

# NODA GROUP MEMBER BENEFITS



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# Welcome

## The National Operatic and Dramatic Association

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Welcome to the first edition of NODA Today for 2023, it seems only yesterday that we were preparing for the 2022 pantomime season!

It is most encouraging to see the many amazing stories from our members across the UK, including those celebrating anniversaries this year.

Youth plays a major role in the future of NODA, and I am especially pleased to see our young people involved in a variety of productions, whether specific youth shows or part of adult groups. Have a look at our youth section on page 16.

Increasingly groups are trying to make their shows as inclusive as possible, with BSL interpreters, relaxed performances and touch tours. Theatre should be accessible to all, and I hope these articles inspire your group too.

If you are still thinking of attending the NODA Theatre Summer School, or would like more information, turn to page 31, where our School Director, Sarah Osborne, gives you a small teaser of what is to come, including information on available courses.

You can now book for our National AGM and gala, being held in Preston on 15th and 16th September. With a theme for Saturday evening of *Murder On Opening Night*, it promises to be a weekend of drama and fun.

Finally, I would like to wish you all the best for your upcoming productions in the months ahead and thank you for your continued support.

lan G. Cox NODA Chairman of Trustees

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NODA Today - Spring 2023

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Catch up with Nick Lawrence as he travels the UK













# Regional vacancies

At the heart of NODA is its volunteers, with over 200 across the UK giving up their time to support amateur theatre groups. If you have the time to give and the drive to provide first-class support, then please get in touch below.

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### NODA ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting of The National Operatic and Dramatic Association, Charity No 1171216 will take place on Saturday 16th September at 2.30pm at Preston Marriott, Preston, PR3 5JB.

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

To ensure the smooth running of the meeting, any resolutions to be considered at the meeting should be sent to the Chairman of Trustees, Mr Ian G. Cox, at 15 The Metro Centre, Peterborough, PE2 7UH or by email to ian.cox@noda.org.uk to arrive no later than 1st August 2023.

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# Councillors' Chat

A quick note from your regional councillor



### Tessa Davies - East Regional Councillor

It's an exciting time for theatre in general and for amateur theatre in particular. More newer shows are now being released for performance and our members are quick to take advantage of this. Groups are being much more adventurous in their productions, and I see new 'takes' on scenery, performance and costumes every time I see a show. It is heartwarming to see that groups are getting back to performing and I am looking forward to seeing some great shows in the forthcoming year.



### Jules Jones - Acting East Midlands Regional Councillor

I'm very excited about our upcoming regional day on Sunday 21st May, as it is the first I will be attending as councillor. I hope to see representatives from as many of our East Midlands societies as possible, especially as we will be awarding more certificates and trophies than ever before.

We still have vacancies with the regional team, if you would like to be involved please contact me. It is lots of fun, a very friendly supportive team and such a worthwhile role.



### Pam Armstrong - London Regional Councillor

What a difference a year makes in our wonderful world of amateur theatre. London Region has seen our groups fully embrace being back to normal, staging a plethora of superb shows – musical, dramas and pantos (pantos are not just for Christmas!) The quality of productions has been outstanding and the imagination applied to the staging is inspirational. What a pleasure to see so much talent abounding. It is always a delight to meet you and a joy to see your shows and I very much look forward to a busy time ahead.



### Peter Oliver - North Regional Councillor

What a year this has been, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the groups in NODA North for their kind hospitality and invitations to visit and witness some exceptional talent. I would like to thank those who came along to our first Weekend Gala and AGM at Scotch Corner since Covid 19; it was so good to catch up with people in person. We are now working on the performance awards which will be held on 7 October at the Grand Hotel, Gosforth and look forward to recognising the talent we have in the region. The committee and I look forward to seeing you all at one of your events, or at our workshops, which we will be publishing soon.



### Leslie Smith - North East Regional Councillor

Well, this has certainly been a different year to the past few, I am very pleased to say that we have more and more productions on our stages and I have been really pleased to have been invited to see many of them. Each week I receive many emails and phone calls from members asking for our support, some maybe a very simple request, others are a little more tricky to sort out, but we do try our best to support you as much as possible. Please do remember we are here to support you and your societies as much as possible so please do contact either me or your regional rep.

### Andy McNicholas - North West Regional Councillor

We had a fantastic turn out of over 1,500 members attending the various District Awards Dinners throughout the region over the past few weeks and I thoroughly enjoyed meeting so many of you again.

The winners from each district will now go forward to the Regional AGM and Awards Weekend on the 29th and 30th April - I hope to see many more of you there celebrating over the weekend!



### Stuart McCue-Dick - Scotland Regional Councillor

Plans for this year's NODA Scotland conference are now at an advanced stage with details due to be launched very soon. As always, the weekend is an ideal opportunity to network with members from across the country as well as take part in a range of exciting workshops. There will also be a range of theatrical supplier stands to browse, as well as ample opportunity to enjoy the unique Peebles Hydro hospitality. There is still time to join the savings club to help spread the cost with full details available from the NODA Scotland Councillor.



### Kay Rowan - South East Regional Councillor

With spring comes a great deal of excitement in the garden. Here in the South East, it is also the abundance of fine shows blossoming in our theatres, halls and schools. The flowering of talent new and not so new, and the sheer exhilaration of performing and watching so many fine productions is truly awesome. The regional newsletter went out early in March, with a great deal of info including items relating to our Celebration Day on Sunday 11th June. If you haven't seen a copy, email me. We are excited to have two young directors to lead our workshop (further details soon) and there are many certificates to present.



### Graham Liverton - South West Regional Councillor

The South West are really back to normal after the last couple of years, so I am excited to announce we are now holding our Awards Evening at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Plymouth - book now to avoid disappointment. Tickets are £35 per head, so come and join in the fun!

I look forward to meeting you all at your performances or indeed the Crowne PLaza Plymouth on the 20th May. Sending best wishes to all members of the South West



### Sharon Davies - Wales & Ireland Regional Councillor

Gosh how time flies! It only seems like yesterday it was Christmas and panto time, and now we are into a new year with new shows. I have been amazed at how most of the societies have bounced back after the last two years tribulations, although I am sad to hear of the loss and problems of some of the societies in my region, proving that times can still be difficult for amateur theatre. I have already seen some amazing productions and have many more booked for the coming year. We must, in these hard times, pull together if we can to keep local theatre and its groups, alive. We can do this!



### 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.



## INCLUSIVITY - the IN word in theatre

### **NODA** London

### Part of your world?

In The Little Mermaid, Ariel sings, plaintively, "Wish I could be part of your world."

This is a sentiment echoed by wouldbe theatre audiences across the land, who have been historically excluded from accessible, affordable and local entertainment because the industry has been too slow to accommodate their needs. If such an audience member wishes to experience the wonderment of an inclusive performance, it often involves travelling to a big city theatre and paying a lot of money. Whereas many people want to patronise their local community groups but have been frozen out; either because of a lack of understanding of their requirements or, sadly, wilful ignorance.

Amateur groups have so much to contend with already; funding, casting, marketing and logistics issues all have to be overcome before even thinking about how to put the maximum amount of 'bums on seats' to ensure the group's survival for the next production and inclusivity is often overlooked or not a priority - especially in smaller companies. However, in these more enlightened times, doesn't it behove us to at least try to include as many people as possible into the cast, production team and audience?

#### So...who am I?

My name is Wednesday Jones and I am a volunteer British Sign Language (BSL) translator, working with amateur groups locally to deliver shows to Deaf audiences for too long starved of the wonderful experience of a night out at a show. In fact, it was at a recent production of the Addams Family in Chesham in the London Region, that I met the Regional Councillor, Pam Armstrong.



Being Hard of Hearing and a CODA (Child of Deaf Adults) myself, I grew up never able to enjoy the theatre with my mother, who was of a generation where BSL was banned in schools, and who had oralism forced upon her. Being only taught how to lip-read, she found musicals and films without subtitles confusing and overwhelming and I felt so sorry that she missed out on a fantastic form of escapism because of a lack of any kind of accessibility.

I started learning BSL in 2014, when my own hearing started to deteriorate, as a 'worst case scenario' to future proof my ability to communicate, and had lofty ambitions of being a West End interpreter, specialising in musicals. However, the Covid-19 pandemic, the menopause, lack of finances and a late diagnosis of ADHD put paid to me finishing my degree and I was crushed that I may never attain

my goal of helping to bring musicals to deaf audiences.

However, when I was asked to start a BSL choir at Manchester Deaf Centre, and a local producer asked me to translate his pantomime in 2016, I realised that I could still play my part; albeit on a smaller scale, working with amateur groups as a volunteer. Since then I have moved South and have translated and delivered many wonderful non-professional shows, such as Sister Act, The Sound of Music, Honk, Shrek, The Addams Family, The Little Mermaid, Kipps: The New Half a Sixpence Musical and Oliver! as well as many pantomimes, with all the mayhem that ensues!

The goal for me is to ensure the deaf audience has the same show experience as the hearing; whether that means communicating comedy,

tragedy or the fact that a cast member has lost their voice! Sometimes it's knowing when to stop signing and just allow the Deaf audience to enjoy what is going on; especially in pantomimes when the custard pies start flying!

### Spread the love around

Relaxed shows are also becoming more popular for audience members who may be overwhelmed by harsh lighting, a cacophony of sound or the flurry of onstage action. These performances often involve a more subdued performance by the cast, rooms for audience members to retreat to and the ability for them to come and go as they please throughout the show.

Not only are relaxed performances great for the audience, but they remind the cast that gone are the days when people got dressed up to go to the theatre and sat completely still throughout the show. Nowadays, audiences like to feel they are collaborating with the characters onstage. That wonderful suspension of disbelief is a two-way street and involving the audience as much as possible by encouraging them to sing, dance and enjoy the whole experience on their terms is, to me, the way forward - I'm not a fan of productions that discourage enjoyment!

### Hey, Big Spender!

Making performances inclusive is also a no-brainer financially. The more people groups can appeal to, the better the sales and the bigger the budget for the next show and so on. I cannot speak for audiences everywhere, but if I see a show run without a BSL or relaxed performance, it deters me from spending my money on a ticket because there are so many other companies who aren't stuck in that 1950's mindset of 'out of sight, out of mind' when it comes to inclusivity.

Not only does providing a service to a diverse audience enhance an amateur production's community inclusivity, but the feeling of goodwill from that audience lasts long after the final curtain closes. Word-of-mouth is crucial to the success of smaller groups' productions and, once the news gets about that they welcome EVERYONE, then no longer will poor ticket sales be an issue.

### This is the Greatest Show?

Involving volunteers such as myself, or finding creative ways to deliver a show to as wide an audience as possible, should be paramount in any amateur group's ethos.

Unfortunately, this is not always the case, and some companies still have a long way to go before they are ready to welcome inclusivity. One trustee famously told me, in all seriousness, that "Deaf people don't go to musicals because, what's the point?" and, as you can imagine, I sprained my eyeballs, rolling them in pantomime exasperation. If this were a one-off experience for me, I could chalk it up to petty ignorance, but, unfortunately, I have encountered sentiments like this on wearyingly all-too-many occasions.

For far too long, Deaf and marginalized would-beaudience members have been overlooked and starved of affordable and accessible entertainment, often having to settle for the bare minimum offered in an 'anything is better than nothing' approach which, I think, is condescending at best and discriminatory at worst.

There really is no excuse for any lack of inclusivity these days, even if a group is small or less well-funded than other larger companies and associations. Sometimes, all it takes is a bit of creative thinking and education by the trustees or committees running amateur groups. There is a wealth of assistance out there, from local councils to charities who deliver awareness courses available to all who want to welcome inclusivity.

### We're all in this together

When I first approach an amateur

group, I send them my information leaflet which sets out what they can expect from me and what I expect in return. I do not charge for translating and delivering the show, but do ask for a small fixed fee to cover travel and any costume expenses.

From receiving the script to delivering the signed performance takes about 50 hours' work. I also attend rehearsals to get to know the cast and the 'feel' of the show, before technical and dress rehearsals where I sometimes have to advocate, not only for the Deaf audience, but for my own health and safety - groups sometimes put props or scenery where I need to stand, or have not really thought about the placement of pyrotechnics or dry ice, so I can end up either shrouded in fog or, on one memorable occasion, having my trousers set on fire!

When it comes to arranging an inclusive performance, the more open to ideas or flexible an amateur group is, the better the experience for the audience. It's also good for cast members to appreciate diversity and gain the skills necessary to hone their craft.

I would love for NODA to reward groups who provide accessible performances. It really should be a badge of honour for a company to be able to say "Wilkommen, Bienvenue, Welcome!" to everyone who wants to escape real life for a few hours to frolic with undersea creatures, scuttle through alleyways with pickpocketing urchins, learn how to sing with a bunch of nuns or discover that differences aren't always scary from a large, badtempered, green ogre.

If you would like to know more, you can contact me at: wedzx2003@gmail.com

### Wednesday Jones

# #Theatre4all

### **NODA Scotland**



Kirrie Panto Group were delighted to perform our third Relaxed Performance for 2022 - Cinderella.

Having heard Jason Gardiner on 'This Morning' back in January 2019, talking about making theatre accessible to all with a Relaxed Performance – essentially aimed at anyone with Autism – I thought this would be a great idea to pitch to the panto committee.

Remembering how scared my own daughter was the first time she was brought along to panto – I thought about how terrifying this must be for anyone with additional needs.

Relaxed Performances are basically the same performance as normal – but with the house lights up slightly so that the audience see us and we can see them, and all loud bangs, crashes and flashing lights are removed.

The committee then thought about the wider range of additional requirements and felt we would like to open this up to anyone with additional needs including mobility and anyone in nursing care. We also want to encourage families



with very young children, who usually don't like to sit still or babes in arms. We hope to encourage these little ones as they will be our audiences, or indeed our cast members, for future productions.

We reduced the capacity of seating downstairs by taking out the first three rows on either side of the hall (60 seats in total) this allowed us the room to put down our colourful new mats which were donated by Parental & Family Engagement, Children and Learning Directorate, of Angus Council. Everyone is welcome to come and sit on the mats – seating is not allocated so anyone is free to sit wherever they wish.

The cost of our tickets for this performance are greatly reduced too.

The show was signed again in Makaton by Sarah Lawson, who works at Communication Support for the Deaf Education in Dundee, we are delighted that she gave up her time willingly to support us again.

We have a small supply of ear defenders to cut out noise which were borrowed for the duration of our show and we were happy for anyone to wander around as we did not want anyone to feel they had to remain seated. Making a noise is also ok too, in fact we encourage it, after all this is panto! Oh yes, it is!

I approached our local Co-Op to ask if they would consider donating fruit to our performance which they kindly did. Local Cllr Jools Bell and Tracy from the Co-Op manned the fruit station.

We also received a donation of 120 bottles of water from one of our hard-working committee members. Everything was offered free of charge to our relaxed audience – we also purchased glow sticks which were given out to all the children.

These small changes allowed parents and carers to feel more relaxed about their visit to our show too. We introduced ourselves before the show so that the audience saw the person behind the character and hopefully this put them at their ease. Kirrie Panto Group are a dedicated bunch, and we all know the buzz of performing and putting on a show. We want to share this experience with everyone, especially those who feel this type of outing would just be too much for them and are normally not thought of as a general rule.

We at Kirrie Panto Group are extremely proud of this relaxed show which has grown in the 3 years we have been offering it.

This year our Relaxed Performance was sold out for the first time, this further proves that there is a huge demand for this special type of show.

Here are some of the lovely comments we have received for *Cinderella* 2022.



Evie and her mum Stacey

"It's nice to come to a place and not have to worry about how your child is perceived, no one bats an eyelid."

"It was a fabulous morning, warms the heart seeing so many relaxed and happy families. Kris and the pantomime team were amazing!"

"Thank you so much for all your support in connecting us with those who would benefit the most."



Hunter (with our ear defenders on) and his mum

"Lovely atmosphere, so relaxed, good show. Characters coming to meet the kids makes them feel really involved in it all."

"Huge thank you to you on behalf of all of our parents and carers of children with additional support needs in Angus who attended the panto on Saturday morning. I have had a fabulous response from our families to say that they had an amazing time!"

"(...) had the freedom to walk around and screech when needed to without feeling judged or as if (...) was interrupting the show, and with the parents there, most being in the same position! The whole cast and helpers were great and we all really enjoyed the show! (...) even sat down and watched the show at some points! So again, thank you so so much! We've come away with huge smiles!"

"Relaxed Performances #Theatre4all This makes us SO happy. Well done everyone and thank you!! #Theatre4all was such a great show, we all enjoyed it!"

Paula Milne, Relaxed Co-Ordinator, Kirrie Panto Group

Permission to use all photos has been sought and given

### BSL debuts at Attleborough

### NODA East



The use of British Sign Language (BSL) made its proud debut with the Attleborough Players in Norfolk in their 2023 pantomime, making a matinee performance a warmly inclusive experience for their community.

Experienced BSL practitioner Sarah Talbot delivered a new dimension to the special matinee performance of Puss in Boots, communicating the panto's dialogue and comic patter with her hands and facial expressions, to support hearing-impaired theatre lovers such as her own father. In spite of hearing impairment, Sarah's father had always come to see previous Attleborough Players' productions and enjoyed them, explained Sharon Coppin, the Players' Chairperson. Offering a BSL-signed performance was a way to round out and enhance the experience, and Sarah, whose husband was in the show, volunteered her services to sign, Coppin said.

The signed performance was promoted locally, and audiences responded enthusiastically.

Added Sophie Garrod, the Players' Secretary, "We sold out this special matinee at Spooner Row Village Hall, and we were thrilled that even more people were able to fully enjoy the fun and feel included!"

Seven hearing-impaired people were among the attendees.

To prepare, Sarah Talbot attended several rehearsals and observed the performances given before the matinee was held. She also had her own copy of the script to study. However, she did not sign the songs, organisers said, because of the songs' pace.

The response to this inclusive step forward has been enthusiastic. For instance, a former member who had moved away wrote to the Players to share how impressed she was that they had introduced BSL to their productions.

And it's not ending with Puss in Boots. Coppin said the Players plan to incorporate BSL signing in most future shows. "People thought it was wonderful," Coppin said.

# NODA North weekend fun

### **NODA North**



Winners of the fancy dress competition - Lois and Erin Kellegher



Alistair Bolton Tees Valley G&S recieving his 50 year Long Service Award



Three Little Maids from Jarrow

On March 15th 2020, delegates from NODA North packed their bags and left an enjoyable fun packed weekend after our regional weekend in Scotch Corner Hotel near Darlington. Five days later the UK went into lockdown and the rest as they say is 'history'.

Three years on, delegates from all over the North head for Scotch Corner again for the first time since that date. The world has changed, habits have changed (who remembers spending actual money and not 'tapping' for everything), the one thing that hasn't changed is the North's ability to enjoy themselves despite any obstacles set up before them.

The first obstacle we woke up to was a covering of snow and the main arterial road around Scotch Corner closed due to heavy downfalls – luckily the A1 was still open and over the course of the weekend, all delegates that were supposed to arrive did so.

Our theme for the weekend was 'Theatre Villains' and at our quiz, held on the Friday evening, several dastardly villains were out in force. Winners of the best fancy dress were presented with a certificate to twins Lois and Erin Kellegher for their portrayal of the girls from *Heathers*.

NODA Presidents were out in force with current President Nick Lawrence, Past Presidents Gordon Richardson, Fred Piggford and Christine Hunter Hughes alongside Regional Councillor Peter Oliver.

At the Gala Dinner, on the Saturday evening, attended by all in their finery the results of the regions' Programme and Poster awards were announced and presented. Pictured are Dr Moffat receiving an award on behalf of Durham MTC and Barbara Simpson on behalf of Sunderland TCo

Those hardy souls who still had clear heads descended on our Regional AGM on the Sunday, where we heard an amusing address from Nick Lawrence (up from Devon for the weekend) and an address from COO Dale Freeman (read by vice President Christine Hunter Hughes.)

Finally, all delegates left for their respective corners of the region determined that it won't be three years again before we meet!

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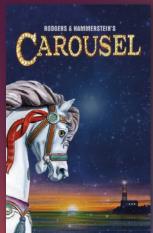
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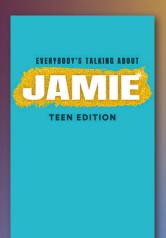
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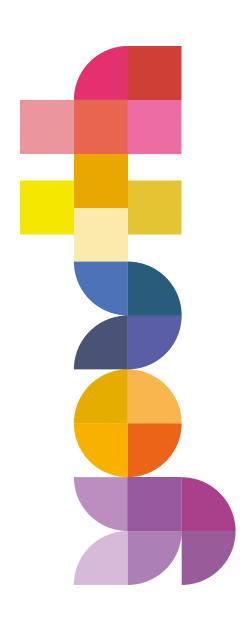
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## **Useful Contacts**

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London	Annie Hertler-Smith	annie.hertlersmith@noda.org.uk
North	Michelle Coulson	michelle.coulson@noda.org.uk
North East	Jo Sykes	jo.sykes@noda.org.uk
North West	Position Vacant	info@noda.org.uk
Scotland	Neil Hartley	neil.hartley@noda.org.uk
South East	Position Vacant	info@noda.org.uk
South West	Jo Wilson-Hunt	jo.wilsonhunt@noda.org.uk
Wales & Ireland	Matt Hampson	matt.hampson@noda.org.uk
West Midlands	Position Vacant	info@noda.org.uk

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

Child Licencing Support - Scotland

Liz Daniels

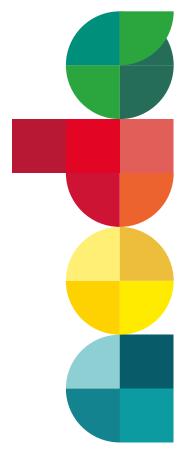
liz.daniels@noda.org.uk

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

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

### For more advice or training

NSPCC - www.nspcc.org.uk NNCEE - National Network for Children in Employment and Entertainment www.nncee.org.uk

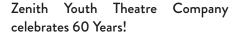


# Diamond anniversary for award-winning Bath youth group!

South West



Lift - Edinburgh Fringe 2018



Zenith Youth Theatre Company are proud to be celebrating their 60th anniversary this year, having had their inaugural meeting on 15th May 1963.

They were originally formed as The Bodlets, by Victor Smith and Charles & Jeanne Wilkinson, members of Bath Operatic and Dramatic Society (BODS), to encourage a younger generation to participate in amateur dramatics and ensure young Bath talent entered the senior society.

Since 1964, they have been staging shows in and around Bath to great critical acclaim and are one of the longest running youth theatre companies in the United Kingdom, only eight years younger than the National Youth Theatre!

The aims of Zenith Youth Theatre are to 'Experience...Enrich...Entertain... 'and to deliver musical theatre to

the highest standard.' They are an entirely voluntary run society, for young people aged between 13 and 21, who demonstrate an enthusiasm and commitment to Zenith's aims. They have an open access policy - so, to be a member, the cast are not required to audition their acting or singing skills, although there is often a long waiting list. Together these young people enjoy a creative and social experience, forging friendships and gaining experiences outside their normal social circles.

Zenith continues to take on new challenges. In 2011, as part of the Bath Fringe, they performed their first ever full-length play – *The Roses of Eyam*. In 2013, they were awarded the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service (MBE for Groups) in recognition of the amazing volunteers who give up their time to run the company. In 2018, the whole company went to Edinburgh Fringe Festival and performed four shows on a Theatre Bus, winning four awards.



Collecting the Queen's Award - 2013



Joseph - 2023

For their 60th anniversary they will again be travelling to the Edinburgh Fringe, where 37 young people will perform two plays and two musicals over the course of a week, as well as watching as many shows as they can fit in to immerse the young performers in theatre. They also launched *PROJECT POP-UP*, which is a capital fundraising project to buy the infrastructure of a pop-up theatre that can be set up both inside and outside.

Zenith continues to go from strength to strength and are proud of their heritage and reputation. Alumni have gone on to be professional actors, singers, dancers, musicians and writers, but many volunteers will tell you the thing they are most proud of are the enduring, lifelong friendships that the young people make as Zenith members and the confidence they leave with. Long may they continue!

Delia Lee

### Behind the scenes in Crowland

### East Midlands























In September 2022, Crowland Amateur Dramatic Society (CADS) announced CADS Academy, a new branch encompassing all aspects of the society for children and young people between the ages of 7 and 17 years. The new academy took place over 7 weeks on a Monday between 7pm-8pm, leading into ensemble auditions for our February 2023 pantomime.

The CADS Academy has provided a platform, enabling ways for children and young people to have fun, learn new skills and gain fresh experiences. CADS acknowledges that being on stage is not everyone's passion and the society offers a range of roles for its members.

The sessions let the children experience a wide range of elements that encompass key elements of the theatre from wardrobe to staging including lighting, sound, make up, acting, prop design and creating, singing and dancing and guided tours of the backstage.

The CADS Academy sessions were 100% free and it is planned to continue with this format later in 2023, which we are very much looking forward to.

CADS Academy sessions gave the children a taste of all things theatrical. We have watched the sparkle in the children's eyes as they have experienced the various parts of putting on a production, and we could not be more grateful to the CADS members who have shared their wisdom and experiences.

Here is a quick insight to one of our sessions:

Being on stage is not all about performing. The teams created within the academy got their hands on our curtains and scenery and learnt how to move around stage safely. They had the opportunity to open and close our curtains as well as exploring the wings and scenery store and learning about stage safety.

Next, we explored how our voices and sound effects reach our audiences by setting up speakers, amplifier, mixer and microphones. The members then chose some music to play, who would have thought we would be singing along to Michael Jackson's Man in the Mirror and Rick Astley's, Never Gunna Give You Up!

Lastly, we need some light! Getting hands on our lighting controller, everyone had the chance to experience how changing the colour of our stage lighting enhances the scenery, making it stand out and add texture to impress the viewing audience.

We can measure our success by rejoicing in the fact that most children who attended the academy sessions continued forming the ensemble in our 2023 pantomime.

The society's intention is to run the academy on a yearly basis and to grow the membership.

# Great opportunites for NODA Youth at Snaith and Cowick Drama Group

North East



Based in Snaith in North Yorkshire, Snaith and Cowick Drama Group put on two productions each year and, in January, completed their successful run of *Mother Goose* written by society member, Steve Boyce, who also played the Dame.

The group work really hard to give opportunities to young people and a wide range of roles are undertaken by the younger members of the society. The photos were mainly taken by youth members Lucy and Lottie, and the show photos were taken by 17 year old Georgina. Lucy also videoed some of the rehearsals to support the cast in remembering certain dances/blocking and she worked as assistant stage manager and stage manager.

Jo Sykes, Youth Co-ordinator in NODA North East, took the opportunity to learn more about what was involved by posing a few questions to Millie Barker (15) and Seamus McEnroe (16), who designed the marketing materials which included the Facebook banners, flyers, posters, outdoor promotional banner and programmes. They also undertook the choreography for the show.

Millie joined Snaith and Cowick in September 2018, and in that time has taken on both main parts and supporting roles within the chorus. Seamus joined the society a year later, and his first show was Cinderella, where he and Millie played alongside each other as Zip and Velcro, the kitchen mice.

Millie and Seamus explained that it was great to have an input into the dance routines that were going to be performed in the show and that they enjoyed coming up with the initial routines which were then developed into full stage performances. Millie and Seamus explained that "The cast worked really hard to learn all the routines, and it was so rewarding to see all the hard work that we had put into the choreography pay off on the show weekend. We received amazing feedback at all of the performances from everyone who came to see the show."

Working with pantomime director, Lynn Tupling and the group's consultant, Steve Boyce, they planned the social media to be used to publicise the show. From their initial ideas, they created different mock ups and responded

to the feedback they received which helped them to determine the final version which would be used. The format was then used as the basis for all the advertising and the programme design.

Millie and Seamus explained that they built up their communication and leadership skills through leading on choreography, as they had to teach the other chorus members the dances, but then listened to the ideas and feedback from other members of the cast.

Taking the lead in the media and design was a really positive experience for both Millie and Seamus who are both studying GCSE art and Millie is also planning to study A level art from September. They explained that, "We learnt lots of new skills by using Adobe Express and Pro Create to create some of the assets such as the backgrounds. We also learned how difficult it can be to create something completely from scratch, and how to put our ideas onto paper to help us to decide on what does and doesn't work."

### Hollywood is calling, part 2

**△ △ △ △** North



In our last edition, we introduced Ava Nolan, a young northern girl whose dream of becoming an actress was one step closer to becoming reality thanks to an opportunity of a lifetime. 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 set up a GoFundMe page to help raise the much-needed money required for Ava to make the trip, and thankfully, it proved successful. After six months of auditioning, attending acting classes with iPOP! coaches, photoshoots, fundraising and writing monologues, Ava left the UK and travelled to Los Angeles to take part in the prestigious convention.

The event took place at the Hilton Anaheim Hotel in Los Angeles, from the 3rd - 7th January 2023. iPOP! takes place twice a year: in Las Vegas in July and in Hollywood in January. The performers audition for qualified professionals who are currently working in the industry and experience the realities of the entertainment and fashion industries from the inside. They gain valuable experience in performing in front of large groups of people (as well as important agents and managers), practise their auditioning skills, and develop networking skills. Agents, managers and casting directors can attend the event by invitation only and the invitational list is limited to those agents and managers who are reputable and respected in the business, and have the power to launch careers for actors, models, singers and dancers.

Over the course of the week, Ava took part in various auditions, meetings, competitions, Q&As, boot camps, seminars, presentations and call backs. It was a jam-packed trip, but one which proved to be a huge success. Out of thousands of hopeful and talented young people from twelve different talent agencies, Ava was the overall winner for her Sitcom Self-Tape entry, and the first runner-up for her Monologue (which she wrote herself). She also received five call backs from reputable Hollywood casting agents and directors, and they are now looking to help Ava gain further experience and work in the UK entertainment industry.

Alongside this, Ava is hoping to aid her local Blyth Music & Theatre Company Youth Academy, and pass on some of her recent experience and learning to assist in nurturing young talent within the society.

### DID YOU KNOW WE CAN PROCESS DBS CHECKS?

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

Volunteers £20.00 Professional £60.00

For more information email dbs@noda.org.uk

### South West youth co-ordinator on her travels!

### South West

# Jo Wilson-Hunt works with groups across the region!

Sharing her knowledge of performance and the training of young actors is one of the areas that Jo Wilson-Hunt takes seriously and is part of her role as Youth coordinator for the South West. As a result, Jo has been offering workshops to the companies of the region! Over the last few months, Jo has had the opportunity to work with Double Act Theatre Company of Corfe Castle Dorset and Karnon Kidz (The Youth Section of Carnon Downs Drama Group), based near Truro, Cornwall.

Working on voice projection, resonance and accents, both groups had great fun through games and



Jo with Karnon Kidz

exercises used to find your inner voice and bring confidence in performance along with laughter and fun of course. Jo is looking forward to now seeing the newly learnt skills in action!

Jo Wilson-Hunt and Matthew Heaton







Claire Higgins is one half of brand-new theatre company, Cre8tive Theatre Co in NODA North West, a collaboration she partners with her real-life partner, Chris Higgins, a former NODA District Rep. They decide to hit the stage anything but quietly as they became one of the first non-Professional companies to perform School of Rock the Musical. Now what a way to make your debut!

Getting to this stage (no pun intended) hasn't been the easiest of rides for both Chris and Claire and it was their love of music and performing that brought them, and has kept them, together. Claire takes up the story...

"Here is his story which is very inspiring explaining how you can overcome lots of obstacles to achieve your dreams and why we raise money for certain charities...."

"Chris and I met in 1998, at college where we quickly knew we had found our other half! Life was great - we performed lots of shows together and were pretty much inseparable! In 2001, at the age of 21, Chris was involved in a bad road accident and was airlifted to Lancaster Hospital where doctors were thankfully able to save his life due to the medical attention he received at the scene by North West Air Ambulance. We are forever indebted to them for all they did that day and we give back at every possible opportunity as they receive no government funding.

A few months later Chris became very unwell and it turned out the metal pin and screws that had been used to repair his femur had all snapped and worst of all, as a result, he had developed sepsis. Chris was in hospital for a couple of months recovering and unfortunately lost some of the length of his leg as a result of the second surgery required to save his leg.

Not long after this Chris began to feel weak and started to lose sensation in his extremities - with numbness and pins and

needles. After a week or two in hospital and with no idea what was wrong, Chris was diagnosed by a leading neurologist with a very rare autoimmune disorder called Guillain Barre Syndrome (2 per 100,000 people a year get diagnosed with this!) Chris deteriorated rapidly losing ability to use all muscles and rendering him completely paralysed for almost 8 months. Chris remained in Royal Preston Hospital under the care of Neurological specialists for 8 months when he was then discharged to recover and learn to walk again as an inpatient at Clifton Hospital in Lytham.

Fast forward to 2012, not long after our son Joey was born, Chris began to experience some new symptoms of pain and discomfort. After lots of investigations, Chris had developed another two autoimmune diseases - Ankylosing Spondylitis and Psoriatic Arthritis which are chronic and debilitating diseases causing immobility, fusion of the spine and extreme pain along with other symptoms such as chronic fatigue. After many years of experimenting with what would help Chris manage his conditions, he now uses biological medication which helps to keep some of his symptoms at bay.

I feel it is important to share this with you all to show that no matter what adversity may be thrown at you, you can overcome ANYTHING and go on to achieve your dreams! There were definitely times when we didn't know if Chris would survive - never mind perform again! Yet, here he is, taking on the lead role in Cre8tive's very first full scale show, as Dewey Finn in School of Rock the Musical! A role that he didn't originally intend on playing, but took the step up when nobody came for the audition. His Dewey may not have been jumping all over the stage and doing knee slides during the performances, but we think he rocks it anyway!! He was dosed up with extra meds to help him through show week and with the support of his family and incredible cast members I think he did amazingly!

EVERY donation for the raffle during show week will make it to the charities Gain (GBS) and Versus Arthritis (PsA and AS) and NASS so thank you for those who managed to dig deep at these difficult times."



# Moda Long Service Awards

Visit noda.org.uk/awards to apply today



5 Year Badge



10 Year Badge



15 Year Badge



20 Year Badge



25 Year Badge



30 Year Badge



35 Year Badge



40 Year Badge



45 Year Badge



50 Year Badge



25 Year Medal



Silver Bar



50 Year Medal



Gold Bar



Diamond Bar



55 Year Pin



60 Year Badge / Pin



65 Year Pin



70 Year Pin



Individual Member



Society Life Member



Youth Award



Commendation Award



**NODA** Achievement Award

# Long Service Awards

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

### What can I apply for?

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

### Who can apply?

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

# Chairman of Sharnbrook Mill Theatre retires after 43 years at the helm

**NODA** East



In September 2022, Sharnbrook Mill Theatre was presented with The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service, the equivalent of an MBE (See NODA Today Autumn 2022). In February, a very special surprise 'This is Your Life' event was held to celebrate the remarkable man who was the driving force behind that award, Douglas Pope.

Pope has been a governor of The Sharnbrook Mill Theatre Trust for 51 years and chairman for 43. Although very much a team player, Pope has been the man behind turning an old, derelict water mill on the banks of the River Great Ouse into the thriving theatre it is today.

Pope began acting at an early age and even met his wife, Virginia at a drama club in Rushden when they were teenagers. Ever since, they have shared a continuing love of the theatre. Their two daughters and three grandchildren have all appeared on the Sharnbrook stage.

Pope spent his professional life in the shoe trade, starting his own company in 2000, and travelling all over the world to sell the John Spencer shoe brand.

However, his theatrical career began with Sharnbrook in Sharnbrook Church Hall (long before the mill was converted) then playing to huge audiences at The Ritz Theatre in Rushden in roles such as the General in *Desert* 

Song, Pellinore in Camelot and his first singing lead as Curly in Oklahoma! Over the years he has played lead roles at The Mill Theatre in over two dozen shows including A Little Night Music, Cabaret, Jesus Christ Superstar, Half a Sixpence and Fiddler on the Roof, to name but a few.

And when not involved with his business or the Mill Theatre he even found time to support his local football team, Rushden and Diamonds.

Pope has been a hard-working mill governor, turning his hand to practical tasks as well as decision making for the Trust. Taking on the role of chair of the governors in 1979, he was instrumental in the conversion of the mill from a deserted water mill into a thriving community theatre, spending much time since then helping to maintain the fabric of the Mill Theatre, his second home. Thanks to his stewardship the theatre now has eco-driven heating and airconditioning, after years of steadfast fundraising, along with a lengthy list of award-winning productions, projects and future possibilities, all culminating in the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service.

Many tributes were paid to Pope during the course of the evening including from such acting emissaries as Hugh Laurie and Joanna David, both Patrons of the Mill, as well as HM The Lord Lieutenant of Bedfordshire, Susan Lousada, whose predecessor Helen Nellis presented the Queen's Award to The Mill. An evening of entertainment consisted of excerpts from some of Pope's favourite shows and a special appearance by two of Sharnbrook's protèges, brothers who have since gone on to have successful careers in opera and on the West End stage, Jamie Tyler and Tyler Clarke.

A modest man, he would always say, "It was a team effort" of achievements accomplished, but in the words of the evening's host, the new Chairman Tim Jackson-Waite, "You're right, Doug, we are a team. But you have shown that it's possible to shepherd cats and get results."

Although Pope has stepped down from the chairman's position, he remains on the board of governors, thus continuing to offer his help and advice accumulated over 51 years of service to the Sharnbrook Mill Theatre.



# The Gala Weekend

The 2023, celebration gala will take place at the Preston Marriott on 15th and 16th September 2023. Central to that weekend will be the Annual General Meeting and the inauguration of the new president.

For those arriving on Friday evening, there will be a traditional Lancashire evening including a quiz and traditional hotpot, with plenty of time for catching up with friends from all over the UK.

The NODA National AGM will be held on Saturday at 2:30pm and will include the presentation of this year's Poster and Programme Awards.

After the AGM, there will be a black-tie gala dinner followed by something a little different. Drama plays a big part within NODA, and this year we will be celebrating that with a murder mystery called *Murder on Opening Night*.

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









# **Prices**

### Package A - two persons sharing

Friday Lancashire evening including quiz and traditional hotpot, Saturday buffet lunch, AGM, gala dinner, glass of wine, murder mystery entertainment.

Two nights bed and breakfast.

£224.00 per person

### Package D - single occupancy

Saturday buffet lunch, AGM, gala dinner, glass of wine, murder mystery entertainment.

One night bed and breakfast.

£187.00 per person

### Package B - two persons sharing

Saturday buffet lunch, AGM, gala dinner, glass of wine, murder mystery entertainment.

One night bed and breakfast.

£140.00 per person

### Package E

Saturday buffet lunch, AGM, gala dinner, glass of wine, murder mystery entertainment.

No accomodation provided.

£75.00 per person

### Package C - single occupancy

Friday Lancashire evening including quiz and traditional hotpot, Saturday buffet lunch, AGM, gala dinner, glass of wine, murder mystery entertainment.

Two nights bed and breakfast.

£315.00 per person

### Package F

Gala dinner, glass of wine, murder mystery entertainment.

No accomodation provided.

£50.00 per person









### NODA Presidential Gala & AGM 2023

Preston Marriott, Preston, PR3 5JB Friday 15th - Saturday 16th September

Please complete in block letters

Name(s)					
Address					
		Postcode			
Phone		NODA Region			
Email					

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

### Package options

A: to include 2 nights (Friday & Saturday) Bed & Breakfast, lunch and gala dinner Saturday £224pp. Two people sharing.
B: to include 1 night (Saturday) Bed and Breakfast, lunch and gala dinner Saturday £140pp. Two people sharing.
C: to include 2 nights (Friday & Saturday) Bed & Breakfast, lunch and gala dinner Saturday £315pp. Single occupancy.
D: to include 1 night (Saturday) Bed and Breakfast, lunch and gala dinner Saturday £187pp. Single occupancy.
E: AGM, Light Lunch Saturday, gala dinner £75 per person.
F: Gala Dinner only £50 per person.

### There is no charge for attending just the AGM.

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

### **Payment**

All payments must be accompanied with a booking form which can be posted to NODA, 15 The Metro Centre, Peterborough, PE2 7UH or emailed to info@noda.org.uk

The latest date for application and payments is Friday 18th August 2023.

### **Deposit**

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

Cheque made payable to NODA	Payment by BAG Account 20379 Quote GALA an		Card Payment - please call once your booking has been 01733 374 790	
Names of other members of your p	party or seating preference	Disability considera	tions	

## Directors check in: Stepping out of your comfort zone

NODA Theatre Summer School







One of the happiest things about NODA Theatre Summer School is the way it creates a space for people to go outside of their comfort zones. Trying something new always takes courage and there is definitely a leap of faith involved but the rewards can be significant and long lasting.

Every year about 25% of the students at Summer School are first time attendees, each one of them steeling themselves to journey into the unknown. However, sometimes regular attendees have a similar experience when they sign up to a course that is different to their usual choice or with a tutor they haven't worked with or in a discipline they have little experience in. Trying something new obviously makes

demands on a student; it requires them to be curious, open minded and sometimes patient with themselves as they acclimatise to their unchartered terrain. NODA Theatre Summer School is the perfect place to meet those demands. The tutors, fellow students, committee, and of course me as the director, will do everything we can to support them in the highs and lows of their adventure.

This brings us onto the benefits of stepping out of your comfort zone... the bubble of self-esteem in your chest that grows as you succeed in your new challenge, the development of skills, seeing yourself in a new light, others seeing potential that perhaps even you didn't know you had! That

brave step has the potential to have such a positive impact on you as you learn as much about yourself as you do about the area of theatre you have chosen to immerse yourself in for the week.

We hope to see you in the summer stepping into whichever course you think you might need to perhaps shake things up a little. Some of the courses are now sold out, but there are still spaces on others. If there is no room on the course you would usually see yourself, perhaps you can see it as an invitation to try something new!

Sarah Osborne NODA Theatre Summer School Director

### Just a few of the courses on offer in 2023



Directing youth theatre
For students who want to be able
to direct youth theatre companies
effectively, creatively and
inclusively.



Post 9/11 American drama
This course is for students who want
to delve into the work of writers
such as Baker, Jacobs Jenkins, Shinn
and O' Harris. It is relevant for
actors, directors and writers.



Pantomime in performance
For students who want to develop
their understanding of pantomime
as a performer or director through
practical exploration.

Want more information? Ready to book? Visit our website noda.org.uk/summerschool

# Presidential travels

One of the joys of presidency of this association is the chances it offers for one to see many varied and different productions in all the regions.

I can report that there are a lot of high class presentations in every part of the nation. From my first visit to Portsmouth, to see a mega production of the extremely popular Shrek, to my recent visit to the small village of Chardstock for the successful community production of The Wonderful Wizard of Oz, I have been delighted to share in some amazing shows. Portsmouth Players' production featured a very special dragon which had to be imagined at the last minute when the hired version proved unsuitable. The three lady solution was most innovative. I've also been privileged to attend some very powerful plays. It is great to celebrate the D in NODA. From a very moving presentation of Blood Brothers (the play version) to the gripping Dangerous Obsession our drama groups are providing some imaginative storytelling.

One of the major parts of my role is to attend the annual regional conferences. At the end of October, I was delighted to be able to celebrate all things NODA with the members of NODA Scotland. Their weekend took place, once again, at the wonderful Peebles Hydro. There was a magnificent turnout for the workshops, dancing, dining and the AGM. Even the trains and buses turned up and got me across the country and home again. It was a long trip, well worth the making. I was pleased to be able to join the East Midlands Region via Zoom to welcome its new Councillor, Jules Jones, and make the short trip to Somerset for the South West Region's



Portsmouth - Shrek



Regional Committee Members - October 2022

AGM where we welcomed two new regional representatives. I am just back from a very enjoyable time celebrating with the members of NODA North at their annual weekend. As well as a really innovative workshop led by Sarah Osborne (Director of Summer School), we had a lively open forum following the AGM. One or two pertinent matters were aired, which we will be following up in the next couple of months. For me, it is inspiiring to meet the local representatives face to face and to chat with them about the activities in their districts. I'm sure members find it reassuring to share their experiences across the regions and listen to how others deal with the shared problems.

In November, I travelled to New Mills in Lancashire, to join in their centenary celebrations. The society is extra special as they have been members of NODA for the whole of their existence. It was good to meet their president and hear all about the wonderful teamwork which keeps the Art Theatre working. Like the amazing Hippodrome in Todmorden, where I was privileged to see the fabulous facility is maintained by the local amateurs.

In the same week, I was privileged to see this year's Wow Show which celebrated 40 years of this successful youth group. Members from this group performed at the Presidential Gala

in 2017, and this year's compilation show was as amazing as usual giving lots of rising stars a chance to spread their wings. Although I have been delighted to attend a number of Youth productions, there is something extra special about the groups where the youngsters are truly integrated into the main body of the society. It is good to see whole families, two and three generations, involved in the local clubs.

I'm now looking forward to a very busy couple of months. Hopefully, I'll be able to attend all the coming regional conferences. The dates are in my diary and I'm excited to hear all about what our members are up to. You will not be surprised to hear that I'm looking forward to another inspiring NODA Summer School in July. I am amazed to hear that there are still some places available on some courses. Having been a Summer School groupie for many years now, I have tried out a multitude of courses. I still learn something new each year, and often find myself being reminded of some method or solution that I have forgotten about. Not only are the tutors consistently brilliant, but my fellow students constantly inspire me to new heights. We are fortunate to have a number of funds from which you can obtain assistance should the fees be beyond your means. Don't hold back, but ask Jacquie Stedman about how NODA might help you to attend. I promise you will not be disappointed in how much you and your society can gain from the experience.

If I make it to your show or conference don't hesitate to come and have a chat. In the wake of the recent independent survey we undertook, we have some exciting schemes afoot, but it may be you have a really useful seed of an idea which I can bring to council. No idea is too dull to consider for an inspiring future.

Keep up the good work.



Exmouth Players - Blood Brothers (play version)



Axminster Musical Theatre - Sister Act



BACCES - Aladdin



Watlington Players - Elf, The Musical



WOW Youth Music Theatre - Celebration



Masque Players - Dick Whittington & His Cat



Salterton Drama Club - Murder In Play



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Chelmsford AODS - 9 to 5



Ottery St Mary Community Theatre - Frankie Stein the panto

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# South East groups head to Edinburgh

### **NODA South East**

In October 2021, Hart Players decided to go to Edinburgh. When the group began, their core objective was to perform quality local theatre that will go beyond the normal fair as well as take on additional challenges including taking a show to the fringe. Alan Birdsworth reports: "The production 'Babysitting Calvin' was chosen because some of the cast had performed it and understood the comedy potential; a good 'fringe performance time' (40 minutes) and minimal set. Taking a show to the fringe is a puzzle with parts, as well as the play itself, marketing, venue, accommodation and transport. We've been to Edinburgh so we knew what we had to do. All productions are given a time and ours was given 50 minutes during which the set has to be put in, audience in and settled, perform and strike the set and out!

Back in Hampshire marketing began, the flyer was finalised and a performance, for family and friends, was decided on. With no regular venue to perform in we approached another group, Hartley Arts Groiup, and with their support we performed 'Babysitting Calvin' alongside Art. This gave us great confidence as we had an idea of audience reaction. So, we headed to Edinburgh, bursting with excitement and enthusiasm and a few funny looks as we manouvred a collapsible sofa through the reception of our hotel. Our five night run went exceptionally well . It's a warm feeling to truly setting up our own success. And a moment of silence and relief when its over. Hart Players loved Edinburgh and will be back with another show - and that is a quarantee!

In total contrast to the hilarious 'Babysitting Calvin', Compton Players, from Berkshire, took their play, a nod to the golden age of the murder mystery with a modern twist, to the Space on North Bridge for their five day run.



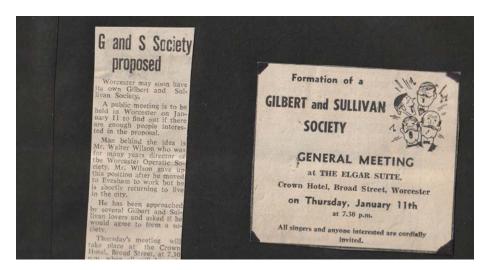
Written during lockdown by and starring, Helen Saxton, it was originally called 'Evil Will Come' and was performed in November 2021, to Compton audiences. But when it was decided to take it to Edinburgh, this tale of 'Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned' needed some script trimming and it became 'In Her Defence'." Helen says: "There was a lot of pressure to hit the ground running. We were a very small group, just five of us, me, Pete Witt my director and co-

star and his wife, Mel who was also in it and was stage manager and their two children: Evie and James who were stage hands. It was an incredible experience. Our show began at 1.25 pm so we spent the morning giving out flyers and soaking up the atmosphere, doing the show and then the afternoon and evening spent seeing shows. It was a brilliant experience and one we hope to repeat but definitely a big exercise in organisation!"

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# From *The Mikado* to *The Mikado* with 50 years in between

**NODA West Midlands** 



It all began with an announcement in the local Worcester newspaper by Walter Wilson that a general meeting was to be held on 11th January 1973, with the aim of starting a Gilbert & Sullivan Society in Worcester.

Enough people replied and in 1973, "The Gilbert and Sullivan Society of Worcester" began. The first rehearsal was held on 25th January, at the Over 60s club in the Cathedral Precincts. A new society was born and here they are in 2023, proudly celebrating their 50th anniversary.

With Walter Wilson as The Honorary Musical Director, a concert version of *The Yeomen of the Guard* and *The Gondoliers* was performed on 17th May 1973, at Pershore High School. This was a huge success so was later performed at The Swan Theatre on 30th September, this time with a full orchestra.

Meanwhile, plans were underway for the first fully staged and costumed production with an orchestra. On 8th July, auditions were held for *The Mikado* for the performance at The Technical College in Worcester 7th– 12th January 1974. It is now with great delight that, 50 years on, we are once again performing *The Mikado*. This time at The Norbury Theatre, Droitwich from 17th – 20th May.

Beginning with a production of *The Sorcerer* in 1976, the society moved to The Festival Theatre, Malvern for their main productions where they happily remained until 2005, (apart from when the theatre was closed for refurbishment).

As the society grew in numbers and popularity, it performed at various venues and locations – Leominster, Ledbury, Bromyard, Pershore, Kidderminster, The Swan Theatre Worcester and even the famous Shakespearean stage in Stratford-upon-Avon. Nowadays, they are privileged to perform once or twice a year at The Norbury, Droitwich.

There is much more to any production than the cast and theatre. The society is very lucky to have a number of people in their membership who take on the tasks of producers and musical directors which helps to keep the consistency of standard. Audiences attending shows wish to hear beautiful singing, also like a visual feast. Blessed with two amazing needlewomen, Sue Coleman and Bridget Corlett to help them, this society provides exactly that. They own sets of costumes which would grace any stage in the country.

Worcester Gilbert & Sullivan Society



The Mikado 1999

has always been known as a 'friendly' society and they all try to live up to this. Testament to their reputation is that they still have three members who were in the very earliest shows, including Beryl Davies who was a founder member. Sadly, she and Mandy Lambert no longer perform, but always support the shows and social events, However, the third person, Colin Wilks, is still treading the boards. In 1974, at the age of sixteen, he played the title role in *The Mikado* and in May this year will be performing as Pooh –Ba.

The Worcester Gilbert & Sullivan Society, as it is now known, performs mainly the works of the formidable pair. Over the 50 years, they have staged more than eight productions of *The Mikado*, seven *Pirates of Penzance*, six *Trial by Jury*, *HMS Pinafore* and *The Gondoliers* as well as all the others in the repertoire. With occasional concerts and digressions from G&S



The original The Mikado

they also perform a lot of works by Fraser Charlton which have proved very popular with their audiences. These are shows which take the music of Sullivan, some of the words of Gilbert, but tell a new story. They are great fun and keep the interest of the membership and audiences, without

losing the G&S "feel".

With a gradual decline in the number of Gilbert and Sullivan Societies in existence it is the mission of this one to continue performing and enjoying all that the wonderful operas have to offer. Here's to the next 50 years.

### Glantawe Theatre celebrates 50 years

#### NODA Wales & Ireland

Glantawe Theatre were formed in 1972, when our founder member Mr Winston Jenkins got some friends together to enter the British Drama League One Act Play competition. They won the Regional and National Competition and went on to represent Wales at the British Final. Since then, the company has grown and developed we now perform up to three productions annually.

We have a membership ranging from 6 years of age to seventy five years. Over the years, we have had strong links in the local community and are proud of all the young people who have been members, some of whom have gone on to work professionally on stage or into teaching and many other careers. In 2022, we celebrated our 50th Anniversary with our production



of *The Wizard of Oz*. This production involved most of our members and was very well received by our audiences. We, as a company, are proud to have been recognised by NODA over the years for numerous productions as well

as individual performances.

We look forward to the future with plans already in place for our next major production of *Calendar Girls* in September 2023.

# BOS Musical Theatre Group reaches it 100th show milestone

#### **NODA East Midlands**

Founded in 1964, BOS Musical Theatre Group, based in Boston, Lincolnshire, will perform its 100th show in April 2023, at the town's Blackfriars Theatre.

Boston Operatic Society was probably originally founded after the First World War, though written records have been lost. Photographs exist in the Lincolnshire County Archives, however, which show various posed photographs. It certainly became defunct during the Second World War.

Boston Choral Society revived fairly quickly after the war, and started to perform the then very popular Gilbert and Sullivan operettas as fund raisers. A cohort of members then decided to break away and in 1964, the new Boston Operatic Society was formed.

The first performances took place at the old Regal Cinema in Boston (caravans were parked in the car park behind to be used as dressing rooms). But when Boston's Blackfriars Theatre opened in 1966, the "Operatics" as the society was known, quickly adopted it as their home base and became closely associated with it. Since then they have produced at least two shows or concerts per year, except during the pandemic.

At first, they performed exclusively G&S, but sooner or later began to perform more modern musicals until eventually it was decided to change the name to reflect the new reality, and the "Operatics" became BOS Musical Theatre Group.

Notable personalities associated with the group include Pat Whittle who served continuously on the committee for 35 years from 1965. The society is also proud to have been the starting point for several young performers who have gone on to professional careers, including Natalie Day (Les Miserables, Annie Get You Gun), Ben Terry (Kinky Boots, & Juliet) and Jake Samuels (Jersey Boys and numerous films).

For the 100th production, Director Jenny Cartwright, has chosen the classic musical My Fair Lady, and is thrilled to have so many new members for the production. She says she will bring a very traditional show to the stage, and feels she is carrying on the spirit of the people who started the society, maintaining high production values.

On Saturday April 22nd, there will be a gala night reception in celebration of the occasion, and the audience is invited to dress up and enjoy canapés and champagne before the show.

Current Chairperson, Lucy Allen, is looking forward to welcoming people. She says: "The last few years haven't been easy, getting through the challenges brought by the Covid pandemic and the effects of the current cost of living crisis, but it is exciting to have so many new members join us for our celebratory production of My Fair Lady."



Anything Goes 2013



One of the earlier productions



Scrooge 2000



Sweet Charity 2010

### Janet reaches 25 years on the South West committee

#### **NODA South West**



### There are plenty of surprises in Janet Elworthy's association with NODA!

Janet Elworthy has been an everpresent and ever-popular member of the NODA Southwest Committee since 1998. As a member of the Hemyock Singers, she was put forward by current NODA President, Nick Lawrence, to become a representative and with 3 group nominations was voted in as the district representative for East Devon.

Janet's journey to NODA is quite exceptional and something not many people know about! Janet left Somerset

for London aged 18 and became a professional showband singer, touring the South of England. She supported popular pop groups of the time such as *Hot Chocolate*, performed from Richmond to Leicester Square, sang on Radio 2's Late Night Extra and worked with Nigel Lythgoe when asked to be part of a collaboration for a Eurovision entry.

After some exciting years, Janet decided that she wanted to return to the South West and, after a chance discussion with her flatmate, was encouraged to take a complete career change and train as a nurse at Musgrove Park, Taunton. It was a career she loved!

She was still able to keep her hand in, performing with the showband whenever it toured in the area. However, it was the local vicar in Hemyock who rediscovered her talents and she joined the local group, taking lead roles such as La Belle Helene, Tzeltal (from Fiddler on the Roof) and Hello Dolly's Irene Malloy.

With no director available one year for the group, she stepped in and became NODA award-winning, branching out to direct other groups in Exmouth, Axminster and Tiverton.

In being part of NODA, Janet has most enjoyed the opportunity going to the theatre and seeing a diverse selection of shows, where she is always able to find something different to enjoy. She has also loved meeting people within the NODA fraternity and built up a large social network as a result.

Janet retired as a full time district representative a few years ago and now acts as stand in assistant representative and events secretary for the South West. In addition, she has managed to encourage her daughter, Jo Parr, to become an assistant district rep. Jo is currently head of drama in a school, but in a similar way to her Mum, previously built her own directing career in the theatrical world of London, before being drawn back to Devon too.

### Guide Dogs shine on stage with LAMS

#### **NODA Scotland**

Last month Lanark Amateur Musical Society announced that we had selected Guide Dogs Scotland as their charity partner for our upcoming production, Legally Blonde.

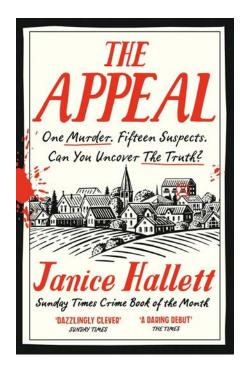
Here, we see Autumn, the guide dog, attending her first on-stage rehearsal.

Guide Dogs Scotland's Edinburgh, Forfar and Glasgow teams provide life-changing mobility services to adults, children and young people with sight loss throughout Scotland.



'Autumn' on stage doing scene work with Vikki McIntyre (Paulette) and Alistair Morton (Kyle)

# Amateur dramatics are at the heart of author's best-seller



Psssst...if you enjoy finding amateur dramatics at the centre of your pleasure reading, you can start your Christmas wish list now: a Christmas themed sequel to Janice Hallett's 2021 best-selling novel, 'The Appeal' will be published in October.

For those few who haven't read it, 'The Appeal' was the murder mystery set in the midst of the fictional Fairway Players' doomed production of Arthur Miller's All My Sons. The sequel puts the Players to work on their holiday pantomime, probably with equally deadly results. However, the original item, The Appeal itself, is unlikely to disappear from the global mass market anytime soon; released in the US last November, to an enthusiastic reception, the book has been optioned by the American TV network ABC for dramatisation by Hallett.

"Whether it gets to the screen or not – that's another matter," Hallett told NODA Today in an exclusive interview. "These things are in development for many, many years usually. And it was only published two years ago.

It's very exciting to work on a script of the book but it's a very slow process – slower than writing the novel."

Hallett's intimate understanding of and affection for local theatre are evident early on in *The Appeal*. Her close ties with the world of am dram were gleaned from her own experiences from a young age with the Raglan Players of Northolt, Middlesex. "I went to see their shows when I was three or four; I grew up going to see them. For me," she says, "that was theatre. We lived within range of the [London] West End, but we never went there. When I was old enough – 14 – I joined them."

Appearing onstage in Blithe Spirit, assistant directing, managing props and "pretty much every backstage role," Hallett participated in Raglan Players productions for several decades. The group disbanded in 2013, "Like a lot of groups, we kind of ran our course; we were all getting older, and people weren't joining those sort of groups anymore. People had more free time to fill when the group started in '72, and even when I joined in '83," she says. "New generations are not so interested in such a hobby that's so all encompassing and so immersive and such hard work at times."

"I mean," she says, "I love amateur

drama, but it's a lot of work."

However, she adds, "some of our friends ended up making friends with other groups in the local area, so you go and see each other's plays. A few people who were our members moved to other groups, and we've been to see some of those and still stay in touch with the whole thing."

Before Christmas, for instance, Hallett attended the British Airways Cabin Crew Entertainment Society's annual pantomime in Hayes "and it was fabulous. We always love it; it's the start of Christmas for us."

Would she see herself participating in local theatre ever again? "I think the opportunity might be there because I know a lot of other groups," Hallett says, "but it's a really all-encompassing hobby. You're set building while you're rehearsing, you're learning the lines, working on your part and your character. You give up your Sunday to set build. So, at the moment, I couldn't give the time up. But you know," she adds, "never say never."

During her time with the Northolt group, Hallett co-wrote and co-directed a satire about the world of reality TV, It's My Manor. On her own, she wrote a farce, Bump in the Night,



Janice Hallett in 'Blithe Spirit'

that the Raglans also produced "with a cast of thousands, something like 17 cast members," she says. "I chose farce because it's the most difficult and the most challenging and the most rewarding of all genres!"

To date, she says, her plays have not been published but she wrote those two and others "before I had any kind of name."

Because her plays had previously been rejected for publication, Hallett says she "assumed" 'The Appeal' wouldn't be published.

Asked if the book's characters or story

were based on any true-to-life people or circumstances she had encountered in her group, Hallett says no, with the exception of aspects of two characters based on herself. However, she adds, she drew on the passion for putting on plays and "pulling together in those last few weeks before a play goes on, that energy and that togetherness and joint committee" to bring her story to life. "There's nothing like it," she continues, "it's almost tangible. And you're very, very tired; you're working very, very hard. But when you get there in the end, there's nothing like that - producing a play with your friends for an audience and hearing their response afterward. There's

Were the Raglan Players surprised when the book came out, Hallett is asked. "I think they were," she says. "They liked it, luckily! When it came out, the group hadn't been around for seven or eight years and was effectively wound up. They said it was very nostalgic."

something magical about it, and that's what I hoped to capture in 'The Appeal'."

"So," she says, "I must have done my job."

Janice Hallett spoke with NODA East Region Editor DeeDee Doke.



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NODA Today - Spring 2023

### A centenary celebration concert

**NODA** North



Felling Stage Society, based in Gateshead, Tyne and Wear, has recently celebrated its 100th year as a society.

It all began on a Sunday afternoon in November 1922, when a meeting was held in the home of a lady called Mrs Johnston, with the purpose of discussing the formation of an amateur operatic and dramatic society. Following this, a Mr. W. W. Burt called a meeting of local Gilbert and Sullivan enthusiasts in the local church. The result was that on 23rd February 1923, the first meeting of the newly formed Felling and District Amateur Operatic and Dramatic Society was held. At that time, a committee was formed, with Mr. Burt as Chairman, a position he held for the next forty years. The society also became members of NODA, of which they remain to this

Felling Stage Society's first show, *The Mikado*, was held in the Corona Picture Hall, Felling in 1923, to a capacity audience. Soon after, the venue

burned down, and so productions were held at the nearby Imperial Picture House. There were no dressing rooms, so a removal truck parked outside the back exit for the men to use. This became the society's home, and productions were held there annually until 1939, when the outbreak of World War 2 resulted in a hiatus. The society reformed in 1947, but they were unable to use their original venue due to the increasing popularity of cinema, so instead moved to The Essoldo (formerly the Empire Theatre) on Gateshead High Street. Annual shows were produced there until 1966, when the theatre was demolished to make way for a new road. The closure of the theatre forced the move to a new venue: The Dryden Centre, which was at that time The Girls' Grammar School. In 2002, the society took the decision to rename itself, and Felling Stage Society came into being. Then in 2012, the society moved to the newly built theatre in Heworth Grange School, which is very close to where it all began.

Since the early days of operas, Felling Stage Society has performed a wide variety of musicals and concerts, more recently including full-scale productions such as Jesus Christ Superstar, Gypsy and Sister Act. Along the way, Felling Stage Society has in fact had two past NODA presidents as members, Jack Robson and Ian Wells.

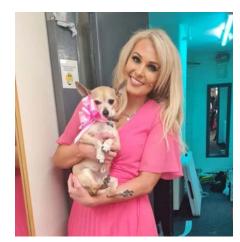
Now, in 2023, Felling Stage Society recently held a one-night-only concert as a centenary celebration, performed in the historic Tyne Theatre & Opera House in Newcastle. The concert saw members from past and present, young and old, take to the stage to celebrate Felling Stage Society's momentous milestone, compèred by local comedian and radio host Steffen Peddie. The night was a perfect celebration and demonstration of the talent that the society has held over the years, and certainly a wonderful way to commemorate the extraordinary occasion.

### Paws for thought

#### **NODA North West**







Although dogs are known for being, 'man's best friend,' they do always say never work with animals (or children). This year, X-Rays decided to ignore the myth and challenged themselves by using not 1, but 2 dogs in their production of *Legally Blonde*. Treats helped hugely for helping get the dogs onto the stage for their starring moments.

The first trick of helping build the dogs' confidence was by making them feel secure in the theatre environment and around the many cast members they came into contact with either on-stage or backstage. We soon learnt that Bruiser (Joey) wasn't so keen on men - it was a good job his scenes only included working with women! Having the owners/familiar faces of the dogs backstage with them also helped to enhance their trust.

Establishing a bond between the actors and the dogs early on into the rehearsal process was beneficial. Fayhe-Louise (Elle Woods) spent a lot of time with Joey (Bruiser) at promotional events for the show to get him used to being picked up by her, which also contributed to the dogs acting naturally on stage with the actors. Before each show, the actors that came in close contact with the dogs would play with them and talk to

them, like humans, to help settle their nerves.

Like I said before, treats played a huge role in helping the dog with their performance to help motivate them and reward them for their good work. A great benefit of having the dogs as part of the performance was that they were also there to act as therapy dogs to help settle cast members' nerves. Joey's owner, Cherie, a dog groomer herself, who also helped to promote the show through her business commented: "I've never seen him sat and so relaxed on a man's knee. He's usually biting their ankles. It has honestly done him the world of good as he has now become a super socialised Chihuahua." Performances with Joey didn't always go to plan. If anything was spontaneously changed, e.g. being walked onto stage rather than being carried onto stage, he would soon let you know of his disagreement, even during a performance!

Kal'El's Chaperone, Lewis, the nephew of the owner, also commented, "As a dog handler, my role entailed making sure Kal'El was ready for when he needed to go on stage, making sure he was comfortable with the actors and taking care of him when he was off stage. For me, I felt the job went great. Kal never missed his cues (even if he did go on early during one of the scenes). He was well



behaved and everybody loved him and he loved the attention. It was also a good opportunity to work with the theatre group which helped me come out of my shell. Everyone who I worked with were incredibly nice and I'm glad I helped out." Kal'El played the role of Rufus (Paulette's dog) and he was a true pro, never missing a cue. He soaked up all of the attention he got on stage and off and absolutely blossomed when he was under the spot light. I don't think this will be his last show and from speaking to his owner, he is really missing the limelight!

Knowing what we know now and having the experience we had with both dogs, we would jump at the opportunity to involve them in future productions. We will work with dogs again!"

NODA Today - Spring 2023



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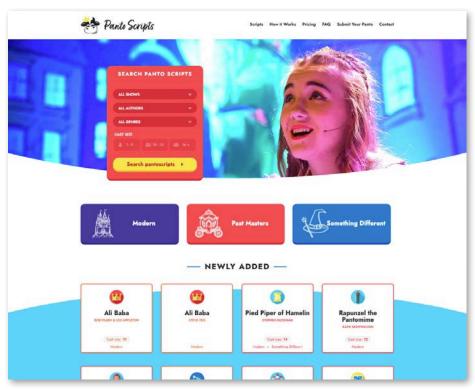


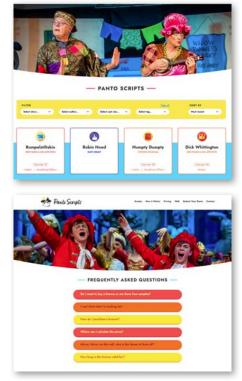
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NODA Today - Spring 2023 45

# Ulveston Pantomime Society celebrates 75 years in theatre

**NODA North West** 





On the 28th February 1948, the local paper to Ulverston reported that "The main feature of social life in Ulverston this week was the successful staging by the British Legion Concert Party of the pantomime Aladdin. This was the party's first venture into pantomime but they hope to make it an annual event" – and so what is now the Ulverston Pantomime Society was born.

They did indeed make it an annual event with an annual pantomime at the local theatre, The Coronation Hall as it was then, all the way through to 2021, where one year was lost due to COVID. The 2022 production, at the end of January last year, to announce our return was, you've guessed it Aladdin.

Over the 75 years of life that the society has had, there have been so many people involved it's almost impossible for this article to do them all justice. Initially, ladies of the British Legion worked tirelessly to produce costumes, drill the dancers and ensure that it all went off without a hitch. The local newspaper mentions several of the ladies in the 1949 production of Beauty and the Beast including one

Bridget Turner who, doing amongst other things, produced the costumes. Bridget went on to produce the shows as well as continue in the role of costume mistress and when the writer of this article joined the society in 1991, this same Bridget Turner was still there, not quite so heavily involved, but still very much part of the society. Similar credit in supporting the society can be seen with Norman and Marjorie Teagle, who, for many a year, supported Bridget in the production of pantomimes.

This aspect of the society has been a very visible part of its history. Many of the officers of the society over the years have started their involvement as young dancers or youth principals. Our current Director/Treasurer, Sue Little, began performing for the society at a very young age as a dancer and has grown through the society; initially as principal girl, then as comedy girl, and now performs character parts as well as directs and is the society treasurer. Even this though is put into the shade by the dynasty that is still involved but began in the early 1950s when the previous director made her dancing debut. Elaine Parkinson (as she became) eventually became principal boy, a fabulous character actress and director of pantomimes for the society over several decades. Her husband, Jack, was recruited to become stage manager and eventually chairman. Her daughter Becky was principal girl and her two sons Daniel and Jamie are still involved today as back stage team, Daniel as stage manager. Becky's daughters took part and both Daniel and Jamie's children are involved backstage and front of stage. Jack and Elaine only retired in 2017, after the 70th panto with 3 generations involved in that show. This community focus of society life is regularly repeated with husbands, wives, sons and daughters all having an involvement. The society boasts a fabulous front of house team as well as back stage gang and, fairly unusually, performs with a full orchestra.

Times are challenging, especially financially, but there is no lack of enthusiasm within the society to progress through the next 75 years, from the youngest performer, of about 6 years old, to the oldest, who is over 60 years their senior.

## Hereford Amateur Pantomime Society (HAPS) celebrate their 40th pantomime

#### **NODA** West Midlands

In February 2023, almost three years since our last production, HAPS finally got to perform their 40th pantomime. This was the first time HAPS had performed *Snow White* and we were thrilled to bring it to the Courtyard, Hereford.

We welcomed 10 new members this year, mainly youngsters with a mixture of ages and abilities who brought such fun and laughter to rehearsals. Many of them took on a small principal role for the first time. What a wonderful week it was being back on stage doing what we all love – performing and spreading fun and laughter to audiences.

Each year HAPS endeavour to make a donation to a local charity of their choice and in 2023, the chosen Charity was CRY (Cardiac Risk in the Young) - Kieran Joyce Memorial Fund. This fund was set up by the Joyce family to support CRY reduce the frequency of young sudden cardiac death. In September 2019, Kieran, who was only 15, fell asleep and never woke up. He was a fit and healthy youngster. The fund was set up by Kieran's family, not only to inform and create awareness, but also to raise money in Kieran's memory. CRY facilitate the vital screening needed to help avert cases of young sudden cardiac death. For every £6,000 raised, this allows for a team to come along to Hereford for a day and screen 100 young adults between the ages of 14 to 35. During the run of our show over 180 young people were screened at the local football ground, including several members of the cast.

Louisa Tobin said it was a great privilege as HAPS chairman and Snow White in the show, to present a cheque on the last night to Kieran's mum, Andrea and daughter Ruby Joyce for £2,000.

Director, Louise Hickey, said that as this was the first time that HAPS had performed Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs in the 43-year history, it has been an absolute delight. The amazing cast and technical team had pulled out all the stops, in their first show post COVID-19, to make it a huge success.









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### How I became a panto author

**NODA West Midlands** 



Cinderella 2023 Droitwich Theatre. Credit Wayne Dutton

I co-directed a version of Aladdin at the Norbury Theatre in 2019, which I had written under the pen name of Will Davies - a combination of my mother and father's names. It had begun life when I was teaching in a middle school, more years ago than I care to remember, and found that scripts were either too adult or aimed at primary schools, so I decided to write my own.

I had worked intermittently on the script over the years, partly because I had split the role of Wishy Washy between two characters, Wishy Washy and Drippy Dryee, as I was not sure how a 13 year old would manage the audience interaction. I discussed directing a pantomime with Anne Lane, the Norbury's Chair, and sent her a version of the script to read. Her first comment to me was: "Do I know the author?" Luckily not many others had realised and when the show went on, only four members of the theatre (on a strictly need to know basis) knew who the author was.

Aladdin was a success with good

audience numbers. The cast and crew were told the author would accompany Anne to see the show on the final night, they would be sitting in the front row and would like to meet the cast after the show. I went backstage during the interval and a number of the cast were sure that they had already spotted the author. However, when Anne actually introduced the author after the show I was met with stunned silence, apart from the Grand Vizier who was less than complementary.

As I usually do, I spent time after the production tidying up the script and it was during this time that Andy Brown asked me if I had ever thought of trying to get Aladdin published, suggesting that NODA were always keen to receive pantomime scripts from new authors. So I worked on Aladdin and a version of Cinderella, also written when I had been teaching, and submitted them both to NODA and forgot about them. I had always thought of them as traditional re-tellings with an emphasis on the story. After a while I was told NODA would be happy to put them

on their website – pantoscripts.org.uk. I pitched *Cinderella* for panto 2022, again with Anne Lane as my codirector. This, for reasons we all know, became panto 2023, we have traditionally put pantomimes on over three weeks in January at the Norbury. This time with my actual name on the script and publicity which was scarier than I had realised it would be.

As a theatre we had promised to keep our ticket prices at pre-pandemic levels until November 2022, so an "early bird" offer meant ticket sales got off to a good start and a new marketing team helped sales along after that. Cinderella became a very successful production, as well as ticket sales of over 99%, a lot of money was taken Front of House on the bar and for teas, coffees, sweets and ice creams. Maybe people are finally ready to come back to local theatres?

Just before Christmas, our Buttons spoke to the directors and stage manager because he had a plan. He and another member of the cast had met while they were involved in a production of *Cinderella* at university and had been together since. He wanted to propose to her onstage at the end of a performance. His plans were kept on a 'need to know' basis and after the curtain on the first Saturday night of the run, Buttons (Jimmy Hill) proposed to Dandini (Emma Waters). Emma said "Yes!" before he'd finished asking her.

I am currently re-editing Cinderella, trying to get topical references up to date and including some of the ideas the cast had during rehearsals and it will hopefully be available for licensing soon.

John Birchley

### Double Celebrations in Morley!

#### **NODA North East**

Morley Amateur Operatic Society recently celebrated their 95 years of existence – no mean feat at all – but when there is another milestone to celebrate, it becomes extra special.

One of their members, Steven Holt, received his 50 year NODA Long Service Award from none other than the Lord Mayor of Leeds, Bob Gettings. It has been an incredible journey for Steven – he joined MAOS in 1972, following advice from a family friend and the rest, as they say is history. He has never missed performing in their shows ever since, totalling 97 consecutive productions (would have been 100, but Covid forced the cancellation of three shows).

His achievements with the society are eye-watering – Dame, Principal, backstage and business manager, where he obtained grants for improvements to Morley Town Hall Stage and the society's rehearsal rooms, totalling over £70,000! He is the perfect example of people who add so much to amateur theatre. Not only that, but he and his wife, Andrea, now President of the society, didn't have a honeymoon because Steven played an ugly sister in pantomime and Andrea dressed him! That's dedication for you

Literally wearing another hat, Steven became Morley's first ever Town Crier in 2020 – he has now made 40 cries, competed in 8 Town Crier competitions and rather sadly, on the 9th September this year, he was called upon to make a proclamation announcing the sad passing of Queen Elizabeth.

Congratulations to both MAOS and Steven!





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### The Story of Gilbert And Sullivan

**NODA East Midlands** 

After a very successful run of Iolanthe back in 2019, Stamford Gilbert & Sullivan Players were a week away from auditioning for their next show *The Gondoliers*, when Prime Minister Boris Johnson, announced a national lockdown due to the Coronavirus.

Theatres went dark, shows were cancelled and apart from those stalwart key workers, the British public were instructed to stay at home. Being in the close contact industry, I wasn't allowed to work at all until July 14th, when even that was restricted and so I found myself with endless unexpected time on my hands.

After spending hours setting what I guessed may be the society's next 3 shows, time was ticking along and even if restrictions were eventually lifted, I knew we wouldn't realistically have enough rehearsal time to reach performance level and so I set about writing a concert...just in case!

Using music most of us were already familiar with, therefore involving fewer rehearsals (socially distanced if necessary), and in evening dress rather than costume, *The Story Of Gilbert & Sullivan* concert was born!

As we were likely to be replacing a full show with this concert, I was keen to make it as much of a theatrical experience as possible for the live 'performance starved' audience and cast, rather than a stand and sing one, and so enlisted the help of our experienced stage manager and his tech savvy assistant!

I trawled through 100s of photos of our past shows choosing which would suit the musical numbers we were doing as well as sourcing some historical pictures I could use without copyright. Eventually, I came up

with nearly 200 images which were projected onto a screen and cued in along with an ecxiting lighting and sound plot enhancing the atmosphere for the audience.

Our concert took you on a light-hearted yet nostalgic musical journey through the G&S canon... describing the ups and downs of the partnership between Gilbert and Sullivan, their relationship with their producer, Richard D'Oyly Carte, and their inspiration behind each of the Savoy Operas.

We started at the very beginning of their story, travelling through the years as they soundly established Gilbert and Sullivan Opera as a 'perfect art' until we reached the 'great carpet quarrel' which sadly marked the beginning of the end of their remarkable working relationship and resulted in them writing two final, but less successful operas before parting ways.

The concert was packed with drama, comedy and tragedy as we sang some of the most well-loved and memorable G&S songs using props and moves which brought the whole performance to life.

Last year, we performed this concert twice, both in beautiful local churches and to packed audiences, raising important funds for both us and the hosts. However Covid did finally catch up with us and the 2nd concert was performed with not only half the cast, but an emergency MD and director!

Thankfully the society pulled together and the healthy amongst us rallied around and still presented a remarkable evening's entertainment for the audience. This year brings two more concerts, once again hosted by local churches and we hope and pray that

we all stay fit and well this time around! Our final song and encore in the concert, is the beautiful and powerful *Hail Poetry* – always a favourite for our members.

In order to show our gratitude and deference to the great Messrs Gilbert and Sullivan for the magic they created all those years ago, I took the liberty to change a few words in honour of them...

"Hail poetry, thou heaven born maid! We sing your songs with love conveyed!"

We do indeed love the works of these 2 great gentlemen and are dedicated to keeping them alive for the enjoyment of future generations. We are proud at Stamford G&S Players to have a lovely group of enthusiastic youngsters in our society, two who joined us when they were only 12, both of whom are immensely talented. They are the true light of the future and knowing that their passion for G&S has been fully ignited and embraced fills the rest of us with such joy!

So, coming to the end of this story, we are now back at the same point we were 3 years ago when we had to cancel our original *Gondoliers* auditions... so at long last, here's to a new theatrical year and our sparkling October production of *The Gondoliers* when we hope to transport you from the drab and dreary early autumn weather into the bright and colourful sunny world of Gilbert and Sullivan!

Ruth Palmer (Director)







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### Theatre problems

**NODA South East** 



Recently, some theatres are banning amateur societies and only taking bookings from professional companies. The Marlowe Theatre in Canterbury is one and over the other side of the region, Ferneham Hall in Fareham is another.

Fernehall Hall closed for refurbishment in 2020, and now, after work, they should be able to stage productions from 2024, but nobody knows what facilities will be available or the cost. The old hall was designed as a concert hall with a wide but shallow stage and, while not ideal for musicals, it was a comfortable place with good facilities for amateurs and seated 500 and this made it a good medium price choice. A number of companies used the hall, principally Fareham Musical Society and others considered it because two theatres in Portsmouth (Kings in Southseas and the New Theatre Royal) had priced themselves out of the amateur market. This has led to groups having to use other venues which have become expensive and are

not very helpful with marketing shows or trying to book tickets.

From Canterbury Operatic Society, Rosie Cullen reports: "In 2019 we began rehearsals for the musical, Kipps, to be staged at the Marlowe Theatre in Canterbury in May 2020, where we had performed since 1952. We were proud to be the first amateur group to be licensed to perform this show. show was advertised in the Marlowe Theatre's brochure. Just before Covid was widely known, the musical director fell ill. He recovered, but then the world shut down, rehearsals were suspended and the theatre closed. 18 months later, we were horrified to discover that the management of the theatre informed us that we were no longer welcome . They cited the large number of professional companies that had been cancelled that they now had to accommodate. were homeless. We found The Great Hall (in a local private school) which had some advantages (larger car park) but disadvantages (smaller dressing rooms). We booked for April 2022. We started rehearsals again and although we'd lost a

few of the cast, we welcomed some new members. Britain opened up again and we hoped that things would be easier. They weren't.

Without the publicity machine and prestige of the Marlowe Theatre, we struggled to sell tickets. And there was also a reluctance for the audience to return to the theatre. Everyone was still nervous of the infection. We tried social media, handing flyers out and the local newspaper. Then disaster really struck and the leading man went down with After many discussions, we cancelled the first two performances and with some reshuffling of the cast with one day to learn the lines and songs, they rose magnificently to the challenge and were ready for the band call on Sunday. The set arrived and we only managed half a show on the Sunday rehearsal. had a stage crew of four, choreographer, stage manager and two performing arts students. The cast helped with the set changes.

Tuesday night (which should have been

our first night) became a dress rehearsal. Our leading man recovered sufficiently to be on the stage but not sing. So, his understudy manfully sang from the There were a wings while he mimed! few more glitches including when one of the understudies fainted mid-song! However, we got to the end of the show; the first time since we'd been in the The following night, an open dress rehearsal, to accommodate those who hadn't been able to re-book, one of the two stage hands fell sick and the other one took her home and we never saw her again!

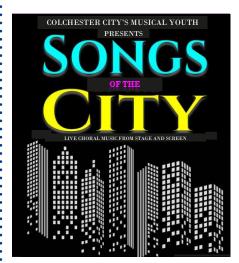
Opening night: we had to use the main door, not the stage door because a piece of the roof had been blown off by the wind and more was expected to follow. We had a message, "no access to the theatre before 5.30" so we did make up in our cars. Finally, the performance was canceled because the high winds had stripped more of the roof off. On Friday, the MD went down with Covid (again) so more shuffling around when the rehearsal pianist moved his keyboard to the conductor's place. After so many calamities we were stoic.

Finally, on Friday evening the show went The leading man was magnificent, the understudy amazing and we enjoyed a few minor mishaps that happen with any show and these were with hilarity rather than dismay. A costume was put on inside out, a spoon was dropped, an entry was late and a piece of the wall didn't get on stage on time. None of it was noticed by the audience who gave us rave reviews. By Saturday night, everyone was exhausted but elated and having to strike the set and get out by the Saturday night. But after two years and many set backs we had overcome it. In future years, in times of trials with other productions, we will all repeat 'If we can survive Kipps, we can survive anything!"

When theatres won't welcome amateur groups, they have no idea what lengths, we, in amateur theatre, will go to in order to put on a show.

# Colchester's Musical Youth to fill an activity gap

**NODA East** 



The city of Colchester (Essex) is the home of a newly-formed musical group for young people ages 11 to 19 that will perform its first concerts in September.

As created by Ann Taylor and Paul Kusel-Baum, Colchester City's Musical Youth (CCYM) is aimed at "filling a gap" for a youth choir in North-East Essex and South Suffolk with professional instruction and coaching. Music performed will range from musical medleys to mash-ups of a diverse range of styles. "Thinking about forming this society, we thought, 'there are a lot of dance schools and theatre schools out there'," Taylor said. "But there's nothing around that actually is [for] vocal."

A Bristol native, Taylor has been involved in the Colchester theatre scene for a number of years, from dance to musical theatre and pantomime, in different capacities, and a 12-year stint as the chairperson of a local youth performing group. Her partner, Kusel-Baum, studied at the Trinity College of Music, London. Their Musical Directors, Ryan Hanlon and Richard Harrison, are practitioners in music education with degrees from, respectively, the Royal Conservatoire

of Scotland and thse University of Liverpool.

The September concert will be themed Songs of the City, in part to honour Colchester's selection in November as one of the UK's newest cities. Britain's oldest recorded town, the former Roman settlement of Colchester, was named one of eight towns to be made cities to mark the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. The songs chosen from stage and screen will reference the major cities of the world, performed as solos, duets, small ensembles and full company numbers.

Currently, CCMY is set to perform three shows at St Botolph's Church near the city centre on 22nd and 23rd September with rehearsals to begin in May. Recruitment is underway to bring members on board. Taylor hopes local appetite for the group's performances will take them to additional prestigious venues in the area: "You know, if people suddenly think, 'oh, we need to use youth choir to do this or do that', then we can give them another sort of experience," she said.

As NODA members, CCMY are taking advantage of organisational structure and other administrative knowledge support available for their non-profit organisation. "We want to make sure that we can plan ahead and do something else next year," Taylor said. "From my own point of view, well, I just enjoy it."

DeeDee Doke, NODA East

# Players recreate founders first meeting a century ago

**NODA North East** 



Recreating the first meeting in 1923

On Wednesday 11th January, members of Grassington Players gathered to commemorate the original society's inaugural meeting, a hundred years ago to the day.

The minutes of the first meeting were found safe in the archives and current Chairman, John Anderson, had the inspirational idea to re-enact that first meeting at the exact date, time and venue.

Taking those precious historical minutes as a starting point, fellow player, Mark Bamforth, painstakingly researched from the 1921 census, the ages and christian names of the attendees who had taken part in the gathering at Yarkers Tearooms in Threshfield back in 1923. He put together a draft transcript which was read by the attendees with current committee members taking on the respective roles of those founding members.

President, Mary Wilkinson, read May Walker; Secretary, Pam Watley-Homes (Hannah Garside), Treasurer Robert Fort (Ernest Pullen), Mark Bamforth read original Chairman, George Gardner, John Anderson, the Reverend Leighton, Paula Vickers (Hannah Grimshaw), Stephen Lodge (Abram Crabtree), Neil McCormac (John Lunham), Andrew Armstrong (William Walker), Katie Milner (Joyce Maufe), Paul Coultas (Henry Greenhough, Tom Powell (William Dennis) and Jonny Jowett (Arthur Blades).

Grassington Players is interested to hear of anyone with family connections to those original members and would welcome any relevant memorabilia for display at productions during this centenary year.

The small and quite moving celebration at the same tearoom (now The Hedgerow), was attended by several current and former members of the Grassington Players, including the oldest extant members Nan Jowett and Beryl Bamforth. A toast was raised with glasses of sherry to the founding members, to the next 100 years and to Hutchinson family of The Hedgerow for their hospitality.

The gathering heard how the original founders called themselves the



Nan Jowett and Beryl Bamforth

Grassington & District Amateur Dramatic Society and agreed to pay an annual subscription of 5 shillings with the aim of raising funds for renovations at the Grassington Devonshire Institute.

Known colloquially as the Town Hall, The Devonshire Institute continues to receive support from Grassington Players today and is the venue for all the society's productions. A centenary dinner celebration was held there on 28th January, with the main hall and foyer theatrically dressed for the occasion, with all the glamour of The Great Gatsby, by Paula Vickers and her willing recruits.

Material from the archives was on display including old programmes. More than 200 productions have been staged since the society's inception, with a recurring theme of a few favourites such as When We Are Married, which was revisited for the third time last year.

Over the years, the society has performed in drama festivals and graced television screens with news coverage and the series *The Dales* 



President Mary Wilkison with daughter Zarina

documenting its staging of the amateur world première of *Calendar Girls* in 2012.

After the buffet centenary dinner, prepared by Grassington House, members heard from Beryl Bamforth, whose tenure in Grassington Players dates back to 1966. Over the years, she was involved in more than 40 productions, performing, backstage or directing, and recalls how, when she was secretary, she sent out the 11-year old Mark Bamforth, now 62, on his bike to deliver membership subscription letters. She expressed her sadness that, at 89 years old, she is no longer able to take an active role.

The Bamforths are not the only generational family in Grassington Players; Joan Whitaker, her daughter, Esme (sadly missed), and grandson, Will Binns, all played a part in the ongoing story of the society, and President, Mary Wilkinson, her daughter, Zarina, and grandchildren, Chris and Harriet Belk, have been the backbone of the committee for several years.

Mary called for members to pull together to ensure the Players survive for a further 100 years, appealing for more people to learn the backstage craft that enables productions to be staged.

After the speeches, Robert Shield, a dance teacher from Swing Dance in Leeds, gave a quick lesson in how to dance the Charleston and many Players took to the floor in fabulous 1920's outfits sourced from the Players own costume store, Ilkley Playhouse, Northern Costume Hire and Colne Hippodrome.

Back in 1923, the society's first productions were a series of one act plays *The Monkey's Paw, No Servants, Mother 'o Pearl'and If This Should Meet The Eye.* A century on, the Players propose to present three productions including the stage adaptation of *Brassed Off* in collaboration with a local brass band in the autumn and a ghost walk around Grassington.

# So you want to direct amateur theatre?

#### **NODA London**

It isn't often that a group decides it needs to increase the quality of its body of directors, and furthermore is happy to open the experience to other groups within their district. Well, this is exactly what Loughton Amateur Dramatic Society (LADS) did at the end of February, at Loughton, in Essex. LADS is in District 6 in the NODA London region and so members of other groups within District 6 were invited to come along and share in the experience. And it didn't disappoint in any way, shape or form. Everyone had a wonderful time, learned a tremendous amount and came away with increased knowledge of what directing (be it a musical or a drama) was all about.

Sarah Osborne, who is a drama practitioner and writer/director running her own youth company as well as being the Director of NODA Theatre Summer School, travelled down from Wakefield in Yorkshire to impart her knowledge and experience to twenty one students hungry to learn, some starting from scratch, but many wanting to improve their already considerable skills by learning from a professional. For some it was gaining new skills to try with their groups, but for some it was almost a validation that what they had been doing up to this point was correct and could be taken further with the knowledge they had gained that day.

From the start everyone was engaged, getting to know each other by means of games and exercises, before the real work began. Somehow, though, it didn't feel as though we were working. It was all so engaging and, yes, exciting too, that the time just flew by so when it was time for the obligatory 'class' photo, everyone felt enriched and motivated, and keen to put into practice their new-found knowledge. A handout is always useful and we took away all those salient points from a day, the contents of which will make us sensitive, constructive and kind directors.

55

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