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ISSN 2756-214X



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Welcome to the summer edition of NODA Today, the entire content designed to be uplifting.

The inclusion of exciting and attention-grabbing stories from our members across the UK demonstrates their brilliant creativity and ingenuity. Notably are the amazing activities and output in theatre from young people which continues to be a key focus.

Youth development in theatre behind the footlights is to be encouraged. A feature article in this edition, on the technical aspects of our hobby, is to stimulate an interest for young people to become involved. It is vital that we all nurture the next generation of theatre creators in any way we can. (Turn to page 43)

This issue sees the launch of the Amateur Group Singing Licence, which refers to the photocopying of music and pieces for a variety of performances. NODA have been working closely with PMLL for some months, to ensure it is fair and reasonably priced for amateur theatre groups. (Turn to page 22)

Please check your diaries as there is still time to book for our National AGM and Gala; this year being held in Preston on 15th and 16th September. With the theme of Murder on Opening Night, Friday evening promises to be a weekend of drama!

Finally, I would like to wish you every success for your events, activities and productions during the coming months.

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NODA Chairman of Trustees

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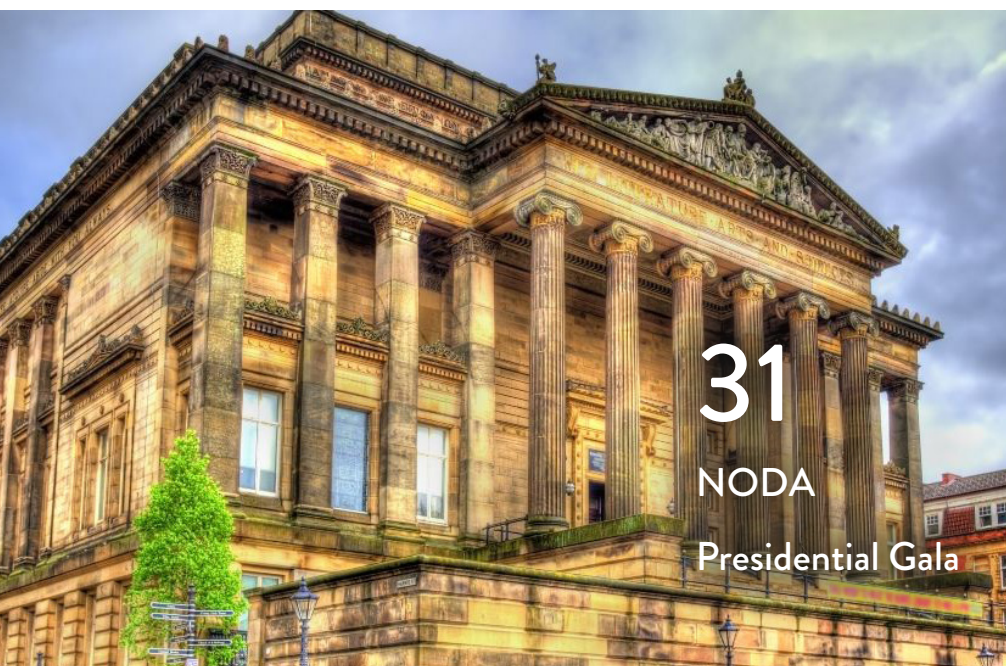
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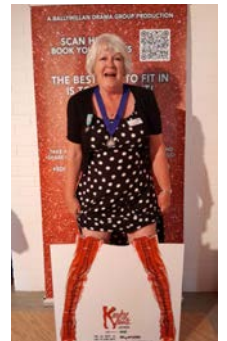
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Regional vacancies

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.

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NODA Today - Summer 2023

Councillors' Chat

A quick note from your regional councillor



Tessa Davies - East Regional Councillor

It is lovely to report that societies in the East are planning more productions. We are slowly getting back to pre-pandemic levels and I'm really looking forward to the autumn season.

We held the East Awards Lunch in April, and 500 guests enjoyed a lovely lunch, a chance to network and meet other like-minded members and receive their awards for productions performed in 2022. I am often asked how we arrive at these nominations and winners and I will be publishing a fuller explanation on the NODA East website in the next few months.



Jules Jones - East Midlands Regional Councillor

So here we are after a very successful Regional Day (May) where I met so many NODA members from across our region. I was able to introduce our new reps, and now we have a full complement of representation for all our districts. We are able to cover so many more shows across our region and we are able to support more groups from a local perspective which seems to be working well. A newsletter is being emailed out with more details; if you have not received it, please let me know. So many societies seem to be doing very well and producing a huge variety of productions this year, so well done all.



Pam Armstrong - London Regional Councillor

London Region held its AGM and Celebration Day in June, and I am pleased to say, it was very well attended. It is such a pleasure to recognise the excellence that abounds in the region. In addition to our showcasing theatrical events, we also had an immersive demonstration by Sign Language Interpreter, Wednesday Jones, which was well received. It is a delight to see the region in full swing and heart-warming to see societies celebrate centenary anniversaries and other notable milestones. Theatre is alive and well!



Peter Oliver - North Regional Councillor

Plans for the NODA North's performance awards are well underway. This year we are going to split the event into the youth awards in the afternoon, and adults in the evening, to enable us to give more time for a social feel to the event. I am pleased to welcome Susan Wood and Richard Hamilton-Leighton as newly elected regional representatives and I look forward to working with them both over the coming year. A big thank you for your invitations to visit your productions and look forward to seeing you in the coming months.



Leslie Smith - North East Regional Councillor

Well here we are again with another edition of NODA Today, which I hope you all enjoy reading. Please remember, this is your magazine and as such any articles contained in it should be about you, our members, if you have any stories please get in touch with me.

Very soon you should be receiving all the information about our 2024 Gala Weekend which will take place in Bridlington from 19th to 21st April 2024. I hope to see you all again and hopefully many more who have still to enjoy The Bridlington Experience.

Andy McNicholas - North West Regional Councillor

A big thank you to everyone that attended the NW Regional Weekend in May – we had over 800 members attending across the two evenings. Congratulations to all our nominees and winners. Plans are under way for next year’s event at The Blackpool Winter Gardens with the addition of more exhibitors and workshops during the daytime, so keep an eye on your emails for more information. If there are any particular topics you would like the workshops to cover, please get in touch with me.



Stuart McCue-Dick - Scotland Regional Councillor

District meetings are a great way to keep up to date with all that NODA is doing to support amateur theatre. They also provide the opportunity to network with other members. The recent meetings I have attended have been very informative with lively discussions and a great deal of information shared by all attending.

The NODA Scotland conference (27-29 October at Peebles Hydro) provides an opportunity to network with members from all over Scotland. Bookings are now open.



Kay Rowan - South East Regional Councillor

It was absolutely thrilling to meet so many of you at our Celebration Day in June. So many happy faces enjoying and sharing each other’s successes and witnessing the performances of a wide range of groups. Volunteers to perform next year are welcome.

The region continues to promote a wealth of talent in all age groups indicated by the range of productions. Let us keep doing what we love doing for the benefit and well-being of our communities and ourselves.



Graham Liverton - South West Regional Councillor

I hope you’re busy with your shows and rehearsals and enjoying every minute of it! I have seen several shows lately and all are of a high standard. It is so pleasing to me and indeed your audiences!

For those who attended the awards at the Crowne Plaza Plymouth in May, I can say it was a great success, as everyone looked like they were enjoying themselves! Please keep inviting me to see your productions as well as your rep and keep the flag flying for NODA South West !



Sharon Davies - Wales & Ireland Regional Councillor

We now have a wide variety of productions coming up, it is so nice to see people “back treading the boards.” Trying to fit in all the show visits can sometimes be a bit of a problem, but we do our best to accommodate as many as we can. Please give us as much notice as possible.

We have enjoyed some beautiful weather, not so good if you are on stage in a full, heavy costume. The audience will never know what we go through in the name of entertainment.



Andy Brown - West Midlands Regional Councillor

We have had our first full regional conference and awards since 2019! Last year was a scaled down version, but we were most certainly back with a bang on 14 May. Successful indeed, when members were asking when they could book for 2024 before they left!

The whole team look forward to invites to more brilliant shows as well as attending social events over the coming months. I most certainly look forward to getting to know more and more people across the region as well as continuing the links with those already met.



Why I love a one-act play festival

NODA West Midlands



The first time I went to a one-act play festival, it was by accident: I was walking past the Evesham Arts Centre. They were running a drama festival so I popped in to see what it was about, and ended up watching six 45 minutes plays almost back-to-back.

It was then that I decided to get involved in amateur theatre. I was hooked.

What did I find so interesting about the plays? Well, it wasn't so much the plays (as a couple of them weren't that great to be honest), but the adjudications afterwards. To hear a qualified professional explaining to us, the audience, exactly why we found our heart strings well-and-truly pulled 'in the bit where...', and why we may have been excused for becoming fidgety 20 minutes into the play, was an eye-opener.

Following each performance, the adjudicator gave a 10 minute analysis, and then awarded marks for stage presentation (set, lighting, sound), directing, acting and dramatic achievement. The play that scored the highest marks was the play that won - and in this case, as the festival was part of the All England Theatre Festival, went on to perform in the next round. 20 years on, the marking criteria used by the Guild of Drama Adjudicators

(GoDA) is still the same. It's a system that works.

So, having done a bit of acting many years before at school, I started looking for a local amateur dramatic group: specifically, one that entered theatre festivals. I found one: New Kinver Players, and joined them. Like most groups, they also rehearse and put on regular productions. The festival participation element has grown over the last few years as we've gained more experience about what works with a one-act play and what doesn't, and - having participated in and won many festivals and having seen others participate too - we've gained a good understanding of what the adjudicators are looking for.

Part of what we do as a group is to go to see festivals, read one-act plays and learn from others. We've found there's a healthy, competitive atmosphere between groups who participate in festivals. In one festival you'll be competing head-on with a group and in the next round you'll be cheering them on from the audience!

It didn't take us long to realise we can choose a play, cast it, rehearse it and get it festival-ready in just eight weeks. It became clear that if you have a fantastic play, simple but effective set, excellent actors, a superb director,

and seamless lighting and sound to bring out those magical moments, then you're off to a good start! The one myth we squashed early on is that you don't need to put too much effort into it because 'it's only for a festival'. Wrong. It may all sound simple, but - as with everything - it takes a lot of hard work.

On a personal front, such is my enthusiasm for the one-act festival scene that I carried out the marketing for the Worcestershire Theatre Festival for 10 years, and am Vice Chair of the National Drama Festivals Association: an organisation formed in 1964, to encourage and support amateur theatre through participation in theatre festivals within the British Isles. Every July, we showcase, over a long weekend, productions that have scored very highly in festivals during the festival season from all over the British Isles. It's a lot of fun and very rewarding.

So, if you enjoy theatre as much as I do, you might like to consider getting involved somehow on the amateur festival network. Or perhaps you already are. I look forward to meeting you!

Ruth Cattell

Sharing the stage with their very own Munchkin

NODA North West



When Catherine Bradley donned her outfit, transformed into the Wicked Witch and was transported to Oz in Blackpool & Fylde Light Opera Company's rendition of *The Wizard of Oz*, she felt warmed by the fact that she got to share the stage with her very own Munchkin: her daughter Lucie! For Catherine, this was her third production with BFLOC and Lucie's first steps into the world of theatre.

Lucie is seven and a half years old. She has Mosaic Down Syndrome (64%) which differs slightly from

Down Syndrome. People with Down Syndrome have an extra chromosome in all of their cells whereas people with mosaic Down Syndrome only have the extra chromosome in some of the cells. Lucie also has female autism as well. I spoke with Catherine regarding the show and, in particular, the lengths that everyone associated with the society went to in order to make the experience one that she will never forget.

"Sophie Coulon, who directed the Wizard of Oz, also runs 'Cou Cou' a company

based in Blackpool who specialise in acting classes for adults and children. Lucie had been going to the classes, so it was great that she got the opportunity to work with Sophie on this Production." Catherine began. *"Everyone involved in the show just went out of their way to look after her. There are other people in the group that have additional needs and they made sure that they had the opportunities to be included as much as possible.*

Joe Booth was the Costume Designer for the Production and he was great. Lucie had a trouser hitch during one of the performances and the next night, Joe had quickly whipped up a dress for her to wear. She was over the moon!" She continued. *"Dannielle Woodhouse was the choreographer for the show. Two weeks before the show started, two girls broke their arms. Dannielle then completely changed the whole routine to incorporate everyone. Nothing was too much for them. It made my life so much easier as I was on stage for a lot of the show and I felt comforted knowing that Lucie was being looked after."*

I asked Catherine what Lucie thought about being in a big musical like this. *"She's tired, but she absolutely loved it."*

It also appears that Lucie now has the bug as she will be appearing in *Nativity!* in November.

Do you have a story to tell?

Has your society pulled off something spectacular?
Was your last show something out of the ordinary?

Get in touch today - editor@noda.org.uk



THERE'S NO BUSINESS LIKE SHOE BUSINESS!

In the run-up to their production of *Kinky Boots* at the Wylllyotts Theatre, Potters Bar, members of Green Room Productions were head over heels to welcome the actual 'Mr Kinky Boots,' former factory owner Steve Pateman, to one of their rehearsals, and to their first two performances at the Wylllyotts Theatre, Potters Bar. Al Woodgate, Chair of Green Room, talks about the experience of meeting the real life "Boss in Boots."

Kinky Boots tells the story of Charlie Price, who inherits his father's ailing shoe factory and turns the business around, making outrageous stiletto boots for men. Donning thigh-length shiny red boots, Steve, the real-life Charlie Price, came to meet our cast and recount the events that featured in the hugely successful BBC2 TV Documentary *Trouble At The Top* and inspired the award-winning movie and stage musical.

Steve was only too happy to travel down to meet us and to share his story. We really appreciated the interest he took in our production and the chance it gave us to hear about his real-life experiences, and how these differed from the events that were captured on stage and screen. The cast had a wonderful time and the photos taken at rehearsal generated great interest on social media in the final weeks running up to the show.

Green Room's Tuesday and Wednesday
NODA Today - Summer 2023

night audiences were also excited to meet Steve in the foyer after the show, have pictures taken with him, Lola and the Angels, and to be able to buy a signed copy of Steve's entertaining autobiography, 'Boss in Boots.'

At our rehearsal, Steve told us about how the factory was saved by switching to supplying a niche market in footwear. He started in the family shoe business W J Brookes in Earl's Barton, Northamptonshire, straight from school where he learnt the trade from his father, eventually taking over when his father retired. When a downturn in the shoe industry led Steve to look to new ideas, he stumbled into the market of making stunning boots for the cross-dressing and transgender community. A series of events then led him into a world of new experiences, people and celebrity stardom.

Will Smith, Green Room's Marketing Manager, caught up with Steve prior to our show and here are a few excerpts from their chat together:

In the film and stage show, Lola is the entertainer who meets Charlie Price and helps him reinvent the business. In real-life it wasn't quite like that was it? Tell me about what inspired you to start making different footwear.

Well, it was around about 1995. Business was in a very bad place. Most of our stuff was high fashion and went abroad, so when the value of the pound went very, very high,

making our shoes too expensive, it basically killed all of the trade. All the manufacturers were left high and dry because stuff was coming in from the Far East and we just couldn't compete. I mean, we were making 4000 pairs of shoes a week and that just dried up. This led to us taking big losses from people who weren't paying their bills. We ended up scrambling around trying to find something to make, then I had a phone call from Sue Shepherd, a shop owner in Felixstowe, asking if we could make some shoes for her. And when I asked her what she wanted, she said she wanted ladies' footwear in men's sizes. That was the first ever contact, and so she was really the original Lola. She provided me with contacts and I then started to do all the research to find out what these boots were, how they were worn, what colours and what type of heels were required. The bit in the film and the musical where Charlie makes burgundy boots with clumpy heels really was an insult as it was me who did all the work. But the scriptwriters said, no, it'll work out fine in the end. It still smarts a bit when you think that I did all the legwork and it's Lola who gets the credit. But that's the way it is!

Tell me about the footwear you had been making.

Most of our stuff was high fashion, for the top pop acts including: Adam Ant, Boy George, David Essex, The Spice Girls, and Elton John. The list is endless. Anything you saw on Top



Steve Pateman with some of the cast of *Kinky Boots*

of the Pops we were kitting them out, mainly through Shellys of London. The Jam was our biggest group. Every time they did a new record, we would kit them out with new shoes from boxing boots to bowling shoes and what they used to call Badgers. Basically anything they wore on stage.

It sounds like you were really involved in the film, but less so in the musical, is that right?

That's right. I was a consultant on the film. It was great to be included: this was chalk and cheese to (my involvement in) the musical. For the film, I met with about nine or so scriptwriters and eventually we got to a level which I thought was pretty good. Obviously, there are bits in it that I didn't agree with. My father is still alive, and they killed him off within the first five minutes, so that went down well! But it was a really good film. I was involved in the opening night and the promotions, you know. I used to go out with the guys, Chiwetel Ejiofor, who played Lola and Joel Edgerton who played myself. I also had a cameo role in the film. I wanted more, but because

I was very well-known at the time through the television programme, I couldn't really turn up standing in the background as a factory worker. So, I was part of the crowd in one of the scenes.

I had no idea you were in the film, which scene were you in?

When Lola and Lauren, get a coffee in the middle of Northampton there's a group of people standing there and that's me and my family.

In terms of the Charlie Price character, is there anything about him that is like you or are the similarities few and far between?

In the film and the musical, they've basically pulled out numerous stories of mine and played around with them: Harry, the musician, is my alter ego. I'm not a musician, but I was a DJ. I used to work in nightclubs and mobile discos. That was my thing. As soon as the factory had finished for the day, I'd be straight out doing gigs and working till two or three o'clock in the morning. But yeah, with the other stuff, they understood the responsibility I felt because, obviously, it's a family

business. You're living in a very small community, so it is a family. We probably had two or three generations working in the factory. So, when you make one person redundant, or go on short time working, it affects the whole family and it's a horrible thing to feel.

I can only imagine. Was it 50 people you had to make redundant?

I did have 80 at one point, so we did it in stages because we tried to keep working on a skeleton staff. But of course, you get to a point where you just can't keep taking the losses, and I could have walked away. I could have run it to the ground, but that's not my way. I wanted to clear my name and the company. So, I made sure that we paid off all our suppliers and paid all the redundancy payments. It cost me a lot of money to do it and a lot of people called me an idiot, but at least I can walk around the town and the county with my head held high and know that I didn't take anybody else down.

So, thinking about the musical, which you've clearly seen many times, have you got any favourite moments in the show or a favourite song?

Yes, I've got several favourites: Lauren's song, *History of Wrong Guys*. I think that is one of the funniest moments. Lauren's character is one of the best. I think it's that quirkiness: you've got to be as mad as a box of frogs, and I think that comes across brilliantly. The worst and best part is *Not My Father's Son*. That really relates to me because I didn't want to be in the factory - it was what the family wanted. It's an unwritten rule that every girl or guy's father or parents who own something want to hand it down and when you put the generations in there as well, obviously it gets harder and harder. So that always tends to make me cry like a baby and it's a very, very emotional song - I find it very, very hard.

I gather that unlike the film and the musical, you weren't keen to go and work in marketing in London?

No. In my early years, I wanted to be in the Royal Marines, believe it or not. Then circumstances changed. I was into playing at nightclubs and that side of it, a sort of performance really and the factory was a means to an end to finance my outside life. But as time went on, I got more and more engrossed with the business. I had to go to footwear college and get a degree in manufacturing. And yeah, I wouldn't change it now for the world. I still wake up in the middle of the night dreaming that I must get an order out and I must do this and it gets into your blood. It's right in there and it's something I would really love to still be doing.

So in a different world you could still be making shoes today? You'd be happy to do so?

Yes, I think I would actually, rather the sales side of it. But obviously Kinky Boots has given me a fantastic outlet because I can go off and do after dinner talks and I travel around the country speaking to groups and cruise lines, anything I can do. I still manage to go to the theatre and do all my talks in my thigh length boots so I'm doing OK.

Long may that continue. After working in the factory you went on to become a firefighter. What drew you to that? Was that a childhood ambition?

No. That came about when I shut the manufacturing side of the factory and I managed to get another little factory to make all my production in Leicester. But working in an old Victorian factory meant I would run up and down stairs

twenty, thirty, forty, fifty times a day. Then, suddenly being sat in a little box room, I was like a caged lion wanting to roam the prairie. I just heard on the local radio that the fire stations were recruiting because they were short of retained firefighters and I managed to join. I did 17 years full time firefighting.

Can you sum up the essence of the show in three words?

Well in a few words, yes. Acceptance, respect and treating others how you want to be treated.

Yes, "be who you want to be" says it all. It's all about celebrating diversity and being accepting of everybody.

Yes, I went into selling boots in very intimate settings like erotica exhibitions and to swingers clubs, fetish clubs and all these sort of places. I was accepted wherever I went. They were happy to have me there and they treated me with absolute respect, looked after me and held my hand all the way through because I was a bit like a fish out of water for a long time. But the people I've met have been wonderful. I just wish I'd met them twenty, thirty, forty years earlier, because I have had the most fantastic time.

Finally, I just want to talk about your book briefly. You've got a lot of stories, a lot of history. There's a lot of passion, I can hear it in your voice. When did you write the book and what motivated you to write it?

Well, I've got this wealth of pictures and every time I went anywhere, I wanted to take a record of it, whether

in pictures or collecting bits. I had an idea I would write something at some point, but when would be the right time? It just happened that the book came about purely for the fact that they were going to start the tour of Kinky Boots around the country and our local theatre, the Derngate in Northampton, was going to be the starting place for the tour. The theatre asked if I would like to help promote it. I said of course I would.

So, with a very good friend of mine, David Saint, who is the writer (I'm the storyteller) we spent nine months sitting down, four or five hours at a time, relaying the stories, writing and rewriting them - it was great fun! We came up with what we've been told is a fantastic book. We've done it in a very nice style, it's very easy reading, very like magazines.

We approached publishers, but they said well, we don't need a book: we've got a film, television documentary and a musical. Why does anyone need the book? So, in the end, we had to self-publish. And since then, we've sold over 3000 copies. I explained the background to all the characters and everything that went on. The funny and outrageous stories, how I had to learn to walk in high heels, how I had to shave my legs and all these very intimate bits and pieces that go on. Luckily, I've managed to get all the people that were involved with the story from day one, so from Sue Shepherd, the original Lola, right the way through to Harvey Fierstein and Jerry Mitchell.

You can find out more about Steve and order his book at www.bossinboots.co.uk

Staging Kinky Boots was truly enjoyable and memorable for the entire Green Room cast and crew. It was made all the more special by Steve Pateman's interest and involvement.





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Poster & Programme Competition

NODA's annual Programme and Poster Competition is a very popular competition for societies and highlights the promotion of amateur theatre in the UK. Its purpose is to encourage high standards in programme and poster design.

It is important to note that it is a condition of entry for all programmes and posters that:

- the official NODA logo with the strapline 'Be inspired by amateur theatre' is included in the programme or poster.
- 'An introduction to NODA' is also to be included (in programmes only.)

The current versions of the logo and 'Introduction to NODA' can be found on our website.

Factsheet Updates

An introduction to Tax

Bullying and Harrassment Policy

Photocopying of Sheet Music Licence

NODA Safe - Ensuring the safety of expectant mothers in your stage production, including sample risk assessment

noda.org.uk/factsheets

Your account will need to be linked with your society before you can access any of the members' content. If you require any assistance, email info@noda.org.uk

Training Suggestions



NSPCC Learning
learning.nspcc.org.uk

Online safeguarding training for volunteers, chaperones and trustees



MHFA England
mhfaengland.org

Mental health first aid training - in person and virtual training



Action Counters Terrorism Awareness
ct.protectuk.police.uk/act

Free venue counter terrorism training online. For venues small to large.

Date for your diary - NODA Theatre Summer School 2024 on sale 1st December 2023

Family pride can't be denied

NODA East Midlands



Ken (*The Duke*), Julia (*Gianetta*) and Margaret (*The Duchess*)



Matthew (*Giuseppe*) and John (*Luiz*)

Stamford Gilbert and Sullivan Players (originally Stamford Operatic Society), first performed *The Gondoliers* in the year 1905, and have been a popular attraction in the pretty Lincolnshire town for both audiences and members ever since.

118 years later, rehearsals are in full swing for it once more, and we are thrilled to be joined by lots of keen and energetic youngsters, ranging from age 12 upwards! They are a whole new generation discovering their love for G&S - following in the footsteps of their parents and grandparents and joining the society as part of our growing junior membership.

Our President Ken, and his wife Margaret, are experienced performers and absolute stalwarts of the Players having been loyal and active members since the late 80s and playing principal characters in all of our shows. This year in *The Gondoliers*, they are fully embracing their roles as the comical Duke and Duchess of Plaza -Toro, drawing on their 49 years of marriage for inspiration no doubt! They initially introduced G&S to their own children Elizabeth and James who first sang with Stamford in 1990, when they were 12 and 14, both then went on to take lead roles at university.

We are now on the third generation of this G&S loving family, as their grandchildren Daniel and Julia subsequently joined us in our production of *The Pirates of Penzance* in 2017, at the tender ages of 4 and 5 – and what a delight they were!

Julia (now 12), has continued to flourish and enjoy being on the stage and was a valued member of our *Sorcerer* chorus last year. She impressed us so much with her maturity and vocal quality that, this year, she has been cast as Gianetta to share the stage once again with her grandparents, but this



Heather (*Giulia*) and Alex (*Don Alhambra*)

time in her debut as a principal soprano. She is astounding us every week with her natural ability and is quickly becoming one of our rising stars!

We are very proud that a Gilbert and Sullivan Society such as ours is continuing to appeal to all generations. Our Youth Rep Rachael (*Vittoria* in *The Gondoliers*) has been involved in G&S since she was 10 and treads the boards annually with her Mum, Barbara.

Our webmaster Alex, joined in 1987, to perform/direct and this year is playing the Grand Inquisitor Don Alhambra with his usual inimitable comic flair. He is graced on stage for the first time with his lovely daughter Heather (14), singing Giulia.

We are also delighted to welcome back The Clayton clan! Dad John, played Grosvenor for us in our 2018, *Patience*, with 2 of his sons, Tim (16) and Ben (12) in the chorus. When Tim was 17, he debuted as the lead tenor Strephon in *Iolanthe*, whilst his dad and brother supported him from the chorus.

This year, however, we not only have Dad, John, back and singing the part of Luiz, but 2 more of his sons, Matthew (15), playing the lead baritone role of Giuseppe, along with his youngest

brother Zach (13) in the chorus - what a talented family they are!

These fantastic youngsters have the world at their feet, and are blessed with an abundance of talent, so we can't wait to let them shine in our production of *The Gondoliers* at The Stamford Corn Exchange.

We are so proud of everyone in our 'G&S family'. Always there to support each other, to encourage, help and watch our young members grow as

performers and most of all to have fun, together as friends who become family.

Here's to generations to come keeping the incredible works of Gilbert and Sullivan alive and in the words of the great Gilbert himself..

"The things are few I would not do, In friendship's name!"

Ruth Palmer
Director

noda
S A F E

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Manual Handling
Risk Assessments
Slips and Trips

noda.org.uk/noda-safe-training

“This would be the perfect place for someone to put on a show.”

NODA Scotland



***“I have had a dream, past the wit of man to say what dream it was: man is but an ass, if he go about to expound this dream.”
Bottom, from Act IV, Scene I of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, by William Shakespeare.***

Back in the early summer of 2020, during that first Covid lockdown, when the whole world seemed closed, I did a lot of walking around my corner of the city of Edinburgh.

One of my favourite places was Saughton Park, a beautiful local park which, despite being firmly enclosed by the city sprawl, was also a haven for wildlife, with otters, foxes and kingfishers, alongside the more usual ducks and swans. I kept returning to one particular space in the park, the Italian Garden. Perhaps, because I was missing my regular theatre fix, I started to see there a stage, actors, an audience watching the show, and my first thought was, “This would be a perfect place for someone to put on a play.” Swiftly followed by, “*This is the perfect place for ME to put on a play!*” And I knew just the play it should be. It was *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*.

At first it remained just that, a dream but gradually, as restrictions eased and we began to mix a bit more, I showed

the space to others who agreed that this was a cracking idea. So, I started to plan. It took two years. I had to work with the owners of the park, the City of Edinburgh council, and I had to persuade other people to share my vision and come along on the journey. I always knew that if this was going to become a reality, I was going to need a lot of help from people who understood some of the challenges of staging a large, open-air production. I wasn’t shy about asking for that help!

I met Dorothy Johnstone, our local NODA rep, and she encouraged me to attend the NODA Summer School where they were running a course on how to stage Shakespeare’s comedies. NODA Scotland supported me with a bursary, and for that my thanks go to Stuart McCue-Dick.

More sage advice and help came from Fiona Main at Threepenny Theatricals. She sat down with me and told me her story, pointing out some of the traps



and pitfalls so that I could avoid them. I joined the Scotland District 6 WhatsApp group, and they continue to be a source of fantastic support. Thanks to them, I've sorted practical items such as sourcing containers, and finding greenery to dress the set, as well as less obvious, but just as necessary, items such as a contact list of local drama reviewers.

I also wanted this show, and this company, to hold and demonstrate certain values. Whilst I had a clear vision of how this show should be, I also wanted the production to be collaborative with all members of the company, both on and off stage, getting involved and contributing their own ideas. I wanted to use recycled and upcycled materials for our set and costumes. I wanted to involve community groups and encourage people who don't usually go to the theatre to become part of the creative process and feel that they also 'own' some part of the show.

It would be fair to say that the area around Saughton Park is not one of the richest in the city, and research done by some of the theatres in Edinburgh found that people who live there are less likely to attend theatre in the city centre. With this in mind, it became important to us to get them involved, and show that drama isn't just something that happens uptown but can be an event right on your doorstep, in a place you already use, know, and love. Local residents are now in the cast, backstage and helping with front of house.

As I write this, we are two months away from our first night and it feels as if we are almost there. The cast is brilliant and a reminder of the astonishing talents that are all around us, just waiting to be discovered. They are a mixed bunch. Some have never been on a stage before while others are more experienced performers. But whatever their level, everyone helps each other. They feel confident



about voicing their ideas and thoughts and when obstacles are met, they are resolved by working together. Mostly unseen by the cast, we have a mix of benevolent professionals and experienced amateurs working behind the scenes to ensure we make it safe, get the technology right and offer our audience the best experience we can. They have my undying gratitude, for they are essential but often unlauded. I don't have the space here to mention all the people, and organisations that have helped make 'the dream' a reality, but if you come along to one of the performances and get a programme, hopefully you will see how extensive

the list is. This really is, community theatre!

Finally, what keeps me up at night? Well, not the performers or the team behind the scenes, I know I can rely on them. No, it's the one thing that all of us knew from day one we could have no control over – the Edinburgh weather! High winds and/or torrential rain are not unknown here, even in June. So, if you ever offer up a prayer, please give us a wee mention. And come and see it if you can. It's going to be the best fun!

Helen Schofield
Producer, The Forth Act



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Amateur Group Singing Licence

An easy way for your Amateur Theatre group to legally copy music for Variety Shows.

Amateur Group Singing Licence – just launched! PMLL and NODA have been working together for the last 12 months to create a licence that will not only ensure societies are covered legally for photocopying, but also to make it as cost effective for all groups.

The Amateur Group Singing Licence allows amateur theatre group members to make photocopies of works and also permits minor arrangements (e.g. change of key) to suit the voices of the group. The licence is applicable where an amateur theatre group is copying music used in the rehearsal and performance of a Variety Show or similar (as part of the Amateur Theatre activities).

What can amateur groups do with the licence?

With the PMLL Amateur Group Singing Licence you can easily and legally make copies of songs without contacting publishers individually (please check the publisher list to find out which publishers are included in this licence). This licence does not cover the copying or performance of whole musicals, permission for this would need to be obtained direct from the publisher.

Why was the licence created?

We wanted to simplify the licensing process for groups whilst working with music publishers to ensure songwriters and composers are fairly paid.

How much will it cost?

Pricing is tailored to the size of your group and how many songs you want to sing.

£2.50 (+VAT) 1 copy per member of up to 5 Licensed Works

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£10.00 (+VAT) 1 copy per member of up to 25 Licensed Works

£15.00 (+VAT) 1 copy per member of up to 50 Licensed Works

Where can we find out more and sign up?

Please contact PMLL to register your interest.

Do I need to report what I have copied?

Yes, it is essential that we receive information on works copied under the licence. This ensures that we can pay the correct publishers who in turn pay monies to the writers and composers of the works.

What does the licence cover?

The Amateur Group Singing Licence (AGSL) allows members of an amateur theatre group to make copies of music for Variety Shows. The licence is only applicable for Variety Shows, it does not cover the copying of music for musicals or plays that you have obtained performance rights for.

Does this cover sheet music from all publishers?

No, there are some titles and publishers excluded from this list. Please check our website for the latest list.

noda

Long Service Awards

Visit noda.org.uk/awards to apply today



5 Year Badge



10 Year Badge



15 Year Badge



20 Year Badge



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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



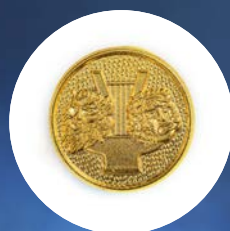
60 Year Badge / Pin



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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!

Presidential travels



NODA East Gala - presenting best youth performer awards



NODA East Midlands Awards Day - with the East Midlands committee



NODA South East AGM and Awards' Day



NODA South West Gala - presenting Best Large Musical Production Award

My year as your president has continued to prove most interesting with an increasing mixture of presentations to see and the bulk of the regional conferences to visit. It has been inspiring to witness how everybody has been raising the bar on the standard of presentations. It seems that post-lockdown there is an increased desire to perform at the very best of our ability. This is also reflected in the choice of material to perform. I have been privileged to see some extremely challenging dramatic work. Our musical societies are finding it increasingly difficult to find newly available West End works to present, but they are giving some well-loved shows revivals which are full of vitality and much enjoyed by our audiences. I have seen some most innovative compilation shows, which demonstrated the fantastically inventive talents of society directors and production teams.

I have thoroughly enjoyed attending the various regional conferences across the country. They are all so different in style, but share the desire to highlight the variety and successful achievements of their societies. It has been

particularly pleasant to join in the recognition and praise for the local committees, and I was pleased to have my photo taken with them at their events. While I have delighted in meeting the region's volunteers, it has been a greater joy to observe how popular they are with our members. There are some very strong connections between regional representatives and the societies in their district. If you are reading this and thinking that you don't see your RR very often, perhaps you should review how often you get in contact and invite your rep to your next event. It's a two-way relationship and it is inefficient to leave it all to your representative. It costs you very little: after paying your subscription, a friendly welcome a couple of seats, a programme and an invitation to meet the cast in the bar afterwards.

One of the most pleasant tasks as president is to attend Youth Days and youth productions. I have been privileged to see some stunning productions, and the variety of subject matter is extraordinary. From a pre-Edinburgh Festival presentation day in Bath to the extremely enthusiastic *Frozen*



NODA West Midlands - presenting Special Awards



The Dreams of Anne Frank - Zenith of Bath prior to their Edinburgh Fringe trip in the summer



NODA North East Gala



Frozen Jr - Angles Theatre Wisbech

Jnr in Wisbech, I have been impressed by the enthusiasm, dedication and professionalism of our youth groups and young members in bigger societies. Those of us who have been around a long time can easily fall into the trap of being doubtful about the future, but, from what I've seen, amateur theatre has a great future in the hands of these young people. We may have to struggle on for a bit longer helping organise things with all our experience, but we can be certain that our presentations are going to be in safe hands.

My apologies go to those societies that I have had to disappoint because of my difficulties with getting to various places in time for productions. This has been made more difficult by the continuing rail strikes, where trips became inadvisable. With medical attention required three times a week, it has meant there is only a limited time for me to travel and public transport often didn't fit in with timings. I'm grateful to the vice president, who has kindly filled in for me on a number of occasions, in particular the visit to the annual celebrations of our friends from AIMS across the water in

Killarney. I look forward to welcoming their representatives when we meet for the inauguration of Christine Hunter Hughes as your next president at Preston. You are all welcome to attend. The details are in this magazine and on the website. 16th September seems to be approaching very quickly, but I have my visit to Summer School and to the Wales and Ireland Celebration along with a number of shows still to make.

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.
Nick Lawrence
President 2022-23

TADLOP takes on Steampunk weekend

NODA West Midlands



The Telford and District Light Operatic Players were lucky enough to be invited to perform at *The Town That Never Was* event at Blists Hill Victorian Town for their Steampunk weekend to promote their October musical *Jekyll and Hyde*. This event aims to attract Steampunk enthusiasts from all over the country. TADLOP is not completely estranged from the Steampunk World having performed Roger and Hammerstein's *Cinderella* back in 2016, which had a very heavy Steampunk influence; nonetheless there are many cast members relatively new to TADLOP who have never experienced Steampunk before and this weekend proved invaluable for them.

The dark musical of *Jekyll and Hyde* is inspired by the classic novella by Robert Louis Stevenson which follows the story of Doctor Jekyll as he searches for a cure to mankind's evil. Using himself as the test subject he accidentally releases his alter-ego Mister Hyde who rampages through Victorian London. Director, Sammi McSporrán aims to lean into the Steampunk aesthetic to evoke more depth in each character portrayed in the musical. Therefore, the Steampunk

weekend at Blists Hill was the perfect setting for TADLOP's first outing as a cast and provided some great photo opportunities to create a feel for the show.

With a few raids of the TADLOP costume stores and a brush up on a few songs from the show, the cast were ready to venture back in time through the cobbled streets of Blists Hill. TADLOP enjoyed performing four sets of songs over the weekend which went down a treat with tourists and Steampunk fanatics alike. With each set ending with the song 'Do you hear the people sing?' from the musical *Les Miserables* which had everyone singing along with power and drive bringing a community of different backgrounds together in unity. Alongside the performance sets, cast members roamed the streets in costume to give out flyers for the show and talk to people about the society and what it means to them. TADLOP members were also able to gain an understanding from the Steampunk community through discussions with various enthusiasts as to how to effectively and authentically represent a Victorian Steampunk atmosphere

on the stage in order to immerse the audience in the feel of the show.

TADLOP aim to bring theatre out into the community and inspire theatrical experiences as part of their charitable aims and they certainly delivered. TADLOP members particularly enjoyed talking to younger members of the public about how to get into the arts and encouraging them to try out their local theatre groups. As a charity TADLOP relies heavily on ticket sales to maintain funds like many other theatre groups, and events such as these are extremely valued by all members of the charity. In particular, TADLOP would like to thank John, Karen and Mark from the Ministry of Steampunk for an insightful weekend and providing many networking avenues to allow them to reach a wider audience. It just goes to show that theatre can find a place in any community.

Jekyll and Hyde will be performed at Telford Theatre from 19th-21st October 2023.

Katie Kinnon
TADLOP Marketing Manager.

Travels of a regional councillor

NODA Wales & Ireland

My region covers the whole of Wales and Northern Ireland and I am only just finding out how large and spread out that region is.

Last year I visited three societies Mid Wales, North Wales and Anglesey all in a week and all in our motorhome. This year I was invited to attend a society in Northern Ireland and I jumped at the chance, and again started to plan a “road trip”. We travelled the coast from Gallway to Portrush taking in all the sights on the Wild Atlantic Way during what was the sunniest two weeks we have had. Whilst travelling through Northern Ireland, I recognised place names that I had seen on the NODA site and on Sheelagh’s show reports and was amazed at the area she has to cover.

I hadn't realised before how large an area the district was, and I have to say, Sheelagh does an amazing job, travelling many, many miles to visit our NODA members and their productions.

We met up with Sheelagh and her son James and went to see the Ballywillan Drama Group’s production of *Kinky Boots*. What a lovely warm welcome we had from them.

The show was all I had hoped for and more - I enjoyed every minute!

After the show, the cast came out to have their photographs taken with the audience and even after a full-on show, during a very hot evening, they had amazing patience. No one was refused a “selfie” and the smiles never left the faces of cast or audience. We were keeping out of the way, but the cast managed to get us into the photographs. Well, who wouldn't want their photo taken with the gorgeous

Lola and the Angels?

Finally, I managed to get a word with the cast and some of the production team to congratulate them and they were so pleased that we had managed to attend. It was a fabulous evening.

Next day, we headed out in our motorhome to Portrush and Londonderry (or Derry as some call it) to see a few sights before calling in at Belfast on our way to the ferry and home.

It was a lovely trip, and good to get to see some of my more remote societies.

The next trip is already in the planning stage. It's lovely to be able to see the region and its scenery while seeing some amazing productions at the same time.



The Olibob Arts Foundation

NODA South East



Silchester Players are pleased and proud to continue to support The Olibob Arts Foundation, a UK registered charity (Charity Number 1201475). This foundation was set up in 2021, in memory of Oli Williams, a member of Silchester Players, who died in a tragic accident during Storm Alex in 2020. He was 27.

Oli was an incredibly popular and talented member of the Silchester Players. When he moved to Stratford-upon-Avon, he continued to work with local amateur dramatic groups. Oli, together with the cast from Second Thoughts Drama Group, was awarded Winner of Best Drama, District 5 2019, for his role as André the dog in the comedy *Supersnout*.

Participating in local youth drama

groups played a big part in shaping Oli's life and career. He was incredibly supportive and inclusive, particularly of his fellow actors. Whilst in Stratford, he became one of the youngest patrons of the Royal Shakespeare Company.

The Olibob Arts Foundation intends to give other young people, who would not otherwise have the same opportunities, the chance to benefit from skills learned through the performing arts. The foundation awards grants to schools, drama groups and clubs to fund performing arts projects, with a particular focus on those aged between 11 and 21 years. The aim is to help young people to develop key life skills, such as social cohesion, role playing, team working, interpersonal skills and communication skills, through the performing arts. This

in turn will help them gain confidence, resilience and participate in society as independent, mature, and responsible individuals. The foundation are currently working in collaboration with the National Youth Arts Trust and have funded two large outreach drama projects to date. These have benefitted many young people in disadvantaged areas in London and Port Talbot.

In addition, the foundation also provides "Olibob Awards" (a trophy and a monetary award) to young people who have demonstrated personal growth from music or drama groups and shown inclusiveness, kindness, care and support of others.

NODA Presidential Gala
and AGM weekend 2023

Murder on Opening Night

Friday 15th - Saturday 16th September

Preston Marriott

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, Christine Hunter Hughes.

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 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 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 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 E

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

No accomodation provided.

£75.00 per person

Package F

Gala dinner, glass of wine, murder mystery entertainment.

No accomodation provided.

£50.00 per person



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How To Write A Musical

noda youth South East



How to Write a Musical by Fiona Morgans, was performed by BATS (Basingstoke Amateur Theatrical Society) Next Gen in Central Studio, Basingstoke on 2 June 2023. This was a great achievement because it was rehearsed and performed in three days.

Fiona says "In January, while planning our summer production, we were also looking at summer school and holiday projects which would be fundamental for funding as 'Everybody's Talking About Jamie' is our first full-length show since 2019. Production costs have risen sharply.

Owen White and I agreed that we would like to run a 'play in a day' as a half-term project, appealing to a younger cast and those unsuccessful for Jamie. Unable

to find something suitable, self-penned came to mind. I shared my idea with Owen, who reacted with great enthusiasm and we met, wrote a synopsis and 'How to Write a Musical' was born. Owen was inspirational in choosing suitable music and we wrote new words to 'I dreamed a dream' at our first meeting. We needed a Musical Director so, without hesitation, Tori Eglin came on board.

How to write a musical: Basingstoke and District Amateur Show Society (BADASS) couldn't find the right show so decide to write their own. The story followed the group through the process of creating the play, choosing the creative team, auditioning, read through and rehearsals, until the opening night. It's littered with characters, scenarios and expressions drawn from rehearsals familiar to all in amateur theatre.

Each character was defined by their role, writer, MD, choreographer, etc. All were referred to as 'they' so the script could be gender free throughout; ideal for workshopping characters and meant when casting we could put the best fit in each role, regardless of gender. Writing and editing took about a month, in time to workshop and audition during the Easter holiday.

By 11 April, our cast of 18, from 7 to 16, had to be off book for 31 May, for our three-day adventure. The cast used their own names which simplified matters. At the first rehearsal, I learned that writing the script was the easy part! Owen (as director) was brilliant at shaping scenes and we realised what worked and what didn't. There were lots of notes, scene changes became tricky even with a minimal set. Changes were made so the scenes would flow. Lighting and a projector identified changes for clarity. Teaching the cast how to perform in the round was also a challenge but they rose to it magnificently. Tori had a very difficult job, in the available time, teaching soloists and ensemble, songs that had lyric changes. Tori was amazing and the cast took direction brilliantly. Nicki, our stage manager, completed our team and showed cast 'crew' how to behave like stage crew to great comic effect!

Usually, I was a little nervous. We were well rehearsed and it had come together, but I was worried about the reaction of those outside of musical theatre and how they would see it, would they 'get it?' My worries were unfounded as they loved it! There was laughter and applause in the right places and everyone left happily smiling. Following the success of 'How to write a musical,' another similar production is germinating."

NODA North East gala weekend *Rock the Masquerade*

 North East



When Rotherham Musical Theatre Company (RMTc) agreed to perform the Saturday night production at the Gala Weekend, they explained that they wanted to include Rotherham Theatrical Student Academy (RTSA) in the performance. The show was to be called *Rock the Masquerade* and the concept was to include songs from the musicals of Andrew Lloyd Webber, linked together by informative introductions from the cast, and the 'idea' that Dewey Finn, from *School of Rock*, was inviting them to 'be in the band!' Rehearsals were well underway when, less than three weeks before the event, it was identified that the theatre at The Spa wouldn't be available. Huge amounts of time and effort was expended in redesigning the production to fit in the Royal Hall. Dee Bennie-Marshall (Director and Choreographer), Matt Symonds (Musical Director), along with other members of the RMTc Committee and Production Team, worked to ensure that the transition would work. The young people involved in the production took it all in their stride and continued with their rehearsals and preparation.

When the weekend came, the young

performers, along with the adults from RMTc, spent Saturday afternoon rehearsing in the Royal Hall with the sixteen-piece orchestra and The Spa technical team for the first time.

Alfie, Bea, Bonnie, Chester, Chloe, Grace, Hebe-Rose, Lily and Pennie opened the show with a 'mash up' from their recent production of *School of Rock*, with Sam Simmons playing the role of Dewey. They then went on to perform numbers from *Joseph and Cats*. Performing to a 600 strong audience of amateur performers, directors and musicians is no easy task – it's referred to as the most 'critic loaded' audience of the year. However, every single member shone on stage and clearly looked to be having a fabulous time performing in the beautiful Royal Hall.

Some of the senior members of RTSA also took on the responsibility of solos. At only 16 years old, Chloe Hind gave a fabulous rendition of 'Memory' which made the hairs on the back of everyone's neck stand up. Emily Bolton, Sophie Antcliff and Brooke Green sang the Andrew Lloyd Webber Love Medley for which band parts had been created by MD Matt.

These numbers were fabulous and the audience struggled to believe the young age of those performing. The production was a great example of just how strong a youth group can be and also that the investment in young people is so important with many of them going on to join the 'senior' society.

Scarlet Buxton, Scarlett Lewis, Darci Eaton, Kassia Hibbert, Florence Roberts and Roma Cartidge – all members of RTSA – played other roles in the show and were members of the highly talented dance team. Additionally, the cast included several past members of RTSA, who are now 'all grown up' and perform with RMTc – Matt Roddis, Dan Fenwick, Ellie Baker and Charlotte Wall, who was dance captain.

The show really was a highlight of the weekend and, whilst the under 18s left The Spa, the audience and adult cast members had a great time at the Masquerade Ball. There was one complaint about the show from an attendee... "That it had to end"!

Jo Sykes, Youth Co-ordinator,
NODA North East



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The Calendar Girls kids!

 North East



Gary Barlow and Tim Firth's *Calendar Girls – The Musical* is popular at the moment and includes some challenging issues. It is largely an adult cast and deals with some adult themes including nudity, cancer and death. When Crigglesstone Community Theatre Community (CCTC) in NODA North East decided to do the show they didn't have far to look to recruit the three young people in the cast. Although offered to open audition, the roles of Danny, Tommo and Jenny were ultimately taken by Tyler Warren (age 15), Macauley Welburn (age 16) and Ana Taylor (age 17) all of whom had recently performed with 'Kids from Crigg' in *Matilda Junior*. The rest of the cast was aged between 30 to 74.

All three young people really enjoyed being involved with the show and Tyler explained: "I have absolutely loved doing this great show. Such a caring cast and crew looking out for us at every opportunity, given with us being the youngest cast members. It was an impactful show so it was an honour to be a part of it." As well as swearing on stage and pretending to be an underage drunk, Tyler was performing with his step-mum Alison Warren (who played Celia) and Auntie Emma Jeffreys who played Chris, his on-stage mum.

Emma, who is the longest serving active member of CCTC said: "These three young people took everything in their stride. From the intensity of rehearsing over a short time frame, whilst still fitting in with and keeping up with their school work and exams. They looked out for everyone else on the cast, making sure we were always okay, both on and off stage."

All three of them behaved impeccably at every stage of rehearsals through to the final show. The way that they slotted into the 'adult' cast with confidence and ease was joyful, in fact they kept our spirits up throughout rehearsals with their humour and chatter. They are all a huge credit to their families."

Safeguarding and supporting young people is important to CCTC who worked hard to ensure that the young people were supported to develop in their performing roles with the support of Director, Dean Patrick and Musical Director, Wil Jones. They also ensured that there were chaperones available for the young people during the show. As well as undertaking the usual chaperoning duties, they were there to provide support to the young people if they were concerned about any issues. Ana explained that: "It was an honour

to participate in *Calendar Girls*. I loved performing with everyone and having the opportunity to learn from the very best. This show meant so much to me, I am so grateful to have been trusted with the role of 'Jenny' and to have worked with a mainly adult cast as they were extremely professional which has equipped me for the future. I was helped by my chaperones when it came to all of my quick changes and they were lovely to chat with backstage between scenes. I am so lucky to have taken part in this fabulous show and it will have a very special place in my heart for a long time."

This was Macauley's third show with the CCTC and he said: "I've really enjoyed my time in *Calendar Girls* and can't wait for many more shows to come." Keeping with the family theme of this long-standing community theatre company Macauley's mum was in the production playing the broccoli loving Brenda Hulse.

As youth co-ordinator it is fabulous to see opportunities being given to young people and knowing that they are being supported holistically, not just with regards to their performance, is really reassuring as we know that the last few years have been a challenge. I had the benefit of seeing this practice up close as I was playing Lady Cravenshire and I can only echo what has been said. With young people like this, the future of amateur theatre is as bright as the sunflowers of Yorkshire.

I'll leave the final word with Nicola Duval who played Annie. "They were all an absolute pleasure and joy to work with. Each one talented, professional and respectful of others." Something I know all the cast would agree with.

Jo Sykes
Youth Co-ordinator,
NODA North East

Carnoustie Theatre Club - youth development



It was great to get back to doing panto last year after covid stopped us from doing what we do best. We got a brilliant group of kids, most of whom had never performed on stage before. It was great to watch them grow in confidence through the rehearsal process. We knew that we had to give them more opportunities once Panto was over, as they had all worked so hard and showed such enthusiasm in their performances.

Rebecca Taylor and Kim Brymer took on the roles of producers for a youth performance, which would be completely led by the children. We got

together with the kids straight after panto, 25 of them, and took their ideas to pick some songs to sing and dance to and themes to explore in their acting.

We picked songs from popular musicals, which Kim then choreographed dances to. She worked with them on singing one of the songs too, giving some of them solo parts, which again was the first time some of them had ever sung on their own in front of an audience.

Kim worked on a drama piece with our primary school aged children. They wanted to use the theme of travel so we decided that we would be at the

airport, and in small groups, they came up with a short scene which depicted who they were and why they were at the airport. This was paired with some airport sound effects, which really set the scene.

Rebecca worked with our high school aged children. They wanted to devise their own one act play. They took the story of *The Ugly Duckling* and modernised it into a piece they called *Rejected*. They created characters and developed the play scene by scene by scripting their improvisation. They then auditioned for their roles, which was then chosen by Rebecca. She then directed them, but the words were all theirs.

Our show was a sell out and a great success. I think the children involved got a lot out of the process, as well as the performances. They were able to confidently express their creativity, in a space surrounded by likeminded people.

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Getting the next generation interested in tech

I have written about my time in amateur theatre many times within NODA Today, all based on the experiences I have had at the same volunteer-run theatre that I have been involved with for nearly 20 years (wow, I feel old!). My focus there is around young people and ensuring they get to experience our amazing hobby, but also have the opportunity to take it further as a career. Over the years, there have been thousands of pictures published in this magazine showing performers young and old on stage, whether that be in a major musical or a small play. We talk about their performances and what an amazing thing it is to be able to perform onstage. But what about backstage, what about technical? The Association of British Theatre Technicians (ABTT) have declared a recruitment crisis within technical theatre. So what role can amateur theatre play in ensuring that there are young people who are inspired to study the dark arts that are commonly known as technical theatre courses. What benefit can it be to amateur theatre to have more trained or experienced techies within their groups?

I still remember my first experience of being a 'techie', as part of my Bronze Duke of Edinburgh Award, I needed to complete my volunteering section, and somehow I ended up at my local theatre. That afternoon, as part of the rigging for the yearly dance show, I was handed a couple of adjustable spanners and given my instructions - I had to dismantle derig boom arms and attach them to a number of scaff poles. Once they were on at the correct heights and done up tightly, hang a Source 4 profile, open par can

and a scrollered parnell (I wasn't let loose on cabling, that came much later in my training!). It certainly wasn't the glitz and glamour that was promised, and to this day, I still hate rigging poles, but I kept going back and the more I saw, and the more I was shown, the more interest I had in the wonderful world of technical theatre.

So where do we start?

Well, every show you put on needs a techie of some sort. From backstage, to lighting, to the person who changes mic batteries. Understanding the importance of 'techies' is like trying to untangle a mound of scroller and speaker cable - really it is very hard to pull apart the world of tech from the world of stage and theatre. The two are intertwined and one will not survive without the other. ABTT have recognised that without change, the world of theatre is soon to be without its left hand, a bit like what's going on with the writers' strike in Hollywood, although maybe a little less glitzy.

The ABTT's recent MAKE A DIFFERENCE conference, centred around solving the crisis of recruitment and retention of technicians. Issues raised included better pay and a better work life balance. But interestingly, those at the conference thought education and outreach were a big factor in the recruitment struggles. So this is where amateur theatre can support.

A large proportion of techies within the industry

will have started with or have worked on amateur productions. We give an opportunity to learn, hone skills and get experience in a way that is becoming lost in most other industries, except perhaps sport. We value, or should perhaps value more, the support and resources that our techies give us - they add the 'showbiz' to our shows with lighting, sound, set to name but a few.

However, in a lot of cases, having a team of volunteer techies are, for some, a distant memory. We ourselves, as amateur theatre organisations, struggle with the internal training of new volunteers, whether that be through the time it takes or the fact that equipment is far more complicated than 'the old days' and find ourselves hiring techies. Whilst this supports the industry in that moment, it hurts the previously flourishing pathway that so many older now-professional techies benefited from.

I learnt to plot lighting on a Strand 520 - at its time, the most advanced lighting desk around and one that was used by every major theatre show. But it is a memory desk, a few hits of a button and it does the jobs for you. I remember the first time I plotted a show, and the designer asked me how do you decide how long a lighting fade needs to be - 3 seconds? 2.5 seconds? As far as I was concerned half a second would not make any difference. So, I was told to manually fade a scene into another over 3 seconds and then over 2.5 seconds. Every performer knows when there is a pause on stage that 1 second feels like an eternity and in lighting it is no different. Why am I telling you this story? It was those experiences I gained when starting out as a techie, that I still remember today, and when training a new volunteer will make them do. The person I was taught by, like me, had no training in theatre but had learnt whilst working on shows

with his operatic society many years before. Yes, equipment and technology changes over the years, but those basics are still the same.

So how do we encourage young people to get involved? As I wrote earlier, from the ABTT survey, education and outreach needs to be improved. How many school halls have a lighting rig and a small lighting desk hidden away at the back of the hall that no one really knows how to operate? Or in some cases, put on their school show and have children that aren't interested in performing but like the idea of tech? However, the problem is



there is only 1 school show a year, so those children go get other hobbies. This is where amateur theatre can step in. Talk to your local schools, talk to the drama teachers, quite often they are screaming out for opportunities for their students. Yes, it does mean more work for you as a group, but how many groups put hours and hours into their youth sections to get dance routines correct or script learnt? The investment is not only worthwhile for your own group, but also you are giving back to the amateur theatre community and potentially inspiring a child to take this on as a career.

If you have gotten this far, some of you may be saying we already do that, or we put loads of effort into teaching someone and they don't come back, or go off to uni. What's the point? Generally within shows, the techies don't get involved until the end of the process. The cast have been working together for months and have created friendships. Coming in at the last minute can sometimes feel like a them and me situation. A major part of volunteering is the social aspect and this is no different for young people. Just inviting the techies to rehearsals or social events during the early stages of the process will not only help retain those volunteers, but will probably make tech week go a lot smoother!

Not every group is geared up towards working with young people or even have the need for their own techies. Some groups hire a theatre to perform and the venue provides all of the crew or hire a production company to provide everything needed. In those cases, even being that conduit and introducing an interested young person to the professionals will have a big effect. Just being able to shadow the team may give

that young person the encouragement to take it further.

So, if you, like me, think it is important to get young people involved off stage and not only onstage. There are some things you will need to consider.

Health and safety - obviously theatre is quite a dangerous place, especially in the technical arts - we literally work in the dark. It is recommended that to work backstage on the show, volunteers should be at least 16 years old, but that does not stop younger people from being involved - prop making, set design etc. For areas like sound and lighting, common sense must be exercised. For instance you wouldn't send a child up to the fly

tower to operate the flies, the same as you would get them to carry a moving light up a ladder. But given the correct risk assessment, and support from your group, there are huge numbers of jobs young people can get involved in. NODA Safe is preparing a helpful checklist that groups can use to ensure they have everything in place to support their young techies. This will be made available on the NODA Safe section of the website.

Safeguarding and child licensing is also a consideration. Being a 'techie' is considered as a hobby so a performance licence or work permits are not suitable, but is guidance that still need to be followed. Contact your local authorities Children in Entertainment Officer for more information and support.

One thing to remember is don't just give them the rubbish jobs to do as they will not be inspired to stay. Don't get me wrong, sitting cutting gel for a show was a pretty boring thing to have to do, but something that was required to learn. Just make sure you can follow up those tasks with something more exciting!

So what should a young person interested in tech take from this article? Firstly, amateur theatre is an amazing place to get experience. The range of shows being performed will give you such a breadth of experience.

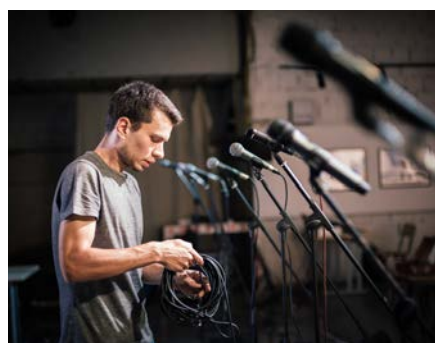
If you are considering studying technical theatre at college or university, there are some great outreach programmes to help. Get into Theatre (getintothetheatre.org) is an amazing website that shows you routes into an education in theatre. Speak to people within the industry, if you live near a regional touring venue, try and speak to the touring tech crews on how they got involved or studied. If you don't live nearby, email the production companies or organisations like the ABTT or Association of Lighting Production Designers. Their members



will be a fount of information to you.

If university isn't for you, don't worry. I know a lot of professional technicians who have started in amateur theatre and didn't go to university, who are now working across the world. Our technical manager at my theatre is one of those people. He got involved purely because his sister was in the cast of *Bugsy Malone* and thought he would give it a try. Fast forward 20 years and he has not long returned from Broadway, being the associate sound designer on *@Juliet*.

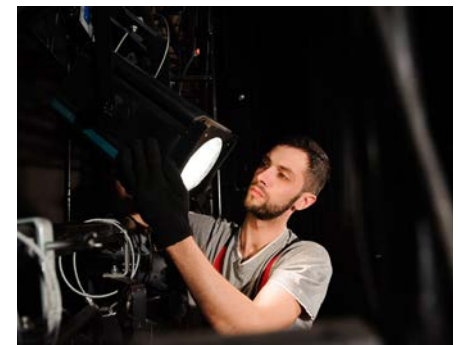
So, in short, if you are an organisation,



think of ways you can help young people to get into tech. If you are a young person, reach out, dive in head first, into the wonderful (and dark) world of technical theatre!

Getting young people involved in any area of theatre is a real priority of mine, so please do not hesitate to get in contact if you would like any further information or to discuss ideas.

Rob Williams
NODA National Editor



Backstage stars

code youth North West

Young students joined members of Blackburn Musical Theatre Company to support their production of *Calamity Jane* in May 2023.

Student photographer Hollie Cotton took cast headshots and rehearsal pictures for the programme and full coverage of the dress rehearsal. During show week, she joined the props team to help keep the stage fully dressed for performances.

Hollie attended rehearsals for several weeks to capture the spirit of rehearsals and to make sure she understood the show ahead of the dress run – when she was fully prepared to capture key moments on stage.

She chose to showcase her work with BMTC at her end-of-year exhibition



at Blackburn College, where it was named 'best in show'.

Meanwhile Elloise Walker and Chloe Backhouse, who both study special make up effects for film and TV at Bolton University, supported the cast with their skills.

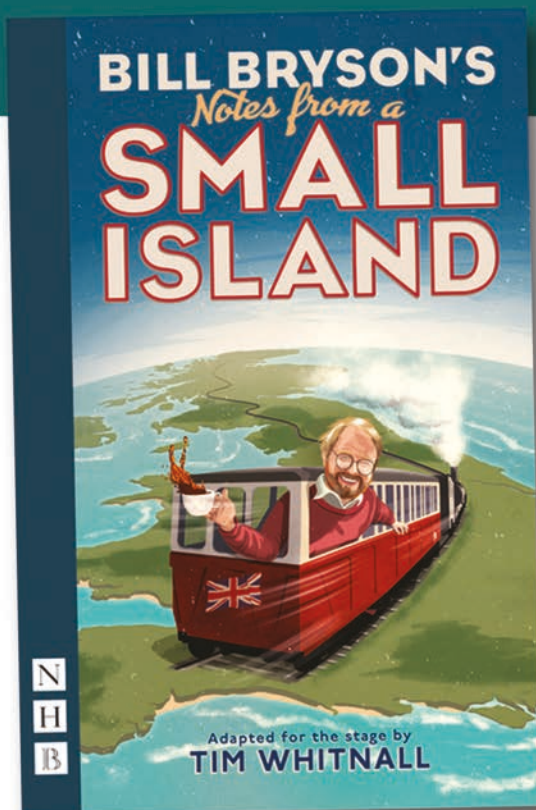
BMTC spokesperson Anna Cryer said: "Having people like Hollie, Elloise and Chloe come along to support our society really means a lot.



They all took the initiative to contact us off their own back, as they wanted opportunities to support their vocational studies, and that go-get-'em approach will serve them well in the creative industry.

We were delighted to hear that Hollie's work won her an award at college.

All three of these young students mixed in well with the society, and we're looking forward to welcoming them back next year!"



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Walking the Pathfinder March 2023 earns cash and kudos for SIYT

NODA East



In the Second World War, the Royal Air Force Pathfinder Force's 19 squadrons were a vital component of the RAF Bomber Command. Based in the South-Western corner of Cambridgeshire, the Pathfinders were target-marking squadrons which located and marked targets with flares, which a main bomber force could aim at, increasing the accuracy of their bombing.

Today, the annual Pathfinder March is a 46-mile route that participants can either walk or run to earn a medal, a certificate and a t-shirt while also raising money for charitable causes. The circular route covers RAF Wyton, Gravelly Pathfinder Memorial, Cotton Farm, Elsworth, Dry Drayton, Longstanton, Bluntisham, Warboys, Warboys Airfield, Kings Ripton and back to RAF Wyton.

Walking the march in June 2023, along with 182 other entrants, was St Ives (Cams) Youth Theatre artistic director Sam Burke, with the aim of

raising funds for the group and for St Ives Food Bank. He was joined by his father, SIYT supporter Kevin Burke.

"We are desperate to raise further funds," an SIYT spokesperson said, *"and due to our registered charity status, fundraising is an important avenue for us."*

Allowed 20 hours to carry out the mission, Burke had to start his walk at 4am from RAF Wyton and complete it by midnight. He had been training since November, all the while directing three shows for SIYT and appearing onstage in another group's production of *A Slice of Saturday Night*.

Burke completed 39 miles of the walk, earning his medal and certificate. His efforts earned SIYT and the food bank altogether a total of £387.50, but SIYT said that this drive is still open for more donations.

Supporting Burke on the day were SIYT Chairman, Andy Davis; Safeguarding Lead, Liz Davis; Secretary, Marina

Hilton; SIYT Member Representative, Orla Hilton and SIYT Supporter, Andy Cashmore. Also supporting the long-distance walker, in a support car, were Emma and Hayden (no surnames provided).



Sam Burke displays his Pathfinder March medal

Celebrations in the South!

Plymouth Ho! for NODA South West's Awards



The event venue at the Crown Plaza, Plymouth. Credit: Emily Appleton Event Photography

NODA Southwest's Annual Awards Evening travels to Devon's famous Maritime City!

Saturday 20th May, in Plymouth's Crown Plaza Hotel was the date and the venue for NODA Southwest's Annual Awards Evening, celebrating all the very best in Amateur Theatre in the region from 2022.

Hosted by Southwest Regional Councillor, Graham Liverton, and with NODA President, Nick Lawrence, (himself from the Southwest too) as guest of honour, nearly 400 people from all corners of our huge region attended together for the first time since 2019, and everyone was keen to make the most of the evening!

43 awards across 25 categories were announced and presented, the full details of which are posted on the NODA Southwest website. Everyone present was a winner of course, as being nominated in the first place in the real achievement. The overall winner was Amateur Theatre in the region, which, in spite of everything

thrown at it in recent years, continues to go from strength to strength as standards on the stage just get better and better.

There were just too many successes to single out, other than perhaps the Regional Councillor's Choice award to Jill Clarke, for her dedication and commitment of service to MAD Kids.

The Awards were only part of the evening – there was the chance to make new like-minded friends, meet old ones, eat and drink and

then to dance the night away at the disco afterwards. All this on a lovely spring evening, just a few yards from Plymouth's famous Lighthouse and Hoe!

It was a wonderful celebration of the hobby that we all love and was testament to the great atmosphere and general togetherness that Amateur Theatre has in the Southwest. See you at the next one!

Matthew Heaton



The 17 District Achievement Award Winners. Credit: Emily Appleton Event Photography

South East



Regional Rep, Doreen Grierson with former NODA President, John Barnes

The Electric Theatre in Guildford was packed for the NODA South East Celebration and Annual General Meeting.

The day began with a workshop given by Tori Eglin and Owen White based on 'If only they would listen' from *School of Rock* and this led into a performance of the scene. After lunch the AGM business was conducted which included the presidential address from Nick Lawrence.

After the AGM and the presentation of awards for the Poster & Programme Competition, together with certificates for Accolades of Excellence and regional awards, the audience were treated to a series of excerpts from shows. These ranged from a hilarious scene from *The Vicar of Dibley* by Rainham Amateur Theatrical Society, to *Fame* (Centrestage Productions Youth Theatre), *Kipps* (Encore Youth Theatre) and by contrast, some beautiful songs from *Here at Last Is Love* performed by David Manners and Neil Sellman from Stables Theatre, Hastings.

Regional Councillor, Kay Rowan thanked everyone for their efforts, including the theatre staff for their co-operation and guidance and wished all a safe journey home while looking forward to next year's celebration.

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Al fresco drama - pain and pleasure all combined

NODA London



There can be few better illustrations of the phrase ‘the triumph of hope over experience’ than the British obsession with attempting outdoor drama, in a country absolutely notorious for having weather that is totally unpredictable and can provide 4 seasons in one day. But we keep doing it! I hope the following article will explain why, and potentially give some advice to those who are contemplating such a production....

Way back in the days before Covid, Theydon Bois Drama Society received an enquiry from the 400 year old Worshipful Company of Educators to ask whether we might be willing to perform scenes from *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* at their anniversary dinner to be held in Copped Hall Manor, near Epping. I would love to tell you that we were approached because they knew of our legendary brilliance. However, I rather think it was because Epping doesn’t have a drama group, and we are the nearest one. So in

2019, we did a recce at the hall and had a chat with the Educators. The first thing we had not quite appreciated was that Copped Hall was actually a ruined Manor House, being returned to all its former glories by a team of devoted and highly imaginative trustees. Luckily, it had a roof, toilets, a certain amount of electricity and limited running water. It didn’t have heating, mind you – something that became painfully clear to us later on. The plan was that we would do the first scene in the gardens, between two absolutely glorious follies – and then head inside for the second two scenes. It all sounded fascinating – but we did rather feel it was a shame to go through all the hard work of preparing this, and then to only perform it once, so we applied to the organisation that runs our usual venue to see if they might let us do the show on the bank (where some wild thyme really does grow) at the back of the hall. Somewhat to our surprise – they agreed.

And then we went away and rather forgot about it – until we all got locked up indoors for an intolerably long time, and editing the play down to three scenes was a welcome relief from working from home, tidying cupboards, wandering about in Epping Forest and painting my nails far more often than they needed, since few people would see them. Editing Shakespeare does feel a little like trying to edit the Bible. Mind you, I know a lot of Christians who feel it would be a much improved tome if you took out Leviticus. I set to, and it soon dawned on me that we might have to focus on fairies and mechanicals and leave out the lovers. This is partly because the fairies and the mechanicals do more together, and more importantly we have no male in the society who can pass for a 21 year old lover, let alone 2 of them – if you know any, please pass on my phone number...

It also seemed that a couple of the mechanicals have far too little to say, so I made Robin Starveling an absentee mechanical, gave his lines to the others, and thought up a cunning plan to get around the fact that he plays Moonshine in the final scene – more anon.

Thankfully, we were all back in the community before auditions were due, and thus we gathered a tremendous cast around us, with me giving ‘fill in’ notes to take the audience from scene to scene. Then the week before rehearsals commenced, Puck dropped out! Don’t you love it when that happens? I decided to upgrade Snout/Wall, who had been second pick, and then I had to re-cast that part. Well, we were truly blessed, because not only was our new Puck absolutely

knock out, but I was able to drag back someone who had, allegedly, 'retired' from performing and is one of the finest actors I know. And yes, he did steal the show with eight lines.

I went back to the hall with Oberon and Puck in order to get the feel of things, on a day with sub-zero temperatures. That was when we found out the hall was actually colder inside than out! Then we started rehearsals, all of which were inside, because it wasn't yet light enough to do it outside and anyway, it did seem that it poured with rain almost every night we rehearsed. Yes indeed, we had chosen to do this show in one of the wettest, chilliest Mays we have had for some years.

One of the trickiest things about rehearsing inside for an outside show (which is often the case) is that it's hard to convey just how much projection you need to prepare yourself with. Luckily, my cast got the hang of it pretty quickly, though other occupants of the hall may have wondered why we were working at quite such a volume. Also, the whole performance needs to be 'bigger' outside, so it involved a lot more animation than one might employ if just planning to do it on a small stage.

When we finally did get outside, it looked quite beautiful (in a corner of the bank right on the edge of Epping Forest) but there was every chance our actors would be getting hypothermia sometime soon, particularly poor Titania in her floaty dress. No matter, they kept their levels of energy and enthusiasm regardless and it was looking great. Though performing so close to a vast array of bushes seemed to bring out every nibbling thing within a 3 mile radius – the smell of deet was ever with us.

Finally, our Copped Hall performance dawned to 100 gloriously DJ, posh frock or Tudor costumed people and let us not forget, they were educators, so could be guaranteed to know a thing

or two about Shakespeare. It was still extremely cold, though they did bring in a vast industrial heater to put in the doorway of our changing room – a very popular spot for us all between scenes. The very last scene, in the saloon, with dim lights, and bricks stained by many centuries, was genuinely magical, especially when Oberon said: "*Through this house give glimmering light.*" Next day, we headed straight to the Theydon Hall and proceeded to prepare for our outside performance on the bank.

It was the oddest of set build days. We constructed a gorgeous bower for Titania to sleep under. We transformed the stage of the hall into a dressing room, since this was the easiest place from which to enter and exit. We marked out a stage and seating area. Our lighting chap found some uplighters for the trees. Though beware here as they absolutely do not show up in full daylight, so there is only any point in having them in the evening as the light starts to fade. Our Wardrobe Mistress, also playing Mrs Quince threw some excellent costumes at us, and that was about it.

We did three performances. The audiences were small, but the enthusiasm was magnificent! Ages ranging from 3 to 90 turned out, oh,

and a dog. I think it is something to do with being outside that made the audience more inclined to be a part of the show which we played on to full effect. The idea of pulling someone in from the audience to do Moonshine each night went better than we could possibly have hoped for. On the first night, we got the local NODA rep, at matinee we got a hugely talented actress friend of Mrs Quince and on the last night, we took a risk and called up a delightful and very keen child from in front of the stage area. He took to the performance like a pro and has been invited to appear in our next production!

It was a unique and rather wonderful experience. The entire company consisted of the actors, a wonderful props mistress, the bar manager and a 'logistics' manager, who got lumbered with anything else of which we hadn't thought. So a company of 12 who did everything. I think it bought us very close together, and the whole thing really did feel strangely magical. As Snug/Lion said when we all left the hall on the last night: "*We'll always have Copped Hall.*"

Teresa Greener, Director
Theydon Bois Drama Group



Innovation: Lighting the way for inclusion onstage

NODA East

Where there's a will, there's a way for theatre folk – and at Springers Amateur Operatic and Dramatic Society in Chelmsford, Essex, the will to make it possible for skilled and talented, hearing-impaired performers to hit the stage has led to innovation and practical, low-cost solutions.

These solutions mean that there are few, if any, barriers for performers who cannot rely on hearing to take on roles in which they must intricately integrate with the action, even in musicals, and hearing colleagues. For Springers, not one, but two, technical innovations addressing two separate challenges have been developed over the past year.

“It came about because a young lady who is a member of our society is profoundly deaf,” explains Anver Anderson, a member and former chair of Springers. Karla Brown acts, sings and dances. She lip-reads and has had significant performance training before she lost her hearing.

To help her understand fully the stage of the performance that the show is in and her place in the scene at the moment, a company member stands in the wings and mouths the words being said, which Brown lip-reads. But often the challenge for Brown was to see the lips of the reader, Zoe Insull, in the darkened wings.

“And we couldn't put a light on her,” Anderson says, because an overhead lamp would have been visible to the audience. *“And of course, a light is going the wrong way – it's shining out from the head, rather than onto the face. So the difficulty was getting a light that could be small enough to light the face, but also*

point in the correct direction.”

Then came a flash of inspiration. *“We had an old pair of headphones which had a microphone attached to it at the bottom. So, we removed the microphone and replaced it with a reading light, the kind that you put on your book if you're reading in the dark or you're reading in low light,”* Anderson says. *“And that fits very neatly because it's a bendy light. This actually shone the light on the person's mouth, so Carla could see her mouth perfectly. And the wings didn't get lit up with a big bright light in order to do it!”*

The successful launch of this tool came during Springers' production last year of the musical *Kinky Boots*, in which Brown was in the ensemble but also had a few lines to sing on her own in one of the show's big numbers.

“She's very adept at looking at what she needs to look at without having to restart, so she's not always looking at the wings,” Anderson says. *“It's just on occasions when she's been doing some stuff, and she looks around to see exactly what's going on.”*

The second innovation developed as a result of Brown's needing to learn music and dances for a new show. *“We came up with a different device because one of the problems is she can't hear the music, and she can't always follow the rhythm,”* Anderson says. *“She's an excellent dancer as well as an excellent singer.”*

Expensive technological equipment to support hearing-impaired people is available on the market, but did not fit with Springers' tight budget. So the technically-savvy Anderson put his mind to work and found a £10

Bluetooth transmitter – *“The kind of thing people use in their car,”* Anderson says – and a speaker *“that's not just a speaker; it's a very small radio receiver.”*

It doesn't work in the normal way that a speaker does where you can hear everything; it waits until you put it on a kind of an echo chamber like a biscuit tin,” Anderson says. *“And then because it's vibrating, it can actually ‘hear’ the music through the biscuit tin.”*

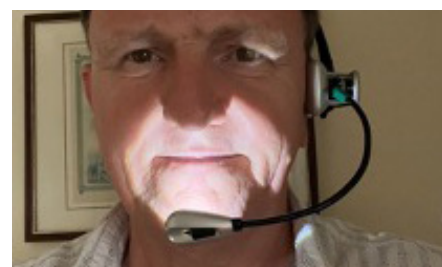
To put this to work for Springers, a Bluetooth transmitter was plugged into the piano. Brown held the vibrating receiver against her skin, hooking it into her bra strap, and when the key was depressed, she could feel the rhythm



This was simple – required: an old headphone headband



And a flexible book reading light



And voila!

of the keys. She couldn't hear it, but she could feel the rhythm of the music so she could learn the dance properly, with everybody else.

Are there plans to patent these innovations? Anderson says no. "It was just something we did because we had a need and we had to try and find a solution. It just worked – so we were very, very happy with it."

The Beat Pulse



Bluetooth transmitter



Bone conduction speaker



It isn't perfect! Bluetooth connectivity introduces some latency (delay) but it is most effective for feeling the rhythm of the keyboard being played.

GAOS recognise over 600 years of long service

NODA Scotland

After 3 years absence, Galashiels Amateur Operatic Society took time out, during their recent sell out production of *Grease*, to celebrate over 600 years of long service.

Borders area NODA rep Debbie Lyons made presentations to 17 company members after the Friday evening performance.

Presentations ranged from 10 years through to 60-year diamond pins to 3 members (one posthumously). An amazing total of over 600 years of service to local theatre – what an achievement! Congratulations to all involved.

While not eligible for NODA long service recognition, presentations were also made by the company to our long serving and much appreciated Production Team: Jeff Thomson, Producer/MD, 30 years; Marie McCullough, Choreographer, 15 years; Jennifer Montague, Rehearsal Pianist, 20 years. Their contribution to the development of GAOS and to local theatre generally has been immense and has allowed us to achieve the success we enjoy today. Thank you all!





A tale of three Hunchbacks

This is a tale of three hunchbacks of Notre Dame – yes, three, but performing in just two productions of *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, the musical based on the Victor Hugo novel and songs from the 1996 Disney film.

The story follows Quasimodo, the deformed and confined bellringer of Paris's Notre Dame Cathedral and his yearning to explore the outside world and be accepted by society, against the wishes of his cruel, puritanical foster father Judge Claude Frollo. Frollo also wants to exterminate Paris's Romani population, which includes a lovely Romani gypsy girl, Esmeralda, with whom Quasimodo falls in love.

The tale is dark, the Disney film offering a brighter ending than Hugo's novel and this musical taking on more of the original story's darkness. This musical, with book by Peter Parnell, features more songs than the Disney film, and a large choir is a prominent element.

With music by Alan Menken and lyrics by Stephen Schwartz, the two separate productions – the first staged in Colchester, Essex, in 2022, with the second set for November this year in Southend-on-Sea, also in Essex – reflect the unique artistic differences that can be made in the same show with different directors and casts.

For instance, for the Little Theatre Company, which will stage the show at the Palace Theatre, Ewan Dunlop will be the one and only Quasimodo, having been selected from a field of eight actors to sing and act the role.

For the Colchester Operatic Society, the role of Quasimodo, the eponymous, disabled anti-hero, was played by two performers – one hearing and the other hearing-impaired. Jestin Bartlett, who lost most of his hearing when he was 14, signed his performance in BSL [British Sign Language] while his counterpart Sean Hynes sang and spoke the role.

Incorporating performers from under-represented groups into productions was a priority for the board of Colchester's Mercury Theatre, where the operatic society perform. "They wanted to make sure that we were being as representative as possible," says Neil Somerville, the show's musical director. "We took that away, and we very quickly came up with the concept of having a Quasi as a BSL signer. So we had two Quasis – one of them signed the show, and the other sang it and spoke the words."

Admittedly, Somerville says, making that choice posed "a huge challenge for us all to work with in terms of rehearsals. He had done some sort of circus work before, but had never done theatre in terms of what we were doing. He hadn't been learning BSL that long, so this was a huge thing for him to undertake. And he was amazing, absolutely amazing."

Other under-represented populations were celebrated in COS's production too, such as the Romani gypsies, who are terrorised in the story. "We were very fortunate that actually one of our cast members is a Romani gypsy," Somerville says. "So, she was able to give us a lot of support and guidance – why they did certain rituals, why they wore certain things and

the implications of some of the language that was used. She was a great help!"

It's still early days in the rehearsal period for LTC, but Director, Bradley Green, has set the opening number with the cast and is excited about how the production is shaping up. "It's just already sounding incredible," Green says. "The music is very powerful."

"The music is amazing," adds LTC's Quasimodo, Ewan Dunlop. "The songs that Quasi sings are incredible."

The LTC production will see him come onstage as himself and transform into Quasimodo, drawing onto his own visage the character's facial features, then adding the hunch to his back and donning his cloak. At the show's end, Dunlop's Quasi reverts to his 'actor' self and narrates, not acts, the show's finale.

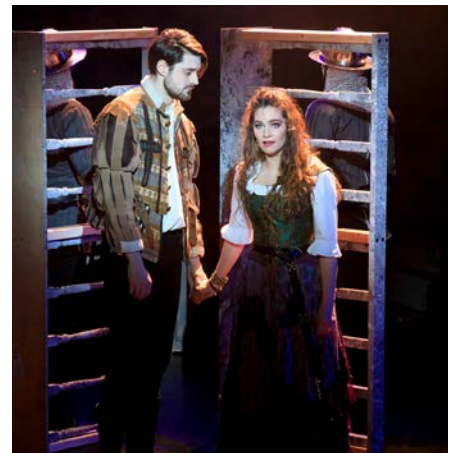
While LTC is a few months away from putting it all onstage, Green has taken on board deeply the show's message of acceptance and celebrating everyone's differences. "That's what makes you special," he says. "That's what this show is all about."

Looking back on COS's production, Director, Adam Woodhouse, thinks of what became for him the show's defining moment in the performance: the point at which the whole cast signs in BSL the lyrics of the theme song, 'Someday'. "At the end of Act Two, we cut the singing, cut all the music and it was just silence and the whole company signed the words of the song. Every night, without fail, you could hear a pin drop in the audience. And to me as a director, that just speaks volumes. They listened, and they understand, and they get it."

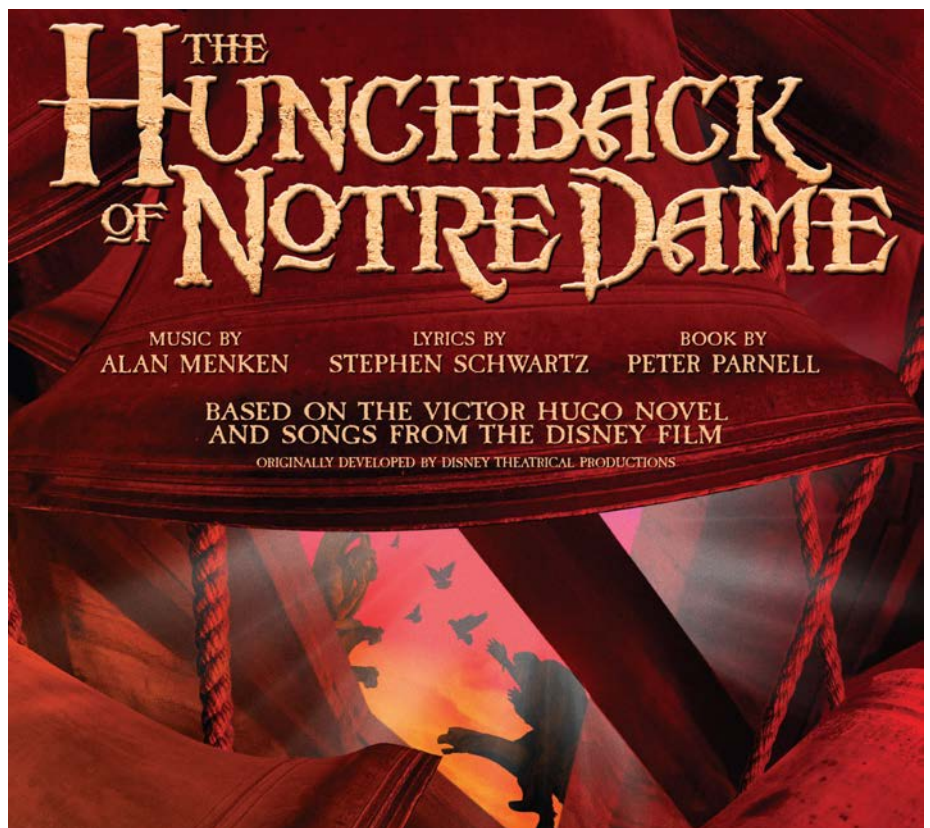
DeeDee Doke
NODA East Regional Editor



Quasimodo (Jestin Bartlett) considers the world 'out there', supported by a rare friend in his lonely circumstances.



Thomas Pleasant as Captain Phoebus takes a tender moment with Esmeralda, played by Cally Kline.



Little Theatre Company performs in November 2023



Little Theatre Company Director - Bradley Green



Little Theatre Company - Ewan Dunlop playing the role of the Hunchback

1943 to 2023 - 80th Anniversary of Dronfield Players

NODA North East



Basinful of the Briny - 1969



Perfect Pitch - 2017

The foundations of Dronfield Players began in the Spring of 1943. As the Second World War entered its fourth year, many commodities, including petrol were rationed and, as the bombs fell on the steel city of Sheffield, the people of Dronfield were no longer able to travel into Sheffield to the cinema or theatre. Thus, David and Rosa Williams set up a play reading group in Dronfield and as *The Derbyshire Times* of 23rd April 1943, reported: "Under the auspices of 'Dronfield Play Reading Class' two entertainments were given at the Infants' Council School Hall, Dronfield". The performances were well received and the seeds of 'Dronfield Players' were sown. In April 1944, Dronfield Players produced their first full length play *Mystery at Greenfingers* in Dronfield. Shortly afterwards the group received an invitation to perform the play to army troops in Penistone and so the adventure began!

Dronfield Players are very proud to reach such an anniversary, performing continuously for the last 80 years. The only year

NODA Today - Summer 2023

in the society's history in which no plays were produced was 2020, due to Covid.

The group always like to perform a mix of plays including dramas, thrillers, comedies and farces and are not afraid to try something 'different', from *Frankenstein* to Shakespeare to *Cheshire Cats* – our most recent production in November 2022, which also raised £597 for Ashgate Hospice. They have even performed John Godber's play *Perfect Pitch* which involved dismantling 2 caravans and rebuilding them on the Civic Hall stage! They have also had huge successes with some TV favourites: *Allo Allo!*, *Dad's Army* and *Hi De Hi*.

They are also proud of their links with Dronfield's twin town Sindelfingen. The players have travelled there to perform farces which the German audiences thoroughly enjoyed.

Dronfield Players', to mark the start of their 80th Anniversary Year performed *See How They Run* – a farce by Philip King, which was directed by Roger Bingham. Roger started his acting career with Dronfield Players back in the 1960s, before becoming a professional actor and director. He has a wealth of experience, having directed over 40 professional productions all over the country and has acted professionally for over 50 years on stage and TV, recently playing the part of the bishop in *Coronation Street*. As well as directing, Roger played the part of the bishop in this production of *See How They Run* and Dronfield Players are thrilled that he came back to his roots.

In addition to the Spring production, a further programme of events was planned to mark their special 80th anniversary year, including evenings of One Act entertainment which took place in June. These were *Albert, Mary & Jean* and *Family Ties* which were all written, directed and performed by members of the society. They will also perform in a full-length thriller lined up for their November production *Scared to Death* by Ron Aldridge.

From 1943 to 2023, Dronfield Players has seen and experienced times of incredible change. They have embraced and moved forward to provide continued entertainment to both Dronfield audiences and to local people who have enjoyed being part of this exciting group of amateur theatre players.

Welcoming and fun, that's what the players are most proud of and look forward to the next 80 years in what will undoubtedly be an exciting venture.

noda

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If we only...won an award!

NODA Wales & Ireland

Glantawe Theatre Company were successful in the recent Glamorgan Drama League Awards for their production of *Wizard of Oz* in 2022.

Lowri Paynter won the award for Best Female Performance in a Musical for her portrayal of the Tinman, being highly praised for her work with the junior ensemble. As well as this Lowri Paynter, Stacey Harries and Russell Rees won the Moderator's Award for their teamwork as Scarecrow, Tinman and Lion. The company are extremely proud of all of them and the whole cast of juniors and seniors who worked so hard to make this a successful production celebrating our 50th Anniversary.



And who was the mystery 'royal'?

NODA East

A 'royal' visitor played quizmaster at the Wilburton Theatre Group's Coronation Quiz on 22 April, helping the East Cambridgeshire company raise more than £200 to support their 2023 productions. Thespian Jack Wright, of nearby Littleport, is a great fan of King Henry VIII, owns his own Henry VIII costume, and also has an array of other elaborate apparel related to well-known musicals that he dons for special events and popular 'cosplay'. The Coronation Quiz, held at the Wilburton Social Club, drew a 'standing room only' crowd to win coronation and royalty-themed prizes ranging from souvenir biscuit tins to special occasion drinks. 'His Majesty' also posed with fans for photos to raise additional funds. Long live the King!





Panto Scripts

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

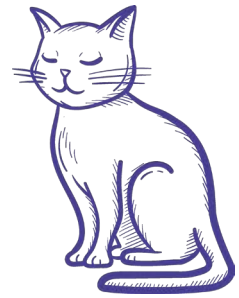




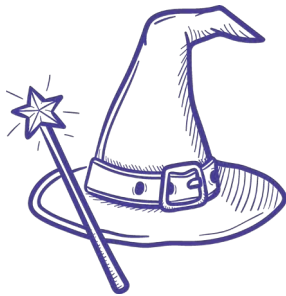
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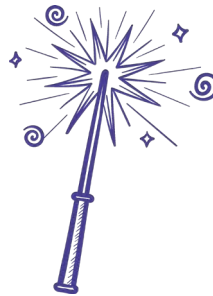
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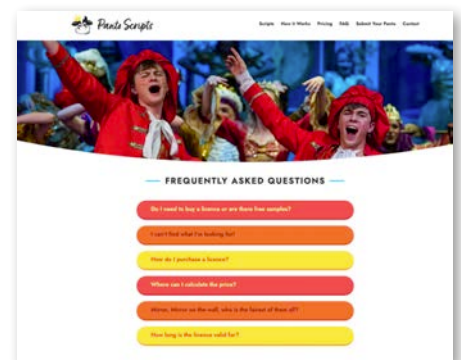
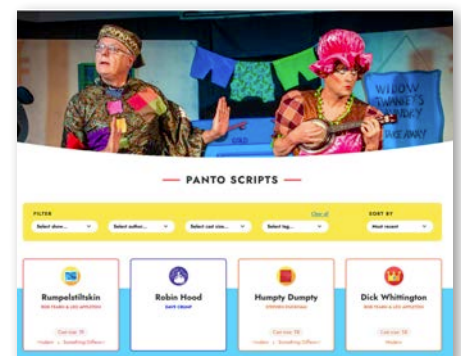
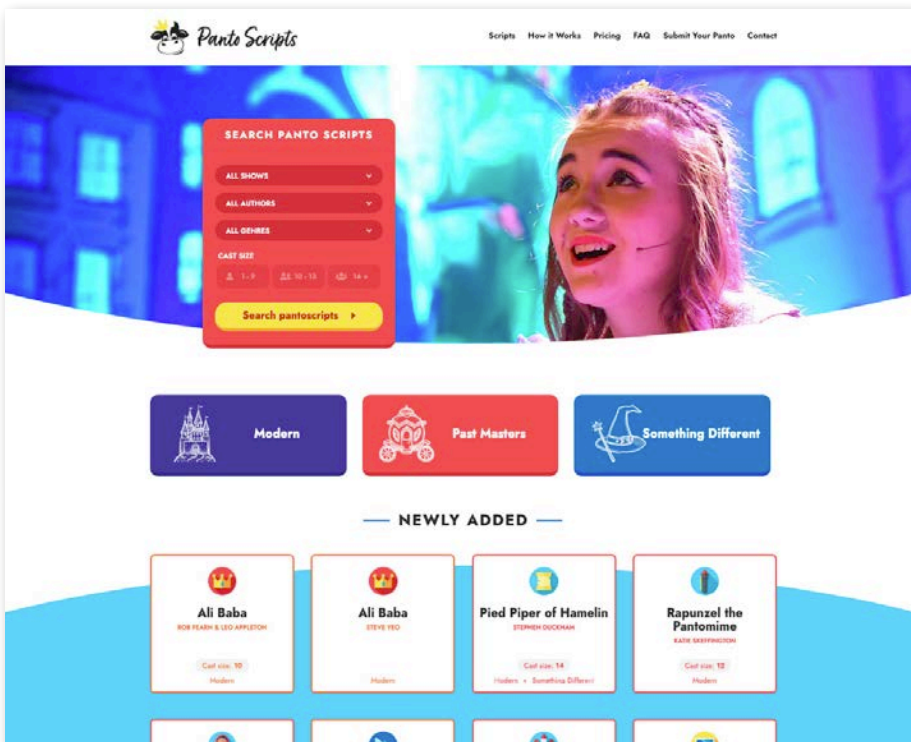


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Local legend honoured with Pride of Sefton Award

NODA North West

An acting legend, who has carried a torch for the arts in Sefton since the 1960s, has been honoured at the 2023 Pride Of Sefton Awards.

Hilda Blomley, who is in her 90s, has made a huge contribution to the arts in the Southport area over the years.

She was recognised as a finalist in the Sefton Arts Award.

Hilda has been a member of All Souls Dramatic Club in Southport from its outset in the 1960s, and has been an acting member from the beginning, starring on stage until her 80s. She is a life member of All Souls and a member of the now defunct All Souls Badminton Club.

Hilda has been an active member of the costume team, attending every meeting, assisting in making costumes, making the tea and being on call for all 12 performances of shows every year to help with any costume malfunction. She also gives lifts to younger members of the society who can't drive and nothing is too much trouble for her.

In 2012, prior to the London Olympics, Hilda was given the honour of carrying the Olympic torch through Southport.

All Souls Dramatic Club included it in one of their pantos and Hilda brought the Olympic torch on stage to rapturous applause! A dedicated member of Holy Trinity Church, Hilda has also spent many hours assisting in church events, organising choir trips and taking them to competitions all over the country.

We are all so very proud that Hilda is an integral part of the All Souls Family.

Andrew Brown
Stand Up For Southport



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FLAT OUT

This comedy contains all the classic elements of a British farce, updated for today's audience. 'Flat Out' entertains through highly exaggerated and improbable situations.

Single setting

Cast: 4 males / 4 females

Age range: 22 – 65

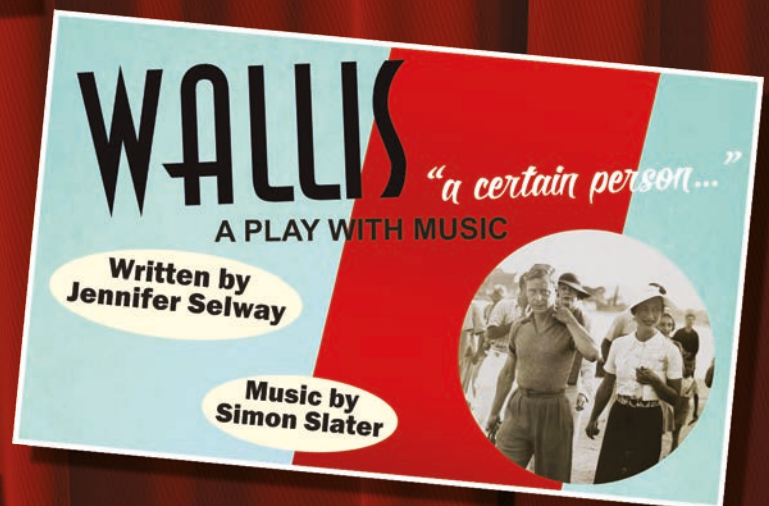
WALLIS – A CERTAIN PERSON

Play with music (four songs) depicting the first five years (1931-1936) of the relationship between Wallis Simpson and the Prince of Wales (Edward VIII).

Several settings

Cast: 5 males / 4 females

Age range: 19 – 64



SUMMER IN THE CITY

Sixties jukebox musical –
Summers of 1965 & 1967
Single setting: a Carnaby Street
coffee bar

24 songs (five-piece band)

Cast: 2 males / 4 females

Age range: 19 – 45



These three shows are written by
journalist, author, and playwright **JENNIFER SELWAY**

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