is our choice, so we spend a couple of hours shooting each other! The activity is only open to the adults of the company and has now become a rite of passage for the youngsters joining the adult company. We are given strict instructions before going not to break any of our limbs or anyone else's for that matter. The really great thing about our trip is that despite the different ages and abilities of our cast and crew everyone attends and everyone loves it. Once we've all had some scares, cursed those who got us when we thought we were hidden and learnt that our newest, quietest youngster is actually a ninja in disguise, we head off for a cheeky McDonald's. There aren't any bill splitting issues, and there are options for everyone that won't break the bank.

It is a great evening where you can just blow off steam and get in the right frame of mind for the challenge ahead - opening night!

## Opening Night and beyond

When attending the NODA Scotland Conference last year, I spoke to Regional Representative Roger Buist who had played pantomime dame for over 40 years and had that year 'hung up his bra'. One part of our conversation stuck with me, he was explaining that the first time you walk out on stage as Dame, you will get a buzz like no other; the first time you announce yourself and get the call back is electric. I have been in many pantomimes over the years, including playing Silly Billy, so I thought that it would be no different, but I was



Audience victim number 16

wrong, and Roger was so right! The buzz was incredible, and with only a few hiccups, we got through our opening night. Only 17 more shows to go!

In the Ugly Sisters opening script, we went into the audience to choose our prey. Each performance I would pick a gentleman who either refused to make eye contact or who's wife was trying to get our attention, ask us to sit on his knee. We managed to get a selfie with them every night, which always went down well, particularly with the partner who wanted a copy to show his work friends!

The behind you scene! A section of the show that is so so unpredictable. Some nights screams from the second the ghost appears, some nights I had to go sit in the audience and teach them what to do. But you knew you had succeeded when you would walk off stage, sorry strut, with a sore throat from trying to get over the noise.

## Relaxed Show

This year we had an enquiry from CamSight, a local charity supporting those with low vision and blindness, as to whether the theatre and the show would be appropriate for their group. In the discussions, they mentioned they previously attended pantomime at a much bigger professional theatre and had been given a touch tour before the show. Was this a possibility with us? We hadn't done this before but said we would try it out.



CamSight group meeting some of the cast at the end of the show

As we are only a small stage, we build a very composite set with very few moving set pieces, so our touch tour relied on the costumes and props to set the scene. We chose the most important costumes and props that would be integral to the story and those that had interesting textures, colours or shapes.

The group leader was so helpful and understanding to us and really just thankful that we had gone to the effort to provide the tour for the children and adults. It was amazing to watch the tour and our staff explaining the setting for each piece and what to expect during the show. For that performance, we reduced the overall sound level and didn't use any pyrotechnics. For the cast and crew, it was really special to know how much this performance meant to the audience. Panto performances are always special because most of the audience are families having a special festive trip out, but this audience and the thanks from CamSight really boosted morale within the cast a crew - 18 performances aren't easy!

## The Royal Visit

This year we were lucky to have a royal visit during the run... well NODA royalty. National President Christine Hunter Hughes made the journey from the far North West to watch the show. Not wanting to be outdone by the Presidential chain, myself and my fellow ugly sister ramped up our accessories to try and compete. When it came to the community song, I



*Me and the Boss! - NODA National President Christine Hunter Hughes*

thought it best to avoid bringing her onstage to dance in fear I might not have a job when I returned in the new year!

For our cast and crew, this was another pick me up along the 18 performances. It was particularly important to our youth chorus who were very excited!

## Community Song

I worked out that in the 2018 pantomime, I sang Baby Shark 68 times, excluding rehearsals, so I was delighted to read that this year would be a dance-off rather than a traditional song. The premise was simple: find two people in the audience, teach them a dance and then split them between the Dames. Quite often we would drag (some didn't need much dragging) our conquests from act one, but other times it would be someone who had heckled us a lot through the show as payback. Some of the more memorable comments were "I can't dance - I am wearing the wrong bra", and one gentleman turned to his wife upon returning to his seat to say "Right - I am not taking you to Disneyland now".

Once we got them on stage, some would be 'shy' at first but really as soon as it was their turn pushed us out the way to get centre. One person wandered off backstage when we were not looking. Some people liked to 'ad-lib' the dance, including adding multiple pirouettes just to show off.

## Adult Panto

A new venture for our group - New Year's Eve adult pantomime. It is something we have talked about for many years and never had the guts to do for fear of it not going down well. With a mixture of some of the cast from the main pantomime and additional 'extras' drafted in, we started rehearsing in the evenings after our matinee performances. When writing this article, I was trying to think about how to describe the rehearsals, one word...carnage.

Some of the cast provided their own costumes including mankinis, gold spandex jumpsuits and backless dresses - and that was just the men! The props list was...interesting. If anyone looked at my Amazon account, they would be confused, scared, and probably a little bit freaked out.

As some of the cast gathered in the bar at 8:30pm ready to greet the audience, we had a lot going through our heads - would the audience actually like it, would they laugh, will they want their money back. So as the overture came to an end, the fairy walked out onto the stage for her opening speech calling the audience things that I probably shouldn't print... and received howling laughter. Phew! We knew we were going to be fine. We were off!

Once the show had come to an end, we all headed out to enjoy the remainder of our New Year's Eve. As a performer, it was a fantastic experience to do something completely different. For the theatre, it was a huge moneymaker as the production costs were low as we already had the bulk of the required set, props and costumes from the main show.



I thought about adding some photos to this article, but they would probably all have to be censored...

If there are any groups out there considering an adult panto - give it a go!

## We made it to the New Year!

18 performances, 3 dress rehearsals, 1 tech run, 8 weeks of rehearsals plus however many hours learning lines, songs and dance routines. It is a massive commitment for anyone, let alone someone who does this as a hobby. Whenever someone asks 'what are you up to over Christmas' they look at you very confused when you say pantomime and even more confused when you tell them it is throughout the whole of December.

When talking about these types of events and commitment, the focus is always on the performer for obvious reasons, they are the ones you are watching. But what about everyone else it takes to put on the show, from chaperones to techies, to box office and front of house, all giving up their time for the show. This type of commitment for me makes pantomime more than just a show, it is my alternative family Christmas.

So why do we do it? For me, it has been my Christmas for over a decade, walking out onto the stage, or into the bar after the show and seeing all of the different faces that we've entertained - that have escaped reality into the magical world of panto. Pantomime is a show that is accessible to all, you can sit back and enjoy, or you can be on your feet participating - that's what makes pantomime special to me!

Was it your first time as  
Dame this year?  
Send us your memories  
of the experience to  
[editor@noda.org.uk](mailto:editor@noda.org.uk)

# Pick of the scripts

With over 100 different titles to choose from, our pantomime elves have chosen a title from each of our modern writers to give you a helping hand in choosing your next title.



## Cinderella - Amanda Craib

A fun and modern version of the classic pantomime Cinderella. This version of Cinderella is full of laughs and songs that will have the audience cheering along and trying to help Cinderella and the Prince find their happy ever after. The story is heart-warming and will leave everyone believing in Christmas magic.

## Rumpelstiltskin - Appleton & Fearn

Not often performed, forsaken for the more popular in the panto canon. But what a great tale it is with all the magic, mystery and opportunity for comedy that a good pantomime could wish for. As usual we have taken the tale and given the story our little twist and added a couple of extra characters for the audience to love and hate in equal measure.



## Ali Baba - Colin Barrow

According to Mammy Baba, "Ali Baba is a lazy good for nothing ragamuffin." This also seems to imply with her other two sons, Bacardi Baba and Crusty Baba. Will Ali Baba get the girl, will the Sultan find the man to topple the villain and will the Genie's love potion get people in trouble. Find out with this colourful entertaining pantomime!

## Aladdin - John Birchley

A traditional pantomime about a boy who finds a lamp, an uncle he never knew he had and love. Along the way we meet the magical Spirit of the Ring, a grumpy Genie and the two remaining police officers in Peking (austerity has hit hard) and have problems with a flying carpet.



## Beauty and the Beast - Bradford and Webster

Belle lives in the village of Petit Pois with her mean older sisters, Chardonnay and Lambrini. Throw in the vain and egotistical villain, the evil countess and of course the lonely Beast to give you a dramatic pantomime full of colourful characters and panto fun.

## Dick Whittington and his Cat- Brennan and Shalks

Dick Whittington is down on his luck and wants to find his success in London where he has heard the pavements are made of gold. They're not, and he finds it a challenge to survive. A 'Good Fairy' (Fairy Cupcake) tries to help him but the 'Baddie' (King Rat) is determined to stop him being anything like successful. A traditional Panto with interactive visual funny business and a happy ending.



## Robinson Crusoe - Vickie Burns

This well-loved story is the tale of a young man called Robinson, who is deeply in love with Polly Perkins, the daughter of the local Squire. With all good pantomime tales, there is a twist at the end, and there is happiness for everyone

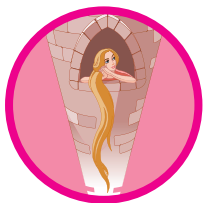


## Red Riding Hood and the Three Little Pigs - Dave Crump

A traditional pantomime with all the usual characters, Dame, Baddie, Double Act, etc. which combines the Red Riding Hood story with that of the three little pigs, both stories of course requiring a big bad wolf bringing a fresh and hilarious story to life.

## The Frog Prince - Stephen Duckham

The King and Queen of the splendid Kingdom of Splendor are presiding over the birthday and engagement party of their daughter, Marina, to Prince Frederick of the beautiful Kingdom of Beautora. This new script has all of the traditional pantomime hits with a new and magical story.



## Rapunzel, the pantomime - Katie Skeffington

Loosely based around two of the Grimm Brother's Fairy Tales; 'Rapunzel', and the 'The Golden Goose', in which a King offers his daughter's hand in marriage to the first person who can make her laugh. Can Tom rescue the kidnapped Rapunzel from her tower? Can they thwart Gothel's evil plan to destroy everything they know? And is there a way to break the curse and make Rapunzel laugh?

## The Sword in the Scone - Steve Yeo

Good king Uther Pendragon has died with no heir. It's up to Merlin, yet again, to find the next king of Camelot. With the help of some dubious knights and some really, bad cooking, Merlin finds the next future king, Arthur, when he pulls the sword of Avalon from an overbaked scone.



## Found your favourite script? What next?

### Licence costs

Seating capacity	£ per performance
< 49	£36
50-99	£48
100-199	£60
200-299	£72
300-499	£82.80
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### Extras

Extras	£
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# Speaking to the authors

## Appleton & Fearn

We're Fearn and Appleton or Rob and Leo to our friends! We've been writing pantomimes for a few years now and like nothing better than to sit down and write something that we think people will love to perform. We have had the pleasure of our pantomimes being performed all over this country and internationally with one being performed in Ireland, Australia and our version of a Christmas Carol the panto being performed in Chicago two years on the trot and hopefully again this year.

One of our latest additions is Aladdin, which at the time of writing is due its premiere on 8th February in Ripponden. This panto is a great example of what we like to write, and attached is an excerpt from Scene 1 which certainly sets the story up from the outset.

**Abanazar:** (As if making a great big incantation). Eye of newt, toad's livers, wombat's tongue and to finish, (works up

to this) spit of a wizard (he spits). (Slight pause, then to audience, suddenly getting very upbeat). Place all this in your oven at gas mark three and in half an hour you'll have a fabulous steaming stew. I do love the new Mary Berry (or other popular cook of the day) recipes. Now, where is that spirit when you need him? Spirit, oh spirit?

(*Shady Spirit enters in a puff of smoke and flash of light*).

**SS:** You bawled, oh master? (SS makes an elaborate bow).

**Abanazar:** I did indeed bawl as you put it. Have you made any progress finding the lamp?

**SS:** Yes.

**Abanazar:** Good. (He pauses for SS to say something, nothing is forthcoming) ....and...?

**SS:** Ah, I see what you're doing, you're waiting for me to explain aren't you?

**Abanazar:** Yes. (He pauses again waiting for SS to say something) .....and ....?

**SS:** Oh sorry, that was you waiting again wasn't it?

**Abanazar:** Right enough of this. You either start telling me where the magic lamp is or as a very resourceful wizard, I will find a

way to whisk you back from whence you came where you will face all kinds of nasty things.

**SS:** (Comes straight in). It's in a deep dark cave with lots of other wonderful treasures.

**Abanazar:** Ha haa! Now I have it.

**SS:** Not quite.

**Abanazar:** Sorry?

**SS:** No need to apologise.

**Abanazar:** I am not apologising. What do you mean, not quite?

**SS:** Only someone with a pure heart can open the cave.

**Abanazar:** Well, that rules me out.

**SS:** It does.

**Abanazar:** What do you suggest?

**SS:** You could join a monastery. Repent. Live a blameless life.

**Abanazar:** No, not me you silly spirit. How do I get into the cave?

**SS:** Ohh! There is only one person I know who can do what you ask.

**Abanazar:** And who is that?

**SS:** (Delivered like a proclamation). A boy. He lives in old Peking and his name is (slight pause) Aladdin.

## Stephen Duckham

Stephen has been involved with Pantomimes both professional and amateur for over forty years. Having directed every major title, he turned to writing in the early 1990's and has had his scripts performed all over the British Isles, Southern Ireland, Europe, Australia and the USA. In fact his first script, Cinderella, was written for an American production in Los Angeles and starred Zsa Zsa Gabor as the Fairy Godmother.

Also, a director of musicals, Stephen has well over 170 productions to his credit including six European Premieres and four World Premieres. His writing and directing work has taken him all over Great Britain and to many parts of the USA.

Stephen's first-hand knowledge of all aspects of theatre has proved invaluable when writing and adapting pantomime scripts for every type of

venue. Each of his scripts comes with a full set of production notes and can be performed simply or lavishly, depending on the facilities available to individual companies. Story lines are strong in every case combining adventure, comedy and always a little romance! Both traditional and modern sequences are found throughout each script, together with a large amount of audience participation. As most of the scripts were originally written and performed by a small theatre company, special attention is always given to the confines of limited theatre space.

Musical items are clearly indicated with plenty of scope for chorus and choreography work for companies of all sizes. In many cases Stephen has written the music and lyrics for situation songs and song sheets which may be used if required.

Stephen is constantly revising and rewriting his pantomime scripts to

update the characters and parts of the plot lines. All his scripts contain sequences where an individual company can personalise and localise the dialogue. In many cases his advice is asked for on how to approach a certain sequence or if something could be altered to fit a particular stage. This he is more than happy to give and if it is possible, he will meet with a company or attend a performance.



[pantoscripts.org.uk](http://pantoscripts.org.uk)

# Devon 17 year-old writes and directs 'Peter's Pan' Panto!

NODA South West

**After 8 years, Laura goes from Fairy to Director as part of her Extended 6th Form Project!**

Back in 2011, a 9 year old girl, Laura Machin, joined Ottery Community Theatre (OCT) and made her pantomime debut as a very sweet "Fairy Nuff". Fast forward eight years and after acting in each year's panto, a 17-year-old Laura has written, and is directing, her own pantomime, *Peter's Pan*.

Laura, who plans to study physics at university, embraced the opportunity to choose any topic for her Extended Project, preferring to laugh at her own jokes than toil over writing a dissertation! After much research, from panto writing techniques to sword risk assessments, rehearsals for the finished pantomime took place most successfully, resulting in performances from 22nd to 25th January in Ottery St Mary, Devon.



Laura commented, "It's an amazing thing to be able to give a group of people your nonsensical brain dump, and they sit down and start learning it! I'm so grateful to OCT for such an awesome opportunity (and for risking putting me in charge), and it's great to rehearse with such welcoming, friendly and fun-loving people."

Those who are paying attention will have noticed the panto is not entitled *Peter Pan*, but *Peter's Pan*. In Laura's

words, "Imagine *Peter Pan*, but set in one of Pantoland's cafés - which has achieved fame through using a magic pan. When Captain Hook decides he wants the pan to get the crocodile off his tail, just how many food puns can we fit in one panto?"

Laura's talents also include progressing through the grades of Margaret Morris Movement, feeding into her choreography of a fairy dance routine.

## Veteran Dame hanging up his frocks

NODA East



After more than twenty years in the role Chris Shinn of Waterbeach Theatre Company has stepped down as pantomime Dame. Talking to District Rep Julie Petrucci, Chris explained it is the time to step aside

"to make way for a younger woman". He said "I've been playing panto Dame for 20 years but first started in pantomime back in 1990 and have been involved in most since but in the past few years I have been feeling like I

am getting too old for the part. Over the years our pantos have become more involved, the choreography has been getting more technical and although always good fun rehearsals are pretty hard work. Looking back there are lots of things from the show that stick in mind. We once had a power cut halfway through the last performance resulting in somebody in the audience standing up and shining a torch and one year in the part of the show where children were invited to come on stage nobody wanted to get up so I improvised talking to invisible children on stage with me while they changed the set. Any group can do panto, but not every group can do it well. You need to be disciplined to keep the show moving but have the freedom to improvise on stage when the unexpected happens. It's going to be interesting to watch the panto from an audience point of view which is something I am looking forward to doing. Oh yes I am.

# Dundee Whitehall Theatre 50th anniversary: ‘Success is down to the community’

NODA Scotland - Written by Michael Alexander and reproduced by kind permission of The Courier, Dundee



*Laura Muir of the 30th Dundee Guides with ugly sisters Daisy - Ewan Campbell (left) and Dandyion - Roger Buist, of the Downfield Musical Society after making her promise on stage at the Whitehall Theatre in 2005*

**As the Whitehall Theatre in Dundee celebrated its 50th anniversary on Friday November 29, Michael Alexander speaks to some of its stalwarts and discovers that, despite a few bumps in the road, the institution is still going strong.**

Downfield Musical Society (DMS) stalwart Roger Buist was 10-years-old when he first became interested in theatre and set up his own puppet theatre.

But while the 78-year-old former DC Thomson & Co Ltd case room worker affectionately refers to DMS as his “home”, it wouldn’t have been possible without the amateur society being able to base itself at Dundee’s Whitehall Theatre.

On Friday November 29, when friendly rivalries between Dundee’s amateur musical and operatic societies were put aside in a special show to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the theatre, Roger reprised his role as a panto dame which he played at the Whitehall with DMS for over 40 years.

He laughs when he recalls the time he lost his wig during a show and another time when his bustle became stuck in a cane chair causing great hilarity for the audience. However, what’s been consistent since he starred as the Red Shadow in *Desert Song* back in 1971 is that the Whitehall has been his theatrical home.

“We used to appear in the Palace Theatre, immediately behind the Queen’s Hotel,” recalled Roger of Broughty Ferry who is a Scottish regional rep for the National Operatic and Dramatic Association (NODA) and a former Downfield director.

“All the societies used to produce in there – many which no longer exist – then in came bingo! The Palace became a bingo theatre. The amateurs did not have a place to produce and perform their shows. The council got hold of the old Alhambra picture house. Dundee’s Lord Provost at the time (Alex McKenzie) lived in Whitehall Crescent. So they renamed it the Whitehall Theatre!”



*Roger Buist on stage with the Jack and the Beanstalk panto in 2002*

Roger, who is also a founder of the Thomson-Leng Musical Society, recalls that when they first started using the Whitehall it was “adequate” – with a few other surprises.

*“It had dressing rooms,” he said. “The toilets were toilets. But when you went into the Caley Hall which joined on next door it was a partitioned dressing room – and it had no roof on it. It was open to pigeons!”*



*The Alhambra*

Roger explained that despite all the efforts of manager Stuart Pearce back in the day, the Whitehall became a financial burden to the local authority and it closed in 1982.

It was an opportunity for local amateur societies to come together, however, to take over the theatre and manage it themselves.

In the 50th anniversary programme for the show, Dundee theatre stalwart and retired solicitor Norman Robertson explains that the takeover was prompted by the late Bill Crowe who contacted businessmen in the city and the representatives of local amateur musical societies to raise funds for the purchase of the building.



The keys were received on November 30 1982 and the Whitehall Theatre reopened shortly afterwards.

*“The societies using the Whitehall Theatre at that time were Broughty Ferry Amateur Operatic Society, Downfield Musical Society, Dundee Operatic Society, Dundee University Operatic Society, Margaret Mather Junior Showtime, Dundee Scout Gang Show, Tayport Amateur Musical Society and Thomson Leng Musical Society” explained Norman.*

*“In addition to these groups every opportunity was taken to encourage professional performers to use the theatre. This was done mainly on a rental basis rather than a percentage of the takings. Then, as now, tribute bands were attracted to the theatre as were many other varied performers.”*

High profile acts visiting over the years have included Alan Cumming, John Lydon, Paul Gascoigne and the Bay City Rollers.

Norman explained, however, that in 2011, the trading company ran into financial difficulties and the theatre had to again close down for a short period.

*“Ex-Lord Provost John Letford, with help from the local authority and others, put the theatre back on its feet over the next two years,” added Norman.*

*“Following this Lina Waghorn, Graeme Smith and Kenny Christie, all dedicated and experienced in theatre, took over the management of the Whitehall Theatre. Their efforts have raised the profile and finances of the theatre, which has also benefited from good houses, allowing improvements to be made to the building and equipment.”*

*“Not only has the auditorium been upgraded but the front-of-house and backstage, which houses the artistes’ dressing rooms, have been greatly done up much to the appreciation of their users.”*

*“The bar was extended and modernised and named after the Pennycook family who had owned the building in the 1940s and 50s when it was the State Cinema. The bar has proved to be a huge success. Recently the former upper floor bar has been refurbished and has been called the Alhambra to acknowledge the first name of the building.”*

Dundee Whitehall Theatre chairman Kenny Christie said: *“The success of the Whitehall Theatre project is not measured by the fact that the bricks and mortar are still in place 50 years on but by the community it has created. A community thriving with people of all ages enjoying participating in watching or supporting live theatre and performance.”*



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# Oliver! – Made in Colchester

Colchester Operatic Society (COS) and Colchester Operatic Society  
Second Edition (CO2) in a co-production with the Mercury Theatre

NODA East Feature Article



The Full Company - Photo by Pamela Raith

**Colchester Operatic have performed their annual musical productions at the Mercury Theatre since it opened in 1972.**

During this time the society has developed a strong working relationship with the Theatre and over the years, they have admired our success and the professional quality of our amateur productions.

A number of years ago the Mercury creative team suggested they would like to 'put on a show' with the Society. We felt very flattered but realised that it was probably just a pipe dream.

How could a professional team work with an amateur theatre group meeting once or twice a week over a four/five-month period, but then with the temporary closure of the theatre for re-building this amazing

opportunity to collaborate became a reality.

After our initial euphoria settled, we started to wonder what we had committed ourselves to.

The Mercury Theatre were aware that we are a Society with Adult and Junior sections who produce separate shows, but they wanted this to be a show with both groups of our society involved. Therefore, this would be a collaboration between COS and CO2. Together with the Mercury Theatre production team, Mercury crew and our society crew, and we would perform in a pop-up theatre, a new venue to both of us. Were we all mad?

The next big step was to find a show and production team. With the ages involved *Oliver* was the obvious choice. The next hurdle for

the Mercury was to get together a production team. We were very pleased that Ryan McBryde had taken up the challenge having seen our production of *Annie* and he had directed *Pieces of String* and *Moll Flanders* at the Mercury. He was supported by choreographer Charlie Morgan. Greg Arrowsmith came on board as Musical Director, assisted by Neil Somerville.

Something new to the society was having David Shields as Show Designer. He designed the staging specifically for the space, costumes and props everything was passed by him before it went on stage. For our society shows, we discuss this with our director and between our wardrobe and props department try to come up with the look that they require within our budget. Having David on board added to the experience



Leanne Field (Nancy), Archie (Oliver) and Fagin's Gang - Photo by Pamela Raith



Leanne Field (Nancy) and Archie (Oliver) - Photo by Pamela Raith

Auditions were held in early May and setting rehearsals began. It was decided to rehearse cast members on specific days of the week with all cast coming together on alternate Sundays. We were given a list of dates but unfortunately not the specific calls. Although this started well it was soon realised that these days should not be so strict, and revisions were needed. This was a bit of a problem as some of our members, like many in amateur theatre, had other commitments. For rehearsals we were able to use the Mercury Abbey Field Centre; this meant that we had the stage area marked out and the show props appearing as our rehearsals progressed. As a society we rehearse mainly in school halls so having the stage marked out and the use of the props was something the cast, definitely, appreciated. Plus, having the Mercury Deputy Stage Manager at all rehearsals, they were able to

feed back any issues with the props, which were dealt with by the next time they were used

After the summer break we started running the show and on the first week of September a buzz was felt at the rehearsals as we could see the tent go up on the Abbey Field not far from our rehearsal venue. And then the technical rehearsals began, we had two evenings in the tent for orientation on the stage and around the theatre auditorium. This helped the cast acclimatise to the space. We began in earnest on the Saturday with a 12 hour call, Sunday was a shorter day, 8 hours, then Tuesday and Wednesday evening and the dress call on Thursday. This was a long process, but all involved could understand the need to spend time on this, so that they could get to grips with the new venue. After all the time spent on the rehearsals, it was a great feeling to

finally open on the Friday and enjoy all the hard work that everyone had put into the show

We recently had our final meeting with the Mercury, who had nothing but praise for the Society and the way every member helped with the show, whether it be on stage or behind the scenes. Yes, there were things that we would do differently and, as a Society, we have learnt so much which we hope will help us when we move back into the theatre towards the end of next year.

Let us all hope that amateur theatre continues no matter where we perform and that it gets stronger and stronger.

Ann Taylor  
CO2 Chairperson

# Kenilworth's Talisman Theatre is 'Moving on a Stage'

NODA West Midlands



The Talisman Theatre started life back in 1942 in an old tannery in Kenilworth's town centre. When, in 1962, the site was given planning permission for a shopping centre, the company needed a new home. The site at Barrow Road was purchased for £3,500 and for the following 6 years the company performed in a range of local venues whilst building the new theatre. Opening in 1969, the current 158 seat theatre served the company and community well. Bits have been added here and there but the core is still underneath it all, put there by the love of the arts and local theatre, by many willing volunteers. Since 1969, building standards and regulations have moved on: the façade, whilst modern when built, is now outdated. And we have challenges with poor foundations to the outside wall causing damp. Add to this, an upper floor with windows that look directly at neighbours and has no disabled access. Finally, the foyer is cramped by modern standards, particularly when the house is full!

## Moving on a Stage

We've worked with architects to create exciting plans to modernise our Theatre. In 2019 we secured planning permission for the construction of a two-storey extension. This will incorporate a much larger first floor studio space, with full access via a new lift, improved accessibility to the entrance, an enlarged bar area and modernised toilet facilities, dressing rooms and costume store. To fund these changes, we've recently launched an ambitious £1.3million fundraising project – *Moving on a Stage*. We're working hard to secure grants and our members are aiming

to raise £200,000 from local events such as, fashion shows and gala performances. Talisman Theatre's Chair, Nigel Elliott said: *"This is an incredibly exciting time for the Talisman and Kenilworth and we're very proud of the high standard of theatre we produce here. Our 50-year-old building is in need of refurbishment in order to continue providing the wonderful plays, musicals and pantomimes the people of Kenilworth expect from us. Our redevelopment project will offer audiences a more enjoyable experience, as well as creating a more flexible and innovative studio space for the communities we serve."*



# Letters from our readers

## A cautionary tale

There has been a lot of discussion and postings on Facebook over the last few months about whether or not certain music can be used in Pantomimes and “songs from the shows” type productions – *Grease*, *Mamma Mia*, *Greatest Showman*, *Disney* etc. Can we use it? How long can it last? Can we do it in costume?

The usual reactions to all these questions are “just do it”, “who’s to know?” or “how will they find out?”. As an answer to those type of reactions I want to pass on to you a cautionary tale concerning a society in the North of England.

The society were presenting a “songs from the shows” style production using songs from a wide variety of shows. Their Business Manager presented to their committee all the relevant facts about copyright regulations and restrictions on costumes. The committee reacted with all the usual comments and questions just mentioned and chose to ignore the advice given.

After the dress rehearsal the society received a firm but friendly telling off from one of the rights holders (I won’t name the rights holders or the show but it wasn’t one of the usual suspects) giving the society the opportunity to make amends. If the tip off had been after they’d used the costumes they would have been in serious trouble.

The society don’t know how the rights holders found out.

It’s quite possible that there could be communication between different rights holders when they find this sort of potential breach, and they could even attend performances to check for themselves. Some societies video their productions and post some of the content on to Facebook or other social media sites and this is another way that rights holders find out about the infringement of the copyright rules etc.

If the society had been found out, at the very least they could have been liable for the full licensing fee for each

show in the production that infringed the rules regarding use of costumes. The implications of being found guilty of copyright infringements are far reaching and severe and could seriously affect the integrity and good name of any society in breach of copyright.

Just to be clear, there was no problem with the content regarding the musicals and songs that were featured in the production. It was the visual presentation regarding costumes that overstepped the mark. The society concerned are happy for their experience to be shared (their Business Manager provided all the background information). The Society hopes it will prevent other societies from finding themselves in a similar position in future.

So, please remember companies spend a lot of money protecting their copyright. Please, don’t “just do it”. They will find out!!

**Bryan Craven**  
NE District 15 Representative

## Write on

Before the production gets on stage before an audience, before the set is created, before the rehearsals begin, before the play is cast or director appointed the words need to be created by the playwright! These days many professional companies are unwilling to take on an unsolicited script by an unperformed writer because of the risk, therefore such storytellers are left to look to amateur theatre to see their work see the light of day. Yet this does not appear to seem to be happening unless the writer forms a company or decides to put it on as an individual, which is expensive if one does not have the means to do so.

Putting on a unique, unperformed work is beneficial to both the writer and the company. The company get

an exclusive work to present a world premier – since it has never been done before – not to mention the fact that royalties do not have to be paid saving the company money. Of course, writers are rewarded by seeing their creations come to life. It can result in a profitable symbiosis and create a beautiful relationship between the two.

By finding a fresh voice with an original and emergent writer can give fresh impetus to a company who wants to find something new and exciting to inject into their productions rather than keep producing the same well-trodden scripts. It can bring in new blood to the company and a new audience. It may even encourage those in the company who want to have a go at

writing their own.

Oh yes, there are writers retreats and competitions but a great many of the competitions are specific and are quite frequently only available to younger writers under the age of 30. What about those of us that have matured with age, we have stories in our imagination that we can bring out because of our age and the only way to get them out is by hooking up with an amateur company. So presently I am trying to complete and plotting another full length Christmas show if anyone out there wants to take a chance.

My wea-pen of choice is primed and ready!

**Jeannie Jordan**

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Access to your region's social media to share ideas, ask for help, source props/costumes etc.

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## Need Information?

You will find lots of factsheets on our website to help with running your society.

These include

Model Child Protection Policy  
Corporation Tax & VAT  
Fundraising  
Equal Opportunities  
GDPR  
Gift Aid  
Any many more!



## Need Legal Advice?

As part of your membership, societies can get assistance from our Legal Advice Service

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The font of information for amateur theatre



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# End of the line

NODA Scotland

Mitchell School of Drama performed a brand new site-specific, promenade piece to mark the 50th anniversary of the Inverurie Locomotive Works on 31 December 1969. The building used was the Garioch Heritage Centre, which was once part of the engineering works. I approached the centre in summer 2019 with the idea, and they were as keen as I was that a huge part of Inverurie's local history should be celebrated. For me, it was also a personal journey as my father had been employed there as a train driver, and my mother worked at Taits Papermill, which featured too.

The heritage centre is a beautiful building, with massive opportunities for a cast to move their audience around in. I wanted to start with the signing of the contract, concentrate on its heyday in the 1940s and then address the closure, which Inverurie at the time thought it might not recover from. (Thanks to the oil boom this, of course, didn't happen!).

I was also aware that to pull it off, we needed a large cast and one of varied ages. So, ex-students were called upon, and all the teachers in the school became cast members as well as our regular performing youth group. Even our regular band members became characters who happened to not only be employed at the works but also play in the local dance band! So with a cast of over 30 we started to rehearse, using some snatches of the script written many years ago by Greg Dawson Allen, and a lot of improvisation which was scripted. We were fortunate to have plenty of rehearsal time in the venue, as moving the cast as well as the audience was tricky. As well as live drama, we were lucky to get a news report from STV, which was from the time of the closure, along with many slides from the Locoworks long history.

Tickets went on sale for our five performances (limited to 40 audience per show), and they sold out extremely fast. An extra performance also sold out.... and we were very



excited to see what reactions would be.

The audience trooped through the Garioch Centre and visited workshops, the factory girls working in Taits papermill, the Colony women hanging their washing out and finishing at the dancehall with a live band, singers and some choreographed waltzing after a marriage proposal!

A project I thoroughly enjoyed and our audiences of many ages appreciated.

The Inverurie Locomotive and Carriage Works played a significant part in the development and history of Inverurie and the wider industrial and economic history of the North East. In 1898, the Great North of Scotland Railway began construction of a new locomotive works to replace their works at Kittybrewster, which were considered too small and out-of-date to cope with the company's needs for manufacture and repair of locomotives and rolling stock. The new works were located on a 25-acre site in Inverurie. William Pickersgill, GNSR's locomotive superintendent, designed the complex. The works were completed by 1905 and provided half of all employment in Inverurie. The works at Inverurie were, for their time, advanced in terms of layout and equipment and included a 60-ton electric travelling crane for easy movement of locomotives over each



other in the erecting shop, and a very wide use of electricity for lighting and powering various machines (electricity, taken from the works' current, was also supplied to the workers' homes, an unusual luxury for houses of this class at the turn of the century).

By the mid 60's, due to many closures of railway lines in the area, Inverurie loco works became redundant, finally closing in 1969.

Rhona Mitchell (Director)



# Knit-tle Shop of Horrors

NODA North West

Amateur theatre groups often go that extra mile for a performance and in October 2019 Whitefield Amateur Operatic Dramatic Society not only called for extra hands, but also the odd pair of knitting needles in the process!

By their own admission, Whitefield AODS performed the show a little differently to the version everyone knows. They had a custom-made plant for the production which was manipulated by puppeteer cast members. The main voice of the plant itself was taken on by a female too.

It was the finer details though that made the show stand out. As a society they hand made all the flowers for the production rather than having the standard plastic versions. It took a small team of them months to make them as weird and wonderful as they could to fit in with the Director's vision for the show. In addition, they set up a flower shop in the entrance to sell the plants to members of the public as a memento and they managed to raise over £300 for the Christie Charity in the process.



## Llandudno Youth Music Theatre Young Volunteers celebrated for their contributions to volunteering

NODA Wales and Ireland

Stagenotes at Llandudno Youth Music Theatre provide fun sessions for children aged between 6 and 13 years. These young volunteers pictured have been part of a fantastic team volunteering to support children to gain skills in drama, singing and dancing and have helped them to grow in confidence, learn to work as a team and meet other children. These young volunteers have earned their various Millennium Volunteer awards by collectively volunteering nearly 1000 hours of their time to support children at Stagenotes. A fantastic achievement. This photograph and article also appeared on the website of Community and Voluntary Support Conwy. The Millennium Volunteer



scheme has now been closed by the Welsh Government but Community and Voluntary Support Conwy

have implemented a similar scheme to reward young people who are volunteering throughout the County.

# Leading lady sings surprising duet with Michael Bublé

NODA North

Lots of people dream of getting the chance to duet with their favourite singer, but for NODA member Samantha Holden, that dream came true when she attended a Michael Bublé concert last November. As a regular leading lady for Tees Valley Gilbert and Sullivan Society and Stockton Stage Society, Samantha is not one to shy from the limelight, but when the 'Canadian Crooner' picked her to sing with him out of a crowd of 11,000 people at the Newcastle Utilita Arena, Samantha couldn't quite believe her luck!

*"I was stood right near the front and had decided to take a sign which read, 'Please can I sing with you?' I knew he picked an audience member out at each concert and thought I'd try my luck. I'm not sure I ever believed it would really happen though!"*

Michael Bublé spotted Samantha's sign and said her red hair, done up in a vintage style, is what drew him over. He sat on the edge of the stage and invited Samantha to cuddle up into him as they shared a few jokes together before asking Samantha what she'd like to sing.

*"Despite knowing I wanted to sing with him, I hadn't fully thought through what to sing, although my husband's favourite Bublé song is L.O.V.E, so I decided on that." Samantha said, "Michael took my phone off me to record the whole thing,*



*and as we sang together I remember thinking, why am I not nervous, I'm duetting with Michael Bublé in front of 11,000 people, why am I not nervous? But as the song ended and he thanked me and walked away my legs turned to jelly!"*

Samantha has not come down from cloud nine since and was the talk of local news, radio and social media for days after and now even gets recognised in the street. Not much will ever beat getting to sing with her favourite artist but landing her dream role of Eliza Doolittle will come close when she plays the lead role in *My Fair Lady* in March for Stockton Stage Society.

---

## Page to Stage in a day

NODA London



As part of the NODA London Festival weekend, the London Region is sponsoring a Youth event on 13th June 2020.

**We welcome you to come and join in and have fun with the Cat in the Hat, Jo Jo, Mayzie, Horton and Gertrude!**

We will be producing a Page to Stage in a day, featuring numbers from the popular show *Seussical*. Under the

watchful eye of trained and experienced tutors, kids from 8 to 16 will develop their performing skills, make new friends and have fun in the safe environment of the Radlett Centre, Hertfordshire.

The NODA London Festival 2020 is on 13th and 14th June and the Saturday will be set aside for this exciting new event. Open to all youngsters in the London Region, between the ages of 8 and 16 inclusive, to book please go to: [www.ticketsource.co.uk/noda-london](http://www.ticketsource.co.uk/noda-london) or for more details please email: [annie.hertler-smith@noda.org.uk](mailto:annie.hertler-smith@noda.org.uk)

Registration will open at 9.00am on Saturday 13th and participants will need to have booked in advance. The workshops will start promptly at 9.30am and will conclude with a performance to which parents/guardians are invited at 16.30pm. Tutors have many years of experience of working with children in the sphere of musical theatre.

The Radlett Centre is located at Aldenham Avenue, Radlett, WD7 8HL, close to the M25 and with good rail links.

This Page to Stage is by arrangement with MTI and NODA London are grateful for their support.



*Nobody loves a fairy when she's [forty] fifty  
Nobody loves a fairy when she's old  
She may still have a magic power but that is not enough  
They like their bit of magic from a younger bit of stuff  
When once your silver star has lost its glitter  
And your tinsel looks like rust instead of gold  
Fairy days are ending when your wand has started bending  
No-one loves a fairy when she's old...*

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# Developing Future Acting Talent

The acting industry can be hugely rewarding; the excitement and achievement of the profession often repays the hard work. For many, nothing can beat the dizzying high of transforming into another person through artistic creation and self-expression.



## A new type of degree

An Acting degree at CU Scarborough is being delivered in partnership with the world-famous Stephen Joseph Theatre. Students get to work with SJT professionals at points throughout the programme.

Students are mentored, observe rehearsals and could have the opportunity to take part onstage in a professionally-directed piece for theatre. Exposure to creatives and industry professionals helps students network at a high-level and boosts their career prospects. Feeling inspired yet?

The dedicated rehearsal room at the CU Scarborough campus lets students work in a professional environment from day one. Facilities include a sprung floor, portable lighting, rostra and mirrors, a high-quality audio system, and fully-integrated technology to streamline access to online resources.

The content of the course also aims to be different. University drama courses can sometimes involve limited hours focused around theory, whereas drama school courses tend to be time and practice heavy. This degree imagines a third way, with lots of practical work in a fair number of fixed hours.



## Acting for all

Students from disadvantaged backgrounds face a range of challenges to get into the profession, including cost and travel. That's inspired CU Scarborough to develop an Acting degree that aims to defy this trend.

Isabelle Barker is a student on the degree and has dreamed of a career in acting since the age of six. She started to audition for drama schools and found that fees could rise to £75 per audition. Isabelle commented *"there's an opportunity for providers to make money as so many people want to audition. But this new degree at CU Scarborough doesn't make students pay to audition."*

## Transforming careers

An Acting degree will only be successful if it helps actors thrive in this competitive industry. That's why career-defining skills are embedded throughout. The course aims to provide training in both the art and the business of acting.

Students learn physical movement, the use of an actor's voice and how to produce performances. Teaching covers a range of specialisms, from traditional theatre, film and television, to voice acting, therapy, education and scriptwriting.

A new generation of acting careers are being unlocked through these specialisms. However, students are also introduced to business concepts including marketing, budgeting and entrepreneurship. This can help them market themselves as proactive professionals.



## New acting talent

Tutor Paul Elsam believes that this course is different to what's available almost everywhere else and is widening participation for a new generation of actors.

He said: *"we've teamed up with this fantastic, internationally recognised theatre and we're doing quite quirky stuff with students from different backgrounds, different levels of experience and different ages and it's working really well."*

If you are interested in more information about studying the degree, visit [www.coventry.ac.uk/cus/acting](http://www.coventry.ac.uk/cus/acting)

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# A trip to the archives

The NODA archive holds hundreds of books and magazines dating back to the Association's creation in 1899. From scores to librettos of forgotten shows, to old issues of the N.O.D.A Bulletin. One such copy I discovered featured the second part of an interesting article, written by the lyricist of *My Fair Lady*, Alan Jay Lerner. Having directed the show, I found the article so interesting and it explained so much. The hunt began for part 1.

After quite a lot of hunting, we finally located a copy of the February 1968 edition of the N.O.D.A Bulletin. However, when opening the booklet to the correct page, it seems that the bulk of the article had been cut out. On the back of the article page was actually the application form for the rights of *My Fair Lady*, which at the time were held by NODA. So, if anyone in the deep depths of their society archives has a copy of the February 1968 edition of the N.O.D.A Bulletin - with the complete article, please get in touch.

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## CREATION OF A LADY - Part II

by ALAN JAY LERNER, Lyricist of *My Fair Lady*

Part I appeared in the February, 1968 issue of the N.O.D.A BULLETIN

Here Mr. Lerner gives a personal account of some the bridges which he and Frederick Loewe crossed in fashioning the show.

---

The "Ascot Gavotte" is another first-rate example of how a humorous song is impossible without humorous music.

*Ev'ry Duke and Earl and Peer is here.*

*Ev'ry one who should be here is here.*

*What a smashing, positively dashing*

*Spectacle: The Ascot op'ning day.*

It's not enough to be able to write a charming little gavotte. It has to be a very good gavotte; it has to be very good music. An inconsequential piece of music will detract from a song as a whole, no matter how good the lyric may be. It's very hard - to the point of impossible - for a lyric writer to ever reach any sort of self-fulfillment without a working knowledge of music, it might be an intuitive knowledge of music. It might be a trained knowledge. I've never known a great lyric writer who wasn't intensely musical, who didn't have decided indeed about form - not only in terms of lyrics, but of music as well.

"On The Street Where You Live" is the song, which, because of the evenness of the music, Loewe cannot stand.

*I have often walked down this street before;*

*But the pavement always stayed beneath my feet before*

*All at once am I*

*Several stories high*

*Knowing I'm on the street where you live.*

I wrote it that way - and he hated it even more. I ran into Robert Russell Bennett and I said to him, "How's the score Robert?" "It's all pee pee music", he answered. "What do you mean?" and he said, "It's pee, pee, pee, pee, pee, pee." From that moment on every now and then when Fritz writes something I'll say, "Oh no, it's pee pee music. We don't want that."

We had written a rather pee middle part for "On The Street Where You Live" which went something like "Some men hate to wait and wait. If by chance the girl is late. I



don't mind the waiting part at all... I would wait through winter, spring and fall. And oh! the towering feeling." Columbia Records was recording the score, and Mitch Miller said, "Oh my God, that's a very nice song, but the middle part is terrible." And Fritz said, "I don't care what you do to it. I hate it. You can take it out or do anything you want with it." As a concession to Miller and because Loewe had no pride in it whatsoever, we took out the pee middle part.

I said to Fritz one day, "Let's write a sort of Hyde Park Feldermaus". He went right to the piano and wrote "You Did It".

*Tonite, old man, you did it!  
You did it! You did it!  
You said that you would do it!  
And indeed you did.*

Not one of the people on stage could really sing, so we tried to write it in such a way that when you were about to throw something at one for not being able to sing, you were distracted by another who couldn't sing either. As a matter of fact, when we were on the road we discovered that Pickering was singing too long and you couldn't stand it anymore, so we increased the servants. The whole thing is a sort of ruse to prevent the audience from realizing that a lot of very bad singing is going on.

The next song, "Show Me", is a clear example of searching high and low for an emotional attitude in order to avoid saying something that has been said before. We have the obvious place where girl and boy have broken up, the obvious place from a song that always appears in the second Act of a Musical - glad to be unhappy. We wrote a song called "Over Your Head". No matter how we approached the music and lyrics, it came out full of self-pity and seemed wrong for the character. It bore to me no indication of a proud Cockney girl. We examined the emotion very carefully; we examined it from every conceivable side. We finally arrived at the idea of her turning bitterness and heartbreak into anger against Freddie.

*Never do I want to hear another word.  
There isn't one I haven't heard  
Here we are together in what ought to be a dream;  
Say one more word and I'll scream!*

We discovered one day that Higgins became lost in the second Act; there was so much music in which he did not participate. I got the idea of "Why Can't A Woman Be More Like A Man" and went home to work on it. It became obvious that what Higgins really wanted was a friend. He wanted Eliza, but he wanted her to behave as a friend because he didn't understand the emotional pressure of an intimate relationship.

*Yes, why can't a woman be more like a man?  
Men are so honest, so thoroughly square;  
Eternally noble, historically fair;  
Who when you win will always give your back a pat.*

*Why can't a woman be more like that?*

It was a bore, it didn't express anything, it wasn't amusing. Finally, the idea emerged of doing it in 6/8 tempo, a "manly" tempo; the whole song came to life and the exact same lyrics became effective

"Without You" is not an important song musically or lyrically, but it's in the play. The problem was a musical one, Eliza acquires a should and stands on her own feet; in order to capture that in music you would be in grand opera. We decided that she would not protest her independence, but would be very sing-songy about it, conveying a kind of confidence.

*Without you pulling it, the tide comes in,  
Without you twirling it, the earth can spin.  
Without your pushing them, the clouds roll by.  
If they can do it without you, ducky, so can I!*

The song had just the emotion we wanted - no emotion.

"I'm An Ordinary Man", went through many, many stages of development. We first wrote an entirely different song called "Please don't marry me", we knew that Higgins, being a misogynist with a young girl moving into his house, would have to sing about his hatred of women. "Please don't marry me, I beg you from the floor. Please don't marry me, don't marry me. The very word and look and flattery that every wife deserves... those little things that matter would shatter my nerves." Higgins would be singing it to Pickering, his friend, explaining to him how he feels whenever he sees a woman. The song - it was small. There was nothing in it with which to act; there were too many rhymes; there was no emotional attitude in the music.

The actual song which was written, "I'm An Ordinary Man", is written in two moods, and those two moods, no matter how good the lyric, could not be possible without those two moods being in the music: the soft shoe feel of tranquillity as he protests his gentleness and innocence.

*I'm a very gentle man;  
Even-tempered and good-natured,  
Whom you never hear complain;  
Who has the milk of human kindness  
By the quart in every vein.*

and the anger

*But, let a woman in your life  
And your serenity is through!  
She'll redecorate your home  
From the cellar to the dome;  
And then go on to the enthralling  
Fun of overhauling  
You.*

We had another problem with that song; we had a man who was not a singer. How do you write a climax for a man who doesn't sing? Usually a baritone can go up to an F or G - and you're home theatrically, so we inserted his turning on the phonograph, the noise gets louder and louder; we had machines give us the climax which he, with his vocal limitations, could not give us.

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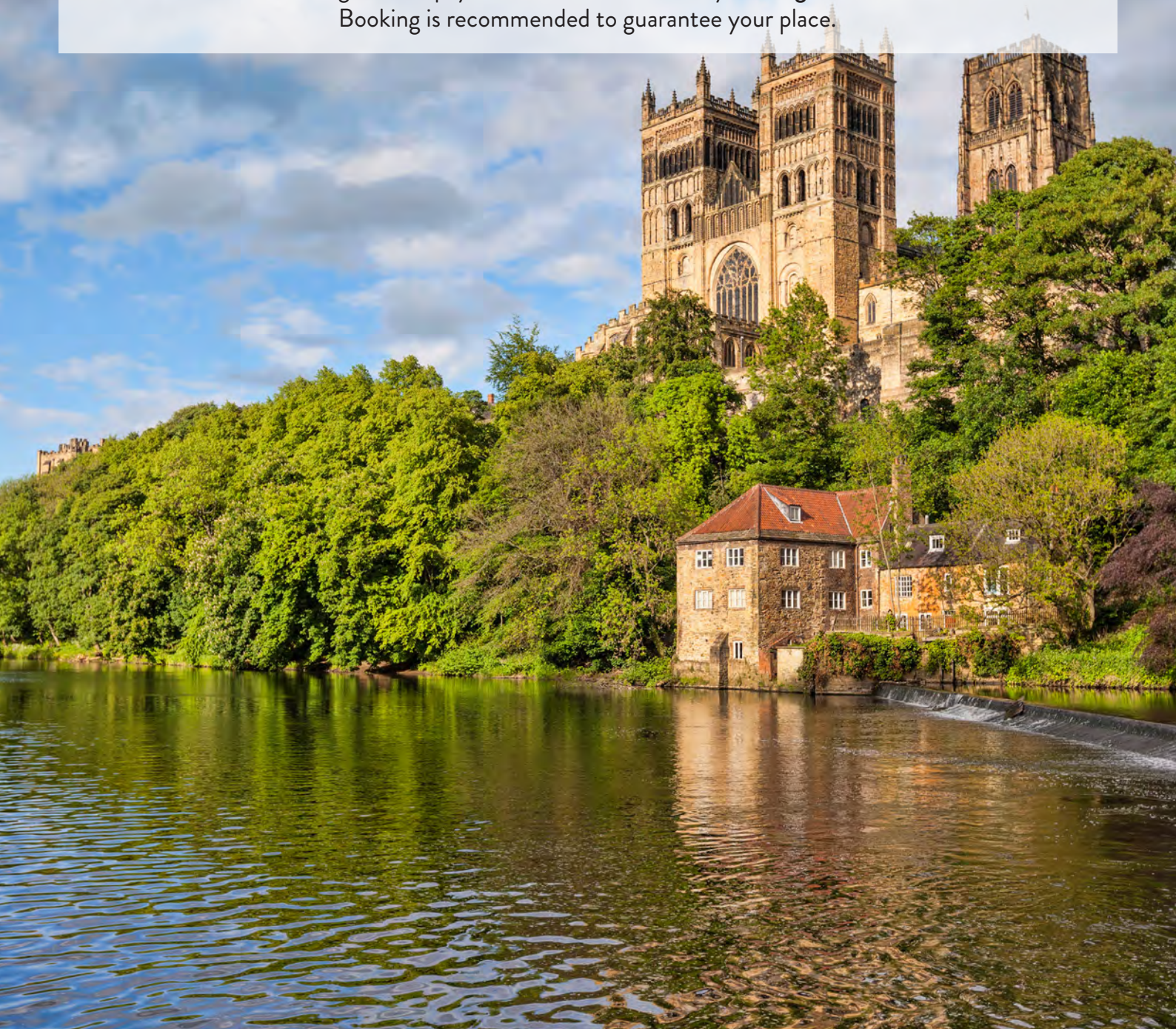
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# NODA Presidential Gala & AGM 2020

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The North is proud to welcome you to the Presidential Gala and AGM. Overlooking the River Wear right in the city centre, the Radisson Blu Hotel in Durham is the perfect place to unwind. Durham, in the northeast of the country, is a quintessential English city peppered with historical and cultural charms. Shop, dine and explore before taking a short walk back to your room to relax.

Booking and full payment must be received by **1st August 2020**.  
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# The City of Durham

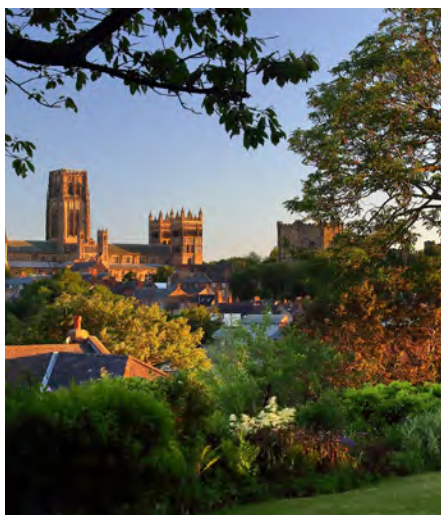


Why not make a full weekend of your trip? Booking onto Package A or C will give you time to explore the amazing city and it's sights.

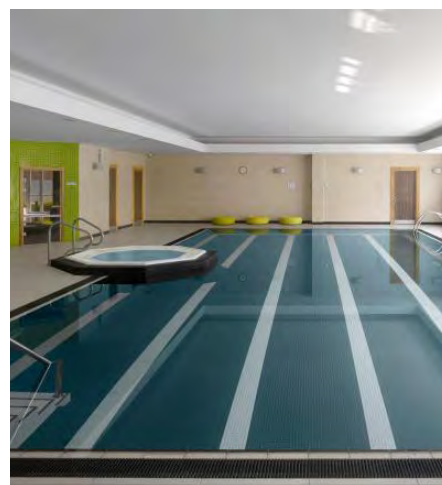
The city boasts several UNESCO World Heritage sites, as well as a maze of hilly, cobbled streets. Visit Durham Cathedral, Durham Castle and Durham University. These attractions are all just a short walk from the hotel.

And if you love history you can delve further into the county's fascinating past at exciting attractions in the Durham Dales, Durham Coast and the Vale of Durham including Beamish - The living Museum of the North, England's largest open air museum.

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Per Person

Gala dinner only

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**Please note - there is no charge to attend the AGM**

# NODA Presidential Gala & AGM 2020

Radison Blu Hotel, Durham Frankland Lane Durham DH1 5TA  
Friday 18th - Sunday 20th September

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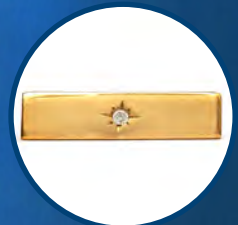
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# Let's celebrate

## Settle's 140th Anniversary

NODA North East



*Freda Hargreaves, Centre, our President, with over 70 years service alone with our historian John Reid and wife Helen Reid.*

Memorabilia from 140 years celebrating song, sweat and laughter were on display at SAOS's (Settle Musical Theatre) Old Courthouse base recently. Their first production was a 'dramatic entertainment' in 1880, and the most recent was *Sister Act* in 2019, and in between, there has been all manner of musical hits. In a display of this sort, a key part is the reminiscences which are sparked by the photographs. It was a real delight to hear visitors sharing stories and memories of the role SAOS has played in their lives. Like all amateur organisations, the final glittering

production is only arrived at after a lot of hard work by all the team. While the actual people have changed over the years, the society has always been blessed with dedicated producers, musical directors and accompanists who have been willing to use their time and talents to inspire others.

The society is rightly proud of the fact that a number of members have since gone on to make their careers in the entertainment industry, while others have remained in amateur theatre even after leaving the Settle area. The establishment of a youth theatre

group, the 'Courthouse Kids Theatre', is part of their initiative to ensure the future of the society and also to encourage young people to discover the delight of theatre and the joy of working creatively together.

The social side of the society has always been important, and this too, was reflected in the display. Over the years they have had many generous bequests which, in 1965, allowed them to buy the Old Courthouse and through the years other essential equipment as well as fundraising themselves, organising fun nights, quizzes and horse race nights to name but a few. As a key part of the Settle community, they have regularly provided concert parties to entertain those unable to attend the annual show. With the exception of *Carousel* in 2000, when the building was being refurbished, every show has been held in Settle's own theatre the Victoria Hall.

The society's ongoing popularity can be seen in the fact that there are over 25 members who have 25 years plus of service either as performers, backstage or committee members and one, Freda Hargreaves, who has 70 years of service. There is, however, always room for newcomers, both on stage and backstage.



# Carmarthen Amateur Operatic Society approaches it's 130th birthday

NODA Wales and Ireland

The society was founded in 1891. The first performance was *HMS Pinafore* which was performed in December that year at the Assembly Rooms, Carmarthen, now known as the Lyric Theatre.

During those years, the society performed in various venues around the town including St David's Memorial Hall – (now the Quins Rugby Club) and St Peters Civic Hall. One of its longest-serving members provided excellent information on the early years, and his family have kindly donated numerous items of memorabilia including photographs, posters and programmes, some of which date back as far as 1912.

The society was forced to take a break

during both World Wars, but in 1951 they reformed under the umbrella of Carmarthen Arts Club. That year the society performed *The Mikado*, celebrating the Festival of Britain. In the following years the society went on to perform many shows including *The Pirates of Penzance*, *The Gondoliers*, *A Country Girl*, *HMS Pinafore* and *A Waltz Dream*; all of which delighted the audiences of the town and surrounding district. Over the intervening years, CAOS performed hundreds of musicals and reviews

The start of the New Millennium year found the society returning to its roots at the Lyric Theatre where they performed *Fiddler on the Roof*. This proved so successful that the society is still performing there; allowing their

members to experience performing in a professional theatrical environment.

In 2011 the 120 years celebrations took place with a Grand Ball, a Musical Celebrations Concert and a performance of *Annie*. As the society now approach 130 years they have performed some of the most modern and up-to-date musicals including *Little Shop of Horrors*, *Sister Act* and most recently *Addams Family the Musical*.

In their 129th year, they will be performing *9 to 5 the Musical*, and it is testament to the entire company that after nearly 130 years they are still going strong, having fun and entertaining the people of Carmarthen.



# Berwick-Upon-Tweed Amateur Operatic Society celebrates 100 years

NODA North



Old and new members of Berwick Operatic Society are preparing for a big celebration this year when the society celebrates its 100th birthday. In 1920, the founder of the society, Mr George Ballantyne, had attended a production by Hawick Operatic Society and was inspired with the idea of forming a similar society in Berwick. A group of enthusiasts were gathered together, and so the society was born, wasting no time in performing its first show *H.M.S. Pinafore* in 1921 with, interestingly, 24 males in the cast! Mr Ballantyne was the Musical Director.

The society then flourished and, apart from the war years when the society performed concert parties in aid of the war effort, a theatre fire in 1954 which meant the cancellation of *Show Boat* and a brief spell without a show in the early 1970s, the society performed at least one production every year. A commemorative book, *Sixty Years of Song*, was written by long-standing and loyal member Dorothy Middlemiss, to celebrate the society's 60th birthday and another book is already being prepared to celebrate 100 years. Among other celebrations planned, there will be an exhibition emphasising the society's theatrical history to be held at The Maltings Theatre, Berwick in August.

Membership of the society is still flourishing, and a youth group was formed a few years ago where budding stars of the future can learn the ropes. The variety and type of show the society has performed is vast, ranging from Gilbert & Sullivan operettas, Rodgers & Hammerstein shows such as *Oklahoma* and *Carousel* to modern shows like *Made in Dagenham* and their show this year *Sister Act*. As a sign of its continuing success and the quality of its productions, the society also received seven nominations for this year's NODA Awards and were successful in six of them, including Best Show for *The Sound of Music*. We do hope in 2120 the society will still be flourishing, and members will look back at this time with appreciation and pride.



Original programme cover - 1921



*The Sound Of Music* 2019

# 100 musical years and counting

NODA East Midlands



*Showtime 100*



*Patience 1920*

**John Hurton Chairman of Melton Mowbray Theatre Company, tells the story of a society which celebrated its centenary last year.**

In 1919 in Melton Mowbray, famous for pork pies and Stilton cheese, the organist and choirmaster of St Mary's church had the idea of forming an operatic society. That young musician was Doctor Malcolm Sargent, who helmed our first production of *Patience* establishing a "G&S" tradition that has lasted to the present day. Dr Sargent remained until 1927 when he was inevitably called to higher endeavours with the D'Oyly Carte, a knighthood and the Last Night of The Proms.

For the next three decades, the Society followed a similar path to many of its contemporaries presenting popular shows of the time such as *Lilac Domino* and *Rose Marie* until 1962 when they performed *Oklahoma!* beginning a run of American musicals and a boom in the Society's fortunes and its popularity resulting in the

production of two shows a year from 1966.

There have been many places to call home, but it wasn't until 1976 that we found a permanent base in the excellent purpose-built 350 seat Melton Theatre, enabling us to present larger and more technically demanding productions to a high professional standard.

However, those enviable standards come at a huge financial cost and the finances fluctuated dramatically. But we've always rallied to the cause and been willing to adapt to the changing trends and needs of our audience and members. 2006 heralded a name change to The Melton Musical Theatre Company, reflecting a more modern outlook and, to keep presenting big, modern musicals. In 2013 came our first non-musical in the shapely form of *Calendar Girls*, whose critical and financial success led to more comedies such as *Fawlty Towers* and *The Vicar of Dibley*.

Members always will be the core of the Company. Ages range from teens to grandparents, and several generations of the same family have passed through our ranks, often performing together. It's also proved the springboard for many professional careers, and we boast current West End lead Laura Tebbutt and TV, film and theatre star, Adrian Scarborough amongst our alumni.

To celebrate our Centenary year, we welcomed back many former members for a rapturously received concert, *Showtime 100* back where it all began in St Mary's church, and the celebrations continue into 2020 and a return to our roots with *The Pirates of Penzance* from 25th to 28th March.

So, what's next? Who knows if we'll make 200 years, but with continued good governance, the right mixture of shows and support from established and new audiences, we'll certainly give it our best shot!



*Fawlty Towers 2015*



*Sir Malcolm Sargent - Proms*

# Wales Community Theatre Players turn 75

NODA North East



*Sleeping Beauty - 2020*

This year, in January, Wales Community Theatre Players (based near Sheffield) celebrated the 75th Anniversary of their annual pantomime with *Sleeping Beauty*. It all began with their founding member, Roy Staniforth MBE. At the age of 12, Roy began attending Wales Methodist Church Sunday School. In 1944, at the age of fifteen, Roy wrote his first panto, *Robinson Crusoe*.

*"I started writing them after I'd seen my first pantomime, Robinson Crusoe. All the principals in the first pantomime were evacuees from Brighton, there weren't many on from Wales, they were nearly all evacuees."*

What began as a playtime hobby, with friends and several evacuees at Wales Chapel after Sunday School, blossomed! One Sunday the Superintendent, William Smith, happened to come across the group of them and was so impressed that he asked Roy to present his panto in the schoolroom so that all the Sunday School could enjoy the show.

*"We practised round the back of Chapel because we hadn't said anything to the Sunday School teachers. The Superintendent came round and said 'what are you doing?'. We said we were practising for a pantomime so he told us to come inside, don't practise outside, come inside and that's how I started doing them."*

Consequently, in March of 1944,

Roy's first production took place. As this was a wartime panto, black out material predominated with scraps of any other suitable material that could be scraped together. When asked in interview what the first pantomime was like, Roy remarked:

*"Very amateurish, quite a few came to see it because there had never been a pantomime in Kiveton."*

It was a huge success and the proceeds were handed over to Lady Matthews at Aston Hall in aid of the Red Cross. His pantomimes continued for over seven decades to the present day, bringing laughter and enjoyment to the many thousands who have watched them or taken part in these unique productions.

The pantos still continued at the Chapel, but in 1977 it was decided that the schoolroom was no longer suitable, taking into account the new fire safety regulations (three people to one chair was no longer acceptable!). So, after more than thirty years based at the Chapel, the pantomimes moved to Wales High School, starting with the production of *Aladdin*. This was only for a short time as audiences grew too large to be accommodated at the High School and they moved to the Montgomery Theatre in Sheffield. Their longest serving member, Martin Crowther, recalls what it was like to walk in to the Montgomery for the first time:



*Roy Staniforth MBE*

*"I couldn't believe what I was walking in to. I went into a proper theatre and I felt like I'd achieved it. I guess nowadays it's similar to people going to London and seeing something like Les Misérables"*

Wales Community Theatre Players has always had a strong family spirit, with several members of the same families all taking part, both on and off stage. Principal boy, Alison Wade started as a chorus girl and now shares the stage with her two children and niece.

*"After being involved in Wales's pantomime productions for 36 years I am really proud that this community group is still going strong after 75 years and I am thrilled that both of my daughters are now involved, it gives them so much confidence and they love to perform on stage with their friends. My niece is also in the cast stepping up to her first principal role this year, so it's a real family affair! This wouldn't have happened without the talent and determination of our founder Roy Staniforth MBE, so thank you Roy!"*

In 2017, Wales Methodist Pantomime Players became a registered charity and re-branded as Wales Community Theatre Players.

Becoming a charity has ensured the society has a bright future and the legacy left by Roy Staniforth MBE will hopefully continue for the next 75 years and beyond.

# Sixty glorious years for society founder members

NODA West Midlands

In November 2019, Redditch Operatic Society (ROS) celebrated their sixtieth anniversary year, with an exhilarating production of Andrew Lloyd Webber's *CATS*.

A diamond anniversary is to be celebrated, of course. But it was not, in itself, an especially unusual event given the equally long history of many dramatic and operatic groups across the country.

However, what really made this particular occasion exceptional was the participation on stage of two of the Society's founding members – husband and wife team, Bob and Pearl Taylor – who were there at the re-formation of the Society in 1959, and for the Society's first production of *The Quaker Girl*, and who have performed with the Society ever since.

Bob and Pearl recall: "We were members of the Redditch Youth Club Choir, and our Choir Mistress Bessie Hill, told us that a meeting had been convened to reform the Redditch Operatic Society which had been disbanded at the start of the war. A few of us were invited to go along and join, so we went along to the first rehearsal and were hooked! We were happy to help re-form the Society, never thinking that we would still be here sixty years later the early years, we were content to be chorus members, but then we became a bit more ambitious, dancing and playing increasingly bigger parts over the years, especially for Pearl, who played some leading roles in various productions."

As the years went on, they became more involved with the running of the society. On the committee, Pearl was Social Secretary, and then Treasurer for many years. And Bob was a general committee member until invited to become President of the Society in 2014. Pearl has also produced a number of shows for the Society.



*The Count of Luxembourg* - 1968



*Husbands and Wives in 25 Years of ROS* - 1983

"Due to our activities, they also became involved with the Palace Theatre in Redditch; Pearl as a key holder and bar/front of house volunteer, and Bob as a member of the volunteer stage crew. When the theatre was in threat of closure and demolition, we would like to think that members of ROS helped save the theatre and kept it going, making it the success it is today. The Palace Theatre is, of course, where we have performed our shows over the past four decades and more."

"As you can imagine, the last sixty years with Redditch Operatic Society has been, and still is, a big part of our lives; a life during which we have met a lot of clever and talented people who we now know as our friends". Bob says, "A good operatic society is like a happy family, and I like to think we are both (good and happy)". Pearl added, "As Bob says, it is a happy, wonderful family. So much so, that two of our younger members, Kelly and Paul, have 'adopted' us as 'grandparents' – what a joy and pleasure



*CATS* - 2019

beyond words. We have seen so many talented people come and go over the years and, whilst we will still be involved behind-the-scenes, we now think we should leave the stage to our talented younger generation to carry on and take the Society through many more years ahead".

ROS Chairman, Tony Jay, summarised by saying, "Bob and Pearl are true 'legends' of Redditch Operatic Society. A couple whose love of singing and performing has shone over sixty years. Their commitment to the Society, both on and off stage is an example to us all. We have been very lucky indeed to have had their dedication, hard work and wise words over the years, not to mention the joy they have brought to our audiences when on stage. There surely cannot be many societies who have had members perform with them continually for sixty years, from the very first show to our latest. To us, they are unique!"

# Melksham Music and Drama hits 50!

NODA South West

Recently, community group Melksham Music and Drama celebrated its 50th anniversary with a performance of "The Enchanted Edition" of Rodgers & Hammerstein's *Cinderella* at Melksham Assembly Hall. It was a slight departure for the group as they used live music. There was a special Friday night performance for original and ex-members, many of which turned up and, one has even re-joined for their next panto, *Camelot*.

The group were formed from the remnants of Avon Players in 1969 which became Melksham Comedy Club, and many in the town still call it that. Chair, Geoff Mitcham, said "*Cinderella* was a wonderful show, produced and directed by Alison Turrell and Kevin Hodges. We've seen a lot of changes over the years from when we used to do a lot of old-time musicals, and the club even won HTV's "Best In The West" in the early



Members, old and new of Melksham Music and Drama at 50th Anniversary celebration  
Credit: Geoff Mitcham

days but moved onto using modern songs from many sources, even including heavy rock! We have a very talented group of singers, dancers and set builders at the moment. Our high point was winning the NODA South West Best Comedy Production Award for "Act Your Age" during 2016".

Over the years the group has performed many musicals, including *Oliver*, *Anything Goes*, *Copacabana*,

*Grease*, *Oklahoma!*. The group is going from strength to strength and currently has around 30 members. After the panto they are doing something completely different, a show written and directed by local performer Justin Haggett, where he will play his acoustic guitar on all the songs! Later in the year, they have the licence to perform *Joseph & His Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat* in September - and they are all looking forward to doing that!

## Three of our most popular musicals ...



Specially written for amateur musical groups with largely mature female memberships. A therapy clinic for celebrities, down on its luck, is forced to take in a bunch of old folk as their Home is un-inhabitable. A mystery celebrity phones to check in, and it's all hands to the pump to try and convince her that the place is well run and managed; when in fact it's the old folk who are gearing up to administer their own bizarre range of alternative therapies.



In 1612, James and Catherine both from different classes, backgrounds and worlds, find themselves in a melting pot of politics and suspicion. In newly Protestant London, the King, his court and his henchman (the Witchfinder), each with a different vested interest, take up against the innocent Catholic residents of Pendle who they suspect are witches. A powerful story with dominant characters and soaring themes, the musical traces the heart-rending events and their consequences, painting a picture that encompasses life and of loss, but equally tells of love and of hope.



This excellent musical is based on the true story of what happened (with a bit of artistic licence) when a ship containing 50,000 cases of whisky runs aground on a remote Scottish island in 1943. Adapted from Compton Mackenzie's novel, this musical has had two very successful productions at the Pitlochry Festival Theatre in 2009 and 2011 and numerous amateur societies in Scotland have produced it. However, it awaits its premier production outside of Scotland.

## And for the 'D in NODA' people...

### **Curl Up And Die** by Anna Longaretti

(3m, 7f) **Full Length Comedy Farce**. The only chance for Ruth's antiquated hairdressing salon to survive is a complete make-over, funded by winning the big-cash-prize competition run by 'Fab Hair' magazine. On the day of the contest things are looking hopeful until, despite being told that the Salon would be closed today, Ruth's old faithful blue rinse ladies arrive and inveigle their shampoo and sets from her. Then the petulant model throws a strop, the Spanish photographer fuses the lights, and a pompous Health And Safety Officer arrives for a routine 'in depth' inspection. In the middle of the mayhem one of the 'old biddy' customers seemingly dies under the drier. Could things get any worse?



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# 25 years of youth theatre

NODA Scotland

In October 1994 Linlithgow Amateur Musical Productions (LAMP) performed *Oliver*. When auditions were held for Fagin's gang, the demand proved so great that the company (along with some parent pressure!) felt the desire was there for a children's theatre company - and so LAMP children's theatre was born! The original children's theatre was set up by LAMP founding members Nan and Bill McDonald, David Wylie and Ian Scott, along with a group of keen parents. They staged their first show, *The Wizard of Oz*, in April 1995 and haven't looked back. We currently have 60 members ranging from P5 to S5, rehearsing for *Bugsy Malone* in April.

Over the 25 years, one of the highlights must be the Scottish amateur premiere of *Billy Elliot* in 2010. Conditions were such that it had to be performed within a specific time frame, and we were lucky enough to be within that. We were then invited to perform an excerpt at the Royal Lyceum Theatre in Edinburgh where other companies who had performed and were about to perform also took part, proving an excellent experience for the children. Last year the 25th-anniversary show of *Barnum* was also hugely successful and showcased many of the hidden talents that the company has - it's not often a show requires a unicyclist!

Another significant achievement for LAMP children's theatre was being awarded the Utopia Costumes award for services to youth theatre in 2013 - it was a great moment to be recognised for something that we all feel so passionately about.

LAMP is proud to be part of the local community within Linlithgow. We are invited to take part in the *Riding of the Marches* each year and last year were invited to sing at the Beecraigs Festive Forest which was a magical experience, if a little chilly! Being a part of our wider NODA family is also hugely important to us and we have many friends from different district 3 companies, providing mutual support.



As a company we are delighted that many of our former members have gone on to have careers in the creative arts industry, including touring in *The Steamie*; professional panto appearances; cruise contracts; professional stage make-up and sound and lighting work.

One of the ideas behind the children's theatre was the hope that they would go on to join our adult company and we are delighted that this has been the case. We have some members who have continued friendships with

people they met in the children's theatre and this gives LAMP the family feel that we love. Over the last 25 years there have been many changes but the biggest change has to be the changes within child licensing! We were fortunate to have a regional NODA meeting to guide us through the necessary minefield of legislation!

We have had a fantastic 25 years and have welcomed hundreds of talented local children to the company and we can't wait to see what happens in the next 25 years!

# Travels with the chain

Written by Christine Hunter Hughes, NODA National President

In the 4 months, to the end of January, from 28th September when I was inaugurated as NODA President, we have travelled a total of 9,071 miles – 7676 of which have been by car – driven by my husband and Consort, David, aka the chauffeur, as he introduces himself on many of the visits. We have seen a total of 51 shows, including one on the Isle of Man (flights not included in the mileage) being split as, 25 musicals, 12 pantomimes 9 plays and 5 concerts (including a rather splendid Gang Show). Included in the musicals was a technical rehearsal (unfortunately we did not have an evening free to see the show) of *Chitty, Chitty, Bang, Bang* by Newtown Theatre Group who had built their own car!

We had intended to visit Cumbernauld MTS to see their production of *Titanic* but unfortunately, thanks to Virgin Trains we were unable to actually get there in time as we sat on a train for 4 hours going absolutely nowhere, as the train ahead of us pulled down the power supply to the West Coast mainline, then were most unceremoniously towed back to where we had started from! (not a pastime I recommend).

There have not been a huge number of duplications of shows either: we have seen *The Addams Family* and *Little Shop of Horrors* twice. The favoured pantomime this year seems to have been *Aladdin*, which we have seen 4 times, closely followed by *Cinderella*, which we have seen 3 times.

I have discovered that ‘the chain’ has a mind of its own and it hardly ever seems to do what I want it to do – and worse yet – it seems to triumph over me – whatever lengths I go to in an attempt to prevent it!

Our travels with ‘the chain’ have taken us more or less the length and breadth of the country from St Austell to Edinburgh and North Wales to Peterborough and, as you may imagine, many points in between. I feel so honoured and privileged and very lucky to be able to represent our great Association up and down the country. We have been welcomed as friends to every single Society we have visited and have been so impressed, not just by the wonderful productions and amazing talent, but by the enthusiasm, passion and commitment we have witnessed at first hand – it is a very humbling, thrilling, wonderful experience. I have also been granted the great honour of presenting several Long Service Medals and Awards of behalf of the relevant society.

So a huge ‘thank you so’ much to all the societies we have visited.

One of the things I have enjoyed the most is going onto the stage to very briefly meet and have a word with the cast and have my photograph taken with them. It is a measure of how much I have enjoyed this that I have finally succumbed to Facebook and details of our travels together with the photograph, appear on the NODA President page.

So do please continue to invite us to your productions, be they plays, musicals or concerts and if we can come we most certainly will. Thank you – everyone!



**Frosted** - Workington Theatre Group



**Festive Fairy Tales and Fables** - Yew Tree Youth Theatre



**The Flint Street Nativity** - Neston Players



**Sunset Boulevard** - Southport Spotlights



**Chitty Chitty Bang Bang** - Newtown Musical Theatre Company



**Little Shop of Horrors** - Whitefield AODS



**George's Marvellous Medicine** - Axminster Drama Club



**Aladdin** - Tyldesley Little Theatre



**Grimm Tales** - Todmorden AODS



**Our House** - Centenary Theatre Company



**Dick Whittington** - Waterloo & Crosby TC



**Sleeping Beauty The Musical** - Mossley AO & DS

# Gallery Players' own miracle worker creates Bedford van on New Wolsey stage

NODA East

Staging a play always has its challenges but building a full-sized Bedford van is something special. We take a look backstage at the Gallery Players *The Lady In The Van* which was staged at The new Wolsey Theatre, Ipswich in July.

You would think that the most challenging thing about staging Alan Bennett's comic drama *The Lady In The Van* would be providing not one but two Alan Bennetts who comment on the comings and goings of their not entirely welcome drive-way tenant.

That proved the relatively easy part with Gallery Players director Steve Wooldridge managing to cast experienced actors Steve Taplin and Daren Nunn as the bespectacled playwright along with Jenni Horne as the recalcitrant Miss Shepherd. No, the real challenge was somehow getting a lightweight, but entirely believable classic Bedford van onto the New Wolsey stage.

Enter long-term set designer Dave Borthwick, a man, rather like Scotty in *Star Trek*, known for his feats of engineering and his ability to seemingly achieve the impossible. Steve Wooldridge describes him as a miracle-worker. Instead of cannibalising a real van, instead he chose to build one from scratch - "working from the original Bedford specifications. A real feat of ingenuity."

For Dave, he modestly shrugs his shoulders, smiles a slightly bemused smile, and says he enjoys the challenge. Whether he realises it or not (and I'm sure he must) Dave is worth his weight in gold. He is one of those rare people, someone totally in love with theatre but has no desire to actually go on the stage himself. He is much happier scurrying around backstage with a paint pot in one

hand and an oxyacetylene torch in the other or perhaps nowadays a 3-D printer!

To enter Dave Borthwick's workshop is to enter an Aladdin's cave of creative industry. A Dave Borthwick set is a long way from panto-props and painted back-cloths. He creates worlds you can live in and therefore they are easier to act in.

However, his latest challenge was exacting to say the least. "It had to be a particular type of van," he explains "A Bedford CA from the fifties: in the seventies, when the play starts, it's already an old van.

They are very hard to get hold of. We were looking at paying £20,000 plus for a vehicle, it would be impossible to sell on - we would have had to take the engine, gearbox and oil out, because we aren't allowed to have those on stage. So we decided to build one.

"It's a great challenge, and to be honest I really wanted to make it. We had a real car in a previous show, and it took weeks of cutting and welding to get it how we wanted it.

"We are making it using stage techniques - it's all smoke and mirrors. It is largely wood and the sort of foam you use for household insulation. There's lots of cutting, sawing and sanding to shape to get the right contours for the van. It's very satisfying."

The enterprise started with a scale model made out of card and foam, using exactly the same techniques that Dave could scale up - just to prove it could be done.

With a fortnight until opening night, Dave is happy with the progress. "It's going well so far. The trickiest bit is the sliding side doors. The lady has to get in and out of her van.

"The van is central to the whole play. It's centre stage, the lady lives in it, it travels around the stage and is seen



Dave Borthwick and his team working away on the construction of the lightweight Bedford van for *Lady In The Van* Photo: Andrew Clarke

from every angle - at times she even has to drive it."

Dave says that he finds working in three dimensions very satisfying - "I find it easy to think in that way. I have made lots of other props for Gallery Players shows but the van will take some beating."

Other favourites have included a full-sized sheepdog puppet for *Far From the Madding Crowd*, the cow Milky White for *Into the Woods*, and a statue of a dog for a play called *Heroes*, which was required to turn its head at one point.

For director Steve Wooldridge, the knowledge that they could have a realistic Bedford van was vital before rehearsals could even begin. With the van you don't have a play and it's one of Wooldridge's favourites, a favourite from one of his favourite playwrights. "I have been a life-long fan of Alan Bennett. I very much admire his wry sense of humour, his keen sense of observation and his ability to make us look at what is familiar in an unfamiliar way, whether in his plays or his prose writings.

I have previously directed *The History Boys* and several of his *Talking Heads* and thoroughly enjoyed doing so." First a book, a play and then a film, *The Lady in the Van* tells the true story of Alan Bennett's strained friendship with Miss Mary Shepherd, an eccentric homeless woman whom Bennett befriended in 1974 before

allowing her 'temporarily' to park her Bedford van in the driveway of his Camden home. For Alan Bennett charity truly began at home but little did he know that she would remain there for 15 years. "It's a wonderfully witty play and centres on their extraordinary relationship, which for Bennett was a source of intrigue, frustration and compassion.

"One seldom was able to do her a good turn without some thoughts of strangulation," he wrote. As Alan Bennett very candidly admits, he and Miss Shepherd mutually benefited from her presence; he provided her with a safe haven while she acted as his muse, providing endless humorous material with her rude interactions with the outside world.

The story is funny, poignant and life affirming. *The Lady in the Van* touches upon a variety of themes: eccentricity, guilt and attitudes to homelessness.

"Bennett comments that he struggled to plough on with work at his desk in the window of his house in Gloucester Crescent in Camden - which faced Miss Shepherd's parked van - and often got tangled in the happenings of the lady rather than producing work. Hence his decision to invite her onto his drive."

*This article by Andrew Clarke used by kind permission of the East Anglian Daily Times.*



## Awards all round for youth group

NODA South East

Knightstar Productions youngsters were presented with NODA Youth Awards at the end of their recent Christmas Production. A total of 17 young performers were presented with awards for their contributions to amateur theatre. Three recipients - Owen Clayton, Eadie Swanton and Madeline Taylor have been with Knightstar Productions since its first youth production - *Honk* - in 2014.

Knightstar Productions rehearse and perform in Barnham, West Sussex and are currently rehearsing for their production of *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat* which will be on 2nd and 3rd May.



# Sunderland Theatre treasure discovered at Barnard Castle

NODA North

Checking and replying to emails is, 99% of the time, a routine administrative task for a theatre company nowadays. However, for Sunderland Theatre Company, a recent email posed quite a different opportunity altogether.

Entitled 'Photo Album', the email detailed how the sender had been

antique scrapbook, you are met with a near-mint condition programme (costing 2d) from *Merrie England* a Comic Opera, performed in Barnes Park in 1943. An announcement in one programme read: "Should an Air-Raid Warning be sounded during a Performance, an announcement will immediately be made from the Stage. Those desiring to leave the Theatre

may speak of our reputation within the Arts, there are some specific newspaper articles that provide us with the most pride. From 1944 to 1949, the five years featured within the scrapbook, the then Sunderland (Amateur) Operatic and Dramatic Society, raised more than £4,000 for the 'Welcome Home Fund', a charity set up to provide aid to returning servicemen.

To paint a clearer picture, as what is four-grand to a charity nowadays? According to the Bank of England's inflation calculator, that £4,000 in 1949 is worth an incredible £142,412.50 in 2020. That truly shows the staggering amount of money raised by the theatre company within those 5 years of this scrapbook, an achievement everyone at STCo is incredibly proud of!

STCo are keen to speak to, or hear from anyone who may have any information about the scrapbook, or have any link to, relations with, or stories to tell about the theatre company at the time of the shows and articles enshrined within it. If you have any information to share, please email [stcosecretary@hotmail.com](mailto:stcosecretary@hotmail.com).



visiting Robsons Antiques in Barnard Castle, an hour down the road from Sunderland. While there she had come across an old photo album, filled with memories of Sunderland Theatre Company, the 127-year-old organisation known as Sunderland Operatic and Dramatic Society at the time the album was made. Wheels were quickly put in motion to purchase the album, and once received, a mixture of nostalgia and awe settled into the eyes of all those who opened it.

Robsons tell us that this priceless find came to them from a donation made from the Hamsterley/Bishop Auckland area, something we are incredibly grateful for, as what a find it was...

As you gaze upon the first pages of what can best be described as an

may do so, but the performance will continue."

As WW2 raged on across Europe, this scrapbook, unfortunately without an author, tells a history of STCo entertaining the masses and keeping spirits up on the home front. With productions such as *Showboat*, *The New Moon* and *Goodnight, Vienna* being immortalised through near-pristine, 70-year-old newspaper clippings and show programmes, the album paints an incredible tale of STCo's brilliant history. One such newspaper clipping shows a photograph of Producer, William Budd, chatting to the one-and-only Ivor Novello, about his production of *Crest of the Wave* with Sunderland.

However, while the programmes may speak of our history on stage, and the famous names of the past



# Dreams bring life to a community's musical theatre and High Street

NODA West Midlands

When work brought Judy and Stuart Megarry (pictured) and their decades of acting, directing and producing experience to Pershore, the Georgian market town in Worcestershire had lacked musical theatre since the Great War.

The couple began to dream. Surely the community could again support an Operatic and Dramatic Society? They began to act – posting handbills that attracted 74 people to the inaugural meeting in 1989 of Pershore Operatic and Dramatic Society (PODS).

Behind each well-received performance lay gruelling days for PODS, turning the community sports hall into a theatre. It led to a further dream; one-day PODS and Pershore would have its own theatre!

People and groups across the community got behind the dream and took on the enormous challenge to raise funds and transform a former High Street supermarket



*Number 8 is a thriving Community Arts Centre inspired and led by the people of Pershore in Worcestershire. The total cost of the project is £1.4 million.*

into Pershore's award-winning, independent arts centre, 'Number 8'. Number 8 represents a dream to reality inspired by the people of Pershore and embraces all art forms, amateur and professional. Its unique identity is enhanced by a team of over 200 volunteers.

PODS is proud to be the resident amateur theatre company and as such

were thrilled to take to the stage in *Showstoppers* on Number 8's opening night in December 2004. PODS were likewise thrilled to perform during Number 8's Royal Opening by Prince Philip (2006) and see Judy Megarry awarded a British Empire Medal for services to community music in the Queen's 2016 Birthday Honours.

## Group take to the tracks

NODA North West



Must See Musical (MSM) were formed in 2008. They are a Community Theatre Group with a difference as they source or make all their own costumes, props and scenery.

First performed in 2012, MSM

revisited the captivating story of 'The Railway Children'. Although it was performed at a much larger venue with all new improved scenery, a few of the original cast returned to perform again. Tracey Carter resumed her role as Mrs Waterbury (Mother), and Helen Bailey returned as the

Engine Driver. Bethany Carter who originally played Peter came back to portray the female lead of Roberta (Bobbie). Emelia Heritage-Brill, formally Patch Perks, came back as Gert and a then very young Sasha Bailey-Henry took on the roles of Ruth and Ethel. Also, our amazing Director and Choreographer, Angela Snell, returned to completely re-energise the show in a brand-new way. Our newest cast consisted of Mr Albert Perks acted by Gareth Roberts, his first lead role, Eddie Bell as Mr Waterbury (Father) and the Russian writer Szczepansky. We also welcomed Josh Moulton as Peter and Imogen Campin as Phyllis. Finally, Gary Blackman, portrayed The Old Gentleman on the train, the character who coins their nickname of 'The Railway Children'. We were supported by several new first-time members who all showed lots of potential.

# “Pour oh, pour the pirate sherry, fill oh fill the pirate’s glass...”

NODA North West



In February 2020 Blackburn Gilbert and Sullivan Society proudly presented ‘The Pirates of Penzance’ With 2020 being a Leap Year their final performance cleverly took place on Leap Year Day. They performed a matinee for the first time, as well as an evening performance on Saturday. They encouraged the audience to

come dressed as pirates and to sing along with the chorus at those performances.

For those unfamiliar with the show, the plot revolves around Frederick who is about to leave the Pirate band to which he was mistakenly apprenticed as a little boy. It is his

birthday, and he is 21 years old, but it transpires that he was born on Leap Year Day and so, by that reckoning, he has only had 5 birthdays and he is apprenticed until his 21st birthday. He is the Slave of Duty and thus cannot leave the band for many more years. However, his true love, Mabel, will wait for him.

When he thought he was leaving the pirate band, Frederick had arranged to lead a fierce team of police to arrest the pirates and bring them to justice.... but he can’t do that if he is still an apprentice pirate. What to do??

The plot unfolds with a bevy of lovely daughters, an elderly spinster, inept policemen, soft-hearted pirates and a military man who knows nothing about warfare. It’s Gilbert and Sullivan at their best and funniest.

## An unrehearsed Happy Ending to our performance of *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*

NODA Wales and Ireland

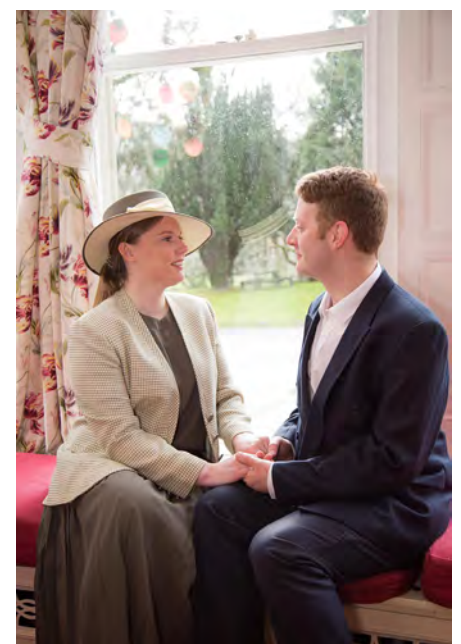
How could Craig Harris, spy, keep his proposal to Truly Scrumptious, Amber Deacon, a secret from so many people.

Craig had planned this to perfection, only alerting the MD just before the matinee performance. Craig’s large family, from near and far had been persuaded to come to the show and booked a whole row of the full house ‘Hafren the Venue’. Ambers family are involved in the company and other than Mom and Dad they were just as surprised as Amber, as were the audience and the cast when Craig asked the MD to stop the final bows to get down on one knee and propose to Amber.

Thankfully, when she stopped screaming with emotion, she said yes, yes, yes and was duly presented with an engagement ring. The whole theatre erupted with clapping, cheering and lots of tears.

The couple had met in the company, and it blossomed from there. Amber works at a local hotel as a wedding planner. I wonder what she will come up with, perhaps watch this space.

Jackie Titley District 1a.



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# Why do we do it?

**Christopher Collington, Chairman of the Gatepost Theatre Company in Derby offers a response.**

This is a question that quite often, as a chairman of an amateur dramatics group, I find myself asking. Not because I don't enjoy being a leader, certainly not because I don't have a group of incredibly hard-working, passionate and dedicated individuals around me, and even less so because I'd rather spend every waking moment of free time doing something else. So why does this question arise?

I've had the great pleasure of being a part of Gatepost Theatre Company, based in Derby, since its inception in 2004. At the time a wide-eyed seventeen year-old whose only involvement was to arrive to rehearsal twice a week, learn my lines and have a good time. A simpler time. But the itch and the desire to do more gets us all in the end and as time has gone on I've found myself allowing this 'hobby' to consume my very identity.

Now, as a trustee, chairman, director, performer, leader and at times the embodiment of group ethos this fun little evening activity has become my passion and I know, dear reader, that you feel exactly the same. . . .

The hats we wear as leaders of these groups are many and require so much

by way of additional knowledge. We are looked to as the publicity and marketing experts ranging from analysing every single view on Facebook posts to spending Saturday afternoons flyering in the city centre.

We are set-conceivers and builders extraordinaire creating buses that appear from suitcases, and barricades out of car boot bric-a-brac. We are the founders of troupes of singing cats from the local charity shops' finest garments, designers of worlds enhanced by the props borrowed from distant aunties, and sellers of programmes and raffle tickets with all the aplomb of a seasoned market trader.

The show must go on, but moreover the show never ends - we give our lives to this endlessly famished monster - but why?

The answer is simple: Purpose - People - Magic.

This world we inhabit is a secret club only really understood by those on the stage, but when done with gusto and intent to heartily entertain or provoke thought it is then that we can create that unspoken but much experienced elation of doing something quite remarkable.

For many of our audiences they will

watch us produce our wares on the same stages in the same buildings. They will arrive at the same time, park in the same spot, order the same interval drink and take their pre-show toilet trip at the same point. However - if we can transport these people for an hour or two to somewhere quite different each time they visit us that is the real magic of theatre. That is most definitely 'why'.

It's a power like no other, it should never be underestimated and when you are truly sick of looking at ticket sales, stressed about how much of a loss you may make - remind yourself of this fact.

In Derby our two amateur supporting theatres have been closed and scores of group now find themselves without a home or a city centre population to promote to. It's nothing short of a disaster - both financially and artistically. But for as long as I have a willing cast, a script in hand and the opportunity to chase that 'magic' I shall never cease to be consumed by this incredible thing that we do.

Why do we do it? Because its who we are.

The show must go on, moreover the show never ends, and long may that continue.

# Local performer pens new musical

NODA North West

Ian Curran is a man of many talents. Some of the job titles that adorn his CV include; Writer, Lyricist, Programmer and Performer. In December 2019, Mossley Amateur Operatic and Dramatic Society performed the premiere of *Sleeping Beauty the Musical* after acquiring the rights from Ian who wrote the book and the lyrics with music from by Simon Hanson and Peter Vint. It is a positive step for amateur societies to support new writers and vice versa and has the potential for a new bond of the arts. Ian was only more than happy to talk to us.

## How did you get into writing, and how long have you been doing it?

*I always loved writing stories when I was at school, but it was at University that I first got the chance to write for*

*the stage. I studied English Literature and Drama at The University of Sheffield and was assessed on both my scriptwriting and produced performances. After I graduated in 2007, I worked as an actor and presenter and was asked to proofread and then later to write the scripts for the projects that I was filming.*

## How did the idea for *Sleeping Beauty the Musical* come about?

*I worked at Disneyland, Paris for a while where I performed as the Disney Princes and I've performed in numerous pantomimes across the UK and toured with family musicals. It was clear that traditional fairy tales still hold a very special place in people's hearts all over the world. I felt that the story of *Sleeping Beauty* had never really been fully explored as a musical before and*

*I had a lot of ideas for developing the characters and the plot to make it engaging for a modern-day audience.*

## Any future collaborations with amateur groups and how they can get in contact with you.

Yes, the future is looking bright for *Sleeping Beauty the Musical*, and we have had license requests from theatre companies in Holland, Italy and North America. The show is now available for licensing in the UK to both Amateur and Professional theatre groups.

Enquiries and submissions can be sent to [sleepingbeautythemusical@outlook.com](mailto:sleepingbeautythemusical@outlook.com) or visit [www.SleepingBeautyTheMusical.com](http://www.SleepingBeautyTheMusical.com) for further details.



# Break a leg...quite literally

NODA West Midlands



When about to direct a production of *Annie* one of the first things to think about is where you are going to find a dog to play Sandy. After putting out an appeal on Facebook step forward Bertie! A six-year-old Cockerpool who was an instant hit with the cast and right from the start took to the stage like a professional. There is no doubt Bertie was the star of this production and relished being in the spotlight and taking his curtain call each evening. We're told rehearsals were called cuddle club and when Bertie wasn't needed, he would get quite upset! Imagine then, after the final performance on Saturday 27th October 2019, Bertie at the after show party lapping up all the attention from his fellow cast members and how the show ended on a real high.

Fast forward 24 hours and a post from Bertie's owners on Facebook about how a Sunday afternoon walk turned into a nightmare! Bertie fell down some steps and as a result broke his ankle in three places. The severity of the break meant that he had to have an operation carried out by one of the top orthopaedic surgeons in Europe.



But poor Bertie was so sad to the point he had stopped wagging his tail! When the news reached the cast of *Annie*, they were all devastated and wanted to do anything they could to help especially as the cost of Bertie's operation was not fully covered by insurance. Fund raising then started with even the younger cast members contributing.

Thankfully the operation was a success and Bertie is now well on the way to recovery. Hopefully he will soon be well enough to get back on the stage and next time he won't take 'Break a Leg' quite so literally!

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## Agatha Crusty and the Pantomime Murders

Agatha is in Gigglington for a Book Festival when she meets the local amateur dramatic group starting rehearsals of their production of Peter Pan. Sadly these are cut short when an actor is killed. The police believe it to be an accident as they do another death which occurs soon after.

Agatha however is convinced that the deaths are murders, and believes them to be connected, something born out when a third member of the group dies; all with clues seemingly referring to a pantomime. The bodies begin to pile up as fast as the laughs, but being an Agatha Crusty murder mystery, this is also a genuine mystery with an ingenious plot to tax the little grey cells of the audience at the same time. Cast 4m, 7f. Running time: 2 hours.

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**derekwebb.co.uk**

# The Magic of the Musicals

**noda youth** - North East



Following the success of the workshop in October 2018 NODA North East reflected on the feedback from the young people who had attended. A key theme was that the attendees enjoyed trying new musicals and learning more about what might be involved in such productions. Armed with this passion from the young people two experienced practitioners from NODA North East were approached and asked to come up with what they felt would be appropriate themes for a workshop for 10-15 year olds.

So the day dawned bright in November 2019 and young members from across the Region travelled to Pontefract in West Yorkshire – with fabulous help being received from group leaders who transported a lot of the young people along with parents. Everyone who attended was issued with a NODA Youth branded t-shirt.

The workshops were led by Dee Bennie-Marshall and James Greatorex and the themes were *Joseph* and *We Will Rock You* for dance and *Matilda* and *Shrek* for song. The day included the opportunity

for all participants to attend both a 'dance' and a 'singing' workshop. The workshops were physically active and encouraged the young people to develop new skills which they could take back to their groups. Smart phones were allowed, but none were used as the young people were too busy developing their performance abilities.

The event ended with two dance performances and two singing performances which included all the participants. The performances were incredibly professional considering the young people had had less than half a day to learn the songs/routines. The parents and carers who came to watch the final performances felt that their young people had succeeded beyond their expectations in such a short time.

The young people all left on a high – giving fabulous feedback along with a long list of requests for themes for future youth workshops!

Jo Sykes  
NODA North East Youth Adviser

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## Young Performers in Amateur Theatre (Scotland)

NODA (Scotland) have recently published their factsheet "Young performers taking part in amateur theatre".

The information already laid out in the article relating to England and Wales is relevant across UK. However, in Scotland there are a few publications that are helpful to read alongside all of the information provided. No matter where children live in the UK, performing in the theatre should be no different for them with regard to their wellbeing, and any requirements for the need to seek a licence for them to perform.

Getting it Right For Every Child (GIRFEC) - The National approach in Scotland to improving outcomes and supporting the wellbeing of our children and young people

by offering the right help at the right time from the right people, published *Getting it Right For Young Performers - Guidance on the revised arrangements for ensuring the wellbeing of children involved in licensed activities*. This guidance along with *Young Performers - A guide for parents and guardians* August 2017, The children (Performances and Activities) (Scotland) Regulations 2014 (in force from February 2015) and the Children and Young Persons Act 1963 section 37 (3), has assisted us in the development of our fact sheet for Scotland.

As well as developing the fact sheet, an approach we have taken in Scotland is to develop a presentation based on the relevant points in the legislation, and provide access to

the supporting documents. The presentation now forms part of the Business of Amateur Theatre workshops that are currently being rolled out across Scotland. As well as the presentation a number of scenarios have been developed which test the knowledge and understanding of the workshop participants following the presentation.

As our factsheet states - Amateur theatre is a fun hobby involving both adults and children. Best practice is to follow the legislation that is in place to protect and safeguard the wellbeing of children and young people. Never assume that children do not require a licence to perform. It is easier to ask the question than to find out too late that the legislation has not been followed. Last but not least, if in doubt always ask your Local Authority.

# Cotswold Players outreach programme is a success!

NODA South West



## Stroud based group commend the benefits to all of getting out of the theatre and into the Community.

We have always felt ourselves incredibly lucky, here in Stroud, to be one of the few amateur theatrical groups to own our own theatre. This has not come without an enormous amount of time and effort over the years to make a dilapidated church into a state-of-the-art theatre space. We have a large proscenium arch stage, a raked auditorium for over 150 theatre-goers, a lounge, bar, dance studio, rehearsal room, offices, expansive costume store, separate changing facilities for men, women and children.

Why then, you might ask, should we decide to up sticks once a year and move out to other places?

The answer to this probably lies with our founder, Constance Smedley, who in 1911 founded the Cotswold Players. While performing in Stroud, she also took her troop of actors to outlying villages. The Players took their own costumes, scenery and actors all around the district, using horse and cart and bicycles as transport, with the express intention of making theatre

more accessible to people who may not otherwise have considered coming all the way into town to see a play.

Over the last few years, it has become apparent to us that our audiences at the Cotswold Playhouse could be divided into two types; those who would come to see The Cotswold Players Productions and those who would come to see our many visiting professional company productions. And they were the same faces over and over. More importantly, we were very aware that there was a large swathe of Stroud residents that did not know there was a theatre in Stroud.

How then could we spread the word? We made the decision to “come off the hill” (our theatre lies 3/4 mile outside of the town centre, at the top of a fairly steep hill) and as Constance did 108 years ago, take theatre to the people. We have, therefore, in the last three years, performed Shakespeare outside Stroud museum, performed “Bastard Blood” in conjunction with an American professional company in a Victorian ruin, created a radio studio in St Lawrence’s Church for a run of *It’s A Wonderful Life*, and this year taken over the bar at Stroud Brewery

to create an immersive space for *Two* by Jim Cartwright.

This has turned out to be a win, win, win, win situation! The Stroud community has received our outreach productions with generous applause, our performers and technical teams have been stretched with each different challenge they faced, and the venues have gained by having theatre-goers visit places they would not necessarily have visited. We have decided that we would donate our proceeds from each outreach production to local charities and good causes and we have made thousands of pounds for these charities.

Now more people know there is a theatre in Stroud, more people want to get involved, and more venues want us to perform there. We are embracing this new direction for local theatre, have invested in new equipment to allow us to travel and plan many more outreach productions in the future. Our Outreach productions have been a success, and we would commend the idea to all groups around the country.

John Salter

# The Pull of Cardiff Scout and Guide Gang Show and its relevance today!

NODA Wales and Ireland



Just over twenty years ago, I was asked by Cardiff and East Glamorgan Girlguiding if I would become involved with the Cardiff Gang Show Management Committee and whether both my husband, David and I would be willing to help on the production and stage management side. Having always been interested in amateur theatre, and with me having been a Brown Owl for many years, we decided it might be an interesting project for us. Little did we realise that in 2020 we would still be “hooked”!

The experience of a Gang Show is, on the surface, very similar to that of any other amateur production, but we rapidly learned otherwise! Each

show takes almost a year to plan, prepare and rehearse. We need to communicate widely with Scout and Girlguiding leaders, clarifying that this opportunity is an extension to the young people’s regular unit activities as well as enabling the audition process to be as inclusive and open as possible. The aim of our audition workshops is to provide a unique fun and learning experience, as well as being the casting process. While rehearsing and performing with us, many youngsters are working on their D of E awards, leadership training or a variety of challenges and badges, and Gang Show is a means of helping them achieve these. Then there is the management of over 100 volunteers,

reporting to both organisations’ executive committees and adhering to all the rules and regulations. However, the most amazing part of it is seeing the cast members, aged 9 to adult, grow in confidence from show to show whatever their ability, understand and enjoy teamwork, gain new transferable life skills and, of course, hopefully, have a memorable, unique experience along with their audiences.

The first Cardiff Gang Show was performed in 1973 at the New Theatre, Cardiff, and we all feel extremely fortunate to still be able to perform in this beautiful traditional theatre, working with their brilliant professional stage management team.



Thanks to the forward thinking and focused determination of the founder, Gordon Ware, this has been a joint Scouting and Girlguiding activity from its inception, so young members of both organisations are able to enjoy the privilege of performing in this prestigious theatre in the centre of Cardiff.

The original Gang Show, begun in 1932 in The Old Scala Theatre, Holborn, was made up of scores of uniformed boys and young men. There were no girls! Baden Powell, who attended a performance, was himself a skilled performer of comic songs and dances, immediately realised that this was a new, exciting, valuable



experience being offered to Scouts and that it could be of great benefit to the Movement. Hence, where we are today! Ralph Reader, Gang Shows' founder, did, in fact, come to Cardiff to see the very first Gang Show and was given the warmest of welcome by the company. Gordon Ware wrote in his diary "He thought it was a very good show, the costumes were first class, our backstage work was good and he was enthralled by the sketch 'Badge Work', and what a welcome The Gang gave Ralph!" It is traditional that for the bows and finale of a main show, all cast appear onstage in uniform with their red Gang Show neckerchiefs (which have to be earned!). Ralph Reader joined them on this occasion to sing the songs he had created, including the well known *Crest of a Wave*.

We now put on a production once a year in November, alternating between the main New Theatre show with an average of 120 in the cast, and a smaller scale fundraising one, usually a pantomime, at a local venue. Last November our production was *Cinderella and the Haunted Mansion*, written by one of our directors and with a cast of 62. Over recent years the concept of our main shows has changed, based on feedback from audiences and company members, but always maintaining the ethos of Ralph Reader's original Gang Shows.

It has gradually changed from the original music hall style into a more modern musical show with a storyline, usually written especially for us by Lesley Ross or Steve Sanders, with titles like *The Hollywood Time Maze*, *Cyberspace Chronicles* and *The Magic Walking Stick*. Despite moving forward with the times, we maintain the traditional uniformed ending to our main shows and the appearance of the whole cast immaculate in their uniforms is still a very moving experience for the company, and indeed audiences too, as they sing our Gang Show "anthems", including *This is Gang Show* from the *Land of Song*.

So why are we still involved...have we not grown weary of stage managing, taking on the role of DSM, production managing, and currently directing and managing the warehouse full of thousands of costumes?

It's the same story as day one! The enthusiasm of everyone, being part of such a dedicated team, the willingness to learn, the excitement on the cast faces, the glow exuded once they hit that stage and that warm feeling when everything comes together in the way we hoped! Roll on November this year!

Doris Dallimore  
Production Manager

# The definitive guide to NODA Safe

Theatre is about fun, enjoyment and putting on a great show. It's not about form filling and health and safety – we all do that in work and that is the last thing we want to do in our hobby!

However (and it's a very big however), we're sure you'd agree that everyone involved in your show, from your leading lady to that last minute audience member, all have the absolute right to enjoy the production without fear of accident, injury or worse.

NODASafe is here to help you achieve this goal, not by saying 'No' but by working with you to overcome your safety concerns and make your production better by making it safer.

NODASafe is a partnership between NODA and Health and Safety Mentor (HSM). HSM is run by people who understand theatre and have personal activity in the community theatre environment, so we know what pressures and challenges face NODA societies on a show-to-show basis.

As part of your subscription to NODA, you are able to access the services listed below from NODASafe.

Telephone and email support services to help with:

- production safety queries
- general advice and guidance on all health, safety and environmental issues
- dealing with serious accidents
- risk assessments
- help completing the recommended NODASafe assessments and checklists
- Generic theatre and show risk assessments – great for stage managers and the production team
- Production checklists – these help to plan your production and integrate safety into what you do
- Production documents – plan your production thoroughly and make sure easily overlooked information is included in easy to use documents
- Access to training courses – details of these dedicated and discounted services become available occasionally, so keep an eye out for information.

There are certain aspects of theatre health and safety that you might need to look at that are not covered by your subscription service. However, NODASafe can provide these services to you, including discounted fire risk assessments, general risk assessments (for your rehearsal space or theatre), specific risk assessments and accident investigation visits.



## Online training courses

NODASafe now offers online training courses to ensure our members have access to the best quality training and support. All you need to do is visit the website and log in as your society. From there you will be able to access the training module from the NODASafe page. Member prices start at £15 plus VAT

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# In Memoriam

## John Warburton

NODA East. Written by Eric Smart, NODA Ltd Chairman and National President 2005 - 2006

John's association began way back in 1956, just after his father passed away. His dad had been very involved in the Standard Telephone and Cable Dramatic Society and John virtually took over where he had left off. This was the beginning of a long and active association with the amateurs. Gwen, his wife, of course, was also heavily involved and this meant that they could enjoy their hobby together. They both joined the Finchley Operatic Society, which performed in Hornsea. They moved to Colchester in 1969 and, like all good amateurs, sought out a local society that they could join. This had to be Colchester Operatic Society and John's first part with them was Skidmore in *Oklahoma*. He went on to take many roles, including an opportunity to 'Brush Up His Shakespeare' as the first gangster in *Kiss Me Kate*. Some of his other memorable roles were Frank in *Die Fledermaus*, the title role in *The Mikado*, the very demanding role of Edward Moulton Barrett in *Robert & Elizabeth* and the macho Pluto in *Orpheus in the Underworld*. In 1992, the local NODA regional rep, Robin Sampson, decided that it was time for him to step down from that role. John was nominated to take over the role BUT, so was I. We didn't know each other back then as I was involved with Springers in Chelmsford and our paths had not crossed. Now, John Plumtree, who was the Eastern Area Councillor back then, didn't want to turn either of us down as he was always very appreciative of people who willingly volunteered for things. In his wisdom, he decided to split the vast region number 8 and create a new region. Both John and I were elected as regional reps, John taking the eastern half and I took the western half. Being in these roles, gave birth to a long and happy friendship between John and me. We worked closely together on the NODA Eastern Area Committee, both learning from each other as we went along. But in 1995, John Plumtree became the National President of NODA, and I took over and was delighted that John continued to serve under my councillorship for the next ten years and was second to none in providing advice and support to all his societies, which had grown in number under his stewardship by around 80%. During his time as a rep, he continued to be involved at Colchester and served as their Chairman from 1998 to 2004. In addition to that, he had been invited to direct shows for other societies and I so clearly remember his production of *Carousel* at the Quay Theatre in Sudbury. *Carousel* was one of John's personal favourites and there was no way he was going to present a production of *Carousel* without an actual carousel. Now, for those of you who are familiar with The Quay, it is not much bigger than a postage stamp, and it was very ambitious to consider putting a carousel on that stage. But, John did just that – it was positioned upstage right, and it was probably only 5 feet in diameter, but it was a carousel, and it was fully functional. Such was John's ingenuity when undertaking direction.



In 2005, I became NODA National President, and John was elected as the Eastern Regional Councillor. This was a job that he took no less seriously than all the other posts he had held. Terry Drury, the Chairman of the National Network for Children in Employment and Entertainment, invited John and I to assist him in writing some rules and regulations for the safeguarding of children in performance. It was these rules which formed the draft paper which went to the government and later became law which is still in force to this day. John took that subject very seriously and led the in-house debate at NODA on child protection. John's involvement was extended further when he chaired and organised the NODA Youth Summer School which ran for some three years from 2010 – 2012.

By now, John was beginning to feel the strain of the job, and I had long chats with him about the possibility of him becoming President of NODA in 2015. He thought long and hard but decided that this really wasn't what he wanted to do. I think this demonstrated the type of man he was – hardworking but didn't seek the glory. So, in 2013 he decided to step down from the role as the Councillor for NODA East and take a well-earned retirement. He continued to have an interest in what was going on, but recognised that he had had his time and quite deservedly could always look back on his many achievements in the amateur movement, as well as holding some very cherished memories of such. Where he is now, I think we can be assured that he will Never Walk Alone!



## Brian Sullivan

NODA Wales & Ireland. Written by Jordan Spencer, Wales & Ireland Regional Councillor

Mr Brian Sullivan BEM Former Regional Councillor (2012 - 2014) and District 5 Regional Representative.

Brian trained for the stage at the Leatherhead Repertory Theatre, Surrey, and appeared in numerous plays, musicals and tours. His performance as the prosecuting counsel in *The Vigil* won him a contract with the BBC and there followed many years working as a radio and television actor in productions such as *The Life and Times of Lloyd George* with Philip Madoc; *Return to Treasure Island* with Brian Blessed; the comedy series, *Three Up Two Down*, *The Onedin Line*, *Casualty*, and alongside the likes of Dirk Bogarde, Lee Remick, Dyan Cannon, Elke Sommer, Robert Hardy, Richard Todd and Christopher Cazenove.

Brian was best known for the support and encouragement he gave to so many people within the industry, he was responsible for bringing a wide range of shows to Wales, featuring the likes of Shirley Bassey, Tom Jones, The Everly Brothers, Don Williams, The James Last Orchestra, Freddie Starr, Jim Davidson, Joe Longthorne, John Inman, Ruth Madoc, Bobby Crush, Nigel Pivaro and Little and Large.

Brian held many roles within the amateur theatre world, he was general secretary of the Swansea Amateur Operatic Society, in its centenary year, director of Clydach and Morriston Amateur Operatic Society, and director of St Catherine's Operatic Society, Gorseinon, Briton Ferry Operatic Society, Cwmllynfell Operatic Society, Cadoxton Grand Operatic Society, and Kettering Dramatic Society, in Northampton.

Brian retired from NODA in 2014 and has continued to direct productions and support so many people.



## Michael Simpson

NODA South West. Written by Nick Lawrence, National President 2017-2018

When Michael moved to the West Country from the North West, he was quickly recruited to continue as a Regional Representative – now for Plymouth. This genuinely kind man with a wicked sense of humour soon proved to be an enthusiastic support of all the groups in his District, displaying particular support for work with young people. He was keenly aware of the hard work and dedication that members put into their shows and was delighted by improvements that came along. He also found time to give incalculable support to his own society – Sounds Musical Company – and was thrilled by its continued progress. As a member of the South West Committee, I could always rely on Michael to make a pithy comment when the time was right. At my Presidential Gala I was delighted to present him and Marylyn with their Fifty-Five Year Pins in recognition of their selfless service to NODA in the North West and South West.

## Tony Hobbs

NODA South West. Written by Nick Lawrence, National President 2017-2018

In the time before the Charity Commission insisted our funds were centralised, NODA SW had its own current and saving accounts. Tony kept a firm hand on things. Doing his utmost to keep charges to members to the lowest figure possible, Tony always ensured our funds were in the black with enough saved to cover us in the event of disaster. Tony's advice to NODA's National Council was well thought out and prudent, although not always acted upon. When he retired he passed over the funds in good standing. His support for Mary in her time as a rep and then as South-West Councillor was invaluable. During Mary's Presidential Year, he transported Mary to all corners of the country and ensured she was in fine fettle. Tony's interest in the many productions and companies he and Mary visited was warm and generous.



## Trevor Guest

NODA West Midlands. Written by Ian G. Cox, West Midlands Regional Councillor

It is with much affection that Trevor Guest will be remembered as a man of warmth, charm and elegance who as a highly respected NODA W.M. Committee member served as Regional Representative for 18 years. Across Worcestershire and further afield Trevor was held in the highest regard and NODA members mourn the loss of a real gentleman and advocate for amateur theatre who always put a smile on our faces. He would be prepared to offer advice and guidance in a most unassuming manner and indeed in my own society BOS in Bromsgrove, it was always a delight to welcome Trevor and his wife Maureen and he will be remembered with much fondness for friendship and support.

Trevor was held in the highest regard as a member of Worcester Operatic and Dramatic Society (WODS) the society he joined in 1983 after a number of stage performances in the Halesowen area. During a rich period for productions

for WODS right through to 1996 he had leads or major roles; including Alfred Doolittle (*My Fair Lady*), Teyve (*Fiddler on the Roof*), Emile de Becque (*South Pacific*), Lancelot (*Camelot*), Horace Vandegelder (*Hello Dolly*), Frank Butler (*Annie Get Your Gun*), Sheriff Dodd (*Best Little Whorehouse in Texas* for which WODS won the Best Production in the Newport International Festival in 1990), Mr Bumble (*Oliver!*), Nathan Detroit (*Guys & Dolls*), Oliver Warbucks (*Annie*) and in 1996 Mr Mushnik (*Little Shop of Horrors*). In 2015, Trevor was awarded with his 60 year diamond bar in recognition of his years of service.

Trevor served on the WODS main committee 1989-1998 and was extremely honoured to have been made Society President in 2016. Sadly due to illness he was unable to fulfil his second year of office, though with Maureen to whom he was married for 61 years did everything possible to attend shows, conferences and events. Being in their company whatever the occasion for Karen and myself was always a great pleasure.



## Ken Clift

NODA West Midlands. Written by Ian G. Cox, West Midlands Regional Councillor

We all have very fond memories of Ken as a highly respected, active and hugely supportive member of our regional committee. For NODA members in the Black Country past and present Ken as regional representative between 2005 and 2013 served their interests exceptionally well, including organising well attended district meetings.

Ken started supporting West Bromwich Operatic Society (WBOS) when his wife Sheila joined the society in 1966. They were an inseparable pair who were married for 63 years having met aged 9&10 respectively at primary school 70 years ago. In 1976 Ken took to the stage as a chorus dancer in *Land of Smiles*. Other roles included Charlie Cowell (*The Music Man*) Doc (*West Side Story*) and Sir Jasper (*Me & My Girl*). *Jesus Christ Superstar* was his last production for them in 2003. Ken was society chairman in 1986 for a period of 9 years and president in 1997.

For Charlemont Dramatic Society (CADS) Ken played various dramatic roles between 2000 and 2007 including in *Holiday Snap*, *Lord Arthur Savilles Crime*, *Out of Order* and *Outside Edge*. As a member of Stourbridge Operatic Society, he served on the committee as programme editor from 2001 to 2007. From 2008 he was Vice Chairman for 4 years. On stage roles included Sir Jeavons Jarndyce (*The Revenge of Sherlock Holmes*), Mr Brownlow (*Oliver*) and Mr Brill (*Copacabana*).

Ken was a highly respected popular charming lovely man and like Trevor Guest his good friend and former colleague was a great golfer. A host of silverware was in his cabinet including a prized trophy when he became NODA National Golf Champion at the 1984 conference in Kenilworth

In recent years Ken had been suffering more acutely with a number of conditions since being diagnosed with Parkinson's disease in 2011. This did not however deter him or Sheila from attending shows, events and conferences as he always faced life with cheerfulness and fortitude with a light up smile. It was always a great pleasure for Karen and myself to be in their company.



## Valerie Joan Millward

NODA North East. Written by Jo Sykes, NODA North East Youth Adviser

When family and friends gathered in Selby Abbey to say their final farewell to Val Millward the congregation included all the living former North East Regional Councillors as well as the current Councillor and several members of the Regional Committee. There were also many NODA societies represented as Val was much loved in the world of amateur theatre in Wakefield and its surrounding communities.

Val's father, Harold Freeman, was a NODA Representative for 26 years and a life member of the Association so it was no surprise when Val, along with her husband, Martin, joined Wakefield Amateur Operatic Society in 1969. While her family were young Val helped with refreshments but then she joined the Elizabethans in Ossett and so began her life as a performer although she would also undertake a whole range of jobs to support amateur theatre.



During the 1980's and 1990's both Val and Martin were in many productions with various societies and also performed with a concert party which raised thousands of pounds for local charities. Following in the footsteps of her father she became President of Crigglestone Community Theatre Company and always offered a warm welcome to new members and guests. She continued performing for many years and was renowned for her voice. She also loved attending the Region's Gala Weekend in Bridlington and encouraged young performers to develop their love of the stage knowing how much pleasure it had given her.

Her funeral was indeed a celebration of her life and amongst the tributes was one given by her son-in-law Tim, another performer, who reflected on the wonderful way in which Val embraced her hobby, always with good grace and kindness to other performers and a recognition and gratitude for all the work that goes on behind the scenes. The exit music was a recording of 'Climb Every Mountain' sung by Val in her performance of Mother Abbess in *The Sound of Music* – a role which she played more than once. So very fitting that her wonderful voice should be heard in the Abbey.



## Denis Branton

NODA South West. Written by Nick Lawrence, National President 2017-2018

When Gerry Branton became Regional Rep for Bristol it soon became clear that NODA had not just gained a vibrant rep but also a handy factotum. By the time she became our Councillor we had become used to the quiet gentle man who kept everything running smoothly. Who could forget the wonderful weekends at Bicton College which always ran so smoothly because of the careful organisation managed, so effectively, by Denis. With a wonderful dry wit Denis could always improve any conversation with wise advice and a good story.

During Gerry's term as National President, Denis organised all Gerry's travel arrangements and ensured she arrived at societies in good time. But he wasn't just a chauffeur and general factotum, he was genuinely interested in the progress of societies and their productions.

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