

Tnoda TODAY

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Be inspired by amateur theatre

‘Rubber Chicken Theatre’ Breaks Guinness World Record!

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Theatre'
NODA Scotland



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'Rubber Chicken Theatre' Breaks World Record!

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Welcome



It is my pleasure to welcome you to this edition of NODA Today which contains a wealth of positive stories from our member groups across the entire UK. There is real excitement in the air reading about the many societies and groups returning to the stage doing what we all love - performing and entertaining audiences.

We are approaching Her Majesty the Queen's Platinum Jubilee, and I am sure that NODA member groups across the UK will be keen to celebrate this milestone. It makes us think about our own celebrations in 2024 - 125 years of NODA - for which exciting plans are being developed, so watch this space.

Vibrancy can be seen in a busy youth section as they are the future of not only our amazing hobby, but the theatre industry as a whole. Theatrical groups have been closed for such a long time, therefore, now is the moment to grasp every opportunity to help ensure we are able to nurture the talent of future generations.

We are very much looking forward to welcoming you at our National Gala and AGM, which is taking place in Plymouth in October 2022. Details of how to book can be found on page 27. We hope to see you there. For our NODA Theatre Summer School, places are still available - please visit our website for full details.

Finally, I would like to wish you all the best for your upcoming productions. After such a long time away from the stage, you all deserve full houses for the best hobby in the world.

Ian G. Cox - NODA Chairman of Trustees

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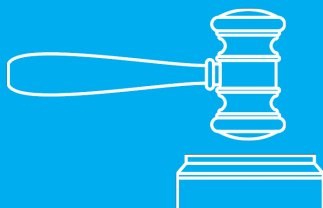
View your show reports online.

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

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Need Information?

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The fount of information for amateur theatre

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Councillors' Chat

A quick note from your regional councillor



Tessa Davies - East Regional Councillor

The NODA East region is alive and kicking its way into 2022! We have significant numbers of societies, in the region, rehearsing or performing over the next few months and we are looking forward to a bumper season.

We are also very pleased to see an increase in societies re-joining NODA for the new subscription year. It's a really good time, as we have so much planned for the next 12 months!



Nigel Hancocks - East Midlands Regional Councillor

We have, with regret, found out that Alex Wood, our Website and Magazine Editor intends to retire at our AGM. Therefore we, will be looking for someone to take on the role/s. We thank Alex for all of his efforts for many years in these roles whilst also acting as an assistant regional representative too. We are currently looking for volunteer assistant regional representatives in most areas but particularly in Lincoln Town and the northern area of Lincolnshire. Please email me for more information. It is great that the number of productions are increasing in our area and I have visited several groups who are vigorously rehearsing their next productions.



Pam Armstrong - London Regional Councillor

"Beginners to Stage" has been the call in the London Region as it continued to be full steam ahead, delighting audiences who have flocked back eager for wonderful entertainment. It has been such a joy to attend many performances, receive such a warm welcome and to see at first hand the outstanding talent in the region. Societies really are to be congratulated – with the advent of yet another variant in December it has been a fine balancing act for groups as to whether to go ahead with a show – your courage and innovative solutions in coping with the challenges has paid off and your audiences have loved you. Theatre is back.



Peter Oliver - North Regional Councillor

As the world is restarting, it has been delightful to see, in NODA North, that societies and performing groups have started planning to return to what they love best. As a consequence, I have had the opportunity to visit many societies and groups as they take to the stage and perform some interesting and polished performances amidst the challenges. It was with great sadness that we had to cancel our AGM and Gala weekend at Scotch Corner, in favour of a virtual event, but the committee and I are looking forward to seeing everyone at our performance awards later this year at Gosforth.



Leslie Smith - North East Regional Councillor

Well here we are again and as you know our Gala Weekend 2022 is going ahead. All the plans are now in place and I hope to see you all at what will be an excellent event. By the time you read this we will have held our Gala Weekend and I hope you all had an enjoyable time. I am really pleased the majority of you will now have been able to get back on to the stage and performing. Please remember I love to come and see your productions and by inviting me, your councillor, you will be considered for The Councillor's Award, both for your adult society and any youth productions.

Andy McNicholas - North West Regional Councillor

It's fantastic to be able to say that we can finally get together for the NW AGM and Awards Gala at The Kimpton Clocktower Hotel in Manchester on Saturday 30th April and Sunday 1st May – I hope to see many of you there celebrating the night away!

I'm delighted to see my diary filled with lots of show invites, but don't forget I'm just as happy to attend a committee meeting or a rehearsal to have a chat and see how we can be of more help to our members.



Stuart McCue-Dick - Scotland Regional Councillor

After 616 days, Robbie and I were delighted to attend our first show visit in November 2021. Since then, there has been a marked increase in clubs being able to return to the stage with an exciting range of productions.

I have continued to engage with the Scottish Government, to ensure amateur theatre begins to receive the recognition it deserves as a major part of the cultural life of Scotland engaging with audiences of over 250,000 annually and contributing over £20m to the Scottish economy.



Kay Rowan - South East Regional Councillor

Over the past few months, it has been wonderful to witness the rebirth of amateur theatre in our region. Whilst several societies have maintained a presence and some activity via various social media, others may not have been so fortunate and so their emergence is even more exciting. Our societies have truly lived up to the phrase "the show must go on" and those I have seen so far are putting on shows with even more polish, style, enthusiasm and panache than previously. I wish you all well in your endeavours and long may NODA "bloom and grow" in the South East.



Graham Liverton - South West Regional Councillor

Things are brightening up in the South West region I am glad to say! Theatres are opening and, in the amateur world, our NODA family cannot wait to get back on stage. I have attended a few already and I am very glad to say I am being invited to shows right across the region!

Please invite your rep for reviews or advice. We are here to help, and we are judging for the 2022 awards! So what are you waiting for? Stay well, enjoy your productions, break a leg as they say and enjoy this bright new year!



Sharon Davies - Wales & Ireland Regional Councillor

At last, we appear to be getting back to some sort of normality. I have been regional councillor for 18 months and I have finally seen my first production, and what a treat it was to be back! Thank you all for the invitations I have received. I am looking forward to seeing shows from all around the region.

The amateur theatre is alive and thriving, as we knew it would; there is no stopping you. Onwards and upwards!



Andy Brown - West Midlands Regional Councillor

Since the previous edition of NODA Today, the increase in shows across the West Midlands has been fantastic. It has been such a delight to attend so many brilliant shows. I have equally been pleased to read the reports compiled by representatives across the region and hope to meet more societies in the future.

In the meantime, I look forward to our Regional AGM and conference on the 3rd July 2022.



On behalf of NODA members
throughout the United Kingdom, we
would like to congratulate,
Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II,
on her Platinum Jubilee.

Her dedication and service is an
inspiration to all.

Celebrating 70 years

As Her Majesty the Queen celebrates her platinum jubilee, we look round the UK at individuals and societies also celebrating 70 years.

A potted history of the early days

NODA West Midlands

At the beginning of 1951, an item appeared, in the Burton Daily Mail, inviting interested people to a meeting to look into the possibility of forming a new operatic society.

Enough people came forward to enable the Burton-on-Trent and District Operatic Society to be formed. Margaret Sheardown, her future husband, Geoff Wendon, and a small committee then had the task of implementing the interest shown into positive action.

The Gondoliers was the first show the committee decided to produce. This was performed in February 1952. Auditions were held and the principal parts cast. Rather uniquely, two people shared most of the secondary parts over the week.

The show was well received with full houses most of the week. In November 1952, the society continued with a second Gilbert and Sullivan Operetta, *The Mikado*. By now the society had the feel for who should take the principal parts so there was no more sharing of roles. *Patience* was produced in October 1953, and in May 1954, *HMS Pinafore*.

In 1972, we rented premises in Ferry Street, which we later purchased. The society moved venues a few times before finally settling at Horninglow Secondary School for a repeat



The Gondoliers - February 1952



Shrek The Musical - February 2022

production of the *Gondoliers*. The society still uses this venue to this day although it is now known as de Ferrers Academy.

We received a letter from the Queen when we celebrated 60 years in 2012.

The society decided to change its name in 2014, as it was felt that as we did not sing opera but produced more musicals. We became known as The

Burton Musical Theatre Company. We go from strength to strength and have recently won the NODA Award for the Best Musical in Area 3 for *Sister Act* in 2018, and joint winners for the same award for *Legally Blonde* in 2019. We have an excellent stage crew who build our sets and a technical team to support our productions. Our latest production, *Shrek The Musical*, was a sell-out.

The Queen of WMCS

NODA South East



Ruth Roberts and son Andrew

When NODA asked if we could think about writing something to celebrate their Diamond Jubilee year our President, Ruth Roberts, realised that it was also 70 years since she first set foot on the Worthing Musical Comedy Stage. We sent our board member, Amy Hart, to meet with Ruth and asked her to talk about her history with the society and musical theatre.

As I sit in the lounge of WMCS, President, Ruth Roberts is looking at the walls adorned with family photographs. It's amazing to think that am dram started it all. Ruth, 88, met her husband Roy when she was invited to join WMCS for their 1952 production of *Sunny* and celebrates her own Diamond Jubilee this year (I've always called her our Queen!) "I was terribly shy at the time," she recalls, "and I was invited to do two solos in the show. I didn't want to do it, but I did, which started a 70 year journey with the society."

Since Ruth joined WMCS at the age of 18, things have changed a lot. "Rehearsals were every Monday and Friday and you never missed one, whether you were needed or not. Even when the local press, hospital and mayor's ball were on, you went to rehearsals, sped home, got changed and arrived late! It was a

real hobby, everyone was there because they loved both performing and also the social side of things."

WMCS has often been referred to as a family, back in the early days this was even more correct! "It really was one big family made of lots of local families. So many couples met at the society and went on to have children who would then appear in shows." This is how it has been for the formidable Roberts family with both Ruth and Roy playing a multitude of parts both opposite each other (beginning with Mrs Molloy and Cornelius Hackle in *Hello Dolly*) as well as serving on the board. Roy was chairman and Ruth was wardrobe mistress for a number of years before they both became president. Later their children, Andrew and Lisa, plus daughter-in-law Tandy, became active members of the society playing lead roles, serving on the committee, being chairman and also choreographing and directing. All 5 grandchildren have also been involved in the society!

The biggest contribution to the society the family have made was probably Roy, along with late society stalwart Andrew Taylor, securing us our very own premises. "We used to rehearse all over the place, basically wherever would have us: church halls, leisure centres,

anywhere, including in a function room nearby until we happened to book 42nd Street around the time they installed a new floor and they said we couldn't tap on it! Roy started looking for premises shortly after that. When we secured "2a The Drive" as our new home, we were working towards our production of Barnum so, as the song goes, members of the public sponsored individual bricks "one brick at a time" so we could get the place finished!"

Some of the "Kodak moments" of the last 70 years include the BBC coming to film a documentary about the society's production of *Charlie Girl*. "We were all quite worried because we wouldn't have any control over the edit, but the programme was brilliant and was a fantastic experience: dancing the original Agnes De Mille choreography when the society performed *Oklahoma* for the first time. Doing two shows at 'The Plaza' included 1967's record breaking production of *Camelot* being seen by 10,050 people and taking a whopping, wait for it, £3,800!! "The only downside," says Ruth, "was that the Plaza had no box office, so we had to man that ourselves as well as perform!"

With such a well equipped team now, self sufficiency is a thing of the past but Ruth remembers it well. "We altered our own costumes, did our own make-up. We would cycle down to the theatre with our costumes over the handlebars as very few people had cars! Back then everyone got stuck in and helped. At one stage, the society was running low on funds so every member was given £1 to make money with. People held coffee mornings, jumble sales and the society lived to see another day!"

Amateur theatre has changed a lot over the last 70 years, although our standards are much higher now and we have a variety of different

production teams "We used to have the same director, although he was called a producer, and choreographer for many, many years, so you could predict who would probably be cast each time. Some of the old customs have changed, whether or not we got a principal role, we would all do every show no matter how much chorus work there was available because we loved it! Not many people went off to university in those days so we never lost people at 18. Most of our reviews said there were too many people on stage!"

When there were very limited television options, local theatre was the hottest ticket in town. Ruth recalls: "Tickets were so sought after, each member was limited to 4 tickets for the closing night of the run. When public booking opened, people would queue down the stairs at the pier to get the best seats. Competition was a big factor back then though. Currently Worthing has two active societies. There used to be a whopping 7 groups all producing two productions a year. "it was sad because it split the talent, split the audiences and everything was more competitive. More thought had to go in to show selection and it was all very top secret so someone else didn't steal your idea!"

Ruth sums up the changes in her 70 years as, "years ago, aside from the performing side, WMCS really was a social event, whereas now it has to be run like a business with such large sums of money involved [our current budgets average at 70k], plus the fact there are so many other things for people to take part in!" We are so lucky to have Ruth as she really is The Queen of WMCS!

As a postscript it appears that things go round in full circles. The dance teacher who trained Ruth leading to her first appearance with WMCS was Wendy Merson whose daughter, Mandy Chapman is now directing and choreographing their latest production of *Guys and Dolls*.

Elsbeth Bunker, Chair. WMCS.

The Queen's visit to Llandudno

NODA Wales and Ireland



Members of Llandudno Youth Music Theatre were excited to learn that they had been chosen to perform for the Queen on her visit to North Wales on 27th April 2010. We were representing voluntary groups in the area.

On the day, Venue Cymru was packed with important looking people in all their finery. Outside the promenade was swarming with school children hoping to get a glimpse of the Queen as she arrived.

Although various musical groups were performing at the event we were the only group lucky enough to actually perform for the Queen and Prince Philip, who were sitting just yards in front of us! We sang "With a Little help from my Friends" by 'The Beatles', "We are the Champions" from *We Will Rock You* and "Have Another Cup of Tea" from our last show *The Likes of Us*

Afterwards, both the Queen and Prince Philip came up onto the stage to thank us and spoke to a few members of the group. It all felt a bit surreal! The Queen then unveiled a plaque to commemorate her visit to Venue Cymru. We then sang both the Welsh and English national anthems.

None of us ever imagined we would sing these to the Queen herself! We stood and watched her leave the arena – it didn't really sink in until afterwards! This was an occasion and experience that we would remember for the rest of our lives. (the above article was written by Annette Evans – a member of Llandudno Youth Music Theatre in 2010)

Other royal events:

Our musical director Philip Jones was introduced to Prince Charles on his visit to Venue Cymru (then known as the North Wales Theatre) in 1994, after a Royal Gala to officially open the newly built venue.

Members of Llandudno Youth Music Theatre were delighted to be involved in the visit by HRH Duke of Essex and the Countess of Wessex at Venue Cymru on 19 July 2007. The royal couple spoke to all the members of the group having thoroughly enjoyed their performance of a song from *Seussical*.

East Berkshire Operatic Society - a short history

NODA London



The Sorcerer - 1958

Who would have believed that, 70 years ago, the result of a meeting calling for people interested in forming a new amateur operatic society in Bracknell would still be going strong today?

The society was formed in 1952, by a group of local enthusiasts, who felt that the Bracknell area lacked the facility of an amateur musical society to perform light operettas. Its first production, *HMS Pinafore*, was presented at the Victoria Hall in 1953. Further Gilbert and Sullivan operettas were performed annually in local venues.

During a nomadic existence of some twenty years, the society campaigned vigorously for a professional venue, and 1984 heralded the opening of the Wilde Theatre in Bracknell. EBOS was the first amateur society to perform there, with a production of *Oklahoma*.

Originally, all the performances were Gilbert and Sullivan operettas, but in the 1960s and 1970s the society started to diversify and a pattern began to emerge of staging two shows a year – one a G&S or operetta style and the other a more modern musical genre.

In 1992, in an exciting development

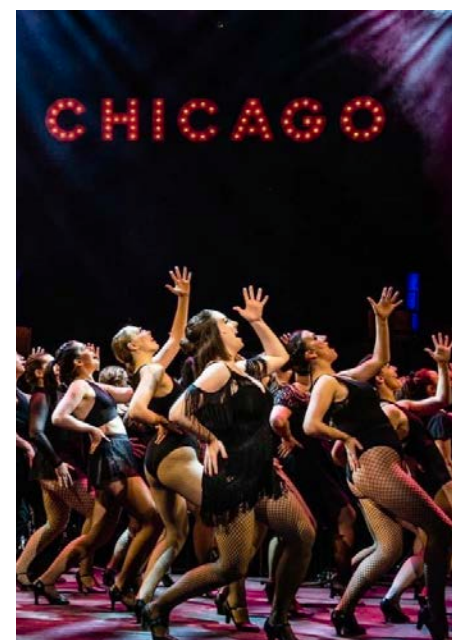
to celebrate its 40th Anniversary, the society commissioned a musical version of *Cyrano*. This lush and dramatic musical was composed by Grant McLachlan, who is now a very successful composer in his native South Africa; with book and lyrics by Mike Snelgrove, a published playwright and Clare Bevan, a well-known local poet.

Another milestone occurred in 2003, when *Yeomen of the Guard* was performed in the round, thus making use of the adaptability of the Wilde Theatre stage. The following year, EBOS adapted *Moll Flanders*, originally for 5 players, for a cast of 36 and orchestration for a chamber orchestra. During rehearsals for *Spend, Spend, Spend* in 2006, the society welcomed a visit from Viv Nicholson, the original Pools winner. EBOS successfully celebrated its 50th production at the Wilde Theatre in 2008, with *Copacabana*.

At the heart of EBOS is its Clubhouse at Pinewood Leisure Centre in the Parish of Wokingham Without. The building is one of a number in a complex, originally constructed during the Second World War as a military hospital, and later as an isolation hospital, until its closure

in 1966. The local authority took over the responsibility of all the buildings and in 1980, offered them to local organisations on a rental basis. Prior to EBOS moving in, the building was used as an indoor football pitch.

After many years of hard work, grants and fundraising by members, the clubhouse now boasts a well-equipped scenery workshop, a substantial wardrobe, a theatre with a moveable raked auditorium seating seventy five, and a lighting and sound box. A theatre licence was granted in 2003,



Chicago - Savannah Photographic

with a grand opening in the presence of the London Regional Councillor and the first production was *Lettice and Lovage*. Since then, three or four productions are staged at Pinewood every year, ranging from Alan Ayckbourn comedies, pantos, music hall and cabarets to dramas such as *Steel Magnolias*.

The clubhouse at Pinewood is well used by members for rehearsals, social events and workshops. Additionally, it has been used for summer schools for children who learn performing and theatre skills and then take part in shows such as *The Wizard of Oz* and *Oliver!* It is also available for hire and has many regular visitors including Brownies and theatre schools. EBOS always welcomes new members, both as performers and technical crew.

EBOS has always been active in the local community, performing in pantomimes and music halls to raise funds for many charities. The annual carol singing around the pubs and restaurants of Wokingham has always been a lucrative event, raising up to £1250 for Berkshire Air Ambulance and Thames Hospicecare.

Of course, the last two years have been as difficult for EBOS as for everyone else. Our Pinewood production of *The Oldest Profession* was stopped in its tracks just before the dress rehearsal and rehearsals for *Chicago*, the Wilde Theatre production, ground to a halt. However, as we emerged from the pandemic, EBOS was quick to get the ball rolling again with a lively compilation of the shows that should have taken place over the previous two years, *Back to the 5, 6, 7, 8*. Already we have staged a Christmas show and rehearsals are well underway for *Curtain Up* at Pinewood and *The Boyfriend* at the Wilde.

The famous motto is true – The show must go on!

Merrie England in Tunbridge Wells

NODA South East



Merrie England - 1950

Edward German and Basil Hood's 1902 comic opera *Merrie England*, concerns love and rivalries at the court of Queen Elizabeth I and ran at the Savoy Theatre in London for nearly 200 performances that year. It became popular in Britain and was often performed by amateur groups in the decades following its premiere. In 1953, the year of Queen Elizabeth II's coronation, over five hundred amateur societies staged the piece. Tunbridge Wells Operatic and Dramatic Society, one of the oldest societies in the country, was not one of them. Their decision was not through lack of patriotism, though. Like many things in theatre, it was merely down to timing.

The society had staged the show in May 1950, and the following year they were invited by the Tunbridge Wells Publicity and Entertainments Committee to contribute to the nationwide Festival Of Britain. TWODS were keen to accept this invitation but were already committed to performing J. M. Barrie's play *Quality Street* in February, Gilbert & Sullivan's *Iolanthe* in April and the hit musical *Bless The Bride* in November. It was decided that the society could meet this extra commitment if they staged a revival of a recent show and *Merrie England*, using largely the same cast as the previous year, was chosen. Just eight weeks after *Iolanthe* closed at The Opera House, *Merrie England* was performed for a second time at the



Merrie England - 1953

Assembly Hall. Of course, at the time nobody realised that this show about Queen Elizabeth I would be performed just eight months before the country saw Elizabeth II ascend to the throne.

Whilst the society missed the party in 1952 and 1953, they finally made amends in 1977, when *Merrie England* was staged for a third time to celebrate Her Majesty's Silver Jubilee. No revival is planned for this year's landmark achievement, in fact it's difficult to imagine a more contrasting show than June's *Shrek: The Musical*. Perhaps there will be added resonance in November, though, when *Me & My Girl* proclaims *Noblesse Oblige*!

Queen of the Sunderland stage

NODA North



If you ask Barbara Simpson to name her favourite show, she has been a part of, she will proudly say Sigmund Romberg's operetta, Sunderland Theatre Company's 1960 production of *New Moon*. The show itself spawned 2 films, and is fondly known for the song, 'Softly as in a Morning Sunrise', a number that Barbara still loves to sing to this day.

Rewind 8 years from that 1960 production, and you will land in February 1952. The 7th February to be precise, the day after King George VI passed away, the day 13-year-old Barbara Simpson joined Sunderland Amateur Operatic Society alongside her mother. As a student of Monkwearmouth Grammar School, it would be another 3 years until Barbara was allowed to tread the boards with her new society, but when she got the chance, she proudly recalls the

production of *King's Rhapsody* in 1955, as her first show.

Fast-forward to 2022, and February 7th marked Barbara's 70-year anniversary of her joining Sunderland Amateur Operatics, now known as Sunderland Theatre Company (STCo). Though it isn't just STCo with whom Barbara has spent her many performing years. Barbara has had the honour of gracing the stage with her friends at Fatfield, Walkerville and Thompson Park over the years, whilst also being the very proud President (for many years co-President with her late husband Alan), of the Rainbow Youth Theatre at Fatfield.

Barbara has benefitted from an illustrious performing history in amateur theatre, with one of her best memories being her leading role in *Oklahoma* with Sunderland in 1969.

However, it is her support of groups that she seems to look back on most fondly when you speak to her. You can look around any of those previously mentioned groups, and see Barbara's impact and legacy, both on them as groups, and the people who have been lucky enough to perform with her and call her a friend.

There are very few people that get to celebrate a 50-year membership anniversary at an amateur theatre group, let alone their 70th year, so how apt it was that Barbara's late husband Alan received his 50 year membership with Sunderland just a few years before his passing. Barbara speaks so fondly and lovingly of their time together in the group; Barbara as assistant treasurer for around 30 years, and Alan as stage manager for a similar length of time. At STCo, there is an Alan & Barbara Simpson Award for their in-house annual awards evenings, which goes to show the incredible impact and legacy of both 70-year veteran Barbara, and her wonderful husband Alan, and what they mean to amateur theatre in the area.

Away from the stage, Barbara has not only attended Buckingham Palace garden parties with the Queen once, but on two separate occasions in the past decade. Though perhaps it's safe to say, for those who know her, it is in fact Barbara Simpson, as she celebrates 70 years in amateur theatre, who is the Queen of the stage to us all! From all at Sunderland Theatre Company, we truly wish Barbara enormous congratulations on this incredible achievement!

For more information on NODA Long Service Awards, turn to page 33

Loyalty, dedication and longevity

NODA North



In today's world the words loyalty, dedication, longevity are in short supply in many spheres. To connect them together and apply them to a hobby is indeed a task.

Joan Brown became a member of Murton AOS on the 8th of May 1952, joining with her late husband Alan, and

is still an active member. Over the years, she has appeared in many shows, pantomimes reviews and concerts all in the name of the Murton Theatre Group. Her favourite production is *My Fair Lady* which she has performed on several occasions, loving the musical score and production. Joan over the years has only missed two productions due to giving birth to her two sons, but quickly returned to join the friends that she has made over the years. She has played an active part of and served on the management committee spending many years in the post of treasurer. She has been involved with the youth section and has nurtured and mentored the youth members, teaching them the skills to tread the boards, to enable

them to entertain their audiences and develop lifelong skills which they have developed throughout their time with the group. Over the years, Joan has been part of the chorus. In her early days she was an active part of the dancing group, being very nimble on her toes, and a great tap dancer. Joan wears her NODA long service awards with pride and is a great inspiration to all who know her.

Murton Theatre Group are very proud to say that in the year that Her Majesty the Queen celebrates 70 years on the throne, and loyal service to her country, we have a member who is celebrating 70 years loyal service to our group.

How's that for service!

NODA West Midlands



As we look to celebrate Her Majesty's Platinum Jubilee this year, NODA honours an incredible seven decades of selfless service from Diana Miller. Last year, Diana achieved the amazing milestone of 70 (yes, 70) years' service to amateur theatre. Although lockdowns prevented doing so at the time, Regional Representative – West Midlands, District 10, Bruce Wyatt, plans to present Diana's incredible 70-year NODA Long Service Award shortly. In the meantime, we caught up with Diana's lifetime of service: "My Dad was a singer," Diana explained "and I started my own singing lessons at



16. When I joined Sunderland Operatic Society in 1948, I got a small part in my very first production; *Showboat*. Years later I played Julie in the same show which – with Julie being a character of mixed heritage – led to me having to dye my auburn hair black. We performed at the large Empire Theatre with a professional orchestra and only footlight mics!

On later moving to Stamford in Lincolnshire, I joined its Operatic Society, now called Stamford Amateur Musical Society (SAMS), and in my first show there I got the part of Anna in *The King & I*. I went on to play principal and

chorus parts in SAMS until 1989, as well as committee roles including minute secretary, patrons' secretary, assistant business manager and honorary vice president. A particular highlight of my days with SAMS came when, as a 50-year long service award holder, I was invited to represent SAMS at the NODA Centenary in London.

A move to Worcestershire in 2017, saw me join Pershore Operatic & Dramatic Society, where I am happy to be both a member and patron."

Diana is pictured with husband Alan; familiar at our PODS' rehearsals where the pair's lifetime of service continues as they take turns at providing rehearsal refreshments. Diana is also pictured in 1972, as Anna, and with her leading man during *Shall we Dance?*

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Do you just belong?

NODA South East

In 2014, when Bert Lumsden was NODA President, he attended the South East Region Conference at Eastbourne and during his speech he read this verse he had composed, which is just as pertinent today as it was then:

Do You Just Belong?

Are you an active member – the kind who would be missed?
Or are you just content that your name is on the list?
Do you attend the functions and mingle with the crowd?
Or do you stay at home and grumble long and loud?
Do you take an active part to help the society along?
Or are you satisfied to be the kind that just belong?
Do you ever come along or information seek?
Or leave the work to just a few and talk about The Clique?
There's quite a programme scheduled that means success is done
And it can be accomplished with help from EVERYONE!
So why not come along and help with hand and heart:
Don't be 'just a member', but take an active part...
Think it over, Members – are you right or wrong?
Are you an "Active Member" or do you "Just Belong"?

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Presidential perambulations

Now six months into my presidency, it seems that after a subdued start, due to the pandemic, visits are coming thick and fast. It was ironic that after a global pandemic, my very first visit was to Leeds to see LIDOS perform *Plague* – contrary to the title, this was an upbeat and humorous production and a great start. Early into my tenure I also had the privilege of visiting Grassington Players for the amateur premiere of *Calendar Girls the Musical* and the opportunity to have a chat with some of the original ‘girls’ (The WI of Rylstone being only 5 miles away).

As theatre takes its tentative steps back after an absence, it is especially gratifying to be able to celebrate societies centenaries and present certificates to them. So far, I have celebrated with Saffron Walden MTC, Chelmsford AODS and Hessle TC (with others in the pipeline such as Leamington and Warwick MS). There have been personal achievements also and, just recently, I’ve presented a 70-year pin to a man, Derek Sparey, who inspired me to go into drama after seeing his exploits in plays.

With regards to plays, I’m the first to admit I love musicals, but drama is my first love, and it has been wonderful to see, up to now, ten plays out of the 60 productions I’ve seen at the time of writing – I’ve also seen 9 concerts, 6 pantos, performed 5 pre-covid award presentations (and attended one AGM down in Sidmouth).

It was sad that I could only attend my ‘local’ NODA conference by Zoom due to logistics – I’ll make up for it hopefully at the performance awards in September...

I am looking forward to visiting other parts of the country as I continue my presidency and, indeed, by the time this hits your doorstep, I should have been up in Shetland to see Islesburgh Drama perform in *Calendar Girls* the play. Keep the invites coming in and hopefully I can get to see you soon.

Gordon Richardson
NODA National President



Walney MTC - *Kinky Boots*. With the angels!



Presentation of 70 year pin to Derek Sparey



LIDOS - Plague



2k - Blackadder



Angles Theatre - Shrek



Grassington Players - Calendar Girls Musical première - original Miss January



Grassington Players - Calendar Girls Musical première - original Miss September

Did you know you can invite the NODA National President to your next production?
Email Gordon Richardson - gordon.richardson@noda.org.uk

Rain stops play in Harrogate

NODA North East



Almost three years after Professor Higgins had his slippers thrown to him at the end of *My Fair Lady*, HOPS Musical Theatre Company finally took to the stage of Harrogate Theatre with their long-awaited production of *Kinky Boots*; preparations for which had been taking place in Harrogate for most of that interim period. Even then, there had been a late concern as several positive COVID-19 tests meant they added a “fire break” into the last week of rehearsals, ensuring the cast and crew were free of the virus. Thankfully, opening night arrived without further worries and was followed by a number of highly successful performances, each ending with the near sell-out audience on its feet.

All went well until cast and crew arrived for the Saturday matinee, only to find a rather damp Harrogate Theatre as

the roof, which had been under repair for eight months, was leaking on to stage right. HOPs quickly moved in to “war mode”. Some musical numbers and entrances were quickly changed, somebody was despatched to a nearby store to purchase £200 of towels and mopping up operations allowed the matinee to proceed. Sadly, the weather deteriorated later in the day and there was a new leak, this time stage left and it had gone into the electrics. With audience seated and cast already on stage, the evening performance had to be cancelled, to the disappointment of all concerned. 24 wigs, 278 costumes and 100 pairs of shoes/boots, not to mention some soggy towels were collected, but only after the cast sang the finale in semi darkness, for which the audience were so grateful, showing their appreciation with yet another full standing ovation.

Within a few days, however, the decision had been taken to repeat the show in June; perhaps the first time an amateur company will have performed the same show within little more than four months. A brave decision, but with a full house almost all week, those who could not even get a seat still keen to see it and some of those from earlier promising to come again, it deserves to be proven correct. Richard Lill, HOP’s Chair said: “*I am so immensely proud of the entire cast and crew. Yes, for how they coped with the Saturday, but also for the five outstanding performances we achieved. We are going to bring back the production bigger & better with all the original cast to Harrogate Theatre 22-25 June 2022*”.

Terry Harrison
NE District 1 Representative

John Weldon - How amateur theatre shaped my career

NODA Wales & Ireland



I first started performing regularly in productions at the Dolman Theatre, Newport, in my early twenties. The Dolman is such an incredible performance “hub” with myriad local musical societies and groups, dance schools, along with its resident acting troupe, the historic Newport Playgoers, all performing there throughout the year.

I was privileged to perform there with several groups such as The Lyric (formally, The Graig Operatic Society) in the musicals, *Finian’s Rainbow*, *Oklahoma*, *Carousel*, *Half A Sixpence*, *My Fair Lady*, and *Me and My Girl*, together with my wonderfully talented uncle, Paul Tucker and my beautiful mum, Juliet Davies. It was their passion, enthusiasm, and love for performing that instilled in me, from a young age, a love of theatre that exists to this day; and always.

At the Dolman, I was also blessed to work with so many incredibly talented, kind and generous actors, who were always so willing to give their time and share readily their wisdom, their craft and their depth of experience. I think often and fondly of wonderful actors like John Davies, Peter Hourahine and Vic and Bella Mason; stalwarts of Standard Telephones Musical Society. It was such a joy to share a stage with them, or to simply watch them work. They all exercised a huge influence on my career, and that of many others.

As a young actor learning his or her “trade”, you couldn’t ask for better role models; not least in their skill as performers, their stagecraft, their timing, their professionalism, but equally, in their comportment, their kindness and their ability to make the rehearsal space such a fun place to work. I miss their laughter. And I miss them. The camaraderie we shared and the fun we had performing shows like *Camelot*, *Mack and Mabel* and *Kiss Me Kate*, is something I’ll never forget. It was such a privilege to perform with them and an even greater honour to call them my friends. Together with my uncle and my beautiful mum, I owe them a debt of thanks I can never repay. Without their example; their enduring love

and support, a career in professional acting would have been nothing more than a pipe dream.

It was during a production of *Me And My Girl* that my awesome friend, Sarah Jayne Hopkins, persuaded me to audition for the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama. It was her encouragement, her belief in me that provided the catalyst for me to finally “bite the bullet” and try to make that “pipe dream” a reality. As fate would have it, we were both accepted, and we have both realised our dream to become professional actors. I have been so very fortunate to enjoy roles in *Skins*, *Doctors*, *The Indian Doctor*, *The Da Vinci Code*, *Stella*, *Born To Kill*, *Ironclad*, *Muppets Most Wanted*, *Caught In The Act*, *Storyline*, *Apostle*, *Love Therapy* and, most recently, *The Tuckers*, for BBC Wales. None of that would have ever happened without the wonderful friends I made at a theatre in Newport.

The Dolman is such a fertile “hotbed” for nurturing young talent. The number of fledgling actors who first trod the boards there, before successfully auditioning for Drama School and embarking on professional careers in the industry, is quite remarkable. The Dolman “alumni” has been represented at every conceivable “Ivy League” drama school in the country: RADA, Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama, Bristol Old Vic Theatre School, Mountview, Arts Ed, Guildford School of Acting, East 15 - the list goes on. Many, like me, (just about) survive as “jobbing actors”; others have stella careers on stage and/or screen. We all owe this incredible community theatre, and the amazing people who enable it to thrive, a huge debt of gratitude.

Thank you everyone at the Dolman, past and present, for all you’ve done for the Arts in Gwent. This theatre, and everyone associated with it, performers, volunteers, supporters and audience members, are truly special. It really is a beacon in the community. And long may it’s light shine!

50 years of BACCES

NODA London



What a year... in fact it's our 50th year! Founded in 1971, by Tony Forster and Chris Devereux, the British Airways Cabin Crew Entertainment Society celebrated its 50th year on 3rd March; marked with a Zoom 'party' due to the restrictions at the time making an in person celebration not possible. Luckily, the society, past and present members, joined by family, friends and long standing supporters were able to put on their glad-rags for a fantastic celebration on 2nd September.

Hosted at Moor Hall in Cookham, the dining room was transformed into a fabulous dinner setting and dance floor. The society enjoyed hours of not only celebrating but reflecting on fond memories of past shows and also looking forward to the future of the society, with many new members present.

The evening entertainment began with a heart warming speech made by Dee Bull and Richard Hickman - the longest standing members in the society, both appearing in the original BACCES show in 1971. They were then awarded Long Service awards by Jacquie Stedman - Past President of NODA in an emotional presentation. BACCES Patron Mike Street also gave a moving yet nostalgic speech which left few dry eyes in the room.

With members performing comedy sketches and songs, a magic act and of course plenty of well-known dance numbers (after all they do know how to own a dance floor!), BACCES members celebrated late into the evening, creating new memories and celebrating friendships and close family-like bonds that have been created so fiercely over the past 50 years. There's something quite special

about a society that spans many generations.

I wonder if Tony and Chris ever imagined that the society would evolve so much over the last 50 years - and if they would ever imagine having a party on Zoom! Here's to the next 50 years of BACCES!

Charlotte Coltman



Proceeds from panto to remember Rob Preece

NODA South West



Cheque presentation: Tanya Rees, Abbie Summers and Barry Lister. Credit: Liz Hammond

Sidmouth Amateur Dramatic Society recently presented a cheque for over £2000 – the proceeds from their panto – in memory of Rob Preece, their long-standing Panto Musical Director, who sadly passed away suddenly last year.

Rob had led the band for their annual pantomime at the Manor Pavilion Theatre Sidmouth for 11 years. Rob loved his music and was a constant help and inspiration to so many, always joining in with a joke and encouragement and even prompting the action. He was a lovely kind-hearted friend and colleague, with a terrific sense of humour and will be

sadly missed by so many who knew him. He was also a talented actor and had agreed to become NODA South West Treasurer, but sadly illness stepped in.

Because he was so very highly thought of and with the approval of his family, Sidmouth Amateur Dramatic Society decided to donate the profit of this year's panto performances of *Dick Whittington* to Hospice Honiton. The photo shows Director Tanya Rees and SADS Chair Barry Lister presenting the cheque to a Hospice Manager Abbie Summers.

Liz Hammond and 'Tricia Barclay

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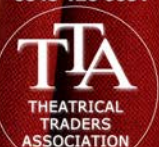
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Raising the profile

NODA Scotland



NODA has always had the aim of providing help and support to amateur theatre clubs across the UK. The need for this has never been greater than over the past two years as we dealt with the challenges of COVID-19. These have included: the almost overnight halt to all rehearsals and productions, ever changing legislation and guidance, how to adapt to new technology to allow committees to continue to meet and productions to move online and the need to impress upon local and national politicians the importance of amateur theatre in the cultural and economic life of the country, as well as the many benefits it brings to those taking part or watching a performance.

As NODA Scotland Councillor, I

along with the Committee, worked hard to produce regular updates for members highlighting changes to guidance as well as signposting full details on the Scottish Government website. These updates also included details of possible funding sources, guidance on insurance cover and ways to engage with members and audience alike whilst lockdown continued.

We devised a campaign entitled “Amateur Theatre - a vital part of Scotland’s cultural and economic life” which outlined the numbers involved in amateur theatre, the impact it had on the cultural and economic life of the country and the vital role it played in both mental and physical health, not to mention the £20m+ it generated

annually for the Scottish economy. This campaign was taken up by NODA nationally as “The Importance of Amateur Theatre” and saw members writing to local and national politicians to make the case for amateur theatre.

In Scotland, the campaign resulted in a meeting with myself and the then Minister with responsibility for culture, Jenny Gilruth MSP, where I was able to highlight directly all the positive benefits of amateur theatre. This was taken on board and it is hoped this will lead to greater involvement of amateur theatre at the highest level – only time will tell.

As a result of an article I contributed to in The Stage newspaper last year, I was recently contacted, by BBC Scotland, to provide input to a piece they were preparing for broadcast on radio and TV, that culminated in amateur theatre featuring on the main Scottish evening news programme – Reporting Scotland.

As the saying goes, there is no such thing as bad publicity! NODA will continue to do all it can to raise the profile of amateur theatre at both local and national levels to ensure we get the recognition we rightly deserve.

Stuart McCue-Dick, NODA Scotland Councillor

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Water Lane Theatre Company

NODA East



The show must go on! (eventually) even if you discover you are older than you think.

In 2019, as part of its yearly programme, Water Lane Theatre Company had begun rehearsing its next early spring production, a four-performance run of Agatha Christie's *And Then There Were None*, to be performed in March 2020. Rehearsals had gone well and by Sunday 15th March, the set was up, and the stage set for the opening night the following Thursday. But the gathering pandemic storm had increased its momentum and, by the full dress rehearsal on the Wednesday, the Rhodes theatre, now named SMA, had very reluctantly been forced to close its doors, and did so at the final curtain of the dress rehearsal. With a poignant expression, and as history records, we went into a full lockdown the following Monday. However, the show must go on, eventually. During those COVID-19 months, we tried many times to stage the play, but all to no avail, that is until now! On March 17th, 2022, *And Then There Were None* was finally staged at the same time and same place, almost two years to the day. Perhaps a record I think, to have a dress rehearsal on one date and opening night two years later.



Another significant point in 2020, was Water Lane theatre company's platinum anniversary, 70 years. Again, like so many others a postponement was set in place. So, in October last year, we were able to celebrate, at last, our 70th birthday with a well needed dinner dance.

An interesting footnote to our celebration. Just recently, I was contacted by a historian who was researching the archives of the United Reform Church in Bishop's Stortford. She was interested in the URC church hall in Water Lane, and those that have used the building over the years. When the theatre company formed it took its name from the hall itself, thus Water Lane.



According to the records, celebrating our 70ths anniversary was a little late. It seems the Water Lane Dramatic Society, as it was known in its first incarnation, was founded not in 1950, as we had assumed, but rather a little earlier...in 1933! It staged productions in the church hall right up until the out-break of the Second World War. For good reasons the society ceased productions until 1948/49, when it was reformed and its first production *The Lady From Edinburgh* was performed early in 1950.

So next year, 2023, now marks our 90th. Time for another party I think!

Granville Rush
Chair, Water Lane Theatre Company

Celebrating 60 Years of TMCS

NODA West Midlands

In October 1961, a group of friends who had a love for musical theatre sat down together and created Tudor Musical Comedy Society. 60 years later, and we are still here; still a group of friends with a love for musical theatre.

The Sutton Coldfield Town Hall has been the home of Tudor MCS for our 60 years, apart from two years when we performed at The Crescent Theatre in Birmingham. Through the years many things and people have changed at The Town Hall, but what has always remained is that same wonderful warm feeling that hits you when you enter this auditorium.

Tudor have performed many different varieties of musical theatre; from the operetta *Die Fledermaus*, to the classic *My Fair Lady*, the hilarious *Sister Act* and the electric *Jesus Christ Superstar* to name a few. However, we must mention where it all started, with *No No Nannette* which includes the well-known song 'Two for Tea'.

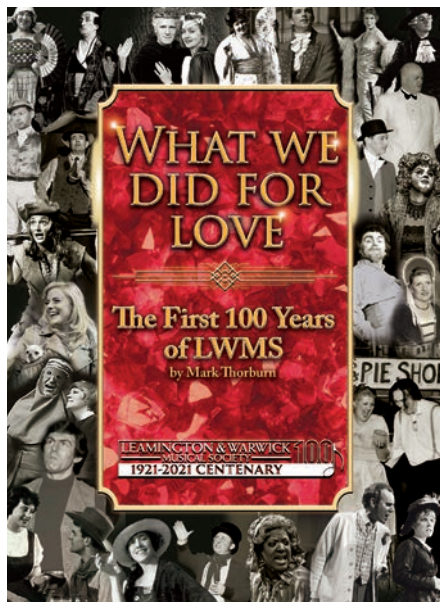
A huge part of Tudor MCS throughout its 60 years, has been our family bonds and connections. After all, two of the founder members were husband and wife (Roy and Betty Gaunt) who's son (Nigel Gaunt) eventually became Chairman and Stage Manager, with his daughter (Charlotte Ward) taking over as Chair more recently. This family feel is core to Tudor and something that will never disappear. Tudor has been lucky enough to have a number of families be part of the society; the Waldron's being one of the largest numbers from one family on stage in any given show with Grandpa, daughter, son-in-law and two grandchildren all at the same time! When people join Tudor, they join a family, with many friendships still going strong after forty plus years and new lasting friendships being made every show. Tudor has been part of many life events such as pregnancies, milestone birthdays, anniversaries and weddings and was lucky to witness the proposal of two of our members right on stage.

There is a wonderful bright future ahead for Tudor, and all musical theatre societies, so keep your eyes peeled!

A final word from Tudor's Chairman, Charlotte Ward: *"Tudor has been in my life ever since I can remember and when I was young I dreamt of the day I would get to go to rehearsals with my Dad. I remember how excited I used to feel when I was allowed to come to The Town Hall on show week and saw the bright lights being put up, the set being built, the sound of the big band and the wonderful cast dancing and singing backstage to squeeze in extra practice. It is a feeling I can't quite explain and I still get that rush of excitement and "that feeling" every time we are here. I could not be prouder to be Chair of this wonderful society and walk in the footsteps of my grandparents and dad. Our founding members are sadly no longer with us, but I know they will be smiling somewhere, tapping their feet, singing along and bursting with pride for this amazing achievement for Tudor Musical Comedy Society."*

What we did for love - the first 100 years of LWMS

NODA West Midlands



2021, saw the 100 year anniversary of Leamington and Warwick Musical Society. To commemorate this amazing achievement, the society has compiled a potted history with photos of every production - from their first production of *The Mikado* right through to present day. Unfortunately, due to COVID-19, the centenary production of *Shrek the Musical* was cancelled and was unable to be rearranged due to licencing restrictions. However, in 2022, LWMS will be performing *Evita*.

What We Did For Love by Mark Thorburn



NODA Presidential Gala & AGM 2022

Crowne Plaza Plymouth, Armada Way, Plymouth, PL1 2HJ
Friday 7th to Sunday 9th October 2022

The South West is proud to welcome you to the Presidential Gala & AGM. The hotel overlooking Plymouth Hoe, the Crowne Plaza Plymouth is the perfect place to unwind. Plymouth, with its cobbled streets and maritime heritage, offers a beautiful backdrop to this weekend of celebration.

The Gala Weekend

The 2022 celebration gala will take place at the Crowne Plaza, Plymouth from 7th to 9th October. Central to the weekend will be the Annual General Meeting and the inauguration of the new president.

Unfortunately, with the October date, it was decided that it would be too risky to hold the event on a boat on Plymouth Sound, but the hotel is adjacent to the famous Hoe where Sir Francis Drake is supposed to have been playing bowls when the Spanish Armada was approaching way back in 1588. It is a very short walk from the hotel on to the Hoe with its stunning views over Plymouth Sound, but you can get a perfectly good view from the hotel while eating your breakfast.

After the AGM, there will be a black-tie gala dinner in the Mariner Suite, with a youth cabaret and dancing to the amazing All Jazzed Up. With a mix of easy to listen to, easy to dance to music, this is the same band which wowed members at Bristol in 2017.

For those arriving on Friday evening, there will be a light buffet (served at 8:00pm) with plenty of time for catching up with friends from all over the UK. This will include a Jimmy Paterson style rehearsed presentation of an act from a well-known musical – no previous experience needed and you can do it from your chair.

On Saturday and Sunday morning, you can take the optional extra of a drama workshop with NODA Theatre Summer School Director, Sarah Osborne.

We will be joined for the weekend by the President of AIMS, Rob Donnelly, and there will be plenty of opportunities to chat to your councillors and regional representatives.

On Sunday morning, the annual Regional Committee Members Meeting will be held at 10am.

Optional Workshops with Sarah Osborne, Director of NODA Theatre Summer School

As an extra to your package, you can book workshops with the fabulous Sarah Osborne. Anyone who has attended NODA Theatre Summer School will be able to attest to how much one can gain from a couple of hours with Sarah. The workshops are designed to suit every experience as singers, dancers or actors.

Making it up as you go along

Saturday Workshop 10:00 – 12:00

A practical, fun and quick paced workshop where participants can indulge in the joys of improvisation and be inspired by their own and others' creativity. Lots of opportunities to play with ideas and use words and action in a spontaneous and rewarding way. No previous experience necessary just an open mind and a willingness to get involved!

Character counts

Sunday Workshop 10:30-12:00

In order to make unforgettable theatre, actors need to create unforgettable characters. Whether you are the protagonist or a member of the chorus, there are invaluable techniques to make sure the audience notice you for all the right reasons. This practical workshop will introduce you to some of the most valuable ones. Not only will finding the truth of your characters help you improve the quality of the production, it will also make the process of rehearsal and performance much more rewarding.

No previous experience necessary, just an open mind and a willingness to get involved! Also, please have a think about a character you would like to focus on...someone you have played before, are in rehearsals with, are about to audition for or perhaps the role of your dreams!

Prices

Package A - two persons sharing

Friday evening light meal, Saturday buffet lunch, AGM, West Country afternoon tea, gala dinner, glass of wine, live dance band & cabaret, private bar.

Two nights bed and breakfast.

£256.00 per person

Package B - two persons sharing

Saturday buffet lunch, AGM, West Country afternoon tea, gala dinner, glass of wine, live dance band & cabaret, private bar.

One night bed and breakfast.

£167.00 per person

Package C - single occupancy

Friday evening light meal, Saturday buffet lunch, AGM, West Country afternoon tea, gala dinner, glass of wine, live dance band & cabaret, private bar.

Two nights bed and breakfast.

£298.00 per person

Package D - single occupancy

Saturday buffet lunch, AGM, West Country afternoon tea, gala dinner, glass of wine, live dance band & cabaret, private bar.

One night bed and breakfast.

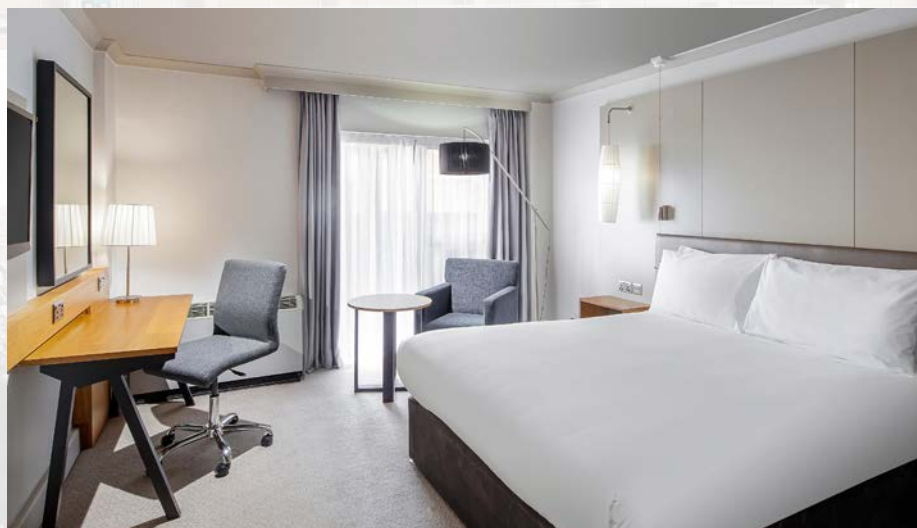
£216.00 per person

Package E

Saturday buffet lunch, AGM, West Country afternoon tea, gala dinner, glass of wine, live dance band & cabaret, private bar.

No accomodation provided.

£65.00 per person



NODA Presidential Gala & AGM 2022

Crowne Plaza Plymouth, Armada Way, Plymouth, PL1 2HJ

Friday 7th - Sunday 9th October

Please complete in block letters

Name(s)			
Address			
		Postcode	
Phone		NODA Region	
Email			

N.B. Confirmation and other news about the celebrations will be sent via email. Your tickets and name badges will be available with complete information packs including timings on your arrival.

Package options

	A: to include 2 nights (Friday & Saturday) Bed & Breakfast, lunch and Gala dinner Saturday £256pp. Two people sharing.
	B: to include 1 night (Saturday) Bed and Breakfast, lunch and Gala dinner Saturday £167pp. Two people sharing.
	C: to include 2 nights (Friday & Saturday) Bed & Breakfast, lunch and Gala dinner Saturday £298pp. Single Occupancy.
	D: to include 1 night (Saturday) Bed and Breakfast, lunch and Gala dinner Saturday £216pp. Single Occupancy.
	E: AGM, Light Lunch Saturday, Gala dinner £65 per person.
	F: Gala Dinner only £55 per person.

	X: Making it up as you go along - Optional Workshop - Saturday.
	Y: Character Counts - Optional Workshop - Sunday.
	Z: Workshops Saturday and Sunday.

There is no charge for attending just the AGM.

Type of Room		Double		Single		Twin (limited availability)	
Dietary Requirements		Vegetarian		Vegan		Gluten Free	Dairy intolerant
Other							

Payment

All payments must be accompanied with a booking form which can be posted to Mr Nick Lawrence, 63 Mill Street, Ottery St Mary, Devon, EX11 1AB or emailed to nick.lawrence@noda.org.uk

The latest date for application and payments is Friday 2nd September 2022.

Deposit

Package A to D - Non-returnable £50.00 per person. Package E and F - payment in full

	Cheque made payable to NODA		Payment by BACS. Sort Code 60 - 83 - 01 Account 20379546 Quote GALA and your name		Card Payment - please call NODA HO once your booking has been confirmed - 01733 374 790
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Names of other members of your party or seating preference

Disability considerations

You can complete this form on our website noda.org.uk/gala

Theatre company creates multi-sensory production of Shrek

NODA North West



Knutsford Musical Theatre Company (KMTC) are to host a multi-sensory theatre production of *Shrek the musical* for the local young deaf community at Northwich Memorial Court in May. *Shrek the Musical* is based on the award-winning animation movie which tells the story of an ogre living in a swamp who journeys with a comedic, donkey sidekick to rescue a tower-isolated Princess Fiona.

Immersive elements of the production will include atmospheric effects including smells to inspire the audience's imaginations. On Thursday 19th May, there will be a special signed performance with a British Signer from Northwich Deaf Support Network for the benefit of the audience who use sign language.

The show is produced by local award-winning theatre company, KMTC, with a 30-strong company of local performers and a 14-piece orchestra.

Ben Ireson, Chairman of KMTC and Director of *Shrek* comments: "We want to make this family-fun-filled musical accessible to everyone, including those who are deaf or hard of hearing. The multi-sensory aspects will help engage our audiences on a deeper level and stimulate a range of senses. That combined with a spectacular set and colourful costumes will make it a visual and sensory delight for all the family."

Did the Dame leave the cooker on?

NODA East



At a packed matinee of *Peter Pan* on New Year's Eve, the alarm sounded, lights came on and the announcement "This is a fire alarm, please leave the building", and the Dereham Memorial Hall was evacuated. Fortunately not too long to wait for Fire Brigade as an off-duty fireman, in the guise of Captain Hook, was on the premises on stage and was able to check why the alarm was triggered and to check the building for safety. All trooped back in and the performance re-commenced with the addition of a line: "Did the Dame leave the cooker on?"



noda

Long Service Awards

Visit 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

Long Service Awards

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, when 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.

We appreciate that some societies cannot afford, or are not allowed, 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?

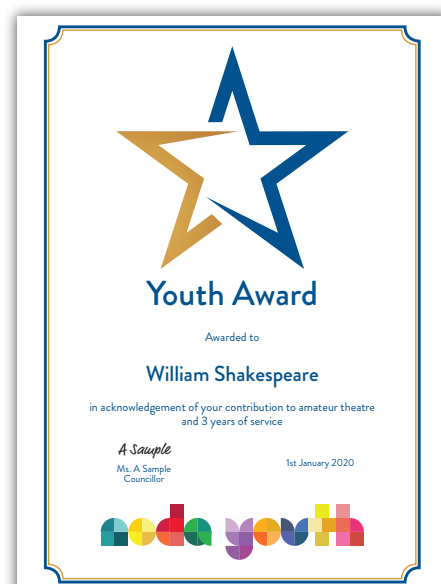
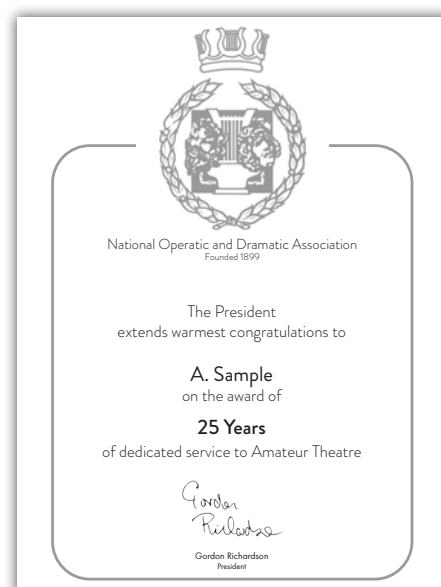
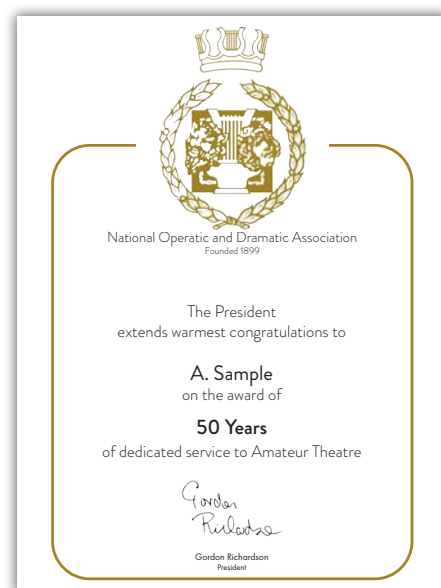
If you are a member of a society, the society will have to apply on your behalf. This can be done via our online application portal or by hard copy form. If you are a NODA individual or joint member, you will be able to apply directly for your award via the online application portal or by hard copy form.

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 and certificate may be awarded from the first youth show every three years to a maximum age of 20.



Useful Contacts

National Youth
Coordinator

Mike Mullen

mike.mullen@noda.org.uk

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Caroline Ranson

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South West

Jo Wilson-Hunt

jo.wilsonhunt@noda.org.uk

Wales & Ireland

Matt Hampson

matt.hampson@noda.org.uk

West Midlands

Emma Laing

emma.laing@noda.org.uk

Safeguarding and Child Licencing Support
NODA Head Office - Rob Williams
rob@noda.org.uk - 01733 374 790

Child Licencing Support - Scotland
Liz Daniels
liz.daniels@noda.org.uk

**If you think you or a child is in immediate danger and needs urgent help,
please call the police on 999**

For non-urgent queries the best place to start is always with your Local Authority -
their contact details can be found online or by calling your County Council / Borough
Council.

For more advice or training
NSPCC - www.nspcc.org.uk
NNCEE - National Network for Children in Employment and Entertainment
www.nncee.org.uk

Gang Show 90, live at the Apollo



Performers from Harpenden Gang Show and St Albans Gang Show are joining a 170-strong cast on the stage of the Eventim Apollo, Hammersmith to celebrate the 90th anniversary of the very first Scout Gang Show.

The first London Gang Show took place in 1932, at the (now gone) Scala Theatre in Charlotte Street. Produced by Ralph Reader, it ran from 1932 to 1938, then 1950 to 1974 at various London theatres. They also took part in three Royal Command Performances.

Over 100 towns and cities across the UK, Australia and New Zealand still have their own version of this unique variety show, performed entirely by Scouts and Guides, and 39 of those shows, from Exeter to Dundee, have provided the cast for this amazing 'one-night-only' performance on Saturday 9th July. The show, co-produced by Ewan Murray, producer of Harpenden Gang Show, comprises spectacular song and dance coupled with original comedy.

Gang member Millie Martin, from Harpenden, said: *"What an amazing opportunity. The buzz we get from performing on stage in Harpenden is already quite something, but to do the same at the Apollo in front of around 2,500 people will be a once-in-a-lifetime experience. It will be amazing!"*

Fellow Gang member Jevon Langridge, from St Albans, agrees: *"I can't wait to grasp this fantastic opportunity with both hands."*

DID YOU KNOW WE CAN PROCESS DBS CHECKS?

We can offer standard DBS checks, right through to enhanced with Child Barred List checks.

Volunteers £20.00
Professional £60.00

For more information email db@noda.org.uk

Building for the future



StagedRight Youth Theatre was only days away from presenting their annual 'Sunday Night @ The Sands' concert featuring 200 young people when Covid lockdown was announced. Since then, they have been forced to cancel six productions, close for more than a year and leave their young members with no social or career building opportunities.

Overture and beginners

StagedRight Youth Theatre was formed in 2004, when Jack, the eight-year-old son of David & Sallie McNeill who run StagedRight, wanted more out of drama than a few hours at school. There was nothing in the area that offered young people the opportunity to 'sing, dance and act', so David and Sallie decided to do something about it.

As a freelance theatre director, David had plenty of experience so in the summer of 2004, they began to plan StagedRight recruiting the most experienced staff in the area and advertising for young people to join.

StagedRight was immediately a huge success with their first major production being Barnum! No easy task.

In the summer of 2011, their family suffered a tragedy beyond words when eldest son, Tom,(17) was killed in a tragic accident.

With their world in pieces, David and Sallie decided their future had to be working together. So David resigned from his 23-year career in marketing and events, and the couple decided to commit to working with young people through StagedRight.

Rather than continue to hire rehearsal rooms, the couple began to look for

premises that could become their home.

Act one: a new start

StagedRight was entering a new and very exciting (but scary) phase. Local businessman Fred Story offered David & Sallie the ground floor of Carlisle's historic Shaddonmill but, in order to convert the building, it required every penny that the couple had, and more!

Plans were drawn up to convert the massive empty unit into three top quality rehearsal studios and wardrobe department.



Opening StagedRight Studios was emotionally and physically draining, but students and their families helped to decorate whilst local companies supplied some fittings and fixtures.

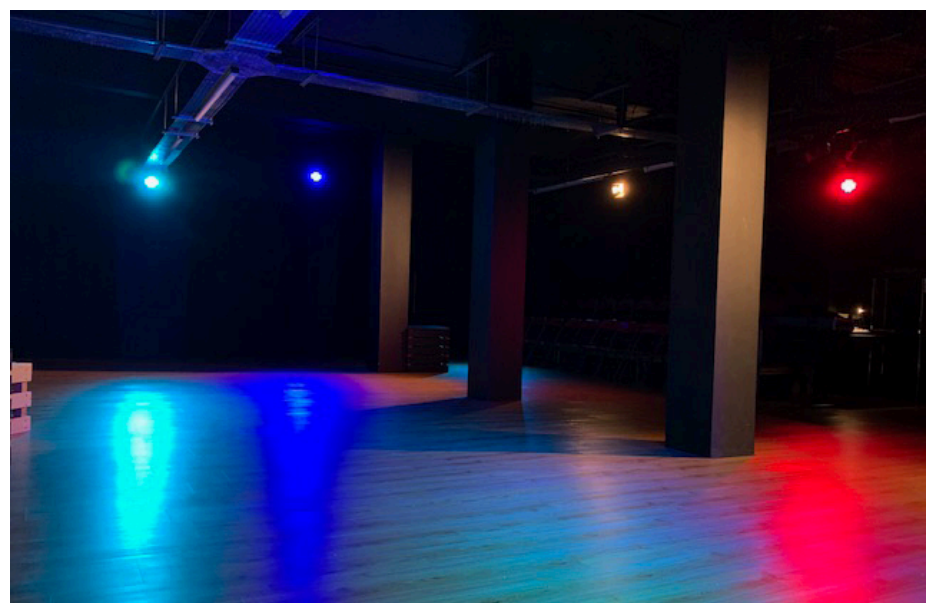
Landlord Fred Story asked that, where possible, StagedRight support disadvantaged children, so a charitable fund was launched in memory of Tom. Donations and collections continue to assist students in many ways including audition fees for theatre schools, funding of equipment etc.

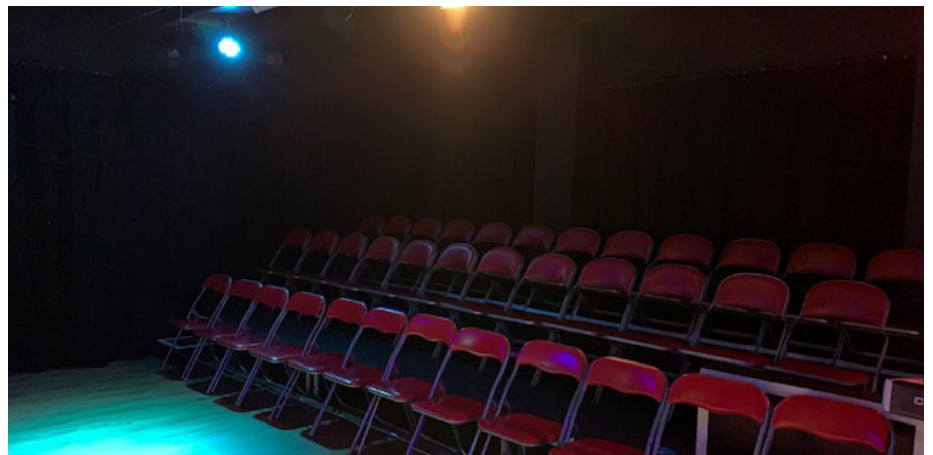
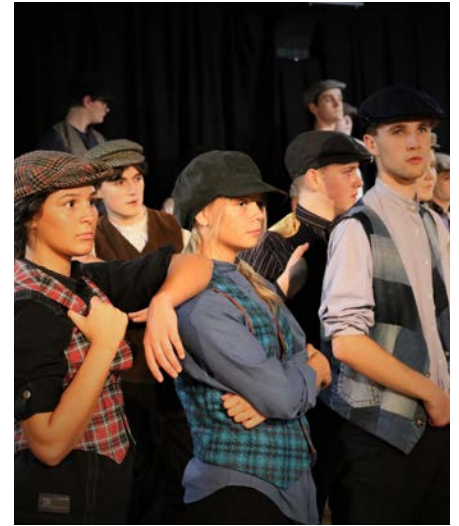
Many students leave StagedRight aged 18 to train at top theatre schools before entering the theatre and TV industry. David and Sallie's son, Jack, is now an actor in London's West End whilst others are performing, directing, and even producing around the world. One student went on to win Britain's Got Talent as part of musical theatre group Collabro.

Act two: looking to the future

Having been forced to cancel so many productions in 2020/21, David and Sallie spent a significant amount of time planning to reopen and trying to book theatre dates for the year ahead. Unfortunately, Carlisle has a limited choice of venues in which to perform and most were not planning to reopen for many months.

With so many obstacles in their way, the couple was forced to rethink what





they do, how they perform and what they could do better. They needed to find a way to continue their work with young people. The answer was clear: StagedRight needed its own performance space!

They made the decision in August '21 to begin turning the main rehearsal studio into a mini theatre that would be adaptable enough to cater for current smaller productions and be used to launch new ideas and initiatives. The budget to carry out the work was more than £12k.

The summer was spent painting walls and the ceiling from white to black, stage curtains were ordered to surround the entire space and a new double door was built to allow for sets to be brought in.

Electrics in that part of the building were not adequate so additional power was needed and stage lighting was installed along with a new PA system.

Stage units were altered, and handrails ordered to enable moveable tiered seating.

With other studios to be used on performance nights as dressing rooms, TV monitors were fitted throughout the building linked to an infra-red camera so that students could see what was happening.

The official opening was planned to coincide with MTI's All Together Now global musical initiative. So StagedRight used the opportunity to invite local councillors, leading businesspeople, sponsors and key supporters so that they could see the fabulous new theatre, plus look at other facilities that StagedRight offers including their amazing wardrobe department.

The studio transformation attracted a lot of local attention, radio interview and pages of press coverage which has been beneficial in the rebuilding of

audiences lost to the pandemic.

All Together Now was a resounding success and was closely followed by Black Box Theatre which was a new initiative based purely on drama and involving all students. The theatre was also used for an 'Open Mic' day and plans are in place to present a junior production of Matilda in June.

David and Sallie are both of the belief that 'to stand still is to go backwards'. Young people deserve the best and that is what StagedRight aims for.

Finale: and now the work begins!

StagedRight will continue to perform their major summer musicals at The Sands Centre in Carlisle as well as their annual *Saturday Night @ The Sands* Spring production. The new studio theatre will offer new and exciting opportunities giving students a safe place to try new ideas and to experience their first solo or small role.

Performing in front of 30,000 people - what a way to spend Christmas!

code youth North East



Manor Operatic Society (MOS), based in Sheffield, is one of the largest amateur theatre companies in the UK. Formed in the 1950s on Sheffield's Manor estate, they performed their first pantomime at the Montgomery Theatre in 1970, before moving to the Sheffield City Hall to cope with audience demand. MOS now perform two productions a year at the City Hall – in spring it's a spectacular musical and over the Christmas holiday a family pantomime – on a huge scale.

With a cast of over 50 members, MOS produces the biggest amateur pantomime in England and attracts a total audience of over 30,000 each year – over 17 shows with a capacity audience of 2000 per performance. Directed and produced by Richard Bradford with Director and Choreographer, Linda Kelly, and Musical Director, Andrew Collis, it really is an annual show of dramatic proportions.

For a group of lucky young people they get to be part of the production as MOS

ensures that it offers development opportunities to a committed and talented group of youngsters. Being part of a production of this scale must be an amazing experience for these young performers as the stage is three times as big as most theatre stages, and when they look out into the audience over 2000 pairs of eyes peer back at them. With stunning costumes, lights, pyrotechnics and set, it has all the trappings of a professional production. However, when asked, it wasn't the sequins or the eye-watering



budget which the young people felt was important. Philip Smith, Regional Representative in NODA North East, spent some evenings over the Christmas break as part of the chaperone team and he asked the youngest cast members to share their thoughts.

Megan – *I love performing with Manor because it takes my mind off the stress of school. I love performing on the stage with my friends.*

Evie – *I love performing with Manor Operatic. I have grown up with my Manor family and now get to perform with them.*

Alycia – *This is my fifth show with MOS and I love being a part of it because I spend time with my second family whilst doing what I love - performing on stage.*

Abbie – *I love being part of MOS, we are all like family. I love performing and dancing on such an amazing stage.*

Laylah – *Being part of MOS makes me feel part of something special. I love to laugh, perform, sing and dance in front*

of live audiences. MOS has given me these amazing opportunities.

Zach – *I love doing theatre because it gives me a way to express myself and I love Manor because the people are so nice and inviting. You feel you're really part of a family.*

Joe – *I like being on stage and performing because it makes me feel good and you are part of a family.*

Ben – *I like being in Manor because I like the experiences and the friendships I have made and seeing people grin.*

Dan – *I love theatre because I love entertaining people and seeing their faces light up. Theatre has helped me more than words can say and I can hardly say I love it.*

George – *I like being in Manor because it's very inclusive and I can be myself. Being on stage is enjoyable because I love the buzz when the curtains open.*

It's no small task to include the young performers and the society has a dedicated Child Registration

Officer, Simon Hance, and a team of 11 chaperones headed up by Sarah Skelton. It is also a huge commitment for all the performers as the intense rehearsal period is just before Christmas. They also spend New Year's Eve in the theatre when they perform two performances with the second one ending with a piper and the whole audience joining in for Auld Lang Syne.

However, it's clear from the comments from the NODA Youth members in the cast that the hard work is definitely worthwhile. For anyone who might be in Sheffield during the Christmas season in future years, the MOS Panto is one which you will thoroughly enjoy and a night you won't ever forget.

P.S. No spoilers, but watch out for low flying dough!

Jo Sykes,
Youth Co-ordinator,
NODA North East

Photo credit
Andy Ellam @creativestudiosmedia



Youth Acts Up are still acting up!



After missing two showing seasons, the youth theatre group – Youth Acts UP! – returned in January with a production of *Jack and the Beanstalk*, a pantomime written by local writer Peter Crussell. The production was directed/choreographed by Becky Smith and produced by Carol Hebbard along with several regular members of the cast and many new and younger members.

After running a youth club for many years in Little Downham, young people became more interested in mobile phones, video games and streaming services; numbers attending the original youth club dwindled dramatically. The decision was made to strike out in a new direction and it was decided to start a drama/musical theatre group based in Little Downham on Saturday mornings. The group was going to be exclusively for young people. No adult actors were to be allowed. Youth Acts UP! (YAU) was born.

The group was formally started in January 2016. A successful application was made to the Little Downham

Parish Council for funding to be spent over two terms. The club was advertised locally by way of social media, posters and school parent mail. As time has progressed, youngsters from all surrounding villages have joined. The age range is from 7 to 18 years. Young people with learning difficulties and disabilities are welcomed to the group. The club is run by Becky Smith, Director and Carol Hebbard, Producer and Chair. Volunteers are on hand to assist the group as chaperones and fundraisers during rehearsals and shows.

Three years ago, Youth Acts UP! joined NODA. A NODA representative also visits and reviews the productions. So far, YAU have been nominated for two awards. The first was for *Seussical Jnr.* and the second for *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* written by local writer, Peter Crussell.

The first show performed was *Musical Theatre Mayhem* performed in the spring of 2016. The cast chose songs that they liked from a variety of musicals. The dances were choreographed by Becky, with input

from the young people. We still have many cast members that have been with us from the first and second shows.

The cast have since gone on to perform sell-out shows including: *Cinderella Rockerfella*, *Aladdin Trouble*, *Dracula Rock Show*, *Peter Pan*, *Seussical Jnr*, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* and *Jack and the Beanstalk*.

We are very fortunate to have our pantomimes written by Peter Crussell and, a new addition to the team, Beverley Dean, professional actress, as our drama coach. Beverley has proved to be an invaluable asset assisting the young people to produce wonderful performances.

Youth Acts UP! aims to teach life skills, which will create confidence when applying for jobs in later life. Drama creates social awareness, away from mobile phones and computers. It teaches respect for each others differences, whatever they may be, as well as dealing with emotions in play form so that they can adapt them to real life situations. Communication skills are improved as well as creative thinking. Our young people are taught to celebrate their uniqueness, individuality and character.

So far, Youth Acts Up! have seen nearly 50 young people move through the drama group. Within that group, five youngsters had learning difficulties and parents witnessed an improvement to their children's skills and life outlook. The final secret ingredient that assists in the success of Youth Acts UP! is that the young members of the group select the cast for each show, with very little guidance.

Presidential perambulations - now it's the youths' turn!

As I travel around the country, I am inspired by the talent of the youth societies I have seen and indeed by the youth featured in adult led shows such as *Annie*.

As Scotland gets back into performing, a little later than the rest of the UK, my first visit was to the youth group 'Big Bad Wolf' who performed a wonderful production of *We Will Rock You* – only to see a similarly good production of it in Whitehaven a couple of weeks later. A trip to Hampshire, saw me enjoying National Youth Coordinator Mike Mullens' youth production of *Shrek* followed the following night by a superb youth production of *Thoroughly Modern Millie* by Encore Youth Productions in Winchester. Teesside MYTC's *Peter Pan* and Spennymoor's *Annie* also inspired.

Youth are our future, and the future looks secure!

Gordon Richardson
NODA National President



Encore Youth - *Thoroughly Modern Millie*



Stamford Showstoppers Kittens - *Cats*



Spennymoor - *Annie*



Teesside MTCY - *Peter Pan Jr*



Whitehaven Theatre of Youth award recipients



Big Bad Wolf - *We Will Rock You*



Darnall MTC - *Humpty Dumpty Youth*



Centre Stage Productions - *Shrek*

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Pendle Hippodrome awarded government grant

NODA North West

Following the recent budget, Pendle Hippodrome Theatre was part of the £6 million grant application awarded to Colne and will be allocated £1.8 million pounds as part of the government's levelling up fund. This amount of money is astounding, not only for the theatre, but for Colne and the wider community. The benefit to them, the businesses and the night-time economy of Colne will be immeasurable and has left them in a bit of shock! The theatre can now press ahead and transform the former Derby Arms, making their theatre accessible to all and ensuring live theatre can stay at the heart of the town for many years to come.

Pendle Hippodrome Theatre would like to thank Cllr Sarah Cockburn-Price, for all her hard work. They are certain they would not have been awarded this transformational amount of money without her help and input.



Musical Harmony - a creative collaboration

NODA Scotland

Our Lady's Musical Society, Motherwell, is celebrating 60 years of musical success!

Teaming up with acclaimed soprano, Monica McGhee, and showcasing the highly regarded City of Glasgow Wind Orchestra (MD – Martin Thomson), Our Lady's Musical Society will combine their talents to create a 60th Anniversary - one night only - concert to live long in the memory. With the Motherwell Concert Hall also celebrating their 50th Anniversary, the evening promises to be a local

collaboration like no other.

Performing new and past repertoire, the society will celebrate 60 years of successful musical theatre productions. Their first performance, in 1962, was *The Mikado* and in 1970, they performed the very first show in the newly completed Motherwell Concert Hall with *The Vagabond King*.

The society won multiple awards, at the prestigious Waterford Festival, including Best Show in 1975, and had appearances on *Opportunity Knocks*

and *Songs of Praise*. Over the years, Our Lady's Music Society has gone from strength to strength performing a huge variety of productions both modern and traditional. Their November 2022 production will be *Evita*.

David Fisher returns to OLMS as musical director and is excited to be working with Joanne Tulips again, who will be directing the concert. Both are delighted to have been asked to be a part of the 60th Anniversary Production *Musical Harmony*.

Centenary year bodes well for BOADS!

NODA South West



BOADS present day

100 Years of performing has seen many changes but the same magic in Brixham!

Brixham Operatic and Dramatic Society is celebrating its centenary year, looking back over a century of producing musicals, operettas, plays and pantos in the old fishing port's theatre. They have been performing almost continuously since then, often with successive generations of the same families joining their ranks. Community has remained an essential factor in their longevity.

A group of young students enigmatically named 'The Orange Bubbles' had already organised plays and a charity concert. They later performed *Pearl The Fishermayden* in 1922, at their town's theatre under their new name - Brixham Amateur Operatic Society - and so BOADS was 'born'.

Joining the society's ranks as director, was the 'Savoyard', Jeoffrey Snelson, who had been a member of the original D'Oyly Carte Company. He retired to Brixham in 1929, and produced many musicals and G & S operettas for BOADS as well as

designing magnificent scenery. He was responsible for the addition of plays to the group's repertoire. After *Eliza Comes To Stay* in 1934, the idea really took off: a drama section was formed and, during the early years, they sometimes put on three or four plays per year as well as a musical.

A brief interruption in the group's activities occurred during WW2, as members were involved in the war effort. However, they involved themselves in local concerts to entertain evacuees and organised a BBC Forces radio broadcast from a local hostelry, when appropriately, they sang 'The Fishermen of England' from *The Rebel Maid*.

Many youngsters 'treading the boards' for the first time during a BOADS

panto production, fell under the spell of all things 'theatre'! Pantomimes were added to BOADS busy performance schedule in 1977, with *Goldilocks* plus youth shows: *Bugsy Malone* and *Dazzle*. The 1950s, in particular, were a 'golden' period for their big musicals and BOADS were responsible for giving several West End shows their South-Western premières on the Brixham Stage, including: *Annie Get Your Gun*, *Oklahoma!*, *Me & My Girl* and *Carousel*.

BOADS 'minute books' for 2008 record the fact that estimated cost for *Annie Get Your Gun* would be £10,255 unlike the £900 estimate for *Oklahoma* in 1955! However, in spite of the increasing costs of licensing, costumes etc, which test the finances of all 'am-dram' societies, they have continued to produce plays, pantos and musicals down through the decades to the current day. More recently, in the midst of Covid restrictions, they embarked upon a different style of show to their usual traditional-style musical by performing *Little Shop of Horrors* - with tremendous feedback from audiences. Inspired by this praise, BOADS looks forward to its next one hundred years, in the hope that subsequent generations of their society's members will continue to bring the magic of live entertainment to the Brixham stage.

Jean Reid



BOADS in the past

Society icon with over 70 years' service

NODA London

Mary Myers joined the relaunched St. Albans Operatic Society (SAOS) in 1950, and performed in its first show, *The Mikado* in May 1951, which was performed to a packed house in the Conservative Hall (located at that time at the back of the current M&S).

Following shows were put on in various school halls at that time (mainly Gilbert and Sullivan) and the society then moved to its more permanent home at the Alban Arena (1968).

Mary was always very involved in all aspects of the productions from performing to making sets, costumes and even tea for all involved.

In 1988, she became chairman. She

is forward thinking and open to new ideas, encouraging everyone to take a risk in performing sometimes less popular, but innovative, shows. She was always up for a challenge and she took the society forward by agreeing to and encouraging our members to vote for a change of name for SAOS and we became SAMTC – St Albans Musical Theatre Company.

She was the driving force behind the society producing a third annual show. After 12 years as our chairman, Mary retired and took on the role of being our third president. She was as involved with all shows in her new role as she had ever been and has only ever missed a handful of rehearsals.

In the early 90s, Mary encouraged me to take on the role of wardrobe mistress and then wardrobe coordinator. I am very grateful for all that Mary taught me and I hold her friendship very close to my heart.

So, thank you Mary for your friendship, not just to me, but to every society member you have taken under your wing. Without you, all the NODA awards we have won, all the professional actors and actresses who started as amateurs with us, and all the members who found friendship, and sometimes even love, might not have been. We all owe you a tremendous debt of gratitude.

Joyce Smith

noda

Theatre Summer School 2022

Course availability

Visit noda.org.uk/summerschool for more details

A Century of Plays

This course is for actors who are interested in both performance and contextualising theatre.

A Riot of Rom Com

This course is for a diverse range of creatives and performers who enjoy working intensively in a team.

Community Matters

This course is perfect for directors and members of societies wanting to make their work accessible and engaging to diverse groups of people.

Feeling Good

This course is aimed at students who have a range of abilities, but who are happy to work as an ensemble and accommodate the different levels of experience.

Make 'em Laugh

This practical and hands on course is aimed at new directors who are happy to perform and direct as part of the week.

On the Side of Right - Battling For Glory

The week is aimed at those with a range of stage combat experience.

Shakespeare - The Comedies

This course is for actors with a range of experience of working with Shakespeare's language and plays.

This Is Your Song

This hands on practical course is for students who are new to the art of song writing or wish to look at the craft with fresh eyes.

Work In Progress

This course will have a strong practical element and is perfect for writers, directors and actors who are interested in collaborative practice, making new work.

Sudbury Dramatic Society

- the first 100 years

NODA East



Outside Edge, 2020

Yes, the society had its centenary this year. Formed officially in 1921, although research by Liz Cole (the granddaughter of SDS founder member and local artist Paul Earee) has revealed what she describes as the 'space dust that slowly coalesced to form the society'. Some of that 'dust', i.e. the stories of the founding members, has been included in the history of SDS, published in book form earlier this year by the society.

The society started with productions that were premières, or 'try outs' from a professional composer living locally, and we have continued to look for opportunities to innovate. It is well known that we converted the Quay Theatre ourselves, in the late 1970s, from its former guise as a riverside warehouse, and that it now operates as a completely separate charity, hosting professional and amateur theatre, live streaming from ROH and NT, we hope. Less well known, is the way in which the society was formed from a base at the Victoria Hall in Prince Street, nor that they also performed in the Gainsborough Theatre, now the Infinity Nightclub, and, after WW1,

for convalescing soldiers in Belle Vue House. We have taken productions to local gardens to fundraise in Great Maplestead (*Midsummer Nights Dream*, Mencap), Lavenham Hall (*As You Like It*, the local hospice) and to Spain (*The Tempest*, *Me Vuelas Loco*). In the 1980s, we premièred *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* and other wonderful shows.

The society has been supportive of the community across the years. Initially, all profits went to support the

children's ward at St Leonards Hospital in Sudbury, in the days before the formation of the NHS. During WW2, they put on a joint production with airmen stationed locally. The society still contributes in the region of £50k a year to the Quay Theatre. Specific plays have contributed donations to other good causes. Recently, this has included the local hospice (*Calendar Girls*), the British Legion (*For Services Rendered*) and Rape Crisis (*Maryland*). The annual panto, sometimes running to as many as 24 performances with two casts, has tickets deliberately priced at an affordable level for all the children locally, and with a relaxed performance for people who need the lights on and the noise levels down. Regrettably, the 2020 panto didn't happen at all and the 2021, *Puss in Boots*, is on hold pending decisions from on high.

In a normal year, we put on 5 plays and a panto each year. Past productions, plus photos for many, can be admired on the website, www.sudburydramatic.com. We have a play selection process that starts in the spring to decide the



Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy, 1980

season for the following year. Putative directors put forward what they would like to read, forming a subcommittee along with other interested members. These are discussed and voted on, and a balanced season is created, usually with at least one that has an extra degree of challenge for members, as in 1996, when *Stepping Out* was cast early to give everyone time to learn to tap-dance! Or one that poses backstage challenges (and I ignore the annual panto lunacy here) – a crucifixion (2005, *Two Planks and a Passion* and 2012, *The Passion*), a forge (2007, *Candleford*), half a house (2017, *The Ladykillers*), etc. Occasionally, there are extra productions, usually over the summer, either a passion project (*Shakespeare Undressed*) or a fundraiser for the Quay (too many to list).

During the pandemic lockdowns we gave members weekly play reading opportunities and created some recorded performances. These are still available on our website: *Pyramus and Thisbe in Lockdown* and *The Seven Ages of Man* are short and silly; *The Warden*, an adaptation by one of our members of Trollope's novel is longer and more serious; *Shake Spears for the Quay*, was a commission that combines a tour of the theatre with extracts from Shakespeare. We also did an interactive Murder Mystery Show, where teams of people bought tickets to solve a murder, after our technical crew had solved some equally challenging logistics!

If you wish to know more, you can buy the book, *Sudbury Dramatic Society: the first hundred years*. It has its origins in an extensive archive languishing on the backstairs landing at the Quay Theatre. Added to this, are the results of interviews with past and present members, and it is full of memories and photographs. The book has been published with the aid of grants from Sudbury Freeman's Trust and from local Councillor Jack Owen.

Sara Knight

NODA Today - Spring 2022

Doubling up at Ilkley

NODA North East



It really was a wonderful and rousing production of *Oliver!* performed at the beautiful King's Hall, Ilkley, West Yorkshire in November. The show was hugely entertaining and there was great characterisation by everyone on stage. This would normally be a reflection of the well-considered casting, but as the list of understudies (as a result of health circumstances) was read out before the production, included five characters, it can only be supposed that this was because there had been so much planning, preparation and hard work by the production team that their commitment and dedication enabled the society to carry it off.

The show had been directed by Mark Allan, who also played the old goat himself – Fagin. Allan perfectly captured what the audience expects to see in this role. As well as directing the production, Allan demonstrated excellent characterisation and found the energy and mischief which is essential to bringing this well-known character to life.

And now for a feat which no one is sure has ever been achieved on stage before. Though only decided at the dress rehearsal, Mark Allan also gave a strong performance as Mr Bumble! The way in which he changed between two very different and very well-known characters was astounding. There was also great work with Helen Smith, as a fabulous Widow Corney, who had also only come to the role in the weeks building up to the production. The cast can't be praised enough for their versatility and resilience in adapting to the different parts and working well together on stage. There is also a need to congratulate them for ensuring that the audience received a production to a very high standard, despite the numerous challenges they had faced.

Congratulations to everyone involved – a really entertaining production and a demonstration of the determination and talent of amateur theatre.



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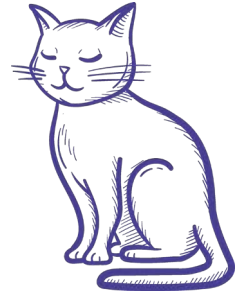




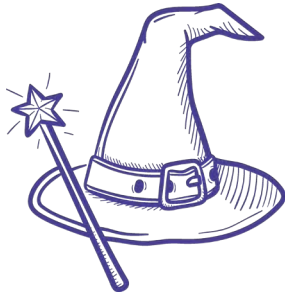
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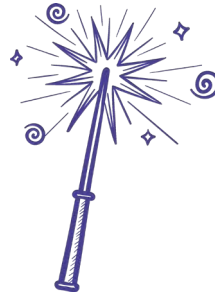
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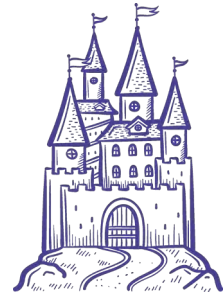
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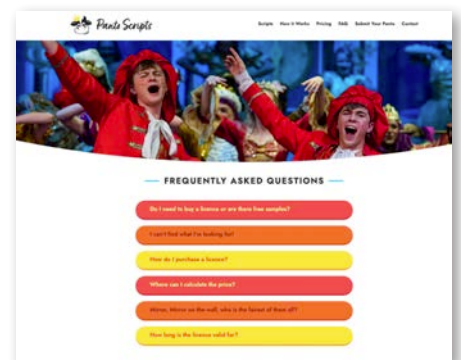
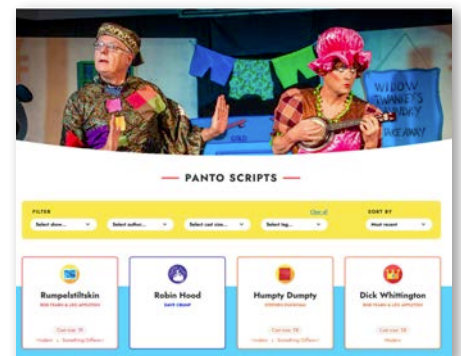
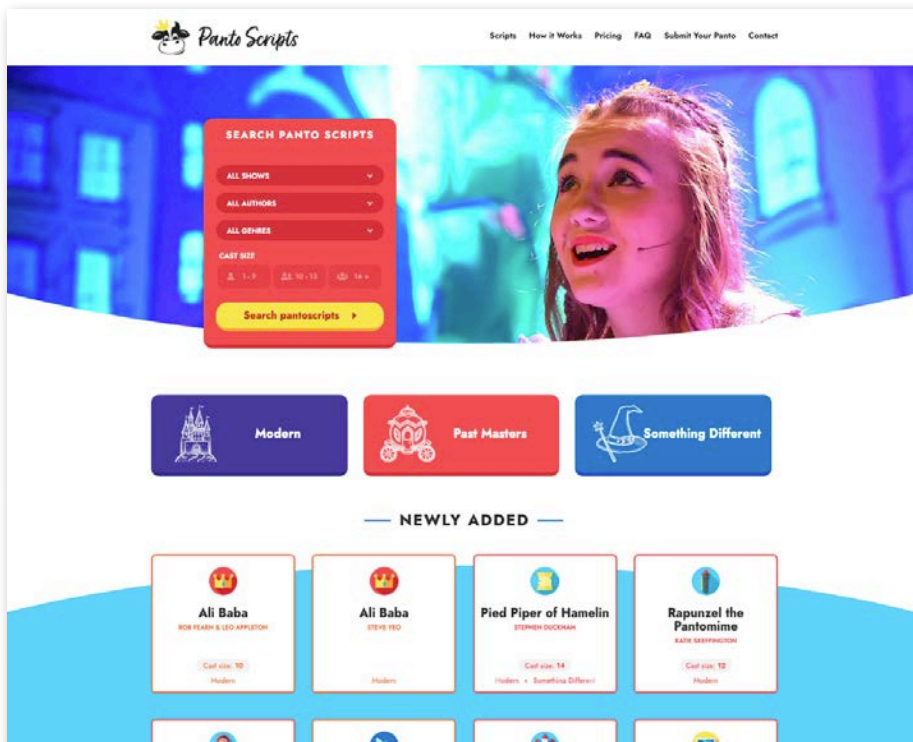


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'Rubber Chicken Theatre' break Guinness World Record!

February 2020, was the last show Rubber Chicken Theatre performed. Just before the world shut down, was our world record breaking production of *'The Wedding Singer'* – taking the Guinness World Records title for Fastest Theatrical Production in a time of 11 hours 59 minutes and 11 seconds. As theatre companies across the globe went into hibernation, we very much did not. Over the 2 years of the pandemic, we performed 2 full scale virtual concerts, 1 'in the woods' production of *Into the Woods*, 4 stadium style outdoor shows (*Matilda Jr*, *Wizard of Oz*, *Aladdin Jr* and *Jesus Christ Superstar*) 1 filmed (outdoors in December up a hill) production of *Elf*, 1 virtual Burns' Supper and 4 full scale costumed, choreographed edited shows, comprising almost 16,000 individual videos (*Chess*, *Annie*, *Little Shop of Horrors* and *10 Ways to Survive the Zombie Apocalypse*) along with 2 outdoor interactive light and performance events. In amongst all that, however, we received some devastating news. A Spanish company had attempted the record 3 months before our production of *The Wedding Singer*, and due to the way Guinness' system works for 'free' attempts, and a blip in the system that meant we weren't notified prior to our attempt. They had in fact taken the record before us, with a slightly faster time than we had. (Albeit with a small cast straight play, but that's a debate for another time!)

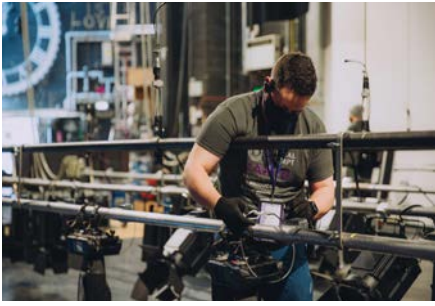
I always said if someone took it off us we wouldn't attempt it again, but the way we lost the record just seemed a little unfair, and so it was, that on February 20th 2022, we found ourselves back in the Macrobert Arts Centre, with the same level of nervous apprehension attempting the record again –

only this
time 2 hours
faster.

With a cast of 150 strong from age 8 right the way through our teen contingent and into our adults, boosted by many of our new friends from across the Scottish theatre scene who joined us for our virtual shows (and indeed theatre friends from Denmark who braved Covid-travels to join us) along with a support crew of techs, runners, parents, keen sewers, shoppers and many more, we gathered at 9.30am (10 hours before curtain up), to open the box of scripts and find out which show we would be attempting. No one involved in the attempt is allowed to know what show we would be performing – the license, script hire etc is all dealt with by someone external to the attempt.

Bang on 9.30am I opened the box – *Return to the Forbidden Planet*. First thoughts were 'Hallelujah it's a show I know! (not one of the company even vaguely knew *The Wedding Singer*) but that was very quickly replaced by thoughts of Shakespeare, good vibrations harmony, tentacles, SFX, live





video, prerecorded video and all the other things that make a show tough on a normal production, much less in 10 hours.

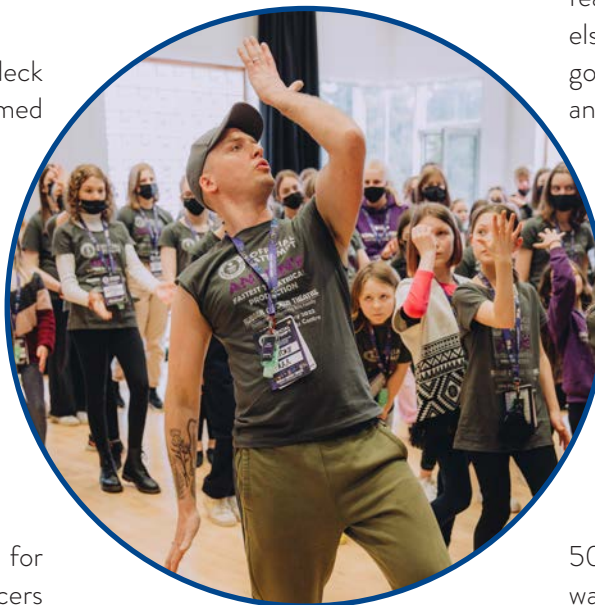
With the box open, we left the cast singing harmonies with 2 of our mds, while I hashed through the plan with my core team. We had 8 areas of the building we could access. All areas needed to be filmed with CCTV at all times, and every area logged individually with every single thing that happens at every point. We also needed 2 external witnesses roaming the building at every point throughout the day and, for this one, every single area was used.

10am – 2pm

The stage was built, steel deck constructed, lights hung, programmed and planned (everything had to be started from scratch) and sound put in place for the band. Principals started hammering lines; no auditions, no time, everyone on board had to just trust that we'd make the right call. The rest of the cast split into three, with one group declaring themselves harmony competent and note bashing through all that, one group learning choreography for the big numbers and some dancers working on dance breaks for some of the featured numbers. The band were battling through the score, working out what gaps in instrumentation we had, and where the instruments we did have could be slotted in to fill those gaps!

In the background of all that, we had someone working on a programme design from scratch, having found a printer willing to print it if we could get

the print file to them by 12pm; someone grabbing props to film the 'flashback' sections; someone designing tentacle files to be sent to the company we had found to CNC cut any set we wanted to fly, and someone heading in a van to get them as soon as they were ready; and someone else sitting creating and editing video files for all the effects on the giant screen that would form part of our set. In addition, our costume team were making a plan and we were sending drivers out across the central belt for all the silver fabric (shower curtains, table cloths anything else) we could find.



2pm – 4pm

With the main structure of the stage in place, we moved cast on to stage to place the main numbers. With set very much still being built all around us, 50s beehives being done in succession with whomever could be grabbed off the stage and principals still battling line learning, it's a blocking session like no other.

3pm

The arrival of our official Guinness adjudicator Jack Brockbank. Only a little terrifying – having an adjudicator means you find out on the day whether you are successful or not. It doesn't lessen any of the requirements for evidencing, CCTV etc and Guinness are absolutely on top of all of that. He spent some time going through all the footage, logging records etc from the morning.

4-5pm

Costuming up – While 'Planet' has the advantage of most people being in one costume, putting 150 people in matching space uniforms is quite some feat. Our costume team, and anyone else drafted in, had a production line going for coloured stripes, silver collars and everything else.

5pm

Dress rehearsal time. Scripts very much still in hand, lights being programmed on the fly as we went, set pieces up in situ on stage, but most definitely unpainted (a realization of this meant several drivers dispatched to buy up all the tinfoil in the world to cover it all with. Very valid for 50s sci fi!) Our klystron generator was still being built and having LEDs, smoke and lights added ready to be flown in and our tentacles were still being painted. We finished dress rehearsal at 7.10pm, clearing the stage to allow the auditorium to open to our full house audience. While behind the curtain newly painted tentacles were being flown, set was frantically being finished and principals were having to be surgically removed from their scripts.



Makeup, hair thrown on for those that hadn't made it earlier and maybe some food, the day was fuelled by more crew keeping an unending supply of packed lunch bags, tea, coffee, pizza, fruit and chocolate going for everyone who could find the time (and lack of butterflies) to eat.

7.30pm

Curtain up - the record time goes from opening the box, to curtain up, so that the length of show doesn't impact the record time and we raised the curtain at 9hours, 59minutes and 3 seconds. Those 3 seconds were vital, Guinness love a detail! We knew that Jack was happy with everything he'd seen to that point, so all we had to do was actually put on the show. The rules for the attempt cover quality - it has to actually look like a proper show. No books on stage, creatively cohesive, a strong design and performance etc. Full on fear!

The performance itself was a bit of a blur - our amazing cast looked like they'd been rehearsing for months. Choreography was together, harmonies were on point and energy levels were through the roof. Video

was where it was supposed to be, tentacles and klystron generators flew in on cue and all of the ridiculously complicated Shakespearean lines were delivered absolutely exactly as written ...or maybe not. Learning lines in that time I think is probably the hardest bit, but with people in the wings with books running lines in between each entry, and a heavy reliance on basic stage craft plus an absolute impetus to keep going and keep performing, our principals rose to the challenge.

'Planet' ends with an on stage party - and at that point our adjudicator joined us on stage. It's all taken very seriously by Guinness and the announcement was no exception. However, with confetti canons waiting in the wings and a certificate in hand he announced that we were officially world record holders for the fastest theatrical production, in a time of 9hrs, 59minutes and 3 seconds.

The whole building went mad! For our first mainstage full house performance after Covid, it felt right to take it back, almost 2 years to the day since our original attempt.

Since then it's been no less full on. There's been lots of media coverage, up to and including a really random appearance on the Late Show with James Corden, and we've been right back at it with performances of *Cocktails and Cabaret*, *The Crucible* and *Madagascar Jr* since then. No rest for the wicked!

The most common question I've been asked is if someone takes it off us will we attempt it again? Our Spanish friends have been VERY vocal on social media about their intention to take it back. Having done it in such a fast time I am 100% confident someone will break the record - they are after all there to be broken and the record has very few rules about how many cast you need, how much set, costume etc is required. I am, however, happy that for the size of cast, range of ages and scale of production we aim for, it's not possible to do it any faster in a way that I'd be happy with. So when that day inevitably comes, although we'll all no doubt be a little sad, we'll offer our congratulations, and move on to whatever the next crazy challenge is for Rubber Chicken.



Let's hear it for the understudies!

We do it!

NODA South East

I am very pleased to say we managed to overcome the many challenges, not just COVID and are still thriving. October 2021, we put on a successful production of *Hi-de-Hi!* A fabulous fun-filled show, something that everyone needed. Cast members dropped out with COVID, other amazing members took their places, we regularly tested and made sure this virus didn't get the better of us. The auditorium layout was changed to allow for social distancing, which meant limited seats and less money, but safety is paramount.

February 2022, and we performed *Secondary Cause of Death* by Peter Gordon. Great fun, but hit by challenges again. With a cast of only seven, we had three drop out at different points in the rehearsal schedule due to



work commitments, family problems and health issues. A frantic reshuffle of parts and new members joining us, rehearsals continued. Such fun, so many laughs in rehearsal. Then sadly one of our lead characters had a close family bereavement and could not make the first three performances. Our amazing Amanda stepped in and the show went on (some of the

audience didn't even realise she had a script hidden) and by the third night was coming on for some scenes word perfect! One review "*Fantastic show but completely bonkers!*"

The Show DID Go On!

Sue Molyneux HAG

The show must go on!

NODA South East

Our first panto in 2 years, *Aladdin*, was due to be performed to a packed house at our local golf club. The excitement grew, the anticipation mounted and all involved could hardly contain themselves till curtain up. Then Mr Omicron came knocking just before Christmas!

Bookings started to get postponed and it looked like all that hard work would be in vain. Would the first performance be cancelled? Oh no, it wouldn't! Oh, yes it would!

It was touch and go for awhile, but then we got the green light and were good to go two weeks before the performance. What a sigh of relief!

Then, yes dear reader you guessed it, one of the crew went down with Covid, then another, and everyone tested and waited with baited breath.

Now 1 week to go and a cast member catches it. Then another. We had all been in rehearsing together... will anymore go down? Daily reports of negative results soothed the jangled nerves, until disaster struck!

Aladdin tested positive, oh yes he did! We had no understudy Covid-free to step in...but with 24 hours to go one of the other performers took on the lead role. Madness! I hear you cry! It can't be done I hear you say! Yes it was, but yes it can! The fact that Helen Bradshaw who was intending to

play the panda, also happened to be the author did help. However it was still an heroic turn and one that she accomplished to rapturous applause and critical acclaim. But what of the panda I hear you ask? A member not previously involved jumped in - into the panda suit that is, and blindly (being unable to see out of the visor), but robustly threw themselves around the stage with no idea where they should be, where they should go or what they should do... which is apparently true of most pandas generally.

Needless to say, not only was disaster averted, but the show was a triumph! Oh yes it was!

Bob Dench - Alternate Shadows

Alice in Wonderland - a 'curious' pantomime

NODA East

In 2020, a pandemic meant that this was going to be like no other panto we had done. We held auditions in the midst of social distancing regulations, with the decision made not to audition children, or cast an adult chorus due to Covid. Then, with a cast of just 17, we had to cancel before we even got started as we went into a second lockdown.

September 2021, and we started rehearsals in earnest, determined that this show would go on. There was rarely a week when we had a full cast as someone was always isolating or unwell. With a fabulous script and huge musical numbers, we eventually made it to show week - and lost a cast member to Covid!! Enter one of

the directors. With just a few days to spare she had memorised the lines and dances for the dormouse. Surely the second week would run as planned? With the dormouse back, Tweedle Dee succumbed to Covid with two days to go - here we go again! Lines, songs, dances learnt and we were pulled out of chaos yet again. Our first show back after 2 years was a huge success and in the words of our NODA rep, "the best yet"!



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Contact Nigel Hancocks
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NODA North West

Regional Treasurer

Contact Andy McNicholas
andy.mcnicholas@noda.org.uk

NODA Wales & Ireland

Regional Treasurer

Contact Sharon Davies
sharon.davies@noda.org.uk

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Contact Andy Brown
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