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at Musical Con 2022

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ISSN 2756-214X



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Welcome to the Winter edition of NODA Today. It is amazing to see so many groups back on stage and sharing a host of their wonderful stories.

As the pantomime season and festive activities approach, it is heart-warming to reflect on the amazing achievements and successes, in recent months, for

so many of our members. In this edition, we celebrate many group milestones, but also those starting their journeys in amateur theatre with our NODA Youth section.

NODA's purpose is to spread the word about amateur theatre across the UK. In October, we showcased our organisation at the inaugural Musical Con, an event that celebrated all things musical theatre. Attending such events gives us an additional insight into how to promote not only the services NODA provides, but all the exciting activities in which our members are involved.

The response to our survey has been extremely heartening and thank you to everyone who took time to complete it. The results have been evaluated by our partners Indigo Ltd. As we approach our 125th anniversary in 2024, the work we are doing together will help to strengthen what we offer to members and provide support for the wider amateur theatre

On behalf of our Head Office team and all our volunteers, thank you for the continued support. All that leaves me is to wish you all a merry Christmas and a successful New Year.

Ian G. Cox
NODA Chairman of Trustees

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Contents

10

British Sign Language in local theatre

NODA East societies are making their performances more accessible with signed performances.

19

Reaching for the star...of Musical Con

NODA North based group recently saw their member make it to the final of the first ever *Star of Musical Con*!

25

NODA Youth

Youth theatre stories from around the UK

36

Last leg of my presidential travels

Catch up with the final part of Gordon Richardson's presidential year

39

NODA member survey - thank you for your input

Find out what's next after the member survey

52

Celebrations, thanks and mishaps

Our art at its best!

59

So, how do we choose the courses for the NODA Theatre Summer School?

Sarah Osborne, NODA Theatre Summer School explains the process of choosing different courses each year.

66

Glitz and glamour at the seaside

NODA Presidential Gala Weekend in Plymouth





16

#TeamNODA at Musical Con

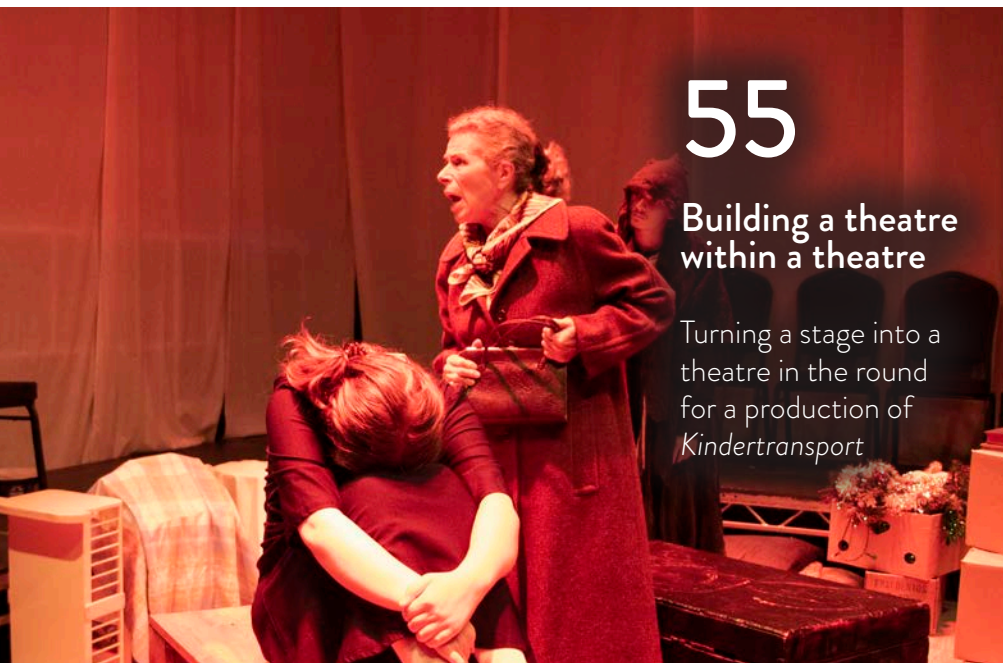
Get the low down on the UK's first musical theatre convention Musical Con



40

Where it all began

Meet the new NODA National President, Nick Lawrence



55

Building a theatre within a theatre

Turning a stage into a theatre in the round for a production of Kindertransport



Councillors' Chat

A quick note from your regional councillor



Tessa Davies - East Regional Councillor

As we move towards Christmas and panto season, I have been reflecting on the amazing efforts many societies have made to get back on stage and perform again. I think this is a record year for 'out of season' pantos. Certainly, in the East we have attended many during the summer period. Just proving that it is a performance genre that works at all levels and in all circumstances. There have been some terrific productions, of other genres, during the summer too and it is a real joy to see everyone back on stage. The audiences are coming back slowly, albeit hesitantly. Many societies have seen a late booking rush where people have put off booking until the last minute.



Jules Jones - Acting East Midlands Regional Councillor

It's been a busy couple of months with some truly astounding productions in the East Midlands. The returning audiences seem to be getting bigger with some sell out performances. It is so lovely to see amateur theatre being supported in our communities.

We are still looking for Regional Reps, particularly in Leicester. If you'd like to join the team please email me.



Pam Armstrong - London Regional Councillor

What a difference a year makes! Now we have the darker nights, it is an absolute joy to see amateur theatre in full swing staging a large variety of excellent shows, and the financially important and popular pantos now being advertised.

The confidence seems to have returned to amateur theatre and to the audiences alike, but it is interesting to note that people are leaving booking their tickets to the very last moment, which appears to be country-wide – somewhat nail biting for societies when looking at their finances.



Peter Oliver - North Regional Councillor

I am very pleased to congratulate all the nominees and winners at the region's performance awards in September, it was so nice to see the region back together in celebration at the Grand Hotel Gosforth, for what was a spectacular evening. We have such talent in NODA North, and it was a privilege to be able to recognise this following a three-year gap.

It only remains for me to wish you from all NODA North committee a merry Christmas and prosperous New Year and I look forward to seeing you all in 2023.



Leslie Smith - North East Regional Councillor

I suspect many of you will be hard rehearsing for your pantomime, 'Oh Yes you will!' You should all have received the information about our 2023 Gala Weekend either via your inbox or, for those of you who are not online, you should have received it via post. If you, or your society secretary, have not received the information please let me know and I will ensure you will receive it.

I really do hope you will join us in sunny Bridlington, I have ordered the good weather!

Andy McNicholas - North West Regional Councillor

Our regional reps are preparing details for the various district awards events and more information should be coming to you soon. The NW Regional Awards and AGM has been booked for the 29th and 30th April 2023, and I'm pleased to announce it will be held at The Winter Gardens in Blackpool.

I've enjoyed seeing so many of you on the stage and at meetings over the past few months and I'd like to thank you for the kind invitations and wish you all the very best for the New Year.



Stuart McCue-Dick - Scotland Regional Councillor

Training workshops are just one of the many benefits of your NODA membership. The NODA Scotland Committee is busy finalising a series of regional workshops to be held in Spring 2023, that will cover a range of topics, covering all aspects of theatre, requested by you, our members.

Held locally these full day events will provide a fun, relaxed and safe space in which to learn. There will also be ample opportunity to network with members from other local clubs.



Kay Rowan - South East Regional Councillor

It is delightful to meet so many inspirational people who are working so hard to entertain their audiences, many of whom are still reluctant to book their seats until the last minute causing many a business manager's headache. My silly accident has made me virtually chair bound for a couple of months. I have, however been very active at the computer answering queries and generally supporting societies and reps. It has saddened me that I had to decline so many invitations over the past couple of months – my sincere apologies to those societies. I hope to make amends in the new year.



Graham Liverton - South West Regional Councillor

As I visit shows, I am seeing a number of performances increase and also the great skill and techniques, that are second to none. It makes me feel proud to belong to the NODA family.

With increasing costs to put on shows, it would be a good idea in your next programme to put the cost of what your last production cost. That way, your audiences will not only realise they are getting a bargain in ticket pricing, but they will also know just how much work is involved! Thank you for all you do, giving great entertainment and lifting everyone's spirits!



Sharon Davies - Wales & Ireland Regional Councillor

Things are definitely picking up and more shows are escaping the curse of Covid. Invitations are also starting to come in and I've just returned from trips to South Wales, Mid Wales and Anglesey to see some amazing performances.

I, and my district representatives, will always do our best to attend, but we do need a reasonable amount of notice. We have a wealth of talent in Wales and Ireland and it is so nice to see it flourish again.



Andy Brown - West Midlands Regional Councillor

As the first year back on stage for many draws to a close, congratulations to all in the West Midlands for the entertainment you have brought to audiences. I was delighted to be invited to many wonderful productions and look forward to seeing many more during 2023. Thank you for the invites to not only me but also to members of the West Midlands Regional Committee. The committee are already working hard to have another excellent Regional Conference, AGM and Awards. Get the date in your diary now – Sunday 14 May 2023, at The Core Theatre, Solihull. I look forward to seeing everyone there.



Stamford Gilbert & Sullivan Players take on *The Sorcerer*

NODA East Midlands



After an uncertain and difficult 3 years away from the stage when theatres ‘went dark’ due to the pandemic, Stamford Gilbert & Sullivan Players finally got to perform *The Sorcerer* – the long-awaited magical tale of ‘Love in a teapot!’

During lockdown, I found myself with lots of unexpected time on my hands... and so set to work researching and setting our next... 3 shows!

I literally spent hours getting lost in ‘rabbit holes’ of history, searching for ‘hooks’ to inspire me when designing each show. I like to keep the staging traditional yet am always looking for ways to create ‘proper’ G&S whilst adding in modern humour to keep the audiences of today as entertained as they were back in the day!

My ‘hook’ this year (apart from having ‘grass’ laid on the stage to the disbelief of the stage crew!), was to add little moments of historical accuracy - from Dr Daly entering singing ‘Onward Christian Soldiers’ (composed by Sir Arthur Sullivan in 1871) to the detailed hand painted lettering on JWW’s case. As *The Sorcerer* was originally based on Gilbert’s Christmas story *An Elixir of Love* written for *The Graphic* magazine in 1876, I wanted to continue that theme by showing how the Victorians used flowers as a way of expressing feelings that could not be done privately due to social etiquette. My ‘journey of the rose’, developed throughout the show, starting with Dr Daly picking it from a trellis at the start of Act 1 and it being passed from one character to another, until the end when Alexis sang “Thou hast the power” tearing its

petals off and stamping it to the ground in anger, then coming full circle when Dr Daly held it up once more claiming “Beauty may fade and perish”. That, as well as the ladies holding pretty hand-held lace wrapped ‘Tussie-Mussie’ floral bouquets were all a tribute to the wonderful era of Gilbert & Sullivan.

As *The Sorcerer* is relatively short, I wanted to reintroduce a couple of the scenes originally written for it including the Act 1 “philtre/filter” lib between Aline & Alexis (a bit like the “orphan/often” scene in *The Pirates of Penzance*), which really is hilarious and had our audiences laughing out loud every night, especially when Alexis ‘twinkled’ his fingers each time he said the word “Philtre”!

Also the scene between *The Sorcerer*

and Ahrimanes (which apparently never actually made it to the public stage), but which proved very powerful indeed making the outcome of the Act 2 finale far more understandable, as when he disappeared in a puff of smoke, his nemesis magically reappeared in his place, and finally, the important bit of extra lib Aline said before she drank the philtre.

I also decided to re-create a historical reconstruction of the song 'My name is John Wellington Wells', (performed by Martyn Green in the 1930s and 40s and who was known for being able to make audiences laugh with a mere "twitch of his toe"). This version of the famous patter song, had JWW – identically costumed as the original Sorcerer, almost exclusively standing still during the verses but only using his face, hands and top hat to interpret the many words!

I hope all these little nods to history along with some truly hilarious comedy moments, super acting, talented orchestra, magical lighting & special effects, costumes and beautiful set all brought my vision of *The Sorcerer* to life on stage.

Once again, the Players came together as one to make our come back production of *The Sorcerer* a resounding success! We have welcomed many new members this year, including some fabulously energetic youngsters and relished them, and the camaraderie we've all recently been deprived of, with open arms. We have laughed so much in rehearsals, particularly whilst negotiating tea cups and our younger members have brought even more joy to the proceedings! We have appreciated even more the friendships we've formed through our mutual love of G&S and all agree that, music most definitely is the strongest form of magic!

Ruth Palmer
Director



British Sign Language in local theatre

NODA East



Rachael Dance

While performers learn their lines, songs and dances to ready themselves for a show run, an additional type of communications specialist may also be deep in pre-show performance study and preparation for that show at your local community theatre: a qualified British Sign Language (BSL) interpreter.

UK amateur dramatics groups are becoming increasingly aware of the opportunities to serve their communities and expand their audiences by incorporating BSL

interpreters into their productions. Examples of two such theatre companies are Campaign Amateur Theatre (CAT) in Ely, Cambridgeshire, and Springers Amateur Operatic and Dramatic Society (Springers) in Chelmsford, Essex, which have successfully deployed BSL interpreters for ambitious musicals including *Elf the Musical*, *Kinky Boots* and *The Addams Family* in the past year.

CAT chair Gemma Crossland is herself a BSL professional, and first recruited Rachael Dance last spring to ply

her skills for the group's production *Harvey's Wallbanger* and then again for the recent *Elf the Musical*. Dance has also interpreted for Roaring Productions' *Matilda* at the Stamford Arts Centre. By day, Dance works for the Cambridgeshire Deaf Association where she provides advocacy and domestic violence advice for deaf people in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

"It's very, very rewarding," Dance said of her new extracurricular activity. And like actors, singers and dancers, she needs to get hold of a script or libretto early on "as an absolute necessity. If I were to get on stage [to interpret] without having seen the storyline or heard any of the cast, I would be really lost. Once I've got the script, I go through it as much as I can to get the general idea of what the storyline is, without knowing who the actors are and how each character is going to be portrayed.

I usually create a playlist on my phone of any of the songs that are involved, and I play that on repeat, then I go to as many rehearsals as possible."

For the first production she was involved with, Dance said she attended rehearsals twice a week for "three or four months" before the show was staged, "and I knew every word of the songs and got a really good idea of how the characters were going to be portrayed and how I could kind of relay those characters through the sign language". She must also use her face to express emotions and, perhaps, actions "because a deaf audience might not be able to look at me and characters at the same time", she explained. "So through your signing, through your face, you have to portray those attitudes as your 'tone of voice'.

Once I've learned the songs generally,

I then think about how they can be interpreted. Sometimes that can be quite straightforward, but sometimes you might get a song with an underlying meaning or difficult words or it's really fast-paced, and then it takes a lot more thought about how you can succinctly translate this as the same time as the song."

Also, Dance said, because often deaf people have varying degrees of impairment, some may be able to feel the beat or hear swathes of music. "So when you're translating songs as well, you have to really get into the rhythm and all the emotion that goes with that."

And if there's a challenging term or perhaps a name in spoken language, the interpreter must develop a visual sign to identify that character. Take the musical *Kinky Boots*, which features the flamboyant drag queen character, Lola. Maria Chamoun, who is studying to become a fully qualified interpreter,

shadowed a BSL professional last summer for Springers' production of *Kinky Boots*. To signify Lola, Chamoun said she and her professional mentor Karen Gager adopted a hand movement of big, curly hair.

"We would make a sign name for the character based on their traits or personality, and then we would use that continuously throughout the performance to reference back to them instead of having to spell out their name every time they were mentioned," Chamoun explained.

Another challenge facing the interpreters is when characters' dialogue overlaps each other's. "How would we deliver that to show what we call their 'role shift'? How would we show every single character and who they are?" Chamoun explained.

For *Kinky Boots*, Chamoun sat with Gager, observing, for three rehearsals

and sat in the audience for the one performance Gager signed. However, Chamoun brought the inclusive experience to front of house for that performance, greeting and meeting deaf audience members.

Asked what lessons have been learnt to date by Springers, group chair Anver Anderson said, "Offering a show with a BSL interpreter not only extends our audience, it also makes the entire society aware of issues they may not ordinarily even think about day-to-day. For example, our choreographer and several cast members have learned some rudimentary BSL to extend our communications skills – and fun!"

Noting members' interest in learning BSL and Chamoun's training underway as a qualified BSL interpreter, Anderson added, "I can see this will be a growth area for the future."

Huddersfield Thespians publish the story of their first century

NODA North East

NODA North East District 13 members Huddersfield Thespians were delighted to mark their first centenary of producing quality local theatre with the publication of a book that reveals the behind-the-scenes story of those hundred years. 'Different Stages: Celebrating 100 Years of the Huddersfield Thespians, 1920-2020' has been written by Huddersfield Local History Society's Christine Verguson.

"As a teenager my son had been a member, learning about stage management as well as having some walk-on parts," explained Christine. "Later, my own academic research revealed the part the Thespians played in the early years of radio drama. Researching what can only be described as the Society's vast archive which is in the care of the West Yorkshire Archive Service, and through talking to society members past and present, I got to know something of the determination, comradeship and a love of all aspects of theatrical production which has meant that the Huddersfield Thespians are still here to bring good quality drama to the town."

The book tells the story of the 'earliest experimental amateur theatre group in Yorkshire' from their humble beginnings in the manager's office of Huddersfield's Theatre Royal, way back in 1920. Since their first official meeting – in Thomas Broadbent's works canteen in June 1920 – the Thespians estimate they've produced over 600 shows and have performed at least one play every year. They've performed in halls, theatres, parks and even on tour to New York.

Different Stages includes many photographs of the Thespians productions alongside anecdotes



from members past and present, which makes it a fascinating account of a century of amateur theatre. It was meant to be published in time for the centenary in 2020, but logistical problems caused by the pandemic and the Thespians needing to move their headquarters, delayed things.

Thespians' President Christine Smith said: "This book has really been a labour of love over the last few years, and it's

been a real pleasure to take the time going back through the old archive material and all those old memories. We're delighted to now be able to share those with readers and to celebrate the story of our first hundred years, while we work on plays for the next hundred!"

Copies are now available from the society secretary@huddersfieldthespians.co.uk

Welsh group perform only amateur production of Buddy - The Buddy Holly Story - in 2022

NODA Wales & Ireland



It was a very rare production; in fact it will be the only production in the UK during 2022, including the professional tour, so MMTC felt a huge amount of pressure to deliver. Rarely, if never, would amateur theatre company take on an actor musician musical let alone the most iconic actor musician musical around. Buddy, tells the life story of how Buddy Holly started his career through to the tragic ending in which he, The Big Bopper, Richie Valens and the pilot died in a plane crash.

The show requires a lead cast who can play, sing and act to an exceptionally high standard. MMTC were very lucky to cast Steffan Lloyd in the role of Buddy who, by all accounts, was absolutely brilliant in the lead role. Learning no less than 23 songs on guitar, script, blocking and nailing the real character he really stepped up and has been publicly praised by the professional producers for his performance. It is really a one man show but the supporting cast were also in the limelight!

Of course, Buddy would be nothing without his Hollies in the first half and once again the actor musician casting was spot on! Huw Jenkins as Jerry Allison (Drums), Andy Burnett as Joe



B Mauldin (Double Bass) and Sam Freeman as Tommy (Guitar) all gave amazing performances supporting Steffan.

We think it's fair to say that in most cases, amateur theatre may have some weaknesses in casting, but this musical didn't have one weak link. Supporting the lead cast were Connor Pope as Hipockets Duncan, Sophie Marvelley as Maria Elena Holly, Dale Gravell as Norman Petty/The Big Bopper, Sophie Lewis as Vi Petty, Sam Freeman as Richie Valens, Neil Perks as Murray

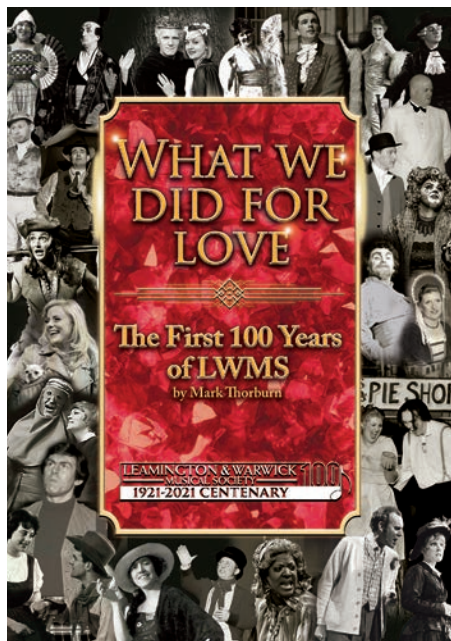


Deutch/ MC then an ensemble of Declan Stuart, Stephanie Wright, Hollie Mathias and Ashe Hewitt playing a variety of roles across the show. Buddy Worldwide, who own the show have given incredible feedback on the production, stating it is of an exceptional standard and they would like to write about it on their website, which is great!

Challenge completed and with rave audience reviews, MMTC continue to hit incredible standards year after year. Long may it continue.

LWMS Centenary Book

NODA West Midlands



Former NODA CEO, Mark Thorburn discusses the Centenary Book, *What We Did For Love*, created during Covid, of his original Operatic Society, now the Leamington and Warwick Musical Society, which celebrated its centenary in 2021. Plus, he urges you all to save your archives, and your past members, from the local tip.

There was a rapid increase in the number of amateur operatic societies in the UK after the Great War, and now the 2020s are seeing another proliferation, although probably not quite so big. This time it is the centenaries of those societies lucky enough to have survived to that historic milestone.

The Leamington & Warwick Musical Society is one of those lucky ones, and although there have been some scary years with audiences staying away, they seem to have miraculously returned and driven the society on to some monumentally successful productions and a currently healthy bank account. Something never guaranteed.

When I became Chief Executive of NODA, way back in 1992, I was struck even then with the demise of

many societies. One such was Bolton Operatic who expired at their 99th anniversary. The large lyric theatre in the town had closed, the modern Octagon Theatre was unsuitable for their style of production and the old guard was fighting change requested by the youngsters. The society fractured and the original society died. As have so many over the years. And, although, superseded by younger, more modern societies, even these have struggled to survive as economic woes have hit us all.

Today amateur theatre is big business. Costs have rocketed and returns need to be fought hard for. For those prepared to fight, rewards can be huge and satisfying as the operatic movement soldiers on into the 21st Century. The old-fashioned word loyalty seems to be fading into the past, but the shows are constantly being released, much quicker than in the past (*The Merry Widow* took 50 years to be released for amateurs!), a company is formed, it performs, and it may disappear as quickly as it arrived. But the shows go on!

What concerns me now is the loss of the stories of those one hundred plus years of talent and entertainment by the people for the people, which will fade as time goes on if not chronicled in some way right now. When I suggested to my original operatic society, the Leamington & Warwick Musical Society in Warwickshire, that I write their story for their 2021 Centenary, their enthusiasm surprised me. A long-serving, hard-working archivist was a huge plus factor. Especially successful productions of *CATS* and other modern popular titles had given them a healthy bank balance and so they agreed to invest a not inconsiderable amount of money into producing a 112 page, A4 full colour brochure of their story. I am pleased to say that it has gone down a storm.

Their story is as unique as every other one throughout the country. All are worthy of telling and ensuring that in times ahead, the world of 20th century operatic societies, already so different to nowadays, can be studied and appreciated.

LWMS has had three very different performance venues. They had fallow years from 1934, with no suitable performance venue in the towns and then the onslaught of the Second World War. Yet in 2022, they celebrated fifty years in Leamington's Royal Spa Centre with a lavish *Evita*. Every society's story needs capturing and archiving. Local museums, town or city archives, will be delighted to take those programmes, photos, memorabilia for future generations to enjoy. Don't take them to the tip (as we discovered so many had done with LWMS info). You owe it to the wonderful performers, production teams and administrators of yesteryear. Let them live in accessible archives.

LWMS may be a little unique in that its archive has photographs of every single one of its 96 productions and so each show has been included in the story. One page, per production. Modern technology has enhanced what we were able to achieve. An almost founder member of the society kept a photo scrapbook throughout her active years. Others asked for copies, so she had the pages photographed and books made up for them. The original scrapbooks are lost, but a number of copies remain. Technology allowed us to scan those early photographic copies and enhance them to such a degree that they re-produced superbly within the book. Imagine our surprise when photographs from the 1920s and 1930s looked so much stronger than those from the 1950s and 1960s. No matter. They are all there. Each

page gives the society history of the production – dates, venue, and more, whilst also giving full details of authors, composers, premières, etc., in order to offer a history of musical theatre for those who have never heard of some of the old shows.

How swiftly things have changed. When I began fifty years ago, Ivor Novello was packing ‘em in, those huge 1920s Drury Lane spectaculars still held sway; *The Desert Song* guaranteed full houses, but that audience has now passed on. One younger member, looking through her copy, had never heard of *White Horse Inn*, a great big operatic society crowd pleaser for so many decades. With everything progressing so fast, if we don’t celebrate the past visually now, it will be gone forever.

What We Did For Love is a worthy addition to any theatre book collection and a blueprint for any society prepared to fund a not over-expensive chronicle of all it has achieved. LWMS would be delighted to sell you a copy of their special story. It is a story well-worth reading, as is the story of your society, and a blueprint well-worth emulating. Please...don’t chuck it all, archive it all.



Save
the
date

NODA National Presidential Weekend

Preston Marriott Hotel

Friday 15th and Saturday 16th September 2023

More details to follow

#TeamNODA at Musical Con

October 2022, saw the inaugural Musical Con event at Excel London. There was huge hype when the event was first announced with an initial line-up of stars hoping to be in attendance. The event was very much pitched at younger musical theatre fans with stars from *Everyone's talking about Jamie*, *Heathers*, *Rent* and *Come From Away*. Star performances and workshops were teased and within a couple of months 10,000 tickets were sold.

In the weeks leading up to the event, information was slow to be released, but that was to be expected being the first event of its kind in the UK, but as soon as the performance and workshop lineup had been announced, it silenced doubters!

Alongside all of the performances and workshops, there was a large area for exhibitors - which NODA was one of. Rightsholders, theatre memorabilia, stage schools lined the 'Marketplace' interspersed with photo opportunities against West End show backdrops like *Moulin Rouge*, Disney's *Frozen* and *The Lion King* and the Delorian from *Back To The Future*.

This is the first event in many years NODA has attended that wasn't our own. Normally, it is regional conferences and weekends talking to our members. This event meant we could spread the word of not only NODA, but more importantly, the importance of amateur theatre. Armed with our NODA bags, #TeamNODA spoke to as many attendees as possible about how amazing our hobby was and to get involved, whether that was joining a local group, attending Summer School or just going to watch a show and seeing how high the standard is.

The main part of our stand was a backdrop featuring over 100 photos of member shows. Not only was it a great photo backdrop, as you will see over the page, but members in attendance were able to come up to the stand and try and find their group - which many actually did. One performer purely glanced over to the stand as he walked past and shouted very loudly from 10m away - "That's me!"

Workshops formed a huge part of the weekend, whether that was dance, singing or talks with

industry professionals. Nearest our stand was one of the dance workshop spaces. With queues forming most of the day - we obviously took the opportunity to hand out as many bags to the lines as possible along with Daisy our PantoScripts cow! Workshops included dance with Layton Williams of *Everyone's talking about Jamie* fame and *Hamilton* with current cast member Sinead Long.

"It is amazing to see NODA at these types of events and spreading the word of our amazing hobby"

Chairman of one of our member groups in attendance

Throughout the two days, there was performance after performance on the main stage. With the opening ceremony featuring amazing vocals from Alice Fearn of *Come From Away* to Trevor Dion Nicholas who played the Genie in *Aladdin*. Stage schools showcased their students and two competitions were held - the star of Musical Con, which NODA North youth member Caisley Graham took part in (read her story overleaf) and the very popular Cosplay competition.

All in all, there was something at the event for all musical theatre fans. The organisers want to make 2023 bigger and better, building on the success of 2022, but also improve the event based on the comments made by attendees.

For NODA attending an event like Musical Con really enabled us to reimagine how we promote amateur theatre to the wider world. So many people we spoke to attended weekend drama schools and clubs but didn't perform outside of those, or had always wanted to tread the boards but didn't know where to start, and that is where I think NODA can play a huge role in encouraging the next generation of performers to the stage.

So who is coming next year?

Rob Williams
#TeamNODA

Turn over for more from Musical Con and fan pics from the NODA stand





THIS IS FOR THE FANS

MUSICAL CON

THIS IS FOR THE FANS

MUSICAL CON

MUSICAL CON

THIS IS FOR THE FANS

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MUSICAL CON

THIS IS FOR THE FANS



Reaching for the star...of Musical Con



Credit Paige Leigh

A Chester-le-Street based amateur dramatics group recently saw their Junior Head Girl make it to the final of the first ever *Star of Musical Con*!

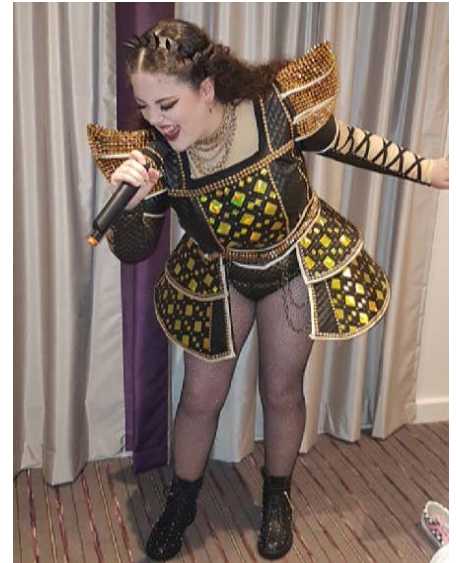
Caisley Graham now 18 started Chester-le-Street Theatre Group as a shy 10 year old in 2014, as part of the ensemble in our production of *The Addams Family*. Since this time, she has been a cast member in all of our shows, either in the ensemble or in principal roles such as Young Jenny in *Aspects of Love*, Maid Marion in *Robin Hood*, Jenny in *Calendar Girls the Musical* and currently Betty Barnum Trott in our forthcoming pantomime *Jack and the Beanstalk*.

Caisley is not only talented on stage but is very creative off stage. She always helps with hair and makeup during shows, with prosthetics being her favourite! She has painted huge scenery backdrops and made several props for us and is a dab hand with costumes. In fact she has made all of the costumes she intends to wear for her forthcoming role of Betty.

Therefore, we weren't surprised when we heard Caisley had made her costumes for Musical Con! On

the Saturday she wore 'Catherine of Aragon' which she said took months of work and she was in fact still stitching the last studs onto the costume in the hotel the night before! Sunday saw her dressed as Juliet from *&Juliet*.

We spoke to Caisley about her *Star of Musical Con* journey. She said she uploaded her audition video not expecting to hear anything back so she was thrilled to have been chosen to audition for the panel on the day, but to make it to the live final on the main stage was amazing, especially since this was the first time the event had ever taken place! She said although it was extremely nerve wracking, as she had never performed in front of so many people before, it was a terrific experience and she was delighted to have been part of it. She said it was very different to performing in a theatre as the lights were positioned out into the audience so she could see everyone, but the buzz she felt when leaving the stage was amazing. She also said the panel were lovely and very supportive. Caisley sang 'Heart of Stone' from *Six the Musical* and received some fantastic comments from the judges regarding her falsetto, storytelling through song, likeability and amazing costume!



Credit Lisa Graham

Caisley finished her weekend experience on the Sunday by attending an *&Juliet* dance workshop where she was asked to dance solo with Miriam-Teak Lee!

Caisley said she had had a fantastic weekend, loved everything about Musical Con and can't wait for next year.

We also spoke to Julie Dryden-Smith the director of Chester-le-Street Theatre Group who told us "*The Group is immensely proud of Caisley. She is our Junior Section Head Girl and we were all very excited when she qualified for 'Star of Musical Con'. We were all supporting her from a distance and were then delighted to hear she had made it through to the final. Despite not winning the competition it was an amazing experience and achievement and Caisley is truly an example and inspiration to our younger members!*"

Caisley recently graduated from a 2 year BTEC course at New College Durham with a Triple Distinction Star in Performing Arts Practice. She has taken a year out before hopefully commencing a Musical Theatre Degree in September 2023.

GADS takes on their first musical

NODA North West



In the small village of Gosforth in the Western Lake District, Gosforth Amateur Dramatics Society (GADS) have been entertaining the village and surrounding areas since 1932. Their usual productions of plays and pantomimes have taken place in the public hall every year, excluding the years of the Second World War and a short break for the Covid pandemic.

After such a long break, in June this year Tosh McGregor took on the exciting experiment of directing the society's first ever musical, Lionel Barts' *Oliver* - and what a huge success it proved to be. With the committee and production team behind her the task of auditioning proved difficult for certain roles. *"We have always struggled to cast productions with lots of male roles but by pulling the Musical Director, Will Sands, into the production for the role of Mr Bumble and getting others to play more than one role we managed to cast the show."*

As many groups will know, the cost of putting on a musical production is very different to a pantomime. Thanks to the hard work of our sponsorship coordinator, Alison Fligg, local

businesses and individuals alike were keen to support this new endeavour by the group. GADS were about to really pull out all the stops regarding sound, sets and costumes to make this a show to remember.

It wasn't an easy road. Life and work continued for the cast, meaning disruptions in rehearsals, along with Covid cases and even a surprise school residential taking out half of the orphans for dress rehearsal! All too quickly show week arrived, and the full cast stepped it up to another level on opening night, receiving fantastic reviews immediately. As news of the show travelled through the area like a shock wave, we sold out the final two performances, with people even returning to see it for a second time.

"I cannot believe the talent 'Oliver' has showcased. Who knew the little GADS group could produce such a professional show. Their pantomimes and plays are really good every year but this was another level. I am so proud of all the cast and the team that worked so hard to put the show on and I am really looking forward to the next production," said Caroline Elliot, long time supporter.

Gosforth's own Jake Phizaklea took on the role of Oliver, only 11 years old and his first performance in a musical. NODA NW10 Rep, Ed McGee, noted in his review that *"he gave a convincing plaintiff performance, and his singing was good, well done Jake. Jake had many of the cast in tears throughout rehearsals with his rendition of 'Where is Love', which he continued to improve throughout rehearsals with help from the musical director."*

Seascale's Andy Williams portrayed the role of Fagan, with Ed commenting that he *'portrayed the main characteristics of the character well, and his singing was good'*. Usually donning wig and dress as the group's pantomime dame, this was a challenging role for Andy which he undertook with determination and focus.

Actors continued to surprise with their phenomenal performances. *'For me,'* wrote Ed, *'the undoubted star of the show was Alison Fligg as Nancy. Her whole performance was outstanding, and she had an excellent rapport with Oliver.'* Again nervous for her first musical, Alison not only had to sing and dance, but be involved in the few



small elements of stage combat with Bill Sikes, played by Tom Summerside. None of the cast or crew dreamt that the show would be the success it became, but after the final curtain the decision was made that this *Oliver* experiment had been successful, and that musicals would remain in the production lists going forward - much to excitement of the cast. There is a lot to be learnt from this first musical, but research has already begun into the next production and GADS are keen to get back into rehearsals and on the stage for their next exciting production.



The show would not have been possible without all the help and dedication, not just from the cast, but from all the people behind the scenes, from the production team lead by Jim Polmear, costume department lead by Paula Waite, and the interval ice cream suppliers, Ravenglass Ice cream. Since *Oliver*, they have now teamed up with GADS to provide interval ice cream at all productions going forward to give the little village of Gosforth the full theatre experience every time.



NODA North Performance Awards

NODA North

All photos credit Signature Times Photography

NODA North was thrilled to once again hold their annual Performance Awards this September in Newcastle. Due to the pandemic, NODA North's last Performance Awards held at Gosforth Park Hotel, Newcastle, was in September 2019. A virtual Performance Awards night was hosted in December 2020, to celebrate productions that took place prior to Covid-19, with the presentations being live-streamed from the Tyne Theatre, Newcastle. There were no Performance Awards in 2021, due to the continued effects of the pandemic, so after three years, NODA North was delighted to be back to deliver a full-scale live event for the region.

The evening saw 500 guests from

across the North dressed in their finest and return to the Gosforth Park Hotel to celebrate their shared hobby and the amateur theatre produced across the region over the past year. The event was attended by NODA National President, Gordon Richardson - who is local to the region - and of course Regional Councillor, Peter Oliver. This was Peter's first full Performance Awards, as he acquired the role in 2020, and so had only previously presented the virtual 2020 awards. Also returning from those awards was the host, local actor and panto scriptwriter, Tom Whalley, who finally had a live audience to cheer and clap. The night was filled with excitement and elation, as over 100 youth and adult awards were won across the

categories for individuals, musicals, pantomimes, concerts and plays.

The evening even saw a marriage proposal, as thespian Liam Grahame Olsen proposed to his partner Tamara Wilson, who had both received nominations for their performances as Gomez and Morticia Addams in a production of *The Addams Family*. Tamara may have scooped the award, but Liam proved to be the real winner that night, as he got a 'yes' from his now fiancée!

The NODA North Performance Awards certainly returned with a bang, and preparations are already underway for an even better evening next year.



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Portrush Musical Society take on *Shrek in the Ballroom*

NODA Wales & Kireland



Portrush Musical Society's production of *Shrek* was their second in the adapted ballroom of a local hotel, as the only theatre in the area is undergoing updating work. As I drove up to Portrush I could not imagine how they were going to manage a show like *Shrek* in such a small space (they presented *Calendar Girls* there in the Spring but it is, of course, a much

smaller musical production). They built a stage at one end, made all their own scenery, brought in all the lighting, and squeezed their orchestra into an alcove halfway up the long side of the room.

Afterwards I was given a backstage tour - they had very little wing space and used the hotel's night club area for prop and set storage when it was

not on stage! AND Aiden (Shrek) spent about an hour after the show in a beautifully created flower arbour talking to children and having photographs taken with them - a lovely gesture much appreciated by the families in the sell-out audience.

Sheelagh Hobart
Regional Representative for Ireland

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

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

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

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



NODA has received a £10,000 Movement for Good Award from Benefact Group

NODA was chosen by a panel of judges to receive a share of £500,000 as part of Benefact Group's Movement for Good Awards, which is giving over £1million to good causes this year.

The project will develop a UK-wide research-led strategy to increase youth participation in theatre and the arts. Participation in theatre is proven to aid children's language and communication skills and enable physical and emotional development. By supporting local groups across the UK, including in rural areas with limited access to mainstream larger theatres to develop a youth theatre platform, it will give children access to arts from an early age.

We will facilitate theatre themed workshops, drawing from communities across the country and with the support of theatre practitioners to understand the requirements and limitations of taking part in theatre, to create a last strategy to increase youth participation in amateur theatre.

The awards are designed to help charities make a real difference in their communities. More than 500 charities applied for the funding which is being put towards the advancement of heritage and arts, education, rural and community, climate, human rights and equality. The winning projects were selected against four criteria: impact and effectiveness, sustainability, innovation and care and compassion.

Ian G. Cox, NODA Chairman of Trustees, said: "Our strategy is designed to reach those rural and remote areas, where the nearest theatre is miles away, or inner-city locations faced with stretched resources. With theatre, young people can find themselves a retreat from the pressures of growing up and by joining, or even just experiencing a theatre group, can be the difference between a positive or a negative future. We are passionate about the opportunities and sense of community that theatre can provide.

The support from the Benefact Group will provide much needed help and encouragement for the next generation to develop their skills, talent and interest in theatre. It will help and enable groups to involve the next generation in theatre. Young people will be able to find an inclusive community that prides itself on encouraging individuality and creativity. Groups will see their



future brighten with new blood, new ideas & future stars. "

Mark Hews, Group Chief Executive of Benefact Group, said: "At Benefact Group we believe business should be a force for good. More than ever, charitable causes need sustained support and a sense of financial stability. Through our Movement for Good larger-grant awards, we are championing a more imaginative way of supporting charities so that they can have some certainty in these challenging times. We know our funding can be a lifeline to those who are struggling with cost-of-living increases and a grant of this scale can make a huge difference to the incredible work that charities do.

Benefact Group is the fourth largest corporate donor in the UK and has an ambition to be the biggest. Owned by a charity, all our available profits go to good causes, and the more the group grows, the more the group can give. As a company whose purpose is to contribute to the greater good of society, charitable giving is at the heart of what we do."

Movement for Good is funded by EIO plc, part of the Benefact Group.

Making friends, finding a passion and experiencing the varied world of performing arts

code youth East Midlands



Spotlight Theatre is all about making friends, finding a passion and experiencing the varied world of performing arts.

Starting in 2007, with just a handful of children, we have just celebrated our 15th year with upwards of 90 members! Last year, we put on the latest in several full company shows with *Into the Woods*. We also, for the first time, put on a show for our seniors with *Little Shop of Horrors*. They put on a fantastic show, and it was incredible seeing everyone together and expressing themselves on stage again in front of a live audience after a chaotic couple of years.

Coming out the other side of COVID, lockdowns and the isolation that came with it, it's never been more important for kids to have a place to go to socialise and have fun, all whilst working together as a team to develop confidence. Our annual showcase is a great opportunity for all our children, aged 4 to 18 years, to stand in the spotlight and use their newfound confidence and talent to create fantastic performances.

Friendships made in youth theatre are often friendships for life. Spotlight Theatre was set up to provide a safe place where children could find their confidence to stand in the spotlight. Over the years, we have been very pleased to see members move into the professional world of performing arts, but what we aim to do is provide each one of the children with the confidence to stand in their own spotlight, whatever that may be. We are therefore equally proud of all those who have become successful in any field.

It's so important for us that everyone feels encouraged and supported not just by the leaders but the other children too. During our showcases backstage is often full of other members watching and celebrating their peers' performances. This atmosphere of cooperation is vital for all to feel confident enough to stand up on stage and let the world see what they can do.

With dozens of different roles being taken on in the world of theatre,



from performers and directors to technicians and artists, there is a place for everyone. At Spotlight Theatre we take the time to help people find their talent and nurture it. Whether they want to sing from the rooftops or design the rooftops themselves, each part is as vital as the next. We want everyone to have fun whilst learning important skills that can be applied to all aspects of life as well as the performing arts.

With *Matilda Jnr* going on next March and our showcases in July we've got lots to look forward to and are always planning exciting things for the future! So watch this space.

Liam Petruccio-Hall



NODA has partnered with ALW Show Licensing to get a first look at the new CATS: Young Actors' Edition!

This brand new, one-hour adaptation of the world renowned hit musical is specially tailored for young actors in schools and youth groups, adapted by iTheatrics. Including easy to sing orchestrations, beginners' choreography videos and helpful guides on everything from pre-production and casting to rehearsal and the show itself, this is the ultimate how-to for putting on an incredible paw-formance!



Whether you're a pro at putting on a show, or are unsure where to start, CATS: Young Actor's Edition takes you through every step of the process with ease, and is now available in the UK. Don't hesitate to join our kitten friendly community!

Materials include Production Guide, Piano-Vocal Book, Student Librettos & Vocal Books and Performance & Guide Vocal Tracks.

For more information visit www.alwshowlicensing.com/cats-young-actors



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Saturday Youth Festival coming to the South West

 NODA Youth South West



South West's Youth Groups called to join this free event!

During the Covid crisis the McMillan Youth Theatre team decided to plan *The Desolation Festival* for once we came back to 'normal'. The plan was to bring the Youth Theatres of the South West together to learn, create, perform and network. The McMillan Theatre has been part of Bridgwater life since 2015, and are proud to present an eclectic programme of events of theatre, comedy, music and film. Due to this we have had to wait until 2023, to find a gap in the programme where we can bring our talented young people together.

The date has now been set – it is Saturday 8th April 2023, 11am – 6pm, and it is **free** to participate.

The McMillan Youth Theatre will be hosting the event and invite all youth companies in the South West to get in touch with Jo, youth director and NODA South West Youth Coordinator, to show interest. Space will be limited, but the McMillan is easily accessible from Junction 24 on the M5 or Bridgwater train station and they also offer plenty of free parking.

Singing, dance, drama and musical theatre workshops will be held in the state of the art dance studio and theatre space, there will be open mic opportunities in the foyer/bar area and short performances by participating companies in the auditorium. Catering will be available in true Bridgwater style (we are home of the Carnival) OUTSIDE with much yumminess to be purchased....Do you want to part of the fun?

Contact Jo Wilson-Hunt jo.wilsonhunt@noda.org.uk

Celebrations for Basingstoke Gang Show

 NODA Youth South East



Basingstoke Gang Show celebrated their 'Best Compilation Show' award by being welcomed by the Mayor and Mayoress of Basingstoke, for a special reception, at the Council Chambers. Gang Show Chairman Steve Edney and over 50 members of the cast, ranging in ages from 8 to 20 years old attended.

Chris Horton, Regional Rep, District 14 says: *"I particularly remember the opening number. Filmed around Basingstoke it portrayed a world in which music had been banned."* She also made special mention of the numerous volunteers who support those on the stage. Following the formal presentation, the 'gang' enjoyed a celebration cake whilst taking a look at a Gang Show archive with photos, programmes and memorabilia from their 43 year history.

Three generations of one family support youth theatre in NODA North East

 North East



When you log on to the website for Ossett Youth Theatre you are told that the group was established in 2002, and that they offer training and performance experience in all disciplines of musical theatre. You can see that their members range from ages 7 to 21 and that young people are supported “in a nurturing and professional environment, where they are encouraged to develop their skills and confidence”.

What isn't immediately evident is that this is down to the hard work of three generations of one family. Janet Lodge is chairperson, drama coach, wardrobe and chaperone. With over 60 years in amateur theatre (and a NODA Long Service award to prove it) she is able to share with the young people all her experience and knowledge – she is also mum to Sue Winstanley who is musical director, choreographer and treasurer. The reigns of director have this year been handed over to Sue's daughter, Jessica, who as well as being director is also choreographer and is responsible for the groups social media.

The group were undertaking their dress rehearsal for *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat* on the night that the first lockdown was announced

in March 2020, but made a return to the stage in November 2021, for a showcase production which included many different musicals in an energetic performance of song, dance and acting. All three performances were sold out and they received fantastic feedback from audience members. It was also during this production that NODA NE Councillor Les Smith was able to present the groups founder, Janet, with her 60 year Long Service award – witnessed by her daughter and granddaughter.

Jessica spent five years studying Performing Arts earning a BA Honours Degree in Performance Industries, specialising in Musical Theatre. Using her skills she has run several professional musical theatre, dance and acting workshops for Leicester University Theatre, Guides, Brownies and Rainbows, Ossett Youth Theatre and her own musical theatre skills development workshops. She is currently teaching drama for film and television at the Pauline Quirke Academy. In March 2022, Jessica became the group's director for their production of *The Addams Family*.

OYT are strong supporters of NODA with members regularly attending the

Gala Weekend and this year, one of their members, Kate Gleghorn (who also played *Morticia* in *The Addams Family*), attended the NODA NE Youth Event. Many of the youth members then go on to further studies and work in the industry with others joining local societies having had an excellent introduction to the world of amateur theatre with OYT.

Janet explained that: “I find working with my close family members so satisfying as both Sue and Jess work hard to maintain the standard reached in the twenty years. Sue took over being M.D. a few years ago and not only teaches the singing, but confidently conducts the band for the shows. This year Jess has thrilled everyone by taking over directing and doing a fabulous production of *The Addams Family*.” Janet feels reassured that the future of Ossett Youth Theatre is in capable hands.

So let's hope that Jessica keeps working with her mum and grandma to give the young people of Ossett a fabulous amateur theatre experience.

Jo Sykes
NODA North East
Youth Coordinator

Halloween Howler

noda youth London



Musical Youth Company of Oxford's production of the *Addams Family* nearly bit the dust at Halloween when a shock email from the theatre suggested they were booked in the wrong week. The set and musicians had already been organised, cast members' parents had delayed Easter holiday plans to ensure their offspring were available to perform, and, to top

it all, the production manager was going to be out of the country on the new dates. Frantic phone calls to the theatre ensued, and it appeared that assumptions about dates had been made on both sides. The cast were kept in the dark (to avoid scaring them) and actually spent the Halloween evening celebrating with a party to get into the roles of ghostly ancestors.

The next day dawned with a burst of goodwill as the theatre kindly moved its planned professional production to accommodate them.

The committee has learnt valuable lessons about checking contracts and the rehearsal process is bowling along.

Hollywood is calling

noda youth North



A young Northern girl is setting her sights on Hollywood, as her dream of becoming an actress may be one step closer to becoming reality, thanks to an opportunity of a lifetime.

Ava Nolan, 14 years old, has been performing with The Phoenix Theatre,

Blyth Music & Theatre Youth Academy and other local acting groups from a young age. She has taken lead and supporting roles in a number of locally run shows and performed alongside adult cast in amateur dramatic performances and short films across Northumberland and North Tyneside.

After auditioning against thousands of hopeful talents, Ava was one of only 16 to be selected to travel to Hollywood, Los Angeles in the USA to attend a week-long conference called the International Presentation of Performers (iPOP), which culminates in live auditions in front of panels of industry experts such as talent agents, film directors and producers, modelling agencies and many other industry professionals.

Ava's family has recently set up a GoFundMe page to help raise the much-needed money required for Ava to make the trip in January 2023, as it will entail substantial costs such as flights, hotels and promotional materials.

In the meantime however, Ava has kept busy, attending regular professional workshops run by celebrity hosts, facilitating sessions with local theatre groups and volunteering at the North East Homeless Hub, demonstrating her artistic talents at events.

Everyone at NODA North wishes Ava the best of luck in her trip to Hollywood, and all her future endeavours to make her dream come true.

The Phantom of the Phantom

code youth North West



Most lovers of musical theatre can remember when they first fell in love with a new production. David & Sallie McNeill, who run StagedRight Youth Theatre in Carlisle, both have very strong memories of queuing outside Her Majesty's Theatre in London waiting on 'returns' for *The Phantom of the Opera*. The couple were both fans of *Barnum*, which starred Michael Crawford and when he was announced to be playing the Phantom, they knew it would be a show not to be missed. They have now watched it many, many times!

Fast forward to 2004, when the couple opened StagedRight Youth Theatre and chose *Barnum* as their first full musical. It was a huge success, and they knew that, when the rights became available, 'Phantom' would be on their 'must do' list. Each year, for more than ten years, they tried to secure the rights. It was eventually, and frustratingly, available to schools and small auditoriums. StagedRight performs at The Sands Centre in Carlisle which is a huge venue and although listed as 1,200 seats, certain rights holders give permission for productions such as *Les Miserables* and *Grease* if seating is limited to 500. 'Phantom' couldn't compromise on anything.

We all know that Covid decimated the theatre industry and with audiences almost scared to return to live theatre, StagedRight knew their 2022 production had to be very special. It needed to be a huge name that would create press, TV and radio interest and persuade audiences to return. Yet another email was sent to the licensing department for 'Phantom' explaining the situation, and a response was almost immediate: "We will look into it!" This was a major step forward and gave hope. After a few emails back and forth, StagedRight was finally given permission to present *The Phantom of the Opera* for three performances of 600 seats.

Although the set was hired from UK productions, The Sands Centre doesn't have flying facilities and any truss/tracking needs to be brought in, so the entire staging had to be carefully re-imagined. The stage was extended to encompass an 18-piece orchestra, a ramp was built from the pit onto the stage for access to the 'rooftop' scene and the side galleries were transformed into theatre boxes.

StagedRight graduates came into their own with one former student, who is now technical manager at The Liverpool Empire, coming back to light the show whilst another, who graduated in theatre make up and prosthetics, came back and made The Phantoms bald wig, his prosthetic face and the wig he wears for most of the show. A third graduate, who is currently studying technical theatre at Glasgow Conservatoire, worked with his dad to design and build a remote-controlled gondola. They also experimented in their garage with ropes and a tin of paint to find a way for the chandelier to fly from the stage to above the audience and then crash down again at the end of act one. Two other graduates, who now work professionally, also returned to work backstage.





Most of the large props were made in house, such as candelabra trucks, the Phantom’s organ, the vanishing chair and a new twist on the Hannibal elephant. After the first lockdown, StagedRight’s long term wardrobe mistress relocated south leaving a mammoth wardrobe hole, but this was filled by a small team who created the entire costume plot by adapting existing stock or creating many wonderful new costumes.

It certainly looked impressive and was commented on by local media. Presenting ‘Phantom’ was a long time coming but according to director David McNeill, it was well worth

the wait. He said: *“Never have I experienced an audience reaction as we did at the interval and curtain call each night. They were amazed at the effects but more importantly, that a group of young people could present something so outstanding and professional. Our students excelled themselves and the hours spent in rehearsal certainly paid off.”* David went on to say: *“When you face challenge after challenge, you sometimes doubt that the end result will be worth it but, in my heart, I knew our students could do it and when you add the amazing StagedRight creatives and the small but brilliant team around us, it was destined to be our best production ever. ‘Phantom’ will always be very special to us.”*

Rocking their way to the youth award



It was our pleasure during the conference to present on behalf of Utopia Costumes the Utopia Youth Award to Big Bad Wolf Theatre Company, Falkirk. This was awarded to congratulate them on their recent production of *We Will Rock You*. The overall production was outstanding and the comments and feedback following attendance from several NODA officials was amazing and I would have loved to have sat in every night of the run.

continued support of all our youth members and the hard work that is going on for the upcoming productions in 2023. It is always a pleasure for me to attend your rehearsals and productions, just give me a shout via email if you would like me to come along. Thanks to those who have booked yourselves in already for 2023. I look forward to working with you and all the Youth Societies in Scotland in the forthcoming year.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you all for your

Neil Hartley, Youth Coordinator

Spotlight's community youth theatre – *Trick or Treat*



Earlier this year, the Spotlights Community Youth Theatre Seniors group was given the opportunity to work with playwright Lisa Nicoll from In Motion Theatre Company, to write an original piece of theatre that would work both on stage and on screen. Due to the unique nature of Spotlights, as an inclusive drama group aimed at children and young people who might not usually engage with the theatre or drama, we have found that identifying a script that allows for the differing needs and abilities of our members is not an easy task. Thus, the idea to write our own was born.

The project was funded by a variety of sources including the Weir Charitable Trust, Youth Theatre Arts Scotland, Tillyloss Trust, Hugh Fraser Foundation and the Tay Charitable Trust. This funding paid for Lisa's services as a professional playwright to work with the young people, and for a sessional worker to support the young people in their work with Lisa and on their drama skills in general.

The resulting script was *Trick or Treat*, a play conceived from ideas and workshops with the young people,

which Lisa then took to form the basis of the story. *Trick or Treat* follows a young girl who is struggling to find her way in the world after her Dad has disappeared from the family home. On the eve of Halloween, dressed as the Lion from *The Wizard of Oz*, she goes to a party but struggles to be accepted by her so-called friends who are more interested in getting social media likes and with their own image. Sent to hide on a spooky game of Hide and Seek, she is left alone in the dark while her 'friends' laugh and joke. That is until she is rescued by two friends dressed as George and Peppa Pig who admit to their own struggles and who make the cowardly lion feel like she is not alone.

Trick or Treat is a story about acceptance, rejection and fitting in. Lisa said: "This was an amazing process with the young people, from workshopping ideas for the basis of the play to filming on location. They worked in such a professional manner even though the days were long for recording! The young people are talented and dedicated and it was a joy to be inspired by them and hear more about the world from their point of view which I incorporated into the story. Young people's voices are so important to

be heard and *Trick or Treat* allows us to do that." Lisa Shortridge, Chairperson of Spotlights, said: "Working with Lisa has been an amazing experience and she was able to really engage with the young people and draw out their ideas and stories. She was able to create characters and a script that catered to the abilities of our members while still engaging the audience in what is a wonderful story."

The film was premièred in the Montrose Playhouse on the 26th July, and the young people were so excited to share their film with friends, family and local dignitaries. The Montrose Playhouse was generous enough to offer us the use of one of their screens for free, and Spotlights wants to extend a special thanks to them.

The young people are now working on rehearsing a pantomime (*Rapunzel* 12th-15th Jan) while working on more original scripts – this time a collection of short plays written via WhatsApp. Watch this space for future exciting work from this enthusiastic group of young actors.

The finished film, and our other videos, can be viewed on our YouTube channel.

Isaac from NODA North East has the Golden Ticket



Isaac Sugden (aged 11) from Wakefield has secured the dream role of Charlie in *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory - The Musical* at Leeds Playhouse for its ever popular Christmas production. Isaac is one of four young actors to play the well-known role of Charlie Bucket which takes place 18 November, 2022 - 23rd January, 2023.

The open-call resulted in hundreds of youngsters from across the North of England attending the workshop auditions and following a number of recalls four young people were chosen to play Charlie over the 13 week run. Isaac spent the summer holidays working with Director, James Brining, to develop the classic and much-loved Roald Dahl character and he along with the other 'Charlies' have already been interviewed live on TV for BBC Look North.

This is an amazing opportunity for Isaac, who earlier in the year played Pugsley Addams in Ossett Youth Theatre's production of *The Addams Family* along with his sister Evalyn (pictured above). Performing is very much part of family life for Isaac as his dad Fraser is a regular on the amateur stage with several groups in NODA North East.

Jo Sykes, NODA NE Youth Coordinator, was lucky to be able to pose questions to Isaac about his experience.

What experience from your time with amateur groups were you able to bring to the audition process?

Knowing to relax and not to be anxious when doing the auditions, always give it your all, but most of all enjoy it and love what you do.

What has been the most exciting part of securing the role of Charlie?

Getting to know the cast, learning lots of exciting songs from the musical and having the opportunity to play a character any child performer would dream of.

What do you enjoy the most about performing?

Showing my love for acting, singing and the rush of performing. I've always loved learning new songs and practising lots and lots to perfect my roles.

What would be your dream role in the future?

A dream role for me in the future is Jamie in *Everybody's Talking About Jamie*, he's such a meaningful character and I find we have very similar personalities.



The last leg of my presidential travels

As I relinquish the role of president to good friend, Nick Lawrence, I look back with absolute pleasure on my time as president with 132 productions under my belt since last September. I had a mind-blowing trip to Shetland, proving that theatre is alive and well in the most northerly reaches of NODA. After an absence of three years, each audience member was given a sunflower with a message of hope to take away with them as the very poignant story of *Calendar Girls* the play was performed to a packed auditorium.

After a lovely flight back to Inverness, landing briefly at Kirkwall in Orkney, I saw an energetic and spirited *Legally Blonde* before heading home through the Highlands.

My travels also saw me celebrating centenary productions of *Shrek*, *Evita* and *Celebrate – the Musical* with Hessle MT, Leamington & Warwick and Chesham MTC respectively – congratulations to all. Other trips saw me seeing a NODA North première of *Young Frankenstein* by Jarrow MTC as well as a brilliant self-written concert by Alnwick SMS, *Cabaret to Broadway*.

I spent my birthday visiting a truly wonderful version of *Little Women – the Musical* by South Manchester OS and had a Marilyn Monroe experience as, after the show, the cast brought a cake out for me and sang ‘Happy birthday Mr President’.

I love all forms of theatre but admit to having a guilty pleasure for drama and saw an extremely funny yet poignant production of *Stand and Deliver* by Whitehaven TG in the lovely Rosehill theatre. It is always nice to see something ‘new’ which was the case when I saw *Big Fish* by Mid Cheshire MTC, especially as it was a production that was truly as spectacular as it was emotional and could well be my new favourite musical.

I was told by previous presidents that the trip to Ireland to visit our sister organisation AIMS is a highlight of the year and I wasn’t disappointed with a star studded, glitzy awards weekend. Pictured is Donald Hill a 60 year member of Londonderry Society (also NODA members) who won the Spirit of AIMS award as well as the youngest ever recipient of an AIMS award, 8 year old Ellie, winner of the Best Ensemble as part of the von Trapp children in Gorey MS.

My journey has been long and has seen me visit all corners of the UK from Lands End to Shetland – I’ve met many new friends along my travels, and seen throughout that NODA is indeed a family. I’ve LOVED every minute of my presidency (even the long train journeys – possibly) and wish Nick the best of years.

Gordon Richardson
NODA National President - 2021 - 2022



Lands End!



Hessle MT Centenary



Alnwick SMS - Cabaret to Broadway



Islesburgh Drama Group - Calendar Girls



AIMS Weekend



Donald Hill - Londonderry Society



Jarrow MTC - Young Frankenstein



Ellie from Gorey MS



Leamington & Warwick - Evita



Whitehaven Theatre Group - Stand and Deliver



Inverness Musical Theatre - Legally Blonde



Mid Cheshire MTC - Big Fish

Opera Worcester celebrates 70 years

NODA West Midlands



HMS Pinafore - 1952

The origins of the society are slightly obscure, but it is believed that 1952, is the crucial date, since it was in that year that the ladies of the Women's Institute, Great Witley Branch, resolved to form a choir. It was not long before the members of the Choir realised that the range and scope of the music they could perform would be greatly enhanced by the admission of some gentlemen to their ranks. At about the same time, the link with the Women's Institute was severed and the Great Witley Choir became an independent body.

The next idea was to attempt a staged work. This is thought to have been *HMS Pinafore* by Gilbert & Sullivan, and it was performed at the Chantry School in Martley, as were several succeeding productions. The Great Witley Choir thus became the Great Witley Operatic Society.

Meanwhile, great things were happening in Worcester, where Sara Knight and others were working hard to provide Worcester with a theatre, after the demolition of the Theatre Royal. Their efforts were crowned with success when the Swan Theatre opened in 1965. It seemed to the Great Witley Operatic Society that this new, small theatre would be ideal for promoting their shows before

the lucrative market of Worcester audiences; and this was possible because the leading local society, the Worcester Operatic and Dramatic Society, had only recently moved fully into presenting modern musical shows instead of Gilbert & Sullivan, leaving a convenient opening for a society which wished to present the Operas of Gilbert and Sullivan.

So, the Great Witley Operatic Society came to the Swan Theatre, and began this long and happy association with *The Mikado* in 1966. The first twenty-two shows produced at the Swan, until 1989, were all chosen from the Savoy Operas of Gilbert and Sullivan. From 1990 to 2015, there were nineteen Savoy Operas, five Viennese and French Operettas and two American Musicals. As the Swan Theatre itself celebrated its Jubilee, GWOS was proud to share with WODS the honour of having performed in that theatre throughout its history.

At this point the link with the Swan Theatre was broken, perhaps only temporarily. The society adopted a new name, "Opera Worcester", and embarked on a programme of more serious operas: *Carmen*, *The Magic Flute*, *The Marriage of Figaro* and the double bill of *Cavalleria Rusticana* and *Pagliacci*.

The Covid pandemic obviously interrupted the even tenor of the society's way, since no production was possible in 2020 or 2021. For 2022, however, it is back to Vienna, and the society's third production of *The Merry Widow* is scheduled for July.

It should be added that the society's dramatic productions have always been interspersed with concerts, which have often explored a more adventurous repertoire, and have usually been given in aid of a deserving charity.

2022, marks the 70th Anniversary of the society and along with its first production in three years, the society plan to celebrate with a series of workshops and events.

Opera Worcester became a charity in 2019. It seeks to promote performance in operatic works, attract and give opportunities to both new and established performers of all ages and educate and stimulate appreciation of the opera and operetta genres.

Its activities in its 70th birthday year will reflect its charitable aims and this had already included a joint workshop and performance of *Dido & Aeneas* with a local grammar school, RGS Worcester. A weekend of drama and singing workshops designed for all ages and abilities is planned for the Autumn.

Since its earliest years, and into the future, the society has been committed to providing high quality productions, wants to build its membership by offering new and varied challenges for its singers and performers, and build new audiences while continuing to entertain and retain its established and very valued following.

NODA member survey - thank you for your input



Earlier this autumn, more than 600 of you responded to our NODA membership survey. We heard from current society members in all the regions we operate in, as well as more than 250 of our individual members. We also heard from a number of societies who are no longer members of NODA, who used this opportunity to tell us about what was going on in their groups, and why they were no longer members.

Thank you very much to those of you who were able to take the time to respond - your responses have been invaluable as we plan for the future.

Why did we run a membership survey?

As NODA approaches its 125th anniversary year, we want to make sure that the needs of our members are at the heart of our decision making and planning. We are going through a process to reflect on what we do and why we do it, thinking about how we can better support the needs of our members, as well as encouraging appreciation of the sector by participants and audiences alike.

The survey was an opportunity for the membership as a whole to tell us what we're doing well, how we could improve the membership, which of the benefits you most value and what else we could be doing to support members.

NODA Today - Winter 2022

What did the results tell us overall?

- The ongoing impact of Covid on your ability to put on productions is being felt by many groups, and you anticipate that the cost of living crisis will have a serious impact as well.
- Many groups are finding it difficult to recruit new members, and even more difficult to recruit new trustees and committee members, and are not always able to attract good audiences for productions.
- Our membership is very loyal and many groups and individuals have been members for many years - we really appreciate it!
- Whilst there are a number of NODA membership benefits being used very regularly by the majority of members, there are some which are not very well used. You gave us some very useful suggestions for new benefits and training you would value, as well as feedback about the benefits you don't value - both for group and individual membership.
- Many of you value the opportunities for connection and networking offered by being part of the NODA community and the support we offer.

- You gave us useful feedback about NODA's systems and processes, including our website and the process for applying for insurance.
- We heard some brilliant stories of the support from our regional reps and councillors, and some requests for more support.

What will happen next?

To support this research, we've been working with Indigo Ltd, an organisation who specialise in research and audiences and in the theatre and wider cultural sector. They have been analysing the survey responses and working with us to prioritise the improvements we want to make to our membership offer.

In the next few months, we'll be setting out a plan for the next 3 years, starting with our 125th anniversary year, and sharing the plan with our NODA members. We want to ensure that the NODA community - and amateur theatre in general - will grow and flourish in the coming years.

This plan will include a review of your recommendations and feedback about the benefits we offer, and some phased improvements to our systems to make sure it is as easy as possible for you to renew your memberships and access the resources you need. We'll also be looking at how we can encourage new members to join, and how we can spread the word to new groups and individuals across the UK.

We're working closely with the NODA Board of Trustees, and we're excited to share our plans with you as they progress. Of course, we're always keen to hear from members directly, so do get in touch if you want to by emailing info@noda.org.uk

Where it all began

Meet the new NODA National President, Nick Lawrence

It all started when I was asked to play in *Dick and Dora Meet Father Christmas*. I especially enjoyed working with my best friends. In fact, I remember being hurt on his behalf that my best friend, Edward Green, was to play the dog. How insulting was that? It was soon after this that my parents, in a rare mood of rash spending, took me to see Sir Geraint Evans playing *Ko-Ko* at the Coventry Hippodrome (a theatre sadly no longer with us). I was hooked and with regular parts in school and church productions, I was developing my craft watching the senior members of the groups. It is amazing how quickly you can learn by watching others, how not to do it. Through a friend of the family, I got to be a supernumary in Coventry Savoy's production of *The Yeomen of the Guard* at the Belgrade Theatre and so to join the Education Department of the theatre.

I was very fortunate to get to play Yuen in *Madam D* and Charles I in *All the King's Men* before leaving the Midlands for Devon to train as a primary school teacher. Funny that, as my Dad didn't want me to go into teaching and my Mother didn't want me to go to stage school. My college had a link with an Exeter college with which we staged works by Gilbert & Sullivan. G&S were back again and in the next few years I got performances in, conducted or directed the full canon of works by the masters.

My first job gave me the opportunity to be one of the original members of The Ditchat Players in Somerset. I had a long walk between villages and my digs, but it was worth it for the camaraderie I enjoyed. This didn't last long before I was moved to Dawlish where I benefitted from the wonderful facilities of the Saftesbury Theatre, owned by Dawlish Repertory Company. As I was now in charge of the school's music, I got persuaded to join Dawlish Operatic and started out with some random characters, such as Pawnee Bill, Young Walsingham and Uncle Jeff. The rep company staged a number of plays in a year and I got lots of experience on stage and behind. I have a fond memory of *My Fair Lady* when the leading lady's husband and I were given the task of holding steady the Wimpole Street door. The curtains were supposed to come in to meet us. You can imagine our surprise when we turned (apparently as one) and saw the audience gaping back. Apparently we turned as one to face each other and remained stony faced through Mrs. Pearce's scene with Freddie.

I appeared as a jester in *Robert & Elizabeth* (sorry, I couldn't find the awful photo of this role) and this led to me being talked into joining Exmouth Operatic (now EMCo) and



Dick & Dora Meet Father Christmas



Bless The Bride - Pierre Fontaine

Exeter Operatic (now EMS). This gave me the opportunity to play the leads in *Bless the Bride*, *Kismet*, *Die Fledermaus* and *Hello, Dolly!*

While I was still living in Dawlish, I became Chairman of the Operatic. We decided to host a meeting of local groups in order to share our extensive wardrobe and scenery departments. At the meeting it was suggested that NODA might be able to help in this. My only experience of NODA up until that moment was the visits of Councillor John Cockram who adjudicated the SW Butlin Awards. As you can imagine I soon found out what was what and made good use of the South West's workshop weekends which were held every year at the beginning of September. It was here that Rose Wigmore (then Todd) got me involved in the ensemble workshop as her second. We were all dismayed when Councillor John Moore died on the way home from yet another successful weekend. At the close of the funeral the new Councillor, Harold Masding, advanced on me

and informed me that I was “just what he needed” to act as Representative for District 4 as it was then. Even the experience of playing Alderman Halliwell in *When We Are Married* failed to put me off committee work and I spent periods as Chairman & Treasurer of Exmouth AOS, Vice Chairman of Exeter AOS, Director for “Exmouth 14-20’s” (now Centre Stage), Sidmouth ACOS (SMT) & Exeter AOS among many others.

Being a rep, I now felt I ought to have a secure background on which to base my adjudications. So I attended my first NODA Summer School, it was 1988, and I absorbed some fabulous information from the lovely Peter Spencer. In the following years, I attended the Operatic School at Ripon, the technical & the musical director’s schools at Winchester and my favourite, many drama schools at Bristol encouraged by the two Joans. Witherall & Pickthall. The amalgamating of the schools, opened up lots of new training and I still find myself learning something new each year or being reminded of a simple solution I have forgotten to use. It was during a summer school that I was approached to direct the music for *You’re A Good Man, Charlie Brown*. The charity production by Lorna Wood and her student friends took shape over two weeks in Northampton. My first visit to NODA East Midlands.

Through NODA, I got invitation to direct and/or musical direct for Axminster Musical Theatre and Lyme Regis AOS. After close to twenty years, I was honoured to receive Life Membership of both groups.



Colla Voce



Yeomen of the Guard - Wilfred Shadbolt

With the celebration of NODA’s centenary and the visit of President, John Richards, to the SW Weekend, I got together with some local friends and formed Colla Voce to provide the evening cabaret. We went on to provide Summer Seasons at the Exmouth Pavilion and still expect certain numbers to follow others even though not from the same show.

I was fortunate to be given the opportunity to be Narrator for Orfeo Opera, a group co-ordinated by my vocal coach, Mrs. Pamela George. I was even allowed to sing in some of the ensemble pieces with some of the best singers in Devon.

All along the way, I have found time to be in or direct plays – my favourite activity. Among my list are leading roles in *A Christmas Carol*, *Toad of Toad Hall*, *On Golden Pond*, *The Lion in Winter*, and when I was energetic many incarnations of Chester Dreadnought.

Over the last 34 years, I have made a number of efforts to escape from NODA, but Councillors Mary Hobbs and Geraldine Branton continually found new jobs for me and suddenly I found myself Councillor for the South West. I have never seemed to learn how to duck and so I am now honoured to serve a second term as your President. I look forward to meeting you at your regional events and enjoying many talented performances. May the fun continue!

Nick Lawrence
NODA National President 2022 - 2023



Orfeo Opera



H. M.S. Pinafore - Ralph Rackstraw

Sixty years on and still going strong!

NODA London



Long Service Award recipients. Credit Will Dyson

On Saturday 23 July 2022, members and friends of Banbury Operatic Society (BOS) gathered together for its Diamond Jubilee dinner dance, celebrating sixty years since BOS started in 1961.

The splendid three-course dinner, which took place at The Holt Hotel in Oxfordshire, started with a reception followed by a warm welcome from the Society's President, Barbara Homer.

This NODA District 12 Society's inaugural show was *The Pirates of Penzance*, so it was very fitting that it was one of the table names on the night. Jonni Rubery, the Society's Chair said: "It is such a pleasure to welcome back so many current and former members, and in particular, two NODA dignitaries: Gordon Richardson, NODA President, and Pam Armstrong, NODA London Regional Councillor."

The society marked the occasion with a symbolic cutting of a special anniversary celebratory cake, by three founder members.

The evening continued with toasts, and

then Life Member, Janet Bishop, gave a potted history of the society's last 60 years. Janet has directed many of the society's shows.

Following the speeches the society used this momentous occasion to give out NODA Long Service Awards which were presented by the NODA President and NODA London Regional Councillor. "We were so grateful to Gordon and Pam for giving up their time to attend our 60th dinner. Their support was hugely appreciated by us all," said Jonni. Receiving their 10 year badges were (Jonni Rubery, Jess Smith, Sharon Smith) 10 and 15 year badges (Ben Coleman, Catherine Cook, Sarah Rubery, Louisa Talbott (collected posthumously on her behalf by her husband, Richard Talbott), 35-year silver bar (David Hornsby), 30-year and 35 year badges (Fred Castle), 30-year and 35-year silver bar (Ann Sloan) and 60-year diamond bar and certificate (Jenny Tustian) – "you don't see many of these", said Gordon Richardson, in response to presenting the diamond bar award on the evening. Congratulations to all.

Following the awards there was a group photo and we were delighted to be entertained for the rest of the evening by the fabulous function band, Jitterbug. Throughout the evening guests reminisced over past shows with a display board with historic photographs and some large TV screens displaying a variety of photos from the society's history.

Society Chair, Jonni, said: "Having not long come out of a global pandemic, I did have doubts as to whether the Executive Committee and I could pull off the dinner without a plethora of absences due to Covid-19, but with a lot of hard work and careful planning we managed it. It was such a lovely evening, and a delight to welcome 88 attendees.

Here's to the next 60 years, and, in the words of one of the songs from Cole Porter's 1948 musical, *Kiss Me Kate*, "here's to "Another Op'nin, Another Show!", which will be in October and is a celebration of 60 years of musical theatre".

Jonni Rubery. Chair and Trustee
Banbury Operatic Society

Ever thought about performing in a Tithe Barn?

NODA South West

Wiltshire's 'The Bradfordians' share their experiences!

There are many interesting venues for drama productions around, so this summer the Bradfordians Dramatic Society in Wiltshire were delighted to return to setting up their stage in the local 13th Century Tithe Barn. Working with English Heritage, who manage this historic by the canal building in Bradford on Avon, the group have devised a way for the lighting rig, staging and seating all to be self-supporting, with nothing touching the walls. The uneven mud and stone floor levelled up with varying amounts of plywood, and the tiers for the seating standing on cloth to protect the floor. When all these difficulties are overcome, it is the most atmospheric building to perform in, with the setting sun shining through the ancient cross left in the stone wall to the west. This was just the space in which to perform *Macbeth* over the Summer.

Previous years have seen the group acting alongside a nesting robin, interrupted by swooping swifts and house martins, trains and ambulance sirens. Once a jazz band were playing nearby, adding music to the amazing atmosphere of the place. Of course, there are difficulties, especially when it rains, and the weather effects are at odds with the production. Running to the barn from the changing rooms can be a challenge for some of us to! However, it was so glad to be back – if only everyone can keep warm enough!

Dee Way



In your Face Theatre, Seaham

NODA North

A policeman's lot is not always a happy one, but in the case of Peter Baker a member of In Your Face Theatre Seaham, it certainly has been. As a police constable, his dedication to preventing animal cruelty and wildlife crime has seen him been awarded with the UK Wildlife Crime Enforcer of the year. Nominations were submitted by his peers and every wildlife crime police officer in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland were eligible to submit an entry for the award. Peter was delighted to win the award which is the most privileged award in wildlife crime fighting a police officer can be awarded. Peter commented that: "It is a true honour to achieve it and I am most grateful." Having spoken to Peter following his recent show, *The Adams Family*, he is totally delighted as are his NODA North family.



The art of the pantomime chase

NODA East Midlands



The villain runs from stage left to right dragging the heroine. The comic runs from stage right to left in the wrong direction. The hero runs from stage left to right to rescue his one true love. The henchman runs from stage right to left in sheer panic chased by the dame who is in hot pursuit with puckered lips and so it goes on until the frenetic race reaches its feverish conclusion.

Whether I'm on performing, directing or sitting in the audience, one of my favourite moments in a pantomime is always the comedy chase scene. The moment where most, if not all of the characters dart backwards and forwards across the stage at high speed (usually through the enchanted woodland) in an attempt to capture or escape from each other.

This element of pantomime is likely to have evolved, alongside the slosh or slapstick scene, from the 'Harlequinade' - an act in the traditional pantomimes of the 18th century involving mime and stylised dance controlled by the character known as Harlequin.

He would use a hinged bat or stick which would make a slapping noise as it was hit against scenery to make scenes change, quickly transporting characters to many different locations.

One of the keys to a really successful chase scene is to incorporate as many characters as possible and, of course, this is something an amateur dramatic society can do brilliantly because cast sizes are often much larger. In the twelve pantomime scripts I have written for amateurs to stage, I always ensure that I can squeeze in everyone if I can, including the pantomime horse, cow, camel, or whatever skin character you happen to be using and whatever creature popped up in the ghost gag, be it a bear, wolf, skeleton or suit of armour.

Another important component is the inclusion of as many silly, comedy objects that your props store will allow. Frying pans, large nets, water pistols, giant spiders, custard pies, anything that will take your audience by surprise. Also, if you can get your dame or

comic to do a quick change before the chase begins, or even halfway through, this will add to the hilarity. I remember playing dame one year and appearing in a spiderman outfit, only for the 'real' spiderman to pop up to join me at the end of the routine - surreal but the audience lapped it up.

Perhaps the most vital element of a comedy chase scene is the music, choose the right piece of music and you're halfway there. *Yakety Sax* always used to be an audience favourite but now Benny Hill is a distant memory for most, it's lost its resonance a little. I tend to favour the more traditional classical numbers such as the *Tritsch-Tratsch Polka* by Strauss, the *Hungarian Rhapsody No.2* by Liszt or Rossini's *William Tell Overture*. But my all-time favourite is the *Can-can* music from *Orpheus in the Underworld*.

Whichever music you choose, the most important thing is to make it fast and make it funny. On your marks, get set, GO!!!

The show must go on!

NODA Wales & Ireland

AAODS next show *Shrek*, after months of rehearsals and planning, had to be cancelled due to its home theatre since 1911, The Borough Theatre Abergavenny, still being closed for restoration. I awarded AAODS my 'The Show Must go On Award' for all their work keeping the society together and a review *All Together Now*.

The same week they would have performed *Shrek*, they staged a celebration of 111 years of AAODS songs from the last 10 years shows, in a new venue The Clarence Hall Crickhowell, and proved that The Show Must go On!

Dee Mc Ilroy
NODA W & I Regional Representative



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Long Service Awards

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5 Year Badge



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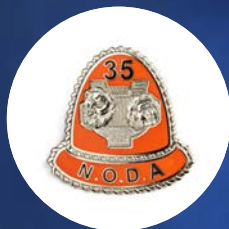
20 Year Badge



25 Year Badge



30 Year Badge



35 Year Badge



40 Year Badge



45 Year Badge



50 Year Badge



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Silver Bar



50 Year Medal



Gold Bar



Diamond Bar



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NODA Achievement
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Long Service Awards

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

What can I apply for?

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

Who can apply?

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

New badges recently added



5 Year Badge

Start your Long Service Award journey earlier than ever before.



NODA Achievement Award

Do you want to reward a member of your cast's performance or maybe a techie who puts everything they have into your show? The NODA Achievement Award can be ordered directly from our website - there are no requirements of service - it is up to you on how you award this badge!

History Of Hereford Amateur Pantomime Society by Tony Taylor

NODA West Midlands



Tony Taylor being presented his 60-year medal by Louise Hickey, President and Louisa Tobin, Chairman

Tony Taylor is the longest serving member of Hereford Amateur Pantomime Society and it was HAPS great pleasure to award him his NODA Long Service Award on August 17th, 2022, for 60 years of unstinting dedication to the society. The society has a long affiliation with the city of Hereford and whilst some older supporters of pantomime still refer to us as Wiggins Panto, we have evolved over the years to what we are today.

This is Tony's story and is a wonderful insight of how we came about.

"It all started when I came out of the forces (National Service) in April 1962, and returned to work at Henry Wiggin & Company Ltd. I renewed some friendships with colleagues from before my national

service. At that time the company was in the process of merging plans and between 1960 and 1962 the plants at Birmingham and Glasgow moved to Hereford. The Birmingham plant included a thriving drama group that used to put on plays at their canteen. When I arrived, I found out, from colleagues who had joined the group, that they did 3 Act Plays three times a year, so I joined up and played several roles in 1962 & 1963. In 1963, the Kemble Theatre in Broad Street was pulled down and was the Tax office for many years. Because of this, the company approached our Chairman, Ron Saunders, (his widow Jeanette is still a patron), asking if the drama group would put on a panto for the employees' children, as the company treated them all to a visit to the panto every year.

The drama group agreed to do a panto on 2 consecutive Saturday afternoons as we were the only group who had any stage experience. It was decided to do

a potted version of Ali Baba (Alis the Barber) all in rhyme. During rehearsals, the company came back to us and asked if we would do it for the mums and dads on the Saturday evenings. We of course said yes, as we were already rehearsing for the matinee – and so it all began.

We used the main canteen as it had a stage, the building only being built a couple of years previously. The canteen was filled with chairs, and it was estimated that over 700 people were at each performance.

The panto was an enormous success with very favourable comments from all quarters, so it was not surprising that the company came back to us again the following year when we performed Sinbad the Sailor. We added two more days (the Fridays) to the run, a total of 6 shows. The tickets were all sold out well before the show to mainly Wiggin employees with people desperate for tickets. The third, 1966, was Mother Goose and this time the group hired 2 follow spots from London which were put on top of a 3-tier staging, like ones used by electricians. I was lucky to be one of 2 people operating the follow spots, with the chairman, a job I did until 1977, when I relinquished the job to take on the role of treasurer. Little did I know that I would be at that post for 40 years.

We were asked to help with many "tricks" with the lights, eg reducing the spot to a small circle on the stage so that the dame could play with it before kicking it off stage. It was 1966, that we introduced "staging" to the canteen so that people further back would be able to see as well as those closer to the stage. In doing this, the seating capacity was reduced to 579 seats per show.

We also increased the performances by another 2 to make 8 in total including the Wednesday and Thursday, and another 2 performances, Monday and Tuesday, were added in 1967, (10) and in 1968, another 2. In 1969, we were doing 14 performances each year which continued to the late 70s.

We performed Cinderella in 1963, and I remember well the “transformation” scene. Somebody had arranged for us to have a pony to pull Cinderella’s coach which went down a treat, and I remember that on the last night the band presented the pony with a bale

of hay. The transformation was from Cinderella’s kitchen to Cinderella sitting in the pony drawn coach in a 15 second blackout following a triple flash as the fairy Godmother waved her wand.

Throughout the 70s we performed to mostly full houses, but towards the end of the 70s we reduced our shows to 11 performances as audiences started to drop off. It was also harder to encourage people to be in the cast as the company policy was to only have employees in the show. Over the years, people left for other employment including cast members and we had to obtain permission from the

company for “ex-employees” to continue in the pantos.

The company finally pulled the plug in 1981, after our last show. The canteen was sold off and became a site for industrial units. The canteen was transferred to the factory as a “tea station” with microwaves. After it was all over, a group of us met at the Wellington (upstairs) and it was agreed that we should try and start again as Hereford Amateur Pantomime Society. The rest is history and as most of you know we have become a fixture in Hereford for February half term week.”

Hamilton Operatic & Dramatic Club – back again

NODA Scotland



We have been delighted that 2022, has been as close to normal as we could possibly make it. We got back to rehearsals at the beginning of the year for our concert *Music: past and present*. This allowed us to get back to doing what we love and we were more than delighted to welcome our audiences back also.

In August, we were back with our first social event post-Covid in the form of a quiz night. Over 80 people

fought it out to be victorious on a night that varied from general knowledge to HODC show history. In a well contested night, the top of the leader board was tight with the winners delighted!

The moment we had all been waiting on came in early November, when we got back to performing our main production which this year was 9 to 5: *The Musical*. From the band call to the feeling of opening night in front of the

audience, we realised just how much we had missed it all. We were also delighted to welcome Christine Hunter Hughes, NODA Vice President, along to watch us this year.

We are looking forward to our Christmas events at the end of this year and are excited to be planning for 2023, which is the club’s 120th anniversary.

Carly Reilly, Marketing Manager.

The Argyle Remembered

NODA North West

The Argyle Theatre was once in Birkenhead, on the Wirral which opened in December 1868, originally as the Argyle Music Hall. The owner and manager between 1888 and 1934 was Dennis J Clarke who was a local councillor, shrewd businessman and entrepreneur, with a keen eye for talent. Acts who performed at the Argyle Theatre included Marie Lloyd, Harry Lauder, Bud Flannagan and Chesney Allen and many, many more. The Argyle Theatre was sadly bombed during the Blitz in 1940, and never re-opened. The shell of the building remained until 1973, when it was demolished and is now occupied by a department store car park.

Joan Clement who lived on the Wirral wrote a show called *The Argyle Remembered* and first performed it at her local church on the Wirral in 1982. This show featured many of the acts that performed at The Argyle. She then gave exclusive rights of this show to Heswall Musical Society which she was a member of to perform. The show tells the story in song and dance of Birkenhead's famous Argyle Theatre. Since 1998, it has been performed by the society four times - its most recent production in July this year. The production was attended by members of The Clarke family whose family owned the theatre.

If you would like to find out more about the society and *The Argyle Remembered* show you can visit their website.



"THE ARGYLE CHRISTMAS CARNIVAL"
AT THE ARGYLE THEATRE, BIRKENHEAD.

A GAY AND LAUGHTER-LADEN SHOW SPECIALLY DEVISED FOR YOUNG AND OLD

THE COLE BROTHERS, two of America's greatest coloured comedians, in a hilarious affair "Matching Wits." Black face comedy at its best.

MARGARET HART, the English mystery girl, presents an amazing demonstration of mental telepathy. Blindfolded, she describes in detail unusual articles produced by members of the audience. For your own amusement see if you can baffle her.

MAX HERMAN. More laughs from the world's worst conjuror. Everything goes wrong, and his efforts to explain things only add to his embarrassment.

GREEN & BENSON, two clever eccentric dancers.

ROLF HOLBEIN, "comically cartoonial." This funny little man has a most original act, full of the most amusing surprises.

SONNY CARTER, the boy drummer, whose clever and snappy syncopation was one of the hits of our "Goodfellow" concert. Thirteen years old and an artist to his finger tips.

GLADYS CHURCH. Pretty and talented. You have heard her on the air from the Argyle.

JOE LEWIS & CHARLIE SINNETT make their first appearance here in a new comedy item, "I'M ONLY A LAD."

TARO NAITO, a dexterous Japanese juggler, in amazing feats of balance and rhythm.

6-40 WEEK OF DECEMBER 24th, 1934 8-50
(Christmas Day excepted)

MATINEES | Boxing Day, Dec. 26th.
at 2-30 | Saturday, Dec. 29th.

Thank you NODA!

NODA North East



The Lamproom Musical Theatre Company in Barnsley, recently had a pre-show crisis. Just six days before they opened with *Elf – The Musical*, they discovered their newly appointed Props Manager had sourced absolutely nothing!

For those of you who don't know, *Elf The Musical* is a very props heavy show. Not only does it require big ticket props like settees and park benches, Christmas accessories like giant candy canes and Christmas Trees, it also requires lots of items to be creatively made – such as broken

wind turbine machines, Souvlaki Carts, false shredding machines and lots and lots of elf like etch-a-sketches.

The LMTC much loved and long-standing props manager sadly retired after their *May* production and so when the new lady came forward and offered help, full of enthusiasm and promises, they jumped at her kind offer.

She was well supported, receiving regular communication from the Production Team, being shadowed by her recently retired predecessor and being part of a pro-active WhatsApp

where they discussed the items being sourced.

Unfortunately, just seven days before the show opened, when they started asking to see the actual props, (and not just photos), it turned out she had not sourced the props and then quit leaving them propless with just six days before the opening night!

What could they do? They turned immediately to social media and also to NODA.

In the first instance, they reached out via social media to other societies who had performed the show recently.

Their very pro-active NODA representatives, Ashley Booker and Les Smith were straight on to it sending emails and promoting it through their own NODA social media avenues.

The response they received was incredible and so heart-warming. Not only were societies who had done the musical contacting them to offer help, they even had offers from societies miles away who haven't even done the show, asking if there was anything they could do, make or source for them.

They were absolutely overwhelmed at the support offered to them by these NODA societies.

The Lamproom Musical Theatre Company want to thank, from the bottom of their hearts, everyone who has reached out to them. They said, "You guys give *amdrams* a good name!"

I am very pleased to report that, YES, they managed to source and make everything needed in THREE days.

Thank you from the Lamproom Musical Theatre Company, Barnsley

Celebrations, thanks and mishaps



Perth Amateur Operatic Society NODA Scotland

PAOS celebrate their 75th Anniversary. Members gathered on September 10th, for a night of Hollywood Glamour, to celebrate reaching a milestone anniversary.

The society was honoured to have Stuart McCue-Dick, NODA Scotland Councillor, in attendance to recognise members who had amassed over 160 years of service to amateur musical theatre.

PAOS are currently rehearsing for their April 2023 production of Legally Blonde.

Nunthorpe Players NODA North

Since it was founded in 1962, Nunthorpe Players has become a big part of their local community. They have a close relationship with St Mary's Church and have based themselves at the church hall since 1967, where they perform their productions.

Over the years they can boast of their many productions and have an impressive back catalogue of productions which include plays and pantomimes.

To celebrate their 60 anniversary the Players have created a special garden to celebrate their achievement spanning their 60 years and to commemorate the life and dedication of the late Queen Elizabeth 11. The garden was open by the society's life members. NODA North would like to congratulate Nunthorpe Players on there special achievement.





CODY
NODA South East

There were smiles all round when CODY welcomed NODA President, Gordon Richardson, backstage following a VIP evening at Princes Hall, Aldershot where they performed *Kinky Boots* to packed audiences and a standing ovation every night. Gordon seen here with cast members, left: Devin Moller and Dale Barrell said: *“It was a lot of fun but I wouldn’t want to wear those boots for long!”*

A Special Message for the South East

Our committee has had several changes with the retirement of our Awards Secretary, Margaret Coltman, and our Editor, Gregory Gower. Most grateful thanks to them both for their loyal and unstinting service. Lance Milton, the Regional Rep for District 1, has had to stand down due to ill health. Nigel Finch, our Treasurer, sadly passed away earlier this year and is sorely missed.

Chris Horton, the Regional Rep for District 14, has taken on the role of Editor. Susanne Crosby is very ably stepping into Lance’s role and I am acting as awards secretary for the time being. The role of treasurer is vacant at present.

Our Youth Coordinator, Mike Mullen, has made the decision to step away from the role of Youth Coordinator due to the pressures of work, a growing family and that of his own youth group. I respect his decision, but am greatly saddened that we lose him from our team. So, are you young at heart, keen to inspire and support our youth groups? You could be just the person to coordinate our various fantastic youth groups. We have such a wide range of tremendous groups they deserve to have someone to link them together, enable them to benefit from each other’s experiences and further enhance the quality of youth performances in the South East.

The show must go on

NODA Scotland

I’m part of Falkirk Operatic Society and in April 2019, we performed *Anything Goes* playing the part of Reno Sweeney. As a side note to this story – only a few weeks before curtain up I found out I was pregnant (and much further along than I thought!) so my tap-dancing routines and standing up on tables and chairs needed to be reduced somewhat last minute.

However, not to be outdone, on the last night of the show, I decided I had to come side stage to watch the first dance number be performed for the last time (it was about ten minutes in!) As I turned to leave the backstage, I tripped on some scenery, fell, and really hurt myself. I powered through, performed the entire show, tap dance and all, and then missed my own after-show party to take myself to A&E in full costume (dinner gown!) and stage make up - it turned out I had broken my wrist!

I am the epitome of ‘the show must go on’ – no one can actually believe I broke a bone and still continued to do the whole 2 hour plus show! Better still, even though I performed with one arm barely functioning - the audience didn’t seem to notice anything was wrong, thank goodness!!

Nikki Johnstone, Falkirk Operatic Society



Building a theatre within a theatre

When we were unable to perform our first choice play, we decided to take a perfectly good theatre with brand new seats and build a theatre in the round on the stage for a production of *Kindertransport*.

I have always been interested in modern history, in particular World War Two. I think it stems back to watching *World at War* with my grandfather on the History Channel. A visit to the Anne Frank Haus Museum, put that interest into perspective. The experience was genuinely haunting. So, a few years later when the opportunity arose to direct the stage version, I jumped at the chance.

The auditions were planned, the set designed – including using the stage trap for the main entrance for the show for audience and cast alike, and costumes had been planned in detail too. However, this was March 2020, and everything came to a stop with COVID-19. Fast forward to 2022, plans were resurrected, and an audition date was set.

On audition day, we had 12 incredible, mind blowing, fantastic auditions for the part of Anne, which left me thinking if I was even necessary in the role of director? However, we were missing one crucial thing. As is the common story of amateur

theatre, we lacked men! We could not cast the male roles, and whilst we did search far and wide, we did not want to ‘force’ people into the show. So, we took the decision to shelve the show.

While feeling a little sorry for ourselves, and with a heavy heart, we turned to our ever growing ‘shows we’d like to do’ bookshelf, well actually, shelving unit. I had purchased the script of *Kindertransport* a few years ago but had yet to read it. *Kindertransport* tells the story of a Jewish girl who is sent over to England before the start of World War II and her experiences of being a *Kindertransport* child. The play’s cast is five females and one male all of varying ages... perfect!

From our Anne Frank auditionees, I could cast the show with ease. The more I read the script and researched the story behind it, I knew I wanted to make the experience very intimate and almost immersive.

Since starting to direct shows, I have wanted to produce something in the



round. Having worked in Scarborough when I was younger at the Stephen Joseph Theatre (in the box office – nowhere near the stage!) I understood the concept but had no practical experience. Other members of the production team did try and dissuade me, but I went to the first rehearsal with my idea – turn our stage into a theatre in the round. I kept thinking - a small intimate space that will mean the audience feel like they are in the attic with the characters.



I remember being told that audience members watching theatre in the round is very much like being a fly on the wall of a conversation, at times the actor will have their backs to you, but it will feel much more natural. So this is my story of our first theatre-in-the-round experience.



First rehearsal – the read through, explaining my ideas to the cast... well it could have gone better! They were not really convinced on the concept, with only one of the cast having seen and performed a piece in the round many years ago.



Second rehearsal was another read through, but this time, I asked the cast to move around the room and try to be as natural as possible, rather than 'saying the lines out front', hoping that although it wouldn't feel alien to them as performers are drilled into delivering their lines out front and not to turn your back on the audience. It took them a while to get used to it, but by the end of the rehearsal, the cast were fully onboard!



So next dilemma... the set. My Anne Frank set was a huge multi-level attic, but now I was confining myself to a stage space of 8m by 6m (26ft by 16ft in old money). Within the space I had to fit the set and the audience.

We normally seat 90, but by not using our lovely new seating and instead seating the audience on stage, we had to reduce capacity. After some

calculations and lots of moving of chairs around the space, we came to the total of 36 seats – one row all the way round.

This would leave a playing space of about 5.4m x 3.7m (18ft by 12ft) - plenty of space... In my head, I wanted to surround the audience so from the minute they walked into the space it felt enclosed. The story is set in an attic, and I was keen on filling it with piles of old furniture, memorabilia of times gone by and all the junk we collect over years.

So, raiding our props store and the cast's families' lofts, we collected everything you can imagine – from crates of crockery to magazines – even the dolls' house the father of one of the cast members made for her as a child. To enclose the performance space, we decided to hang material from the lighting rig all the way round with only a cut out for the audience to enter and one for the cast.

The floor design is always an important element in theatre in the round as without large set pieces, a lot of it is on show. As we are able to paint our stage floor, we went with a floor board effect. A quick Amazon purchase and several hours of working on our hands and knees, we created a realistic wood effect. (It is that realistic, it is still showing through on the floor, even though it has been painted over multiple times!)

One detail when performing in such an intimate setting was that letters, books and documents had to be correct as the audience were that close they would be able to read them. Trying to find handwriting fonts that looked realistic was nigh on impossible, so with fountain pens and writing paper, we set to work creating decades worth of letters and notes to be located around the set. Most of these get torn up during the show, so multiple copies had to be made! Kindertransport centres around a book *Der Rattenfänger*, which in the

play is taking the idea of the pied piper and combining it with illustrations from the German book *Der Struwwelpeter*. As with the letters, the audience would be able to see every page, so after much hunting online for a German version of *The Pied Piper*, we located a small online shop in Hamburg that had a copy from 1908.

Setting the show, with only one stage entrance did pose a few issues. For instance, how would we get the Ratcatcher on and off stage, particularly for his first entrance? To have him enter through the doorway would lose the effect we wanted to create. So, we decided to hide him onstage for the first 15 pages under blankets and dust sheets that you would store in your loft. We would set the performer prior to the audience entering and pack set dressing on top. The effect worked perfectly with the audience none the wiser of his presence until he started stirring. The show relay camera was set just next to his position and it gave the tech crew great pleasure witnessing the audience reaction when it started to move.

To light the stage, we cut the space into a 3 x 3 grid, which gave us a map when plotting the different time periods. Using two sets of LED fresnels, we were able to change time period smoothly without the need for a huge lighting rig. The 1930s/1940s using deeper hues like 'chocolate' and 1980s lighter straws. For sound, cast were unmic'd and we hid speakers underneath the stage decks the audience sat on. Doing this allowed us to create a surround sound effect with sound effects like the Ratcatcher, being able to follow the character around the stage. Music played a big role in setting moods and scenes and at times underscoring the scene.

For the audience, as I said earlier, this was the first time we had attempted a show in the round and for most of the them, the first time watching something in that form. Talking to the

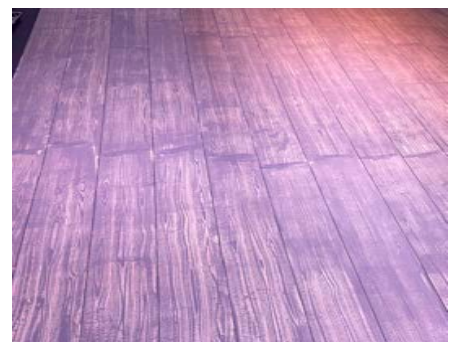
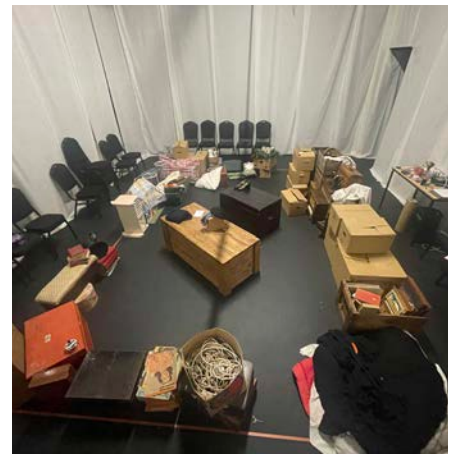
audience preshow, they did not know what to expect. They had obviously read the show synopsis and had had the concept explained to them, but upon exit after the show, they said they had not expected to be drawn into the story as much as they had. In a normal show, there is that clear divide between audience and performers, but with the curtains surrounding them, they felt they were in the attic room with the cast.

Obviously, *Kindertransport* was not our first choice of show and I did worry that the cast would not engage as much as working on the *Diary of Anne Frank*, but I am pleased to say I was wrong. Even after the final performance in the bar, we were still discussing character motivations and back stories. I can truly say I wish I had had this script as my GCSE set text, it is a text that just keeps giving!

As every director will say, the cast they work with are amazing. However, with this show, the cast all go through a rollercoaster of emotions, let alone learning the mammoth amount of script. The person playing Eva was just 14 years old at the time of casting, and not only did she have to play a part which aged from 9 through to 17 and see that transition, but also ask her to speak German (and not be allowed to leave stage until the final page of script.) Every person in the company and crew, outdid themselves and created a very special piece of theatre. One that I will not forget.

In the end, this show lent itself perfectly to being performed in an intimate round setting. Not every show would work that way, and I would certainly try it again, learning from the bumps along the way. I would definitely recommend trying something 'outside the box', with the right script it can make the show something very, very special.

Rob Williams, Director



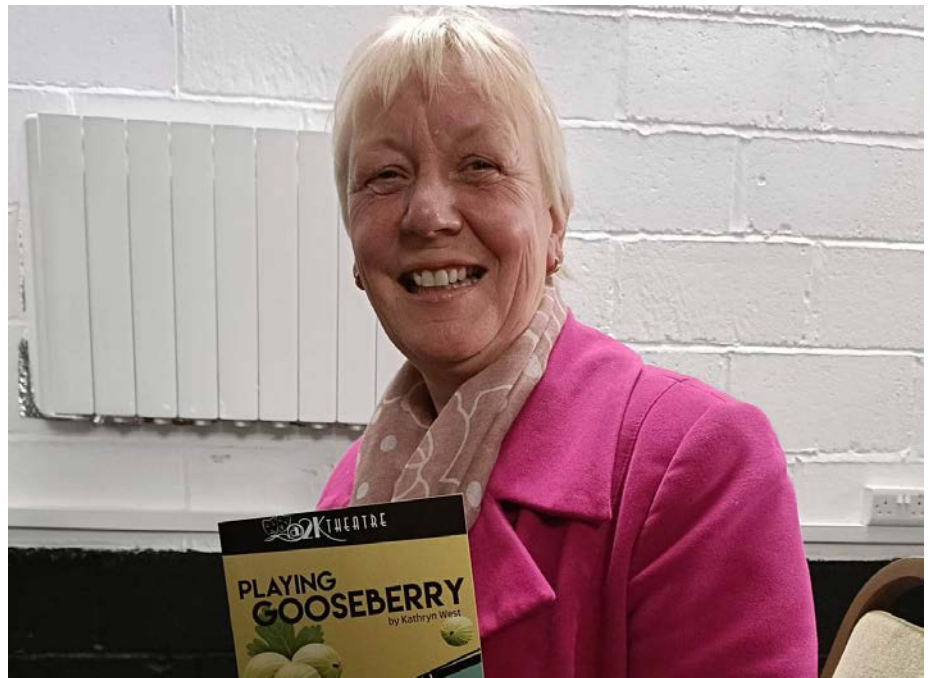
Playing Gooseberry!

NODA South West

NODA Summer School helps Kathy West achieve her dream of seeing her own One-Act Play performed!

After a lifetime in amateur theatre, whether as a performer, backstage, choreographer or director, I'm well-accustomed to first night nerves. However, recently I experienced a first night unlike any other I've ever had: the first ever performance of the first play I have ever written. To hand over a piece of your work to someone else to interpret and perform is a massive exercise in trust and faith, not to mention total helplessness! Would it work? Would people laugh? Would they applaud? Would it be performed the way I had intended? I must confess I felt slightly nauseous as the lights dimmed and the opening music started to play, but I needn't have worried. At 2K Theatre's world première production of *Playing Gooseberry* in Taunton was everything that I could have hoped for. To hear people actually laughing at the gags I had written, and to hear gasps as the plot twist was revealed was just as exciting as anything else I've experienced in my theatrical career.

My writing journey began during lockdown in 2020. Like many people I had always wanted to write, but there always seemed to be more important things to do. Lockdown meant I suddenly had time on my hands, so that excuse was no longer valid. But, what if I simply couldn't write? What if everything I wrote was simply childish rubbish? I joined Sarah Osborne's Yew Tree Creative Collective on Facebook, and found myself responding to her creative prompts with odes, limericks, poems and short stories, and what's more, sharing them with other group members. I hadn't written anything creative since my schooldays, but I found myself actually enjoying



stretching my brain in a way it hadn't been used in years. But could I actually write anything substantial? A play?

There followed a NODA Summer E-School in 2021, all conducted via Zoom. On the playwriting module I learnt about structuring a play, about creating characters, about writing my ideas down without judging them first. I dabbled with a few ideas, then remembered an article on *Gardener's World* from the previous year, about a man who wanted to grow the world's biggest gooseberry. If you'll forgive the pun, it was this seed that germinated into a play!

In January this year, I sat in a pub in Wakefield with a group of Summer School friends, listening to them reading the 2nd draft of my one-act play, *Playing Gooseberry*. This, together with their feedback, and comments from one or two other trusted friends, led to a 3rd draft and, more importantly, 2 of these friends said they'd like to perform it with their group in Taunton.

Summer School this year found me on

the Work in Progress course. We were a small group, all at different stages of our writing careers, and we spent the week writing, learning and laughing in equal measure, under the excellent tutelage of Tom Hughes. We were all encouraged to start to write a one-act play. We learnt to dramaturge our work; to research and edit our own and each other's creations. Tom showed us how helpful it is to put new writing up on its feet, to invite opinions (without being afraid of them!) and to offer and receive feedback in a constructive, non-judgemental way. As a group we have stayed together, meeting regularly via Zoom to read and discuss each other's latest works. As usual, NODA Summer School provided not just amazing tuition in a new skill, but also a new group of great friends.

Currently I am continuing to write the one-act play I started at Summer School. Maybe there's another opening night waiting for me somewhere; who knows? If not, no matter, I will continue to write, even if it's just for myself. Thank you once again NODA Summer School for opening my mind to a whole new way of thinking!

So, how do we choose the courses for NODA Theatre Summer School?

Sarah – Director of NODA Theatre Summer School (NTSS) for the first of a regular slot giving you insight into the machinations of your Summer School.

My role in NTSS is multi-faceted. In September, I'm an artistic director deciding on courses and the best people to tutor them. Then it becomes administrative, collecting relevant information and requirements from and for tutors to make sure everything will run to plan. Once we finally get to the week itself, I do anything needed to ensure it goes as smoothly as possible.

I thought it would be useful if this check in focused on the process of selecting the courses, to give you a flavour of how the final set comes about.

I have two clear objectives – that NTSS

provides training to enhance the work of amateur theatre and secondly offers opportunities not available in students' societies. The process of putting the courses together pretty much starts at the previous summer school. During the week, students and tutors suggest possibilities. All are written down and put in the mix. I'm sure some students think I haven't taken their ideas on board, but if I ran all of them, there would be 50 courses with no rooms to put them in. Rest assured they are all given serious consideration.

At the end of the week I have pages of ideas and then the big sheets of paper offer still more suggestions. I look at all of them, consider their virtues, try to find some balance between disciplines, think about how they relate to previous years and look at the frequency of

suggestions.

Eventually, I'm left with a shortlist of about 20 which gets whittled down to the 12 or 13 we have space for. At this point I put them to Jacquie and the committee. They are brilliant at asking the important questions, presenting a balance of support and challenge. Once I have the go ahead, it's time to put the tutor team together which is a logistic problem in its own right. I look at specialisms and skills, and then tutors look at availability and whether they can commit so far in advance.

As you can see there's a lot of negotiation before courses are announced, with a certain amount of trepidation, in the hope that there is something for everyone – even if they have to take a bit of a risk...

Just a few of the courses on offer in 2023



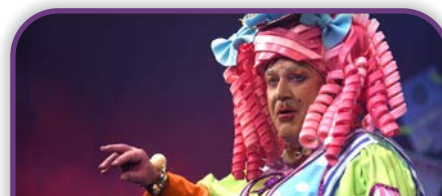
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Hexham Amateur Stage Society turns 90

NODA North



In 1931, a Hexham tennis club staged a one-off pantomime production of Dick Whittington. After being well received, it led to the belief that Hexham could have its very own operatic society.

At a meeting held on the 21st of April 1932, in the Queen's Hall, it was decided that after much discussion, that the stage society should be formed and Mr Charles F Knight was voted as the very first chairman of the society. The annual subscription for members was fixed at 5 shillings.

The society's first show, performed in the Queen's Hall in January 1932, was the *Gondoliers*, in October 1937, after several successful productions the society moved to the newly erected Forum Cinema to perform *The Toreador*. The Forum, remained the venue for productions until 1974, when the venue became the Queen Elizabeth High School.

There were, over the years, many notable productions including a special production of *Pirates of Penzance* in 1951, to celebrate the festival of Britain. There were many notable

productions over the years including the first American musical *Oklahoma* in 1956, followed by *The King and I* in 1958, and *South Pacific* in 1964.

In 1983, the society returned to its birthplace now named The Queen Hall arts centre and has continued to increasingly wow audiences with its shows and concerts.

The society has gone from strength to strength and is always regarded as family orientated, as brothers and sisters, parents' children and even grandchildren have been involved over the years. There has even been many a romance blossomed through the membership leading to several marriages. One such couple is the current Chairman, Albert Simpson, who met his wife Janice on stage.

The society has members from all areas of the Tyne Valley and have welcomed members from other societies who have moved into the area and benefited from their expertise both on stage and behind the scenes. Hexham Amateur Stage Society has always been involved out and about

in the area helping to raise funds for different organisations and charities. Last Christmas, the society performed at the Acomb Village Hall, and the Church of St Mary's the Virgin Slaley.

Some of the members have been in the society for many years and have received long service awards from NODA and have received many performance awards over the years for their productions.

To celebrate their 90th anniversary Hexham Amateur Stage Society performed a tribute concert *The Sound of Musicals* to packed audiences of friends, family and the general public who travelled to thank them and wish them well for the future.

Congratulations from NODA on this your special anniversary and we wish your continued growth for the next 90 years.



Don't You Want Me?

NODA North West



It was truly a case of 'third time lucky' with the Hall Players recent production as they showcased a newly written comedy by the talented author, Andy Bennison. It was definitely worth the wait.

The play is set in the 1980s, a period of time where garish clothes and exuberant colours were the order of the day. The story centres around the Craven Street Community Discos which were legendary. With the building due for demolition, there is one last chance for all friends to meet up again after nearly forty years. It's a night of dancing, drinking, reminiscing and the re-opening of old wounds. The end of an era but, for some, a beginning.

The performance had already been cancelled twice, thanks to Covid. It has been two years of hard work, re-casting, frustration and perseverance.

The set has to be dilapidated, but garish, as are the costumes and props. This was achieved by Set Designer/ Stage Manager, Chris Kerry, and team who set the scene perfectly creating Craven Street Community Centre Hall. They skilfully aged flats to depict the run down demeanour of an unloved hall ready for demolition. All that was needed to complete the look was a makeshift bar and a few tables and chairs.

The lighting and sound were crucial. The sound almost another character in its own right as hit after hit from the 80s echoed through the auditorium, much to the audience's delight. The action moved smoothly both on and off stage, enabling interaction with the audience. It took many attempts to get the music levels right once in the theatre as to not drown out the dialogue and it was beneficial to have sound early on at rehearsals.

The cast had fun with the costumes too, depicting their favourite 80s icon. Every character has their own moment and all reveal aspects of themselves, with both humour and pathos, as the play develops.

It was an excellent new play, and everyone had so much fun during rehearsals, which transitioned onto the stage and, listening to the laughter from the audience, including the Mayor of Preston, who came along to support the theatre, I think they pulled it off!



Princess Chloe and The Monster

NODA North East



Princess Chloe and the Monster is a brand new, original pantomime written by myself, which is having its première production with Crigglestone Community Theatre Company this month.

The reason I wrote this show is because I was getting fed up of seeing the same pantos year after year and, being CCTC's Chair, I found it frustrating that we were constantly having to look back to see how long it had been since we had performed a certain show. I wanted to see something different, with a positive message, especially for the young girls in the audience and decided to take matters into my own hands and create my own pantomime. When thinking back to what shows and characters I enjoyed when I was growing up, it wasn't some meek princess who needed saving, it was the *Pink Power Ranger*, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, *Xena Warrior Princess* and *WileyKit* from *Thundercats*. I thought about that and started writing about a strong and brave princess and her daft best friend Toggles. Then I got writer's block and doubted my show would ever leave my laptop anyway, so I stopped writing for about a year. When lock-down hit and we had to cancel

all our productions, I knew I had to do something creative for my own sanity, so I started writing again. Once I was happy with it, I had a read-through with a few members of my family, then plucked up the courage to send it to the committee of CCTC. We quickly set up a table read with a few of our members. The committee were happy with the results and feedback from that, so they agreed to give me the opportunity to, not only have my work performed, but also for me to direct it.

I have directed a few shows with Crigg. *Dream On*, an excellent adaptation of one of my favourite plays, *A Midsummer Nights Dream* and *The Wizard of Oz*, both with our Kids Group and *Girls' Night*, which I also took part in, but this is my first time directing a pantomime and it has been great fun.

It's a very odd sensation directing my own work. I've found that I'm very calm and collected when I'm on my way to a dance rehearsal as I know the choreographer, Robert Gordon, is going to create amazing, energetic routines that are wonderful to watch. However, when it came to the lib rehearsals, my stomach was in knots just hoping it would all work. Once we

had the final blocking session and we were onto full runs, I felt the weight lift from my shoulders. The show was suddenly complete and the wonderful cast had brought my words to life. I can sit there now, relax and laugh at the things that had once just been little ideas floating through my mind.

Having my husband, Richard Longbottom, in the cast has been great. We met by playing Billy and Hope in *Anything Goes* and have been in several shows together, but this is the first time I have directed him and, luckily, it has been a lovely experience for the both of us. Being able to discuss ideas or the scenes that we have rehearsed, on our way to and from rehearsal, has been extremely valuable and helped me to work through my thoughts as well.

We are very lucky at CCTC to have a great in house production team. Our wardrobe mistress, Cath Brown works tirelessly to create all the costumes. While our Choreographer and Vice Chair, Robert, along with committee member, Graeme Hemingway, have built an amazing set that can be utilised for any show. Robert is very talented when it comes to drawing and painting the scenery and has even taken the time to teach me so I could help create the set for the production.

I am still writing new shows. I have almost finished Act 1 of my next pantomime and have ideas for another 2, as well as having completed scripts for 2 musicals, one based on the tragic true story of a well-known 70s pop duo and the other a 60s jukebox, superhero comedy. I would love to see these shows performed one day and will continue working on new ideas to bring to the stage.

Kimberley Longbottom

Will It? Won't It? Will It? Wont It?

NODA West Midlands

Well yes it did , sort of!

After a difficult two years, Kay's Theatre Group's pantomime came back with a bang!

Director, Paula Dymock, Principal of Harlequin Stage School, had an idea for a pantomime with three little pigs, a big bad wolf, a girl in a red cape all ending in a pop concert. The obvious choice was *Little Red Riding Hood*. How apt as this was the very first pantomime Kay's performed at the Co-op Hall in Worcester back in 1954.

Paula enlisted the wonderful talents of Paul Tate who listened and delivered a fabulous written script that raced along and brought every character to life .

With her team set and St Richards Hospice chosen as the charity to receive a donation this time, rehearsals started in October 2021, and they were challenging due to Covid . Then came opening night, 20/1/22, and LRRH was performed at The Swan Theatre, Worcester, the audience loved it .

Covid rules were all in place at the theatre. Cast, backstage, and front of house, had to wear masks entering the theatre. Cast could take them off once in the dressing rooms; everyone else had to wear theirs throughout the run ! Everyone was elated, theatre was back. Then it happened - after opening night Covid struck and one by one it started to work its way through the company - 68 cast members including two teams of 16 Harlequin Stage School junior dancers and almost as many helping backstage !

During that first week, actors had to go home and isolate . Three understudies went on; members who weren't in the show went on, with very little rehearsal,



roles were swapped around on stage chorus and dance numbers had to be re positioned all to try and keep the show 'afloat'.

Even band members caught it and changed around! The director, assistant director, musical director caught it and, in the end, it was decided too many people had to stay away, so after performing 5 out of 14 shows it was pulled! Heart-breaking for everyone .

Whilst the theatre was closed it was fumigated and extra staff had to be brought in to deal with refunding tickets!

After many a meeting and against all odds, the last 4 weekend performances went ahead as all the principals were back!

Some chorus, crew and band members still had lines but stayed away!

Even more stringent plans were instilled; by 10am all had to send in their Covid tests to the chairman of the group who relayed them to the stage manager of the theatre. This was all done by a new Whatsapp group. On that final Sunday performance, on the 30/1/22, seeing the cast's faces and the fun they were all having, made it all worthwhile. The audience lapped it up and gave them rapturous applause that was so richly deserved .

Kay's values its team work ethos so much and via the technology of smart phones, iPads and Facetime, Paula and Rachel (Director & Assistant) managed to watch the final performance from their homes as they were still isolating! Kay's Theatre Group battled against 'Covid' and WON as the 'Show did go On' !

"Oh, yes it did" 10 out of 14 in the end!!!



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Getting the chance to express themselves onstage

NODA West Midlands

TADLOP have just finished up our run of the *Hunchback of Notre Dame*. It is to date one of the most ambitious shows we've taken on and we have received rave reviews from our audiences and cast members. Our *Hunchback* run was also the first ever show for one of our members, Dan.

A little bit of background about Dan is that he struggles with autism and has come from a difficult background. He lives on a council estate in the middle of Telford with a single mother and multiple brothers and sisters. His father was separated from the household when Dan was very young and sadly passed away 5 years ago.

This background did not give Dan much of a chance at expressing himself creatively, this is particularly sad as his biggest dreams are that of being a performer. He has told me time and again how much he wishes he could sing with his favourite band, Westlife. However, every time he has tried to sing he has always been told to keep quiet and that his singing can be irritating.

Dan was desperate for some form of creative outlet and turned to sport, boxing to be precise. Something to help 'toughen him up.' The boxing club he attends is one which has many community outreach programmes and provides a space for its members to chat. Now this funny old world has a strange way of making things happen and through this boxing club is where TADLOP and musical theatre begin to creep in.

I was made aware of Dan by the director of the boxing club. I previously dabbled in the sport and perform as their MC from time to time. I was told there was a member of their group who wasn't really interested in boxing, but wouldn't stop talking about how they wanted



to sing. So, I agree to meet with Dan and have a chat about what we can do. Personally, I am not a singing teacher but, being a member of TADLOP, I can carry a tune and know how therapeutic singing can be. So, we organised that weekly, I would go round and provide a safe space for Dan to sing.

As soon as Dan began to release a few notes from 'flying without wings' I saw his face light up. We continued these sessions for a few weeks and eventually talk turned to musical theatre. I was playing Nathan Detroit in a production of *Guys and Dolls* and explained exactly what it's like being part of a production. Dan was fascinated and asked if he could work backstage for the show to get a bit of experience.

Of course, Dan was immediately hooked and as soon as the show ended, he signed up and joined TADLOP as a performing member. I was taken on as assistant director for the next show, which was to be *Hunchback of Notre Dame*. Dan was fascinated with the story and the music. He even went

so far as to audition for the lead. He retracted his submission however, as he wisely thought it would be better to start off smaller and fell onto the ensemble cast.

I had my concerns as *Hunchback* was a massive undertaking. Dan had to go from no experience to learning multiple harmony lines, in Latin no less, deal with choreography and blocking. There were times where he was getting frustrated with his abilities comparing himself to the more experienced performers, but he was able to push through.

The production performed beyond our expectations with each show receiving a standing ovation. Dan himself was allowed an opportunity for his own bow and as the curtain fell, he was overtaken by emotion, to many claims of how this was 'the biggest thing' he'd ever done. Dan now claims his dreams have changed and in the next 5 years he wants a principal role in a TADLOP production.

Glitz and glamour at the seaside

October 2022, saw the inauguration of Nick Lawrence as NODA National President for 2022-23, in Plymouth. The hotel which overlooks the picturesque Plymouth Hoe was the perfect location for the weekend's celebrations.

Friday evening, delegates gathered for catch up with old and new friends from across the UK. A highlight of the evening was delegates performing *The Fiddler on the Roof* in just five minutes, a performance that had everyone in stitches!

Saturday started with a workshop led by NODA Theatre Summer School Director, Sarah Osborne and after lunch the formal part of the weekend began with the AGM.

Gordon Richardson, the outgoing

President, recounted stories of his travels around the country and his pride of holding the role of National President. The President of our sister organisation, The Association of Irish Musical Theatre Societies (AIMS), Rob Donnelly, spoke of the future for both organisations and the importance of our shared hobby.

Gordon Richardson's last duty as President was to award his President's Trophy, this year to Islesburgh Drama Group, for their production of *Calendar Girls, the play*.

Incoming National President, Nick Lawrence, gave an emotional address, pledging to do his very best for the Association, wanting to meet and inspire as many people to take up and continue what he calls "*the best hobby in the world - amateur theatre.*"

The AGM was completed with traditional Devonshire Cream Tea, a small argument ensued to the order of the jam and clotted cream!

Into the evening, attendees were entertained in the magnificent ballroom by Kidz R Uz and their production of *Matilda Jr*. Around 30 cast members, travelling up from St. Ives gave a faultless performance including full dance routines to a stunned audience.

To sing us into the evening were the amazing band All Jazzed Up, who managed to get the dance floor full!

The National Gala is so much more than an AGM, it is a celebration of all things NODA and more importantly a celebration of our amazing hobby.





Centenary of Basingstoke Amateur Operatic Society

NODA South East



HMS Pinafore

HM Queen Elizabeth II wasn't the only person celebrating a special year as the Basingstoke Amateur Operatic Society reached their centenary, a major milestone. Celebrations were due to take place in 2021, but had to be postponed. The first mention of an operatic society in Basingstoke was on a wet Sunday afternoon in 1921, when discussions at the local cricket club turned to 'amateur operatics'. The idea was taken to a local business, Thornycroft, who already had their own amateur band and dramatic society. This shortly transformed into Thornycroft Amateur Operatic Society. The operatic society, very much in its infancy, provided Basingstoke audiences with 13 performances in their first decade, mainly Gilbert and Sullivan, whose works were extremely popular at that time. *HMS Pinafore* took place from 23rd to 25th February 1922, rehearsals having started in autumn 1921.

When the society performed *The Gondoliers* in 1929, the committee put

it forward for the NODA Trophy for the first time. There were three ticket prices shown in shillings and pence, pre-1971 currency, followed by their approximate equivalent in decimal currency. The figures in brackets show approximately how much each ticket value is worth today:

3/6 = 17.5p = £11.71 today
2/6 = 12.5p = £8.37 today
1/3 = 6.25p = £4.18 today

Performances were originally in the Thornycroft Canteen, but the Haymarket Theatre, formerly the Basingstoke Corn Exchange, has been their home since 1951. Moving onto shows other than Gilbert and Sullivan, productions in the 1950s and 1960s included: *Annie Get Your Gun* and Franz Lehar's *The Merry Widow* being the first two non-Gilbert and Sullivan productions.

During the following decades there have been many and varied productions: Rogers and Hammerstein's *The Sound*

of Music, Carousel, Kiss Me Kate, The Desert Song, Showboat, Hello Dolly and My Fair Lady to name just a few.

This century, newer shows and old favourites have been offered to Basingstoke audiences. The newer productions include *Hairspray, The Witches of Eastwick, Wind in the Willows, Made in Dagenham* and *Jesus Christ Superstar*.

Caroline Price, President:

"A production normally takes up to six months from auditions to dress rehearsal with twice weekly rehearsals. The society is self-funded with only ticket sales for revenue so our audience is a vital part of the production. Not only do we need to consider productions that will appeal to our membership, but, with costs currently running around £40,000, it is significantly important that the shows will draw large audiences."

Kathy May-Miller, current Chairman says: "Our society has meant a great deal to many people over the years and as a family we miss those who are no longer with us and support each other in difficult times. We relish the success of those who have gone on to perform professionally. It is also very special that our centenary year also coincides with the 10th anniversary of *Limelight*, our youth group and its first young performers now perform with the adult company. *Limelight*, since its foundation, have performed *Grease, Into The Woods, The Addams Family* and many more. *Limelight's* most recent production was *Seussical*."

Caroline says: "2022 has been our busiest year ever. We were asked by the Mayor to perform at our local concert hall, *The Anvil*, to raise funds for her two charities and we performed *The Pirates of Penzance*. This was done alongside rehearsals for our main production *Kinky*

Boots - two very contrasting shows. An exhibition to share a visual history of the society was organised in the Willis Museum where we were able to display our various awards, including many from NODA. We also held a concert performance of songs from our 100 year history in the Haymarket Theatre, Basingstoke in July 2022.”

A final word from Kathy May-Miller: “I wonder if the founders of the Thorncroft Society ever imagined that it would still be thriving 100 years later? What a legacy they left to Basingstoke!”



Wind In The Willows

Sounds of laughter return to the Salterton Playhouse!

NODA South West



Cast head-shots for *Going off*. Credit: Ken Elvy



Drama Club use own comedy to relaunch after the pandemic.

There is a long tradition of amateur dramatics in Budleigh Salterton, and since the Salterton Drama Club was founded in 1938, the group has gone from strength to strength, finally acquiring their own theatre in 1970. The Playhouse is a little gem, set in a large wooden building with comfortable raked seating for 80, it is tucked away beside a stream in a quiet corner of the town, not too far off the High Street and with the bonus of a large car park nearby!

The club presents four productions a year each running for six performances, ranging from *Outside Edge* to *The Hollow*, *Blithe Spirit*, and *Season's Greetings*, always with innovative and stunning sets for such a small

space; all made possible by a team of enthusiastic and committed members, both on stage and behind the scenes. Not only has the group enjoyed success in the regional rounds of the All England Play Festival, but they also have budding playwrights in their midst. Their September production this year was an hilarious comedy *Going Off* written and directed by club member Ken Elvy.

“Like all other groups, the Salterton Drama Club was affected, emotionally and financially, by the impact of COVID. The Playhouse remained dark for approaching 2 years. During the depressing periods of lockdown, when understandably we were all anxious about the future, it felt important to remember that laughter is the best medicine, and to keep faith that we would meet again.

And, we have. And it's good to laugh again, isn't it? As our loyal audience proved recently when we staged *Going Off* – a comedy set in the mourning room of Stave and Son Funeral Directors. It opens with the discovery that, accidentally, Stave's have prematurely cremated one of their clients. In fairness, an easy mistake to make. To protect their reputation for exemplary customer service, the company needs to persuade the deceased's grieving family that their loved one is still intact. A task made more difficult by their wish to view the body and by the arrival of an insurance claims investigator demanding a full post-mortem. A tricky thing to conduct on an urn full of ashes” It certainly did the trick!

Ken Elvy

VIVA goes to The Fringe

NODA East



The Addams Family - Credit Bridget Hickish

The Edinburgh Fringe returned in its proper form in August 2022, with virtually every venue in the city hired to stage a staggering variety of live artistic and creative content.

Also returning to the Fringe this year, after the Covid-19 hiatus, was the multiple award-winning Viva Arts and Community Group from Soham, Cambs, with not just one or two, but three, multi-generational productions: the one-man show *Morecombe*, a profile of the British comedian, *The Addams Family musical* and a second musical, *Calendar Girls*.

Taking just one production requires significant investment; taking three requires even more. But Dan Schumann, Viva founder and Chairman of its Board of Trustees, believes it's worth taking the risk. "Theatre feels very fragile at the moment," Schumann said during the autumn. "Our audiences have been hit by the pandemic, and now they're being hit by the energy crisis, inflation and all of those things. That's why taking the risk and doing shows at Edinburgh and keeping the festival alive is so important."

He continued, "There is real joy in being

in Edinburgh, and you know there is a real joy in waking up and knowing that you are in a community of thousands of people who are still going to see several shows just that day."

"Seeing the shows you can fit into your own schedule is important too," added Keith Gallois, who directed Viva's production of Tim Whitnall's *Morecombe*. "The Fringe is not just about your own performance; it's

about enjoying the whole event! But seeing several shows a day in addition to performing one takes its toll, too," Gallois acknowledged. Enthusied by the reaction to Morecombe, but a bit wiped out from the overall experience, he will take a break from the Fringe for a year or two, but one day, he would like to take his own show there: "Just for the art of it," he said. "I would love to direct my own words. Somebody else's words - well, I can do that."



The Addams Family - Credit Bridget Hickish

Dan Schumann's tips for taking your amateur theatre group to Edinburgh

Viva takes productions to Edinburgh every two years, and the planning for the next trip begins “the moment the current one finishes,” Schumann said, “even though it’s two years away. So, we start thinking about accommodation. That’s the big thing.”

Consider which show or shows could be taken to Edinburgh. “Don’t pick something too obscure because the risks are too high already. Keep ‘bums on seats’ in mind, something that will grab people’s attention. And think about scale; you need to do things that scale up or down without losing their artistic integrity or interesting tech.”

‘Castability’ is essential. “You want to showcase your group, you know; you don’t want to be out there doing a show that you haven’t really been able to cast. The reviewers will pick up on that.”

Logistics: make sure you have the resources to get the logistics in place. For instance, skilled, knowledgeable tech personnel who “really know their stuff” and can carry out get-ins and get-outs quickly. They’re harder to get [than performers],” Schumann said. “Like the performers, Viva’s tech crew also pay sizeable sums for accommodation and travel,” he pointed out. A van driver is also critical so “ideally, you can get your stuff up there and get it home again without the huge cost of hiring,” he said.

Then there’s the money. “You’ve got to budget really carefully,” he warned. “Taking a show to Edinburgh – accounting for accommodation and venue hire – can cost around £15,000 to £25,000,” he said. “They’re big numbers, but they’re not as scary as it seems. You should budget so it balances itself so that in a lot of cases, like accommodation and travel, you’re simply the middleman.” At Viva, each volunteer attending pays for their own accommodation and travel –

for example, train fare is bought at a group fare, which this year reflected a personal investment of around £600-700. That doesn’t include individual expenses such as food or transport within the city. But even though the actual staging of the production should not cost much more than one performed at home, the group’s costs are not insignificant. To tie up that end, volunteers are also required to organise or support the group’s fundraising efforts to cover Viva’s costs, including venue hire. Said Schumann: “You’re not going to make your money back from a week at the Fringe – well, you’re unlikely to. So you need to know there’s a cushion there, either by doing the shows in your own venue back at home, or by doing fundraising, or maybe both. You need to figure that in from the beginning.”

DeeDee Doke
NODA East Regional Editor

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