

Tnoda TODAY

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FANTASTIC
FRANCIS HARDY
FAITH
HEALER
ONE NIGHT ONLY



Relishing the
challenge of
Faith Healer

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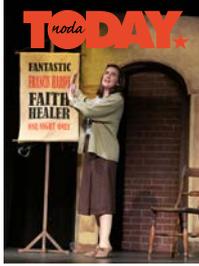
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Dramatic Society
NODA East.



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Relishing the challenge of *Faith Healer*

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Welcome



It is my pleasure to welcome you to the second edition this year of NODA Today. As always it contains so many positive stories from our members across the UK.

It is always rewarding to see groups celebrating their respective key anniversaries, including in this edition: Leaven Amateur Musical Association formed in 1872, and Chesham

Musical Theatre Company celebrating its centenary. You will be interested too in a trip to the archives.

We are proud of our association with the Benefact Group, who provide quality insurance services for NODA members and very much more besides.

This year saw the return of the in-person attendance of NODA Theatre Summer School. It was wonderful to see so many participants this year. Keep an eye out later in the year for the 2023 dates and courses.

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 23.

As always, we are looking for more articles from your region. If you have an interesting story to tell, please get in touch with your regional editor.

Finally, I would like to wish you all the best for your upcoming productions, you all deserve full houses for the best hobby in the world.

Ian G. Cox - NODA Chairman of Trustees

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Councillors' Chat

A quick note from your regional councillor



Tessa Davies - East Regional Councillor

It is lovely to see societies in the East slowly returning to performing and I have been invited to see some excellent productions in the past few months. Audiences are still a bit reluctant to commit to booking early so the last minute booking rush has become the new normal for many societies. This leaves a few anxious moments regarding ticket sales, but the signs are that last minute walk-ups are on the increase, so don't lose heart! I look forward to seeing more shows in the autumn and seeing the panto season revived.



Jules Jones - Acting East Midlands Regional Councillor

We have seen many brilliant productions over the first part of this year. Some wonderful show reports and everyone seems to be celebrating getting back onto the stage after such a long break. As interesting and creative the online and filmed productions were, I'm very pleased to be visiting theatres again. The East Midlands needs regional representatives. There is such a large area to cover so the more the merrier. Please get in touch if you are interested. We have an interesting season ahead of us and lots of opportunities to see the very best performances in the East Midlands.



Pam Armstrong - London Regional Councillor

Congratulations to all our fabulous Regional and District Winners – we had a wonderful attendance at our Celebration Day and AGM in June and it was great to see so many of you. We have such talent in our London Region and in addition, we were fortunate in being able to stage showcase performances from adult and youth societies which were much enjoyed. It is truly impressive to see how quickly so many societies have returned to staging performances and with your audiences returning in such good numbers – it demonstrates how important live theatre is in our communities – you are our Shining Stars!



Peter Oliver - North Regional Councillor

NODA North is back and flourishing just as I expected it would be; it will take more than a pandemic to keep us northerners down. Our societies and groups are going from strength to strength with shows been performed across the whole of NODA North. Audiences have returned to support societies and the feedback has been fantastic. Thank you all for continuing to invite me, and your regional representatives, to your performances. This enables us to see first-hand your hard work and outstanding talent. I would also be happy to attend any of your committee meetings or rehearsals to enable me to meet your members.



Leslie Smith - North East Regional Councillor

I am very pleased to say we had a great Gala Weekend back in April, and of course back in Bridlington, for those of you who came I hope you enjoyed it as much as I did.

I suspect many of you will be in rehearsals for your autumn productions. Please do invite me as well as your regional rep; we are always very pleased to see you all.

With very best wishes, stay safe, stay well.

Andy McNicholas - North West Regional Councillor

It was fantastic to finally see so many of you in person at our Regional Awards and AGM weekend at the end of April. We are now looking for suitable venues for next year, so if you are aware of any please drop me an email.

It's great to see so many societies back in full swing with so many productions in the past few months - it's more important now than ever before that we look at ways of supporting each other, either by sharing props and costumes or going to see each other's shows.



Stuart McCue-Dick - Scotland Regional Councillor

Once again, the NODA Scotland conference will be returning to Peebles Hydro from 28-30 October for a weekend of workshops, good food and wonderful company as well as our AGM and the results of the programme and poster competition.

This year, we also have a youth forum, over 3 sessions, for those tasked with running youth groups/sections. This will cover child protection and licensing of children in theatre, as well as a practical session covering singing, movement and drama. Full details are available on the website.



Kay Rowan - South East Regional Councillor

A big thank you to all those who gave up a sunny Sunday to join your South East Committee for our Celebration Day in Guildford. A special thank you to the societies who entertained us and to Sue Sampson and Tori Eglin who led our *Evita* Workshop.

The past few months have seen my reps and I very busy visiting a wide range of shows and societies - thank you all for your invitations. We look forward to many more delightful and inspiring performances.



Graham Liverton - South West Regional Councillor

Societies have come back with great enthusiasm after the pandemic with performances being of a high standard. I have been fortunate to see a lot of the shows that would not be out of keeping in the West End!

Please do not forget to book for the National Conference at The Crowne Plaza Hotel Plymouth in October. It will be great to see a large contingent from the South West to support the in-coming president Nick Lawrence.



Sharon Davies - Wales & Ireland Regional Councillor

It's lovely to see so many societies back up and running and I'm sure there will be many more following in the near future. Invitations are now coming in with a variety of shows on offer and we will always do our best to attend.

It was sad to have to cancel our Gala Dinner and awards night due to lack of support, but the awards are with the regional representatives and will be given to the relevant societies at a time to suit them. We look forward to seeing you at next year's event.



Andy Brown - West Midlands Regional Councillor

After a total of 1,176 days since the 2019 West Midlands Regional Conference, AGM and Awards, it was superb to be back with so many colleagues in the West Midlands on 03 July 2022. Congratulations to all those who won special awards.

The number of societies now rehearsing and ultimately performing is great to see, although encouraging audiences can, at times, be a challenge. I am delighted to have been able to meet an increasing number of societies and look forward to this continuing over the coming months.



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our group family so we can back even more.

Together, we are building a ‘Movement for Good’, an initiative where you can nominate a charity to be considered for a donation of £1,000.

A service of Thanksgiving was held at Westminster Abbey to mark over £100 million raised for good causes by the Benefact family. The event was attended by NODA Limited Chairman, Eric Smart, on behalf of NODA.

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NODA ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting of The National Operatic and Dramatic Association, Charity No 1171216 will take place on Saturday 8th October 2022 at 2.30pm at The Crowne Plaza, Plymouth, PL1 2HJ.

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

To ensure the smooth running of the meeting, any resolutions to be considered at the meeting should be sent to the Chairman of Trustees, Mr Ian G. Cox, at 15 The Metro Centre, Peterborough, PE2 7UH or by email to ian.cox@noda.org.uk to arrive no later than 1st September 2022.

Relishing the challenge of *Faith Healer*

NODA East



Credit - Peter John Wilson

Many theatre companies, amateur and professional alike, might have winced at the thought of staging a dramatic play with challenging themes, difficult characters and a defiantly bleak ending, after potential patrons had endured 18 months and counting of a global pandemic.

However, the opportunity to stage Brian Friel's dark *Faith Healer* in October 2021, came as both a relief and a joy to director Robert Naylor-Stables and Wheathampstead Dramatic Society (WDS) in Hertfordshire, coming "probably seven or eight years", Naylor-Stables says, "after the project was initiated.

It was going to be my directing debut with WDS. I'd been acting with them for a good, few years, and I decided that I'd try my hand at directing, and this was going to be my first play," he recalls.

For those unfamiliar with the play: its three characters offer a series of four conflicting monologues about the life of Frank Hardy, an itinerant faith healer "who can neither understand nor command his unreliable powers" and "the lives sacrificed to Hardy's destructive, charismatic life", in the words of a Bench Theatre synopsis. The characters are Frank himself; his long-time mistress, Grace, who dies by suicide and Frank's agent and manager Teddy, who travelled with the pair through Frank's one-night stands in small church and village halls through Wales and Scotland.

"One of the reasons I chose it was because it was a little bit dark, it was a bit edgy, it was a different sort of a play," Naylor-Stables says.

He relished the challenge he knew *Faith Healer* would give him in working with his actors to "actually get the story

across so that the audience felt engaged, and would appreciate it, and would absorb the story which is quite complex".

Unfortunately, fate intervened early on. "We'd just started it, I cast it, planned it, designed the set and we'd just started rehearsing, when unfortunately, Brian Friel died (October 2015), and in respect to him, his career and profession, all licences of his work were repealed. So, I wasn't able to do it," Naylor-Stables said.

Later, once licences were again available, a jubilant Naylor-Stables renewed his plans "with great joy" to stage *Faith Healer*. "I was very excited, and the actors were very excited as well," he remembers.

But more delay was to follow. The production's restart came at the end of 2019. "And then Covid hit," he says. "I felt I was destined to never be able to put on this play!"

However, the licensees ultimately agreed to extend the period of the licence so that WDS could stage the play once "we could do things again," Naylor-Stables says.

And they did, with two of the three actors originally cast in the show still part of the production.

The final delay did have its benefits, Naylor-Stables acknowledged. "It gave me the opportunity to read it through again and again and again, and pull it apart and really examine it page by page. My wife, who is very supportive, and I read it together, worked through it together and bounce ideas around... it was fantastic to be able to do that and not be under, like, three months of rehearsal time to get it on.

There was almost a year-and-a-half of

being able to really get to grips with the nuances in the writing and the language.”

He also built a model of the stage and of the furniture pieces he wanted to use plus models of each of the actors “and just worked through the whole staging of it as well”.

But how did audiences respond to this “dark, edgy” play after living in uncertainty and lockdown conditions for months on end in 2020, and much of 2021? To accommodate safe social distancing, capacity at WDS’s venue was sliced to about half of its normal 120. Of that half, Naylor-Stables estimates that the play drew between

two-thirds and three-quarter full houses each night.

“Audiences were keen, you know, when we followed up. The audiences like the slightly more challenging stuff, a bit more gritty,” the director says. “WDS are not shy of doing some good, challenging stuff.”

And with WDS’s reputation for quality theatre, local audiences tend to trust the group’s choices and “we know it’s something that we’ll enjoy”, Naylor-Stables explains. “I think our audience was also just keen to get back and see something.”

Not only did the local audiences appreciate the production, *Faith Healer* received recognition on a regional scale: it won Best Drama in NODA East District 3’s 2020-21 NODA Awards in April.

Asked what advice he would give groups considering taking on a challenging play, Naylor-Stables says instantly, “Immerse yourself in the writing. And don’t be afraid to ignore the stage directions. Don’t be frightened. Just, you know, be radical.”

DeeDee Doke, NODA East



Credit - Peter John Wilson



Credit - Peter John Wilson

Taken the Lead...!

NODA North West

In the world of amateur dramatics, I am sure we have all misplaced, forgotten or lost something whilst performing a show. For Gwen Carter, a life member of Morecambe Warblers AOS, she has experienced just that. She lost a leading man. Three times!

Gwen recalls: “The first was when I was performing as Fiona in *Brigadoon* in 1985, and my leading man lost his voice

just before dress rehearsal. Fortunately, a nearby society had performed the show and so my new leading man was drafted in. After rehearsing during the day for 3 days, the show went on.

In 1989, I was fortunate to be cast as Eliza in *My Fair Lady* and the week before the show the committee sacked my leading man for not knowing his lines or songs.

The director (who had played the part previously) took over the part, again with little or no rehearsal. In between these I was due to play the leading role in *Ruddigore*, but had to take a more minor role due to being pregnant with my daughter.

The irony of this is that the leading man was the same person for all three shows.”



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NODA South West



The Backdrop with Graham Liverton (NODA Southwest Councillor), Jackie Demkwi and Fay Done (Artists) and Katie Jones (District Rep for Areas 7 & 8)
Credit: Katie Jones

Amazing Backdrop produced for Axminster Drama Club Production

It's an accepted truth that theatre is good for everyone and being part of something special is an experience that can last a lifetime... And that's being on the stage - but this remarkable backdrop of Coventry Cathedral by Jackie Demkwi and Fay Done of Axminster Drama Club is testament to the incredible teams which grow up around a show.

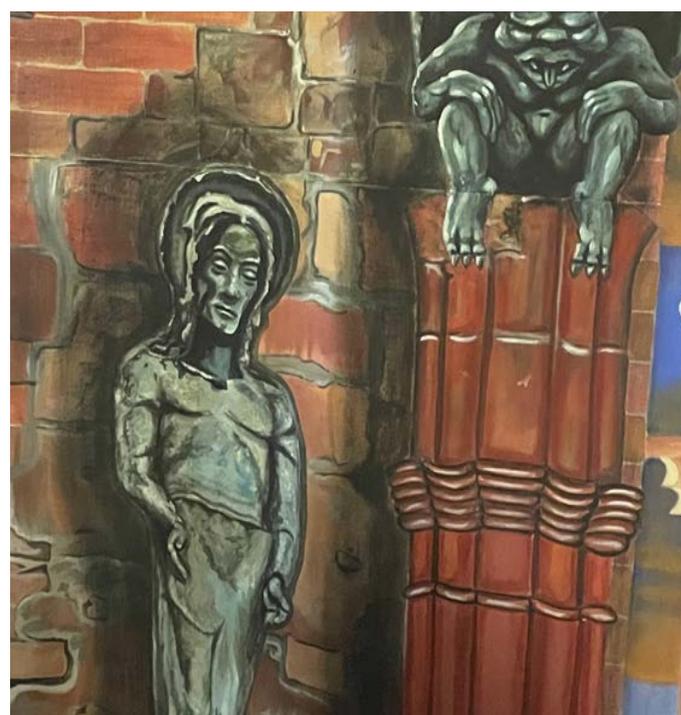
When Axminster Drama Club decided to stage Debbie Isitt's *Nativity!*, Director Sarah Leat, showed a photograph of Coventry Cathedral to Jackie Demkwi, saying: "I'd like this, please."

Jackie took the picture and began by producing a 1-inch scale drawing of the cathedral on paper for approval. "It's really the only way to work on the cloth, you have to think backwards and work your way forward," explained Jackie. "As it was, to fit the cloth, I was half an inch out, so I simply raised the image by 18 inches to get the whole picture in." Once drawn to her satisfaction, Jackie filled the image with the block colour. "This gives you the opportunity to stand back and check you're happy it's right," she said. From there, she worked from the centre out to complete the stunning detail.

Jackie has been with the club for 36 years and counting, but she protests that this backdrop would not have been possible without the incredible skill and talents of Fay Done. "When Fay joined the club, she told me she'd like to help paint scenery. She scrolled down pictures of her work and I thought, if

I could paint like that, I'd call myself an artist!" recalled Jackie. Fay was responsible for the stunning details and fine art including the gargoyles, the statue of Christ and the stained-glass windows, to name a few items. The whole project took around 300 hours to complete - and what a result!

Katie Jones



Close up of gargoyle
Credit: Katie Jones

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NODA North East youth event

NODA North East



Now in its fourth year, the Youth Event, at NODA NE Gala Weekend, aims to provide a great introduction to the Gala Weekend, as well as providing interesting workshops and the chance for young people to share in the excitement with over 500 members of the region who had gathered together for this annual event – which sadly hadn't taken place in 2020 or 2021, so the excitement was at fever pitch.

Held at the Spa Complex in Bridlington, the sunny April day included the opportunity to attend

dance, acting and singing workshops. The young people also saw some of what is available at the weekend as well as viewing the evening cabaret performance of *Thank You for The Music* by Take 2 Theatre Company – where they were blown away by the experienced performers who took to the stage to celebrate the life and work of Geoff Whitfield.

Throughout the day there were three workshops which were led by experienced, professional tutors. The dancing workshop was a 2.5 hour 'Everyone's Talking About NODA!' themed dance workshop led by highly renowned local Director and Choreographer, Dee Bennie-Marshall, which saw dancers leaping from chairs with well over 100 participants filling the Royal Hall dance floor. Sarah Osborne, Director of NODA Summer School, ran a drama workshop to look

at the skills needed for audition and performance which there isn't always time to work on in rehearsal. She also awakened the interest of the young people by telling them all about NODA Summer School. The final workshop was a great singing workshop – developing skills and techniques with Adam Boniface, whilst singing songs from *Dear Evan Hansen*. The young people really enjoyed the workshops and feedback from those attending was very positive. Plans are already underway for an event in 2023, so if you are 16, 17 or 18 and want to join us at Bridlington on Saturday 23rd April, 2023, please get in touch jo.sykes@noda.org.uk.

Jo Sykes
Youth Co-ordinator
NODA North East

The next leg of the Presidential travels – youth

I never fail to be impressed by the versatility and sheer unadulterated talent shown by the youth throughout the country. Indeed, just this weekend, I saw a superb concert by Spennymoor YTG, where I had the privilege of presenting an award on stage to graduate Charlie Jackson, who was leaving to attend Lincoln University in the autumn. Wonderful visits to Yew Tree (*HUNT*), Limelight (*Matilda*), Teesdale (*Matilda*), Weymouth (*Grease*), WEOS - Newcastle for a very talented set of von Trapp children and Whitley Bay OS Next Generation (*Seussical*).

The youth of Middlesbrough Youth performing *Bugsy Malone* were delighted to 'splurge' and 'custard pie' me (I quite enjoyed the fun myself...)



Limelight - *Matilda* Jr



Whitley Bay OS Next Generation - *Seussical*

The longest running amateur musical society in Scotland

NODA Scotland



Merrie England



The Arcadians



The Gypsy Princess

Leven Amateur Musical Association (LAMA) was formed in 1872, and is the longest running amateur musical society in Scotland. On 11 October 1872, a bill was exhibited inviting the people of Leven, and the surrounding area, interested in forming “a society to have for its object the practice of Vocal Music, particularly Music of the higher class”, to attend a meeting on Wednesday 16 October.

The minutes of that meeting shows that 45 people showed an interest and Rev Duncan offered the use of his school for rehearsals. Leven Amateur Musical Association was duly formed. The association met for the first time seven days later with a membership of 158 and a subscription of six shillings (30pence) – this fee remaining the same for 100 years. A production, aptly named *The Creation* ushered in the beginning 150 years ago.

The following is a general outline of the path taken by the Association from the initial meeting until the present day.

- 1873 – 1893 Choral works: *The Creation*, *The Messiah*, *Samson and Judas Maccabeus*.
- 1893 – 1915 Oratorios and G&S: *Trial by Jury*, *HMS Pinafore*, *Patience*, *The Mikado* and *The Pirates of Penzance*.
- 1915 – 1920 Break due to World War One.
- 1923 – 1926 *The Country Girl* starts musicals: *Merrie England*, *The Arcadians*, *Rose Marie* etc.
- 1926 – 1939 Musical Comedies.
- 1940 – 1947 Break due to World War Two
- 1947 onwards: Musicals: *The New Moon*, *The Quaker Girl*, *The Desert Song*, etc.
- 1950 – 1967 Dramatic shows plus musical productions: *The Happiest Days of Your Life*, *For Pete’s Sake*, *Bachelors are bold*, *Royal Scotch*, etc.
- 1968 – 2022 Back to one musical production per year: *Carousel*, *Bless the Bride*, *White Horse Inn*, *Kismet*, *Me and My Girl*, *Sister Act*, etc.

- From 1934, onwards, LAMA has performed in 7 venues:
- 1934 – 38 Town Hall Pavilion
- 1939 – Jubilee Theatre
- 1947 – 61 Scoonie Kirk Hall
- 1962 – 68 Beach Pavilion
- 1969 – 70 Kirkland School
- 1971 – 76 Buckhaven High School
- 1977 LAMA took up residence in The Centre, Leven where

we now rehearse and stage our shows.

Over the years, our stage sets etc. have been adapted to suit the facilities available to us in The Centre. This has led to our production team being able to produce slicker shows with a more professional appearance.

In striving to produce musicals which our audiences enjoy, we have presented shows as diverse as *The New Moon*, *The Land of Smiles*, *Camelot*, *Anything Goes* and *42nd Street*.

Since 2002, there have been some lesser known but nevertheless memorable shows including *The Scarlet Pimpernel* (2003 Scottish première), *Titanic* (2005 Fife première), *Jekyll and Hyde* (2007 Fife première), *Children of Eden* (2011 Fife première), *Sunshine on Leith* (2016 Fife première and complete sell out) and *Made in Dagenham* (2017 Fife première).

In 2011, an exciting development, which is hoped will secure

the future of LAMA for many years to come - LAMA Youth were formed and put on their first show in 2012. Over 50 young people, from the age of 10 upwards came together to put on a specially created concert show with songs and dances from a variety of musicals. The hope is that the young people, who take part and gain a grounding in musical theatre at a young age, will go on to become members of the main company once they are old enough to join. This year's production of *Oliver!* was an inspired choice for LAMA's 150th year as it gave a rare opportunity for junior members to perform alongside the adults. The show was very well received and again a complete sell out! This was a fitting return to the stage after two years due to Covid.

The company is in a healthy state, well supported by members and well run by an enthusiastic highly competent committee. Next year's show, *9 to 5*, is a complete contrast to *Oliver!* and the company is already looking forward to beginning rehearsals in the autumn.



Sweet Charity



Oliver!

Making society history

NODA North West



Clitheroe Parish Amateur and Operatic Society created history recently when they elected their new chair. Stephanie Zakrzewski became the first female chair in the society's 60 year history and is looking forward to continuing the success of the group.

Stephanie has been a member of Clitheroe Parish Amateur and Operatic Society for the past 11 years. They are dedicated and enthusiastic and it is always the committees ambition to deliver high quality performances that are enjoyed by audiences near and far.

They have just finished their spring play, *Off The Hook* which had a great review. Then, on 17th July, at St Marys Parish Church, Clitheroe, they performed a *Summer Serenade*, an afternoon of musical hits by their amazing show choir. Stephanie introduced their first show choir performance in her role of chair.

She added: "I absolutely love the world of amateur dramatics and the amazing people involved who give so much of their time and energy."



Panto Scripts

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

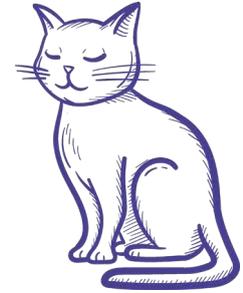




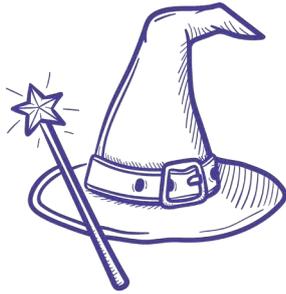
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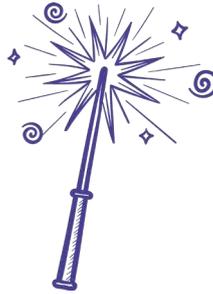
Modern, something different
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thing for everyone!



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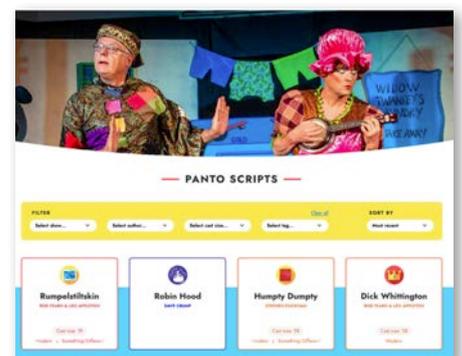
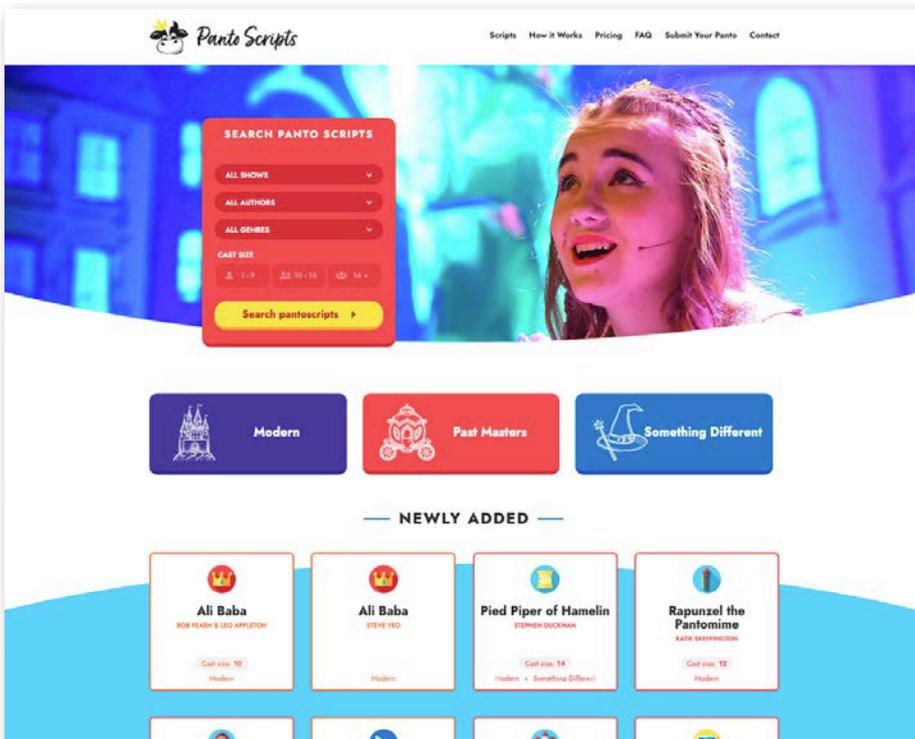


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Chesham Musical Theatre Company: from G&S to GBS in 100 years



Chesham Musical Theatre Company: from G&S to GBS in 100 years celebrates its centenary

The company first formed in 1922, by Richard Shaw Jepson, who was a talented amateur violinist and fine conductor. He brought together an assortment of singers, from the church choirs of the town - particularly the Congregational Church where he was choirmaster.

The first three shows by the embryonic company were minstrel concerts staged at the old Chesham Town Hall and at the Sycamore Hall in Amersham. After three performances of the show, Jepson and his assistant, Sara Christie, renamed the society 'The Cestreham Singers and Players'. Their first show was a concert version of Gounod's *Faust* in 1924, followed by a fully costumed performance of Gilbert and Sullivan's *Trial by Jury*. From then on, the Cestrehams started an almost continuous run of Gilbert and Sullivan productions up until 1937.

The Cestrehams were not an affluent society, with shows produced on a shoestring, and the members

themselves making the scenery and the costumes. The committee had great trouble restraining Jepson from spending cash they didn't possess; he often gave the impression he would like to have the London Symphony Orchestra in the pit instead of his faithful amateur group, the Mid-Bucks Symphony Orchestra!

WW2 brought a temporary halt to the proceedings, and, it wasn't until 1951, that the citizens of Chesham heard the strains of Gilbert and Sullivan again. The town council invited Maurice Barnes to reform the group and stage a show for the Festival of Britain. So, with the new name of Chesham Amateur Operatic Society, the company performed *The Gondoliers* once again.

In 1954, while rehearsing *Merrie England*, Maurice Barnes was taken ill and had to retire. His place as musical director was taken by Harold Green who was another stalwart from the pre-war days. Under Harold's baton, the company continued, first with Gilbert and Sullivan, then introducing operettas such as *Gipsy Baron*, *Sweethearts*, and *Orpheus in the Underworld*.

By the 1960's, the variety of shows now being performed led to another change of name to Chesham Light Opera Company in 1968. When Chesham finally opened its own purpose-built theatre, the Elgiva Hall, in 1976, they were the first company to test its effectiveness by staging a lesser-known Gilbert and Sullivan opera *The Sorcerer*.

With the arrival of *The Elgiva*, the company began to spread further into more modern musicals, starting with a memorable *Fiddler on the Roof* in 1977. Spring shows such as *My Fair Lady*, *Oklahoma!*, *The Pyjama Game* and *Annie Get Your Gun* became our annual fare. Regular Gilbert and Sullivan productions and concerts such as the popular Old Time Music Hall began being staged during the autumn, keeping the company together virtually all year.

During the 1990s it became clear that the audiences that had once flocked to see the performances of Gilbert and Sullivan were dwindling, and the local population were looking for more inventive and exciting shows. So, with London's West End less than an hour

away, the company decided to be more ambitious in its choice of shows. In 1996, the Elgiva Theatre closed its doors and reopened as the New Elgiva Theatre on St Mary's Way. Chesham Light Opera Company was again proud and privileged to be the first amateur company to perform in the New Elgiva when it opened in 1997, with the impetus to try more challenging and larger scale productions, using grander sets, cutting-edge lighting, and expansive soundscapes. In keeping with the new direction, the company name changed again to Chesham Musical Theatre Company, as they are known today, reflecting the move away from operatic shows

With this last name change, and moving into the new millennium, the company really started to pull out the big guns in terms of production values and staging, to huge acclaim, some lesser-known shows like *Copacabana* and *The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas*, the latter causing many raised eyebrows at the subject matter of the show! There was also much greater emphasis on dance and choreography and this remains integral to Chesham Musical Theatre Company's productions.

They are now preparing for a momentous celebration in 2022, their 100th Anniversary. Since 1922, CMT have continued to develop and adapt, from a traditional G&S society into a successful Musical Theatre Company, and are proud and privileged to continue to entertain the Chilterns area. Extra special celebrations and performances are planned for our centenary year, including our production of *My Fair Lady* in May, and an original juke box musical production authored by one of our members in October. It is the ongoing enthusiasm and dedication of their members which makes the company what it is today. To quote Abba '... without a song or a dance, what are we?'

That's not just any wedding dress

NODA Wales & Ireland



I attended *The Sound of Music* by Londonderry Musical Society back in March, and was fascinated to hear the story behind Maria's wedding dress.

"This wasn't just any wedding dress for The Sound of Music....this was my Nanny's beautiful wedding dress and what an honour it was to wear it on stage playing Maria. This dress was bought 60 years ago this year and was worn for the 60th Anniversary show of Londonderry Musical Society," says Caitlyn, who performed the role of Maria.

Sheelagh Hobart
NODA Wales & Ireland

Personal reflections

NODA North West



Sarah Stone speaks of her personal reflections as she performs in *Calendar Girls the Musical*.

Sarah Stone is no stranger to the theatre. Her impressive CV of talent extends back to when she was just 4 years old, she attended Sue Turner's School of Dance in Bispham. She has graced many a venue and she has trod the boards on both the amateur and professional stage. Yet, it is her performance in *Calendar Girls the Musical* that will not only test her abilities as an actor, but her strength as a person.

Calendar Girls is a story we are all familiar with and the rejuvenation of the story - turning it into a musical featuring songs from Gary Barlow - has taken the show to a new platform. It is based on a true story of how a group of middle aged women decide to bare all for a nude calendar to raise money for Leukaemia Research, after the husband of one of their members dies from cancer. As far as stories go, this one proved to be very relatable to Sarah.

Sarah takes up the story: "During rehearsals for *Glorious* in 2018, I went for a routine mammogram and this showed a suspicious area, so I had multiple tests and quite invasive biopsies. I was told this was a very low

grade 'ductal carcinoma in situ' but as they were over a large area, I would need a partial mastectomy and hopeful reconstruction. It all went to plan and they were able to reconstruct my breast at the same time with a fantastic result. This was followed by daily radiotherapy for 3 weeks at the Rosemere Centre in Preston. I decided that I was going to make these treatments into a positive, so every day, I asked a different friend (my angels) to come with me and afterwards we had catch up with coffee and cake!"

"I had to have 6 monthly infusions for 3 years which have thankfully now completed, and take an anti-cancer drug for 5 years, so I have 18 months to go! The following year, I went back in for surgery on the other breast to match them up as they looked quite different! After 2 years, my niece and I, with a small group, decided to do the London Moonwalk Marathon walk, through the night with just bras at the top! We raised over £5,000 between us. Nataly, my daughter, and I also recorded a CD together all in aid of Breast Cancer charities.

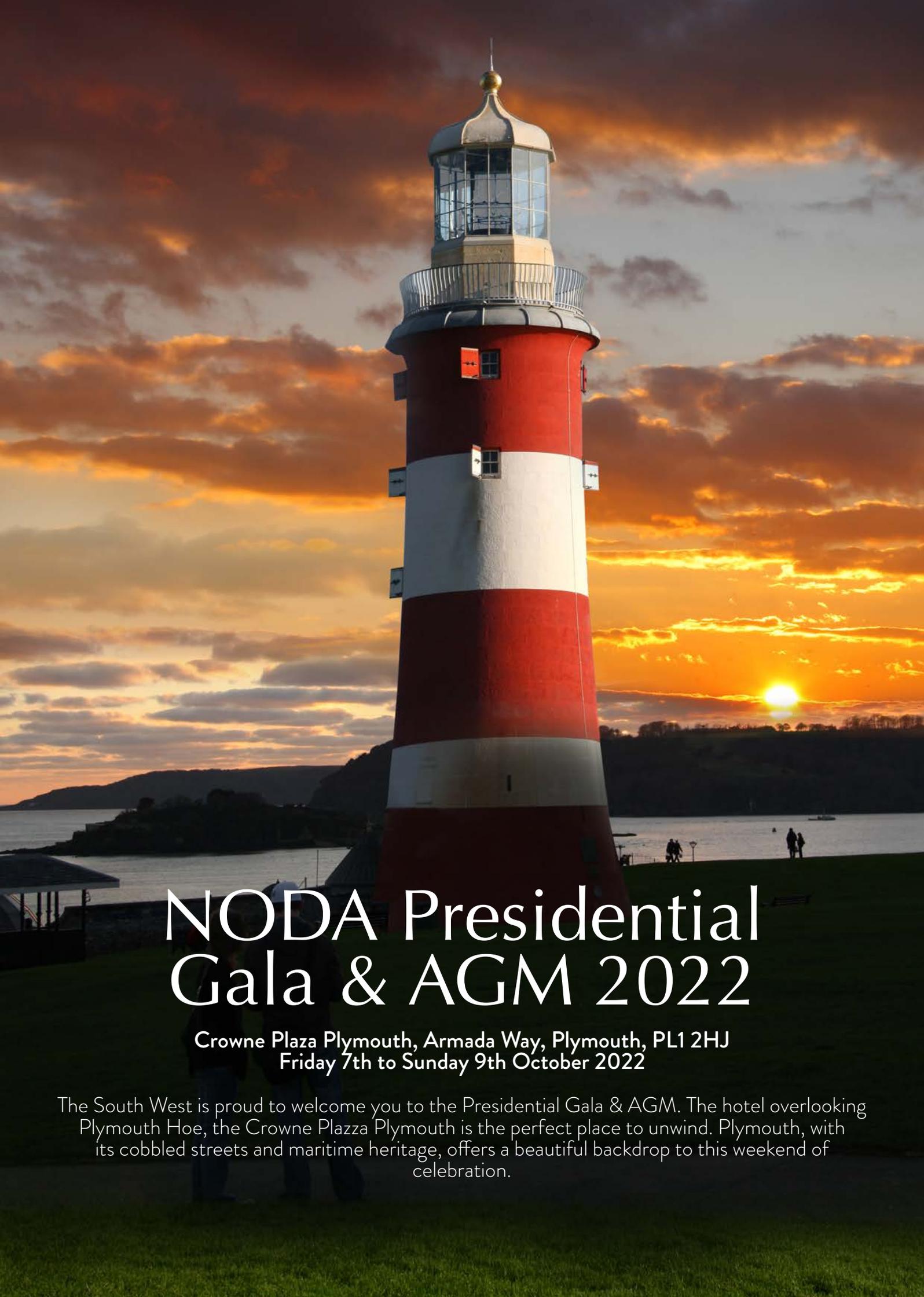
All through this I have continued to pursue all my activities, both at my church, my private teaching and my performing. And each of these in their own way has given me the strength and motivation to overcome any low moments. I am a 'never stop for a minute'

type of person and that's the way I like it. My husband calls me "Mrs Whizz Bang" as I fill every minute with something. Performing, whether it be acting, singing or dancing, is a great leveller. It makes you forget your troubles and takes you into a different world, as well as having a wonderful network of friends who help you through.

In February this year, I heard that St Annes Parish Operatic Society were going to stage *Calendar Girls the Musical* at the Lowther Pavilion, Lytham in July. I was absolutely delighted to be asked to play the role of Chris, who in the film was played by Helen Mirren. She is an inspirational, full of life person, and it is a pleasure to play her. I have read her book and just recently went to visit the actual village where it all happened, Cracoe in North Yorkshire. I went to all the places mentioned, including: the hall, the Green and the pub where they had their meetings. It really gave me an insight into the character and the story. I didn't actually think about the 'revealing' scenes at all. It's just about how good the characters were and the whole true story which appealed to me."

The best way to sum it up is by using a line from one of the songs featured in the show...

"There's a courage you'll only ever find, if you dare!"



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.

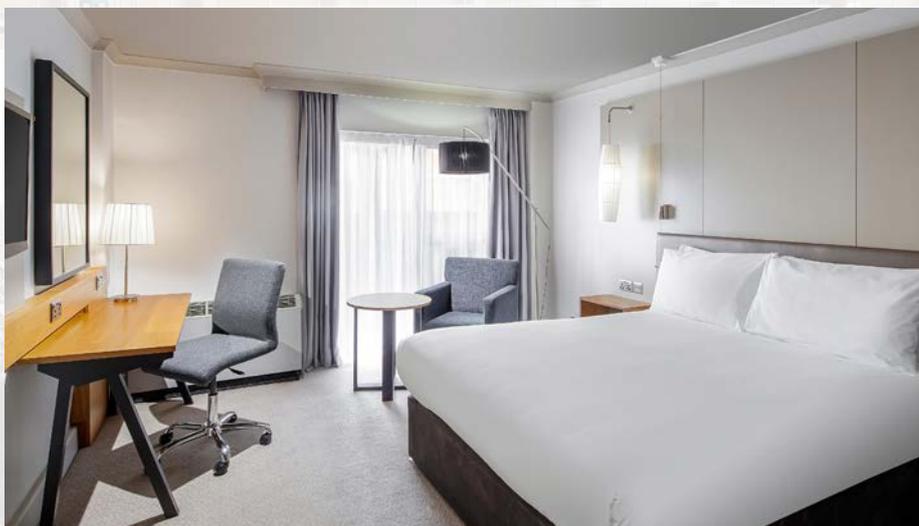
£216.00 per person

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	<input type="checkbox"/>	Double	<input type="checkbox"/>	Single	<input type="checkbox"/>	Twin (limited availability)		
Dietary Requirements	<input type="checkbox"/>	Vegetarian	<input type="checkbox"/>	Vegan	<input type="checkbox"/>	Gluten Free	<input type="checkbox"/>	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 Monday 12th September 2022. If after this date, please get in touch.

Deposit

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

<input type="checkbox"/>	Cheque made payable to NODA	<input type="checkbox"/>	Payment by BACS. Sort Code 60 - 83 - 01 Account 20379546 Quote GALA and your name	<input type="checkbox"/>	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

One Act Play Festival comes to the Blackmore Theatre!

NODA South West



Patricia Cowey Exmouth Play Festival organiser with Salterton Drama Club and Adjudicator David Price

Exmouth Players host the competition for the 41st Time!

In April, the Exmouth Players were delighted to be able to host a preliminary round of the All England One Act Amateur Play Festival, again at the Blackmore Theatre - for the forty-first time! After the break caused by the pandemic the run was shorter than usual, just over four nights, but they were still able to welcome six NODA Societies from around the area who presented eight very different productions.

The adjudicator this year was David Price from the Guild of Drama Adjudicators, who brought a wealth of forty years' experience in amateur theatre, including twenty years of drama adjudication. David charmed both audience and performers alike with his warmth and friendliness and certainly bolstered confidence all round with his encouragement and constructive suggestions. With a plethora of trophies and awards to present on the final night he quickly

had the audience on his side for the ceremony, particularly with his reference to recent events at the Oscars!

Four of the productions performed were original scripts. Broadclyst Theatre Group presented two plays by Rachel Feeny Williams, *Cast One Male* and *Believe Me*, and Salterton Drama Club presented *Cooking the Goose*, by Ken Elvy. Axminster Drama Club's entry *Tangled Web*, written by Simon Hurst, earned particular praise from the adjudicator, and Caroline Markham, who gamely went on with the book at very short notice, was awarded the Raymond Moxey Memorial Cup for the Adjudicator's Choice. *Tangled Web* also collected the Jim Vardy Memorial Award for that "Magic Moment", and the Andrew Benn Memorial Trophy for the "Most Enjoyable Play" chosen by the Friends of the Blackmore who came to every performance.

Sidmouth Amateur Dramatic Society's Youth entry *Thousandfurs*, won Best Youth Production. Axminster Drama

Club Youth received the Best Youth Runner-Up for *Teen Angel* while cast member Emily Newton received the Blackmore Trophy for Best Newcomer.

Broadclyst Theatre Group picked up the Best Original Script award for *Believe Me* and Salterton Drama Club the Rose Cumming Memorial Trophy for Diction and Expression, together with the Brixington Shield for Runner-Up Best Play.

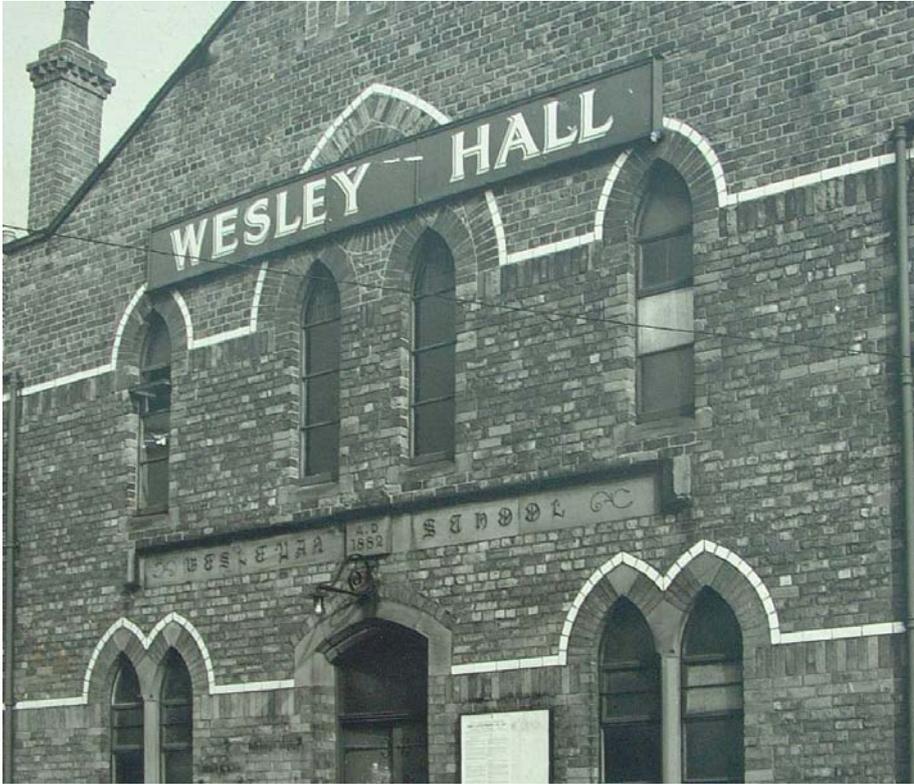
Mezzamorphoses, the Drama School, Exeter took the trophy for the most exciting production together with the Blackmore Theatre Shield for Best Play but had elected not to go through to the next round, so Salterton Drama Club went forward as Runners-Up.

A most successful and enjoyable event which provided an invaluable opportunity for societies to perform once again.

Tricia Barclay

Tynemouth Priory Theatre is marking a special anniversary

NODA North



The hidden gem tucked away on Percy Street, Tynemouth began life as a Methodist Chapel; it is now Tynemouth's very own special theatre. Tynemouth Priory Theatre Club staged its first play *Hobson's Choice* by Harold Brighouse in its brand-new building in 1972. Covid halted any plans to celebrate the Club's 75th Birthday; they are therefore celebrating 50 years of productions in their wonderful theatre. Along with a number of social events for friends and patrons, old and new, the club will once again stage the same play, *Hobson's Choice*, from the 7th to 12th November as part of their upcoming 2022/23 season of productions. The club are delighted that one of their longest standing members, Christine Coaster, who was in that original production in 1972, has readily agreed to direct the very same play she was in all those years ago.

The club began its life many years before in the 1940s and had already produced a great many very successful plays and revues in a local church hall. However, the dream was always to have their very own theatre and, as a result of a great deal of hard work and fundraising by a small band of committed members, the former chapel in Percy Street, Tynemouth, was acquired and renovated. To everyone's relief, and with much excitement, the curtain finally went up on Harold Brighouse's much-loved play to open the 1972/73 season.

During the last five decades, the club have staged numerous dramas, costume plays, pantomimes, thrillers, comedies and farces. Recent years have inevitably seen many changes. New seating has been added, a fly tower built, dressing rooms refurbished, the foyer much improved

and storage space developed. In addition, technical advances have enabled much better lighting and sound equipment to be installed. Such necessary improvements have ensured that the club has continued to realise the dream of their Founder, Ria Thompson, and her loyal band of followers, and continue to maintain the highest standard of production possible.

As a charitable trust, the club relies on the generosity of its members and local community, not only in the regular purchase of tickets, but more importantly the dedication of their time for free to engage in all aspects of running the theatre, both front of house and behind the scenes. All the profit from the ticket sales is reinvested in their shows, social events and maintaining and making improvements to the building; a fact which makes this anniversary all the more significant.

The forthcoming 50th Anniversary season begins in September with *Stone Cold Murder*, by James Cawood, followed by *Hobson's Choice* in November and the club's popular annual pantomime, which will be *Puss in Boots*, by Jon Dixon, in January 2023. *Baskerville*, by Ken Ludwig, will play in March 2023, and the season will be rounded off by *Steel Magnolias*, by Robert Harling, in May 2023.

It will be a very special occasion to see *Hobson's Choice* on the stage at Tynemouth Priory Theatre once again, and the club hopes that members past and present, audiences young and old, will come to celebrate with us to mark fifty wonderful years in our special theatre.

Break a leg...literally!

NODA North East



When NODA North East Regional Representative for District 5, Ashley Booker, attended The Wombwell & District Amateur Operatic Society's Jubilee Concert, to celebrate HM Queen Elizabeth's Platinum Jubilee, he did what he always does and put a post on Facebook complete with a photo of the programme and a comment "Break a Leg everyone". Little did Ashley know that one member would take this literally.

The group had performed hit music from the 50s, 60s, 70s and were now performing songs from the 1980s. They had just finished singing 'I Just Called to Say I Love You,' the lights went down, the men exited from the stage, and it was the turn of the ladies to perform the hit song from The Weather Girls, 'It's Raining Men'.

Whilst moving from the top rostra to the main stage area, society member Janice Parkin missed her footing and fell, unfortunately breaking her ankle during her fall.

The show had been going really well and Ashley said both he and his mum, who had accompanied him, were thoroughly enjoying it. His mum, Sue was looking forward to hearing 'Sweet Caroline' which was to be the closing number.

Society Chairman, Adele Murray, who had also directed and choreographed the concert, had to speak to the audience to inform them the society was going to halt the show as an ambulance had been called to take Janice to the hospital as it was feared she had broken her ankle. They had been informed the ambulance could take up to two hours. Janice was still on the stage and could not be moved, therefore the show could not go on.

Audience members were told they could, if they wished, come back the following evening to see the full production, or they could have their money back. Some agreed to come back on the Saturday, some were unable and only a very small number

requested their money back.

Paramedics attended and took Janice, who was in terrible pain, to hospital where she was admitted and operated on the following day.

Members of the society sent messages of support to Janice and an announcement was made prior to the following evening's performance, to inform people, who had attended the previous evening, about her condition.

A post was also added to the society's Facebook page about Janice. It was very warming to see the messages which were added from patrons who had attended on the Friday evening.

Janice spent just over a week in Barnsley District General Hospital where she underwent surgery to initially fit a stabilising frame to her leg and, on a second operation, had pins and plates inserted into her leg, plus a temporary plaster cast fitted. Janice was told she would need another cast on her leg after ten days and may have to undergo further surgery.

Following the concert, members of Wombwell Amateur Operatic Society started rehearsals for the hit musical *Oliver* which will be performed in September. Janice had been planning to audition for a part in this, but obviously, due to her injury would not be able to take part in this one, but is hoping to be in future productions.

Janice attended hospital again as requested. Her cast was removed as well as the stitches and a brand new sparkling pink cast was applied; pink being Janice's favourite colour. She was told to return to hospital in another three weeks where the pink cast would be removed and she would have to wear a surgical boot.

Flames of Injustice

NODA East



When a 16-year-old youth was hanged at Chelmsford's gaol in 1829, for arson, supporters of the lad, whom many believed was innocent, probably doubted that his story would outlive either the judge who sentenced him to death or the owners of properties which had been set ablaze.

But in October 2022, the memory of James Cook (sometimes spelled 'Cooke') will be reignited in a new musical to be staged by the Witham Amateur Operatic Society (WAOS) in Essex.

It is a genuine community project. The expanded story, script and music of *Flames of Injustice* have been created through a collective and collaborative effort within the WAOS community, with book and lyrics by Sarah Osborne (Director of the NODA Summer School and a drama practitioner, director and writer), and music by local musician, Frances Garland.

WAOS President, Stewart Adkins, discovered the story of James Cooke several years ago when he asked local historian and author, Janet Gyford,

what memorable and significant events had ever taken place in Witham. "I said, 'I'm looking to come up with a theme for a musical for us [WAOS]' for our centenary, and what had happened in Witham's history that was really dramatic?" Adkins recalled.

"She said there were only two things: one was the hanging of James Cooke and the second was a railway crash in 1905, and 10 people died." The crash in question involved the London Liverpool Street to Cromer train, which remained at speed while going through the Witham station. In addition to the 10 passengers, a luggage handler at Witham was killed.

Dramatic yes, but Adkins believed that the tragic story of Cooke who was hanged "probably for something he didn't do" had more stage musical production potential.

"The only thing I was concerned about was, how do we create something which is just terribly tragic?" Adkins said. "People don't like to go out of a musical feeling, 'Oh, that was awful, that was really sad.' They want some kind of uplifting thing or series of events."

He compared it with *Les Miserables*, in which virtually every tragedy known to man occurs but ends with hope. "At the end, yes, there is some happiness, and that's what we needed to create," Adkins explained.

To lead WAOS through their project, Adkins said, "I thought, I know the very person that can help us create this musical." He invited Sarah Osborne to Witham. "I sent her the historical details, she came down and we had a whole weekend of workshops. There were 16 members. We had Saturday and Sunday, going through the whole process. So, by the end of that weekend, we'd created characters, we then went through scenes and Sarah was great in challenging us all the time: 'Well, what do you want to say? What are the key words or the key emotions that you wish in this part of the story?' and we went through it, you know: revenge, injustice, poverty, anger, whatever it was. We settled on one or two, which then created a seed."

Launched before the start of the global pandemic, the musical project required virtual meetings to develop lyrics with Osborne, "and we also did a first reading of the entire script on Zoom", said Show Director, Rhianna Howard, a volunteer, while Covid-19 raged to move it forward.

Now, however, WAOS are in the home stretch of seeing the project completed, under Howard's direction. Auditions were held in May, and *Flames of Injustice* is set to run 24-29 October at the Public Hall Witham.

"I jumped at the chance to be involved," Howard said. "I was invited to pitch to the committee about my vision for the show, and well, here we are!"

Act I ends with Cooke's hanging

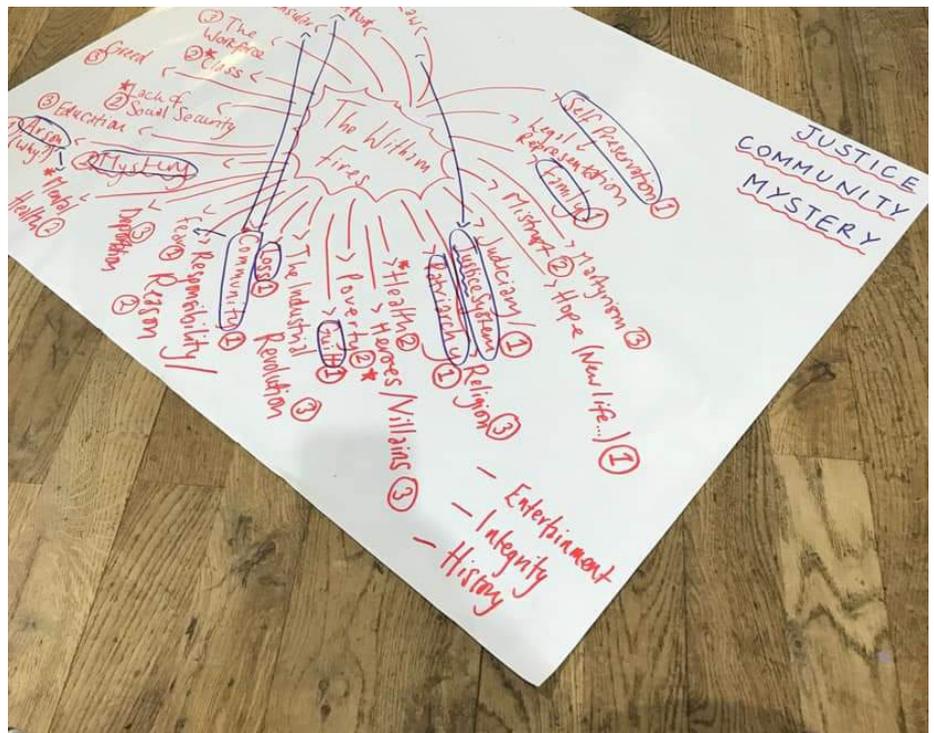
offstage. With the Swing Riots in the background, Act II sets a path for redemption, even romantic love for two major characters and “justice does come about in the sense that they do find the person that actually committed the crimes”, Howard revealed. “There’s actually a moment of peace and calm in Witham; they (the local community) have learned from the mistakes and so they’re moving forward, but there’s also stuff we’ve added so that it isn’t completely sombre.”

The company are rehearsing two, sometimes three, times a week to ensure this labour of love is polished and ready for the show’s debut. “It’s amazing that we’re getting to tell this story,” Howard said. “I didn’t have a clue who James Cooke was until Stewart brought in this story and we started working on it.”

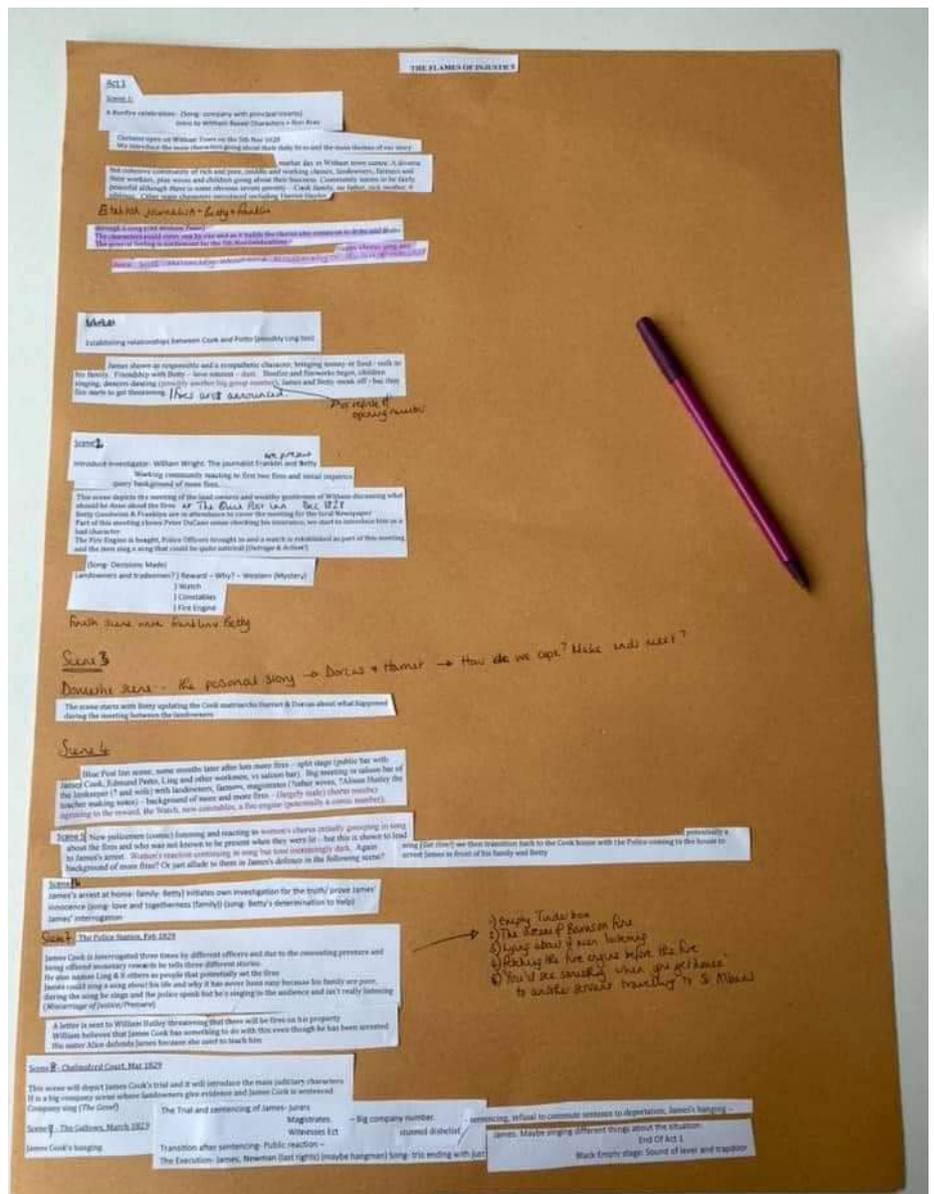
As the show marches toward its staging, Howard is delivering talks to area schools about its history and also sharing the story of how WAOS created a musical. And both Adkins and Howard acknowledge that though tragic, the historic tale is compelling. “I love a good story,” Adkins said. “And I wanted to have a story that was local to us and meant something to our community. I felt we might be able to sell a new musical. The local people know there’s a wood named after James Cooke – they might be curious enough about ‘The James Cooke Musical’ to come along and see what it’s all about.”



Stuart Adkins



Development storyboard



Development storyboard

A trip to the archives

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

Following on from the NODA Today Spring 2020 Edition, a copy of part 1 was located, and for the first time, both original articles are together.

CREATION OF A LADY

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

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

Part II appeared in the June, 1968 issue of the N.O.D.A BULLETIN



It seemed to me, when I graduated from college, that everything that could be said in lyrics had been said. If you were witty, how could you be wittier than Larry Hart? If you were romantic, how could you be more romantic than Oscar Hammerstein? We start off, in any art form, eclectic; but it's an acute problem-how to find an individuality.

I've been writing lyrics, professionally, since 1940. It's only within the last few years that I have begun to feel for myself, that I've come close to finding something that's pretty much my own. It isn't Hammerstein. It isn't Hart. It isn't Porter; it's my own particular vernacular and the first song in *My Fair Lady*, "Why Can't the English", I think, illustrates what I mean.

The first ten minutes of any musical offering should dictate the style of the entire evening: on what level the work is to be accepted critically and emotionally. Loewe and I wanted Professor Henry Higgins to be the first one to sing. We decided he should not be a singer; he should be an actor who sort of spoke some songs. We wanted the audience to know at the beginning of the evening, before they had heard anybody else-this was what they were in for. Higgins was going to sing and the question was what. There was no situation, so obviously it was to be a character song; it would concern itself with the cornerstones of his personality, his frustrations, his intense interest in the English language. How do you write a comic song of that nature, which is to be spoken, and not have it sound like Coward or Gilbert? We wrote several versions until we finally discovered a key. We didn't write the song first; it was written much later, the result of having solved another problem. We found that if we could write each comedy song based on some emotion-either frustration or anger or disappointment or bitterness-on a definite emotion, we

could escape from a humour that came from clever rhymes or from the author's intrusion of himself. It would come out of the antic of the character.

*Look at her-a pris'ner of the gutters;
Condemned by ev'ry syllable she utters.
By right she should be taken out and hung.
For the cold blooded murder of the English tongue!*

I can only speak of the second song, "Wouldn't It Be Lovely", with pain because it was obvious that the leading lady was there and she must have a song to establish her. In a musical play, even with the dialogue of Bernard Shaw, nothing establishes a character as much as a song. My great frustration was that I couldn't find a climax for the song without going into someone's head resting on a knee, and there I was back in "Over the Rainbow" and "The Man I Love". I went seven weeks trying to find a solution for it. Finally, I couldn't find a creature comfort that was as climactic as someone's head resting on a knee. So the lyric stayed.

*Someone's head restin' my knee,
Warm and tender as he can be,
Who takes good care of me ...
Oh, wouldn't it be lovely? Lovely! Lovely!
Lovely! Lovely!*

Every time I hear it. my skin turns a little crabby. The next song of the play, I think, is a good example of the interrelationship between composer and lyricist. No lyric writer can ever realise himself or his talents alone; I don't think it's possible for a lyric writer to ever reach his full expression without continuing collaboration with a composer. The knowledge of how a composer thinks and how he creates and how he feels about work is simply of incalculable influence upon a lyric writer and upon his ideas. "With a Little Bit of Luck" was the introduction of the father, Doolittle, and we wanted a character song to establish him.

*The Lord above made liquor for temptation.
To see if man could turn away from sin.
The Lord above made liquor for temptation-but
With a little bit of luck,
With a little bit of luck,
When temptation comes you'll give right in!*

We decided the type was to be an English music hall song. The reason is indicative of what mean by knowing the abilities and inclinations of a composer: Loewe does not write jazz. He's Viennese by birth and is more at home in tempo than rhythm.

The song, "Just You Wait", wherein Eliza Doolittle gives vent to her hatred and anger of Higgins, was the song that told us how to write the show.

*Just you wait, 'enry 'iggins, just you wait.
You'll be sorry but your tears' be to late!*

*You' ll be broke and I' ll have money'
Will I help you? Don't be funny!
Just you wait, 'enry 'iggins, just you wait!*

We had written eight songs before we wrote that one, and none of them seemed right. It was after writing "Just You Wait" that we threw out all the others and started over, because it was there that we suddenly saw the value, the whole kind of freshness that seemed to nail down an emotional attitude, an emotional point of view.

I don't know how to talk about "The Rain in Spain" because we had no idea what its effect would be. We wrote it in about ten minutes. We're very slow workers; I don't know what happened. I said one day, "We'd better write something where they scream with joy about the Rain in Spain". Fritz sat down and wrote it in a very few minutes.

*By George, she's got it!
By George, size's got it!
Now once again, where does it rain?*

We thought it would be amusing if Higgins did a little Spanish fandango-and that was the end of it. I think it's quite obvious to any student that it's not a great piece of music, nor a great lyric. It's just a pure, simple piece of business that seems to come out of Eliza's longing. Certainly it's nothing anybody should examine twice. "I Could Have Danced All Night" was an unsolvable problem; the reasons were manifold. One was a dramatic one. It was impossible for Higgins to love Eliza; for them to admit to themselves that they felt anything emotional about each other. At the same time, you have to have a ballad in a musical and it seemed like the place for it; but every song we wrote-we wrote seven-said too much. Somehow they seemed to indicate that Eliza was in love with Higgins or that she felt something for him. Finally, we were only able to write the song when we were near the end of the whole work itself and we had written "I've Grown Accustomed to Her Face". We said, "There's the ballad. We don't have to worry about a ballad. We'll just go back and write a happy song".

*I could have danced all night!
I could have danced all night! And still have begged for more.
I could have spread my IVings
And done a thousand things
I've never done before.*

Writing happy songs is the thing

I care least about doing. I'm embarrassed by that lyric. Although I think the first half of it is very good, it's not something I'm proud of; it's not a lyric I enjoy listening to in the theatre. I said to Loewe, "Can't we make it look a little more interesting? We'll put the servants in and give it some kind of life other than a girl being ecstatically happy".

"Get Me to the Church on Time" was needed for many reasons. When you have thirty people standing in the wings,

somewhere in the middle of the second act - they ought to come on stage and sing; after two intimate scenes, we felt the need for splash and colour; we felt the need for Doolittle underscoring his getting married. The best way by which Fritz could capture that kind of gaiety was the music hall song.

*I'm getting married in the morning!
Ding dong! the bells are gonna chime.
Pull out the stopper!
Let's have a Vhopper!
But get me to the church on time!*

It has no modern rhythm but it has real vitality. From my point of view, it's too heavily rhymed and nothing of which to be proud. The last song, "I've Grown Accustomed to Her Face" is my favourite. Years ago, Maxwell Anderson wrote a book called "Off Broadway" and for those students interested in writing for the musical theatre, I certainly recommend it. He discusses what he calls the "recognition scene", that scene wherein the hero or heroine recognises the nature of his problem, be it external or internal, and either conquers it or is conquered by it. We felt that Higgins must have a recognition scene in which he recognises the nature of his problem, albeit obliquely and slightly astigmatically.

*Damn! Damn! Damn! Damn!
I've grown accustomed to her face!
She's almost makes the day begin.
I've grown accustomed to the tune
She whistles night and noon.
Her smiles. Her frowns.
Her ups, her downs,
Are second nature to me now;
Like breathing out and breathing in.
I was serenely independent and
content before we met;
Surely I could always be that way
again - and yet
I've grown accustomed to her looks;
Accustomed to her voice: Accustomed to her face.*

The only difference is - he neither conquers it nor is conquered by it.

Eliza? where the devil are my slippers?

There are tears in Eliza's eyes. She too understands.

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

*Ev'ry Duke and Earl and Peer is here.
Ev'ry one who should be here is here.
What a smashing, positively dashing
Spectacle: The Ascot op'ning day.*

It's not enough to be able to write a charming little gavotte. It has to be a very good gavotte; it has to be very good music. An inconsequential piece of music will detract from a song as a whole, no matter how good the lyric may be. It's very hard - to the point of impossible - for a lyric writer to ever reach any sort of self-fulfilment without

a working knowledge of music, it might be an intuitive knowledge of music. It might be a trained knowledge. I've never known a great lyric writer who wasn't intensely musical, who didn't have decided indeed about form - not only in terms of lyrics, but of music as well.

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

*I have often walked down this street before;
But the pavement always stayed beneath my feet before
All at once am I
Several stories high
Knowing I'm on the street where you live.*

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

We had written a rather pee middle part for "On The Street Where You Live" which went something like "Some men hate to wait and wait. If by chance the girl is late. I don't mind the waiting part at all... I would wait through winter, spring and fall. And oh! the towering feeling." Columbia Records was recording the score, and Mitch Miller said, "Oh my God, that's a very nice song, but the middle part is terrible." And Fritz said, "I don't care what you do to it. I hate it. You can take it out or do anything you want with it." As a concession to Miller and because Loewe had no pride in it whatsoever, we took out the pee middle part.

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

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

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

The next song, "Show Me", is a clear example of searching high and low for an emotional attitude in order to avoid saying something that has been said before. We have the obvious place where girl and boy have broken up, the obvious place from a song that always appears in the second Act of a Musical - glad to be unhappy. We wrote a song called "Over Your Head". No matter how we approached the music and lyrics, it came out full of

self-pity and seemed wrong for the character. It bore to me no indication of a proud Cockney girl. We examined the emotion very carefully; we examined it from every conceivable side. We finally arrived at the idea of her turning bitterness and heartbreak into anger against Freddie.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The actual song which was written, "I'm An Ordinary Man", is written in two moods, and those two moods, no matter how good the lyric, could not be possible without

those two moods being in the music: the soft shoe feel of tranquillity as he protests his gentleness and innocence.

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

and the anger

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

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



The show must go on, Dolly!

NODA Scotland



reach a high note gave you a mouthful of cloth and reduced volume. It was hard to gauge how this was all going to sound. The interesting thing was that in terms of remembering what had been rehearsed previously, the singing came back easily. The MD was delighted with the sound and that he was not going to have to start from scratch. It was not the same with movement however. With fewer women, places had to be changed and with Covid related absences, the chorus was continually working with spaces and found it difficult to remember steps and places. The producer seemed very placid about it all, but she must have been very frustrated at the number of times things had to be gone over and over and over.

Like many companies Falkirk Operatic Society was devastated to have to cancel *Hello, Dolly!* a month before it was due to perform it in April 2020.

The committee tried hard to keep the company going, like many groups, with singing on zoom etc. However, the technical difficulties of singing to a machine at home and trying to keep in tune without hearing others etc. proved too unwieldy and the effort withered. Quizzes and chats were all tried, but it was hard to keep in touch with everyone. So come last autumn, when the committee called a meeting to see if the company wanted to go ahead with *Hello, Dolly!* for April 2022, it did not know quite what to expect. Would folk come back? Would there be enough men to do the waiter's gallop? Would the principals still be available? Would folk return to the theatre?

In the event these concerns were all groundless. The meeting voted unanimously to continue with *Hello, Dolly!* Only one of the principals was unavailable. Fifteen men came along.

Wow! A few of our ladies' chorus had other commitments, but the show could go on.

Then the rollercoaster of the journey to curtain up began. Our usual rehearsal hall was unavailable, but the offer of other premises solved the problem. To ensure everyone's safety, new rules were in place concerning testing before rehearsals, hand gels, cleaning chairs, not sharing music, social distancing and so on. The worst was singing with masks on. As all singers will agree, especially sopranos, this was not easy. Trying to take a big breath to hold a line or

Scenery, costumes and sound were all contacted and ready to go, though the new transport costs for the scenery gave the treasurer some more grey hairs. Then Covid reared its head again and continued to bedevil rehearsals from the turn of the year right up to the show. The lady who was Mrs Malloy had Covid and was so debilitated she had to withdraw. Thankfully she was replaced by one who had been in the original auditions. One of our waiters had a change in job circumstances and regrettably had to withdraw. Luckily another young man came along to replace him so that the whole



choreography of the gallop did not need to be changed. Then the virus took a firmer grip in March, and one by one and sometimes three, folk were ill including the MD. Two of our male principals fell ill, then a third. The committee privately wondered if this show was ever going to go on. This time, if it had to be cancelled, there was not the cushion of insurance. Fingers were crossed and deep breaths were taken.

The rehearsals limped along until April. The chorus numbers and The Waiters' Gallop had not yet rehearsed with everyone there and indeed the waiters went on stage in the opening two nights with one short. The waiters were so good no one noticed. Then the week before the show the producer tested positive and worst calamity of all, the society's president, who was the leading lady, fell ill with Covid. Even worse her husband suffered a heart attack on the Tuesday and she could not visit him.

A few dark days followed. Would the show have to be cancelled again? Would there be the nightmare of returning ticket money again? A contingency plan was put in place. One of the ladies was prepared to sing Dolly. Costumiers were contacted for another set of Dolly costumes. Would they be needed? In the end, no. On the day of the dress rehearsal, Dolly's husband was allowed home from hospital and, as she was now negative, she insisted she went along and did the show she had worked so hard to get going. Sighs of relief all round.

Falkirk OS had a brilliant show week. The buzz on stage, the relief and the pleasure in performing at last, was fantastic. The audiences were great and so appreciative and supportive. They had no knowledge of the difficulties the company had undergone. If the committee had known the hurdles it would have to overcome it would not have set out on this venture. Other companies have trodden a similar path and not been so fortunate in the end. Here's to amateur theatre everywhere and to their hard-working committees without whom life in local communities would be greatly diminished.



A Taste of NODA Theatre Summer School comes to Devon!

NODA South West



Ian Good comes to Lympstone for 2 days of wonderful workshops!

NODA South West enjoyed a taste of Summer School recently at Ian Good's two performance skills workshops: "Page to Stage" and "The Power of Ensemble". Ian, a professional director and popular tutor at NODA Summer School, led members of local societies through a series of lively and engaging activities to develop truthful characters from scripts and as an ensemble. One participant said: "It was brilliant ... to say it got me out of my comfort zone (panto baddie) is an understatement!"

Sharon Wayland (District 5 Rep) organised the 2-day event in Lympstone Village Hall in East Devon

and is keen to organise more theatre workshops for adults in the South West. "Drama classes in this area are available for children but rarely for adults," she said. "Attending a workshop is a great way to add to your skills toolbox without the time commitment and pressure of a performance run. It can also be a great way to attract new members, share experiences and strengthen connections between neighbouring societies."

Anyone in the South West interested in being involved in future workshops, contact Sharon at sharon.wayland@noda.org.uk

Sharon Wayland

A social event like no other

NODA North



Dryburn Theatrical Workshop has always prided itself on being a very welcoming, sociable and tight-knit theatre group. With a wide range of social events across the year, such as post-show meals out, an annual picnic, after-show parties, or even their weekly post-rehearsal trips to the pub, DTW's members very much enjoy spending time together outside the rehearsal room.

With this in mind, one of their members has regularly taken it upon themselves to organise a jam-packed group weekend away to Brown Rigg Lodges, a collection of self-catering lodges located in the small village of Bellingham, Northumberland. With their first group weekend away there being nearly thirteen years ago, their last trip was in 2018. Having never expected the next one to be four years later due to a pandemic, this holiday was highly anticipated.

The trip was held in its usual slot of the last May Bank Holiday weekend, although this one was of course slightly later due to the Queen's Jubilee. The

five days included an eclectic and exciting mix of activities and events with over forty DTW members and their families, the details of which were handed out a couple of months prior, in the form of itineraries, allowing everyone to plan and prepare for the occasions.

Day One saw the arrival of the guests, who were welcomed with a large BBQ feast followed by some fun group games that continued well into the night.

Day Two began with a sunny walk up to the popular Hareshaw Linn waterfall,

where guests enjoyed a picnic on the rocks. The evening was host to a spectacularly colourful Rainbow Party, where each of the six lodges had to represent a different colour through costume, food and an act. The party was a vision of colour and creativity, the buffet was varied and delectable, and the acts were brimming with fun and talent.

Day Three first included a 'Portrait Artist of the Year' competition, where the six lodges were each given a supply of painting materials in order to create six portraits of a fellow lodger. These were thrillingly revealed and





judged later in the afternoon during a Jubilee Street Party, which saw guests dress in red, white and blue and feast on a spectacular jubilee-themed buffet. The sun luckily continued to shine, and the fifties music perfectly accompanied the lovely afternoon. That night was the 'Comedy Game Night', a fun game-show style evening with a variety of rounds to test the guests both mentally and physically.

Day Four began with a Treasure Hunt held in the surrounding countryside, followed by a Sports Day afternoon complete with classic games such as the egg and spoon race, the sack race and tug-of-war. Once the winning team was awarded their medals, everyone finished the day off with a game of British Bulldog on the homemade slip-and-slide.

The final evening was host to a Murder Mystery Party, where each guest was given (in advance of the trip) a

character to portray for the night. The victim dramatically 'died' halfway through the party, and it was up to the rest of the guests to determine the murderer, with the aid of some enthusiastic and fervent acting skills.

On Day Five, once the lodges were vacated and the cars were packed, guests stopped by the village of Corbridge on the way home to enjoy a well-needed pub Sunday lunch.

After arriving back home, the DTW members had only ten days before their upcoming production of 'Legally Blonde' opened, as that too finally had its day after first being postponed over two years ago. The show proved a huge success for the group, as the hard work, talent and commitment of the cast and crew finally made it to the stage. It was certainly a busy few weeks for some of their members, but ones which were filled with fun, friendship, and memories to last a lifetime.

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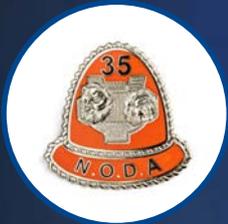
20 Year Badge



25 Year Badge



30 Year Badge



35 Year Badge



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Who can apply?

The awards are intended for those who, week after week, attend rehearsals or spend many hours backstage or on 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?

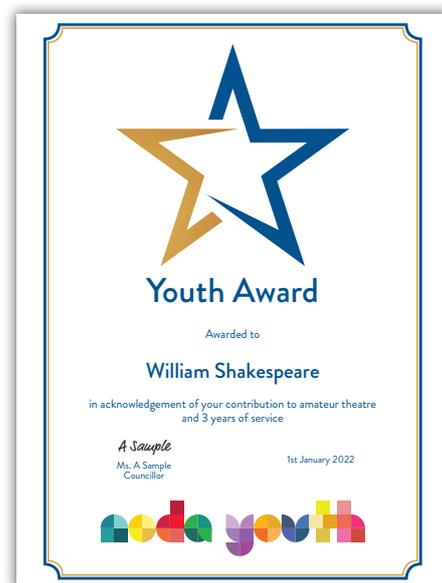
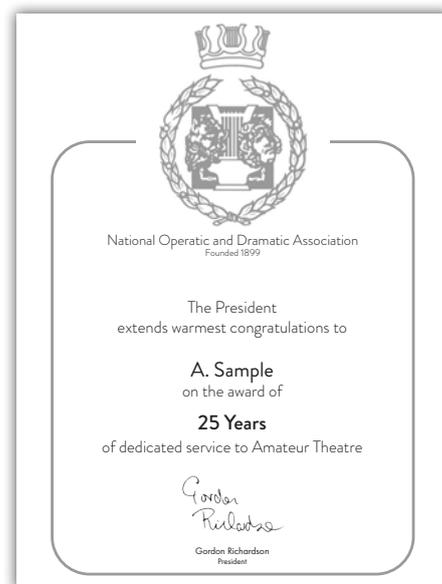
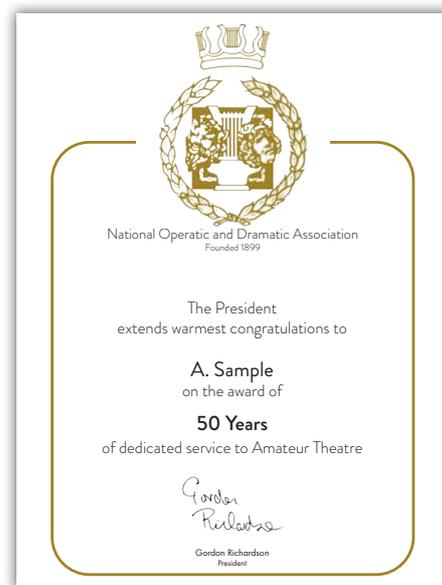
If you are a member of a society, the society will have to apply on your behalf. This can be done via our online application portal or by hard copy form. If you are a NODA individual or joint member, you will be able to apply directly for your award via the online application portal or by hard copy form.

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.



WOD you believe it?

NODA London



Surrey Society keeps things truly in the family, as chairman Jamie Weatherall explains.

"I joined Woodmansterne Operatic and Dramatic Society (WODS) in 1999, just for a bit of fun, thinking I might only do one show. Now here I am, 23 years on and chairman of, I am delighted to say, one of the best amateur dramatic societies in our area.

In 2000, I was asked if I had any daughters that could play the part of Liat in 'South Pacific', a young Polynesian girl who had no lines, so I put my eldest daughter Deanne forward for the part, thinking this was a one-off. She thoroughly enjoyed the part, despite having nothing to say.

She auditioned for the next musical, 'Me And My Girl', and got the lead role of Sally at the tender age of 18. In the succeeding 22 years, she has had many leading parts and is now heading up our junior section along with Erin Ridgwell. Mary, Erin's mother, was the lead in 'Irene', my first production when I was full of confidence and stage presence. She inspired me to continue on the am dram path. At that time, Mary had just one



daughter, but quickly followed with two more remarkable girls who have graced our stage in many performances.

Families tend to run in our society: we've had shows where we have had three generations of the same family performing together, including a grandmother, daughter and granddaughter!

My wife Nicky has appeared in nearly all of our productions alongside Deanne and me, including 'Blitz', when my youngest child Faye made me very emotional when she played my stage daughter."

Mary adds: "When I moved into the village, my youngest daughter Erin was 18 months old and I joined WODS to get to know my neighbours.

I appeared in quite a few shows and Erin's sisters, Keeley and Tara, were dragged to rehearsal in the pram. All three eventually joined the juniors, then we started to do shows together, after Erin had appeared in 'Annie Get Your Gun' and as my stage daughter in 'Blitz'.

Keeley (now a TV and film make-up artist, who was gutted when 'Sister Act' was postponed and she had to pull out because

of work commitments) and Tara joined us for 'Annie' and we were all hooked.

It became the thing we do together – WODS is our little bit of sparkle!"

Jamie continues, "Apart from having the pleasure of appearing in such roles as Bumble with Mary as Widow Corney and as Moonface Martin with her in 'Anything Goes', I've had a few awkward (but I am pleased to say, successful!) pairings playing opposite Deanne as her romantic interest. These have included her title roles of 'Thoroughly Modern Millie' and 'Annie Get Your Gun'.

Then with our long-awaited COVID-delayed recent production of 'Sister Act' (which I am proud to say was a sell-out, with a standing ovation on the Friday evening), it was another show playing my daughter's love interest, so out came the hair dye once again to try and reduce my age by at least 20 years!

Mary was cast as Mother Superior, with her youngest daughter Tara as Sister Mary Robert, while Tara's sibling Erin doubled up as a waitress and a nun. Not forgetting my wife, playing a rare combination of a nun and a prostitute...

We have a thriving junior section, and now I can't wait for my granddaughter, Amelia, to be old enough to move up to the senior section and play alongside Deanne, my wife and me.

Meanwhile, I can't help thinking that perhaps we should have re-named our most recent show 'Mums and Dads, Daughters and Sisters Act The Musical'.

Incidentally, some past members of WODS subsequently turned professional. Adam Pettigrew has starred in the West End in 'Avenue Q' and 'Wicked' and Ellie Edmonds is a successful operatic performer. But that's another story..."

Workshop with Joe Harmster

NODA East

A play, says director and consultant Joe Harmston, is “a series of arcs”.

And, he adds, there “might even be little arcs within scenes”.

Hanging on Harmston’s word were theatre enthusiasts, from Essex and beyond, who paid a small sum recently to take part in a four-hour workshop “From page to stage” with the director, who has worked with Harold Pinter, Peter Hall, Trevor Nunn and numerous other theatre luminaries.

With the emphasis firmly on storytelling, the workshop incorporated dialogue readings, along with physical exercises and interpersonal communication games. Altogether, they provided the multi-generational participants with a neat set of tools with which to approach new roles and directing duties.

Organised by the Little Easton-based Greville Theatre Company, the workshop took place in the atmospheric Barn Theatre in Great Dunmow, Essex, where the group performs two productions a year. The workshop’s aim, organisers say, was to expose interested amateur dramatics

folk to new ways of thinking about dialogue, scripts and the storytelling that must pull actors and audience through the action.

With any play, there are questions that must be answered: who, what, where, why and when? Harmston said. “Actors need to be clear about what their character knows but also what they do not know, and clear about who knows what when...always looking for clues.

It’s questions that drive things forward,” he said. “For example, the plays of the late playwright Pinter always start with a question.”

To illustrate a way of examining the start of a play or story, Harmston offered a comparison of considering the ‘when’ of the stage action occurring: “Either ‘today is the day’ or ‘today is just another day’. When does it become a surprising day?”

Directors, for their part, must “create an environment where people think they can be brave as the actors explore the story and the characters”, he urges.

Each participant has brought a favourite piece of dialogue from a

contemporary play script to read out loud to Harmston and to the others, followed by a short discussion of the characters portrayed, the action and what the audience has learned about both in just the single, brief vignette. Ranging from the drama *Kindertransport* to the comedy *As Bees in Honey Drown*, the scripts all demonstrate how Harmston’s argument in favour of mentally asking questions can be applied to any play.

Later, Harmston gave the students scripts that were unfamiliar to them, and they mined the pages of dialogue by Strindberg, Moliere and others to consider the questions behind the writing. Physical actions designed to explain something about characters or activity also came into play. The ball game ‘Zip Zap Boing’ focused on directing energy at each other and quick reactions to share the energy in unexpected directions.

“It was a mentally and physically stimulating four hours”, attendees said afterwards. They felt stretched, they said, and both appreciated and enjoyed seeing their avocation in a new light.

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