

# Tnoda TODAY★

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## Into the Woods... in the woods

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# Contents

10

## Societies take to the great outdoors

With the change in legislation, some companies decided to brave the British summer weather to take to the outdoor stages



13

## Cover story Into the Woods...in the woods

Where else would Rubber Chicken Theatre Company, Dunblane, produce Into the Woods?



21

## Why are you a member of NODA ?

Do you know what benefits you receive as a NODA member?



34

## A trip to the archives

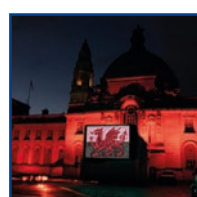
A long forgotten costume plot for a even longer forgotten title - The Rose of the Border



42

## #WeMakeEvents

Find out why NODA supports the #WeMakeEvents campaign and explains how you can get involved



46

## Pantomime in the desert

One of NODA's international members - The Doha Players - tells us about their history of pantomimes and other shows in the desert



52

## Amateur theatre will return

Amateur theatre has stopped before, during World War 1 and 2, find out how societies restarted performing after those devastating times



# Welcome

**Michael Hastilow**  
Chairman of Trustees

*"We thank our numerous correspondents. It all goes to show that many Societies are chafing at their enforced inactivity, and we feel more than ever convinced that if Committees will take the bit between their teeth, search for material to suit their remaining personnel and go into rehearsal with it they stand a good chance of actual production, and will, at all events, keep their Societies alive and retain the interest of their members".*

I did not write that, I lifted it wholesale from our NODA Bulletin of April 1940. Yet with very little editing it reflects very effectively the situation we are in today. We and our members survived over 6 years of war and the difficult economic conditions following it. We can, and will, survive and, I expect, be stronger for the challenges.

This magazine will arrive on English doorsteps during a lockdown; those living in Wales and Ireland may be out of lockdown as will members in Scotland subject to their restrictions. It may be some time before we can return to something near normal. Theatre and especially amateur theatre is renowned for its ingenuity in finding ways to overcome technical or logistical problems and allow our audiences to enjoy the transformation of our halls, and performance areas, from dingy kitchens to glamorous ball rooms, or experience the thrill of a car chase, even the odd magic carpet ride.

I am encouraged by the range of activity and the ingenuity of societies from across the UK and beyond, in finding ways to continue making their mark and perform, some being fortunate to take to the open air, others to Zoom or some such similar online platforms. In the following pages you will find reports on such activities. I am aware that most of the "big shows", that so many of our members were planning to perform in 2020, have now been postponed to a future date or even abandoned to be replaced by something more manageable.

We missed the glamour of our National Conference this year, but were still able to hold an AGM online with the advantage of a wider audience from all geographical regions of our membership. Council will look at ways of incorporating online participation in the 2021 AGM.

We face many challenges in the months ahead, but whatever we do we must ensure:  
The health and safety of our members, (both society and individual)  
The health and safety of employees and our volunteers (Regional Committee members)  
The health and safety of our audiences and production crews

Finally, it is coming up to that time of the year when I wish you all a Happy and Joyful Christmas and although our celebrations may be a little restrained, 2021 is not far away and for that I wish all members a prosperous New Year and a rapid return to performance.







## Box Office Radio is now live!

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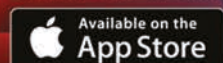


Founder Josh Haywood



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# More non – travels with the chain

My, hopefully very unique presidency continues and the September AGM, which should have seen Gordon Richardson installed as your new President in Durham, was instead a virtual webinar; which had, as the song goes, to accentuate the positive, the distinct advantage of having more members than usual attending the formal AGM. The negative, of course, is that we were unable to meet with old friends and hopefully even to forge new friendships. However, if this awful pandemic has taught us anything, it is that we must make the very most of all the things we can and are able to do, and not dwell on the things we are, at present, no longer able to do.

NODA Societies are at their creative best in doing just this! Initially with virtual quiz evenings and get togethers, progressing to play readings and virtual performances, with many people writing and performing their own very witty, both musical and textural comments on the current situation, so engaging members of their own, and many other societies via the auspices of social media! Like it or loathe it (social media that is) it has been and continues to be, a wonderful and safe way to keep in touch with our friends and families.

NODA Summer School, which I managed to attend this year as a student, was also undertaken virtually. As far as I have heard, it was enjoyed by all who attended, with the added bonus that people who would not have been able to attend 'physically', for a wide variety of reasons, were able to attend and thoroughly enjoy themselves, albeit virtually.

My diary, like so many others, remains empty, so I am using some of my time to write to local MPs, councillors and government departments to put the case forward for support for Amateur Theatre and the many benefits it provides to so very many people, of just belonging and being a part of a NODA Society and by extension the NODA family.

The 'COVID-19 situation' has been, and continues to be, much longer than I think any of us really expected. However, I continue to be certain of one thing – amateur theatre will survive – with so very many committed and inspired people how could it not?

To close, I feel I can do no better than to quote the last half dozen lines of a poem, read in its entirety at the aforementioned AGM, and written by Brian Haworth a member of two NODA North West societies:

*Don't give in, don't lose our way,  
we'll all perform another day!  
But until then – let's not give in,  
keep up our spirits I know we'll win.  
Although it's sure to be a while,  
we'll all be back, to make audiences smile.*

Christine Hunter Hughes



# A message from our Patrons

## The Lord Lloyd Webber KBE

To the President, Council members, regional representatives, officers, members and staff, I trust that you and your societies are all well.

This year has been impossibly hard for the UK Performing Arts, and I know many of you will have to cancel or postpone the amateur productions you have worked so hard on.

It has been incredible to see how many amateur societies have embraced online formats and innovative ways to stay connected during this pandemic. But nothing ever replaces the live experience and I assure you I am doing everything in my power to persuade the government it is safe to open our theatres and music spaces.

Stay creative and I wish you all good wishes for the coming year.

(signed) Andrew Lloyd Webber



## Connie Fisher

Dear NODA Members,

For those who make their livelihood on the stage, those who live to perform and those who love to go to the theatre – it's been the toughest year of our lives. As we know, so many theatres soon face closure if they cannot open their doors to run at capacity, and so many productions are 'dark', and have remained so for months now without a glimmer of hope.

However, it has been encouraging to see some theatre companies using their creativity to find innovative ways to keep their theatre community connected, inventive ways to perform together and to entertain socially distanced crowds outdoors. "Where there's a will, there's a way", as they say. I hope that all our NODA community can keep that hope and positivity alive, stay creative and stay hopeful – because all we have right now is hope. Hope that a safe vaccine will allow us to get back into production, hope that we will see a full house at our beloved theatres again and hope that we will soon stand on stage and enjoy the roar of a packed crowd once more.

To plagiarise one of my favourite R&H musicals;

*When you walk through a storm  
Hold your head up high  
And don't be afraid of the dark.  
At the end of the storm  
There's a golden sky  
And the sweet silver song of a lark  
Walk on, walk on  
With hope in your heart  
And you'll never walk alone  
You'll never walk alone.*

Stay positive, hopeful and remember you're not alone – we're in this together. Thank you NODA for keeping those who love theatre connected. I hope you have a successful and enjoyable AGM – and hope that we can find creative solutions to keep our shared love of theatre alive.

P.S. Some good news to share... I am expecting twins – so at the start of 2021, my husband Jeremy and I are looking forward to welcoming two little girls into the world and starting our own Von Trapp family! Maybe one day we'll do a family bubble version of *The Sound of Music*. I'd better start teaching Jeremy the chords to Edelweiss now because he's not very musical and will it take him years to learn!

Connie x





# Councillors' Chat

A quick note from your Regional Councillor



## Tessa Davies - East Regional Councillor

With theatres still being out of bounds for the majority very little has been happening since the last time I wrote this message. Many societies have tried very hard to put on some show, and the increase in online performances from our members has been great to see. The frustrations brought on by the frequent changes to the 'rules' have not made things easy, but it is great to see some creative thinking by many.

The reps and I continue to support and encourage societies wherever we can. We are all looking forward to the time when we can audition, rehearse and put on a show, whenever that might be.



## Nanette Lovell MBE - East Midlands Regional Councillor

Well, to coin a phrase "I've never seen anything like it in my life"! I remember when I was in the West End to see *Mary Poppins*, a young man by the name of Joseph Duffy (age nine years) was playing "Michael". Joseph was a member of Northampton Musical Theatre's Youth Group and this was his West End debut. I was in a cafe near to the theatre when I got the news. It was bizarre going back to Euston Station as all the theatres en route were closed. That was 16th March, and I am writing this on 14th October. Nothing has changed to date although... in the meantime, I send my very best wishes to everyone in NODA. Keep safe and keep smiling as "the sun will come out tomorrow".



## Pam Armstrong - London Regional Councillor

I am delighted to be representing the London Region as your Councillor. I was very much looking forward to meeting as many of you as possible, but as we move into our "winter of discontent" this may be somewhat challenging.

However, I would love to hear from you so do please email me and let me know what your society is up to and how you are keeping in touch with your members and if you have any special activities planned.



## Peter Oliver - North Regional Councillor

There's a true saying "where does the time go?" Since my election, for the position of NODA North Councillor, I feel my feet haven't touched the ground. I want to take this opportunity to thank those societies and individual members who supported my application and to the NODA North Committee who has supported me to make some tough decisions during this difficult time. Finally, a big thank you to Gordon Richardson, who has been a great mentor to me during the handover. We are all looking forward to our virtual awards ceremony in December. It may not be what we had planned, but I'm sure it will be a fantastic evening bringing our NODA North family together.



## Leslie Smith - North East Regional Councillor

Usually at this time of year, we would all be rehearsing for our shows coming up to Christmas as well as our pantos. Sadly, as we all know, this is not to be the case for 2020 and we are all still in lockdown mode.

As we start to move forward, I sincerely hope 2021 will be much more friendly towards theatres and live entertainment and we can all get back to what we all enjoy - rehearsals and performing.

With very best wishes, stay safe, stay well.

## Andy McNicholas - North West Regional Councillor

While most of our theatres continue to be dark, it's fantastic to see so many societies have taken to online media to keep theatre alive with streaming concerts, plays and keeping interactive with their membership.

It's also encouraging to hear so many societies have taken this downtime to make plans to come back stronger once it is safe to do so.

Don't forget the NW Committee are here to provide any support or advice you may need.



## Stuart McCue-Dick - Scotland Regional Councillor

We might not be able to perform in a theatre at present in Scotland. Still, I have been very impressed with the range of performances put together by member clubs from a production of *Into the Woods*, set in the woods, to a series of live performance plays streamed via Zoom, to a series of pre-recorded concerts.

I would encourage members to explore what is possible to keep cast and audience alike engaged until we can meet again.



## Kay Rowan - South East Regional Councillor

New ways of entertaining ourselves, when we would normally be at rehearsals or performing, have enabled societies to keep together and support each other. Energies have been channelled in a variety of directions and NODA members are nothing but creative! Following a spate of online applications for awards and badges, I am looking forward to attending several online meetings to 'present' them and congratulate everyone on their achievements.

What more can I say that hasn't been said umpteen times over the past six months? Keep well stay safe.



## Graham Liverton - South West Regional Councillor

I know this is the time when rehearsals would be well underway for pantomimes, etc., and societies have had difficult decisions to make! But it is a case of chin up and there is light at the end of the tunnel.

It is my sincere wish that we will come out of this difficult time stronger and more determined that we will be back on stage doing what we know best - entertaining our audiences. My message to you is to keep calm and carry on! NODA is with you every step of the way.



## Sharon Davies - Wales & Ireland Regional Councillor

This last six months has been hard for us all, and I think we are all concerned about the future of the theatres, both amateur and professional. It is heartening to see societies connecting online and keeping in touch digitally with snippets from shows, photos, quizzes etc. we must try to keep it up.

NODA is with you all the way and we all miss seeing you and your productions. Please keep safe and we will see you as soon as we can.



## Ian G. Cox - West Midlands Regional Councillor

The absence of applause as theatrical venues remain closed is balanced by members of societies and groups displaying enormous enthusiasm and eagerness to maintain momentum in virtual rehearsals and innovative ways of keeping together. Fluidity in governmental edicts makes planning a real challenge, though optimism for only a minimal programme into 2021 shows little sign of dampening spirit and tenacity. Vital behind the scenes teams see meagre opportunities in tough times. I hope we can get together again soon. Meanwhile, stay safe.





# Societies taking to the great outdoors

## ‘BOAT’ up your Shakespeare!

NODA South West



Performing *As You Like It*. Credit: Chaz Davenport

**After their ‘top tips’ on performing outdoor Theatre in the last edition of NODA Today, Brownsea Open Air Theatre (BOAT) explain their lockdown activities without it!**

In 2020, Brownsea Open Air Theatre (BOAT) were scheduled to put on a three-week show of *Romeo and Juliet* for their 57th season. Each year, they create a quality show for up to 530 people per night, for 9 performances across the three weeks. The experience of the trip to the island, the picnic in the grounds, the show itself and the boat back under the stars is something people come back for again and again.

With the advent of COVID-19, it became obvious that this wasn’t going to be the case for 2020. So, the group went about broadcasting some of their previous shows across a couple of months. This they called “BOAT at HOME”, and the broadcasts were very well received in a time when no theatre was available – indoors or out.

As a group of creative people, who do

what they do without payment and go the extra mile to create shows each year that are comparable in quality to many successful professional outfits, they were itching to flex their creative muscles. So, they decided to go a little further with BOAT at HOME and create new content for what they called “BOAT at HOME – Season 2. Shakespeare Shorts”. This is a series of extracts from Shakespeare’s Works, performed and presented in highly

innovative ways. A series of 6 are in the pipeline, with two already released – covering new takes on scenes from *Twelfth Night* and a dark, moody section from *Macbeth*. This will be followed shortly by a beautifully shot moment from *Romeo and Juliet*, with later content from *The Tempest*, *Hamlet*, *Richard III* and *As You Like It*.

All their content can be found on their YouTube channel.



Performing *Macbeth*. Credit: Chaz Davenport

# Red Kite Theatre’s local tour of Twelfth Night

NODA London



While the COVID-19 lockdown has created huge problems for theatre generally, in a strange way, it helped accelerate Red Kite Theatre Company’s thinking and approach and led to a sell-out, local tour.

The company’s last two shows were of excellent quality (winning a NODA award indeed), but attracting audiences was extremely difficult. We decided that if the audiences wouldn’t come to us, then we should go to them. And by selecting venues that already had a social media following and user base, we were optimistic that we could improve our ticket sales.

Easy to say, of course. In July (when restrictions had, to a degree, been relaxed) we took the decision to develop a tour of *Twelfth Night* based on scrupulously following COVID-19 safety advice and guidance.

We carefully documented our approach, including risk assessments, and approached three outdoor venues: Chiltern Open Air Museum, Wycombe Museum and Daws Hill Vineyard. Having secured their enthusiastic support for performances at the end of August and early September, we turned our attention to rehearsals.

The Little Theatre by the Park in Chesham were fantastically accommodating and stringent with their own COVID-19 safety requirements. In fine weather, we rehearsed outside in the park and when we were forced indoors we wore

face coverings. Social distancing was mandatory for all, along with frequent hand washing / sanitising and personal temperature checks before each rehearsal. Rehearsal schedules minimised numbers called and everyone applied even tighter restrictions to their own activities for the duration. The prospect of losing members of the cast was a significant risk throughout.

Thanks to tremendous hard work from the whole company, in a little over four weeks, we had a tour ready to hit the road!

Audience numbers were limited by the size of the outdoor space (into which they brought their own seating with social distancing) and limitations on audibility. Ticketing was done online, enabling us to capture essential details for track and trace. On arrival, every audience member had their temperature taken to screen potential carriers of the virus.

Minimal staging was deployed, no lighting

(other than the sky) and the sound was limited to actors’ voices and an acoustic guitar. Costumes were sourced from stock and hire. Artistically, references to the COVID-19 crisis were incorporated into the show: hand sanitiser, social distancing, elbow bumps and the rest much to the audience’s amusement. In practical terms, it meant the unusual distance between characters was explicable in the context of the play.

The style of the show was informal and intimate and was exceptionally well received. We sold out every performance and played to more than 500 in total. Audiences were enjoying their first live theatre for many months and were hugely appreciative of our efforts come rain or shine. And we certainly had both!

Dates are already booked for next year’s tours and, subject to the extent of restrictions at that time, we are confident we can recreate Red Kite Theatre Company’s 2020 vision.







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# Into the Woods...in the woods

## NODA Scotland

Over the years we’ve put on some pretty huge shows in pretty weird places in very short timescales. When it became apparent that live outdoor events might be allowed in Scotland by August, attempting a full show outdoors seemed like a great idea.

With MTI onboard and a handy privately owned hilly forest in the middle of Dunblane, alongside a massive advantage in that our usual tech team are typically found producing outdoor events, we were off. Into the Woods to many must seem a really odd choice; it’s such a challenging show, but the lack of ensemble, the fact that a few of us had done the show before, and the lack of any major romantic storyline requiring lots of physical contact, along with its obvious suitability for the setting made it the clear choice.

Initially, there were no guidelines available for either performing arts or live events outdoors – just an indicative date, so we started off rehearsing 5 weeks before the show, with no guarantee of being able to perform at all, abiding by the social guidelines in place rather than any sector guidance. For the first four weeks, all rehearsals were outdoors (either up on Holmehill or in people’s gardens) with a maximum of 5 people – including our pianist. That added an air of complexity to an already difficult show. The week before the show, guidance for both live outdoor events and performing arts was released and we moved into following that guidance – allowing larger outdoor company rehearsals (with many mitigating steps around distancing, placement etc.)

The Thursday before our show week (and 2 days before, our tech boys started moving production into the hill) the Scottish Government confirmed that live events could go ahead and it all became suddenly very real. I think up until that point we were all a little unsure it would ever happen. With our audience sitting in ‘bubbles’ painted in eco chalk on the meadow, a mobile coffee truck providing interval hot drinks, our ever-patient techs camping out for the week to man the site, portaloos, a digital programme downloadable by QR code, a 45-page event manual for the police to satisfy the COVID-19 guidance and a fleet of clear umbrellas for the cast (which only had to

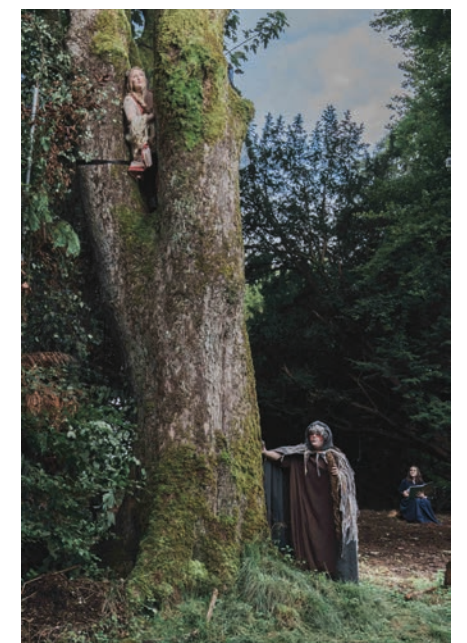
be used once) it was a massively steep learning curve for us all. The cancellation of our dress rehearsal due to rain and wind storms meant that we didn’t have a single full company rehearsal. Opening night was more than a little scary.

That all said, it was magical. To perform again, to be in costume, to have an audience, and particularly outside, in amongst the bats and the trees as darkness fell, it really was quite special. Financially we made a considerable loss – the costs of mounting an outdoor production combined with the distancing required for the audience (despite having to add an extra show) was always going to make that

likely. For us, it was more about keeping theatre alive in a time of darkness. We can only do that once though – moving forward, the future, both for us as a social enterprise and performing arts family and everyone in the wider arts community is as uncertain and worrying as always.

We learned a lot about how to make things work in COVID times – band, costumes, staging etc If anyone wants to ask about any specific aspect just get in touch!

Pamela Mackie, Creative Director,  
Rubber Chicken Theatre Company,  
Dunblane





# Murder at the shopping centre

NODA West Midlands



Against all the odds, in 2020, we are delighted to say that we managed to pull off a live theatre performance for three nights, on an open-air stage in September at The Valley (The Country Park) in Evesham. Three audiences were thrilled to be able to sit and watch live theatre again, after six months of lockdown, or restrictions. We did not break any rules, we put nobody in danger and the sense of achievement for this group of teenagers was palpable! Not only that, but the group gave up their stage to an acclaimed tribute band on one of the spare nights, to allow those professional musicians to earn their first income since 24th March.

It was done very much with fingers crossed that by the time we came to perform it, we would be allowed to do so – and we were. We were, perhaps the first group (the only group?) to offer live theatre since so many societies and NODA member groups had to cancel their planned shows, even some cancelling pantomimes.

This year, 2020, has been a trying period for the theatre and for businesses throughout Britain. Thousands of actors and musicians have been unable to earn a living since March, and non-essential businesses were forced to close their doors. Those working in the 'care' and

medical professions have been severely stretched, with some paying the ultimate price for their dedication.

That is why we, in The Festival Players, in our small way, were pleased to show our appreciation. The adverts in the *Spider's Web* programme were given free of charge to the advertisers; NHS staff were invited to have a free ticket to see the play and the award-winning Hats off to Led Zeppelin were invited to use our stage for Friday 4th September, for an evening of their brilliant music. It was quite a change for them, after touring the UK, Europe and the Far East for some years. We were very grateful to the management, The Valley for allowing us the use of the space for our stage and for welcoming this project; bringing live entertainment back to Evesham!

It wasn't easy. We started rehearsing in January and had to stop in March when we were all locked down. The teenage members of the group insisted on continuing 'virtual rehearsals' on Zoom, every week, organised by one of the senior cast members, even as most amateur drama groups were cancelling their productions, even those scheduled for Christmas.

These youngsters, in a smaller group, could continue to rehearse the words of a play on their phones. As for me, being the 'director', the only member of the group who is sixty years beyond being a teenager, I had no input to their digital



rehearsals – being a bit of a computer dinosaur! So there emerged a co-director and co-producer, both teenagers, as well as a social media manager who, between them, kept the production and publicity 'alive' as months went by.

When June came, we began rehearsing in groups of six, in a garden, and later with the entire cast, in a bigger garden, when the rules allowed.

Meanwhile, I was continuing to pursue printing, advertising, arrangements for lighting, sound and set, despite most of the providing companies not being in full operation. But we got them to open up when we needed them! They were glad of the business.

Rehearsals in gardens were fun – dragging out furniture and props to an imaginary set on the lawn, much to the amusement of the neighbours.

I was also concerned that, after six months, rehearsal fatigue would set in, but No! They carried on as full of enthusiasm

as ever until we decided on the dates for performances. The first week in September was chosen as the one and only week that suited. Most were going back to school and college that week and my Co-Producer was off to university by the middle of the month.

The Festival Players is a very small group. A dozen or so teenagers, three or four 'crew' including a teenage lighting and sound wizard, a couple of mums for the front of house and my wife and me! Between them, they built the set, created the atmosphere, performed the play, struck it every night (except the flats) and enjoyed every minute of it. They did the work, but I was exhausted!

We were originally due to perform in four venues, for a short 'tour' in July, but that was never to be. Rehearsing in August was fun! Some were booked to go on holiday, which was not helpful, but inevitable! In the play itself, some were due to hold hands or kiss as part of their performance, but there was none of that on show! Just good acting.



So, there we were, despite all the problems of the year, on 1st September at 7.30, perhaps the only amateur drama group in the UK performing, at last (although we are more than happy to concede that others may have 'stayed active' also). Everyone had rallied round to bring live theatre to three audiences which we hope and believe they thoroughly enjoyed just as much as the group enjoyed preparing it – sometimes from their own bedroom! The Mayor of Evesham came, as did the local MP.

These young people are truly an inspiring group to work with. I adore directing and encouraging them and we all hope their efforts paid off as audiences got caught up in the *Spider's Web*! And the murderer? Well, even his own mother, on front of house, didn't realise it was him until the first-night performance, so she obviously hadn't been listening at his bedroom door while he was on his phone!

Eric Jones





# Sāvitri Vs Covid HGO's first outdoor venture

NODA London



In April this year, it became clear that HGO's proposed autumn production of *Figaro*, to be staged at the Pleasance Theatre in London, would not be feasible thanks to the COVID crisis. But with the support of the production's director Julia Minzer and its music director Thomas Payne, we began to think of what we could do to help keep opera alive in London. A likely candidate soon emerged – *Sāvitri* by Gustav Holst, a 35-minute opera based on Sanskrit legend, written for outdoor performance in 1916, for a cast of three with chorus and small orchestral ensemble; and with a storyline uncannily appropriate for the times.

In the legend, *Sāvitri* hears the voice of Death coming to claim her husband, the woodman Satyavān. Satyavān tells her not to fear, he will defend her with his axe – her fears are only *Māyā*, illusion.

Death arrives, and Satyavān dies; nonetheless, *Sāvitri* bravely and cunningly welcomes Death and praises him. Death is so moved by *Sāvitri*'s words that he offers her a boon: it can be anything but the life of Satyavān. *Sāvitri* asks for life in all its fullness; but when Death grants this, *Sāvitri* points out that her life cannot be full without her husband. Death is defeated, and Satyavān returns to life – even Death, we learn, is *Māyā*.

Next, we had to find an appropriate venue: and we were fortunate that Lauderdale

House in Highgate, North London, were delighted to cooperate with us. At the rear of the house, facing a lawn ideal for placing an audience, is a colonnade where the action could take place and a pavilion where the orchestra could be located. And all with appropriate social distancing! Throughout our preparations, we were warned from all quarters that the rules might change at any moment and that our production would be proscribed; but here, in eight performances in August, our persistence paid off. HGO was able to bring live opera back to London, to warm reviews (including, for the first time in our history, from both *The Times* and *The Sunday Times*).

All praise to Julia, Thomas and their teams and of course to our wonderful casts – three *Sāvitris*, two *Satyavāns* and two

Deaths who shared the performances in rotation. We were mercifully spared rain, except towards the end of the second performance, when the audience manfully mustered under the colonnade and the singers and orchestra continued the performance from the pavilion. The production was entirely sold out and we were also able to receive, at one of the performances, the NODA Dorothy Lawson Award trophy for our 2019 production of *La bohème*. Now, we are looking for an appropriate production we could stage at Lauderdale for summer 2021. From the privations of 2020 have come new opportunities and we hope this may be so for all our friends in the performing arts.

David Conway, Chair, HGO Trust



# Ahead of its time?

NODA South East

In 1999, EODS made the exciting decision to mount an open-air production of *The Merchant of Venice* for the new century. The venue was to be The Italian Gardens, Eastbourne Seafront. A beautiful natural arena and perfect for such a production.

It was the first time the society had tackled Shakespeare and the first time we had even thought about performing in the open air. Everything was planned from scratch and with good advice from those who had done such a thing before, plans were made to set the venture on its way.

To say there was a lot to do is an understatement. Suppliers had to be sourced for everything. We had calculated the maximum capacity would be 200 and chairs were procured from Eastbourne Borough Council (the council were brilliant and supported the society all the way through the months of

planning). A local scaffolding company was contracted to build the raised seating area. Someone suggested a contact that could supply a large marquee to act as the changing rooms and refreshment area.

A generator had to be found as there was no electricity. Fortunately, there was a water supply nearby. Timber and other materials were loaned to us, and volunteers and members rallied to the cause and took on the jobs of wardrobe, props, set builders and dressers. Lighting was supplied and installed by an electrician from Devonshire Park Theatre.

During the production, an army of volunteers became programme sellers, front of house staff, cake bakers, tea makers, ticket sellers. The auditions attracted a large number of hopefuls and we had no trouble casting the play. It is true to say the excitement generated for

such an undertaking triggered fantastic support from the membership. August 2000 came and opening night was upon us. Advance sales were encouraging, but would enough people support ten days of performance for the show to pay its way? We played to near capacity most nights. The final weekend sold out and people paid to sit on the wall surrounding the gardens. What happened afterwards? We have performed every summer since and this year marked twenty years of open air Shakespeare. The marquees have grown in size and number and we now cater to a broader audience.

A success! I should say so. Was it the right decision all those years ago? Definitely!

Nick Reynolds  
Former Chairman

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### Love on the Beach Male 2 Female 6

"... the audiences loved the play, and the feedback was amazing! This was the fifth play by Raymond Hopkins that we have performed, and I believe it was his best." Endeavour Theatre Company—Australia

"We've enjoyed an extremely successful five day run with this play – audience numbers were the best we've had for years." The Wisbech Players—UK

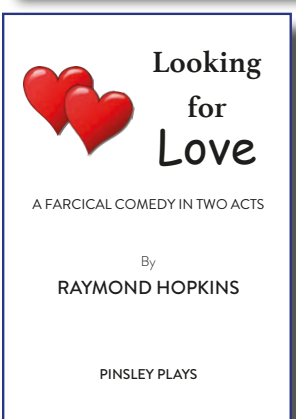
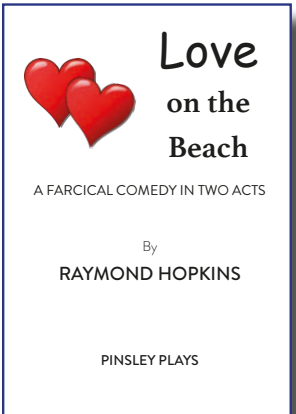
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### Looking for Love Male 4 Female 5

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"A wonderful, funny play ... really, really enjoyed every minute."  
"One of the funniest shows for a long time."  
"Excellent, cried with laughter."

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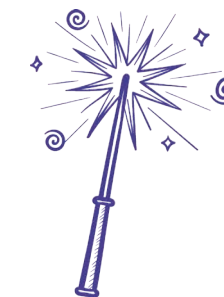
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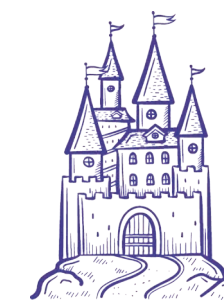
Free printable script with performance licence



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Flexible licensing options



Digital perusals at [pantoscripts.org.uk](http://pantoscripts.org.uk)

Whether you are looking for something traditional like *Jack and the Beanstalk* or *Cinderella*, or something a bit different like *A Sword in the Scone* or *Sherlock Holmes the Pantomime* there is something for every group

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We offer our gratitude and admiration  
for NODA members throughout the UK.



You are essential to your community and all of us.

We're here each day for our NODA  
theatre groups during the  
ongoing pandemic.

While maintaining full operational capabilities to service  
all of your licensing activities and questions,  
we're listening, learning, responding and  
doing what we can to help.

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## Why are you a member of NODA?

Find out the benefits of your NODA membership

NODA  
THEATRE  
SUMMER  
SCHOOL

NATIONAL  
AWARDS

NODA SAFE

DBS AND  
SAFE-  
GUARDING

LONG  
SERVICE  
AWARDS

PANTO  
SCRIPTS



# What a year it's been so far

Despite sudden closing, reopening setbacks, and more lockdown closures, one thing has certainly shone throughout this pandemic; how the industry has adapted from the grassroots of amateur theatre up to the glitzy lights of the West End. Groups across the UK have discovered alternative ways to enjoy their hobby through online performances, workshops, read-throughs, new writing and much more! And whilst this is no replacement for live theatre, it has become a fantastic stop-gap. With live streaming becoming commonplace in 2020, the arts have become more accessible. I for one have watched online productions and streamings of shows I would have never dreamed of booking tickets for. With the likes of the RSC and the National Theatre throwing open their archives for free alongside 'The Show Will Go On' YouTube channel and, of course, amateur companies taking the leap onto the digital stage, a new generation of theatre lovers has been born.

So, what has NODA been doing? We announced in the summer edition of NODA Today, that we would be extending all society memberships, that were due to expire on 31st December, by three months. This is our way of giving back to our membership, especially with the financial constraints you are facing. But why continue to be a member of NODA when performing onstage seems so far off?

Throughout the lockdown, NODA has remained open to support its members through the ever-changing guidance from four different nations. Earlier this year we launched our lobbying campaign for the government to recognise the importance and value of amateur theatre through our **#MakeOurVoicesHeard** campaign. So many societies and individuals have already sent our open letter to their MP. The word has been spread far and wide and even picked up by The Stage. But we need another push to keep our voices being heard, especially after the latest lockdown. For more information, turn to page 29.

During the past seven months we have seen online events like;

- NODA National AGM
- NODA Regional Conferences including NODA Scotland's full weekend of events
- NODA Theatre Summer School moved online with 100 students taking part in four different theatrical pathways
- NODA Training and NODA Safe Training being launched providing an online learning platform for individuals and societies.

NODA has worked alongside NAYT (National Association Youth Theatre) for a number of years, and now are providing a new benefit to each other's members with reciprocal access to a range of benefits.

NODA Members now have;

- Access to the regularly updated policy, procedure and guidance documents that are specific to those working with children and young people
- A members discount for the NAYT annual Raising the Game training event. This happens every year and brings together practitioners from across the country to upskill and network. After a successful online event in 2020, NAYT will be

exploring opportunities to run additional online programmes throughout the year

- Access to the NAYT Fundraisers and Practitioners of Colour Networks. Designed to bring together practitioners to discuss, share practice, upskill and advocate in these specific areas.

To access, login into your NODA member society account and visit the NODA Youth page.

Alongside all of this, this autumn, we have launched our new online Long Service Award application system and we are now in the process of testing our new pantomime website - [pantoscripts.org.uk](http://pantoscripts.org.uk). Our website, which saw a complete overhaul at the beginning of 2020, offers resources to societies from factsheets to health and safety support. We have continued to print our magazine NODA Today throughout the dark period, bringing you amateur theatre updates from the country (and in this edition the world!).

Head office has been open for the duration of the lockdown and has received well over 1000 calls from members, whether it be advice on the ever-changing guidance, a sounding board for ideas to get back up and running or just a friendly voice on the end of the phone.

Our regional network of representatives offers support and guidance for their districts, backed up by our Regional Councillors and head office staff, bringing a unique support structure for whatever your query.

The next twelve months are going to be, let's face it, rocky. Whilst the return of theatre to the stage has had another setback, NODA continues to develop its support package to members, but also still looks to the future. One thing is certain, NODA will be with you every step of the way.

2771

NODA  
Members

239

Regional  
Volunteer  
Network

1325

Support phone  
calls since March  
2020

3502

Participants of  
NODA Training

55

NODA Theatre  
Summer School  
Online Sessions

8

Online AGMs

*"I regard the theatre as the greatest of all art forms, the most immediate way in which a human being can share with another the sense of what it is to be a human being."*  
Oscar Wilde

# The 10 reasons why to be a member

1

## Digital Resources

With our new look website, it is now even easier to find the information when you need it, including our helpful factsheets, NODA Safe, Long Service Award applications and Pantomime applications.

2

**noda**  
INSURANCE  
Protecting Amateur Theatre

Did you know that with NODA Membership you get discount on insurance through NODA Insurance?  
T 01823 250 730 W [nodainsurance.co.uk](http://nodainsurance.co.uk)

3

**noda**  
SAFE

Support includes - telephone and email support with production safety queries, general advice on all health and safety queries, dealing with serious accidents, generic risk assessments and online training.

4

## Legal Advice

NODA provides advice on a wide range of contractual issues and guidance on subjects by a qualified solicitor who understands amateur theatre.  
Email [info@noda.org.uk](mailto:info@noda.org.uk) with a clear description of the advice required.

5

## Regional Support

Each society is allocated a 'Regional Representative', this person is your first point of contact for all things NODA. Alongside your Regional Representative is your Regional Councillor, they sit on the National Board of Trustees and 'head up' your region.

6

 **Panto Scripts**

Traditional, modern and  
alternative scripts

Over 160 quality scripts

Digital scripts

Film your production  
with a video licence

New titles added  
regularly

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

7

## Long Service Awards

NODA offers an exclusive range of medals, bars, badges and certificates for your society to present to members, commemorating their years of service. Visit our website for more information and to apply online.

8

## NODA Theatre Summer School

NODA Theatre Summer School provides residential training to members aged 18 and over using professional theatre practitioners, guaranteeing a fun packed week of top quality training.

9

## National Awards

NODA's annual Programme and Poster Competition is a very popular competition for societies. Its purpose is to encourage high standards in programme and poster design.

10

**noda**  
Corporate Partner

NODA works closely with some of the biggest companies in the theatre world to provide our members with that little bit of extra support when it is needed.  
[noda.org.uk/corporatepartners](http://noda.org.uk/corporatepartners)



# noda

## Long Service Awards

Visit [noda.org.uk/awards](http://noda.org.uk/awards) to apply today



10 Year Badge



15 Year Badge



20 Year Badge



25 Year Badge



30 Year Badge



35 Year Badge



40 Year Badge



45 Year Badge



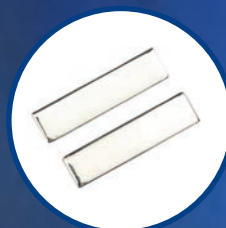
50 Year Badge



60 Year Badge



25 Year Medal



Silver Bar



50 Year Medal



Gold Bar



Diamond Bar



55 Year Pin



60 Year Pin



65 Year Pin



70 Year Pin



Individual Member



Society Life Member



Youth Award



Commendation Award

# Have you applied yet?

NODA offers a superb and totally exclusive range of medals, bars, badges and certificates for your society to present to members, to show appreciation and to commemorate their years of service to amateur theatre.

## What can I apply for?

From badges to medals, there is something for all budgets. Show off your long service with the 25 year long service medal. You can add a silver bar for every 5 years additional service up to 50 years, where you will be entitled to the 50 year gold bar and at 60 years service the exclusive diamond bar. If you wanted something a bit less formal, then the long service badges fit the bill. A different badge for every 5 years of service.

## Who can apply?

The Awards are intended for those who, week after week, attend rehearsals or spend many hours on backstage or administrative work and whose services are essential/ indispensable to putting on shows. 'Occasional' service, e.g. just for a show week itself, does not qualify and generalised descriptions of duties such as backstage, f.o.h., programmes, tickets, committee, officer or helper are insufficient. The grant of Life Membership of a Society is NOT a qualification for a NODA Award, nor is any status which can be achieved by merely paying a subscription - such as 'Patron', 'Associate' or 'Hon. Member'. Receipt of any remuneration - but not refund of actual accountable expenses - disqualifies, and for this purpose, remuneration includes gifts above a nominal value. Payment for services to the amateur theatre other than to the sponsoring societies, however, does not preclude the person from being given an Award. Any activity before the age of eleven does NOT qualify for consideration for NODA Long Service Awards.

We appreciate that some societies cannot afford, or are not allowed to due to their constitution to purchase awards for members. Whilst the applications will need to be made by the society, the individual is able to pay for the award themselves (or indeed someone else in the society).

## How do I apply?

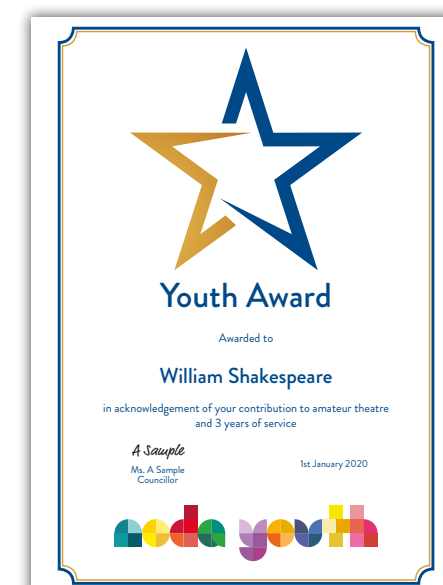
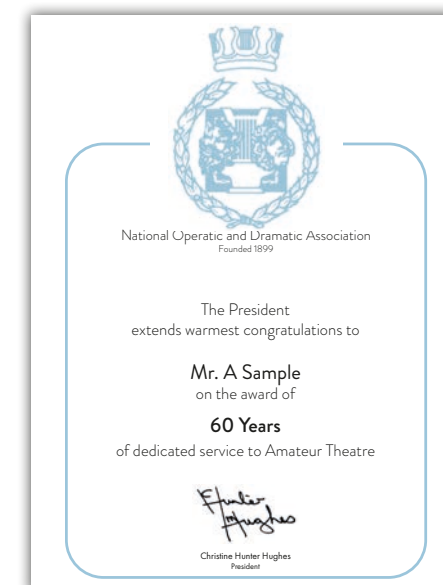
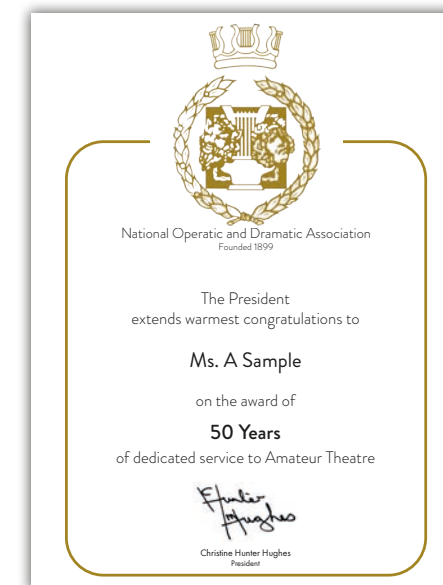
If you are a member of a society, they will have to apply on your behalf. This can be done via our online application portal or by hard copy form. If you are a NODA individual or joint member, you will be able to apply directly for your award via the online application portal or by hard copy form.

## What if I don't qualify?

Those who do not qualify for one of the Long Service Awards may be entitled to wear the **NODA COMMENDATION AWARD**, especially if they are in receipt of remuneration or do not serve amateur theatre on a weekly basis. Please note - 10 years' minimum service to amateur theatre is required before a nominee can be considered for this award.

## Youth Awards

A Youth Award may be awarded from the age of 11 after a minimum of three years' service to a maximum age of 20 ie. the Award may first be presented at the age of 14. A Youth Certificate may be awarded from the age of 5 for every three years of service to a maximum age of 20 ie. the Certificate may first be presented at the age of 8.





# noda SAFE

## Online health and safety training

Members £18 / Non Members £24 per course

- Basic ladder awareness
- Control of substances hazardous to health
- CPD asbestos awareness training
- Falls prevention - working at heights
- Fire safety
- Fire warden
- GDPR
- Health and safety level 2
- Legionella awareness
- Level 2 food safety training
- Lone and remote workers (personal security)
- Manual handling
- Risk assessments
- Slips and trips

[noda.org.uk/noda-safe-training](http://noda.org.uk/noda-safe-training)

# noda Training

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## Stage Hire Scotland

Scenery and prop hire - from full sets to special effects  
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## Stage Lighting Services

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## Theatre Tees

Personalised clothing from show t-shirts to merchandise  
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## Theatrical Rights Worldwide

Represent Broadway shows, West End shows, and a variety of Theatre for Young Audiences musicals  
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## Theatrical Traders Association

Everything you need to put on a show  
[theatricaltradersassociation.co.uk](http://theatricaltradersassociation.co.uk)



# Why it is important to keep the right insurance in place

## NODA Insurance

Having supported many NODA members throughout the lockdown period, we are aware that societies are now looking to the future and starting to plan for post-lockdown activity.

We know societies are eager to return to the rehearsal rooms and get productions onto the stage, but before starting rehearsals it is important to maintain your insurance package.

### Liability Cover

Before COVID-19, by far the largest number of claims costs related to liability: normally involving injury to other members, or third parties. A high proportion of claims happen during rehearsals or meetings, not just during the production. It is therefore important that insurance remains in place.



### Property Insurance

As standard, NODA Insurance comes with £5,000 for scenery, costumes, props and other equipment. Many societies select higher levels, based on specific needs. If your society continues to own (or be responsible for) such property, keeping insurance in force ensures it is protected, especially during these times of inactivity.



### Abandonment Cover

Although going forward, the abandonment cover won't include abandonment due to diseases such as COVID-19, it continues to provide cover for many other reasons. As you do start to incur costs in preparation for productions in 2021, having the insurance in place will ensure that you are protected if you need to cancel shows for reasons beyond your control.



### Committee Insurance

For those societies that have the additional Committee Insurance product, it is important not to create a "gap in cover", which could result in claims not being covered for disputes such as libel, slander, discrimination or breach of copyright.



If you have any questions or wish to discuss your policy, please do not hesitate to get in touch

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E [info@lloydwhyte.com](mailto:info@lloydwhyte.com)  
W [nodainsurance.co.uk](http://nodainsurance.co.uk)

*noda*  
**INSURANCE**  
Protecting Amateur Theatre

# #MakeOurVoicesHeard

As part of our campaign to raise the profile of amateur theatre within government, we want to show that there is definitely strength in numbers. We want every society whether they are members of NODA or not to:

- Send a copy of 'The Importance of Amateur Theatre' letter to their MP and local press. We encourage you to add details about your society and members, the impact of the current restrictions and activities they have been undertaking to engage with both members and your audience.
- Share it on your social media pages
- Send it to all of your members and encourage them to send it to their MP.

So far, we have received numerous responses from MPs and councils, but we cannot let up. As part of our campaign, we asked societies to share with us 1 photo of a show or rehearsal. Over the page is the result of that request. It shows the amazing depth of productions mounted in the UK and that is just a fraction of the groups throughout the country. The image is available to download from our website via the link below - add it to your email and press releases to show there is power in numbers. Keep sending the letters, keep posting online - we must #MakeOurVoicesHeard.

## The importance of amateur theatre Where would we be without it?

There is no question of the importance of Amateur Theatre within our local communities.

Amateur theatre performing groups produce over 3500 productions annually which are watched by audience figures of more than 2 million every year. These performances include pantomimes, plays and musicals. We are proud to be part of the umbrella body, the National Operatic & Dramatic Association (NODA) The combined membership of this organisation is over 100,000 ranging in age from 8-80.

NODA's member groups generate between £150m - £200m in ticket sales with at least the same being produced in additional spending including: food, drink, travel and accommodation. The vast majority of this supports a wide range of businesses, including theatres, village and community halls, theatrical suppliers, restaurants, musicians, bars and hotels. Many groups also raise significant sums for local and national charities with post show collections and specific fundraising events.

Amateur theatre plays a significant part in the cultural life of the nation; helping with both physical and mental health, not just for the performers and all taking part, but for audiences too. Youngsters involved grow in confidence and self-esteem. Amateur theatre, in many smaller communities, is very often the hub of cultural activity as well as helping to bring communities together. Also worthy of note, is the fact that many professional performers and stars of TV, originally trod the boards in amateur theatre thus shaping them for more lucrative exploits ahead.

Amateur theatre also supports professional theatre as well. The venues amateur groups are hiring, mostly, are professional theatres and with that comes the employment of staff, both front of house and technical, as well as the hiring of freelancers i.e. choreographers, directors, musical directors, make-up artists etc.

At the present time, virtually all amateur theatre productions have been cancelled across the country, and given the lead time for productions, it is unlikely there will be many, if any, productions before the end of 2021. This is a significant loss to the cultural and economic life of the UK. Many groups have been making use of technology to keep in touch, rehearse, or put together videos to entertain their audiences via social media channels. They are eager to maintain their involvement and to resume a normal programme as far as they can.

My plea to you today, is to PLEASE give the amateur theatre sector the same consideration as that of the professional theatres. The professional theatres are currently being highlighted in the press, but there is no mention of the amateur sector. A sector which does so very much for the wellbeing and the economy of our country.

To download a copy of the letter or the #BelnspiredByAmateurTheatre image on the next page, visit our website [noda.org.uk](http://noda.org.uk) or scan the QR code with your smartphone



Together we can #MakeOurVoicesHeard







# My story so far...

NODA East



My name is Hayley Hope and I belong to The Phoenix Players Drama Group in Luton. I have been involved in amateur theatre since the age of 7.

The show that ignited my passion was *Joseph and The Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*. My late father was playing the drums and I went to many rehearsals with him. This was when I was 5 years old, from then I was hooked. I am sure I could recite all the songs and they are still etched in my brain today. I have spent many happy years treading the boards and have played many parts. Unfortunately, after a bad car accident, my onstage days are over, but I am still very active with the group. I am on the committee, webmaster, poster and flyer designer, the photographer plus more which I thoroughly enjoy.

Since lockdown has put a halt to our latest production, along with the rest of the amdram community, I was desperate to keep active within my love of theatre.

My friend Jordan, runs the Facebook group for *Joseph UK* tour and he approached me with an idea. He thought we could get some of the cast members together and record them singing in their own homes and put together a small video. Well fast forward a few weeks, and it went from a

small idea to a major project.

We had so much interest from old cast members, so we got a creative team together, and with the approval of RUG (Really Useful Group) and Andrew Lloyd Webber & Tim Rice, we gained permission to produce a Highlights Concert. The creative team includes Me, Adam Lacey, Jordan Doolan, Laura-Duthie Coupar, Robbie Davies, Matt Longley and Nigel Wright.

This has all been put together purely on love & devotion. We have over 30 cast members including Jess Conrad OBE, Darren Day, Ria Jones, Mike Holoway, Jaymi Hensley, Zoe Tyler, Keith Jack, Jenna Lee James and Maria Freidman. They all recorded vocals and video in their own homes, after we decided on what songs and who would sing what etc. The fantastic record producer Nigel Wright (who has produced many platinum albums with recording artists as diverse as Madonna, Shakatak, Mezzoforte, Barbra Streisand, Boyzone, Sonia, Take That, Sinitta, José Carreras, Michael Ball, Sarah Brightman, Cliff Richard and Ray Quinn), worked tirelessly to put it all together vocally for us and then we had a professional editor mix it all with the video. We had achieved something we never

could have hoped for.

The final edited version was sent through to RUG and Andrew Lloyd Webber to get their approval. We had an online press night on Monday 6th July and the concert was then released to social media and on YouTube on Friday 10th July at 6.30 pm.

We did not sell tickets to view this, but we have set up a just giving page and are donating all money to Acting For Others Charity. [www.justgiving.com/fundraising/josephdreamconcert](http://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/josephdreamconcert)



## Wakefield Litfest

NODA North East



What do you do when you can't perform or meet together to share activities and rehearsals? Young people from NODA North East found an answer – "Let's organise a Literary Festival for Young People." Youth members from District 7 started in June to develop a Literature Festival created for young people, by young people. Lead by Yew Tree Youth Theatre, but open to any young person between the ages of 14 and 25 who was interested, they sought to create something that would connect young people and further develop their relationship with literature, culture and the arts.

The young people initially met online, but as lockdown eased they progressed to having some socially distanced meetings. There are workstreams around Social Media and Programme Development and it has been a great way to work with other people during this 'strange' time when there is limited theatre activity. As the Arts Council England and IVE are supporting the event financially, they have also had the opportunity to work with a range of professional groups (including Mortal Fools and The Poetry Society) and community organisations to learn from them about delivering such events. The young people have also recorded videos of their feelings about the experience which have been shared on Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/wakeylitfest>).

The festival took place in October and the planning had been undertaken in a versatile way so that while many events were 'online', there was also scope to hold some events in some of the impressive arts venues in Wakefield City.

Co-ordinator Sarah Osborne, Director of Yew Tree Theatre Company, said, "We are so lucky to have found a team of young people who are so creative and committed. They are making something incredibly inspirational. It's the first one of its kind and our programme board are true trailblazers!"

It's been a big commitment for the young people who have attended regular meetings as well as undertaking much more work in their own time. To recognise this, some of the young people are planning to complete their Silver Arts Award - these qualifications are designed to inspire learners up to the age of 25 to grow their arts and leadership talents.

It's great to see young people using their time not just to perform, but develop wider skills and leadership qualities which will be of benefit to them and the community in the future.

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# A trip to the archives

As part of a project to catalogue the well over a thousand books, librettos and musical scores of long forgotten shows, magazines and photos from the last 120 years of theatre in the NODA archive, this treasure was found. A costume plot from one of those long forgotten titles, *Rose of the Border*. Filled with watercolours of the different costume requirements, it gives you a new appreciation to the process of design before computers.



This photo was tucked into the back of the book with a faded photographer's stamp on the back. All we can tell is that it was taken by a photographer from Harrogate.

We can find very little about the title and even less of companies that have performed it in years gone by. If your society performed *Rose of the Border*, please get in touch, especially if you have photos!



# Talking Faces

NODA North West



Lockdown has been difficult for us all in so many ways and, especially, to all the amateur dramatic societies all over the country who just want to perform. Many groups have found ways to keep the message out there in their own unique way and, for Blackburn Drama Club, they have been doing it to preserve its history.

The idea came from club member, Suzanne Nolan, to maintain everyone's interest, not just within the group, but outside of the group as well. Based on the famous play by Alan Bennett, the group decided to write and record their own stories all entitled, "Talking Faces."

Chairman and Publicity Officer, Paddy Darnell-Walsh, took the idea and ran

with it, involving himself in the editing, collecting and scheduling of all the videos; which has been gruelling work by his own admission. The members have performed short stories, written by other members of the society to share online and also to raise some money in the meantime.

There are a lot of uncertain groups in these dark times, and Blackburn Drama Club are no different. With no shows, there is no income and it is a pretty torrid tale that resonates with us all. So, the idea came about to set up a 'fund me' page for people willing to donate to the club. To date, they have raised an incredible £700, which will help the club through the next few months until we can all once again start to enjoy the theatre.

They have been performing these shorts all over lockdown and the last episode, to air on Friday 9th October, will be held very dearly in many people's hearts. It will be performed by Eric Nolan who recently lost his wife, Margaret. Margaret had been celebrating her 50th year as a member of the group with Eric already over that milestone. The episode on Friday also holds more poignancy with the fact that it would have been their 49th wedding anniversary.

I am sure it will be an emotional evening for everyone involved and to everyone who knew Margaret. It is also the perfect way to end an incredible achievement from this group.

# A different kind of half term

NODA North

Amateur theatre groups across the country have faced the saddening reality of cancelling and postponing their much anticipated shows and productions. Dragon Tale Theatre Group were no exception to the situation and were only a few weeks away from opening their April production of *Oliver!* when the pandemic forced them to postpone. The ongoing restrictions have meant that they were also unable to perform their usual October half term pantomime this year. However, DTTG didn't want to sit back and let the usually significant week pass them by, so they decided to host a virtual event over the half term holidays with the aim of keeping their members entertained, involved and inspired.

Throughout the week, videos from some favourite moments over the last twenty years were shared, interspersed with videos of current members singing songs from previous productions. This gave them a small chance to enjoy their hobby once more, albeit virtually. Past and present members also shared their knowledge of the traditions and history of pantomimes, why they love theatre and why the arts – and community theatre in particular – is so important, now more than ever. The week wrapped up with an online quiz for their members.

In such a devastating time for the theatre world, it is both encouraging and inspiring for amateur theatre groups to continue to come together in any means possible. Projects such as this, which allow all members to be involved and participate in some capacity, can be a fantastic way to keep the spirit of amdram alive.



# Don't neglect your voice!

NODA North East

When Christine Castle (Regional Representative for NE District 9) found herself with no shows and no rehearsals following the lockdown in March, she wondered how to fill her time.

When wardrobes, cupboards and every nook and cranny had been thoroughly cleaned, she turned to an area of real neglect – her garden!

Her expertise in this area was sadly lacking, but she battled on, clearing and pruning every inch of her garden (with occasional help from husband Brian!). She planted summer bedding and re-potted (and added to) her pot collection. All this required watering a lot, during long summer evenings. Watering is tedious work, so she began to sing numbers from favourite musicals – not realising her dulcet tones were being heard in

neighbouring gardens!

Apologies were refuted and requests were gladly sung out with fans joining in the popular numbers and always finishing with 'You'll Never Walk Alone'. When the rains came down, everyone de-camped to their homes, but the joy of those singing evenings are a lovely memory. Perhaps these memories will boost ticket sales one day soon!



# Regional Councillor awarded MBE

NODA East Midlands



Readers will be pleased to know that Nanette Lovell, Regional Councillor for the East Midlands, has been awarded an MBE for 'For services to Young People and to the community in Northampton.'

For a time a professional dancer, Nanette has been involved in many ways with theatre in her home town of Northampton, notably the Northampton Musical Theatre Company as a performer, but also in backstage roles, such as helping with auditions, chaperoning and selling programmes.

It may surprise many of you that Nanette was also a theatre landlady providing lodgings for people working at the Royal and Derngate, our local theatre. This has provided her with quite a few famous friends and a wealth of memories.

It almost goes without saying that Nanette has, for many years, played an important role in NODA attending national

meetings, running our regional ones and still keeping in touch with our societies by attending and reviewing their shows.

In addition to her role in theatrical matters, Nanette has played a very active part over many years as a governor and Chair of Governors at many Northampton schools, receiving a governor award from the local authority for her work. Of special note is her work with Northamptonshire Carers where she has been especially involved with supporting young carers and their families.

Nanette was granted the award in this year's New Year's Honours List, but sadly, due to COVID-19, has not yet had her day at the palace.

## How It All Began

*I was 19 years old and went with two friends to Butlin's for a holiday. I had a great time - I won the Holiday Princess Contest and also the Miss She fashion competition. That was it - I decided I was going to be a Redcoat!*

*I took the Stage Newspaper, and there was an ad for entertainment staff at a holiday village on the Isle of Wight. I applied, went to London for an interview and got the job. It was at Pontin's Little Canada Holiday Village and that began an eight-year career as a Pontin Bluecoat. Such great experience as we did full variety shows, Olde Tyme Music Hall, cabaret - the lot! I was at Little Canada on the Isle of Wight, Pontin's*

*Pakefield at Lowestoft and Riviera Chalet Hotel in Weymouth.*

*After eight summer seasons, I got a job in local government (as a temp) until the next summer season started, but I enjoyed my job and life in Northampton so I stayed. I joined the Northampton Gilbert and Sullivan Society and Northampton Amateur Operatic Company - I have been a member of the now Northampton Musical Theatre Company since 1974.*

*I didn't know much about NODA then - only that a VIP from NODA came to see our show each year and wrote a review*

*which was published. In 1995, we had a new director, Scott St Martyn, and he told us about NODA and its National AGM and weekend in Torquay. I went with a friend and had a ball, and that was how I became involved with NODA. We met the Midlands Councillor and his wife at several NODA shows and the Midlands then became East Midlands. I became East Midlands Secretary and also a rep for East Midlands District 8. The East Midlands Councillor then became President and Martin Tailby took his place for a number of years until Martin stood down, for work reasons, and I took over - and that's how it all began!*

On behalf of the Board of Trustees, Regional Representatives and every NODA member, I would like to congratulate Nanette Lovell MBE, on not only this thoroughly deserved award, but her continued support of young people and the community of Northampton and to the NODA East Midlands region.

Christine Hunter Hughes  
NODA National President

# The Sound of Music - the prequel

NODA North West



I am sure you have all heard of *The Sound of Music*. If you haven't, then I can only assume you have been living under a rock in the Austrian Alps your whole life!

*The Sound of Music* is a 1959 musical based on the life of Maria Von Trapp, who became a governess to a large family in Austria, while she decides to become a nun. She fell in love with the children and their father and so they decide to flee the Nazis and leave Austria. The story is a real-life tale of Maria Von Trapp and later became a film in 1965, starring the delightful, Julie Andrews, fresh from her success as *Mary Poppins*. Although we know a lot about their life in Austria, there isn't a great deal we know about the Von Trapps' life before.

It is said that if a prequel to *The Sound of Music* was ever written, then part of it would be set in the North West of England. In the musical version of the story, we meet Georg and his seven children a few years after his wife, their mother, dies. The wife and mother of the Von Trapps was Agathe Whitehead. She was the daughter of John Whitehead who was a naval engineer from Bury. Agathe grew up in a village in Bury called Bolton & Tottington. Her father's work saw the family leave the UK for Austria and that was where Agathe met naval officer, Georg Von Trapp, and the two ended up getting married. The rest, as they say, is history.





# Surviving 2020

NODA East



For many amateur theatre groups and companies, 2020 started off as usual with a calendar of performances planned for the forthcoming year. Our first venture was Agatha Christie's *And Then There Were None* to be staged on 19th to 21st March at the 300-seat South Mill Arts (formerly Rhodes) Theatre in Bishop's Stortford. Rehearsals had progressed well, and we erected the set on the Sunday preparing for the dress rehearsals and Thursday's opening night. However, during the first few months of this year, quietly in the background at first but gathering momentum, was this new Coronavirus. By the time we had got to the final dress rehearsal on Wednesday, the theatre had announced its closure on Thursday and, as we all know, by the following Monday we all had entered the "lockdown".

Governed as we all were by the new restrictive measures in place for now and for the unforeseeable future, we had a choice: to quietly go into neutral and ride out this viral storm or optimistically adapt to the situation and go on. Like many amateur theatre groups, Water Lane is made up of people not only enthusiastic for the stage, but as a company of friends, therefore to settle into quiet isolation was not an option.

Discovering zoom was a technological lifeline. For the first five or six weeks of lockdown, we organised weekly quizzes

and progressed to daily Zoom monologues. These were open to all our members who could do anything they wished (within respectable reason) as long as it lasted for only five or so minutes. The response was a wonderful collection of recitals from *Shakespeare* to the *Vagina Monologues* and from music hall ballads to ghost stories and more. As these short creative moments came to a natural end and the lockdown restrictions began to lift, we decided to record short "radio plays" to be aired on our Facebook group. These consisted of a series of old *Sherlock Holmes* scripts which we discovered on the internet together with short one-off plays written by members. The recordings were made in a rehearsal room at the theatre with small casts doubling up on characters and socially distancing as required, rotating the cast with each recording.

As the lockdown began to ease it was announced that theatres could now perform outside. So seizing the opportunity, we decided to stage an outside production. With a private audience of members, families and friends we presented *A Four Play Afternoon*, a collection of four one-act plays each with small casts to keep within the rules. The audience was logged by name and contact details, temperature tested on arrival and seated in bubbles of six. This effort towards normality was very much appreciated by the audience, but more so by the actors,

directors and production staff making the whole afternoon a great success.

So now once again, restrictions have been put in place to avoid a second wave of the virus. Our postponed March production, re-scheduled to be performed in November, is once again postponed until next year. Nevertheless, through the next few months, we will be zooming on with *Theatre in the Zoom*: a development on from our early monologues. These will consist of short plays or pieces performed live or recorded twice a week until December and a series of workshops covering production management, directing and set design. Lastly, of course, a few more quizzes by popular request!

Water Lane Theatre Company, like so many groups, is driven by talent and fuelled by enthusiasm. We, amateur actors, directors, set builders, seamstresses and technicians are the backbone of this country's reputation for the theatre. Amateur groups give life and laughter not only to all our members throughout the country, but to all our communities. It is vital that we stay together and keep in touch with each other over the coming winter months. No one knows what the situation will be in 2021, but I am sure, with optimism, that it will be a better year for all and in particular the theatre, or as a 19th-century ringmaster would say at the point of trouble: "The show must go on."



*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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## THE SHOW WILL GO ON.

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The UK is regarded as a world-leader in delivering cultural events: Glastonbury Festival, Edinburgh Fringe and Notting Hill Carnival are household names around the globe and spectacular events such as the 2012 Olympics opening and closing ceremonies are widely praised. UK events contribute significantly to the UK economy and supports circa one million livelihoods. The events industry has always had a close relationship with amateur theatre companies, providing everything from staging, sound, lighting, costumes, props and many more. They have supported societies by adding their professional expertise and products to heighten the quality of performances. Now it is time to return that support. The events industry has been heavily impacted by COVID-19 and received little to no support. NODA is proud to support their Corporate Partners and the wider industry in the [#WeMakeEvents](#) campaign and hope that you, our members will read the messages below and get involved.

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Since March, we have seen 95% of our work cancelled as the theatre, concerts, events and productions have been put into lockdown as the country comes together to fight the pandemic. We are doing everything we can to ensure when live events are back up and running, your audiences can enjoy the best production values that we have always provided. Like the other supply companies that support live events, the next few months are crucial for us. We are lobbying government for more financial support with grants, tax relief and extended furlough, so that when our theatres, community halls and venues are open once again, we can be here to support you to the same high standards. If you can support us, sharing messages on social media, lobbying your local MPs, and of course, picking up the phone when you start performing again - we would be incredibly grateful.

**Phil Hurley, Stage Sound Services & Stage Lighting Services**

## Scenery Hire Scotland

"Scenery Hire Scotland lit up in red in September to raise awareness of the dire effect that government policies to combat Covid 19 are having on the creative industries. We were joined by friends and former colleagues whose jobs - in theatre, cruise ships and events have been put on hold or lost.

Our company was set up to provide a local affordable service to amateur theatre in Scotland and, thanks to that community, we were thriving and had expanded to larger premises last October. 2020 was shaping up to be an exciting year; we had built two brand new sets by February with more to come.

COVID -19 has hit us hard. When the Scottish Government started to cancel live events in March, our customers began to postpone shows to the autumn, these then turned into cancellations. We are now, along with our other colleagues in the supply chain, seeing cancellations of shows scheduled for 2021.

We understand that societies are nervous about committing to productions in the current climate, and are perhaps now considering waiting until 2022 before producing their next shows.

However, the supply chain that you rely on is fragile and some suppliers have already gone out of business. The rest of us are facing a precarious future, with spring 2020 being a make or break season. We hope to be here to serve you in the future, but to do that we need your support now. Contact your councils, message your MPs, get the message out there. In the meantime, think about what you can do - think outside your traditional shows and venues and support your suppliers now, so we can continue to serve you next year."

**Tess Bryne, Scenery Hire Scotland**

### Top Row

**ACTION Community Theatre** - North Hykeham Lincolnshire.

Photo credit Thomas Gall

**NODA Corporate Partner - Scenery Hire Scotland**

### Second Row

**Pantheon Club Glasgow**

**Elgin Town Hall**

**Old Court Theatre Chelmsford**

### Third Row

**Brechin City Hall**

**Princess Theatre** - Burnham-on-Sea

**Whitehall Theatre** - Dundee. Photo credit Mark Lindsay

### Bottom Row

**NODA Corporate Partner - Stage Lighting Services.** Photo

Credit Katie Bainbridge Photography and Nathan Wyburn Art

**Chorely Theatre** - CADOS. Photo credit Paul Carr



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# Pantomime in the desert

NODA International Member



*Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs - 2017*

**NODA membership is not exclusive to the UK and Ireland. Members stretch across Europe into the Middle East, including the Doha Players. Staging pantomimes through to amateur exclusives like *Les Misérables* in 40°C heat, the Doha Players Chairman, Elaine Potters, tells us the origins of the society.**

Many people think of Qatar as a tiny little country in the Middle East and may be surprised to learn that it's had an active English speaking theatre group since 1954. When the oil and gas industry started to grow, so did the population with workers arriving from all over the world. Amongst them were engineers, medical and teaching staff with a passion for theatre.

There was nothing much to do in those days, no television, only the BBC Overseas Services programmes, hence the British expatriate community enthusiastically made their own entertainment including an annual pantomime held since 1973. In the very early days, performances would take place in people's homes, but some were also held in a furniture store and a police compound until the powers that be found out! As the country grew, so did the number of theatres and The Doha Players recent shows have been held in Qatar National Theatre, Education City Black Box Theatre and Qatar National Convention Centre.

Over the past 66 years, the Players have staged numerous productions – comedies, farce and serious plays, pantos and musicals. In 2014, they sold out 3,000

tickets for *Les Misérables* (one of the first companies to be granted an amateur adult license). The annual panto is also a popular show attracting audiences of up to 2,000 over a four-day run. Non-British families, who are not familiar with this genre of entertainment, are often astounded at the antics and the children love being allowed to shout out and sing along.

Today, the players have members drawn from more than 20 countries, most with day jobs and all with a love of the performing arts. As well as taking part in Doha Players own productions, our actors have participated in the 2019 Jaipur Literary Festival in Qatar and have taken part in role-play at the newly opened spectacular Qatar National Museum.

For the musically inclined, the players put on 'open mic nights' for musicians to entertain enthusiastic folk, punk and rock devotees and it's great to have live music for our productions too.

Many people have come to Qatar on short term employment contracts, some staying longer than initially intended as they loved being part of the players. Lifelong friendships have been forged and wonderful memories made.

Due to COVID-19, Qatar, like most other countries, has closed its theatres, but we are continuing to audition and rehearse via Zoom and get together for outings, i.e. masked visits to local museums. We're hoping to meet in the parks when the weather cools down (it's around 40°C from June to October).

We are grateful to NODA who have a wonderful selection of high-quality scripts and hope that we will all be back on stage or backstage before too long.

Lastly, when things return to normal, I would encourage you to visit us in Qatar, especially if you are a football fan as there is something called the FIFA World Cup planned for 2022!



*Fools Paradise - 1962*



*Les Misérables - 2014*



*Les Misérables set - 2014*



*Peter Pan - 2014 Education City*



*Snow White - 2017. Members (left to right) from Canada, England, New Zealand and Nigeria*



*Beauty and the Beast - 2018 QNCC*

## How to present a COVID-secure musical



How can you present a COVID-secure musical if ensemble singing is in the score, but is not allowed?

How will you cover your costs if you can't sell tickets in the theatre and how will your actors cope with the lack of atmosphere in a venue that's virtually empty?

Nobody has faced these challenges before and there's no manual to help you out.

Some publishers have pulled up the drawbridge until brighter times arrive. Others are focusing on plays with just a handful of characters to cast.

ITM Shows is here to help you present a musical - one that obeys the COVID rules whilst keeping everyone safe.

For more than a decade, we have offered you the flexibility to edit down the script or omit songs to suit your situation better.

Our digital delivery of script, scores and backing tracks is tailored for remote learning and Zoom read-throughs.

Maybe chorus and ensemble numbers are difficult for the time being, but you can still include plenty of solos and duets.

Your actors can sing to our backing tracks or even mime to our cast albums if singing is not permitted.

If your performance dates have to shift because of local restrictions - or any other reason - that's fine. Just get in touch and we can amend your contract straight away.

We also permit virtual online performances or live-streamed shows for all our licensees.

There are many ways that we can help so please email us now, and we can discuss how you can best present your production: [info@itmshows.com](mailto:info@itmshows.com)

And you can request a **free perusal script** for any of our musicals.

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## Keeping in the Bridlington spotlight

NODA North East



*"It's an ill wind that blows nobody any good."* That was one of my mother's favourite expressions meaning that even in the worst of circumstances, something good might come out of it. Well in the middle of March 2020, when we were due to run our dress rehearsal for *Lilies on the Land*, we instead found ourselves having to cancel our whole week of performances in line with government guidance on COVID-19. No sign of an upside to that.

I spent most of the next day in tears in spite of knowing it was the right decision. Lockdown was hard on everyone, but it was clear that theatre was going to suffer more than most in terms of getting back to normal. Facebook was full of choirs and groups getting together on Zoom, and I was so jealous as, whichever way you look at it, you can't do a play on Zoom. Then Tennant and Sheen did *Staged*, and I thought, *"Radio, we can do a radio play!"*

My daughter and I had written a play in the summer of 2019, so with no royalties to pay and a bit of tweaking, we could make it suitable for radio. The play needed more work anyway and this offered the opportunity to test and trial it, but with a clear purpose in mind. Then the government decided to relax lockdown a little and a small group of us were able to meet in the theatre (observing social distancing and hygiene requirements of course) to rehearse. So, during July and August, we met twice weekly and worked on our play, *Carpe Vinum*.

It is a play about six women who share a house whilst at university and two men

who have an impact on their lives. We have a very talented membership at BOADS and the second half of the play includes singing and guitar playing by members of the cast.

The final recording was on 4th September, and at the time of writing this, we are waiting for the final cut of the recordings. We were very fortunate to have a skilled "tech guy" who was happy to sit through hours of practice to capture our best moments. He also captured our "bloopers" and as you can imagine, in a town like Bridlington, the murder of seagulls was high on the blooper scale.

The final product may take a while as "tech guy" has just gone off to university and has a lot on his plate at the moment, but I am confident he will do his best to get it to us as soon as he can. We will release it to members as soon as we are able.

Trying to keep theatre alive during a pandemic is a difficult job, but I'm hoping we have shown it is not impossible. I am now looking for other performance opportunities. The latest news on COVID-19 means meeting in person may not be possible for a while, but given what we have achieved so far, I am not dismayed. Our play is much improved as a result of this process and we hope one day to be able to produce it on the stage. It will be much funnier as a result of this project. My mother would be proud of me and my daughter for making sure we made some good come out of this awful pandemic.

Joan Sanders, Bridlington AODS

## First recipient of the Theatremask Bursary

NODA Wales and Ireland

Based in the valleys of South Wales, Theatremask Productions was set up back in 2007, to provide quality staged productions encompassing a wide variety of styles and nurturing the actors/actresses of the future.

We are a friendly, inclusive, open and multi-award-winning amateur theatre company, entirely run by volunteers. After staging 19 productions, 2020 sees Theatremask Productions introduce the 'Theatremask Bursary Award'.

This financial payment is provided to assist with the costs associated with attending a college/university/drama school to advance the study of the performing arts. It is open to anyone under the age of 25 who has taken part in any productions staged by Theatremask Productions.

The first recipient of the *Theatremask Bursary Award* is Molly Elson. Molly has recently won a place at the oldest drama school in the UK, The London Academy of Music & Dramatic Art (LAMDA), to study acting and begins her training this September. Molly's first appearance with Theatremask was in *Jesus Christ Superstar* back in 2014, and has subsequently appeared in *Agnes of God* (2015), *One O'Clock from the House* (2017) and most recently *The Graduate* (2018).

Molly made her professional debut in 2013, alongside Welsh actress Siwan Morris, at just 15 years of age when she appeared in *Tonypandemonium* staged by National Theatre of Wales at the Park & Dare Theatre, Treorchy.



Molly Elson in *Tonypandemonium*

## Seizing opportunities

NODA East

Matthew Attwood knows something about seizing opportunities. At 22, the winner of NODA East District 4S's Best Technical Production Award 2020, has written a full-length pantomime, directed it and even had to play the lead villain when the person originally cast in the role had to drop out just weeks before showtime. Oh, and taken the show, *Jack and the Beanstalk: A Very Cheesy Pantomime*, to France to perform with his group, the Ellesmere Devils Pantomime Society from Suffolk.

*"You can't always rely on others to give you opportunities – you have to create them yourself,"* says Matthew, who recently completed his drama degree at Anglia Ruskin University. *"You have to seize the moment, and you have to push yourself to achieve something – even if it's not in your comfort zone; that's half the battle."*

With his early theatrical experiences, from age six to 18, taking place onstage,

*Jack and the Beanstalk* was the first full length production Matthew had written. *"To actually sit down and write and make a lot of time to do that was a new process for me,"* he said.

The wildly funny script emerged from Matthew's vision to take the traditional fairy tale down a different path *"and then, gradually by adding more and more characters, I had to think, right, what's the trajectory that I want to take these characters on?"*

A few months of editing and collaboration with assistant director, Sue Green, followed to polish the script off. Performed in January 2019, the production kept crowds laughing with too many cheese and cheese-y jokes to count.

With university studies completed, Matthew aims to join with friends to develop his own theatrical company, exploring both online and live theatre. *"I*



*think writing and directing are leading me somewhere. I want to hone in on that and see what I can create."*

And does he have any advice for others in the theatrical orbit? *"The best advice I can give anyone,"* he said, *"is just be fearless and really push yourself, step out of your comfort zone and challenge yourself consistently and make your own opportunity."*

DeeDee Doke

## The Literary and Discourse Society needs you!

NODA South West



**Lockdown has brought together a group to support and develop local playwrights and is looking for your help!**

In these challenging times of lockdown, it is inspiring to see how many NODA members have entertained each other via the social media with ever-more elaborate Covid-Blues songs and mini-plays and memes – a period of different types of collaboration and creativity.

Recently, as part of such a forum, several members of various cross-district groups were discussing short plays and how rich they were becoming with the increasing skills and experience of local writers. Many

professional and published writers of plays have begun by writing for their own local groups, eventually getting their work published more widely. In the early stages of writing, it can be said that you never quite know how it will sound and if it will work until the characters are populated with voices of their own.

So, with potentially hundreds of amateur actors twiddling their fingers at the moment, who could bring so much to untested scripts – the Literary and Discourse Society was born. This tiny, informal group acts as a platform of creativity and encouragement for mutual learning and development. Meeting on

Zoom on a Sunday evening, it reads scripts written and submitted by local writers. The first part of the meeting is the reading of the play. At the end of the reading, there is a question and answer session with the author who shares their influences and inspirations and invites feedback on the subject matter.

The group has been going for a few months now and is still in its infancy. However, during this time, they've read works by a number of local writers on all kinds of subject matter. It can be hilarious, tragic, thought-provoking and uplifting. Writers have taken new ideas and knowledge away from the meetings; actors have improved their sight-reading skills; directors have become aware of new one-act play scripts and playwrights have been able to wow adjudicators and attract audiences post lockdown.

The group welcomes new actors and writers with huge enthusiasm. Contact [katie.jones@noda.org.uk](mailto:katie.jones@noda.org.uk) and bring your skills to a new, stimulating and collaborative audience.



# Back on stage - *Relatively Speaking*

NODA North West



Sophie Cartmell and Tim Withers. Credit Andrea Neville

Fylde Coast Players perform 3 plays a year: March, July and October, at Lowther Pavilion Theatre in Lytham. They were due to perform *The Hollow* by Agatha Christie in late March, when the pandemic hit and theatres across the country closed their doors.

As the months passed, it became obvious that it would not go on in July and even October was looking doubtful. The large cast, was already set and rehearsed before anyone had even heard of self-distancing. The chair of the group, Teresa Mallabone, and I, chatted over the possibility of performing a small cast play instead and I started reading plays looking for something suitable. I found it in the classic Alan Ayckbourn comedy, *Relatively Speaking*. It's a four-hander, made up of two couples and I was confident I could make it work.

The first reading was a social reading via Zoom for any member of the group. I was pleased that everyone found it very funny and there was quite a lot of interest. This was July and we held a casting reading. Two members were on holiday in Spain, but were very keen to read, so Teresa and I auditioned them via Zoom, and they were cast as the younger couple. I was also able to cast a married couple as the older pair, from the others who auditioned. It was already apparent that this would make setting the play easier, as the couples could be close together, whilst keeping separate

and two metres apart, from the other pair. Four individuals would have been possible, but probably not very credible - a bit like Coronation St at the moment!

We were ready to go, and then the first blow. Spain was added to the list of countries requiring quarantine on return, so I lost Sophie and Tim from rehearsals for another fortnight. Undaunted, I pressed on rehearsing Kath and Tim in either my garden or theirs.

In August, the theatre was allowed to reopen with all the latest precautions in place to make the venue COVID-19 secure: a one-way system, vastly reduced seating capacity from 450 to 178, temperature checking equipment in the foyer etc. The theatre manager was extremely supportive of our plans

and offered to help as much as possible. Our next problem was a rehearsal venue, we couldn't continue in the garden indefinitely. Our usual venue hadn't reopened so the theatre agreed we could rehearse on the floor of the auditorium. We armed ourselves with sanitiser wipes and disinfectant, and every rehearsal we wiped every chair, table and surface we touched, before and after. Every prop we were using was taken home and washed.

As time went on, rehearsals were randomly fitted in around the theatre's business, but almost weekly, the rules changed. Every time they did, we spent hours trawling through the local government websites to ensure we were still legal to continue and more to the point, safe. The rule of 6 applied which meant there was just the cast of four, the prompt and me! When it became necessary for the stage manager and the props lady to attend, they had to form a separate bubble, stay right at the back and not mingle with the rest of us.

As we knew we would have a limited audience, the costs had to be kept to a minimum, so the budget for costumes, props, set was pretty much nil. We borrowed from members and friends and many things were handmade. The set builders were another group who met separately at the store and built the scenery keeping their distance and wearing masks and gloves...more sanitiser required!

Of course, we still had all the usual problems which crop up during a rehearsal period, which meant that people were



Tim Greenwood and Cath Greenwood. Credit Andrea Neville

missing - illness (though fortunately not coronavirus), holidays, a bereavement and a local flood which prevented one of the couples driving out of their road. But the cast were really committed, learnt their lines early and thoroughly, which made my life as a director a great deal easier.

The autumn brought increased numbers of Covid to the north west, and gradually more restrictions were put in place, but theatres weren't closed and we decided to continue, again with the support of the theatre, helping to promote the production. Financially we were concerned, as the more restrictions we felt, the smaller the audience there would be. But we all had the feeling by now that we weren't just doing this for FCP, but for the theatre and for amateur dramatics in general. We wanted to prove that live amateur theatre was possible.

The play was on from Wednesday 21st to Saturday 24th October. Sunday 18th was "get-in", Monday technical and Tuesday,

Dress rehearsal. On Saturday 17th, Lancashire was put into Tier 3. After all of our efforts and hard work, was this the end of the line? Teresa and I had both had a sleepless night and having confirmed with the theatre manager that we were still legal to go ahead, we decided to call a Zoom meeting with all the cast, crew and committee so that everyone could air their views and concerns and we would vote. The vote was to press ahead.

The get-in/backstage team built the set, the cast stayed in another bubble and the technician and I had to stay in the auditorium, with no mingling between the groups. I couldn't go onstage or backstage and we couldn't make refreshments. Only the actors, whilst performing, were exempt from wearing masks. They had to put them on immediately they stepped offstage. Andrea, our props supremo, took 66 items of crockery home and washed them every night.

There is a big scene change at the end of



Tim Withers. Credit Andrea Neville

Act 1, Scene 1 (not the interval) from the bedsit to the garden. Tim Greenwood the set designer had made reversible flats, so I set the scene change to the music of The Kinks, had the stage crew make a feature of their masks and gloves, and choreographed the transformation. It worked.

In the end, we had a really good production with excellent performances. Over 230 people came to see it over the four nights, and thoroughly enjoyed it. Many feeling reassured at how safe they felt in the theatre.

I had a tremendous amount of support from the Chair of the group, the theatre manager, the cast and the stage crew. Sheer will and determination got us through. Was it hard work? Absolutely! Would I do it again? Like a shot!!!

Rosie Withers

## A View from the Audience

Christine Hunter Hughes - NODA President

I had been invited to see the show sometime earlier and felt sure that as Lancashire moved into tier 3 that the production would have to be postponed - however, having done all the necessary checks I found, somewhat to my surprise, that Yes - it was legal and within the rules, so I was simply delighted to attend on Friday evening.

What a simply marvellous evening it was - yes, I did initially feel a little uncomfortable although the precautions in place were obviously secure and well-practised, so I

was reassured. It did feel a little strange to sit in the theatre wearing a face mask, but that was a small price to pay for being able to watch a live production. The set change at the end of scene one was a triumph - one of the best and most entertaining set changes I have had the privilege to watch - the crew in masks and gloves and 'bopping' to The Kinks is a sight that will remain with me for a long time - just wonderful. Yes, I really missed being able to chat to the cast and crew - although as Rosie was in the audience, I did manage a socially distanced brief chat with her. I

missed other things too: members of the society in and around the auditorium to chat to, no programmes, no raffle, but it WAS live amateur theatre and on stage!

I am filled with admiration and awe at the dedication and determination of the Director (Rosie) and the cast and crew, and of course the theatre management for accomplishing something which, on the surface seemed impossible and achieving it really well with a great production - well done to all concerned, just for proving that the show can and must go on.



Sophie Cartmell. Credit Andrea Neville



# Amateur theatre will return

During both World Wars, theatre came to a stop. Theatres went dark and the future looked bleak. However, after VE-Day and VJ-Day, societies started to reform and put on productions. Some started small and worked back up to full scale shows, some just went for the biggest shows around. The current crisis makes the prospect of going to rehearsals and getting back to the stage seem like a long way off and in some cases seem like it won't ever happen. But as you read through the articles, please remember amateur theatre has stopped before, amateur theatre has been dark for several years, but it did return and it returned bigger and better than before. The same will happen after the pandemic and we will tell those who come after us the story of what happened when our favourite pastime stopped, how we restarted and how we are so much more grateful for it now.

## We will meet again!

NODA North West



The Girlfriend - 1937

If history has anything to teach us, then it is that we, as a society, are capable of doing anything we want despite what we are up against. As a nation, we are strong, and we have stood up to threats far worse than we are dealing with now and lived to tell the tale. One society, in a small coastal town of Cumbria, is living proof of that.

Formed in 1906, Workington Amateur Operatic Society (WAOS) first performed a production of Gilbert & Sullivan's, *Patience* at the Opera House in Workington – a building which is still there to this day.

They have gone on to perform over 109 full-scale shows during their 100-year history and, despite the Opera House being gutted by fire in 1927, continued to perform after it was rebuilt until they moved to the Carnegie Civic Theatre in 1962 – a venue they still perform in today.

However, toward the end of 1939, life for everyone was about to change as a threat to the world was imminent.

Workington Amateur Operatic Society performed for one last time in 1938. It was a performance of *New Year Revels*, and it would be the final performance from the society for 10 years. Everything, including the group, had to stop: the world was at war. Young men would have left to go and fight. We, as a country, would have to defend ourselves and we would have to be victorious.

And so, in 1948, long after the war had been fought and won, the society came back with a performance of *Gypsy Love* their first in over a decade. Fast forward 71 years where they last performed the *The King and I* at the end of 2019 before life, again, was to be put on hold.

If WAOS can show us anything, they can show us that we can come back from anything and we can come back stronger. As long as we unite as a nation, as long as we are in this together, we can be victorious once more.

**We will meet again!**



Katinka - 1948



Katinka - 1948

# Keep calm and carry on

NODA London



The Yeoman of the Guard - 1924



Merrie England - 1929

HEOS Musical Theatre has celebrated their 109th Anniversary this year, so have survived the 1918 'Flu pandemic and two World Wars, a general strike and a 3-day week with electricity rationing. Here is a flavour of how they "kept calm and carried on".

At the outbreak of the First World War, HEOS were well underway with their rehearsals for *Tom Jones* (a saucy piece). Over half the male members volunteered for the front, but the government's "business as usual" meant that production for the show carried on. However, some members were now based in their military camps and, such was their dedication to their art and society, they travelled from as far away as Didcot to London each night to take part in the rehearsals and production – a return trip of around 120 miles was not an easy undertaking in 1914-15.

Thereafter, shows ceased for the rest of the War, but musical evenings were held to keep the society going. For one of these evenings, Madam Clara Novello asked her son, Ivor Novello, to write a patriotic song for her to sing. So, with Ivor Novello



Footloose - 2019

playing the piano, Clara Novello sang *Keep the Homes Fires Burning*, in what is believed to be its world première (unless you know differently!) It subsequently became one of the most famous songs of the First World War.

During the general strike and depression, losses were made for decades, but the society struggled on mainly by keeping afloat through social events – much as we do today.

Performances ceased throughout the Second World War period, and with the advent of the coal strike in the early 1970s, this brought about the 3 day week with electricity rationing: the priority for power being manufacturing and essential services. This was considered preferable to a total lockdown (the effects of which we have experienced in 2020). Throughout this dark and dismal time, as much cheerfulness as possible was needed. Rehearsals continued and were, on many occasions, held by candlelight, and the music directors were marked by their youth and enthusiasm. When one young music director was unable to be present, he asked his fellow student to

deputise for him and Simon Rattle (now Sir) stepped up to take the baton.

Passion and resourcefulness will keep our societies going now through our own 2020 pandemic. We seem to have outstanding reserves of these attributes over the whole country just now. Have hope, for as the song says – **We will survive.**

Acknowledgement – Information is taken from Hanwell & Ealing Operatic Society, Our First Century – Brian Thorne



Merrie England - 1914



# Amateur theatre has resurged before

NODA North

Like for many societies, the Second World War caused an immense change in plans to Murton AOS in 1939. The original intention had been to produce *Goodnight Vienna* in October of that year. However, with the Austrian overtones of that show and the almost certain prospect of war, the show was cancelled in August, and the society, by request, repeated *The Desert Song* in 1940. The repeat performance helped to raise morale as well as raise money for the war effort. Unsurprisingly, the war left the society depleted and therefore, it was left in abeyance for the following four years. Like the actions of current modern groups, the society was not prepared to sit on their laurels, and in 1944, they were asked to perform a pageant written to celebrate 100 years of the Co-operative Society.



Nina Rose - 1948

The idea was that the group would go on tour, taking in the local villages of Ryhope, Murton, Thornley, Wheatly Hill, Trimdon and Sherburn Hill. Unfortunately, the year being 1944, posed a problem as petrol was currently rationed and transport was clearly a necessity for touring. Therefore, much 'trading' went on and petrol coupons were obtained from many sources, with the 'pick up' cars being situated in various key points in the village - too many cars in one place may well have attracted some unwelcome attention. Despite all the subterfuge, the society toured for a fortnight and managed to get the whole society there and back each night.

With an end to hostilities came a resumption of regular live theatre in Murton and in 1945, *Belle of New York* was successfully performed, which also brought a visitor in the form of the Variety & Music Hall star, Frank E. Franks (who had started his career in the Olympia Theatre thirty-two years previously). Mr Franks is quoted as saying of the society of that show: "*They are the best society I have seen*".

Undeclared during the war years, it is anticipated that amateur theatre will return at the end of the pandemic as strong as it was before.



*Desert Song* - 1937  
Ruby Richardson nee. Gilchrist

## Survival Snippets

NODA North East

Hull Musical Theatre, formerly Hull Amateur Operatic Society, has been active since 1897 (only the name has changed to protect the innocent!!). Two World Wars haven't stopped us functioning!

Did your society stop producing shows during World War 1 and World War 2?

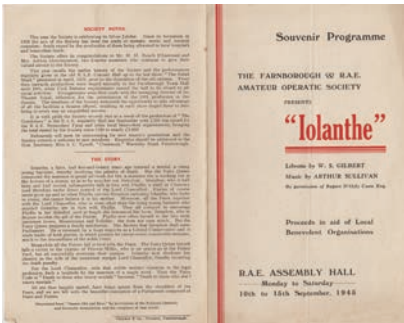
What show did they reopen with?

If you have a story or photos please get in touch - [editor@noda.org.uk](mailto:editor@noda.org.uk)

## The show must go on!

NODA South East

Pictured is a production of *Iolanthe* performed in September 1945, by the society then known as The Farnborough and RAE Operatic Society. Despite the war, productions continued to take place annually despite all the enemy activity over Farnborough. Like many societies that started out as a group associated with a local company, the Royal Aircraft Establishment (RAE) who were the area's largest employer, were keen to sponsor social activities for the benefit of their staff and the local community. Through the years, the RAE has changed its name on a few occasions and subsequently, so have the society. Now known as Cody Musical Theatre Company, in honour of Samuel Franklin Cody, the great showman and aviator who made the first powered flight from British soil from Farnborough in October 1908.



## ACEchorus in lockdown

NODA Scotland



This was to be our special year: the year that ACEchorus came of age. All our plans for our 21st concert were finally in place, venues booked, rehearsal pianists and vocal coach engaged, singers signed up - what could possibly go wrong? Well, like the rest of the country, we quickly found out!

ACEchorus is a mixed voice group with

up to 150 singers, drawing members from across the country and rehearsing separately in Fife and Glasgow. Our repertoire is selected from musical theatre, popular songs and classic standards, all accompanied on stage by a professional orchestra. A mountain of work goes on behind the scenes for any group, and for us, planning for our Gala Concert in November each year, begins

in February. By the end of March, we had the staffing and rehearsal venues booked, but thankfully we had not at that point contracted our orchestra or paid any hire fees to our concert venue. In any event, it was the venue - the SEC Armadillo in Glasgow - that cancelled our booking, so with no financial liabilities to anyone, it worked ok for us. Had the lockdown begun in May or June it would have been a very different outcome, as so much money would have been paid out by then and it may never have been recovered.

What we did lose, of course, was what we all love - the chance to sing together! Getting together with others who have a shared interest is such an important part of human interaction, and like so many similar situations, the one we miss the most.

Will it ever be the same again?

Rona McKenzie, Director, ACEchorus, Glasgow



# Keeping us together during lockdown

NODA Scotland



Derek Calder, prominent Borders Area Musical Director and Director, with experience galore of musicals, pantos and cabarets, has brought great pleasure and much-needed togetherness to a wide range of folk in The Borders, The Central Belt and beyond with his Borders' Big Sing every Monday night. This online sing has been going for 27 weeks now and shows no sign of abating. His method of inviting us to suggest songs then asking us to vote on our favourites, which are then included the following week is a successful format – not to mention the added attraction of wondering which of his cats is going to strut his keyboard this time! For many of us who are missing our rehearsals and the fellowship of our companies, these Monday nights have been a highlight of the lockdown weeks. After a singing warm-up to keep us in good voice, we sing songs that provide a good sing, and that also trigger memories of productions and fun. We can comment as we go, finding again for an hour a companionship in the sharing of a beloved hobby.

Derek tells us how it all came about:

*The Borders' Big Sing was started for my*

*three theatre groups – The Right Angle Theatre Company in Galashiels, Selkirk Musical Theatre Company and Hawick Amateur Operatic Society. However, friends in other areas asked if they could join in, as well as friends from groups I've worked within the past, Falkirk Amateur Operatic Society, Bo'ness Amateur Operatic Society and Innerleithen and District Amateur Operatic Society were also welcome to join. Word of "The Borders' Big Sing" was talked about at work at Galashiels Academy and Senior Management quickly asked if they could add it to the Staff Health and Well-being activities during the lockdown, which of course I said, 'Yes' to. Shortly afterwards, they were back asking if it could be promoted throughout the Scottish Borders and added to the list of Health and Wellbeing activities for employees of Scottish Borders.*

*Our chairman of NODA Scotland encouraged me to promote "The Borders' Big Sing" on the NODA Scotland Facebook page and this brought in numerous participants from societies across Scotland and old friends from the past.*

*TV presenter John Scott (Wardrobe Supervisor for some episodes in the Poirot TV series, as well as numerous Hollywood movies such as Tomb Raider and Four Weddings And A Funeral and numerous James Bond movies, as well as Seven Brides For Seven Brothers in London's West End) had also been doing live streams during the lockdown. At the end of one session, I excused myself early to go do preparations from The Big Sing; that brought about more interest from John and many of his other viewers, with several requests for songs*

*from Seven Brides For Seven Brothers.*

*So, rather than being restricted to the Scottish Borders, I have viewers/ participants around the world, in the UK stretching from Inverness down to London and viewers in Portugal, Greece, Cyprus, USA (Florida & Houston, Texas) and New Zealand.*

*The repertoire for "The Big Sing" comes from shows we all loved. The basis is a setlist, known affectionately as the SOS (Same Old S\*\*\*\*), compiled years ago by the late Jimmy Walker, for late-night singsongs in the bar at the NODA Scotland Conference at the end of October and subsequently expanded greatly for playing during the Saturday evening banquet, where everyone sings as they eat!*

*In 6 months, we have sung 299 different songs, from 125 different shows ranging from G&S through to Hamilton and that number is still increasing. Participants are encouraged to send in suggestions every week, and if I have the music, I'm more than happy to learn them for including them in another Big Sing. We also have a poll after each session where participants can vote for their three favourite songs in that evening's programme, for inclusion in the following week's programme.*

*While we are all missing our rehearsals, I intend to keep The Big Sing going (as long as numbers make it worth my while!). So many have said that our Monday evening singalongs have been something to look forward to each week. Anyone who wishes to join in is more than welcome.*

## Mardling\* the time away - a 'lockdown' summer

NODA East

*\*To Mardle/Mardling - Norfolk speak for gossip or chat. This is something old Sheringham fishermen used to do (and perhaps do still) under the town clock on a Sunday morning.*

*"Oh what a beautiful morning... oh what a beautiful day"...it may not be Sunshine on Leith, but here in Norfolk Me and My girl have been busy every day from 9 to 5. After a good and hearty Breakfast (At Tiffanys), we enjoyed working hard to the Sound of Music and All that Jazz on the radio. Even in Stormy Weather, you'd hear us Singing in the Rain, as we Whistle Down the Wind feeling ever-optimistic that The Sun will come out Tomorrow so we can Paint (y)Our Wagon and the garden fence. Even our dog Tommy learned new tricks; we're thinking about changing his name to Barnum, he's sure to be spectacular at Christmas. Carol, our friend and her neighbour Joseph, were impressed when they saw him from their Room, with a View of our garden.*

*The family keep in touch on Skype, granddaughter Matilda and The Boyfriend, Billy Elliot, have a Wicked sense of humour. She is a real Funny Girl, you could say a*

*Thoroughly Modern Millie, she'll say to my wife Hello Dolly, you can Call Me Madam...cheeky monkey, but, then you could say Anything Goes at Our House. The grandchildren are not Bad Girls, so When The Lights Go On Again and this year fades into Memory, we will take them on a Summer Holiday to the South Pacific... but not without raiding the Rent money, though.*

*So, like a lot of people in early lockdown, we were short of toilet rolls, masks and hand gel, but worse was our shortage of Food Glorious Food. We ate Spamalat and had too many Salad Days, but never went without apples... Cox's Pippin is my favourite. My biggest problem, though, was the length of my Hair, the lack of a cut is a Titanic problem; Hairspray just wouldn't cut it, and yes I did try Grease. My Italian cousin who is the Barber of Seville, (and calls himself Sweeney Todd) shouted "Mamma Mia"...when we met up on Zoom...he cried "A(h)gen(tle)Tina" (he always forgets my name) "your-a hair, it-a looks-a bit-a Tangled".*

*When this panto... er pando is over, it's going to be Some Enchanted Evening!... I'll*

*take My Fair Lady to the White Horse Inn for a meal where The Entertainer will play A Little Night Music with the Fiddler On The Roof, then afterwards we will ride the Carousel and enjoy All the fun of the fair as Merrily, we roll along home.*

*But for now, I'd better get my coat and walk down Avenue Q to 42nd Street for an hour's exercise. I really enjoy a Sunday in the Park with George even though his dog Oliver will chase Cats and run Into the Woods, but at least it gets me out of Our House for exercise...*

*Well, I'd better get the kettle on... Fing's Ain't Wot They Used To Be, but when this Nunsense is over we'll be Footloose and fancy-free, not too much mind, or the wife will be saying Divorce Me Darling... Meanwhile, let's all sing along with social media and look forward to virtual Fame and more musicals! ..all this time on my hands has been some Spring Awakening.... Life is a Pantomime old son! Roll on the Cabaret.*

*Submitted by retired NODA East rep Terry J Rymer District 6*

## Performer Cait returns to Wales, teaching in her own arts studio

NODA Wales & Ireland

Cait Davies Vocal Tuition Studio opened its doors in September 2020. Cait is thrilled to be teaching several local society members from Abergavenny Amateur Operatic and Dramatic Society, Abergavenny Pantomime Company and Brynmawr Musical Theatre Company, of which she was also a member herself.

Cait was proud to see students go on to progress their Performing Arts training this year at Italia Conti, Bird College, READ College, University of West London and the University of South Wales.

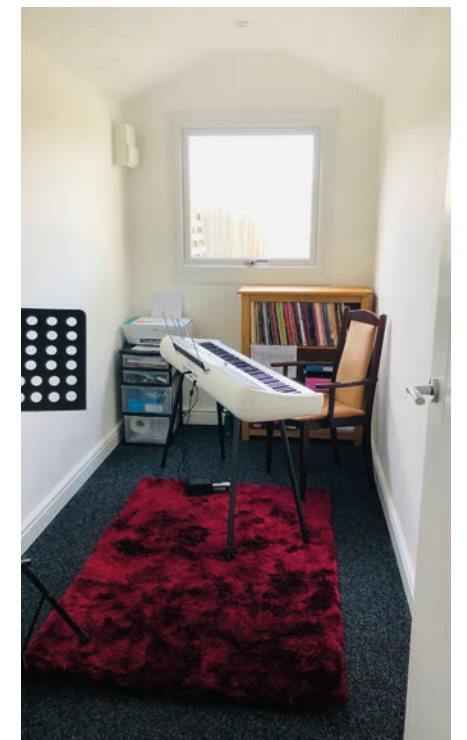
Originally from Abergavenny, Cait trained at the Italia Conti Academy of Theatre Arts graduating with a Level 6 National Diploma in Professional Musical Theatre. After graduating, she enjoyed a successful career as a singer and dancer performing in the West End, throughout the UK and internationally.

After settling down to start a family in 2014, with her husband Rhys, Cait began her teaching career.

Now based in Llanfoist with Rhys and their two beautiful daughters Amelia and Isabel, Cait teaches across South Wales in all aspects of the Performing Arts for Stagecoach Theatre Arts and Coleg Y Cymoedd, as well as her one-to-one tuition, from her purpose-built studio in Llanfoist, South Wales.

Cait would like to thank her local NODA representative Dee McIlroy for her continued support. As a child, Cait was a member of several local societies and Dee always encouraged her to pursue her passion for the performing arts.

After Cait left to begin her training at Italia Conti, Dee continued to follow her career and has been a constant support.



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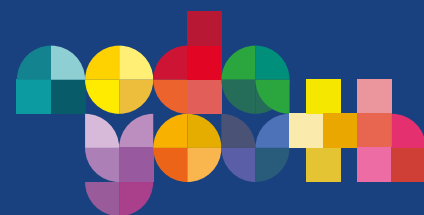
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# A close call with *Dolly!*

## NODA Scotland

It was Monday 16th March 2020, and excited members of Inverness Musical Theatre Company arrived at Eden Court Theatre eager to unleash our week-long run of the Jerry Herman classic musical *Hello, Dolly!* on our loyal Highland audience.

As the cast and crew prepared to take to the stage for the technical rehearsal, a meeting was called on stage. We were informed by the theatre management the local council emergency group were due to meet the next day and it was highly likely the theatre would close.

Having just completed building the set, it was our Stage Manager, George Reynolds, who asked the question ... would we like to forget the tech and just run the show?

Well, why not? We had an orchestra in the pit; costumes were hired; theatre staff were in attendance and we had six months of dedicated rehearsals under our belt; all the components were in place.

Realising the urgency, and with no time to lose, the cast scattered to their changing rooms to get into costume for the opening. The show played to an almost empty auditorium, but with no less commitment than if we had sold out the upper circle. To thunderous applause and support of the handful of non-playing supporters sprinkled amongst the 870 empty seats, we took our curtain call, and the lights faded on *Hello, Dolly!*

It was the most surreal and emotional experience for everyone. Even our longest-serving members had never experienced such events or the feelings stirred in all of us that evening. On the same day, we had arrived at the theatre, we all packed up and the hired costumes were boxed ready to be returned. The stage set, so carefully and enthusiastically set up earlier in the day, was struck and we all went home wondering ... would our club survive such a financial shock?

Ten days earlier our NODA insurance renewal had been due, and with everything going on around the world, we decided to check with NODA whether our insurance would cover us if our show was called off because of the COVID-19



pandemic. With confirmation, it would be (and despite the hefty increase in our premium) we took the decision to increase our cover from £10K to £55K. Despite our earlier assurances, it was with a little anxiety we submitted our claim for the costs associated with our abandoned show. We were delighted to get the news shortly afterwards that our claim would be met by the NODA insurance policy and we all breathed a huge sigh of relief.

Despite the traumas and shocks of events back in March, we now find ourselves in a strong financial position going forward. Although we all agreed, our loyal audience may have to wait a few years before we

tackle *Hello, Dolly!* again. Instead, we were delighted to announce recently to our supporters our next show will be *Joseph & The Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*. This production is particularly special, not only because of the events of the last six months, but because our Honorary President is Sir Tim Rice.

How lucky we all are to be part of the NODA family and even if we have to wait for Joseph until 2022, we are all ready to put on our Sunday clothes once again ... oops sorry, wrong show!

Morven Reid, Chair, Inverness Musical Theatre Company

## Looking ahead in Scarborough

### NODA North East

Among the many hard realities the COVID-19 crisis has forced us to accept are “how we’ve always done it isn’t viable at the moment”, “small is beautiful” and “any business model that can’t adapt, be ingenious or flexible, will have to suspend everything indefinitely in hopes that things will improve, or go under”.

So, the challenge is... how to adapt, downscale, continue, do it differently. It’s the new COVID Darwinism. If you can’t adapt, you’re suspended or finished. Brutal.

Here in Scarborough, we have three theatrical models. The Council-owned Scarborough Spa complex’s management is outsourced to the financially troubled Sheffield City Trust, which has mothballed its venues, laid off most of its staff and talks of reopening next Spring. We’re not holding our breath: there’s no money to be made by this commercial management, trying to work under COVID.

The dynamic Stephen Joseph Theatre has rallied with impressive determination and ingenuity, moved the popular, award-winning Eat Me Café into its public areas for dining, adapted its main house programme and studio theatre/cinema for

COVID-compliant, safe film showings, live streamings, small-cast shows and other events, and is giving a strong lead how to survive in difficult times.

On the amateur and community front, our equally dynamic and resilient YMCA Theatre & Leisure Centre has downsized, scaled-back, adapted and cautiously reopened its facilities within Covid-compliant regulations. On 2nd October, the 290 seat theatre presented its first show, to an invited, masked and distanced audience of 75, for a terrific concert of West End hits by five talented local singers. It was a wonderfully inspiring occasion and YMCA also announced auditions for its seasonal youth Christmas show and pantomime. With a Covid-compliant capacity of only 129, reliant on amateur performers and volunteer staff, YMCA Theatre has the will and capability to struggle through and a powerful body of local support behind it.

My organisation, UK Foundation For Dance, is a registered charity and company limited by guarantee, without the usual amateur society’s membership and committee structure; so we’re 100% free to adapt and rise to the restrictive circumstances. Since relocating from

London to Scarborough in 2008, we’ve mostly staged amateur musicals, and, like everyone else, we were forced to defer our 2020 production and all activities... but we’ve rallied.

UKFD has rescheduled the 2020 production of *Mr Cinders* to May 2021. We’re revisiting how we can rehearse it initially under the Six Person Rule and how we might stage it within Covid-compliant restrictions: quite a challenge!

We are also in discussion with our regular venue, YMCA Theatre and a range of other amateur groups and societies, to try and programme a series of small-cast plays, musical concerts, talks or events in Spring 2021. Our idea is to present, in collaboration with the venue and fellow groups, a range of shows that will attract an audience who feel safe to attend.

The key factor, of course, is that we are amateurs, and can maybe make economic sense of reduced seating capacity, without having to pay performers. We trust that with ingenuity and a flexible approach, we can keep the flag flying.

Tim Tubbs, UK Foundation For Dance, Scarborough

## Keeping youth activities fresh during lockdown

### NODA South West

Chippenham’s Youth Section, ‘The CLOGETTES’ have some great ideas on surviving lockdown and keeping rehearsals new and exciting!

The CLOGETTES, the youth section of CLOGS Musical Theatre in Chippenham, Wiltshire have kept busy throughout the lockdown, forming their own *Isolation Survival Group* to get them all through. Keeping activities varied, fun and fresh has been vital and achieved through completing regular challenges with different themes each week. Such themes have included villains, favourite things, songs from Andrew Lloyd Webber productions, dance and dreams. The group even completed a mock audition, casting for a production of *Charlie and The Chocolate Factory*, where the children had to send in self recordings. This has

given all of the children the chance to show off a variety of their skills, including video editing and playing instruments, as well as more traditional performance. Against all of this, the Clogettes Creative team has offered constructive and helpful comments, to allow everyone to keep improving and developing.

Said Creative Director Debi Weaver - “It was lovely to feel connected to the children whilst in lockdown and I learnt so much more about their talents and skills. It was also so great to see the quieter, shy children come out of their shells and perform so well”.

Feedback from the children has included:

Imogen: “I loved all the challenges and really looked forward to the new challenges being set. Some of them pushed me out of my

comfort zone, but I still wanted to give them a go.”

Sam & Connie: “They stopped us from getting bored! We enjoyed watching our friend’s performances, especially the humorous ones. We learnt more about our friend’s interests and their talents.”

Curtis: “I had a lot of fun with the challenges and getting to choose my own ideas on how I would present it in the videos. I especially liked finding out that some of the quieter children had some hidden skills and were being brave and showing the group what they could do. I actually liked receiving the positive and constructive comments from the Clogettes team.”

Well done, CLOGETTES and may your great work continue!



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